The Chancellor's Plan for

Shawnee State
UNIVERSITY

to Improve Course Completion, Retention, and Graduate Rates

In accordance with Ohio Amended Substitute House Bill 153, the Chancellor of the Board of Regents is to submit to the state Legislature and the Governor a Plan, developed in consultation with Shawnee State University that assures the Shawnee State Supplement will be used to promote the goals of improving course completion, increasing the number of degrees conferred, and furthering the university's mission of service to the Appalachian region.

In order to meet this obligation, I enlisted the help of the leadership at Shawnee State to define innovative strategies that will transform this institute of higher learning that only relatively recently was named a university.

The result of this four-month collaborative planning process that included Shawnee State's president and administration, school consultants, staff and a joint advisory committee formed by my office was an action Plan for Shawnee State.

In developing this Plan for Shawnee State, I relied heavily upon the recommendations of these participants. I am confident that the strategies set forth in the Plan will allow Shawnee State to meet their goals and continue to pursue their unique mission.

This document represents the summary of my Plan for Shawnee State University, which has been submitted to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, and the Governor on January 24, 2011. The President of Shawnee State University, Dr. Rita Rice Morris, and I stand ready to respond to questions regarding the Plan or use of the Shawnee State University Supplement during the current biennium.

However, the ultimate success of Shawnee State on reaching these goals and growing its stature rests squarely on the ability of its Board, administration and faculty – through their shared and deliberate efforts – to embrace and implement the strategies outlined in this Plan.

The goals outlined for Shawnee State University are goals with which the University System of Ohio is familiar. We are leading the nation in developing and implementing innovative policies aimed at graduating the maximum number of students with the skills employers are seeking as quickly and cost-effectively as possible.

We are instituting a comprehensive assessment test in Ohio high schools to ensure students are evaluated and provided the tools they need to graduate from high school, college and career ready. We are asking Ohio's colleges and universities to find ways to deliver timely, cost-effective education relevant to the demands of the current job market.

I strongly believe in the importance of providing greater access to higher education for the citizens of the Appalachian region. Increasing the number of degree recipients in this region is an important goal that will directly strengthen the business and employment opportunities for all of southern Ohio.

I encourage the leadership of Shawnee State to continue to find exciting and new ways to increase student retention and attainment and to continue to pursue its mission of enriching the lives of those in its community.

Jim Petro
Chancellor
Ohio Board of Regents

Contents

Shawnee State University

An Overview of Southern Ohio's Unique Access University

In 1986, an act of the Ohio General Assembly created Shawnee State University (SSU), from what was formerly a community college. SSU includes a beautifully landscaped, 62-acre campus located in Portsmouth, Ohio, and had a total enrollment of 4,687 students for fall semester 2011.

As the regional state university serving southern Ohio and beyond, SSU has met the challenge of its unique mission: to prepare students for the changing needs of business, industry, education, and society through its diversified degree programs. Recognizing the importance of knowledge, values, and cultural enrichment, SSU has made a commitment to provide a higher education environment that fosters competence in oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking. SSU offers a wide variety of academic programs, at some of the lowest tuition levels in the state, including more than 80 baccalaureate, associate, and master's degrees in arts and humanities, mathematical sciences, natural sciences, social sciences, teacher education, business administration, industrial and engineering technologies, and health sciences.

Since becoming a university, one of the core features of SSU's unique mission has been to provide greater access to higher education for the citizens of the Appalachian region through open enrollment. Pursuit of this primary objective has required SSU to address the challenges of serving a student population that has been historically underrepresented in higher education and often underprepared for college. SSU is situated in a region characterized as having high poverty, fiscal challenges, and low levels of adult education attainment. Almost four out of every five students at Shawnee State University are first-generation college students, many of whom are insufficiently prepared academically, socially, economically, and culturally, to succeed in college. They are in need of intervention, developmental coursework, and support services. Nearly 44% of all first-time in college students at SSU are underprepared and require developmental courses. SSU's open enrollment attracts underprepared students from outside the region, as well, and the University has experienced significant growth in the last ten years. With this growth has been a parallel increase in the number of developmental courses required, creating greater challenges to improving student retention.

