MXC Foundations of Excellence
REPORT

Introduction

Malcolm X College, one of the City Colleges of Chicago, is invested in the success of its first-year students. An integral part of assuring student success, especially in the first year, is developing a comprehensive vision of the many ways in which we currently support student success in the first year of study at our institution. We seek ways of adopting a holistic approach to the first-year student experience, across all programs, which links the evaluation of needs and effectiveness to a comprehensive plan of action that move us beyond a “programmatic” outlook to a “college-wide” vision of ways to improve the first-year experience. Foundations of Excellence will support the aforementioned by facilitating the development of a college-wide conversation about the first-year experience of our students; the enhancement of our institutional intelligence to include the importance of first-year experience to the attainment of our strategic goals and objectives; and, the improvement of our ability to recognize and reduce redundancies that lead to decreased institutional efficiency as it relates to the first-year experience of students. Finally, we know that the success of our students, especially in their first year, is indelibly linked to our ability to fulfill our mission. Indeed, fulfilling our mission is at the core of our continued accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Thus, we seek to participate in the next cohort of the Foundations of Excellence in order to develop a comprehensive plan to assure student success in the first-year (and beyond), which aligns with our institution’s strategic goals and mission and supports our continued institutional accreditation.

Commitment to the First-Year Experience

MXC has forged through a collaborative and inclusive process, a mission statement that seeks to “...empower students of diverse backgrounds and abilities to achieve academic, career, and personal success.” The college views its mission statement as a strategy that it must work consistently to achieve. An integral aspect of MXC’s endeavors to achieve its goals is its ongoing development and implementation of assessment of student learning. While the assessment of the first year experience is still in its developmental stages at MXC, the College is finding the necessary ways to move closer to its goal. As assessment of the first year experience becomes more pervasive and systematized throughout the College, it will serve as the core of curricular and pedagogical reform, which will enhance both student learning and teaching effectiveness within MXC’s educational programs.

Both local and district administrative structures also provide and promote effective leadership towards that end. Locally, College officers, such as President Ghingo Brooks and Vice President Darrylinn Todd have made assessment a priority. President Brooks is determined that we, as an institution, deliver on our promises to students, and Vice President Todd has been at the forefront of the assessment efforts. For example, budget monies have been allocated to the first year experience as evidenced by the support of PREMIER, the first-year experience at MXC.
The College also actively involves faculty and staff in the support of first-year students at the College, and it continues to solidify assessment efforts to include a systematic approach that will engage multiple levels of assessment between general education programs and career programs.

At the district level, the CCC Board of Trustees and district administration also support the college’s local administration through established policies and procedures that are revised regularly.

The First-Year Experience at Malcolm X College

Making the transition to college is an exciting yet challenging time for students. First-year college students often face difficulties acclimating to and navigating through college life. Malcolm X College has recently launched PREMIER, a new first year experience program for all new students to be actively engaged in for their first academic year at the college. As the institution recognizes and understands that the needs of college students have changed, so must the attempts to retain and successfully support the students. The primary goal of PREMIER is to create a positive and supportive first year experience to support academic success and retention. The program is designed to assist first-year college students to successfully navigate the college experience. The program creates a systematic way to provide opportunities for all first-year students at the college. The PREMIER program is designed to ensure that all new students complete a mandatory orientation, are assigned an academic advisor, and registered for the freshmen seminar course. PREMIER students participate in various college activities during the year, including New Student Week, mandatory advising, and workshops for long term success.

Recommendations
1. Formally adopt a first year philosophy statement, approved by the Board of Trustees and accepted by all CCC
2. Disseminate the philosophy statement regarding first-year experience to all new students
3. Align the findings from FoE self-study with Reinvention – Mission/Vision of CCC
4. There is a strong need to establish learning communities inclusive of course offerings that foster growth, student engagement and social learning during the students freshman year.
5. A comprehensive orientation structure needs to be established to ensure coverage of critical items students should be aware of.
6. A retention strategy inclusive of staff and financial resources should be developed to ensure sustainability of this effort and to also effectively monitor students beyond their first year.
7. Transition plans should be established to effectively transition students from one academic career to the next, depending on the students' academic intent/goal.
8. Stronger partnerships and communication must occur between academic affairs and student services.
9. Introduce funding sources to support existing efforts aimed at servicing new students.
10. Creation of an Engagement Survey - The involved disciplines should begin assessing the engagement of students.
11. Dual Enrollment and Transfer Centers - Introduce dual enrollment programs with other institutions. Opening Transfer center at college lead students to achieve goals for careers.

12. Review SLOs - Departments should ensure that SLOs are consistent across the faculty and, more importantly, that faculty are actually addressing all SLOs in their courses.

13. Review Placement Testing - The placement test should be compared to SLOs for different classes, to ensure that students are placed in the appropriate class.

14. Increase Awareness - Students should be made aware of the Honor's Program, honor societies, and other options for advanced work.

15. Teaching Excellence Recognition - Effort should be made to identify and recognize excellent teaching of full-time and adjunct faculty.

16. Implement a curriculum specifically designed to address the academic needs of students taking entry level courses.

17. Establish a comprehensive First year experience program

18. Centralize Retention Effort

19. Develop models to ease transition to advanced level of educational tracks

20. Introduce new-student Orientation Family Night

21. Incorporate the use of CAN-TV For Students
CCC FOE Summit

Background Information

To improve student outcomes, six CC Colleges (with the exception of Wright College) were involved in a year-long self-study process which began summer 2010 to determine their status of the first year experience.

Wright College began their Foundations of Excellence Self Study as part of their AQUIP project in 2009.

This FOE Self Study process allowed each College the opportunity to survey faculty, staff and students to understand what existing program and services that are dedicated to a student’s first year experience as well as programs and services dedicated to students seeking transfer. As a result, each college was asked to look at 9 dimensions focusing on the first year students and student transfer experiences.

The Summit’s goal was to bring all 7 colleges together to present their high priority recommendations, opportunities, highlight some of their opportunities and briefly explain challenges documented in the 9 college level dimension reports.

As a result, our work throughout this year is to provide recommendations, feedback and solutions that will help to inform the work of Reinvention.

Collectively, the Summit Goals were:

- To develop a comprehensive list of district-wide First Year and Transfer action items
- To develop district-wide 1st Year and Transfer Student Philosophy

Additionally, the CCC College Success course has not been implemented uniformly across the district. Different campuses use it for different population and WR does not use it at all. However, best practice suggests that this type of course be a mandatory part of the first year experience for all new students.

This Summit helped the colleges develop a district wide plan first year experience and how to incorporate a college success course into the first year experience at all of the colleges.