

ACTION PLAN FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

The Communication Department of Buffalo State College

(Adopted April 2005)

The Communication Department of Buffalo State College is committed to promoting student-focused and individualized assistance to both potential and current students. Specifically, the department seeks to assertively manage its program of student academic assistance through a formal process of recruitment, advisement and retention, rather than merely reacting to an ebb and flow of student enrollment.

To this purpose, we identify five goals for the department:

Goal 1 – Student Recruitment

Strategy 1 – Recruiting Plan

- Priority Action Step – Recruiting Preferences
- Priority Action Step – Website
- Priority Action Step – Invitation
- Action Step – Recruiting Materials
- Action step – Intermediaries
- Action Step – Learning Community

Goal 2 – Student Advisement

Strategy 2.1 – Adviser Training

- Priority Action Step – In-Service Training
- Action Step – New Faculty Training

Strategy 2.2 – New Student

- Priority Action Step – Orientation
- Action Step – Early Warning
- Action Step – Flow Chart

Strategy 2.3 – Transfer Students

- Priority Action Step – Articulation Agreements
- Action Step – Pre-Transfer Advisement

Goal 3 – Student Achievement

Strategy 2.1 – Student Research

- Action Step – Class and Individual Activity
- Action Step – Support and Assistance
- Action Step – Research Showcase
- Action Step – Honor Society

Strategy 3.2 – Student Creative Activity

- Action Step – Class and Individual Activity

Strategy 3.2 – Student Professional Activity

- Action Step – Student Organizations

Strategy 3.4 – Scholarships

- Priority Action Step – Website
- Action Step – E-Mail
- Action Step – Recognition of Scholarship Recipients
- Action Step – New Scholarships

Goal 4 – Student Retention

Strategy 4.1 – Research

- Priority Action Step – Exit Survey
- Action Step – Statistics
- Action Step – Literature Review

Strategy 4.2 – Retention

- Action Step – Early Intervention
- Action Step – E-Mail Invitation
- Action Step – Peer Mentors

Strategy 4.3 – Student-Centered Focus

- Action Step – Staff Training

Goal 5 – Assessment of Action Plan

Strategy 5.1 – Annual Report

- Action Step – Faculty Report
- Action Step – Committee Report
- Action Step – Chair's Report

Strategy 5.2 – Student Evaluation

- Action Step – Student Satisfaction Survey

Definitions and Assumptions

- The Communication Department has an undergraduate population with the following profile: 509 students; 24% students from under-represented ethnic and racial backgrounds (higher than the general Buffalo State profile); 47-53 male-female ratio (compared to 40:60 college-wide); acceptance rate of 55% for freshmen, 57% for transfer students (Fall 2004). Given the realities of Buffalo State College and Western New York, we make the prudential judgment that this is a positive profile of a diverse student population.
- General research into student retention shows that retention rates are highest when students identify with their departments. The two most significant success factors are intensive advisement, particularly for new students, and positive interaction with academic advisers and other college personnel. Course availability also is a factor in retention. All of these are issues that can be positively influenced by the department.
- Research indicates that the first six weeks at a university are the most critical.
- Several areas critical to retention are beyond the department's control, including personal and financial issues for students, general academic satisfaction, and the overall college environment.
- Retention issues are different for various groups of students, varying particularly as related to academic achievement and whether the students are members of under-represented populations.

Past Achievements and Current Status

- Current college-wide recruiting programs have resulted in satisfactory numbers of Communication students creating a diverse student population. Thus the department is satisfied with current efforts and has had no formal or aggressive recruiting program. However, the department is less than satisfied with the quality of some first-year and transfer students.
- The Communication Department has among its standing committees one focused on advisement and retention issues.
- The department assigns an academic adviser to every student who is or intends to become a major. At present, every full-time member of the faculty shares in the advisement load. The decision to continuing sharing advisement duties was reinforced in 2005 by a recommendation of the department Advisement and Retention Committee.
- The department encourages students to have frequent contact with their academic advisers, at least once each semester, for one-on-one advisement. As to mandatory advisement, current department protocol reflects college-wide policy on advisement times: at point of entry into the college, every semester for pre-major and probationary students, prior to a change in major, and during the semester prior to graduation.
- The encouragement for students to meet with advisers is reinforced by department application forms requiring adviser signatures prior to any change in major. Additionally, letters following a change of major direct the student to make frequent contact with the adviser.
- The department website currently lists contacts and provides links to online application forms for student scholarships and competitions.
- The Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication is encouraging the department to develop a program of recruitment and advisement/retention.

Enrollment Management Goal 1 – Student Recruitment

The Communication Department will recruit quality students into the department, both as first-year and transfer students.

