

DESCRIPTION

The mission of the Student Development and Services Division is to provide a welcoming and supportive environment that will enhance students' ability to achieve their highest potential through learning programs and services.

The following services represent Three Rivers efforts to assist students in achieving academic and personal potential for both individual and community benefit: Admission counseling prior to entry or reentry into the college, mandatory placement testing, orientation for new students, academic advising for new students and career counseling, personal counseling and referral services, registration, comprehensive transfer and transfer credit services including college transfer advisement, financial aid, student government and organizations, recreational activities and trips, an athletics program, special workshops and seminars. Many services are implemented on an individual basis with highly trained professionals.

Three Rivers continues to endeavor to ensure appropriate services and facilities for students in all programs, especially for the historically underrepresented, physically disabled, learning disabled, women, international, and veteran groups. Three Rivers identified the characteristics and learning needs of its student population and is especially adept in assisting them to resolve their educational problems by meeting developmental and transitional needs first and by providing academic assistance.

Particular emphasis has been placed in continued improvement of off campus services. The college is currently investigating the expansion of off campus locations from its Waterford High School site to include more of the Southeastern Coastal Community. An adjunct faculty member in the Math department serves as the educational assistant to the Waterford High School Site and provides tutoring in Math as part of his services. He assists in maintaining informational services and communication with the college community.

In addition, a full time administrator who has responsibility for the Naval Submarine Base spends 20% of her time on that site, acting as liaison with the military and other educational programs. She facilitates support services there such as the establishment of a "wireless" computer center, library services and academic advising. The recent national crisis has forced us to temporarily postpone our program at the subbase. In order to continue to offer services to our shoreline community we immediately negotiated for space and resources with Grasso Technical High School in Groton. We are exploring a continuing relationship with that institution and other sites to better serve our mission to the total Southeastern Connecticut Community and provide enhanced services to our shoreline students. Additionally, we are investigating establishing a relationship with two Cultural Centers in New London: Kente, an African American Center and Centro de le Comunidad, a largely Hispanic cultural center. Discussions have thus far been preliminary but positive.

Over the last several years the college has worked hard to increase enrollment through both traditional and innovative approaches to recruitment. We have gone beyond our activities in the high school to establish partnerships with middle schools, expand our tech prep program, develop a minority Community Leaders outreach program and update our marketing materials.

Our Career Services office has seen growth through a full time staff member who engages in on campus recruitment, encourages local employers to visit the campus and meet with students, holds a large Job fair, provides seminars in resume writing and interview skills, makes available a databank of Jobs available and routinely, at the beginning of each semester, visits the classrooms to encourage students to access the services of the office.

We have been most fortunate in turning a part time transfer coordinator position into a fulltime position. The institution has been vigilante and persistent in establishing articulation with four (4) year institutions (i.e. The Eastern Connecticut University Compact and the University of Connecticut Nursing Agreements). Transfer credit is assessed more effectively and efficiently then before and Three Rivers is represented on statewide committees developed to establish articulation with the University Of Connecticut.

A wide range of financial aid is provided that awards grants and scholarships, facilitates loans and provides work-study opportunities from federal, state and local sources. An onsite federal and state audit process and review of the financial aid program is done biannually. The implementation of Banner and increases in staffing has improved the efficient and timely disbursement of funds as well as immediate notification of students regarding their status.

During the last three years the college has recognized and invested resources heavily in the development of a comprehensive plan to address advising, retention, transfer and job placement. In accordance with that plan, the college's counseling services provides orientation activities for all new students. In addition to the traditional orientation sessions provided just prior to each semester, group instruction is provided before each computerized placement test session (currently fifty [50] group sessions each semester) Topics covered include the purpose and use of test results, college vocabulary, highlights of the catalogue, information for registration, overview of the advising system, time management and typical demands on college students. The curriculum is well defined and delivered by three senior counselors to ensure that all students hear a consistent message from the college.

The traditional pre-semester orientation program is two to three hours long and curriculum covers the role and function of student services followed by meetings with faculty to discuss academic expectations in the classroom. Day and evening sessions are offered to give all students and their families an opportunity to participate. Additionally, Three Rivers is exploring the use of an online orientation system.

Before students can register at Three Rivers they are required to take a placement test which assesses an incoming student's English, basic Math and Reading Skills. In the years immediately preceding the work of Academic Models, testing was required mostly of degree seeking students. Effective Fall 2001 all new non-degree and degree-seeking students (with few exceptions) take this placement examination prior to registration. In Fall 2001 the institution, with the support of local high schools, piloted the PASS placement instrument, which is appropriate for juniors and seniors on the college track.

The Nationally Accredited Childcare services, provided through the Student Services Division further enhance the quality of life and meet the needs of Three Rivers' students. Three Rivers has offered childcare since 1983. The college center operates with oversight through the coordinator of childcare services, a year round Children's Center. Contracted to full and part-time TVCCA, this program offers discounted slots to students and sliding scale to staff. The

childcare services works closely with the academic program of Early Childhood Education. The program also provides a practical and observation site for students in a variety of academic programs.