Additionally, SSU embraces as part of its mission the importance of enriching the lives of those in its community. SSU has demonstrated this by providing opportunities for continuing personal and professional development, intellectual discovery, applied research, and appreciation for the creative and performing arts.

SSU is unique among Ohio universities in its mission, students served and its institutional profile – yet it has embraced these challenges and excelled. It is in support of this unique mission that the Shawnee State University Supplement was established in 1986, upon SSU's creation. The supplement, which has decreased from more than $4 million to the current $2.4 million funding, was originally intended to provide support for the University in its transition from a community college to a university and to provide increased access for regional students by keeping tuition lower than other universities in the state. In 1994 the General Assembly reviewed the University's development and the role of the supplement and developed a plan to "level off" the supplement at approximately $2.5 million in continuing support of lower tuition rates for Appalachian students.

The Chancellor's Plan

A Strategy for Achievement

The purpose of the Plan is to recognize and build upon the achievements of SSU to further the goals of: 1) improving course completion; 2) increasing the number of degrees conferred, and; 3) furthering the university's mission of service to the Appalachian region.

In recent years the University has focused upon improving course completion and graduation rates and allocated funds to support programming, personnel and scholarships. At the same time the number of students entering the University underprepared to do college level work has increased and the University has seen its retention rate level off, rather than decrease. It is clear that in order to have dramatic impact upon the current retention and graduation rates, programming will need to be refined and expanded. The first phase of this Plan will provide Shawnee State University with additional expertise, utilizing an external consultant who will work with both the Chancellor and Shawnee State University to refine the goals and metrics of the Plan, identify best practices, and advance existing efforts showing success.

Highlights of Existing Efforts & Success

SSU has already reallocated resources and developed and deployed several successful programs that are actively addressing areas impacting upon the achievement of the three goals of the Plan. Here are a few examples of these notable programs:

Development of university-wide strategies to address course completion, retention, and degree attainment.

SSU recognized that to be successful it had to develop and implement comprehensive strategies to better understand the prominent factors of its student body that lead to successful course completion, retention and degree attainment. These strategies have included providing a dedicated student success center with peer mentors, individualized, and small group tutoring; using placement data to schedule developmental students into specialized courses to enhance their academics; and providing information about available resources and services to targeted student populations. Additionally, SSU has recently revised its Orientation programs as part of creating a "First Year Experience" to include strategies for addressing the needs of targeted student populations such as veterans, transfer students, first-generation, etc. through coordination of academic and student affairs.

Despite the increase in the number of underprepared students enrolling at Shawnee State, the University has maintained a retention rate of returning freshmen that is typical among peer open-admission institutions - an indication of the success of SSU's efforts thus far.

SSU must have strong evidence-based strategies to address the needs of underprepared first-time in college students, the student population identified at the highest risk, to have continued success in overall retention and persistence to graduation.

Enhancement of the University's data-based decision-making capabilities

SSU recently created the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), which is charged with facilitating and promoting data driven decision-making across the university. The OIE allows SSU to make reliable, accurate, and timely decisions and forecasts with data that is more readily available to campus leadership. This results in decisions that benefit SSU students, programs, and the University and allows for thoughtful and deliberate strategic decisions that ensure proper stewardship of limited resources while maximizing their impact.

Additional data from research conducted by the Ohio Appalachian Center for Higher Education ("OACHE"), an organization created by the Ohio General Assembly to eliminate regional barriers to access and success in higher education, has provided SSU with insight about the dynamics of the region that impact a student's success in college. SSU has provided a home for OACHE on its campus since 1993.

Creation of a University College, an enrollment management unit, and a Student Business Center provides focus on retention and access to critical student services

SSU created a "University College" to bring together services aimed at improving student success and to provide links among its academic and non-academic units, providing a university-wide focus on efforts to improve course completion, retention, and graduation rates. As part of these retention efforts, SSU also established the Student Business Center, which brings together the bursar, registrar, and financial aid services within a single operation and brought together the efforts of these functions with admissions – aiding students and staff in better navigating the unknowns of the university and creating more efficient operations from recruitment through graduation. Additionally, a university-wide Enrollment Management Committee reviews and recommends practices and policies intended to enhance retention.

