ACT Advising Survey Report 2008

Students’ experiences with and perceptions of academic advising are widely recognized ingredients important to their success. Research over the years has backed this up linking student perception of the advising they receive with academic performance and persistence. (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993) Buffalo State students have consistently ranked academic advising as very important in previously administered satisfaction surveys. These surveys, however, only included a few general questions regarding advisement and didn’t provide in depth feedback on the role of advising in student success.

The 2003-2008 Strategic Plan Initiative 1.5 (Facilitate timely completion of degree programs) focused on improving the advisement process through Action Step 1.5.1 “Review and adjust advisement systems and programs to ensure comprehensive support for each student”. The first step was to review advisement procedures in academic departments. Once this was completed each department filed a comprehensive advisement plan with their Dean for administrative review and oversight.

The ACT Advisement survey, administered in spring, 2008 is the first campus-wide assessment since the departmental plans were completed. Undergraduate students were asked about their experiences and satisfaction with and impressions of their advisors and the advising process at Buffalo State. These measures are linked to demographic and academic success variables and benchmarked against national norms.

Consortium of Student Data Exchange (CSRDE) 2008

The CSRDE is composed of 441 higher education institutions who cooperate in the exchange of student retention and graduation data for the purpose of benchmarking.

Buffalo State uses this data to benchmark against our peers, aspirational peers and other SUNY campuses.

{ Continued on back cover }
**Intellectual Foundations Assessment Learning Outcomes and Assessment**

This year we will be assessing the following areas in Intellectual Foundations:

### American History Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of a basic narrative of American history: political, economic, social and cultural, including unity and diversity in American society
   - Understand the origins and development of the political, economic, social and cultural institutions of the United States and the roles that they have played in American life.
   - Understand the origins of the racial, ethnic and intellectual diversity of the American people.

2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups.
   - Understand the origins and development of the political, economic, social and cultural institutions of the United State and the changing roles that they have played in American life.
   - Understand the impact of race, class, ethnicity and gender on the development of the American people

3. Students will demonstrate understanding of America’s evolving relationship with the rest of the world.
   - Understand the process by which the United States expanded its territorial boundaries
   - Understand the mergence of the U.S. as a world power
   - Demonstrate the ability to distinguish between primary and secondary source

### Foreign Language and Culture Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate basic proficiency in the understanding and use of a foreign language
   **Holistic Language/Communication Strategies**
   Students will:
   - Convey meaning clearly at the sentence level
   - Use vocabulary and idioms appropriate for the level of student (i.e. avoidance of word-for-word translation from English, false cognates; command of frequently confused words in target language, formal vs. informal address)
   - Describe themselves, someone with whom they are familiar (i.e. friend, a favorite singer, etc)
   - Identify and categorize, compare/contrast familiar objects in their immediate environment
   - State a fact or opinion, give a piece of advice (202 level only)
Grammar/Syntax
Students will:

- Use verbs market with appropriate conjugation
- Begin to describe events in the past using correct tense and aspect
- Correct subject-modifier agreement (i.e. correct selection of articles, noun and adjective endings)
- Use correct word order

Oral: (202 only)
Students will:

- Speak smoothly, with no more than a brief hesitation between words and clauses
- Accurate and standard pronunciation

2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the distinctive features of culture associated with the language studies.

- Demonstrate a basic familiarity with/knowledge of Latin American and Spanish culture/or the culture of France and Francophone countries
- Know basic politeness, daily routines, celebrations and other differences between American and target cultures in education, health care, shopping, etc.

Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning Learning Outcomes

Students completing Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning courses will meet the outcomes listed below in 1 or 2.

- Problem solving and abstract reasoning

Students will

- Represent and analyze known relationships\(^1\) using algebraic and geometric models
- Represent phenomena of the physical world\(^2\) in abstract, symbolic form
- Solve problems using appropriate methods through logical relationships and reasoning

Statistical Analysis and reasoning

Students will:

- Describe and analyze sets of numerical data visually and quantitatively
- Draw valid and meaningful inferences and conclusions from data using appropriate methods
- Assess the validity of conclusions drawn from statistical methods\(^3\)

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\(^1\) “known relationships” refers to the existing collection of functions and formulas used to describe the world around us

\(^2\) “physical world” includes phenomena that we may encounter in the study of the physical, life and social sciences

\(^3\) “statistical methods” includes research design, data collection and data analysis
Basic Communication Learning Outcomes

Written

- Students will produce coherent text within common college-level written forms. Students will:
  - Demonstrate the ability to compose and revise competent pieces of expository writing, including narratives, personal essays, responses to literary works and/or informal writing such as journals
  - Demonstrate competence with patterns of arrangement, narration, description, comparison, contrast, classification, cause and effect, induction and deduction
  - Demonstrate competence in argumentative and persuasive writing
  - Demonstrate the ability to read writing-in-progress, identify rhetorical patterns that work for articulated writing tasks and appreciate and expand their stylistic repertoire
  - Demonstrate the ability to write well-organized, unified, coherent research-based papers and essays that include a clear thesis and strong supporting material
  - Produce at least five substantive writing exercises demonstrating competence in drafting and revising for each. In Eng 102 students will compose longer essays sustain more complex revision and practice greater control of structure, form and research than in Eng 101.