In the area of health care volunteer staff and Emergency Medical Technicians provide the only health care on campus exclusively on an emergency basis. W.W. Backus Hospital, which is less than a mile from the campus, has emergency department services. On site immunization clinics for measles and rubella are provided to students to assist in the compliance of legislative mandates.

Three Rivers faculty and staff consult with student development staff regarding other health concerns. Students are referred to counselors for crisis counseling, learning disabilities or deficiencies and short-term assistance. If a student needs long term therapeutic counseling he/she is referred to professional agencies.

Students are given the opportunity to develop their leadership skills through involvement in a wide variety of student organizations. These organizations are open to any interested student. Students develop the organizational structure and plan and initiate activities.

Over the past ten years and with the merger of the Thames and Mohegan facilities opportunities for students have expanded greatly. Student organization have increased from nine (9) to twenty-one (21), and the breadth of those organizations range from acting and drama to the Society of Mechanical Engineers, American Institute of Architecture Student Chapter to clubs which focus on minority and diversity issues. Orientation of students groups and advisors has expanded. Student government has developed into a comprehensive organization that includes representation from all student organizations and other interested students to reflect the diverse student population and interests at the college. All members of student organizations fill out a registration form and are given a student organization handbook that fully explains the policy and procedures for student groups. As a result of the growth in this area, Three Rivers has seen an increase of students representing the college at regional and national events and organizations.

In 1994 faculty and students were asked to help organize volunteer services at the college. A student organization sponsored week of volunteer services was developed and the college established an annual volunteer recognition ceremony. Advisory Council on Community Services and Service Learning whose members include students, staff, faculty, and representatives from community agencies was established to be a clearinghouse for college sponsored volunteer and service-learning opportunities developed at the college. Three Rivers has also joined Campus Compact that has resulted in a VISTA volunteer being present at the college. The America Reads program and numerous other college-sponsored volunteer and service learning initiatives take place at the college.

Yet another extremely positive innovation that has developed over the last ten years is the growth of our Athletics program. Three Rivers has a gym facility that is open for student use. Three Rivers also sports a men's basketball and golf team. In 1997 the college formed an Athletics Task Force to look into the feasibility of adding a women's program. In 1999, a coach was hired to plan a women's program and the college introduced women's basketball in the 2000-2001 season. In 2001, a part-time athletic director was hired to strengthen and explore further development of the program.

The growth of the student programs area at Three Rivers has been the result of good fortune (the merger) sound planning (the development of Task Forces and Advisory counsels) and high visibility within the institution. The presence of the Academic Models team, a committee that supports the breakdown of traditional organizational silos and encourages the partnering of faculty and student services, enhanced that visibility. Weekly newsletters and an informative and creative WEB page serve to inform the Three Rivers community about student government, student organizations, volunteer services and athletic.

Clearly stated standards of ethical practice are detailed in the college catalog and student handbook that contain policies on student rights and responsibilities, grievance procedures, racism and acts of intolerance, sexual harassment, disabilities. Drug and alcohol use, student discipline and academic dishonesty.

Policies for retention and disposal of students records are defined in the Department of Public Records Administration, Connecticut State Library, Schedule III Administrative Records: State Agencies. The relational student database holds all student information securely. Records and student rights are further protected by the Family Education Right and Privacy Acts of 1974 (FERPA-Buckley Amendment). Appropriate policies have been established by the Board of Trustees for the entire community college system and are endorsed fully by Three Rivers.

Three Rivers maintains a highly responsive Division of Student Services. Its' student focused staff, under the leadership of a recently hired permanent Dean engages frequently in self-examination and growth exploration. The expansion of information available through the Banner system and the commitment of the institution to the functions of the division ensure that regular and systematic evaluation takes place.

The openness to explore new ways of doing things, the evolution of so many of its programs, and the powerful presence of this division within the institution reflects its willingness to revise and improve their achievement.

APPRAISAL

The Student Services Division routinely evaluates the delivery of services to students. Banner, albeit a complex relational database system, has proven to be a valuable resource in the assessment and evaluation of student needs and services. Banner reports provide information on demographics, registration, advising and retention of the student population.

The co-curricular goals and needs of students are assessed through a variety of services; generally as needs arise or patterns in student behaviors/needs evolve. For example, reports are run after continuing student registration to identify those students who have not availed themselves to that service. Division personnel identify these students and contact them by mail and phone to encourage their return and assist them if necessary. Students who request to withdraw are encouraged to meet with a member of the counseling staff to explore future options. Communication, be it telephonic or written is maintained and according to our most recent Student Satisfaction Survey (fall 2001), 80% of respondents indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with assistance of college staff upon entry to the college; 87% were equally satisfied with admissions; and, 91% indicated satisfaction with information in the catalogue and admissions publications. General registration procedures were satisfactory or very satisfactory to 88% of our respondents. Although the division recognizes that students are generally satisfied, routine debriefing meetings occur after each registration period in an effort to refine the process.

