Colleague Shares Tips for SACS Visit

Last month’s SACSLetter 2011 reported on Lenora Keas’ October trip to J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College in Richmond, Virginia. At about the same time, Vickie Natale, Director of Institutional Effectiveness, served as an observer for an on-site reaffirmation visit to George Corley Wallace Community College in Selma, Alabama.

Ms. Natale picked up a number of tips that will help in the completion of the Compliance Certification Document (due March 15, 2010) and with preparations for the visit of the on-site team (they’ll arrive on October 12, 2010). For example, Federal Requirement 4.5 requires the College to describe the procedures that it uses to respond to student complaints. But, in addition, the College also has to produce an example of a fully processed student complaint with the names redacted.

Reviewers also expect to examine documentation of job descriptions, resumes, and transcripts for all administrators, learning resources staff, and student services personnel reported under Comprehensive Standards 3.2.8, 3.8.3, and 3.9.3.

The information that Ms. Natale acquired in connection with preparations for the on-site team will be invaluable. For example, the College has to provide shuttle service to and from the airport and among the hotel and the campus and various dinner locations.

Workrooms have to be set up at the hotel and on campus. Both workrooms need computers with Internet access and MS Office 2007.

Hard copies of all documents are required, as well, in both workrooms, and the website default on the computers in both workrooms should be set for the College’s SACS website, which must have links to all documents. Both workrooms need network printers.

Several luncheons will need to be provided for review team members to interact with key campus leaders and student representatives.

And don’t forget the major focus for the on-campus site visit will be the QEP, with an introductory presentation for the team on day one of the visit.

There’ll be plenty to do to get ready.

A SACSLetter Double Issue: November & December

Look for your next SACSLetter in mid-January 2010. Here’s wishing everyone a relaxing, fun, and safe holiday break. The SACSLetter Editors
Work on the Quality Enhancement Plan, a crucial component of the reaffirmation project, continues. Last summer, a set of four QEP objectives was developed. They were printed in the July SACSLetter, but by way of reminder, they are: (1) Increase the rate of initial enrollment in developmental math (within one semester) after placement determination. (2) Decrease the number of students who withdraw or stop attending their developmental math courses. (3) Increase the rate of successful completers in developmental math courses. (4) For students needing a subsequent developmental math course, increase the rate of enrollment in the next semester.

A number of strategies for reaching these objectives have been developed, centering on the areas of curriculum, environment, policy, professional development, and faculty. These strategies are not, as yet, carved in stone, but they represent the kinds of efforts the College will undertake in order to improve our success with developmental math.

For example, in terms of curriculum, math workshops on difficult topics could be developed for each developmental math course. Or math orientation sessions for students prior to their taking state-mandated placement assessments could be useful. In terms of environment, students might respond favorably to an expansion of the Math Learning Center.

In terms of policy, students who are placed in developmental math courses could be required to take subsequent math courses and core math classes in successive semesters in order to achieve more continuity in their learning.

With regard to professional development and the faculty, one proposal involves annual professional development, for both full-time faculty and adjuncts, in the use of technology in the classroom to enhance math instruction. And an interventionist with a mathematical background could take important proactive steps to help students who might be struggling with developmental math courses.

These strategies, as well as many others, are on the table. As the QEP develops, I’ll continue to report on its progress.

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