Strategy 1.1 – Recruiting

The department will actively engage potential students to be recruited into the college and the major.

Priority Action Step – Recruiting Plan

The department will identify categories of preferred potential students based on characteristics such as academic achievement and extracurricular involvement with student media, and demographic factors such as race, ethnicity, and membership in an under-represented population. It also will identify a short list of high schools and community colleges to target for recruiting activities. The department also will establish measurable objectives for recruiting new students.

Priority Action Step – Website

The department will maintain a section of its website dedicated to the interests of potential students, both freshmen and transfers.

Priority Action Step – Invitation

The chair will send a letter to each departmental applicant who is accepted by the college, encouraging the applicant to make personal contact with a faculty member, attend open house, visit the website, contact a student, or otherwise become more familiar with the department.

Action Step – Recruiting Materials

The department will prepare recruiting materials to support the recruiting plan. These materials – print, CDs and DVD, and other formats as appropriate – will be made available through the department website and will be produced and distributed according to the recruiting plan.

Action Step – Intermediaries

The department will develop materials for high school guidance counselors, University College advisors working with undeclared students, admissions counselors, community college faculty and advisers, and others who may be in a position to influence potential students toward the department.

Action Step – Learning Community

The department will experiment with a special Learning Community for incoming Communication students, providing a package of core courses COM 100 and Com 205, along with ENG 101 and BUS 116 for the Fall semester, to be followed by a Learning Team of COM 210 and Com 215 in the Spring semester. If evaluation shows this to be effective, it will become a standard offering for the department.

Enrollment Management Goal 2 – Student Advisement

The Communication Department will provide quality academic advisement to help students make informed choices. The purpose of this goal is to assist students along the smoothest-possible path toward satisfactory completion of their degree.

Strategy 2.1 – Adviser Training

The department will train new and continuing faculty members to provide well-prepared student assistance both for curricular issues and general academic advising.

Priority Action Step – In-Service Training

At least once each academic year, the faculty will convene to discuss advisement issues, identify problems, and engage in in-service training. Arrangements will be made, as needed, for training on new college-wide advisement procedures and computer/internet applications.

Action Step – New Faculty Training

The department chair will assign advisement mentors to new faculty members. During the first semester, new faculty members will meet with mentors to learn advisement procedures and relevant curriculum provisions. They will observe advisement by the mentor and will begin to advise a limited number of students, still under the supervision of the mentor.

Strategy 2.2 – New Students

The department will help new students understand and meet degree requirements.

Priority Action Step – Orientation

The department will develop and implement a mandatory departmental orientation program for all entering students, both first-year and transfer. This program, which will meet several times each semester, will be aimed at helping students understand degree requirements and begin a smooth path toward satisfactory and timely completion of the degree. This orientation will comprise a preparation for their individual advisement experience as well.

Action Step – Early Warning

The department will monitor students receiving low grades, particularly in Communication courses. The department chair will encourage students receiving low grades to meet with their advisers.

Action Step – Flow Chart

The department will prepare and distribute to each student an easy-to-understand flow chart for each major. These charts will allow students to record progress toward their degrees. This information will be available to students as handouts at the department office and as downloadable files at the website.

Strategy 2.3 – Transfer Students

The department will assist potential transfer students to understand and prepare themselves to meet degree requirements.

Priority Action Step – Articulation Agreements

The department will communicate modifications in its curriculum and program requirements to community colleges and will formally and periodically update articulation agreements.

Action Step – Pre-Transfer Advisement

The department will attempt to communicate with potential transfer students while they are still at community colleges through its website and by providing materials for community college advisers.

Enrollment Management Goal 3 – Student Scholarship

The Communication Department will support and assist students who are making suitable progress toward completion of their degree. The purpose of this goal is to enhance the education of students.

Strategy 3.1 – Student Research

The department will encourage and promote students in doing research and submitting their work to academic and professional venues.

Action Step – Class and Individual Activity

Instructors will encourage capable students of undertaking research, either as class projects or as individual enrichment opportunities, and of submitting their research to appropriate conferences, competitions, publications and other venues.

Action Step – Support and Assistance

The department will assist students in undertaking and completing research projects, whether individual or as part of class activities. The department also will assist students in identifying campus and professional sources of financial assistance for conducting research and preparing and presenting their findings in academic and/or professional competitions, conferences, publications and other venues.

Action Step – Research Showcase

The department will create a venue for highlighting student scholarship, such as an online publication parallel to Bengal News Online, presenting student academic writing from various courses.

