

TITLE III GRANT

Strengthening Student Services to Improve Retention

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Introduction

In 2003, Portland Community College was awarded the Title III “Strengthening Student Services to Improve Retention” grant. This was a five-year grant from October 2003 through September 2008 with a budget of \$1,790,229 (approximately \$360,000 per year) funded through the Department of Education.

The primary goal of the grant was to improve student retention through the development of a comprehensive online student services portal and faculty training on retention techniques for the classroom. The student services portal offers a unique solution to communication and access problems that were identified in an analysis of student, staff, and faculty prior to the grant funding period. These problems included: inconvenient and incomplete orientations, limited availability of academic advisors, difficulty accessing transfer evaluations and degree audits, lack of individualized educational planning, minimal early-warning and intervention systems, and overall time and transportation issues. The Title III grant addressed the college’s need to address all of the above.

Title III has helped carryout the PCC mission and goals by providing additional services online for students, faculty and staff. PCC strives to make education accessible for all residents throughout our 1500 square mile district, in addition to providing effective teaching and supportive student services. The online portal service, MyPCC, gives students access to most college services without having to step foot on campus. This has been a great benefit to our diverse student body with commitments that sometimes make getting to campus difficult during regular business hours. Communication between faculty, staff, and students has most greatly improved through the development and use of online services. This communication has given more students access to our programs and services since the inception of the grant.

History of Title III

The Title III grant program helps eligible institutions of higher education become self-sufficient and assists in expanding their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen the academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability. These funds may be used for planning, faculty development, and establishing endowment funds. Administrative management, and the development and improvement of academic programs also are supported.

Under the specific eligibility requirements described in the SIP regulations (*Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 34, Part 607), an institution must have at least 50 percent of its degree-seeking students receiving need-based student financial assistance from the Department of Education or have a higher percentage of students receiving Pell Grants than the median percentage at comparable institutions that offer similar instruction, and have low education and general expenditures below the average of comparable institutions that offer similar instruction. The secretary may waive the eligibility requirements under certain conditions, which are defined in program regulations.

In 1995, PCC was awarded a Title III grant entitled “Improvement of Academic Programs and Faculty Development” to address the extraordinarily high attrition rates in math courses. Recognizing every academic program required proficiency in math and that math had the lowest completion rates of any subject area in the college, the grant helped increase the success and retention of students in mathematics. Objectives for the previous grant included the establishment of an applied mathematics

curriculum, embedding learning skills, faculty development in teaching/learning strategies, establishment of an assessment process, and development of a community math center.

With the success of the previous Title III grant, PCC submitted another Title III grant application in 2003 to further address student retention within the college. Of the 307 Title III grant applications submitted that year, PCC was one of the 74 institutions that were approved for funding through the Department of Education.

Key Measures

The key measures for the Title III “Strengthening Student Services to Improve Retention” grant were to increase student retention in the follow ways:

By September 30, 2008, increase the **fall-to-winter retention rate** of degree-seeking credit freshmen from 68% to 83%, an increase of 15%.

By September 30, 2008, increase the **fall-winter-spring retention rate** of degree-seeking credit freshmen from 50% to 65%, an increase of 15%.

By September 30, 2008, increase the **fall-to-fall retention** rate of degree-seeking credit freshmen from 41% to 56%, an increase of 15%.

By September 30, 2008, decrease the number of credit freshmen being placed on **academic alert** after their first term from 26% to 16%, a decrease of 10%.

By September 30, 2008, increase the number of degree-seeking freshmen **enrolling in four or more terms** in a two-year period from 44% to 54%, an increase of 10%.

Title III worked with PCC’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness to assist in the data collection and reporting as it related to these key measures. During the course of the grant substantial increases were difficult to achieve, but there were incremental improvements with four of the five measures.

Fall-to-winter retention rate of degree-seeking credit freshmen **increased 3.7%**.

Fall-winter-spring retention rate of degree-seeking credit freshmen **increased 3.3%**.

Fall-to-fall retention of degree-seeking credit freshmen rate **increased 3.4%**.

Credit freshmen placed on **academic alert** after their first term **decreased 3.9%**.

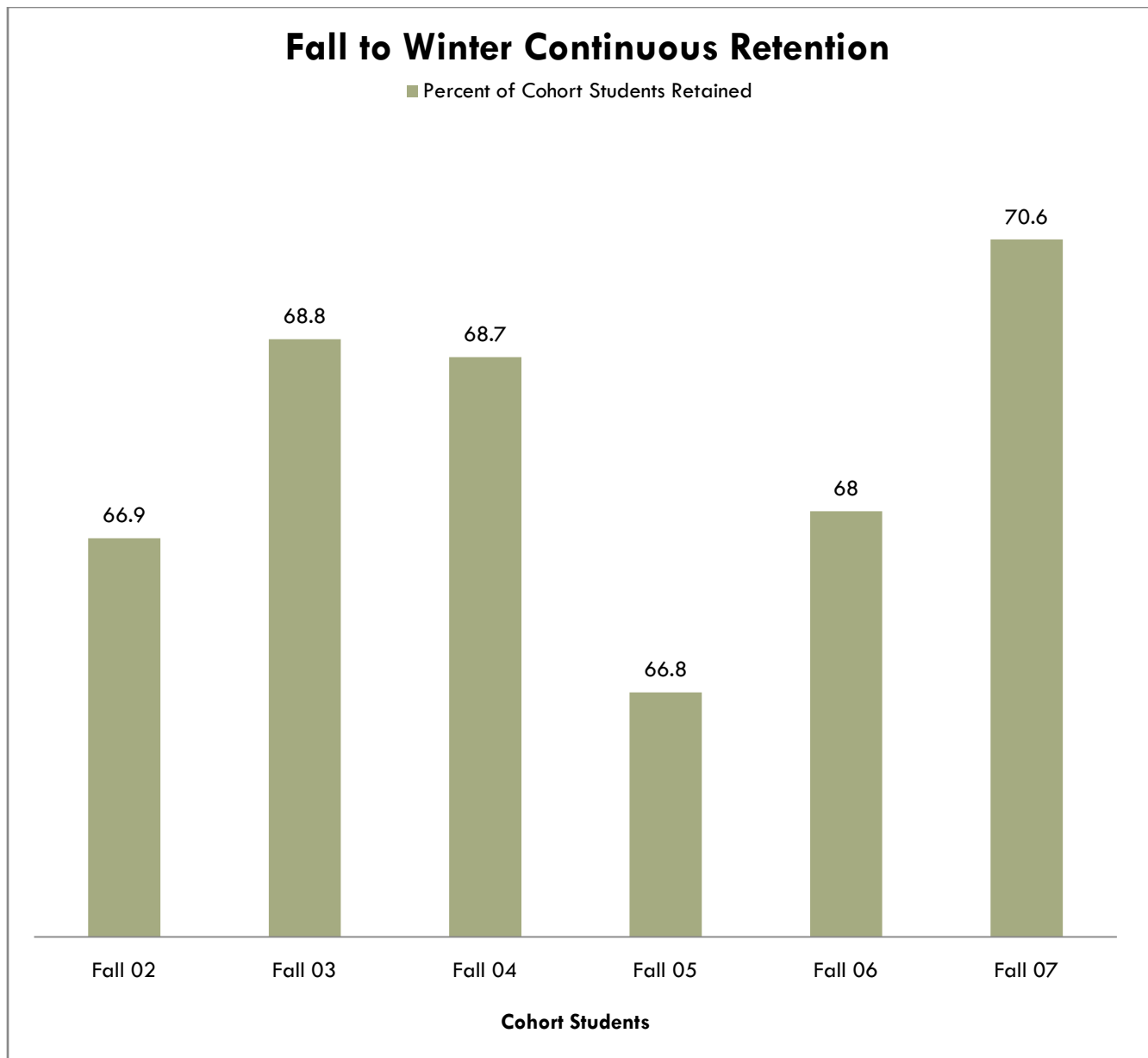
Degree-seeking freshmen **enrolling in four or more terms** in a two-year period **decreased 1.5%**.

Obviously, many factors play a role in the retention of PCC students, not just the development of online services. Student retention has long been a topic of conversation and the focus of various efforts at the college, but with the introduction of Title III in 2003, and additional online and portal services, awareness

of student retention reached greater heights. All of these contributed to the incremental increases in retention and student success as mentioned above.

