STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN 2015-20

SOUTH MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE OVERVIEW

South Mountain Community College (SMCC) is one of 10 colleges that make up the Maricopa County Community College District. The College is a federally designated Minority and Hispanic-Serving Institution that offers associate degrees, certificates of completion, courses that transfer to universities and technology training. SMCC serves the communities of Phoenix, Ahwatukee, Guadalupe, Tempe, South Chandler and Laveen.

INTRODUCTION

In Spring 2015, the SMCC Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (SEMP) was developed using the Appreciative Inquiry approach. More than 50 internal stakeholders representing all areas of the college were brought together over a series of meetings to discuss the historical, current and future enrollment strategies of the college. This approach allowed for a collaborative process in developing a plan that focuses on the future of the college. This plan is the tangible result of the inquiry process that describes where the organization wants to be, based on the internal and external needs of the College and community. During the 2015-16 academic year the enrollment plan was modified to be in alignment with the college strategic plan and process.

The intent of the SMCC SEMP is to support the mission of the college, expand student access, increase enrollment, and promote student retention to goal completion and/or graduation. The framework of this plan leverages the strengths of the college and necessitates the collaborative efforts of the entire college community. The activities are strategic in nature and based on best practices. In response to the rapidly changing internal and external environment, the activities within the plan are monitored monthly to ensure successful progress is being made toward the desired outcomes. The activities are also reviewed annually so that new activities can be incorporated into the plan and existing activities can be documented as continuing or completed.

Therefore, the SEMP's intent is guided by two specific principles;

> Alignment with the College Strategic and Marketing plans
>
> Shared institutional responsibility by the entire College community

This document provides a detailed framework of the enrollment management strategies for SMCC. Additional discussion among college stakeholders may result in modifications to the SEMP including, but not limited to: identifying responsible departments and/or groups for specific actions, establishing timelines, refining strategies and activities, developing metrics for key activities, and decision-making based on budget information.

STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

The SEMP was developed using a three-tiered approach: priorities, strategies, and activities. Priorities are what the college wants to achieve; strategies are how the college intends to achieve the priorities. The strategies identified in the SEMP are not listed in any rank order. The activities represent the detailed operational actions that need to be completed in order to successfully accomplish the strategies and priorities. The enrollment priorities are:

1. Develop and implement a systemic approach to all recruitment functions.
2. Enhance the overall student enrollment experience.
3. Expand retention strategies to increase student goal completion, graduation and/or transfer.
4. Maximize course and program offerings to continuously respond to the changing needs of students and the community.

RECRUITMENT

SMCC's recruitment and outreach activities are designed to meet the college's objectives of access and quality as well as its goal of recruiting, enrolling, and graduating a high-quality, diverse student population. Its desired student body is viewed both as a reflection of its educational mission and a significant indicator of its institutional health.

While the overall number of high school graduates has continued to decrease for the past several years, the rise in tuition at four-year institutions coupled with the current economic climate have made the affordable, quality experience at community colleges increasingly desirable to traditional and non- traditional college students alike. At the same time, partnerships with feeder high schools and 2 + 2 + 2 programs can uniquely position SMCC as a pivotal post-secondary institution. In addition to the traditional youth market, reaching the increasing number of older Phoenicians that need to return to college as the job market places greater demands on increasing skill sets as a condition of employment will be pivotal to the college's success.

In order to attract and enroll academically and socioeconomically diverse students, the college will need to implement and maximize effective communication tools – personal and digital, host on campus events
for students K-12 and community members, attend events both in the community and on school campuses in our service area and streamline processes to make enrollment, registration and graduation simpler. In addition, strategic, efficient, data-driven efforts will need to be implemented, documented and measured. Research has shown that it takes five touches in seven days to convert a potential student to an actual student.

Strategies:
1. Develop a consistent market definition of the college service area and establish ongoing relationships with K-8, high school, business and community organizations within this area.
2. Leverage college events as an opportunity to transition participants into SMCC students.
3. Establish greater efficiency and effectiveness throughout the recruitment process.
4. Provide ongoing training for all college staff responsible for recruitment functions to ensure consistency, accuracy and comprehensiveness of all interactions.

ENROLLMENT & REGISTRATION EXPERIENCE

Once a potential student has been recruited, the enrollment and registration process begins – and continues until the student graduates or completes. The "if we build it, they will come" approach may have worked in the past, but it is far too passive for today's pressurized and ever-changing higher education environment. Community colleges now face a more competitive, sophisticated, technology-driven marketplace, demographic challenges that will affect the pool of available students, performance-based funding initiatives that will require achieving significant benchmarks, and issues of cost and access.

Degree flexibility and reassessing assessments are needed to provide a personalized experience. For example, the ability for students to design their own degree in the Associate of General Studies program can be highlighted. And, understanding why the student is coming to the campus – transfer, certificate, re-careering – can let you know if they need a placement test. It is no longer a one-size fits all approach.

In order to convert a potential student to an actual student, SMCC will need to increase customer service, implement a strategic, efficient, service-friendly enrollment, registration and advisement process, and increase communication touches.

Strategies:
1. Enhance the exterior appearance of the college campus.
2. Develop and implement college-wide customer service standards.
3. Implement a one-stop model approach to the entire student enrollment and registration experience.
4. Leverage strategic communication to potential and current students as an essential tool to promote awareness of key events in the enrollment and registration experience.
5. Establish proactive academic advising efforts with a targeted focus to effectively address new, continuing, former, career and transfer students.

RETENTION

A successful retention program should encompass virtually everything the college does to improve the quality of student life and learning. It is not just an institutional goal but also a by-product of improved educational programs and services for students. Research indicates that increasing retention rates requires colleges to develop coordinated, highly structured, integrated and intentional plans.

It has been proven that students persist when they are making progress towards educational and career goals, and they are satisfied with the quality of educational programs, services, and the environment.

Annually, South Mountain loses a significant amount of financial resources due to student attrition. This does not account for additional indirect costs such as negative word-of-mouth that may occur due to attrition, loss of income to dining services, bookstore, etc.

The key to retention at SMCC is to stop thinking in terms of tactical, fragmented actions and responses and instead look at institution-wide strategic efforts. To increase persistence rates at the college, clearly developed pathways to student success, personal communication and attention, improvement-oriented ethos, and a commitment to shared responsibility for educational quality and student success must be instituted.

Strategies:
1. Utilize strategic communication to students to promote college success, goal completion, transfer and graduation.
2. Enhance student engagement in campus events and activities.
3. Implement systemic processes to facilitate student retention.

PROGRAM & COURSE OFFERINGS

Academic programs and course offerings play an important role in recruitment and retention. Not only do students need general education classes for transfer degrees, but also they need programs and offerings that are relevant to the workforce and flexible – in terms of modality and days/times.

Course offering and programs need to be reviewed and updated on a consistent basis through a streamlined process that includes evidence of the need for new programs. Using a data-informed process
– such as surveying local businesses and the community about workforce needs, gathering student satisfaction statistics, and understanding why students choose to go to a sister college – the college can ensure that it is offering programs that meet the needs of the students and the surrounding community.

Strategies:
1. Continue to offer and create programs that meet the changing needs of students and the community and ensure that these programs can be completed in a two-year time period.
2. Create and continuously communicate to all stakeholders the process of developing and sun-setting college certificate and degree.