Action Step – Honor Society

Having established a departmental chapter of the Lambda Pi Eta of the National Communication Association, the department will induct charter members and promote both membership in and activity by the organization.

Strategy 3.2 – Student Creative Activity

The department will promote student achievement in communication-related creative activity.

Action Step – Class and Individual Activity

The department will encourage capable students of undertaking creative projects related to their majors, either as class projects or as individual enrichment opportunities, and of submitting their projects to appropriate publications, media and other venues.

Strategy 3.3 – Student Professional Activity

The department will promote student organizations and activities related to departmental majors.

Action Step – Student Organizations

The department will support the establishment and function of co-curricular organizations in advertising, broadcasting, journalism, public relations, and speech. It will provide advice, assistance and access to such organizations, as well as encouraging faculty participation as advisers.

Strategy 3.4 – Scholarships

The department will promote the availability of scholarships, awards and competitions for students in communication majors.

Priority Action Step – Website

Information about scholarships, awards and competitions will be posted at the department website. When possible, active links will be made available for online application forms.

Action Step – E-Mail

Information about local scholarships, awards and competitions for students will be sent via e-mail to students in relevant communication majors as the application deadline approaches.

Action Step – Recognition of Scholarship Recipients

Information about students who receive scholarships, awards and similar honors will be posted at the department website as a means not only to recognize the successful students but also to hold them up as role models for other students.

Action Step – New Scholarships

The department will raise funds to establish new scholarships, awards, and other forms of recognition and assistance to provide practical support for students in the department as they pursue their degree.

Enrollment Management Goal 4 – Student Retention

The Communication Department will support and assist students who are making less-than-satisfactory progress toward their degree, for the purpose of retaining them through a timely graduation.

Strategy 4.1 – Research

The department will research reasons that students leave the department, particularly those students who leave Buffalo State.

Priority Action Step – Exit Survey

The department will develop an exit survey for students leaving the department. Efforts will be made to identify students who fail to register for classes each semester and to contact students withdrawing from the college.

Action Step – Statistics

The department will research data on student retention to identify trends in student progress toward degrees. Once this data is available, the department will establish specific goals for retention, either to continue what is seen as a healthy trend, or to make changes toward an improved trend.

Action Step – Literature Review

The department will seek information specific to Buffalo State as well as general academic information on student retention.

Strategy 4.2 – Retention

The department will increase retention of students who have been accepted into Communication majors.

Action Step – Early Intervention

At the end of each semester, faculty will submit to the department chair names of students who receive less than a “C” grade in any Communication course. The chair will encourage each student toward higher academic achievement, to offer departmental assistance, and emphasize regulations about minimum grades and prerequisite courses. These names will be shared with advisers, who will be asked to discuss with the student reasons for the low achievement and to help the student develop a personal plan for higher achievement.

Action Step – E-Mail Invitation

Each semester prior to the advisement and retention period, the chair will send a mass e-mail to all students in the department, encouraging them toward successful completion of their degree and inviting them to discuss any difficulties that they may encounter that might interrupt progress toward their degree.

Action Step – Peer Mentors

The department will consider recruiting and training volunteer juniors and seniors to work with incoming new students, both freshmen and transfers.

Strategy 4.3 – Student-Centered Focus

The department will provide service to students at a level that goes beyond basic requirements and aims toward the highest level of service to students.

Action Step – Resources

The chair will arrange for the department support and professional staff as well as faculty to receive resources and support for delivering a high level of service to students as these relate to recruiting, advising, retention, scheduling, availability, and similar aspects of student services.

Enrollment Management Goal 5 – Assessment of Action Plan

The Communication Department will continually monitor and assess its progress on this action plan.

Strategy 5.1 – Annual Report

The department will formally report on progress toward implementation of this action plan.

Action Step – Faculty Report

Faculty members will submit information reporting their role in implementing the action plan as individual members of the faculty.

Action Step – Committee Report

The chair of the department's Advisement and Retention Committee will submit information reporting the committee's role in implementing the action plan.

Action Step – Chair's Report and Evaluation

The department chair will report to the department on overall progress toward implementing the action plan. As appropriate, s/he will make recommendations or invite faculty discussion on modifying the plan to more effectively address contemporary issues before the department. The chair also will report to the dean on overall progress toward implementing the action plan.

Strategy 5.2 – Student Evaluation

The department will formally evaluate student satisfaction with issues of advisement and retention.

Action Step – Student Satisfaction Survey

The department will develop and implement a brief survey of each student to be administered as part of the semester advisement process, as well as part of the senior exit survey. This questionnaire will be designed to obtain information on how well satisfied students are concerning various aspects of advisement and retention, among other topics.