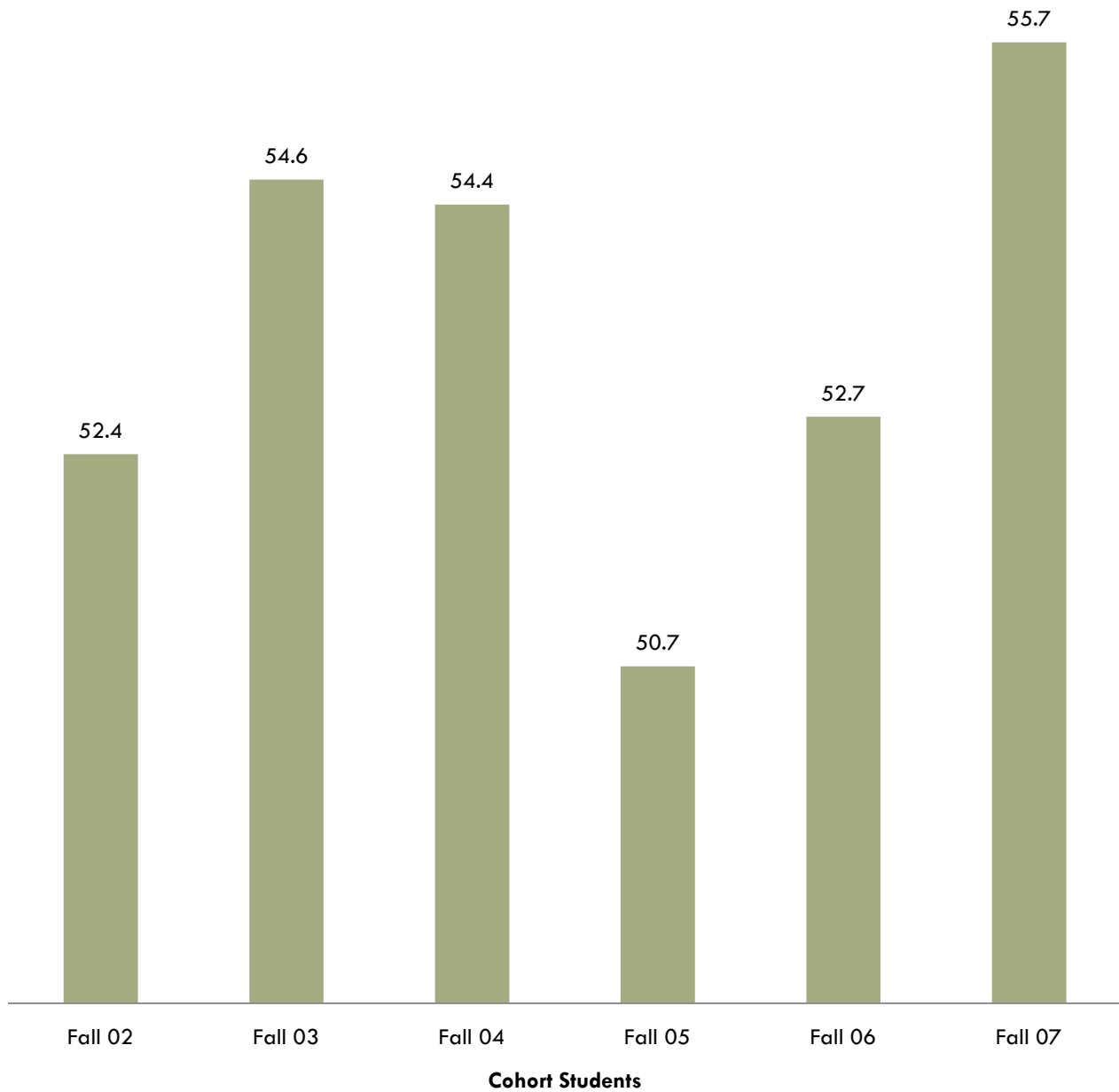
Recommendations

The proposed percentage of increase in each of the key measures were not achieved upon completion of the grant. Again, there are many factors that play a role in this, the economy, accessibility of financial aid, personal and family circumstances, to name a few. While the substantial increases in the key measures were good targets for Title III and the college, in the end, they give the perception that the grant may have failed in achieving its objectives. This issue should be given consideration as the college applies for future grants.



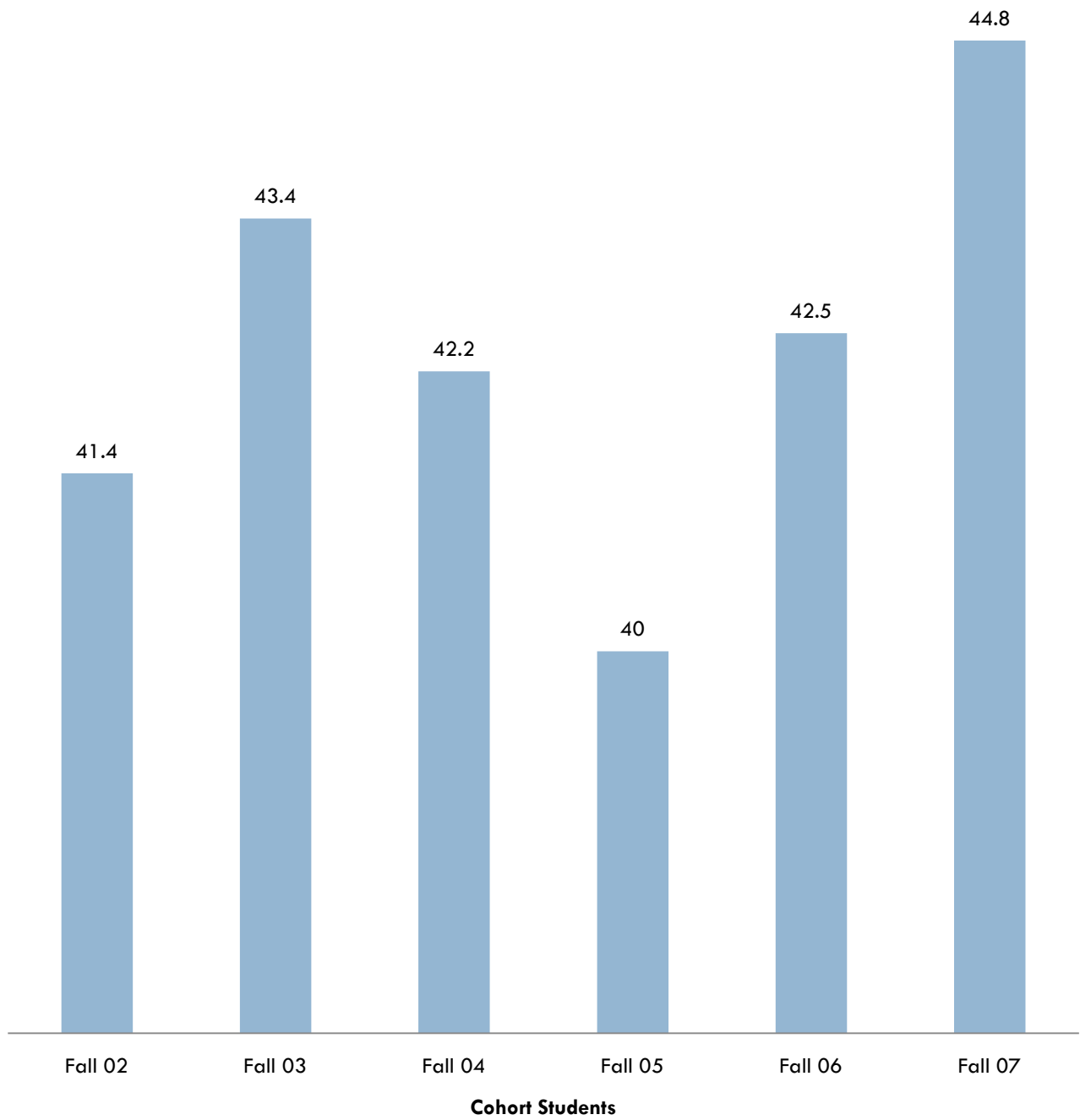
Fall to Winter to Spring Continuous Retention

