

## **Major themes from January 2016 faculty meetings**

1 – Students' attitudes - Developmental students need to feel like college students in “real” courses, including at least one course in the degree program. Many are caught in a downward spiral that began long before they arrived here, and they feel resentful about their course placement; lacking resiliency, some quit as soon as they receive the first bad grade. Do they enter their classes with a negative self-image? We need to . . .

2 – Life's complexities - Many of our students are dealing with issues outside their academic work that consume their attention: e.g., family responsibilities, legal issues, hunger, mental health challenges, and self-medicating. Because of cell phones, some are “over-connected” to those at home and elsewhere, and so their attention is diverted away from academic work. We need to . . .

3 – Racial concerns - Are we ready as an institution to address the needs of students of color, to appreciate the unique gifts they bring to us, and to confront institutional racism? What can we do to understand the unique needs of these students? Are our systems, procedures, and attitudes supportive of those who have not been part of a white majority culture? If not, what can and must change, and how? We need to . . .

4 – Course design and scheduling -We should consider a different type of approach to course scheduling for first-semester students, such as block schedules (recommended by Melinda Karp in her Fall Day presentation), learning communities, a “themed” approach that builds on a student’s interests, a reconsideration of pre-requisites and co-requisites, and supplemental instruction (e.g., ENGL 098/100 approach). We need to meet them where they are if we are to take them where they need to go. Perhaps structure some courses (e.g., MATH) into smaller units in which students can experience immediate, smaller successes. We need to . . .

5 – Adapting to college-level expectations - We should consider a Freshman Seminar type of support/introduction to college life (not necessarily a stand-alone course) for our students. As many students wrestle with the challenges of learning to be a student, do we assume and expect too much of them? We also need to help students to understand that expectations at the college level differ from those at the high school level, especially with respect to students’ initiative and their need to understand the level of work required outside class. It is important for a student to get a taste of success early in his or her academic career. Many students exhibit a “learned passivity” and many are conditioned to live in the moment, while college is largely about building toward the future. Peer mentoring, both formal and informal, can play a pivotal role in supporting students and helping them see that they are not alone and that the challenges they face are not insurmountable. We need to . . .

6 – Using support services - How can we get the students who most need support services (e.g., tutoring, counseling) to use them? How do we go beyond merely mentioning the availability of these services and expecting students to decide to use them? Students may think they can handle challenges on their own when an intervention is really necessary. How can we develop

in students a sense that seeking help is a positive action, not an expression of incompetence?  
We need to . . .

7 – Changing faculty role - The role of the faculty member has expanded far beyond the range of responsibilities previously expected of them. What can we do to help faculty members to address the complex needs of students while also fulfilling their core responsibilities as teachers? Perhaps we should place greater emphasis on a smaller quantity of work required of students coupled with a strong emphasis on the quality of the work they do. Developing relationships with individual students is key. We need to . . .

8 – Systems and structures - We have structures and systems in place that may not support – or that may actively inhibit – student success. We need to examine such things as course placement, prerequisites, class size, layout and furnishing of classrooms, course scheduling, the semester structure itself, academic advising, standards of academic achievement (including probation and suspension), financial aid, an “S/U” progress reporting system that may give students false expectations about the meaning of “S.” Does our commitment to a one-day testing/registration experience place some students in an untenable situation? We need to . . .