

**New Millennium Strategic Planning Committee
Educational Environment Task Force
Report
February 28, 2005**

Executive Summary

Rosalyn Y. Brown, Ph.D., *Chairperson*

The Education Environment Task Force Report includes findings and recommendations for improvements, which include strategies to fulfill Chicago State University's goals relevant to improving student enrollment, retention and graduation rates. The recommendations and intended outcomes are designed to sustain the strengths that support a culturally diverse, thriving academic institution. Further, the outcomes are intended to address the factors that negatively affect the quality of life for members of the campus community.

The Task Force on Educational Environment established two sub-committees to identify and examine internal factors related to the student body and academic support systems. Dr. Cheryl Green served as the Co-Chairperson of the Student Body Task Force while Dr. Jacqueline Bryant served as the Co-Chairperson of the Academic Support Task Force. The Task Force committee members consisted of representatives from the student body, academic affairs units, administrative affairs units and student services.

Committee members examined existing CSU documents, current research literature, information and statistical data relevant to the Education Environment Task Force's charge. Committee members also reviewed pertinent information provided by other New Millennium Steering committee Task Force members. Evidence of factors that affect Chicago State University educational environment is supported by information derived from the Strategic Planning Results Report; North Central Accreditation Self Study and Report; Illinois Commitment, NCA Climate Survey (Fall 2002), Noel Levitz Retention Opportunities Analysis Report of Findings (2001), Noel Levitz Retention Opportunities Analysis Student Satisfaction Inventory and a survey developed by the Academic Support Task Force, entitled, *Communication Survey*.

Each sub-committee gathered and analyzed data that affect the perception about CSU's quality of life (both positively and negatively). CSU's existing strategic goals, internal and external factors affecting higher education, and future trends in higher education provided a framework for the committees' dialogue and discussion. The Student Body and Academic Support committees addressed factors gained from statistical data that characterizes CSU's population and permeates every division and unit on campus. The data was compiled and analyzed by the chairpersons.

Strategic issues were prioritized according to the most urgent internal factors that affect the educational environment and are believed to threaten CSU's ability to enroll, retain,

and graduate students as well as attract and retain faculty and staff. Recommendations for improvements include strategies intended to enhance the quality of life for members of the campus community. Further, the indicators of successful strategies include measurements that are intended to demonstrate an increase in satisfaction among internal constituents. Moreover, the outcomes are intended to demonstrate the positive improvements that will change the number of occurrences of negative situations and enhance the systems that lead to improvements in overall quality of experiences for those enrolled or employed by CSU.

Summary of Findings

Findings gained from the Student Body Task Force demonstrate that there is campus wide satisfaction with CSU's mission, academic programs and diversity issues.

The findings from the Student Body Task force demonstrate dissatisfaction among students about student services. The services identified include registration and class scheduling, advising, financial assistance and disbursements. In addition, faculty and staff are dissatisfied with the lack of marketing of CSU strengths and the limited number of events that highlight CSU.

Findings gained from the Academic Support Task Force show that communication about policies and procedures and frequent changes, without timely notice, are important factors that affect the quality of services.

Recommendations for Improvements

An analysis of the findings suggests that improvements in customer service delivery, academic advising and support and enhanced communication among and between units are the top three strategic issues identified by the Educational Environment Task Force. These issues require changes in administrative or organizational systems and a reallocation of existing resources. Implementation of the recommendation strategies found on Worksheet #6 may help to alleviate cumbersome processes and enable better communication between and across divisions. Requiring unit assessment for the registrar, financial aid and bursar offices and on-going training and professional development of staff might alleviate certain problems consistently identified. Also, the misinformation about academic programs and requirements would be vastly improved with implementation of an academic advising model that links students' interests, skills and program requirements.

Increasing communication through a centralized location and having an effective campus wide communication plan about changes in policies, along with a continuous review of systems and processes will provide greater accountability when mistakes are made. Further, by providing orientations that include expectations and values at CSU will help to instill a culture of greater sensitivity & civility toward others. Student involvement on

committees is also recommended to help create procedures that consider student interests and alleviate a lack of awareness about student services and support.

Other recommendations for improvement include enhance programs that require reallocation of resources to support programs such as intramural recreation.

Conclusion

The increasing number of affinity groups among CSU's student body, faculty and staff appears to be emerging. The various interest groups within CSU demonstrates a diverse campus, but also heightens the necessity for managing CSU's diverse population through continued dialogue and involvement of groups, representing specific interests, to ensure an educational environment that understands and respects various groups.

Residential students, athletes, international students, evening students and increasing numbers of gays/lesbians and disabled students are representative of CSU's strength in embracing a diverse population beyond race and ethnicity. Many institutions with greater resources have more difficulty in addressing diversity than CSU.

CSU's commuter/residential campus is unique among its sister institutions. With a student body consisting of approximately 330 residential students, the growing interest in expanding requires more attention to the resources necessary to sustain satisfaction among non-residential students during the evolution. The factors that affect the quality of life for residential students include services and programs that may be more expensive and less attractive to the majority of commuter and adult learners.