■ Percent of Cohort Students Retained



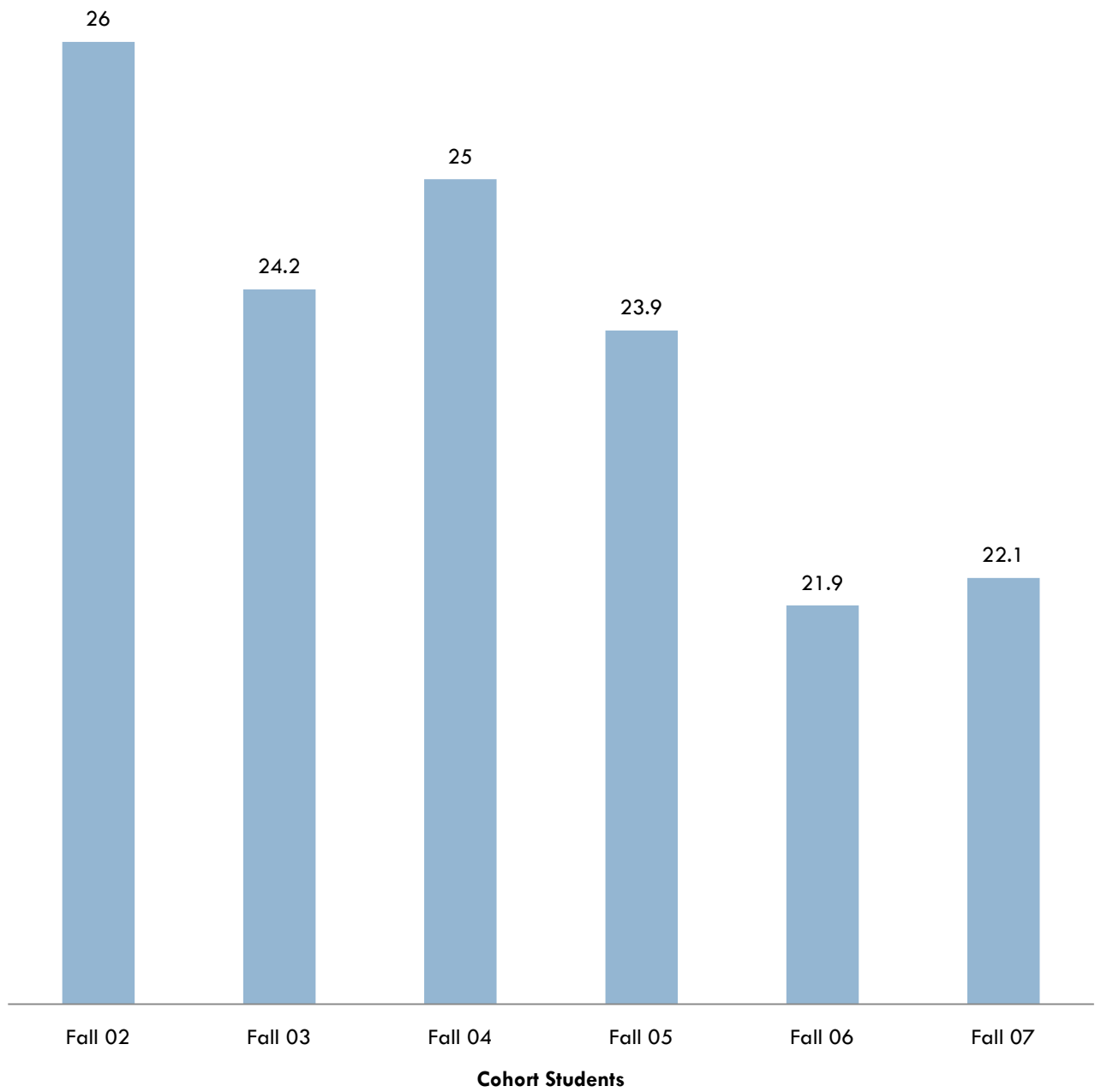
Fall to Fall Retention

■ Percent of Cohort Students Retained



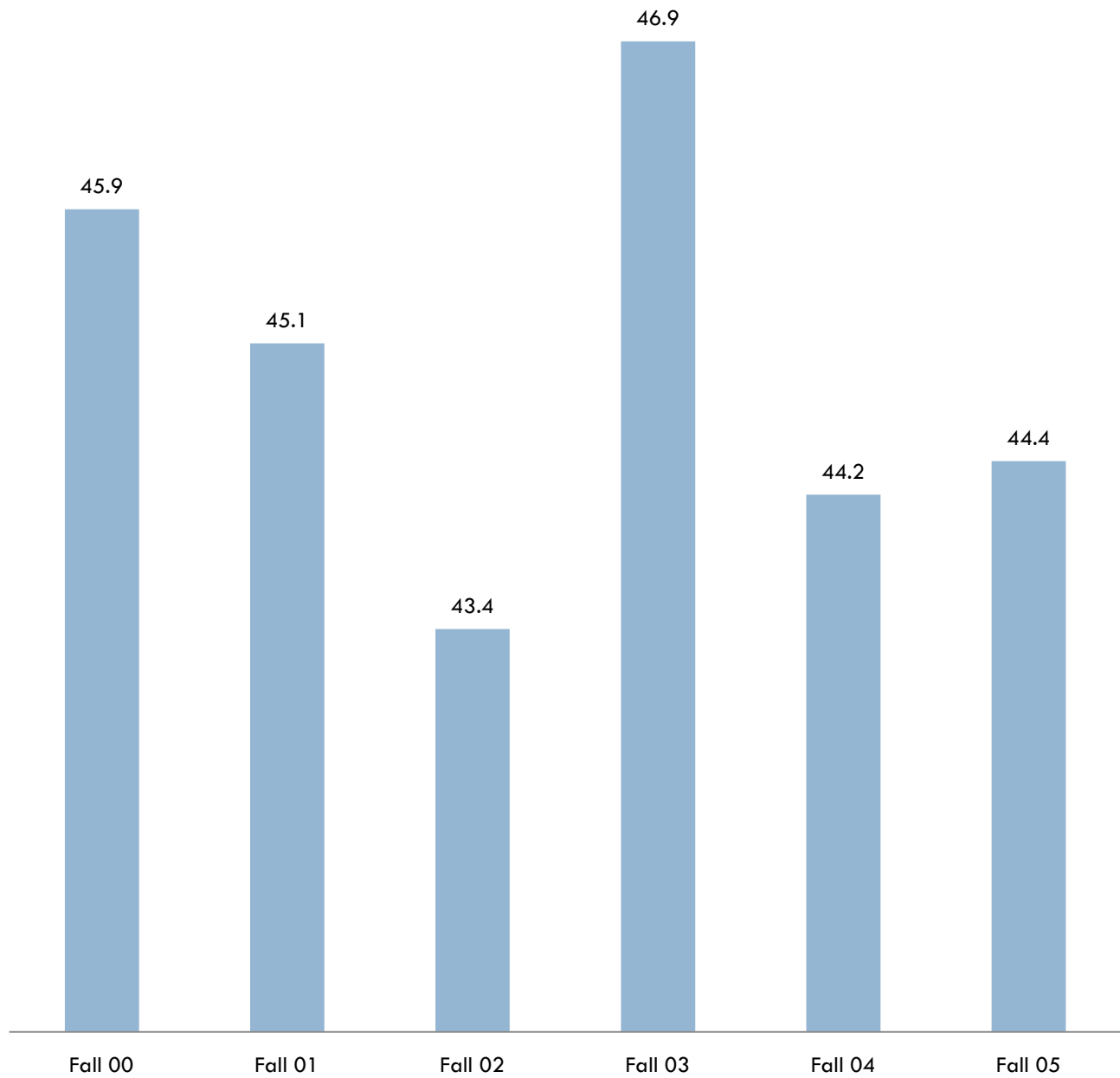
Students on Academic Alert After First Term

■ Percent of Cohort Students Placed on Academic Alert



Students Enrolled in 4 or more terms in the 2 year period following their first term at PCC

■ Percent of Cohort Students Enrolled in 4 or more terms in the 2 year period following their first term at PCC



Staffing

A full-time Title III Coordinator/Activity Director reported to the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs for the duration of the grant. Other Title III staff included:

Retention Coordinator (1 FTE)

Online Transfer Center Maintenance Coordinator (.5 FTE)

Administrative Assistant (.5 FTE)

Systems Administrator (1 FTE)

Web Developer (1 FTE)

Student Workers for Computer Help Desk

As a condition of the grant, the Retention Coordinator, Online Transfer Center Maintenance Coordinator, Systems Administrator, and Web Developer, were institutionalized through Enrollment Services and Technology Solution Services upon close of the grant. Fortunately, this allows the college to continue maintaining and improving the portal and online services that have come out of the grant without interruption. Individuals who have been responsible for portal maintenance and improvement will continue to do so.

Title III staff held important roles throughout the institution and on various committees including:

Academic and Student Affairs Council (ASAC)
 Educational Advisory Council (EAC)
 Student Development Committee (SDC)
 Graduation/Commencement committee
 Enrollment Management committee
 Strategic Staffing committee
 Tobacco-Free Taskforce
 First Year Experience

Staff also participated and presented at numerous conferences, workshops, and in-service events, including:

Student Retention & Success Conference 2007, 2008, 2009
 Educational Policy Institute: Retention Conference 2008
 Education Pathways Conference 2007
 On Course Workshop 2008
 SunGard Summit 2006, 2007, 2008
 Noel-Levitz National Conference on Student Recruitment, Marketing & Retention 2006, 2007
 National Resource Center Conference for the First Year Experience 2005
 AACRAO Strategic Enrollment Management 2004
 NW Association of Student Affairs Professionals 2004
 Articulation and Transfer Conference 2004

Recommendations

During the first year of the grant, there was a significant challenge, in that it was difficult to fill the two technology positions, in part due to the private sector paying higher wages for similar positions. For future grant writing purposes, the wages for these specialized technology positions should be assessed in an effort to budget for positions and to be competitive in the labor market.

