Achieving the Dream  
August 14, 2014  
Minutes


Ms. Taylor opened the meeting and thanked everyone for being there. Ms. Taylor asked the group if they had received any feedback related to the professional development activities on August 13th. Most agreed that there was both positive and negative feedback. Some faculty still don’t understand what Achieving the Dream is and what it means for Calhoun. Ms. Congo thinks that an information sheet should be sent to faculty that answers the following questions:

1. What is Achieving the Dream?
2. What are the benefits?
3. What is my role?

Another suggestion was to place signage similar to the QEP signage to help get the word out.

Ms. Taylor stated that the employees in attendance were either a part of the Achieving the Dream core team, data team or administration that will help facilitate the Achieving the Dream initiative. Ms. Taylor went on to say that each person had expressed an interest in change and improvement. If you are not truly interested in being a part of the Achieving the Dream initiative, please let Ms. Taylor know and she will remove you from the committee.

Ms. Taylor introduced Dr. Mary Fifield. Dr. Fifield will be our coach throughout the Achieving the Dream initiative. Dr. Fifield stated that Achieving the Dream will provide a framework to help Calhoun analyze data to discover what barriers are preventing our students from being successful and completing degree requirements.

Introductions were made around the table and Dr. Fifield shared with the group her story and career path. Dr. Fifield will serve as our leadership coach. She will provide us with advice and feedback. Dr. Fifield will makes suggestions feels are important in helping Calhoun achieve our stated goals. Achieving the Dream is about what we do to invigorate ourselves and our mission to help our students succeed. There is no secret recipe. Where the college begins is with a self-analysis – what is good, what is bad and what can we do to improve. This is the most difficult part. Once the information is compiled from the self-analysis then the work begins of drilling down to choose 3 – 4 critical areas of focus. The activities of our professional development day will provide a wealth of information and will help narrow our focus. This data can be compared to data
that is housed in Institutional Research – is what our data showing true or false? Decisions will be made based on the data. What does the data show and what can we do to improve. Dr. Fifield used learning communities as an example. Examine the difference in completion rates for students who were a part of a learning community with those who did not participate. As the college builds the retention of our students, we will also be building revenue. That revenue can be used to continue initiatives started during Achieving the Dream. When Dr. Fifield’s college was a member of the Achieving the Dream cohort, they set aside money for action plans that would lead to greater retention and student success. There was a proposal and approval process. Those selected to receive funding were evaluated at the end of the year to see which initiatives were successful and which were not. Those activities with proven success were funded the following year.

Dr. Fifield felt that a manageable number of priorities would be three. All priorities should relate back to the college’s strategic plan.

There are a couple of resources that can be used to help the college get started. One would be the national Achieving the Dream conference in Baltimore, Maryland. The second is the Showcase Intervention Databank. This is where colleges submit their best work and share with other institutions. Dr. Fifield cautioned us not to move too quickly. The first year is about analysis and planning. Year two is the action year.

Dr. Debi Hendershot, Institutional Research stated that she had met with our data coach about Calhoun’s capacity to submit the required data. We are using our cohorts from 2011, 2012 and 2013. This data needs to be submitted by November 15th. We are planning to submit no later than October 1st. This data will be analyzed and we will receive it back with identifiers such as a retention analysis and demographics on who we lost and potentially why.

Brian Gann has been through this process related to Achieving the Dream at his previous employment. He stated that the first year is all about the planning. We are required to submit our plan by the end of April 2015. This plan will help us understand problems and strategize ways to change based on the data. One of the first places we need to look is at our policies and procedures. What invisible barriers we are creating for our students? Mr. Gann also cautioned that we shouldn't rush this process. It will take from now until April to get buy-in from faculty and staff as well as formulating a plan that identifies ways for us to improve in the areas that we have selected as our barriers to students success.

The core and data teams will meet on a monthly basis. By the time of our September meeting, the data will be compiled from the three questions posed at in-service. We will begin looking at that data to see what critical items have been identified. The next step will be a communication plan. Our two coaches will be on campus three times during the next year. As many as possible from the core and data teams should attend the national conference in February. Our detailed plan will be submitted in April 2015.
The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:

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Recorder