- Students will demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts. Students will:
  - Demonstrate competence in the writing process from invention and prewriting through drafting, revision and final editing
  - Develop a repertoire for analyzing and approaching writing tasks, finding a subject and generating ideas for writing
  - Examine reading and writing processes in relation to each other and in class and with the help of the Writing Center staff, will gain practice in reading writing-in-progress, identifying what works as well as what need work.
  - Gain experience in using the personal computer as a writing and revising tool

- Students will research a topic, develop an argument and organize supporting details. Students will:
  - Recognize persona, purpose and audience in writing and develop essays that demonstrate unity and coherence and contain a clear controlling idea (thesis), a strong introduction, sufficient supporting detail and a strong conclusion
  - Demonstrate the ability to use research strategies for specialized assignments,
  - Demonstrate competency in finding, analyzing, synthesizing material from critical and popular print and electronic and other media into their writing

If you are teaching or have taught general education courses in one of these areas your class may be randomly chosen for assessment or you may be designated as an “assessor” or reader. In either case, thanks in advance for helping.
When Access is Not Enough

By Vincent Tinto (from Carnegie Perspectives – used with permission)

While many observers applaud the fact that the access to higher education for low-income students has increased over the past two decades and the gap in access between them and higher income students decreased, few have pointed out that the gap in the completion of four-year degrees has not decreased. Indeed, it appears to have increased somewhat. That this is the case reflects a range of issues not the least of which is the well-documented lack of academic preparation which disproportionately impacts low-income students. The result is that while more low-income students are entering college, fewer are able to successfully complete their programs of study and obtain a four-year degree. For too many low-income students the open door to American higher education has become a revolving door.

What is to be done? Clearly there is no simple answer to this important question. Yet it is apparent that unless colleges are able to more effectively address the academic needs of low-income students in ways that are consistent with their participation in higher education, little progress is possible. But doing so will not be achieved by practice as usual, by add-ons that do little to change the experience of low-income students and the ways academic support is provided. Too many colleges adopt what Parker Palmer calls the “add a course” strategy in addressing the issues that face them. Need to address the issue of student success, in particular that of new students? Add a course, such as a Freshman Seminar, but do little to reshape the prevailing educational experiences of students during the first year. Need to address the needs of academically underprepared students? Add several basic skills courses, typically taught by part-time instructors, but do nothing to reshape how academic support is provided to students or how those courses are taught. Therefore, while it is true that there are more than a few programs for academically underprepared students, few institutions have done anything to change the prevailing character of their educational experience and therefore little to address the deeper roots of their continuing lack of success.

Fortunately, there are currently some who have, and their efforts could point the way for other colleges to follow. These are efforts that take seriously the task of reforming existing practice. Among these is the use of supplemental instruction that connects academic support to the classrooms in which students are trying to learn. For example at El Camino College in California, where students—particularly low-income students—approach college one course at a time, supplemental instruction is aligned with a specific class and its goal is to help students succeed in that one course. In other instances academic support is embedded in a course as is the case in the iBest initiative at Highline Community College in the State of Washington.

Other efforts that focus on the teaching of basic skills courses are also bearing fruit. In California and in several other states, faculty are coming to together to explore how they can restructure the teaching of basic skills to better promote the success of their students. An initiative by the Carnegie Foundation and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Strengthening Pre-collegiate Education in Community Colleges (SPECC), is one of these. At the SPECC institutions, collaborative faculty inquiry groups are exploring different approaches to classroom instruction, curriculum, and academic support. Their inquiry into the effects of these approaches engages a wide range of data, including examples of student work, classroom observations, and quantitative campus data.

What these and other efforts have in common is the recognition of the centrality of the classroom to student success and the need to restructure our efforts and the support students receive in those places of learning which, for most low-income students, may be the only place on campus where they meet each other and the faculty and engage in learning. Least we forget, most academically underprepared low-income students do not think of success as being framed by the first year experience, the second year experience and so on as do many academic researchers. Rather it is, in their view, constructed one course at a time. You succeed in one course, then move on to the second course, and so on. If our efforts to promote the success of low-income students, especially those who enter college academically underprepared, are to succeed, our efforts must be directed to those courses and the classrooms in which they take place, one course at a time.

What these and other initiatives also demonstrate is that the success of academically underprepared students does not arise by chance. It does not arise from practice as usual, but is the result of intentional, structured, and proactive efforts on their behalf that change the way we go about the task of providing students the support they need to succeed in college. Without such support, the access to college we provide them does not provide meaningful opportunity for success.
NSSE Results 2008

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is considered the “gold standard” for assessing colleges. This survey focuses on student engagement: the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities. Research for many years has shown that engagement is the BEST SINGLE predictor of learning and personal development.

Buffalo State administered the NSSE for the second time (the first was in 2006) to freshmen and seniors in spring, 2008 as part of a SUNY-wide administration. See the results and how Buffalo State benchmarked against peer institutions.


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2008 - 09

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Resources

There are many good assessment books out now but here are a few seminal ones from Linda Suskie, Vice President, Middle States Commission on Higher Education:

Classroom Assessment Techniques by Tom Angelo & Pat Cross (Jossey-Bass, 1993)

Outcomes-Based Academic and Co-Curricular Program Review: A Compilation of Institutional Good Practices by Marilee Bresciani (Stylus, 2006)

Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses by Mary Huba & Jan Freed (Allyn & Bacon, 2000)

Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, Improving by Catherine Palomba & Trudy Banta (Jossey-Bass, 1999)

Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment by Barbara Walvoord & Ginny Anderson (Jossey Bass, 1998 (A second edition is in the works.)