A Brevard Community College White Paper

Success Coaches

A Faculty and Staff Mentoring Support System

Author:
Melissa Alvarez Mangual, M.A.
Learning Lab Coordinator
Palm Bay Campus

August 20, 2012

Success Coaches: A Faculty and Staff Mentoring Support System

A cadre of faculty and staff who facilitate group advising sessions and individual coaching of BCC students to support student success.

Problem Statement

The Brevard Community College (BCC) spring 2011 student survey findings overwhelmingly reference frustration and dissatisfaction with advising at BCC. More opportunities to interact with faculty and accurate advising across the college are also noted areas for improvement. BCC student responses to the spring 2011 survey align with the 2012 results of the *Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)*. When students were asked about their use of academic advising/planning services 73% say their college puts quite a bit or very much emphasis on providing the support they need to help them succeed, yet when asked about their use of said services, 59% use academic advising services sometimes or often, and 34% rarely or never use them. In the same CCSSE survey faculty-student interaction is also assessed. While the majority of students have communicated with instructors through e-mail and received prompt feedback from instructors on their performance, most do not report having meaningful communications with instructors outside of the classroom (CCSSE, 2012). 69% of CCSSE respondents have *never* worked with instructors on activities other than coursework.

Excerpts from the BCC spring 2011 student survey responses to the question, "What should BCC do to help you be more successful as a student?" paint a clear picture of the need to improve advising services and the faculty-student interaction:

> *"First I would have to say that the student advisors should be more thorough when explaining each program to students and realize that a good percentage of us students are in our 30's and 40's and not just starting out in college and in life, therefore we should be advised with completeness and feel as though we have a chance. I cannot tell you how many students I have spoken to (myself included) who have been incorrectly advised and have not been able to apply for a program because of prerequisites that we were not told about or a points system that was not explained to us in detail. It can be quite disappointing."*
>
> *"I realize they have a lot of work and probably get a lot of questions that seem stupid or simple, but it would help a great deal if, when a person presents himself/herself, waits, sometimes for quite a while, that administrative person would give all the information a person ever needed to know about their question. I have many times gone through this process and been given the brief answer to my question and not the entire story or instruction, only to find out there was something else I was supposed to do that I wasn't informed of the first time. Especially if it is a busy time is when personnel need to take their time with each customer and not give them the short version so that they have to come back, OR, Heaven forbid, try to call."*

> *"There should be more advising hours for teachers"*
>
> *"More helpful teachers. Accommodating guidance counselors."*
>
> *"Hire teachers that are willing to help students."*
>
> *"Have teachers try to help those that know that need more help."*
>
> *"Better communication between the departments and the advisors."*
>
> *"Be consistent at answering questions. When I go to Student Services I hear one thing and when I go somewhere else they tell me something different. How am I to know which is correct?"*
>
> *"I have return to school after twenty plus years. It [is] possible to have an Advisor or someone in the appropriate field hold a symposium or a pep talk for lack of a better word, on going forward in the career one choses or possible changing direction before one becomes overwhelmed or discouraged."*
>
> *"Have a team of people/students who can mentor, or help with questions that you have. Basically like an advisor, but one that is available without an appointment."*

Research

Advising at BCC occurs at four different campuses, in the TRiO program, and informally through academic support units and faculty. With so many areas interacting with students, it is critical the messages are aligned. Currently there is no mechanism for ensuring this, beyond expecting staff to know where to look for information on the newly designed and more accessible website. The solution is not simply to refer frustrated and anxious students to an overwhelmed advising staff in Student Services. The College must institute both ongoing professional development for key personnel to stay abreast of changes in the curricula, processes, and policies, and a method of communicating such things in manageable chunks of information via easily accessible tools and resources. Examples include the website, an advising group on Angel, and self-paced learning modules (Barnett, 2011; Coles 2011; McArthur, 2005).

