



**GREAT FALLS
COLLEGE**

**MONTANA STATE
UNIVERSITY**

2014 SEM REPORT

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Executive Summary

For the last year the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) team has conducted an environmental scan at Great Falls College MSU (GFC MSU). The scan included an introduction to the concepts of SEM for all campus departments and meetings with both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs areas that support students as a first step in reviewing overall college needs. It is important to note that Outreach and Workforce Development areas have not been looked at during this last year. There is a great potential for growth in those areas, however; the SEM team believed that during its initial year of work that we would not include those areas in our findings mostly due to the impact of Performance Based Funding on the college.

There are some wonderful things happening at GFC MSU and the SEM team would like to also take a moment and commend all of the Student Affairs and Academic Affairs areas that support students mentioned in this report for their outstanding work and commitment to our students. Without them, we would definitely not be as successful as we are.

During these initial SEM presentations, the first finding clearly stated by college personnel was the negative impact of not having a dedicated Institutional Researcher from whom to access data. This position has since been filled. The SEM team therefore recommends that the data needs of the college and the SEM team have priority over the next few months.

Based on input gathered the initial key areas for action are the following in no specific order. (More detail on each of the SEM team recommendations can be found in the recommendations section of this document on page 15.)

- Disability Services
- Marketing/Communication
- Growth of specific and changed programs
- Retention efforts – analysis of non-continuing students
- Better transparency and communication on campus
- Analyze the discrepancy between male and female student populations
- Modify graduation fees for students
- Promise scholarship
- Periodic brainstorming sessions
- Program value review
- Sustainability checks
- Initiative alignment

The SEM team continues to gather data from other college department meetings. Once the college data has been gathered and analyzed, external data will be included in the planning process to determine effective strategies for increasing enrollments, retention, completion, and service to the region and State.

Background

The challenges Great Falls College MSU faces in the next five to ten years include budget constraints, population diversity, limited campus space and/or the need to repurpose space, keeping pace with new technology, increased competition, and an expanded demand for education from an increasingly under-prepared student population.

Over the past six years, GFC MSU has been transformed from a primarily technical school into a comprehensive community college. Efforts to accomplish this began in the spring of 2006 with the Common Ground initiative and increased in significance and intensity over the past few years. Funding from the Lumina Foundation supported the College!Now initiative in 2010 from Montana's Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. The purpose of the initiative was to expand the mission of the State's two-year colleges from colleges of technology to a comprehensive community college model. Those changes have greatly contributed to demonstrating the College's commitment to increasing student enrollment and success as well as created the College's core indicators of institutional effectiveness.

The Common Ground Initiative shifted the GFC MSU culture to one of data-driven decision-making throughout the institution. Data collection, use of information and distribution of that knowledge to decision-making entities will also be the foundation of the new strategic enrollment management process. The primary guiding principle of the current planning effort is to establish a clear integrated strategic planning model that focuses on resource allocation, measurement and accountability with a systematic process for oversight.

Given the forecasted demographic changes and economic pressures within our regional population the world as higher education has come to know it, will change dramatically. In tomorrow's environment, a "build it and they will come" philosophy will leave many classroom seats empty. Admissions is facing an unprecedented competitive environment as the reduction in high school graduates is upon us and will continue for at least the next decade. Due to the upcoming changes in these population demographics, retirement of baby boomers, and the re-entry of non-traditional age students needing to enhance their job-related skills, the GFC MSU student body will become even more diverse.

GFC MSU has experience working with limited resources and has shown creativity in dealing with significant resource restrictions. Creativity will be just one of the many talents needed to employ this strategic enrollment management plan. As part of the SEM process, the college has committed to a systematic process that internalizes a system of enrollment management prioritizing activities and directing resources in the most efficient and effective manner. The effectiveness of SEM will be fully realized through a proactive administrative process that independently monitors implementation of action plans, eliminates barriers when they arise, and evaluates completion of objectives. To realize further growth the college is developing a compatible timeline for planning and resource allocation to create a process that aligns funding to improvement in key performance indicators.

The SEM process engages the entire college community in enrollment management. Throughout the process, all college personnel will learn the role each plays in student success. Implementation and oversight of the SEM will improve awareness of data and analyses available to guide enrollment management planning decisions. Assessment of the planning efforts may uncover overlap, duplication, and/or gaps between academic and business/community development programs.

