

Jackson State Community College
Core Team Meeting – Feb. 12, 2016
Defining Student Success and Identifying Focus Areas

During the spring 2016 in-service week, JSCC ATD Executive Team asked all employees to define what success means for Jackson State students. Based on a compilation of the comments, the following observations can be made:

Most often used action words, from employees in reference to student success, are related to what students will “do” at JSCC:

Learn	Obtain	Value
Identify	Create	To get
Accomplish	Gain	Meet
Achieve	Recognize	Able
Reach	Finish	Learn
Complete	Overcome	Discover
Find	Develop	Progress
Improve	Realize	

Analyzing the same comments, other action words are seen in conjunction to what employees feel the institution can “do” to impact student success:

Give	Care	Empower
Help	Make	Listen
Assist	Create	Motivate
Provide	Support	Remove
Educate	Prepare	
Place	Encourage	
Display	Receive	

Continuing to analyze the feedback on student success, what end results or items were most commonly mentioned in relation to the action words above (which items or things will students achieve to be successful):

- Individual goals (could be academic, personal, professional, etc.)
- Graduate with degree or certificate
- Job, career, gainful employment, marketable skills
- Transfer to another institution of higher education
- Dreams
- Life-long learning
- Personal responsibility
- Pass classes
- Enrichment
- Full, holistic educational experience/personal transformation
- Potential (confidence, self-esteem)
- Identity

Growth (intellectual and personal)
Life purpose
Larger life picture
Obstacles

Using these many comments and ideas, the Core Team Members have constructed the following statements about student success as JSCC:

Jackson State Community College describes student success as the discovery of, progression towards, and achievement of the unique, holistic goals and milestones sought by each individual. The institution strives to create environments and processes that encourage, empower, and support students in their transformational quest.

By using the exact words of our employees, the statements above should feel inclusive to most and assist to create ownership of the statements. Defining success as the students' attainment of their own personal goals, using terminology such as "unique, holistic goals and milestones" includes all aspects of an education (degrees, transfer, completion, personal enrichment, skill attainment, life-long learning, etc.). There is a blend of what external sources dictate we must measure in terms of student success (graduation rates, etc.) and what the student may define as success (which may not be measurable). These statements consider both. The statements on student success align with our current mission statement, vision, and goals.

Next, the ATD core team was asked to continue reviewing employee comments on our current student success strategies and what future attempts should include. Using the comments and data of key performance indicators, the team was asked brainstorm and identify the three most common student success focus areas. Those areas are:

- **Individualized Student Centered Education** – To improve on its student success efforts, the institution will emphasize individualized, student-centered education. This emphasis will include all aspects of our institution including onboarding processes, non-academic services, and classroom interactions. Additionally, an increased awareness of our students' communities and situations will be sought. The goal is to create an environment that recognizes and accommodates the individual nature of each student.
- **Retention/Progression and Completion** – We recognize that retention, progression, and completion are key student success areas that need attention from all aspects of our institution. A strong focus is needed on (1) defining our most at-risk student groups and other student groups we wish to track, (2) making sure data collected is accurate, (3) using information gained to determine the effectiveness of current processes and (4) supporting ideas for improvement. The goal is to create an environment that where retention, progression, and completion are expected outcomes for students.
- **Faculty & Staff Development** – To ensure student success strategies will have the best chance for success, all employees must have the opportunity to develop the applicable skills and have access to the necessary resources. Communication will be instrumental in assuring data are being collected and shared with appropriate individuals in a timely

manner. The goal is to empower the individuals of the institution to make student success a reality for all students.

It is obvious there are dozens of actions that can be pursued in each of the focus areas, however, an honest inventory should be conducted on practices currently in place with improvements being made as data directs. Only a few new items should be added to the groups...start small and build larger; focus on “quick fixes” for each area and select ideas that will impact the largest student populations. Best chance to move the needle of student success forward!