Once the learning and development of key personnel across the College and campuses occurs, the partnerships and collaboration necessary for a successful campus wide advising effort can flourish. Current research points to mentoring as a means of promoting student success (Barnett; 2011; Chang, 2005; Coles, 2011; Crisp, 2010; Crisp and Cruz, 2009; McArthur, 2005). Crisp (2010) emphasizes mentoring, as college students experience it, may not be limited to a single relationship between student and faculty (p.40). In Kram & Isabella (1985) and Zalaquette & Lopez's (2006) empirical

studies, they found the core functions of mentoring are often provided by a combination of persons in an individual's life (as cited in Crisp, 2010, p. 40). This concept of mentoring the college student is aligned with and supports the recommendation to establish a cadre of faculty and staff who facilitate group advising sessions and individual coaching of BCC students to support student success.

In Crisp's 2010 study of the impact of mentoring on the success of community college students, mentoring was validated as an integral part of the theoretical framework on student persistence. She found mentoring support, regardless of who provided it, to have a direct positive impact on (1) students' ability to integrate both academically and socially at their institution, (2) their commitment to the institution, (3) personal commitment to earning a college degree; and it indirectly influenced the students' intentions to persist in college, as mediated through goal commitment (Crisp, 2010, p. 52).

Mentoring programs on college campuses tend to be designed as peer-to-peer and/or faculty-student. Research conducted by Campbell and Campbell in 1997, deemed one of the most methodologically rigorous quantitative mentoring studies to date, shows that after one year of mentoring by faculty, students with mentors have higher GPAs and are more likely to stay in college compared to academically similar students who do not have mentors (Coles, 2011; Crisp and Cruz, 2009; McArthur, 2005). Most faculty student mentoring and advising programs on college campuses across the U.S.A. are loosely structured with minimal administrative responsibilities placed on the faculty or student. They tend to be designed to last one year and take place during the first-year of study for the student. Faculty are tasked with making themselves available to their assigned protégé to answer questions about the college, help them identify with and become more engaged with the College and its campus culture, inspire students through role modeling, and support them during their transition to college life (Coles, 2011). The ultimate goal of most faculty-student mentoring programs is retention and persistence through to the second year of studies (Coles, 2011).

Academic advisement and the role faculty plays in the delivery is the most critical service available for community college students according to King's (1993) research. Barnett's (2011) study on community college students' validation and persistence confirmed Rendon's work in 1994 and 2002, emphasizing the validation by faculty and others in the college community as a central influence on student persistence and success. Inadequate academic advising was found to be the strongest negative factor in student retention, while a caring attitude of faculty and staff and high quality advising is the strongest positive factor (King, 1993; McArthur, 2005). The BCC student responses to the survey question "What should BCC do to help you be more successful as a student?" offer evidence that Rendon's findings are relevant to BCC.

Exemplary Programs

Exemplary faculty-student mentoring programs move beyond matching faculty and students, to integrating the student into the college experience, complementing academic advising, and supporting the pair through their match.

The Pennsylvania State University's (2012) FastStart program supports underrepresented students or any student who wants to get his or her college career off to a fast start through a faculty/staff/alumni triad of mentoring support. The FastStart program provides the student with a faculty/staff mentor during the first-year, networking and learning opportunities, and during the second year the student is matched with an alumni mentor. On campus mentors are charged with helping make the university "manageable," provide advice, and refer the student to available services.

California State University, Sacramento's (2012) Faculty Student Mentor Program is an educational equity program for low-income and/or first generation college students. The program is centered on teams of faculty and peer mentors from the respective Colleges who assist the students with integrating into campus life and developing as scholars in their academic major. Teams organize study sessions, provide advice and referrals to the appropriate campus resource, and plan activities. Faculty are responsible for serving as role models, advocates, liaisons to other departments, meeting with the student on a regular basis, helping the student establish short and long-term goals and plans for achieving those goals, coordinating events, and the hiring, supervision, training and evaluation of Peer Mentors and/or Tutors.