SEM Presentation to Campus

In September, 2013 the SEM Committee introduced the concepts of SEM to the campus community and had several working breakout sessions to solicit feedback from the campus. In particular, participants were asked to address the following topics of interest in each breakout group: 1) Define the student experience, 2) Define successful retention and needed services, 3) Identify ways to improve retention, 4) Define the niche areas of focus for GFC MSU, 5) Define student success, and 6) Describe GFC MSU in five years. Discussion in the groups was robust. The SEM team feels that the feedback offered gives insight into improvements of services to and interactions with students on a day to day basis.

Listed below are the topics of focus and common themes that emerged from the different breakout sessions:

Define the student experience:

This topic challenged the participants to think about how students feel about their overall experience on campus while attending school here. Results indicate a strong feeling that students are overwhelmed with the entire process of being a student, thus a recommendation is given to review the entire admission process, orientation for new students, and other services provided to students. By communicating with students in a clear and concise way and outlining all the services offered, the initial student impression will be stronger and build confidence.

- Exciting
- Overwhelming
- Learning new things
- Knowing about resources that are available
- Stressful
- Begins when they come in the door
- Unrealistic goals
- Under prepared
- Confusing
- Many roadblocks
- Peer mentoring
- Intimidating
- Social Interactions
- Challenging
- Welcoming
- Rewarding
- College culture – the language of college
- Fun
- Diversity
- Engaging activities
- Classroom Experience

Define successful retention & needed services:

This topic challenged participants to think about the meaning of retention to students and what services the college can offer in order to retain students. We can see that many of the answers reflect building confidence in student's skills, engaging students in the college in ways other than academic interests, and also proper assessment of college readiness.

- Social groups to engage students
- Students need to be prepared for pace & need skills to be successful
- Strong Learning Center – bigger & more tutors & more subjects tutored & more online tutoring
- Technology skills assessment
- Buddy support system – peer support
- More alignment and what's expected at course level
- Students helping students
- Student success center – build up morale
- Flexible scheduling – meeting students' needs
- Offer modules for technology topics, videos
- There are a lot of resources, but students do not seem to know about them.
- Repository in Library for resources
- Teach time management, budgeting class, extended orientation over multiple days
- Look at the COLS 103 course – let campus know what is being taught there
- Every instructor should teach COLS 103 course
- Require time in the Learning Center
- Boot camp for Technology
- Keyboarding/Computer help resource
- Finances
- Give students a sense of community – be welcoming/encouraging
- Review development offerings and placement
- Faculty workshops to include Critical Thinking into courses
- Having the right people in right job – FIT of hires
- Motivate students to complete
- Why do students drop?
- Teaching development center

Identify ways to improve retention:

This topic asks participants to think about how they impact retention and the things that they can do to not only assist students but also encourage students to continue with their academic interests. Much of the feedback gathered from this session revolves around encouragement, knowing about campus resources, and being personal with students.

- Know or educate yourself about campus resources
- Be nice, friendly, kind
- Be clear & realistic about expectations
- Help students to find another path if their current program isn't correct fit
- Encourage students to connect with each other – peer support
- ENCOURAGE!
- Be flexible
- Take the time...
- Ask good questions – don't assume you know what the real question is
- Personal contact
- Walk them where the student needs to be
- In conversations – empower student & make them aware of their responsibility
- Celebrate accomplishments

Define niche areas of focus for GFC MSU:

This topic asks participants to think about the college holistically and focus on what the college is all about. In many cases, this directly translates to our mission by asking not only who we are but also who we want to be. We all understand that we cannot be everything to everyone, but this question sets a good trend in this line of thinking. Feedback from this group focused on not only our mission but had a strong sense of identifying our niche at different levels.

- Transferability
- Connected to existing mission – maybe need to revisit mission
- Need to define the scale of the niche – local, regional, state, international
- Serving a broad audience and educational system
- Better prepare students coming into the 2 year
- Military relationships – base, family needs,
- Improve people's lives
- High quality workforce development
- Responsive community partner
- Trying to be everything to everybody – should this be the case
- Some programs more focus than others
- Marketing what niche is
- Dynamic nature of the niche
- Define who we are to the community
- How to better use fiscal resources to target institutional programs
- Instructors are professionals – no T.A.s
- Progressive, creative, full of energy
- Provide personal support to students
- Rigor of curriculum
- Dual Enrollment

Define student success:

This topic asked participants to think about how we define student success at GFC MSU. This area of focus expands upon the idea that graduation is only one of many successes a student might have. Feedback from this group focused on graduation, achievement of a goal, personal and academic successes, and employment.

