Graduation Initiative

Strategic Plan 2013-2014

Companion Document to the Full Report: Increasing Graduation Rates and Closing the Achievement Gap
Summary of Accomplishments

Sacramento State’s Graduation Initiative publishes an annual Strategic Plan to outline goals for the academic year and to summarize accomplishments associated with those goals. Through the work of the Graduation Initiative Steering Committee, this year many systematic reform efforts were implemented on campus. Each of these efforts brought about programmatic changes, which were all designed to improve retention and graduation. The outcomes of Graduation Initiative efforts appear in bullet form below and help to paint a picture of the impact the Initiative is having in shaping successful programs.

Successful Programs- (D) indicates that corollary/substantiating program data exists

GENERAL
- Action-oriented sub-committees leveraged GI initiatives
- Continued effective cross collaboration between Planning and Enrollment Management and Student Affairs (PESMA) and Academic Affairs

THEME 1
- Hosted the Advancing Opportunities for Women event and secured grant funding to support the campus women’s initiative
- Revitalized the Male Empowerment Initiative and identified new leadership and program components going forward
- Developed marketing materials and acquired online tools in support of the new campus-wide Sacramento State “U” Mentor Program
- Formulated training materials to expand campus mentorship training opportunities
- Created a toolkit designed to assist employers with developing quality internship programming for Sacramento State students

THEME 2 - Engaged in General Education Reform efforts that resulted in the following, as approved by the President and the Faculty Senate:
- Secured approval to change the GE/Major Overlap Rule: the old policy was no more than 9 units of overlap; the new policy is unlimited. (Note: This change has already gone into effect).
- Altered the B5 Lab options (B5): this change now allows courses in B5 that have labs to count for the B5 lab requirement.
- Reduced Area D from 15 units to 12 units. In addition, in Area D elimination of the sub-areas with the requirement that students must take units from at least three different disciplines has been approved. Note: The American Institutions Requirement will still be satisfied in Area D for up to 6 units.
- Area C: The current four sub-areas will become two—C1 (Arts) and C2 (Humanities). All courses currently in C1 World Civilizations and C4 Further Studies can ‘opt’ into the appropriate new sub-area, i.e. C1 or C2.
- Established an implementation team to make the appropriate changes to the GE curriculum by the Fall 2014 effective date.
- Garnered approval requiring that students declare their major by the fifth semester of enrollment at Sacramento State.
Summary of Accomplishments (Continued)

THEME 3

- Compiled a new student resource guide for faculty to expose them to the various support programs that exist on campus.
- Developed an Attendance Policy Survey. Data gathered from the survey will be used to investigate the need for attendance policies on campus.
- Worked collaboratively across Themes on projects designed to increase faculty mentoring.
- Created linkages with the newly established Student Retention and Graduation Sub-Committee of the Academic Policies Committee.

THEME 4

- Publicly recognized students on the Dean’s List via the digital signage, the wall, and through personalized communications.
- Incorporated the Leadership Initiative into a total of 8 academic courses thus far, two in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration (RPTA) and six in Freshman Year Experience courses (Fall 2012).
- Worked on marketing the inclusion of the Leadership Initiative into academic courses, as an opportunity for faculty campus-wide in Spring 2013.
- Created a new Veterans track of the Leadership Initiative, the “Veterans LI,” which is tied to a course in RPTA and will offer academic credit for participation in Fall 2013.
- Worked collaboratively with the Alumni Center to engage alumni with Initiative efforts.

THEME 5

- Customized messages to students at the beginning of the semester to better inform them about university policies, procedures, and deadlines.
- Conducted a study of an e-mail messaging effectiveness to determine the best modes of communication.
- Worked to identify students closer to graduation and to assess factors hindering and/or promoting student persistence.
- Planned usage of a campus outreach calendar to better coordinate campus-wide on access initiatives.

THEME 6

- Officially formulated a task to review and recommend policies and procedures that promote time to degree.
- Proposed a process whereby consideration would be given to provide registration assignments by progress toward the degree.
- Developed a formal methodology to measure student progress and degree completion goals utilizing the degree audit as a measuring tool.
- Planned an initial pilot of the project for Fall 2014 with a细化 of progress to the degree versus total units earned for the senior class only.
- Reviewed the Waitlist Management business process and made recommendations to change the maximum number of units a student can waitlist, as well as communication to encourage the departments to limit the size of the waitlist to no more than 25% of seat capacity.
- Reviewed the status of super seniors, students who have more than 114 units. This review included status toward graduation versus total units and assigned registration appointments.
TO CONTINUE FOCUSING ON THE STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE 2012-2013 STRATEGIC PLAN, THE FOLLOWING FEASIBLE PRACTICES WILL BE SHARED AND ENDORSED FOR THE 2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR.