The Borough of Manhattan Community College (2012) utilized a Title V grant from the U.S. Department of Education to improve Liberal Arts advising by establishing faculty advisors. Faculty participate on a voluntary basis, are provided advisement training, and a $2,000 stipend upon completion of the training. Faculty are assigned a cohort to advise and track through to graduation. DegreeWorks, a student database is used to track student progress and Blackboard, is used as a mechanism for faculty advisors to communicate with one another. Faculty advisors also work collaboratively with Educational Planners and Peer Advisors, particularly during the summer and when trying to reach students in jeopardy.

The above three examples demonstrate three distinct approaches to mentoring and advising students, of which BCC can pull from in developing its own faculty/staff and student mentoring program. Although some examples come from institutions that are not community colleges, given BCC's upcoming transition to a four-year institution, there is merit in considering these examples and their relevance. Other approaches warrant mention in that elements of their program may resonate with the BCC community. Valencia College's (2012) LIFEMAP program cross-trains staff so that any of them could provide in-depth services to the student who requests or demonstrates needing assistance. Texas A & M University – Commerce (2012) has a public page on their website with easily accessible resources for success on their campus, minimizing

the need to log into a secure system or search for basic essential information in various locations.

Praxis Solution & Implementation

Establish a cadre of faculty and staff who facilitate group advising sessions and individual coaching of BCC students to support student success.

High Level Program Structure

ROLE OF SUCCESS COACHES

Success Coaches will function primarily as mentors to students who demonstrate the greatest need for guidance based on their placement test scores, academic progress and/or enrollment in courses among the top 10 for DWIF, as well as, those who express interest in being matched with a Success Coach. Students will be identified and matched with a faculty or staff Success Coach over the summer and at the start of the Fall semester. The student will be informed of their match and requirements for completion of the Academic Success Initiative as part of admission and/or continued enrollment. Success Coaches will be charged with calling and emailing their protégés to introduce themselves, express interest in getting to know them and their goals better, and to support their academic success.

The first meeting will be scheduled as a group advising conversation. The Success Coach will set a day and time, based on the availability of the protégés for a 1 hour meeting during the initial call or via email communication. The first group advising meeting will give the students the opportunity to learn more about the advisor and one-another, creating an embedded support system amongst peers. Success Coaches will be given resources to help make their group advising meeting interactive and helpful to the students. Monthly group advising meetings will be scheduled to allow students the opportunity to come together with the guidance of their Success Coach, participate in a brief and timely interactive learning activity, and address any issues or concerns that they may be having. The Success Coach will make themselves accessible to their protégés via email, phone, or in person to have a one-on-one conversation. The program requirement will call for at least two individual face-to-face meetings with each protégé each semester.

The Success Coaches will have a secondary function of serving as a buffer and helping to graciously redirect students to the appropriate areas and resources on campus. The steering committee or task force designated to establish this academic success initiative will be charged with identifying areas on campus that tend to have high traffic and students congregating to socialize and/or study. Staff that interact most with students in those areas should be recruited to serve as Success Coaches. Faculty in each department who are already serving students in this capacity and acknowledge their role as a resource should also be recruited to serve as Success Coaches. If there are not any

faculty in a particular department already serving informally as Success Coaches, junior faculty on the tenure track should be encouraged to serve as Success Coaches. Faculty and staff will require training in four areas, (1) BCC Academic Choices: Options and Resources, (2) Advising Foundations, (3) Communication: Cross Generational and Cross Cultural, and (4) Problem Solving Strategies. Success Coaches will need to be equipped with a solid foundation of basic advising skills so that they can support students at the initial point of contact, whether they have seen an academic advisor or not. If students have not met with an academic advisor before their Success Coach, the Success Coach can direct them to Academic Advising after having eased some of the student's initial concerns and given recommendations for getting off to a good start.

Nora and Crisp's (2007) four major domains, validated through research using a community college population would be an excellent way to structure the areas of support that Success Coaches focus on. The four major domains are (1) psychological and emotional support, (2) support for setting goals and choosing a career path, (3) academic subject knowledge support aimed at advancing a student's knowledge relevant to their chosen field, and (4) specification of a role model (Crisp and Cruz, 2009, p. 538). Training in the four domains should be embedded in the first professional development delivery. Success Coaches would be expected to be familiar with the four major domains and how to support students, but not experts in each domain. Since the role of a Success Coach is that of mentor and advisor, the expectation is that the Success Coach would know his/her limitations and refer students to the appropriate resources and people to assist them.