The Path to Achievement

Building upon SSU's current successes, the Chancellor has developed a Plan that will achieve the following three goals to propel SSU into an even brighter future:

Goal 1

Beginning with first-time in college students entering in the fall of 2013, Shawnee State University will improve the rate of successfully completed courses, as compared to the AY11-12 (both semesters) course completion rate, by 1-3%* for each class entering for the next ten years.

Goal 2

Beginning with first-time in college students entering in the fall of 2013, Shawnee State University will increase the number of students earning associate and/or baccalaureate degrees, as defined by IPEDS**, by 1-3%* for each class entering in the successive 10-year period.

Goal 3

Shawnee State University will further its service to the Appalachian region by strengthening relationships with key regional employers and school districts.

*Improvement percentages are subject to adjustment, based on findings and recommendations of an external consultant.

**IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) provides standards for data collection and defines graduation rate at 150% of estimated time for a 4-year degree.

NOTE: First-time in college students were identified as a targeted high-risk population that present an opportunity for increased retention and success.

Plan to Meet Goal I: Increase Course Completion

1.1 SSU shall conduct a full review of all course completion data over the past three academic years to fully understand trends and provide tailored solutions.
   • Review of all existing SSU courses and programs, to then set target course completion metrics and measures for each course to meet the goal of increased completion;
   • Identification of those SSU courses with low completion rates;
   • Provide students enrolled in those courses with low completion rates targeted supplemental instruction, tutoring and mentoring services;
   • Implement intensive and targeted strategies for students who have been identified as at-risk for low course completion, such as personal advising, individual and small group tutoring, and an increased range of course and degree delivery methods (e.g., summer bridge camps, intersession classes, distance learning);
   • Monitor and track on a semester basis the effectiveness and impact of each of these efforts to obtain Goal I.

1.2 Develop collaborative partnerships with key regional secondary schools to develop rapid strategies that will prepare students to enter the university prepared to succeed.
   • Identify existing gaps between the content taught in high schools and college readiness expectations in English, language arts, and mathematics;
   • Work to align high school curriculum and college placement expectations;
   • Develop collaborative improvement plans with key regional secondary schools to reduce in-coming SSU student remediation rates;
   • Identify with created retention plan a strategy to provide mentoring of incoming students with current SSU students;
   • Monitor, improve and report on these efforts to the Plan Implementation & Monitoring Team on a regular basis.

1.3 Institute a First Year Experience Program.
- Design and implement a dedicated SSU team to expand use of academic and student affairs services with a focus on those students identified as likely to be underprepared for college level coursework;
- Develop and implement student centered supportive services for identified at-risk students including mentorship;
- Create a First Year Experience course for all students entering SSU;
- Develop metrics and measures to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the First Year Experience Project;
- Monitor, improve and report on these efforts to the Plan Implementation & Monitoring Team on a regular basis.
- A campus-wide group is completing planning for this First Year Experience Spring 2012 with a pilot program to launch Fall 2012.

1.4 Develop and expand courses and programs that allow for distance education options.
- Expand the distance learning opportunities (including blended courses), led by the academic faculty with support of administration, that are targeted to increasing course completion;
- Monitor direction given by the General Assembly's Distance Learning Taskforce, and the programs that follow related to distance learning.

1.5 Implement the "Beginning College Survey of Student Satisfaction," to be administered to all first-time in college students.
- Utilize existing survey tools to design and administer a survey that will aid SSU in identifying new opportunities and program gaps;
- Begin monitoring and reporting of the Beginning College Survey of Student Satisfaction annually to SSU faculty and administration as part of the retention plan.

Plan to Meet Goal II: Increase the Number of Degrees Awarded.

