The Role of the Faculty in Student Success Initiatives

Jon Young
Faculty Senate Workshop
January 4, 2008
Thank you

- First time that Faculty Senate has explicitly addressed student success (?)
- Encourage your (and the general faculty’s) participation in the decision making process about student success, an issue of vital importance to university and the faculty
- Encourage you (and the general faculty) to assume part of the responsibility for institutional effectiveness in meeting our goals
Workshop Objectives

- Identify components of and ways of measuring “student success”
- Provide information about the higher education context (in US and NC) of student success initiatives
- Identify specific current programs and efforts that require Faculty Senate and faculty participation for institutional effectiveness (Intentional, deliberate, and planned involvement vs unreflective actions)
- Suggest that the Faculty Senate should help direct the university to achieve higher standards than those required by UNC, General Assembly, SACS, and other external constituencies
Student Success - Components

- Sufficient numbers of students complete degrees: retention and graduation rates (80/30/50)
- The university provides educational experiences that promote student learning
  - National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
  - Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)
- Graduates achieve the learning outcomes (skills, knowledge, and values) needed to “lead meaningful and productive lives.”
  - Qualifying exams (teacher education, nursing)
  - Rising junior examination (CBASE)
  - Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)
  - Major field tests
- See “Voluntary System of Accountability” (AASCU; NASULGC)
The higher education context

- “Business as usual” in higher education, both in the US and NC is no longer aligned with national and state economic, political, and social needs. (Spellings’ Commission; UNC Tomorrow)
- “Business as usual” - perceptions, assumptions about the goals and purposes of higher education that shape practices
- All of us are products of “business as usual” in higher education – to question it is to question many of our own deeply-held assumptions
“Business as usual” in higher education

- “Best” colleges and universities defined in terms of reputation, resources, selectivity
  - Enroll the best students (“best” in terms of test scores, class rank), which ensures reasonably good graduation rates
  - Attract the best faculty (“best” in terms of disciplinary achievements)
  - Provide excellent resources (facilities, libraries, endowments)
  - Institutions with best students, faculty, and resources earn the reputation as the “best.”
  - Institutions with the best reputations can be selective in enrolling students and can charge the most tuition
  - Institutions that are most selective and most expensive must be the best
  - The “best” institutions can enroll the “best” students….
“Business as usual” in higher education

Limitations of “business as usual”

- Guiding assumption – bring the best students and best faculty together – learning will occur
- Institutions assume little responsibility for helping students succeed – function more to “weed out” undeserving students
- Students who don’t succeed? “Didn’t deserve to be there.”
- “Best” faculty defined in terms of disciplinary accomplishments, not primarily student learning
Thought Experiment

- X State University has never fully practiced business as usual
  - Has defined quality not in terms of student attributes, but the difference it makes in student learning (value added)
  - Employs a large number of new faculty without helping them understand the institutional mission and context
  - What is the likelihood that new faculty (and by implication) revert to “business as usual?”
“Business as usual” in higher education perpetuates ethnic and socio-economic disparities.

- Baccalaureate degree completion rates by ethnicity (8 ½ years – all institutions attended)
  - Whites: 67.6%
  - African-Americans: 52.1%
  - Latinos: 45.4%

- Degree completion rates by socioeconomic status (8 ½ years – all institutions attended)
  - Top socioeconomic quintile: 79.7%
  - Third socioeconomic quintile: 55.4%
  - Lowest socioeconomic quintile: 35.9%

FSU and region - ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County/State</th>
<th>2015 Population</th>
<th>% Minorities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bladen</td>
<td>34,815</td>
<td>38.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>322,416</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harnett</td>
<td>124,474</td>
<td>25.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hoke</td>
<td>54,606</td>
<td>45.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robeson</td>
<td>139,766</td>
<td>64.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sampson</td>
<td>73,865</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>10,022,722</td>
<td>26</td>
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</table>

Source: NC State Demographics
## FSU and region - income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County/State/Nation</th>
<th>Median family income</th>
<th>% in poverty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bladen</td>
<td>$33,974</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>$45,291</td>
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<td>Harnett</td>
<td>$41,176</td>
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<td>Hoke</td>
<td>$36,110</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robeson</td>
<td>$32,514</td>
<td>19.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sampson</td>
<td>$38,072</td>
<td>13.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>$46,335</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>$50,046</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census, 2000
North Carolina – Workforce needs

- Shift from a manufacturing-based economy to an increasingly knowledge-intensive business-services economy
- Demand for both high-paying jobs that require high (advanced) skills and low-paying jobs that require low (minimal) skills

Source: 2007 Report of the NC Commission on Workforce Development
Higher Education and Future Needs

- By 2014 North Carolina will need 400,000 new workers with at least a bachelor’s degree. NC institutions (public and private) are projected to have 254,000 graduates.
- By 2015, 85% of new jobs in the US will require some post secondary education.
- By 2020, the shortage of workers with college-level skills in the US will increase to over 14 million.

