Retention Sub-Committee Proposal

Retention=Relationships

Upon the solicitation and review of "best ideas" from staff and faculty across campus, the most pervasive outcome is that retention is dependent upon creating and supporting healthy relationships.

Doing so requires changes in human behavior. What particular behaviors are identifiable and changeable? What behaviors are preventing us from achieving our retention goals? Can we, ourselves, possibly be the true answer to changing our retention outcomes? If not, are we willing to say that our students are at fault?

As we engage in the difficult work of building a better understanding of who we are and how we treat one another, is our commitment to retention stronger than our perceived and real differences? Are the changes in our own behaviors worth the outcome, or is the individual cost too high?

Why is this important? Increasing retention will lead to higher rates of completion of certificates and degrees, impacting our students' ability to transfer and/or gain employment. This improves their ability to "make a good living and live a good life" for themselves and their families. Increasing retention will also support the institution's revenue stream.

Goal of recommendation: To increase retention by 10% in one academic year by focusing on critical, must-win strategies that connect us to our students.

Recommendation: Plan, develop, and execute an "I'm-All-In" first-semester commitment and experience.

The emphasis starts with us, but it impacts the entire MCC community. The "all-in" connotation is about making a commitment to behavioral changes for sixteen weeks that impact students in their first semester of their first-year-experience.

Actions:

1. A reformulation of Learning Framework into a "best course at MCC" reputation. Add one lab hour to the class hour for development of cohort activities, including interactions with faculty, staff, and peer leadership. Extend invitation to teach LF to staff and work out HR challenges. Identify strategies to funnel students to the best section of the course for their needs. Recruit the "right people" to teach it. LF coordinator and supervisors connect with this committee to weigh decisions.
2. Identify reward program for all employees. Begin by rewarding employees with "I caught you doing something right" badges awarded by Peer Leaders who act as secret shoppers. Develop end-of-semester evaluation of employees by students, identifying who or what has made a difference in the previous sixteen weeks. All identified

personnel are eligible for a drawing after the end of the semester for (not a new car) but a prize that must be shared with their teams.

3. Create and incorporate instructional messaging using various platforms (Comevo, Brightspace Intelligent Agents, Announcements, etc.) by departmental teams, each responsible for content and delivery.

4. Plan and build an extensive cohort of Peer Leadership, inclusive of SI, Ambassadors, NSO Leaders, Tutors, Honors College, First Generation, etc. Incorporate Peer Leadership into Gateway courses, beginning with faculty who choose to participate.

5. New Student Orientation (NSO): Review and reformulate the orientation process for all new students in conjunction with Title V initiatives.

6. Identify new technology that creates an effective communication platform for Title V initiatives, one that connects the Engagement community. This could include predictive analytics and improved early alert systems.

7. Identify second-semester actions which make for a successful First Year Experience, including Peer Leadership training for returning students.

8. Identify ways to survey incoming students in new ways to avoid survey fatigue and to increase our response time to their suggestions. Implement what they suggest where possible to show our commitment to meeting their needs. This could be focus groups within the LF sections, NSO, etc.

9. Place new emphasis on student mental health through wellness videos, timely Counseling Center services announcements, mental health surveys, and mental health information on the main webpage.

10. Review Processes, Identify Challenges, and Clarify Roles
    a. Create inter-office implementation teams, inclusive of faculty, staff, and students. Identify and repair process gaps, ultimately reducing perceived competition over who is best at resolving challenges that are already outside of established job descriptions and professional roles. Incorporate already well-established academic and support areas, share data-proven success strategies, and build better models of retention for less-successful areas. Ultimately, these process changes lead to doing less of what's not important and more of what makes a difference. Where processes do not need to change, we still need to ensure the processes communicate with each other.
    b. Acknowledge acts of innovation to implementation teams that begin with "We Have An Idea" and result with tangible change that positively impacts students. Use program review data in WebAdvisor to investigate what's going well, and then adopt those strategies in other departments.
    c. Establish new parameters of "early alert," especially as the definition of "early" becomes less and less effective in the best use of the Success Coaches' time.
    d. Review institutional process that reveals why students leave, inclusive of attendance, alerts, determining effective use of reports, timeliness of getting information, Brightspace alerts, etc.