LEARNING EVENTS FOR STUDENTS

Throughout the academic year learning events should be organized to complement and support the Success Coach and student matches. Participation should not be mandatory, rather it should be encouraged. Learning events that are interactive, with opportunities to do/practice what is being taught during the learning event will have the most value add to the student, and encourage continued attendance to learning events. An end of the academic year reception/mixer should be organized where everyone, Success Coaches and matched students, are acknowledged for their work together and contribution to BCC excelling in supporting academic success.

INTEGRATING ALUMNI

At the start of the second year of enrollment at BCC, participating students will be matched with a BCC alumnus who is working in the industry of interest for the student and/or with a similar socio-cultural background. The Alumni Mentors will be charged with being available to guide the student in career choice, allow the student to shadow him/her in the workplace, share their academic and career experiences that were most valuable to them, etc. This mentor protégé relationship will be loosely structured to allow the student the opportunity to exercise skills gained from the first year of study, mentorship under faculty/staff, and group advising, as well as, minimize the demands of

meeting times for the busy alumnus. The BCC alumnus will be requested to complete a self-paced online mentor orientation. Upon completion of the orientation the alumnus will be eligible for match with a protégé. Once the match is made the alumnus will receive a swag item in the mail as a thank you for their dedication to the success of BCC students. An end of the year event will conclude the Academic Success Initiative inviting Success Coaches, Alumni Mentors, and student participants. Student participants who demonstrated commitment to their academic success through their engagement with their success coaches, alumni mentors, and on campus will receive a congratulatory gift. Success Coaches and Alumni Mentors will be recognized for their invaluable contribution to the success of BCC's students and the college as a whole.

INCENTIVES AND REWARDS

Faculty and Staff who take on the role of Success Coaches, in addition to their regular job responsibilities will need incentives and rewards. The work of mentoring and advising is time consuming, requires ongoing professional development, and engagement with students that requires patience, persistence, empathy, and resourcefulness. In order to ensure Success Coaches feel valued and are not overworked, BCC will need to allow release time from their primary responsibilities and should consider the following:

- Stipend
- Additional Leave Time
- Award/Recognition of Service Plaque
- For Faculty only: Inclusion in the Tenure and Promotion process

SUCCESS COACH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Success Coaches will require an orientation and initial training. The four primary areas of professional development, as previously mentioned are noted below.

- BCC Academic Choices: Options and Resources
    - BCC degree and certificate programs
    - Academic and Student Services
    - Financial Aid basic advising information
    - Career Center services and resources
    - Student Involvement Options by campus
- Advising Foundations
    - What it Involves and the Relationship between Advising, Persistence & Teaching
    - Types of Conversations
        - *Informational:* policies, procedures, graduation requirements, important dates & deadlines, and programs of study
        - *About the student:* core values, aptitudes, interests, strengths, areas for improvement, involvement in extracurriculars

- *About the future:* what they want their future to be, steps they need to take to make it a reality, how they're changing as a result of their education
- Critical Thinking
- Goal Setting and Life Planning/Mapping
- Decision-making
- Communication
  - Cross-generational
  - Cross-cultural
- Problem-solving Strategies
  - In academia
  - In the personal realm

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

The Academic Success Initiative will require a dedicated staff position to manage and coordinate. This initiative will be college-wide at each of the four campuses. Even in its piloting, were it to occur at one campus, would need a dedicated staff member to manage it. The responsibilities that such a position would involve are listed below.