Source: UNC Tomorrow Website: www.nctomorrow.org/content.php
FSU and the future of the region

- Enabling more students to develop skills, knowledge, and values that are essential to 21st century economic, political, and social realities:
  - To attract businesses and organizations that require high-skilled workforce
  - To meet the need for teachers and health care professionals
  - To promote innovation and entrepreneurship
  - To develop the educated citizenry needed to preserve and promote democratic institutions
## Low Educational Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County/State/Nation</th>
<th>Age 25+</th>
<th>% with Assoc Degree</th>
<th>% with college <code>degree(s)</code></th>
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<tbody>
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<td>21,409</td>
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<td>11.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>171,548</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>20.2</td>
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<td>Harnett</td>
<td>57,138</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>12.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hoke</td>
<td>19,934</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>10.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robeson</td>
<td>74,458</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>11.4</td>
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<td>Sampson</td>
<td>38,796</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
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<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>5,282,994</td>
<td>6.8</td>
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<td>United States</td>
<td>182,211,639</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>24.4</td>
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Source: U.S. Census, 2000
Retention vs. Student Learning

- All too often, the goal of improving student retention is understood to be in conflict with holding students accountable for learning, that is, to increase retention we must lower standards.
- “Student success” includes retention and learning outcomes.
- If we believe that we can choose retention or learning, we have already failed in fulfilling the implicit promises we (collectively and individually) have made to our students and their families and to those who pay our salaries.
Ethical failure: retention vs. learning

- We as faculty recognize that one third (or half? two thirds?) of our students are not fully prepared for the course we are teaching.
- We tacitly (perhaps explicitly) decide to direct our attention to those who are prepared.
- What about those who are not fully prepared? “They shouldn’t be in college, so I will not waste my time on them.”
Ethical failure: retention vs. learning

- The problem: we are employed at an institution that has admitted the students.
- In admitting students, we are affirming that they have the potential for success at FSU.
- We are quite willing to use the funds generated by their enrollment to pay – among other things – faculty salaries.
- This is a form of economic exploitation.
- “We will not use students to drive our budget.” LV Hackley (1988)
Ethical failure: retention vs. learning

- We recognize that one third (a half? two thirds?) are not fully prepared for the course we are teaching.
- The students predictably perform poorly on graded assignments.
- We grade on a curve, give all students bonus points, throw out some low grades, or take some other similar action.
- Result: A much greater percentage “pass” the class than would have without our adjustment of grades. (we support retention)
Ethical failure: learning vs. retention

- This action may help students in the short term, but it hurts them in the long term because we falsely suggest that students have attained the skills and knowledge of the course, but they are not prepared for other subsequent courses.
- We perpetuate the dilemma as our colleagues have classes with one-third (one half? Two thirds?) who are not fully prepared for their classes.
- Lack of preparation of our students is NOT just because they were weak when admitted, but because we have collectively perpetuated the problem.
Ethical obligations

- Students and their families choose FSU because they want to gain the benefits of higher education. (“good job,” “better life”)
- Taxpayers of NC and the US (through financial aid) invest millions of $$ annually in FSU so that we can prepare students to fulfill roles in business, politics, education, health care,…
- To both, we say we’ll take your money “to prepare graduates to lead meaningful and productive lives,” to develop “creative thinkers…change agents in shaping the future of America and the world.”
Ethical obligations

- We make an implicit promises to meet the expectations of students, their families, and all the people who invest in the institution.

- What are implications of evaluating higher education in terms of these implicit promises?

- (Contrary to “business as usual” in higher education.)
Role of faculty

- Promote awareness of the challenges we face:
  - FSU serves students that have not been successful with “business as usual” in higher education.
  - FSU serves a region whose future is dependent upon increased number of individuals with university education.
  - We must be much more intentional and deliberate about developing structures and experiences that promote student success, though most of us are ill-prepared for these challenges. (Prepared for success in our disciplines.)
- Encourage each faculty member to ask: “Is FSU the place for me?”
Role of faculty - classroom

- Learn students’ names
- Monitor attendance (call roll) – Practical way to let students know that faculty care and class attendance is important
- Verify rosters
- Use Early Alert System - Interim Grades to warn students that they are in trouble – Do so before it is too late.
Role of faculty - classroom

- Focus on student learning - What we do as faculty is important only in terms of what we enable students to do.
- Do not mistake the familiar for the obvious. *Robert Leamnson*
- We cannot assume students immediately hold the assumptions essential to our discipline or recognize its relevance and importance.
- Reflect on the way we learn
Exercise on learning – 5 minutes

- Think of one thing that you are reasonably good at and that you learned to do outside of school: a sport, a hobby, an art, a people skill, something around the house, a computer program. Write this down.
- Think back to how you started learning it. How did you get from the point of not knowing how to do it to being reasonably good at it? Try to look at the learning in steps or stages.
- Write your description.
- Compare your description with a person near you.
- Do you find any similarities?