One of the conditions of the grant was that some of the Title III positions be carried into the college's general fund upon completion of the grant. While the college greatly benefits from these positions and further carrying forth the mission (and technology) of the grant, it has also posed some challenge in identifying where funding for these positions comes from, where these positions are situated in the college, and the job duties those individuals will carry. These challenges should be addressed by grant management and staff well in advance of grant completion.

For immediate consideration, each of the Title III positions that are now housed with Technology Solution Services and Enrollment Services should review position job descriptions and update them to better reflect job duties and expectations.

Grant Projects

Title III staff, along with the support of administrators, faculty, and staff across the PCC district were responsible for developing and implementing the following:

MyPCC: Online portal system

Ask the Panther: Virtual advising assistant

Panther Tracks: Expanded online orientation

Course Progress Notification: Online early-warning system

My Academic Plan: MAP

University Transfer: Online transfer center

DegreeWorks: Online degree audit

Faculty & Staff Training: Intervention strategies

All of these projects have been developed and are now in use, with the exception of Degree Works: Online degree audit which will be available during the 2009/2010 academic year. Each project included contributions from many faculty, staff, administrators, and students from across the district and continue to be evaluated and improved to meet the needs of the college. Without the hundreds of hours of in-kind service from various staff around the district, these projects may not be a reality. Additionally, grant staff continue to promote the use of these online services, though in-class demonstrations, faculty/staff meetings, campus workshops, and various communication efforts.

MyPCC: Online portal system

The initial focus of the grant was to develop and implement MyPCC, the college's online portal system. This online tool gives students critical course and college information without having to be on campus during business hours. The online portal has greatly benefited the PCC student body who often have work and family obligations that limit their ability to be on campus to address college business and coursework.

Access to course materials has dramatically increased with the use for the portal. Additionally, most college necessities, including Registration, Business Office, Bookstore, Library, Student Services, and email services are available through the portal. Some of these resources were difficult to find online prior to MyPCC organizing them in a student-driven fashion. This organization was based on the input of student services staff, as well as, direct responses from students who participated in usability testing for MyPCC. The successful development and continued improvement of MyPCC has been due in part to the active participation of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and PCC Human Resources. Many individuals served on four committees that helped shape the direction of the portal: Title III Oversight Committee, Portal Operations Steering Committee, Advising Steering Committee, and Student Development Steering Committee. The Portal Operations Steering Committee continues to meet bi-weekly to improve portal services, while the Student Development Steering Committee meets quarterly to address portal changes and improvements.

MyPCC went online and available to the PCC community in Fall 2004. This new communication tool was a major change for the college and its 3,700 employees and 83,000 students. It took most users a significant amount of time to transition their use of older communication methods to the new one-stop unified system, but within the first four months of portal service 36,000 students logged in.

Portal training: As we continue using and improving the portal, students, faculty and staff are continually trained on its features and benefits of use. The Technology Solution Services Training Team and Instructional Technology Specialists provide ongoing workshops and one-on-one assistance to faculty and staff, while the Retention Coordinator provides in-class demonstrations to students and faculty.

Approximately 1,200 students in 65 classes participated in hands-on portal demonstrations during the 2007-2008 academic year. Additionally, all new students are introduced to the portal through both online and in-person New Student Orientations. Through these interactions with faculty, staff, and students, we have had the opportunity to continually assess the portal, getting continuous feedback from the college community about its successes and shortcomings.

Student satisfaction: In winter 2008, PCC administered the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) to 1,177 credit students. Through this survey, PCC students responded that they used email more frequently to communicate with instructors than did other community college students. The portal has helped to facilitate that communication and it is known that there is a greater likelihood that students will persist and succeed in college the more they have contact with their instructors (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2008). Through both faculty and student workshops across the district, this is a critical point that Title III staff have continued to voice.

After going through the training, I got a better understanding of how important MyPCC is and it made me realize how much more I need to use it.

CG 100 College Survival and Success student

Additionally, in the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory administered spring 2007, the importance of MyPCC was confirmed when students responded that access to college services through the portal had a high importance of 6.19 (out of a 7 point scale) . The survey identified student satisfaction for this item was rated at 5.64, for a performance gap of .55. It was also found that the use of MyPCC Course Tools was important to students at 5.78, with a satisfaction rating of 5.08, and a .70 performance gap. With this information, there has been continual effort given to the improvement of portal services and performance, as well as the promotion among faculty and students to use MyPCC Course Tools.

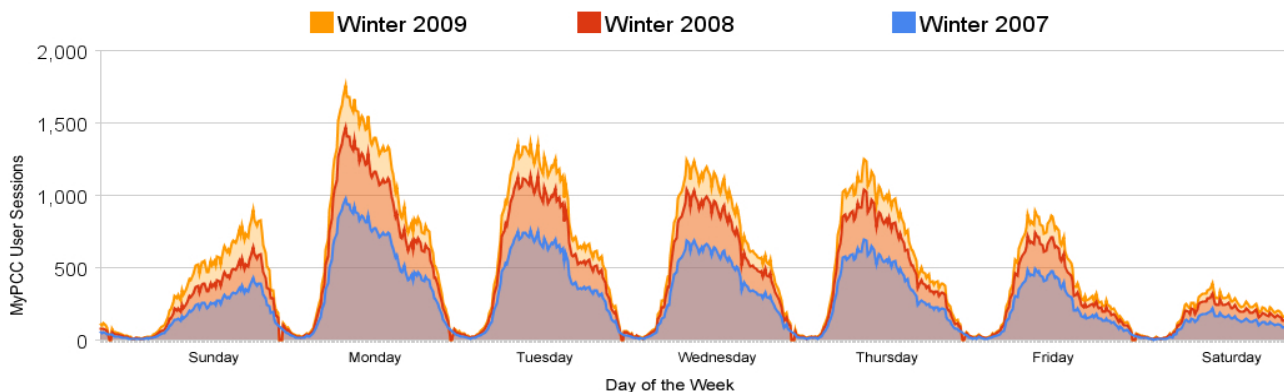
Portal usage: In preparation for increases in usage, MyPCC was migrated to a new server environment with enhanced capacity and, through server virtualization, better capability to grow. MyPCC was migrated in November 2007 from an HP-UX server environment to a Sun Solaris environment. This involved the purchase and installation of five new servers for our production MyPCC and email services. Three servers and additional storage space was also purchased and installed for the test environment. The goal is to have an environment that can support up to 5,000 concurrent user sessions. Term to term, usage of MyPCC grows and as we move forward, more and more college services become dependent upon MyPCC as their gateway.

The portal experienced a successful start of fall 2008 and a largely successful winter term registration. MyPCC did not perform as hoped for the start of winter 2009, but the PCC community continued to show up to use the portal. A few details regarding the portal during the first week of winter term 2009 follow.

- 1,400 were logged in at the same time on Monday
- 20,800 students, faculty and staff logged in on Monday
- 52,000 actual logins on Monday (some people logged in more than once)
- 30% increase in usage the Sunday before term start
- 15% increase on the first Monday of the term
- 235,000 logins during the week (Sunday through Saturday)

While these numbers are impressive, they would have been higher had the portal not experienced performance problems and we realize that many of the people represented by these numbers did not have very satisfying experiences with MyPCC during this time. The following graph shows how portal usage has increased over the past two years at the start of winter term.