- Graduation
- Achievement of individual student's goals
- Getting a job or career
- Maturity
- Motivation
- Self-satisfaction
- Empowerment
- Progression of successes – building on each other
- Overcoming failures – you had to fail to appreciate success
- Have to be able to measure success
- Sense of community and giving back
- Ability to give back to the community
- Knowledge retention

Define niche areas of focus for GFCMSU in five years:

This topic asked participants to think about the future direction of the college. This area of focus expands on the previous one and relates more to the vision statement. Responses-focus around continued degree opportunities beyond a two-year education, campus enhancements, scheduling, and an athletic team.

- Increase student connections to the college
- Larger and more technology in the classrooms
- Alumni connections
- Increase number of buildings – maybe be divisions
- Central location of Student Services
- Beautification of the college – trees, ponds, waterfalls,
- Display student work around campus
- Flexible course scheduling and more flexible hours to the college for all
- Higher Education Center that would house multiple campuses
- Student Activity building – recreation opportunities
- Athletic team
- Mascot
- Please don't change the name
- Dorms
- More and better transfer articulations

One of the next steps that the SEM team will do is review the feedback of the presentation and then cross reference all of the suggestions to efforts that are already in progress since September. There has been a lot of great work done on campus and the SEM team will continue to look at this list as we look at more enrollment items

SEM Activities

Following the SEM presentation to the campus, the SEM team met and developed some team building exercises. From those exercises the team also recognized the need to first understand both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs areas that support students in an effort to better recognize not only the great work that is currently happening but to also gain insight from the areas directly in regards to their perceived needs. The SEM team has found this exercise to be one of the most beneficial things that it has done to date and now has a much better understanding of not only what the various areas do, but also how they interact with each other so cohesively. Another great thing that happened during this process is that each division that presented commented on how they had no idea just how much of the student continuum that they had a direct effect on.

The following is a break-down of each area and a summary of SEM teams findings. Each area was asked to provide a presentation to the SEM team giving an overview of each area, the things that were working for them currently, and also to identify any areas they saw as needing improvement.

Academic Divisions

Health Sciences:

The Health Sciences division is one of the largest program areas on campus comprised of 19 programs with 7 differently accredited programs in addition to NWCCU. Many of the difficulties for this department stem from the fact that not only is it difficult to find qualified faculty but also many of the programs operate at a high cost.

General Education and Transfer:

The GET division is a very large division with many different areas of focus including developmental education, general education, related instruction, pre-program classes, and transfer. This division also has one of the highest populations of adjunct faculty in the entire college. This division is also a pioneer for the college in getting faculty included in the student continuum model and has made great strides in integrating faculty availability both inside and outside of the classroom. Some great examples of this is having math faculty in the Academic success center, adding mandatory instructional time for biology classes for student below 75%, open science labs, and improved office hours.

Some specific needs of this department include a better direction and focus on what students need to concentrate on, information to plan ahead such areas as interests of potential and current students, and more assistance in marketing current services and offerings in the division.

Business, Trades and Technology:

This division gave a great overview of each of its programs and the flexibility and one on one time of its faculty in not only meeting industry needs, but also being nimble to change. Some of the challenges include the fact that licensure and certifications offered by different programs are not required for employment in many areas.

A common item among all of the division directors was the aspect of marketing. Each director gave testimonials as to individuals in our community not knowing all of the programs that we offer on the campus. There seemed to also be some confusion as to who was responsible for marketing individual programs and/or the division as a whole.

Admissions

The admission department is one of the most important departments in the college in that it is normally the first contact between the college and prospective and new students on our campus. There is a lot of work that is done in this division including customer service, scheduling appointments, providing information, form and application processing, and many others. Although this group is highly worked, they do a great job of accomplishing a lot of tasks each semester. During the SEM presentations, an opportunity also arose for an AACRAO consultant to be hired to review our admissions process. SEM agreed that this would be a great opportunity and that recommendation was delivered to the Admissions office as well as the Executive Team.

Because of the sheer amount of communication and materials that admissions handles, it is recommended that they work closer with the marketing and communication department in many ways to ensure a consistent message is delivered.

