

U.S. News Task Force on Student Selectivity

March 2003 Report

PRESENT: Thornton Kirby, Robert Barkley, Marvin Carmichael, Bonnie Page, Debra Sparacino, Cathy Sams, Bobby McCormick, Dave Fleming, Byron Wiley, Catherine Watt, John Warner, and Debbie Jackson

Our February 12th meeting was dedicated to better understanding the *U.S. News* criteria relating directly to retention and graduation.

Debra Sparacino presented a paper drafted by her work group—Dave Fleming, Bobby McCormick, Bonnie Page, and John Warner. That report is attached.

In response to questions and discussion, Robert Barkley presented an overview of legacy admissions activity for Fall 2002. That overview is also attached.

The Task Force members discussed the following questions.

1. Given that nearly 100% of our freshmen predicted GPRs that would allow them to graduate (PGPR>2.0), ***why do nearly 30% of them leave without graduating?***
2. Are we serving the state as a land-grant university in helping to close the educational gap between the well educated and the uneducated in SC?
3. Why is Math 106 such a choke point for student success, and what more can we do to ensure student success in this fundamental class? We recognized that Provost Helms has led a renewed focus on gateway math courses, and efforts such as better placement testing and the Academic Support Center have made a difference already. Our question was what else we could do to support the Provost's leadership here. Ideas:
 - a. Use "master teachers" in freshman math courses
 - b. Study our students' learning styles, and try to better match teaching styles to learning styles
 - c. Establish incentives for faculty who "crack the code" in achieving strong Math 106 performance without reducing academic expectations
4. What other things could we do to have an impact on retention and graduation?
 - a. Try to better match students with their majors
 - b. Intervene earlier in the first semester—don't wait until first semester grades are finalized
 - c. Reduce credit hours required to graduate (Provost Helms' initiative)
 - d. Follow up with students who do not return to school
 - e. Consider an enrollment fee to decrease non-academic attrition

- f. Better marketing and recruitment of top students
- g. Increase unrestricted scholarship funds available to recruit top students

Commentary on use of waivers: In order to recruit top out-of-state students, we need to offer meaningful financial incentives. We do so by waiving out-of-state tuition. This helps us recruit top students, but it hurts Clemson financially because we are foregoing tuition revenue. We therefore become shy about offering additional waivers, which means we are less aggressive in our recruitment of top students. We are making a mistake by effectively charging ourselves for every great out-of-state student we recruit—this paradigm is not sustainable. Instead, we should increase unrestricted scholarship dollars so we can still offer financial incentives while we collect full tuition from all out-of-state students.

We also planned several studies to educate the University's leadership team on retention and graduation issues.

- Study of historical student data to determine what is driving attrition (Bobby McCormick and John Warner)
- Focused survey of students who left Clemson; follow-up study after Bobby and John complete their study (Cathy Sams and Debbie Jackson)
- Analysis of tuition waivers—historical and projected (Marvin Carmichael)
- National Student Engagement Survey planned for 2003 (Debbie Jackson)

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