Director of Academic Success Initiatives (F/T and at each campus)

- Coordinate Mentoring Program
  - Matching Process for the student to faculty or staff member Success Coach
  - Matching Process for group advising
  - Monitor match progress, address and resolve issues as they arise
  - Assess matches and coordinate match evaluations
- Design, develop and facilitate Mentor Training and Development
- Design, develop and facilitate Student Success Clinics
- Coordinate Mentor and Protégé networking events
- Establish an alumni network of mentors by industry and socio-cultural background
- Establish and sustain partnerships with department chairs, campus directors/coordinators, and SGA
- Maintain web resources for Mentors and up-to-date photos/biographies of faculty/staff mentors
- Maintain data on matches, academic progress and success, unsuccessful matches and their cause for failure, training, success clinics, retention, persistence, and graduation rates

Summary

BCC students have entrusted the College to guide and prepare them well for the next steps in their academic and professional careers. They have shared their experiences and opinions candidly in the 2011 student survey, with the hopes that the institution will develop new,

effective, and efficient processes to support their academic success. Advising and meaningful interactions with faculty were among those of their highest priorities. Research consistently shows the powerful impact mentoring relationships, particularly those with faculty have on the academic success, retention, persistence, and completion of community college students (Barnett; 2011; Chang, 2005; Coles, 2011; Crisp and Cruz, 2009; McArthur, 2005). By implementing the Success Coach concept of faculty and staff as a cadre who facilitates the academic success of students through group and individual advising/coaching, BCC will reach the students who are slipping through the cracks and those who yearn for the support.

References

Barnette, E.A. (2011). Validation experiences and persistence among community college students. *The Review of Higher Education, 34*,(2), 193-230.

Borough of Manhattan Community College (2012). Title V advisement model. Retrieved from http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/titlev/model.php

Center for Community College Student Engagement (2012). Community college survey of student engagement. Retrieved from http://www.ccsse.org/survey/bench_support.cfm

Chang, J.C. (2005). Faculty-Student Interaction at the Community College: A Focus on Students of Color. *Research in Higher Education*, *46*,(7), 769-802.

Drake, J. (2007). Components of a successful faculty advising program: Institutional commitment, professional development, incentives and recognition. *NACADA: National Academic Advising Association,* 1-16.

Crisp, G. (2010). The impact of mentoring on the success of community college students. *The Review of Higher Education*, *34*,(1), 39-60.

Crisp, G. & Cruz, I. (2009). Mentoring college students: A critical review of the literature between 1990-2007. *Research in Higher Education, 50,* 525-545.

Coles, A. (2011). The role of mentoring in college access and success. *Institute for Higher Education Policy*, Spring 2011, 1-11.

Farrell, E.F. (2007). Some colleges provide success coaches for students. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *53*(46). A25. ERIC EBSCO. Tues. 30 July 2012.

Howard, J. & Grosset, J. (1992). Student responses to a community college faculty mentor program. *Community College Review*, *20*,(1), 48-53.

Kennedy, B. (2011). Bridging the gap between admission and graduation: A QEP plan for student services. Retrieved from http://www.easternflorida.edu/faculty-staff/institutional-effectiveness/qualityenhancement-plan/documents/whitepapers/studentservices.pdf

The Pennsylvania State University (2012). FastStart: Information for faculty/staff. Retrieved from http://www.alumni.psu.edu/network-mentor/faststart/information-for-faculty-staff

The Pennsylvania State University (2012). FastStart: Information for students. Retrieved from http://www.alumni.psu.edu/network-mentor/faststart/information-for-students

McArthur, R.C. (2005). Faculty-Based Advising: An important factor in community college retention. *Community College Review*, *32*,(4), 1-18.

Shugart, S. & Romano, J. (2006). LIFEMAP: A learning-centered system for student success. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *30*,141-143

Texas A & M University Commerce (2012). Success Coach Recommended Resources and Fun Stuff. Retrieved from http://web.tamu-commerce.edu/academics/universityCollege/successCoaches/recommendedSitesAndResources.aspx

Reynolds, M. M. (2012). An Advisor's Half Dozen: Principles for Incorporating Learning
        Theory into our Advising Practices. Retrieved
        from http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/learning.htm
Torregrosa, M.A. (2012). Faculty Student Mentor Program. Retrieved from
        http://www.csus.edu/fsmp/
Williams, J. A. (2011). Advising's Role in Tenure. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
        Retrived from http://chronicle.com/blogs/onhiring/advisings-role-in-tenure/29851