Advising and Career Center

Since its inception in 2011, the Advising and Career center has been a huge improvement to student advising for the campus. The Advising and Career center interacts with students in a large variety of ways including new student registration, continuing student registration, academic course advising, add/drop procedures, phone and D2L advising, SAP plans for financial aid, and check-ins with probationary students.

Two impactful elements that the Advising and Career center have implemented are the use of the Grades First program to facilitate early student alerts from faculty for at risk students as well as the Academic Probation Program improvements to help serve students on probation.

The largest need currently for the Advising and Career center is data. This comes in the form of getting data from GradesFirst, Degreeworks, Job-Wire, and also data from academic plans. There are a lot of great systems that are in use, but collecting and analyzing the data is a high need to inform them of adjustments that they need to make in order to better serve students.

CHEO

The CHEO/NANSLO grant is a newer grant on campus and offers the opportunity for students to experience online lab environments through an internet connection. Although the grant is still in its early stages and is now operational, we do not have data yet to support its impact although we are highly hopeful for its future success.

Disability Services

Disability Services is one of the areas that the SEM team feels could use immediate assistance. The sheer volume of students has more than doubled from spring 2008 (83 registered students) to spring 2014 (173 registered students) and the size of the department has remained static at one person. This one person does everything for the division including counseling students, helping them with assistive technology, scanning textbooks, signing in classes, and also trying to keep the college on track for federal assistive requirements.

Although overwhelming, the individual currently doing the job finds the work highly rewarding. It is the opinion of the SEM team that this person is highly overworked and there is no backup person for this position. The number of students requiring distraction free testing, and general testing assistance has

also grown which becomes a huge time demand for this individual. Because of this, the ability for this person to miss work due to sickness, professional development, or even trying to recruit for the college and promoting our dedication to accessibility is highly limited. It is the recommendation of the SEM team that another person be hired in this division to assist primarily with the technical assistance of the adaptive technologies and also assist in signing for students in class.

Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment is a great opportunity for high school students to earn college credit while still in high school. The downside of the current model is that it is highly expensive vs. the revenue stream per student. Dual Enrollment students pay half tuition and no fees for courses, thus with limited budgets, if we decide to expand or grow our dual enrollment programs significantly, we need to recognize that these increased FTE and headcount numbers would not directly affect the same fiscal return.

That said, the SEM team does highly support dual enrollment, but we believe growth in this area will steadily continue without a lot of promotion. We are obligated to the state of Montana and the BOR to do our best with dual enrollment and we will continue to do so.

Financial Aid

Close to 70% of our students receive some type of financial or college aid. The financial aid department does an outstanding job in helping make the college experience affordable to students, however we can continue to improve this by offering more scholarship aid which can be secured through the development office. Other areas of improvement for the financial aid office include continued efforts to promote financial literacy to students to ensure they are not borrowing more than they can afford.

Academic Success Center

The newly renamed Academic Success Center has been a great resource for students requiring extra assistance in their learning. The ASC has continued to grow and a current concern for them is space as it is becoming quite crowded in the center. Another concern is cost for tutors as there is no current funding mechanism that lends itself to a self-sustainable model.

The work done in the success center is very valuable to our students and lends itself directly to helping students succeed in their coursework which in turn helps our retention and completion efforts despite funding concerns and overcrowding.

Library & eLearning

The library and eLearning department offers a great service for students in both supporting students taking an online course as well as assisting them with finding source materials for their coursework. The eLearning area continues to grow in its support of online offerings as well as the number of visitors to our library. Online offerings of courses; however, have been fairly stagnant and have not grown to their full potential. This may be an area to expand growth in enrollments at the college.

Areas that the library and eLearning area would like to focus on include better marketing for online programs and courses as well as continuing to promote the services that they offer to students.

Marketing

When the SEM team met with marketing, the primary needs that were identified included an environmental scan and completion of the strategic master plan. The marketing team focused on current college initiatives such as targeted marketing and retention of students.

The SEM team feels that marketing is a very important factor for our enrollment success at the college and that there are several areas of opportunity that can be done fairly easily such as showing the direct cost savings of a two year school, promoting transfer to a four year degree, and also more opportunities in showing what we offer to the community rather than a pure branding campaign.