2.1 SSU will increase the associate and baccalaureate degree graduation rates of students targeted in this Plan by 1-3% each year of the Plan, as defined by IPEDS***.
- Monitor entering underprepared first time in college students and provide supportive student services and resources (advising, mentoring, tutoring) to help increase the percentage of first time in college students obtaining degrees;
- Increase the Fall semester to Fall semester retention rate (persisting year-to-year) by 1-3% for those students entering identified as at-risk or underprepared;
- Establish baseline figures and set SSU standards, along with a three year growth projection, for the key metrics of: retention, degrees conferred and graduation rates.

2.2 Encourage expansion of regional business, industry and civic partnerships to increase SSU Co-op or internship programs at a percentage rate equivalent to the projected increase in enrollment.
- Build upon existing partnerships and create new opportunities for student internship placements;
- Work collaboratively with regional partnerships to enhance the curriculum to meet the needs of our business community.

2.4 Identify and modify institutional policies, practices and programming that currently increase the time to graduation for students.
- Develop a communication plan to share with students and parents upon matriculation on cost of not completing degree in a timely manner;
- Infuse the student advising with this information to reinforce the Plan;
- Work with faculty to align course sequencing and scheduling for timely completion;
- Develop alternative time frameworks and formats for courses, i.e., 3-year degree completion programs;
- Work with faculty to refine developmental courses and placements.

2.5 Assess the viability of developing a "Success Roadmap" to degree completion, including:
- Recognize completion of 30 hours of study (1-year) with the granting of a certificate focused on career readiness.
- Recognize completion of 60 hours (2-years) of study and a core curricula completion with the granting of an associate degree in the specific art or science discipline selected.
- Focus on expanding co-operative education and internship programs to provide employment experiences.

***The target is ambitious and the external consultant will be asked to provide recommended refinement, as appropriate.

Plan to Meet Goal III: Further SSU's Service to the Appalachian Region.

3.1 Strengthen relationships with regional school districts.
- Provide districts with data on the performance of their graduates at SSU;
- Work with districts to align the common core curriculum with college readiness expectations;
- Continue to offer and expand dual credit offerings, PSEOP, and support for AP courses.

3.2 Enhance relationships with area employers.
- Increase the number of clinical, internship, and field experience opportunities;
- Increase area employers' participation in program Advisory groups.

3.3 Strengthen academic and programmatic offerings through enhanced communication with alumni.
- Regularly survey alumni to assess the types of jobs they earned and how well they were prepared.

Implementation & Monitoring of the Plan

The Plan will have two distinct phases: Implementation and Monitoring. The Plan Implementation & Monitoring Team (Team) shall consist of five members – three being named by the President of SSU and two being named by the Chancellor. The President of SSU will name a chairperson for the team. The Chancellor shall at all times retain full authority and responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the Plan.

During the Implementation Phase, the Team shall:

1. Identify a consultant, who shall be retained by the Chancellor, to assist the Team with the implementation and monitoring phase.
2. Recommend refinements to the Plan, as necessary, to the Chancellor.
3. Develop clear metrics and measures that will assist the Team in monitoring the progress toward and impact of achievement of the stated goals.
4. Create a timeline for implementation and completion of the Plan.
5. Visit the SSU campus to understand the operational impact of the Plan.
6. Meet as needed for performance of its duties.

During the Monitoring Phase, the Team shall:

1. Meet quarterly, or as directed by the Team Chair, to discuss SSU's progress on the Plan.
2. Ensure implementation of the Plan per the agreed upon timeline, including visits to the SSU campus.
3. Monitor SSU's progress towards meeting the goals and metrics of the Plan.
4. Recommend to the Chancellor appropriate adjustments to the Plan.
5. Prepare and submit a final report of the Team to the Chancellor at the close of each biennium, which highlights the impact of the Plan and makes recommendations going forward.

By the submission of this Plan summary, the Chancellor has completed the objectives called for by the Ohio General Assembly in H.B. 153.

The Chancellor and his staff look forward to working very closely with Shawnee State University's President, Board of Trustees and staff to ensure the full implementation and monitoring of the Chancellor's Plan.

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