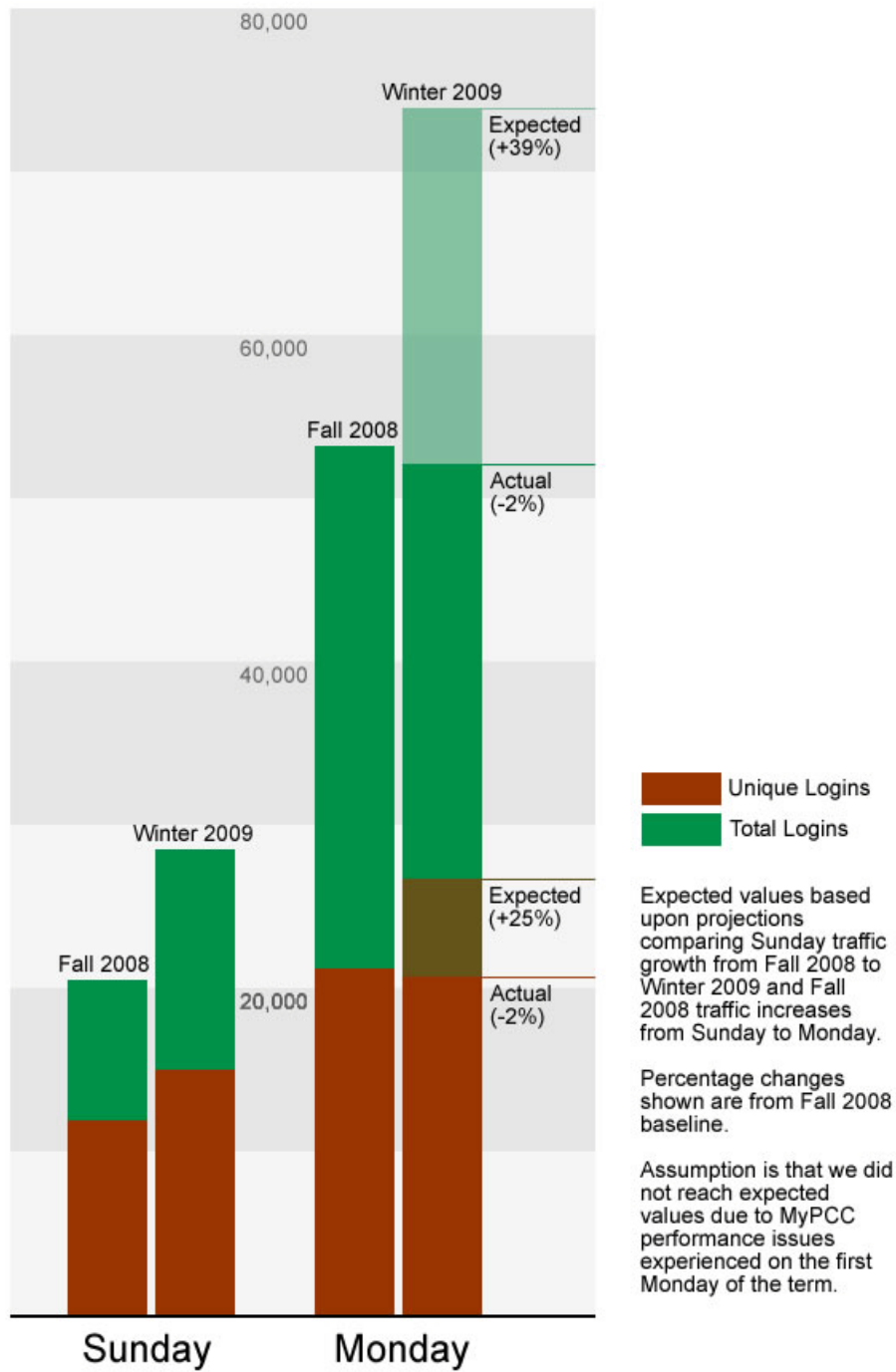
MyPCC Session Trends For First Week of Winter Term



The following graphic projects the traffic we might have seen (expected values) based upon projections from actual trends.

MyPCC Logins (Unique Accounts and Total Logins)

Comparison of Start of Term for Fall 2008 and Winter 2009



The start of winter term is the busiest time of year for MyPCC. It also sets the bar for fall term. At this time we expect to see a 20% increase for fall 2009 compared to fall 2008. Spring 2009 registration is the next critical time for MyPCC. The most recent improvements in MyPCC, which corrected the latest performance issues, leave the portal in a positive environment for this load.

As noted in discussions with students, we are starting to see growing expectations around portal usage. Students are looking to see if their instructors are making use of MyPCC Course Tools. Since winter 2008, MyPCC Course Tools, which allow faculty to student and student to student communication have been active for all courses. This follows consistent increases in use over the first four years MyPCC has been available. Over 1,300 courses actively use Course Tools on a continual basis and on a typical day instructors send over 200 course related announcements to their students.

Through usability studies we have found that student expectations around online tools has grown. This is confirmed, as mentioned previously, with the results of the winter 2008 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) which found that PCC is a leader in faculty-to-student and student-to-student communication in comparison to other Oregon community colleges and other multi-campus institutions nationwide. Each term, the number of PCC faculty who actively use Course Tools has grown significantly. In fall 2006, MyPCC Course Tools were used in 15% of courses, in Fall 2007 this increased to 25% (another 25% used our Learning Management System WebCT/Blackboard) and now, as noted above, we leave all MyPCC Course Tools on by default.

Student connections have been enhanced through the use of the portal. MyPCC Groups gives students and employees an opportunity to use online group tools to share information and correspond with group members.

MyPCC is a great tool. I use it almost every day. It makes things so much easier to be able to do almost everything from any computer rather than have to come into school to do things.

CG 100 College Survival and Success student

To date, there are 217 employee groups, 92 program groups (students and staff), 93 student groups (mostly student clubs). Additionally, attendance at college sponsored events has increased due to their visibility in MyPCC through the events calendar and announcements. As an example, over 70 students attended a poetry reading that typically would have only drawn about a dozen students. In addition, processes were developed that used email

for communications with students and received positive feedback on these: notification of bills and registration start times, Phi-Theta-Kappa eligibility, Deans/Presidents/Honors lists, etc.

Non-credit use: The success of the portal for the PCC's credit students, faculty and staff, was extended in spring 2008 to all non-credit and Community Education students who now have access to MyPCC. This has given non-credit students a gateway to registration, information, announcements, and course tools.

Waitlists: Beginning winter 2007, students had the opportunity to put themselves on class waitlists. This was not an initial objective/project of the Title III grant, but due to grant staff involvement in the portal, its integration with Banner, and the grant's focus on technology to increase student retention, our involvement was important. Automated waitlists had been requested for many years, using the MyPCC functions we were able to deploy a successful and efficient system for automating waitlists that requires very little technical support.

With the new online waitlists, as class space becomes available, students are automatically taken off the waitlist and registered for the class. Students then receive an email in their MyPCC email account that

informs them of the registration. Students can check waitlist status daily by checking their Student Detail Schedule in the portal and see the order in which they fall for being added to the class. During MyPCC demonstrations with students, grant staff go through online registration services with students and introduce students to the waitlist feature. The introduction of course waitlists has also given administrators additional information to determine whether or not to add course sections with high demand. Division deans can run reports to identify high demand course sections and to identify the best times of day to offer courses.

Additional applications: As was demonstrated through the waitlist project, secured access to additional applications has become relatively 'easy' through the portal. Banner Self-Service, Ask the Panther, My Academic Plan, Events Calendar, PCC-Pay, CCOG Management are all separate software applications that plug into the MyPCC presentation. There is the potential to do much more and provide more services through the portal, as will be seen in the years to come.

Challenges: Managing portal account access is an enormous task (help resetting passwords is the most common support call to the Help Desk). We have continually refined the login process and made improvements, but the volume of users still requires a significant support effort. As simple as we have tried to make this process, it faces increasing pressure to become more complex and costly due to security concerns and FERPA regulations.

Adequately anticipating and preparing for high-load usage and rate of growth is also a continual challenge. By fall 2006, after 2 years in, it was clear the college would need to upgrade and expand our hardware platform within one year to meet the growth rate of demand. This may well continue to be the case as our enrollment increases across the district and more college services are dependent upon the portal as their gateway. Additionally, it has taken longer to utilize some of the more sophisticated and customized functionality of MyPCC (portal for non-credit students, for example) because significant time has been spent on stabilizing the platform and addressing system performance.

The vendor product is in its infancy and PCC was one of the first colleges in the state to move forward in using it. Vendor support was comprised by technical challenges, the size of demand from their customer base, and inadequate resources.

By the Numbers

- | | |
|----|--|
| 20 | Percent of courses with MyPCC Course Tools active. |
| 82 | Percent of degree-seeking students logging into MyPCC in a typical month. |
| 97 | Percent of full-time faculty and staff logging into MyPCC over a two month period. |

Recommendations

There are two areas in particular need of long term commitment to on-going review, assessment, refinement and investment. With that commitment, we will have a strong infrastructure for enhancing online services for students. Without it, the services will begin to fail students. The two areas are:

- Account management: activating and inactivating access, supporting students with account issues, providing timely and appropriate attention to security issues related to accounts.
- Software and hardware upgrade and expansion: planning and execution to meet the growth rate of demand.

Funds through the Title III grant provided the college with the means by which to staff and purchase the technology needed for introducing and improving the portal in its early years. Now without those additional grant funds, it is critical that consideration and a defined plan to fund portal technology make its way into budget and funding decision making.

Currently, we have barely tapped the potential for targeted communications. We have purposely kept usage of these tools restricted to a small group, out of concern that these resources maintain a high level of integrity as “official communications” of the college and, once lost, it would be difficult to re-establish that integrity. We believe that to fully utilize the power of these tools, a district-wide protocol should be recognized and supported.

There is great potential to expand and deepen the content and services within MyPCC. However, online content needs to be owned and managed by the right institutional business or academic function to be effectively developed and to retain relevance to the students using it. It will be important to support the concept of 'content ownership' and continue to commit staff outside of technical support in taking on that role to ensure our online processes truly meet the needs of the students.

As the college continues to use and depend on portal services, continued efforts to encourage faculty, staff, and administrator use of MyPCC is essential to its success and that of our students. As stated previously, PCC students have increasing expectations as it relates to portal services and faculty using it. Our portal committees will continue to improve and promote MyPCC, but this promotion, support, and demonstrated use needs to come from all levels across the district.