1. Continued to examine advising systems and structures to make improvements in service delivery to students across class levels
2. Better coordinate and align tutoring/mentoring programs across the campus
3. Require a mandatory transfer experience by the end of the first semester
4. Implement a second year advising program that requires second year students to meet with an advisor before they can register
5. More fully implement an early alert system using the Retention Tracking Tool to collect data from campus retention programs and academic departments
6. Assess the male and female initiatives to determine areas of expansion and improvement
7. Continue to implement upper-division retention interventions for continuing and transfer students. In addition, develop a menu of services for new students and transfer students to elevate the campus graduation rate overall leading up to our 2015/2016 goals
8. Disseminate the undergraduate degree roadmaps within the advising center and colleges to assist students in mapping their progress to degree upon implementation of changes in General Education
9. Partner with Research Administration to assist with faculty grant development and retention research efforts
10. Build upon the Sacramento State “U” Mentor Program by securing faculty mentors, holding trainings, and creating a user friendly web-based interface
11. Hold trainings and collaborate with other campus entities to offer diversity forums and conversations to build campus unity
12. Continue to develop the Leadership Initiative as an essential component of student engagement and success
13. Place the same emphasis on retention as is placed on recruitment
14. Establish recruit back campaigns and approach for students eligible to re-enroll, as well as engage in enrollment campaigns on a continual basis
15. Commission all campus departments and programs to develop retention plans to promote the Graduation Initiative and follow-up on submitted plans
16. Generate disaggregated data by class level, ethnicity, and cohort year to identify areas of retention improvement and areas necessitating strategic intervention
17. Institute and progressively develop funded student success initiatives to promote timely graduation and to close the achievement gap
18. Place a priority emphasis on degree evaluating students in the target cohorts to help them gauge their academic progress
19. Encourage departmental advisors to engage with students in the target cohorts and at large
20. Continue engagement in super senior advisement to promote graduation
21. Leverage effective campus retention program models to advance student success for greater populations of students
22. Use information gathered from the Retention Survey to underscore high impact practice areas that are effective in retaining students
Strategic Implementation Items for 2013-2014

The theme of each section is indicated below. The next page contains the related recommendations.

Theme #1: Services that Support

Offer flexible support services during non-traditional hours and in non-traditional modes

Conclude accessible online systems/learning modalities to assist in meeting the needs of multiple students

Office Responsible: Planning, Enrollment Management and Student Affairs

Theme #2: Learning that Counts

Review the design of major forms

Develop a “smart major form” with easy access for students

Office Responsible: Registrar’s Office/IRT

Theme #3: Defining Learning that Counts

Research current E-portfolios

Research shows that academic standing is a major predictor of later success in college, especially in the first year. Proactively reach out to students prior to their receipt of their first and second semester grades.

Office Responsible: Academic Affairs, PEMSA

Theme #4: Policies and Procedures that Promote Time to Degree

Design and implement a four-year graduation plan to keep students on course toward degree utilization of degree audit data and graduation requirements.

Office Responsible: Academic Affairs, PEMSA, Office of Institutional Research

Theme #5: Outreach and Recruitment: Faculty and University-wide Engagement

Recruit back and forth between Sacramento State and students

Engage in academic outreach to students who are on the pre-stages of going on academic probation (i.e., 2.0-2.3 GPA)

Office Responsible: Academic Advising

Theme #6: Enhancing Student Retention and Graduation Efforts

Develop an outstanding retention and graduation plan

Engage in academic outreach to students in more detail. An example could be an assessment of “The Needs of Scholars and Formulate Services and Programs around Such Feedback.

Office Responsible: Academic Affairs/Colleges/Departments

(Continued)
Conclusion

The Graduation Initiative is a system-wide effort that has brought together an increased level of engagement around student achievement. Collectively with the hard work of many individuals, campus departments and offices, the Initiative has led to a more tangible and holistic approach to elevating student success. However, we continue to approach the Initiative very cautiously and pragmatically knowing that many of our successful efforts will yield results in the years to come, long beyond the 2015 system marker.

Overall, as a campus, we have employed a more global and systematic approach to evidencing changes in policy and practice that will require time and planning to achieve our aspired outcomes. Together, our University has been enriched by the collaboration around graduation success and will continue to refine and rettool our strategy realizing that our outcomes may take time to manifest themselves in the data. With a data driven and holistic approach, we remain positive and resolute in our attempts to unlock a complex retention puzzle at Sacramento State that has been affected by our changing economy, the diverse needs of our student population, and the myriad of external factors that currently challenge many institutions of higher education. Armed with a body of recommendations and achievements along the way, we will continue the hard work of doing what’s best for our students and that is helping them to succeed.