From Rita Smilkstein, We’re Born to Learn (2003).
Exercise on learning: Findings

Participants usually identify four to six stages:

- Motivation – Respond to stimuli in environment
- Beginning Practice – trial and error
- Advanced Practice – skill and confidence
- Skillfulness/Creativity
- Refinement/ Further improvement
- Mastery/Broader application
Implications

- How would we change what we do in class to imitate the “natural” learning process we just discussed?
- What would it mean if we saw our primary task as establishing structures and activities that help students practice our discipline? (Take cue from performing arts?)
- Connect what we teach to what students already know.
Role of faculty - classroom

- The more actively engaged students are the more they will learn; the more passive students are the less they will learn.
- Give frequent, varied, narrowly-focused assessments and provide quick feedback to students.
- Use assessment results to guide future instruction and practice.
Engagement: Probability of 2nd Year Retention

Source: NSSE Annual Report, November 2006
Engagement – First Year GPA

Source: NSSE Annual Report, November 2006
Role of faculty - classroom

- Foster habits of outside-of-class work – essential to success
  - Most students report spending little time outside of class study prior to coming to FSU.
  - On the NSSE, students report spending less time in study outside of class than counterparts at other institutions.
  - Provide structured out-of-class assignments: Blackboard quizzes and documents and other online resources (MyMathLab, Smarthinking, Criterion); group projects; small “chunks” of reading on a daily basis
  - Hold students accountable for outside of class work – If there are no immediate consequences of not doing out of class work,, many will not do it.
Role of faculty

- Outside of class contact with faculty – one of the most reliable predictors of student success
- Structured requirements for students to meet with faculty outside of class.
Role of faculty

- Clarify learning outcomes for core curriculum and the major programs
- Perhaps our low graduation rates are the result of our failure to delineate clearly what students must know to progress from one course to another.
- If course X is a pre-requisite for course Y, have we delineated the specific skills and knowledge course X must provide to enable success in course Y? Are our instructional strategies and assessments in course X aligned with the outcomes needed for course Y?
DFW Rates

% of students who do not earn “C” or better
What can we do?

Courses with high DFW rates

- Some will claim that we want to lower standards, “give away grades,” “dumb down the curriculum.”

- The most effective institutions strike a balance between **challenge** and **support**. They **challenge** students to meet high standards, high expectations, but they also provide **support** to help students meet these standards.

- Are we doing all that we can both to **challenge** and **support** our majors?
What can we do?
Courses with high DFW rates

- Increase academic support
  - Supplemental Instruction (SI)
  - Smarthinking and/or Criterion
  - Required recitation sessions
  - Departmental tutoring (majors serve as peer tutors; we will try to find funds)
What can we do?
Courses with high DFW rates

- Review course pre-requisites
  - What do students need that they do not have?
- Review course content and credit
  - Does the course cover too much content?
  - Increase credit hours?
  - Divide course into two different courses? (Implications for the program)
- Develop new instructional strategies
  - Participate in TLC seminars and workshops
  - Discuss instructional strategies within the department
Role of faculty - advisement

- Advisement
  - Opportunity for ongoing communication between faculty and students
  - Encourage colleagues to support efforts to document meetings with faculty
  - Workshops will help faculty download information from Banner system and provide general instructions.
CLA Approach

Administered online
No multiple choice – all writing
Holistic assessment of common skills
  ▪ Critical Thinking
  ▪ Analytic Reasoning
  ▪ Written Communication
  ▪ Problem Solving
Measurement of value-added
Institution as unit of analysis
Direct measurement of typical performance
CLA Measures

Analytic Writing Task
- Make-an-Argument
- Critique-an-Argument

Performance Task
Analytic Writing Task: Make-an-Argument

“In our time, specialists of all kinds are highly overrated. We need more generalists -- people who can provide broad perspectives.”

Directions: In 45 minutes, agree or disagree and explain the reasons for your position.
“Butter has now been replaced by margarine in Happy Pancake House restaurants throughout the southwestern United States. Only about 2 percent of customers have complained, indicating that 98 people out of 100 are happy with the change. Furthermore, many servers have reported that a number of customers who still ask for butter do not complain when they are given margarine instead. Clearly, either these customers cannot distinguish margarine from butter, or they use the term "butter" to refer to either butter or margarine. Thus, to avoid the expense of purchasing butter, the Happy Pancake House should extend this cost-saving change to its restaurants in the southeast and northeast as well.”