MyPCC makes your life easy



MyPCC makes your life easy. With easy access from anywhere and a wide array of classes and services at a student's fingertips, registering for classes was never easier. For busy students, college life is hard enough. But at PCC, registration has been made as simple as clicking on a mouse.

Students can still register at any campus registrar's office or register by mail or fax. However many are too busy or don't have the time to wait around to see if they can get into a class. Thanks to MyPCC, the college's Web portal, students can simply log in from anywhere and in a matter of minutes set their entire course schedule for the upcoming term. From credit to non-credit and professional development courses, a student can do it all online.

MyPCC is an online community for students, faculty and staff at the college. This secure site allows them to check email, register, communicate with other students and faculty, read news about the college, and take care of all aspects of college business.

"MyPCC is not always a required part of school, but at the same time using it can really help," said Jeff Guenther, a peer advisor and engineering student. "There are so many different resources on there." The portal helps busy students get what they need quickly. Kimberley Miller was a student with a full plate. Winner of the inaugural PCC Business Student of the Year Award, Miller juggled schoolwork with a job at Bank of America and raising her two children. Since 2004 she has worked hard to get her associate's degree and is transferring to Portland State University to study accounting.

"Before I came back to get my degree, I was a student at PCC in 1992 when we had to stand in line for registration," Miller recalled. "I never knew if I'd be able to get through and get the class I needed. Today, the process is a lot easier and incredibly user-friendly."

Besides being easy to use and available anywhere where there is a computer with online access, Miller said that the number of classes at the college made it easier to create class schedules that jived with her way of life.

"Wow, it really helps," she said. "One busy day last year I had to set my class schedule. So I dropped my kids off at school, went home and logged on and registered. It was incredibly easy. There are so many classes. I always found the courses that fit into my schedule. They really compliment a person's lifestyle."

<http://www.pcc.edu/about/profiles/2006/09-04/registration.html>

Ask the Panther: Virtual advising assistant

Ask the Panther is available through MyPCC and PCC's website www.pcc.edu. Our virtual advising assistant was dubbed "Ask the Panther" as a way to generate camaraderie among students and increase the visibility of our school mascot. Ask the Panther has served as a question and answer database for students to have continuous access to information that was previously difficult to find on the web or only accessible by making an appointment with an advisor. Before Ask the Panther and the Title III grant, if a student had a question, they had to go on campus to talk to somebody, call the department, or e-mail the department. According to the Title III grant application, from 2001-2002 "Over half of the 14,600 emails sent to the admissions email require a specific reply...of the 5,000 emails sent to advising@pcc.edu, the majority require educating students on basic PCC policies and procedures."

Through Ask the Panther students can access answers to questions they have about Advising, Admissions, Registration and Records, University Transfer, Distance Education, Testing, Counseling, Financial Aid and Money Matters, to name a few. Representatives from Advising, Admissions, Registration, and Financial Aid are assigned to answer student questions. There is also a generalist from Title III that answers questions that fall out of the range of these categories. Representatives log-in to the database every day to respond to the students. Ask the Panther, continues to be used by students and staff to research college services, programs, and information. During the 2007-2008 academic year, approximately 400 questions/answers were updated and 40 new entries added to the database. In addition, there were over 136,000 searches via the system and over 450 inquiries submitted to staff to address individual questions.

Right Now Technologies, a customer service software company based in Bozeman, Montana, hosts Ask the Panther. Right Now staff is available to assist with technical difficulties and to provide staff training, both virtually and via phone. Initially, staff worked to develop over 200 questions/answers to introduce the software to the college. Between 2004 and 2009 staff added Q/A increasing the database to approximately 500 commonly asked questions. The database of questions will continue to grow relative to the needs of our students and the questions they ask. Their feedback continue to drive new questions and answers in the system. When mandatory prerequisites were implemented, questions were added and old questions were revised to address the changing policy. Students also have the option of rating an answer based on its helpfulness. When receiving ratings that a question is not helpful, we revise the answer to better serve the students. As programs and requirements change, so do the questions and answers in Ask the Panther. The questions and answers undergo constant revision and each question is evaluated on a yearly basis.



Between October 2004 (when Ask the Panther first went online) and February 2009 there were 498,849 searches within Ask the Panther, with 2,679 specific questions submitted to an Ask the Panther representative for a response:

- 381 Admissions
- 370 Advising
- 400 Financial Aid
- 733 Registration & Records
- 742 General
- 53 Health Admissions (specific questions regarding limited admission Health programs)

This is a tremendous reduction in staff work load for time spent answering student email questions. Admissions went from over 14,000 e-mails in one year, to 381 over 4.5 years. Within those 4.5 years, Ask the Panther had 55,214 hits with Admission inquiries.

Recommendations

Ask the Panther software has the capacity to support “Live Chat”. There was some discussion surrounding this functionality as the college considers a call center for access to college services. With this service, students can submit questions to Ask the Panther as they do now and then interact live online with a PCC representative. This would allow for an online conversation to help clarify the student’s inquiry. It is recommended that the “Live Chat” feature be further investigated to see how the college could further make use of Ask the Panther.

As is the case for most of the Title III projects, it is essential that college staff continue to inform students about Ask the Panther. The Retention Coordinator continues to promote the service through in-class demonstrations and faculty workshops. Additionally, it is important that college staff assist in the continuous improvement of the service through the submission of questions/answers that are commonly asked by students.

Panther Tracks: Expanded online orientation

Panther Tracks was designed as a virtual, expanded orientation. In 23 interactive pages, Panther Tracks walks students through the first term, identifying terminology, possible pit-falls to avoid and various strategies to help them be successful. In 2006, Panther Tracks was awarded by the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations with a District 7 Silver Medallion of Achievement. This award recognized the outstanding achievement of the web team staff and committee responsible for developing the site.



Initially developed by a committee of student services and Title III staff, website content is revised and added to when additional student success resources are identified, or college practices change. Recently, as class waitlists and student photo ID cards were introduced, information was added to the site to give students information about these important resources. Via MyPCC Personal Announcements grant staff post first week, second week, and midterm checklists to help students navigate through key processes such as registration or tuition deadlines. Additionally, students are introduced to the website in all MyPCC in-class demonstrations.

The website is divided into six parts: Welcome, MyPCC 101, and four “tracks”: College 101 Track, College Success Track, Academic Track and Student Services Track. The Welcome and MyPCC 101 allow students to link out to information about the New Student Orientation, course descriptions of CG courses, and several tutorials to guide students through the tabs in MyPCC and some account functions. Additionally there is a link to International Panther Tracks, which follows the format of the original but with additional information specifically for F1 Visa International students, including a track on Visa Issues.

In the College 101 Track students gain an understanding of important dates, deadlines and what is needed to successfully complete the first term at PCC. Each checklist guides the student through critical weeks of the term and to prepare for the next term. As is the case with all of the tracks, information can

be accessed at any point in the term. A student can access the tracks before the term starts and come back to each track at any point if they need to look up information regarding drop deadlines, payment deadlines, and what to do in the first, second, and mid-term weeks of the quarter.

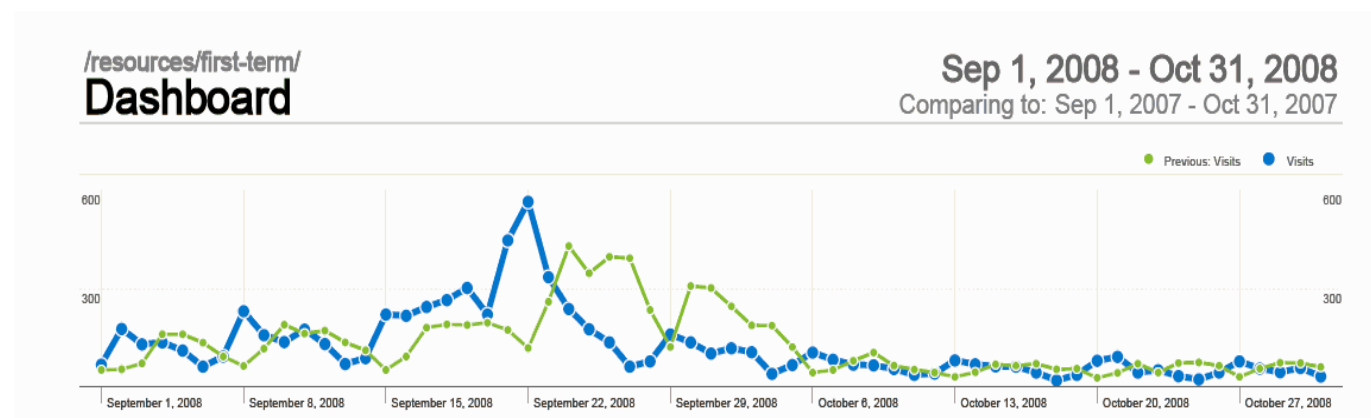
The College Success Track has information about college resources and services to help students be successful in college. As a student goes through the track there are audio clips, worksheets and a variety of links to college resources. The information is distributed across five sub-tracks as mentioned below:

- **Instructor:** Introduces the importance of getting to know one's instructor and gives tips on how to interact with faculty.
- **Study Skills:** Introduces the student to a list of courses and tips that may improve their study habits and motivation for being in college.
- **Time Management:** Offers a weekly schedule for the student to download and recommendations on how to schedule study time, work time and life time.
- **Grades:** Briefly explains PCC's grading policies and encourages students to check grades each term and be aware of their academic standing.
- **Academic Resources:** Allows the student to easily find a list of links to the variety of services available to help them be successful at PCC.