In recognition that many of our continuing students delay registration to open registration periods, the division is exploring greater use of Web registration. This will allow students to access their biographical, academic, and financial information, and register on-line thereby avoiding hurried registration sessions. Counselors and faculty involved in this process attend system wide and other professional development conferences to ensure that Three Rivers continues to explore new ways to make services to students more meaningful and efficient.

In the same survey students were asked to identify service utilization. With a random sampling of approximately 10% of the overall head count responding (or 19.4% of FTE) the majority participated in registration and advising (97% and 71% respectively) most were satisfied or very satisfied (69% and 54% respectively) with these services. The percentage of students who utilized other services including job placement career services (29%) personal counseling (13%) and financial aid (39%) web registration (14%) and recreational/athletic services (9%) were less utilized but students consistently expressed satisfaction. What remains interesting and certainly demands attention is the majority of students who, in this survey, indicated that these services were N/A or not utilized. Further assessment is necessary to fully understand why so many of our students, although aware of services do not choose to avail themselves to them. While this data does not represent an anomaly within Community College Education, Three Rivers will endeavor to identify ways in which we can improve that connection to services. Increased staffing and more appropriate space would enhance both our ability to do greater assessment and data analysis and provide a more conducive environment in which to offer these services

Data collection has precipitated expanded student services in orientation and academic advising. Regular orientation evaluations validate these efforts. We have also identified through a variety of data sources that athletic programming is an important need for our students. We expanded our offerings to include golf and Woman's Basketball. We are exploring a football program. Similarly we have merged our student government since our last report. While 49% of our respondents indicated that Student Government was not applicable to them, 47% of the respondents who were affected by this activity indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied.

Our need to provide more efficient transfer information services has been met by a new hire since our last report. This staff person regularly collects data and has recently implemented new documentation to access this data more efficiently through Banner. The Eastern Compact has increase transfer and serves as a model for other transfer compacts across the state. Twenty two percent of our respondents indicated utilization of this service with 84% of those expressing satisfaction.

The new census data have facilitated a targeted marketing campaign to meet the educational needs of the increasingly diverse population in Southeastern CT. This demographic data have stimulated greater discussion across the college regarding the types of services this diversity may encourage.

While measles immunization clinics are held with each registration period, health care services to the college community are lacking. The Division intermittently offers programs on specific issues of concern, i.e. Depression information sessions during national Depression recognition week. The division also identifies immediate needs-sponsored workshops on trauma, such as one following the September 11th attack.

Student Services staff is particularly responsive to data that suggest early contacts with Middle schools and high Schools encourages college participation. These efforts to increasingly engage in outreach activities have worked to strengthen relationships and build bridges.

Great strides have been made in addressing the accuracy of the placement tests to ensure a positive relationship between the results on placement and the success in the classroom. Key faculty and staff work together very closely in assessing that instrument.

Three Rivers is proud of being able to offer many services to students. The student services division recognizes that increased staffing, effective cross training, a more welcoming physical environment and a dedicated institutional researcher would enhance these offerings. While Three rivers continually relies on an enthusiastic, student centered, student services staff to wear many hats, we also recognize that without increased resources it may be a struggle to maintain present initiatives much less accomplish more.

PROJECTION

Three Rivers is dedicated to provide services that will enhance student opportunities to meet their stated goals. Recent demographic and socioeconomic shifts in Southeastern CT will affect our student population and the services offered. The Student Services Division will continue to monitor and modify programming accordingly. Working with our recently hired facilities consultant, planning and relocating to a new facility will provide opportunities to enhance offering and increase programming. The future will bring greater use of technologies in service delivery. Web for Students, Web registration, Web for faculty/advisors and Web advising are ways in which services to students can be increased without taxing our personnel resources.

Planning and projection remain critical in maximizing the potential of staff and programming. With budget tightening and fiscal restraints planning and prioritizing activities is critical to divisional success. The Division's planning document is tied to both the institutional planning document and to the State Community College System. Projections for 2002-2003 include the following major objectives:

Goals for Student Services Division

- Increase awareness of financial aid programs among new and continuing students.
- Encourage continuing student to complete the financial aid process earlier
- Promote greater utilization of technological resources for registration
- Ensure and maintain integrity of students' academic and biographical records
- Expand the role of the Children Center in the academic division
- Reduce operating budget shortfall in the Children's Center
- Conduct targeted outreach to ethnically diverse groups in New London County
- Promote early college awareness to area middle and high school students and parents
- Continue to develop articulations with four-year colleges

- Provide additional orientation to incoming students
- Promote community service and student involvement
- Promote greater awareness of VA benefits and services
- Actively participate in Academic Models
- Complete student records archival project