Other Student Services

This area primarily focused on the office of the Chief Student Affairs Officer and services supported by that office such as the student activities coordinator, student government, and other services for students. We do a good job of filling needs for our students and one success that we are excited to see results for is the hire of a student activities coordinator. The SEM team is very hopeful that this will get students more engaged in activities on campus and help build a sense of community among students on campus. The student government office is also a key player in student involvement on campus. Another need that also was shared with the SEM team is the desire to have a behavioral assessment team in place on our campus.

Performance Based Funding

With the new funding model approved by the Board of Regents regarding performance based funding, the SEM team invited Chris Fastnow, Director of Planning and Analysis from Montana State University, to come to campus and do a presentation to the SEM team, Executive Team, and also Joint Directors on the new model and how funds were allocated using the new model as well as answer any questions regarding the new funding model.

Testing Center

From Fall of 2011 to Fall of 2013 the number of exams proctored by the testing center has grown from 735 to 1942. This represents a 160% increase in the number of exams administered per semester and will likely continue to climb. This makes space for testing a valuable asset and, with disability services getting more requirements for distraction free areas for testing, it makes this task even more challenging.

Another challenge the testing center has is with noise from adjoining or nearby classrooms. Some noise in other classrooms is natural during learning, but we should be considerate to the students taking vital exams that are required to be proctored. Looking at better noise reduction in this area could help quite a bit.

Veteran's Success Center

The Veteran's Success Center was established to provide our veterans with a resource area on campus to help them find resources, network, and have an area to go when needed. This has been a great success so far although we do not have enough data yet to really analyze its impact overall.

One concern for the center at the time of the SEM team meeting was appeal of the room which has been addressed as well as a low usage rate which can be overcome with better advertising of services to our students.

SEM Program Communication Team

As a result of SEM, a small side committee was formed when we realized we needed a task force for communicating program changes to students. This includes standing members in key areas such as the registrar, marketing, admissions, advising center, CSO and CAO. Other members are rotated into the group when needed such as division directors and program directors. The goal of the team is to get information together in a timely manner and then get information out to students so that they are better informed when the college makes changes to programs.

The SEM team feels that this strategy is sound, however; this team needs to have some way of enforcing deadlines or to hold others responsible. There seems to be little or no empowerment in this team.

Program and Division directors need to ensure proper communication is done to their students, prospects, and applicants and it should be their responsibility and not rely solely on other support areas to do this work for them.

Looking at the SEM program communication team, ET or a representative should have the power to ensure that this process is running smoothly and efficiently. If we really care about communicating with our students then better guidelines and practices should be developed and enforced.

Summer Planning Workgroup

Although not directly related to the SEM team, efforts in retention in other areas were also reviewed during this past year. This workgroup first met on October 8, 2013, to evaluate improving the summer term. The workgroup recommended working with the SEM team on the “Future Recommendations” to coordinate efforts and move the college in the same direction rather than work towards opposing ends.

Priorities 10/2014

- Marketing external non-degree populations and have that campaign ready to go end of Jan/early Feb
- Focus on nontraditional students – not high school students at this time.
- Continuing student could have their academic plans reviewed for the possibility of spreading their coursework over the summer term and exploring Fin Aid eligibility.
- All coursework needs to fit between the official start and end dates of the summer term.

SEM Recommendations:

Disability Services

The SEM team recognizes that the disability services area is probably the one student service support area in the most need of staffing. We feel that hiring another individual to assist with the technology, testing, and signing would greatly enhance the efficiencies and production of this division.

Marketing/Communication

The SEM team has heard from all of the areas summarized above and throughout each of these areas the key finding was that marketing was needed in each and every area. The SEM team feels that marketing can better serve us by working efficiently in the following areas:

- Identity: Establishing the GFC MSU brand and identity and moving us away from Vo-Tech and College of Technology references.
- Programs Available: Marketing of the college to include not only brand identity but also promoting all of the different offerings that the college has available. Often times we do a knee jerk reaction to low enrollment programs but often times overlook other programs. The SEM team feels that if the community knew about all of our offerings, including transfer, that we may see a rise in enrollments.
- Services for students: Often time we do not do a good job of promoting all of our services that help students excel in their academics. We feel that better communication and marketing can greatly enhance the use of these services and thus should help retention and completion.
- Communication of changes in classes/programs: Another area that we do not communicate well in is timely information in program changes and class cancellations. Although this is still done as a last minute effort due to enrollment, we can still communicate this better with our students so that they are not fully discouraged when a class is no longer offered or available.
- Website: Our website needs a drastic overhaul. Although efforts are underway to do a full website rebuild, we must keep in mind that it is a way that many students get information from us and that will definitely go into re-build decisions.
- eLearning Opportunities: We can do a better job in marketing online programs and courses to the community. This includes support for online programs as many people may be hesitant to take an online program if their computer skills are not very strong.
- Affordability: Promote two year costs vs four year costs and include transfer.