The Academic Track furthers the idea of understanding the importance of goal setting. The track covers the information about how to choose a major and list several courses a student might take if she or he is still undecided about a major. The track also links out to information on the PCC website about how to complete PCC degrees and how to transfer successfully to other institutions using the University Transfer site or how to transfer credits in if the student arrives with credits from another institution.

Finally, the Student Services track introduces the student to the Deans of Students on each of the four main campuses, introduces Students Rights and Responsibilities, has financial planning resources, and explains the benefits of the college's diverse student body. Additionally, the student is introduced to the many opportunities to get involved with the campus they attend or the community at large and introduces the concept of student engagement and the importance of engagement in student success.

Most recent site analytics show Panther Tracks had 7,470 visits within a two month period (September 1 through October 31, 2008), with 21,550 page views within the site. The peaks seen in the below graph represent the start of fall term when grant staff post portal announcements to students linking them to the First Week and Second Week Checklists within Panther Tracks. Approximately 600 visits were made to the site the first week of fall 2008.



New Student Orientation: When the college's vendor contract for PCC's New Student Orientation was to expire in October 2007, the college transitioned the online orientation to an in-house site. Title III staff participated in the process of bringing the college's New Student Orientation to the same format as Panther Tracks, in an effort to help the New Student Orientation and Panther Tracks: Expanded Online Orientation appear seamless within our online services. The Retention Coordinator (both current and past) along with the webteam staff who designed and update Panther Tracks served on this committee to design and roll-out the new online orientation.

First Year Experience: Panther Tracks underwent a few revisions in fall 2008 and is now being used as a medium to promote college success for the PCC's new First Year Experience program for incoming students. Many faculty teaching the College Survival and Success and the Study Skills for College Learning classes (CG 100 and CG 111) use Panther Tracks in their curriculum to help students access PCC resources and services.

Recommendations

In 2009, there will be a review of content in Panther Tracks to further align the curriculum to the Core Outcomes of the college and the course outcomes for the anchor one-credit course of the first year programming, CG 100c (College Survival and Success). Additionally, staff will continue to promote the use of Panther Tracks in the MyPCC in-class demonstrations that take place across the district and through the First Year Experience program and courses. The promotion of the website continues to be important as we have seen some decrease in usage and time spent in the site when comparing fall 2007 and fall 2008 web analytics.

Course Progress Notification: Early warning system

Course Progress Notification (CPN) was developed in response to PCC's need for an early alert system. In the Noel-Levitz survey, administered in spring 2007, PCC students responded that being notified early in the term if they were doing poorly in class was of high importance with a 6.0 rating (out of a 7 point scale). Yet, students responded that their satisfaction with early notification was significantly low with a 4.25 rating. CPN gives faculty an easy and systematic way to communicate with students regarding attendance, class participation, completed coursework, current grades and overall performance to address this need.

Accessible through Banweb Class Summary Lists, the system generates an email to individual students noting concerns or positive feedback faculty have and provides students with information regarding PCC student services and resources.

The early alert project started as a web form that was piloted in fall 2006 with approximately ten faculty using it to communicate concerns regarding students. Feedback from the pilot faculty group and then focus groups held at each of the campuses with approximately 40 faculty and 10 students suggested that Title III develop an early alert system that was easier to use and could include positive remarks concerning successful student progress as well. Many technical and content/language changes were made to the form at that time.

Following the focus groups, the web form transitioned to a form found in all faculty Banweb class rosters. This allowed for easy access and information to auto-populate into the form. Additionally, faculty commented that they did not feel comfortable having the form suggest a student go to or seek help from

specific student service offices, which led to the inclusion of a link to the Panther Tracks College Success Track which gives students a menu of student services available. This link also gives students information about Academic Progress Standards.

CPN was first made available to faculty beginning fall 2007. During and upon completion of the term faculty that used the system were asked to provide feedback and recommendations for improvement (see Appendix).

In an effort to inform faculty, ongoing promotion has been key to the success of CPN. Presentations and workshops were sponsored at all campus fall and spring in-service events and TLCs. The CPN website, MyPCC announcements, email/communication from administration, flyers, and posters were all used to further inform faculty.

2007-2008 academic year CPN usage		
	Students received CPN	Faculty used CPN
Fall 2007	3,999	394
Winter 2008	3,274	351
Spring 2008	2,792	319
Summer 2008	<u>807</u>	<u>102</u>
Total	11,354 students	1,166 faculty

Faculty who used, and/or tested, CPN in Fall 2007 were asked to provide feedback in an effort to improve the system (see appendix). Based on their feedback the following changes were made:

- Limited text in the body of the message sent to students.
- Double capacity for instructor comments to student (from 300 to 600 characters).
- Counter included with comments text box.
- Ability to preview message before it is sent to student.
- Clearer options for faculty to choose concern or congratulatory comments.

This feedback also led to investigating ways to expand options for CPN to be copied to program advisors (similar to the ways in which the Sylvania ROOTs and the Office of International Students is currently using CPN).

Recommendations

One of the keys to the success of Course Progress Notification has been continual promotion of the system. Title III staff have been promoting it to faculty through in-service activities, New Faculty Institutes, faculty workshops, portal announcements, and marketing materials, which will continue. In addition to this, it is recommended that administrators and faculty already using CPN serve as champions on their campuses or within their divisions to further promote the benefits of using it.

Just has been the case for both Sylvania ROOTs and the Office of International Education, it would be beneficial to expand how CPN notifies program advisors of student progress. This might be expanded to student athletes, high school completion, Perkins programs, and Early College, as a few examples.

Time has not been spent addressing how to measure and report the retention of students who have received CPN versus those who have not. This is an important aspect that needs to be further explored in

an effort to measure its success and to further inform future improvements to the system. It is recommended that the Retention Coordinator responsible for administering CPN work with Institutional Effectiveness and other relevant staff to report student retention as it relates to Course Progress Notification.

University Transfer: Online transfer center

The purpose of the University Transfer web site www.pcc.edu/programs/university-transfer is to assist students and staff who advise students (advisors, counselors, learning specialists, etc.) with the necessary information to prepare PCC students for transfer to our local public and private 4-year schools, our local community colleges, and out-of-state colleges (currently Washington and California).

The site is accessible through the www.pcc.edu, MyPCC, and Panther Tracks: Extended Online Orientation. Due to the accessibility of the site, students who take courses during evening and weekend hours can acquire similar information as those students who are able to meet with an advisor during regular office hours. Although this site is not meant to be used without the assistance of an advisor, students who are unable to sit down with an advisor still have access to transfer information.

The University Transfer site is also a resource for those who advise students. In 2002, PCC advisors felt that having guides that assisted students who were transferring would be beneficial for the advisor. Each advisor was assigned a school or schools and was in charge of developing Admission Information guides, General Education guides and Major guides for the most “popular” majors. The General Education and Major guides listed the courses that were required at the transferring school, whether or not PCC had an equivalent course, and if so, what those courses were. The Major guides also gave additional information; some may include specific application information for closed programs, careers that students could seek with the major, and contact information for the academic department. In all, there were 148 guides that were updated yearly by advisors.

As the years progressed, some advisors felt that they did not have time to update their assigned guides each year. They were too busy advising students to take the time to contact the 4-year schools, research any changes, and update the guides. In September 2006 all of the guides were assigned to the Title III University Transfer Specialist. The University Transfer Specialist reviewed all of the guides and noticed some guides were repetitive. For instance Major guides for Accounting, Marketing, and Management contained the exact same information. Now there a guide for Business majors that lists the common courses for each option but also shows the specific courses for each of the options. Other guides were eliminated due to feedback from advisors that they were not being sought after by students. A total of 27 guides were eliminated from the original 148.

The University Transfer Specialist has added new schools and new Major guides and now has a total of 153 guides that are updated every year. Once the guides are updated and approved by a representative at the transferring institution, the guides are then sent to the PCC Print Center for advisors to order, and are posted on the University Transfer website in HTML and PDF format by the University Transfer Specialist.