The data suggests that CSU's issues related to customer service and communication may be contributed to a lack of knowledge and understanding among some CSU members about inherent differences of others. Further, expectations about CSU's quality of life differ among various groups based on individual experiences.

Remaining competitive and sustaining a viable mission is contingent on CSU cooperatively creating an educational environment that understands and supports the evolving academic and personal interests of student learners. It is also contingent on students, faculty, administrators and staff respecting the values and beliefs of a culturally diverse, socially dynamic, intergenerational body of individuals. The academic support necessary to create the educational environment includes enhanced technology, highly qualified human resources, efficient services and effective delivery of programs.

Student Body

Cheryl Green, Ph.D., Co-Chairperson, *Student Body*

After examining the relevant data, the top concerns affecting CSU students' perception about the educational environment emerged as strategic issues for CSU.

1. Customer Service to Students
2. Registration Process
3. Academic Advising
4. Student Service Support and Awareness
5. Intramural Recreation and Programming
6. Specialized opportunities for Graduate Students

The Student Body also determined that strategies to address the concerns would improve the retention rate and graduation rates.

Academic Support

Jacqueline Bryant, Ph.D., Co-Chairperson, *Academic Support*

Based upon the personal experiences of survey respondents, customer service is an ongoing concern for all units; however, the unit especially needing improvement in customer service is Financial Aid.

Concerning the communication of policy changes, respondents suggested the University email notices to students, faculty, staff, and administrators, and provide alternative means to announce changes for students. Examples are to include announcements with refund checks, print announcements in the Schedule of Courses, etc.

The survey elicited similar responses related to the ways faculty and staff might communicate a general high regard and respect for students. High on the list were verbal utterances and gestures such as the following: learn names, address formally (Mr. and Ms.), and smile. Regarding individual accountability, respondents suggested that the University identify who is responsible for the problem, and follow through with consequences for inappropriate behavior, poor work ethics, etc. When asked to rate the handling of all forms of communication (interpersonal communication, information exchange, dissemination of information, etc.) within the last year, respondents agreed it has neither worsened nor improved but has remained the same.

The academic support subcommittee makes the following recommendations in an effort to improve customer service at CSU: require specific on line training; badges for administrators, faculty members and staff; provide customer service response cards; Also, the academic support committee supports its student proposal to form a Student

Committee for Communication Improvement. Last, the committee recommends that an accessible, online, updated organizational chart be available to everyone.

**Educational Environment Task Force
Worksheet #3**

Priorities #1

Student (Customer) Service Delivery

- Registration Process, Financial Aid, Check Disbursement Processes
- Academic Advising
- Marketing and Communication

Priority #2

Strategic Programming

- Intramural Sports and Recreation

Priority #3

Specialized Programming for Affinity Groups

- Graduate Students

Worksheet #6 (draft)

Task Force Name: Educational Environment

Strategic Issue: Academic Advising

Outcomes	Strategies	Indicators	Amount/Source of funds	Timeline	Process Owners
Enhanced Academic Advising Model	Implement Advisor/Student Portfolio Process to guide students and advisors throughout students educational experience	Portfolios will reflect entire academic experience with charted progress demonstrating advisors' comments and advise	To be identified: Will include coordinator	Beginning Fall 2005 with freshmen class and on-going	Academic Affairs, Student Affairs

	Integrate academic advising methods, academic support and career development services				
	Ongoing assessment				

Worksheet #6 (draft)

Task Force Name:

Educational Environment

Strategic Issue:

Campus Wide Communication

Outcomes	Strategies	Indicators	Amount/Source of funds	Timetable	Process Owners
Campus Wide Awareness of Events, Services, Policies, Procedures	Implement Campus Information Center Utilize technology for training Require Orientation for all new employees and students	95% of faculty, staff, students (when asked randomly) will either know most relevant information or be able to refer to CIC.	Reallocation of existing public affairs funds Volunteers Student Aides	Fall 2005	Public Affairs Office

Worksheet #6 (draft)

Task Force Name:

Educational Environment

Strategic Issue:

Customer Service Delivery

Outcomes	Strategies	Indicators	Amount/Source of funds	Timetable	Process Owners
Efficient and Streamlined Registration, Financial Aid, Bursar Processes including Book Purchasing	<p><i>On-going assessment of primary student service areas related.</i></p> <p><i>Exam and Review the technology support, staffing and resources and take corrective action</i></p> <p><i>Integrate all processes related to registration, including financial aid disbursements, etc.\ and develop a guide for staff.</i></p> <p><i>Implement Mock</i></p>	Satisfaction Surveys indicating 85% rating of satisfied or highly satisfied with registration and course scheduling process	Reallocation of existing registration funds	Fall 2005	Academic Affairs

	<i>Registration Process and Correct Problems Prior to Registration</i>				
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