Targeted growth of programs

The SEM team feels that we can do a better job in promoting our new, modified and changed programs through some targeted marketing. This also includes increasing online course offerings.

Programs such as welding and EMT may not require the degree in the workforce, but communicating the skills earned in the program may be valuable in these cases. Also showing the value of programs such as SET and welding to different markets such as agriculture may be beneficial as well. Growing participation numbers in these areas is also a key component to continued success. We should also look at other potential barriers of these programs such as high program fees.

Retention Efforts – Analysis of non-continuing students

The SEM team feels that an area that we can continue to improve in is our retention rate of continuing students. Data analysis of students who did not continue as well as a survey similar to the summer survey may provide valuable insights as to why students are not continuing with us. This data could then be used to analyze our current practices and see if we can adjust our model to better serve students.

Better transparency and communication on campus

The SEM team feels that the term “Everyone is a recruiter” is a very powerful and accurate statement. The college as a whole should do a better job at communicating information to both faculty and staff on a variety of issues. This includes a monthly or bi-monthly meeting for an update on the BOR meetings, open campus meetings for divisions to share what they are currently working on, and also an official communication plan to the campus so everyone knows what communication methods will be used to convey information. Many times we say it is email, but people do not read the email. Then we put it on a website, but people did not know it was there. Or we have data in the IR site, but people do not know where to find it once it is there. There are many ways we try to communicate, but consistency will be the best way to do so. By communicating clearly and transparently (and not over communicating by these methods) we feel that the campus will be much better informed to both answer student questions as well as serve them better.

Analyze the discrepancy between male and female populations

In looking at our male to female ratio of students at Great Falls College MSU we can see that historically there has been a very large female to male student ratio. The SEM team thinks that this area may be worth investigation as the male student population may be a growth area potential. This analysis would include program analysis of the same ratios, as well as peer institution analysis of similar program comparison as well as comparisons of programs not currently offered at GFC MSU.

Modify Graduation Fee for Students

Currently students pay a graduation fee once they are eligible to graduate. Many students feel that they worked hard for the degree but they now must pay for the diploma. Then, if a student has truly worked hard and qualifies for a second diploma, they must pay an additional charge. One way to change this would be to create a mandatory graduation fee that would be charged per semester to a student. Once a student completes the requirements for a diploma or certificate, there is no other charge as they have paid it while they attended school. If a student takes longer to complete school then they pay a bit more in the long run. This also serves as a small incentive to complete faster. Also those students taking a bit longer to complete but earn multiple degrees would not need to pay for the additional degree. We think this will actually lead to more completions and more multiple degree recipients, which will positively influence our performance based funding metrics. Students are still paying a graduation fee, but it is masked by a semester to semester fee. Because this is also a fee, financial aid can be used to cover the costs.

Promise Scholarship

During the interview process of the candidates for the position of Director of Development for the college, the topic for the campus presentation was that of a promise scholarship. The SEM team feels that this is also a great way to entice high school students to begin their academics at a two year school and then transfer. By offering this type of financial support to students, we feel that our enrollments and retention and completion rates will rise. This is definitely an idea to continue to investigate and hopefully make a reality.

Periodic Brainstorming Sessions

At least once per semester, the SEM team feels like a campus brainstorming session would be a great benefit. The SEM team is a small team, but there are some great ideas out in our campus and if we can promote the campus to be involved in brainstorming these “out of the box” ideas, we think we can gain some really great momentum on new ideas.

Program Value Review

One of the most frustrating things to see is a student who has worked hard for a degree and not been able to get a job in their field. As a college we really need to look at the value of our programs and ensure that we are serving the students the best that we can. This will call for some serious data analysis and some tough conversations but we will not succeed in recruiting for or keeping students in programs for which there are not many jobs available.