Directions: In 30 minutes, discuss how well-reasoned you find the argument.
"...Butter has now been replaced by margarine in Happy Pancake House restaurants throughout the southwestern United States..."

"...Happy Pancake House should extend this cost-saving change to its restaurants in the southeast and northeast as well..."
“...Only about 2 percent of customers have complained, indicating that 98 people out of 100 are happy with the change...”
Performance Task

Performance Tasks place students in a real-world scenario.

In the following case, students have 90 minutes to advise the mayor on crime reduction strategies and evaluate two potential policies:

1. Invest in a drug treatment program or
2. Put more police on the streets.

Students are provided with a Document Library, which includes different types of information sources, such as...
Performance Task

A MEMO by a private investigator that reports on connections between a specific drug treatment program and a vocal critic of placing more police on the streets.
Performance Task

CRIME STATISTICS that compare the percentage of drug addicts to the number of crimes committed in the area.
Performance Task

Crime and community DATA TABLES provided by the Police Department.
Performance Task

A NEWS story highlighting a rise in local drug-related crime.
Performance Task

A RESEARCH BRIEF summarizing a scientific study that found the drug treatment program to be effective.
Performance Task

A CHART that shows that counties with a relatively large number of police officers per resident tend to have more crime than those with fewer officers per resident.
Performance Task

WEB SEARCH results of other studies evaluating the drug treatment program.
Performance Tasks require students to use an integrated set of critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication skills.

There are no “right” answers. The goal is to stimulate students’ abilities to make reasoned, reflective arguments.
Students are expected to evaluate evidence by:

1. Determining what information is or is not pertinent
2. Distinguishing between fact and opinion
3. Recognizing limitations in the evidence
4. Spotting deception and holes in the arguments of others
Performance Task

Students are expected to analyze and synthesize the evidence by:

1. Presenting his/her own analysis of the data
2. Breaking down the evidence into its component parts
3. Drawing connections between discrete sources of data
4. Attending to contradictory or inadequate information
Performance Task

Students are also expected to draw conclusions by:

1. Constructing cogent arguments rooted in data rather than speculation
2. Selecting the strongest set of supporting evidence
3. Avoiding overstated or understated conclusions and suggesting additional information to complete the analysis
We participated in a cross-sectional study AND longitudinal study:

Cross-Sectional Study
- Fall 2005 – tested 300 first-year students (random sample?)
- Spring 2006 – tested 100 seniors who began as native students (random sample?)
- Comparison of two groups provides one measure of “value-added”

Longitudinal Study
- In spring 2007, we re-tested 100 of the students who completed the assessment in fall 2005 as first-year students
- Comparison of scores provides a measure of value-added
Freshmen 2005; Seniors 2006

Figure 1: Relationship Between CLA Performance and Incoming Academic Ability
Rising Juniors (2007)
Based on the average SAT score of 842 for the rising juniors we tested, their expected average CLA score was 945. Our students scored 1001, which is Above Expected.

CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

Regression:
- Intercept: 21.00
- Slope: 1.00
- R-square: 0.71
Student-level CLA results are also provided for us to link with other data sources (e.g., course-taking patterns, grades, portfolio assessments, student satisfaction and engagement, major-specific tests, etc.) so we can identify correlations, begin to explain our results and formulate additional questions for investigation.

January 29 – Webinar on use of CLA data
CLA Data and Next Steps

- **How do we ensure that our students are required to rate in all of our programs the skills assessed by the CLA?**

The Performance Task described earlier in this presentation will be released publicly in spring 2008 as an instructional tool, complete with a scoring guide. This will provide faculty with the chance to work with students to understand why they achieved the scores they did, and what to do next to improve their skills. This initiative is called CLA in the classroom.

FSU to pilot CLA in the Classroom later this month. Encourage faculty support of widespread usage of CLA in the Classroom throughout our programs.
Role of Faculty – Student Success

- Suggest that the Faculty Senate should help direct the university to achieve higher standards than those required by UNC, General Assembly, SACS, and other external constituencies.
- Achieving the minimum standards (80, 30, 50) is not enough; strive for excellence.
  - Intelligent use of 1) what we know about our students’ incoming attributes, abilities, and needs and 2) wide range of assessment data of current practices (NSSE, CLA, SSI, rising junior, DFW rates) to provide experiences inside and outside the classroom that will promote intellectual, personal, social, and ethical development.
  - FSU emerge as one of the “best” institutions – not in terms of business as usual, but in terms of providing low-income, ethnically diverse students with high-quality education.
  - Enable them to “lead meaningful and productive lives…” and “to become “change agents for shaping the future…”
Questions? Comments