Sustainability Checks

Another aspect that we believe should be looked at is not getting too far ahead of ourselves too quickly. Fast expansion is not always the best approach when looking at sustainability. For example, when we accept grants, we do not always do a lot of planning on sustaining programs, personnel, or equipment after the grant ends. Other factors include the “restaurant mentality” which is to say that if the menu is too large you will ultimately fail because you cannot sustain small enrollments in many programs. There may be some hard things to look at but good planning of programs, resources, and enrollments is going to be a key in our future planning.

Initiative Alignment

One of the topics that the SEM team heard from the presenting groups was the concept of “Initiative Fatigue.” The SEM team feels that this is not necessarily a trend to not want to implement or try new initiatives, but that we must do a better job of showing how initiatives work together in the bigger picture and links back to work that is done in our day-to-day operations. Just as we try to align our initiatives to our mission and vision we must also do a better job in showing how these initiatives work together. One final consideration is to also create a master workload calendar that identifies when key areas of the college are extremely busy with workload issues such as registration. These are not ideal times to implement new and time-consuming projects.

Next Steps

From these recommendations, the SEM team identifies the need to both prioritize and establish some timelines for how these recommendations should be implemented as well as some initial ideas on target enrollments.

The marketing and communication recommendation has several different parts within it, but SEM can identify some areas that need immediate attention such as the completion of the website redesign, advertising for continuing student registration to help retention from fall to spring semester, and finally working on a comprehensive marketing plan for all of the other areas mentioned.

The loss of continuing students is also a large concern of SEM and we feel that beginning on the non-continuing student survey would be a good place to gain an understanding of the reasons why students are not continuing. Although this may be difficult to attain data for, we still feel that these results, as well as analyzing the drop reasons required by advisors would gain some insight to see if we can improve services or see where student barriers may exist.

Targeted marketing for new, modified, and changed programs may also help our enrollment numbers by trying to ensure that these programs have enough students in them. It may be difficult to fully enroll these programs, but awareness will help in these efforts.

With the combination of marketing, communication, and insight into why students are choosing to not continue, we feel that these efforts alone could raise our enrollment back up to our original FTE target and act as a stop loss to our current 3.8% deficit.

As we move into spring semester we will also take a closer look into the male student population and try to formulate some ideas on why our student ratio is so heavy on the female side. This could correlate to non-continuing students, but until we have the data we will not make any assumptions. We can also take a look at programs in a holistic three year view as well. Currently we do this for program review but do not do it for all programs each year. It is the SEM team's recommendation that we do this review annually to get a longer trend pattern for each program.

SEM also recommends that we look into the graduation fees for students as we feel this may be a barrier for dual degree seeking students. The use of a mandatory fee would also be covered by student financial aid and thus would be even less of a burden on students at the time of graduation.

Longer term goals include the development of a campus communication plan, a robust marketing strategy, and also development of scholarship opportunities such as a *promise scholarship*.

SEM will recommend to CPBAC a hire in the disability services area. This appears to have the heaviest current need in the student or academic support areas.

The SEM team also feels that the SEM Program Communication team needs to be empowered with the authority to assist both changed program communications as well as potentially assist with the process of cancelling classes late. This will ensure proper communication to students regarding both program and class changes in a consistent manner.

In looking at our biggest populations in which we can grow enrollment, the SEM team feels that

retention and completion are two appropriate areas to focus resources on. For new student registrations, we feel that we really need to provide the value of our programs to the community in order to increase those numbers. This will be a longer process, but in the end we feel it will affect our applicant numbers.

The SEM team also feels that we must continue to monitor resources for the campus end ensure sustainability, value, and excellence for every program that we offer to our students. We must be cognizant and respectful of our faculty and staff duties and time during these efforts to avoid overload and burnout. To do this we must be mindful of our actions and directly show the value of the initiatives that we implement. This will be a long effort made by the entire campus, but in the long run the results of these efforts will provide the best learning opportunities for our students.

SEM Resource Reference Guide

The following reference list provides a variety of SEM-related readings that may be helpful in your campus SEM planning. Notes:

- **AACRAO Books:** Those in bold are AACRAO books and generally available via the AACRAO website or AACRAO Bookstore at AACRAO-related conferences.
- **SEM Source:** SEM Source is an online journal published by AACRAO to provide members information on strategic enrollment management current issues. SEM Source is available at: www2.aacrao.org/sem/
- **College & University:** C & U is AACRAO's quarterly journal distributed to all members. Past issues are on AACRAO's website: Click on "Latest Publications" and on "College & University".

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