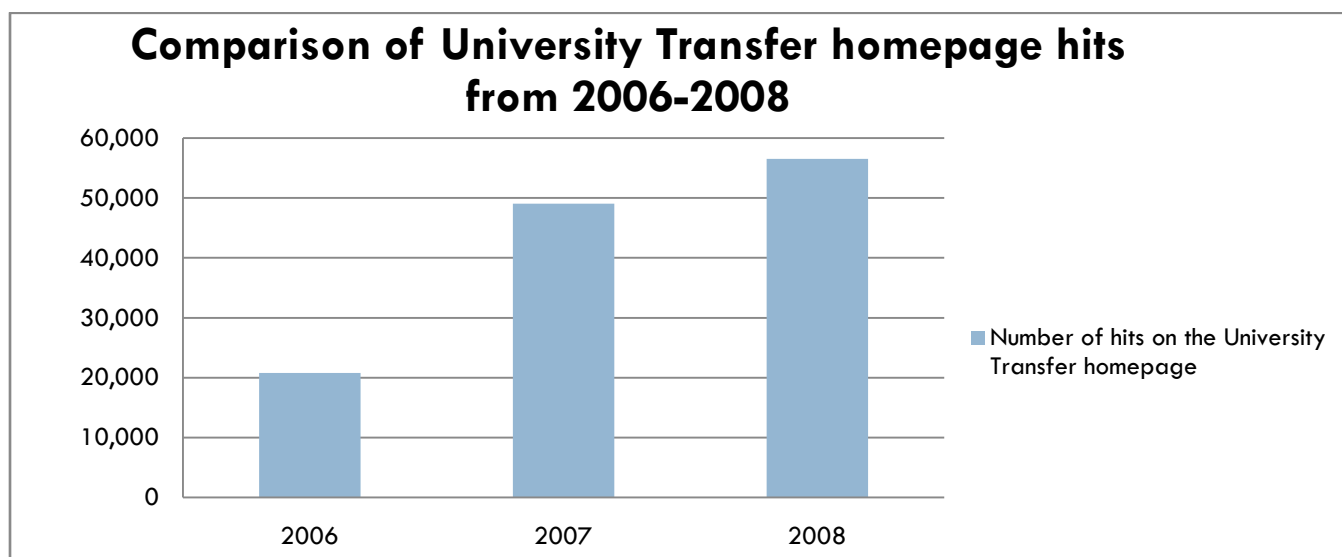
The University Transfer web site has continued to evolve while being maintained by Title III. The site originally listed the transfer guide information for Oregon public and most private schools, frequently

asked questions, a transfer glossary, helpful links, how incoming credits would be accepted, and a transfer planner. In addition to the aforementioned information:

- Each guide now has a PDF version so students can print the same guides found in advising offices
- 43 guides have been added since 2004
- Visits by university representatives are listed for each campus
- PCC associate degree worksheets are in PDF format for students to print
- Information about programs that are not offered by PCC but are offered by other Oregon community colleges is available
- Information about transferring to the California college system is available
- University of Washington information is available
- Over 30 articulation agreements for our Career-Technical programs are posted on the site

The promotion of the web page to PCC staff has mainly occurred at district-wide and campus advising meetings. Advisors are encouraged to show transfer students the benefits of the web pages in their advising sessions. Students are also made aware of the university transfer information via in-class MyPCC overviews. The University Transfer web pages can be accessed through the My PCC, My Courses tab, through MAP (My Academic Plan) which is also accessible in MyPCC, and on the PCC web site under the Academics tab and the Resources tab.

In 2006, the University Transfer main webpage had 20,779 hits. In 2007, it had 49,050 and 2008 it had 56,505 hits. More and more students and college staff are using the University Transfer website for information. In fact, in winter 2008, 1,177 students participated in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, students responded that the most likely reason for withdrawing from a class or the College was to transfer to a 4-year college or university. This further supports the need for transfer information for our students.



Recommendations

The University Transfer web pages are a continual work in progress and as new programs and majors are offered, new transfer guides will be developed. Feedback from PCC academic advisors will continue to be solicited in an effort to improve the site and to identify new guides that need to be developed. Additionally, staff will work with PCC Marketing to identify ways to promote and further brand the site.

MAP: My Academic Plan

Title III grant staff and a committee of counselors, advisors, and faculty worked with The Oregon Career Information System (Oregon CIS), to customize an interactive website that PCC students can use for career exploration and academic planning. In fall 2008, MAP: My Academic Plan became accessible online via the MyPCC. MAP is available to all PCC students to help them develop and “map” an overall career and academic plan through a customized version of Oregon CIS. In addition, students have access to PCC academic programs, degree worksheets, and academic planning resources to plan coursework at PCC and beyond.

The Oregon CIS has been providing services in the state for almost four decades. They provide a system of occupational and educational information to help Oregonians learn about the world of work and education. They work with schools, colleges, social agencies, and businesses who provide career guidance and employee development services.



The information that CIS develops and that is now available through MAP is comprehensive, and includes some of the following:

- Current employment, wages, outlook, hiring practices, preparation, and licensing, in addition to the skills, abilities, and knowledge required, are reported for each of over 540 occupation titles. These occupations cover over 95% of the labor market in Oregon.
- Every postsecondary program of study or training offered in Oregon is described within one of over 600 program categories. More than 150 topics of information, from admission requirements and costs to services for students with disabilities, are provided for each postsecondary school in Oregon. Similar information is included about national two-year, four-year, and graduate institutions.
- A complete scholarship and a financial aid database that lists national, state, and local awards is available along with a tool to sort the entries based upon an individual's characteristics.
- Information about self-employment, job search, industries, and the military as an employer.



The information in Oregon CIS and MAP is also delivered in a systematic way. Each information file is linked to other relevant information to create an integrated system of career information. Professional information analysts collect, analyze, review, and edit every piece of information in CIS each year. They use a wide variety of data sources and generate additional information from their own questionnaires.

Grant staff have been promoting MAP and providing training to students, faculty and staff regarding its functionality. In-class training demonstrations of the portal now include demonstrating MAP to approximately 1,200 students a year. Similar demonstrations and

workshops are also held for faculty and staff at all four campus locations. Students and staff have had an overwhelmingly positive response regarding MAP as they see and experience the rich and interactive nature of the tool and many faculty have incorporated it into their coursework. MAP is now being used as a model across the state, with other community colleges and universities interested in customizing Oregon CIS for their own institutions.

Initial feedback from faculty and staff suggest that MAP will be a great resource to use in Counseling and Guidance courses, introductory courses, as well as one-on-one with students in advising and counseling sessions. See the Appendix for additional feedback collected from faculty and staff regarding MAP and the worksheets that were developed for use with MAP.

Recommendations

The initial concept for MAP was to provide students with a tool to plan out and save an Academic Plan completely online. Currently MAP has degree worksheets and planning forms that can be used, but to date, work is still underway to provide the functionality for those worksheets and forms to be saved completely within the personalized MAP portfolio. Additionally, it is recommended that with the implementation of DegreeWorks, students have a relatively seamless means to go through the MAP and the degree audit process. The Retention Coordinator responsible for MAP, will be working directly with the DegreeWorks work team to assist with this.

DegreeWorks: Online degree audit

Degree audit will allow PCC students and advisors to utilize online tools to audit degree progress and make changes to academic plans based on these audits. After evaluating various software options to support a degree audit system for the college, DegreeWorks software (in addition to hardware) was purchased toward the end of the Title III grant. DegreeWorks is a module of the Banner student information system. The system will be introduced to the college in the 2009/2010 academic year and will be accessible via the online portal. Consultation and planning has been underway this past year to streamline Banner in an effort to support degree audit.

In fall 2008, PCC Enrollment Services participated in a Process Improvement Assessment with Sungard Higher Education to identify best practices for using Banner in conjunction with DegreeWorks. Currently work is underway to address some of the following as it relates to PCC's use of Banner:



- Updating course level codes and student level codes so that they are the same within Banner
- Identifying courses that have had either the subject code changed or course number updated
- Reviewing all course attributes and consolidating them where possible
- Clearly identifying developmental education courses
- Addressing inconsistencies as they relate to degree requirements across various disciplines

DegreeWorks will be available to PCC advisors and faculty in spring 2010, with it being introduced to students in fall 2010. Grant staff will be involved in the process of training faculty, staff and students as the degree audit system goes online.

Faculty & Staff Training: Intervention strategies

An important objective of the Title III grant was to provide faculty with training and resources to address student retention. Title III staff sponsored and participated in numerous events and workshops across the district as part of this. Title III has been present at most district and campus inservice events, the New Faculty Institute, Teaching and Learning Center sessions, online instructional training sessions, and division meetings.

For approximately two years, a faculty-driven work group developed resources to improve retention in the classroom. The work group developed online resources that included student scenarios, teaching tips, and creative classroom activities. The committee sponsored the Classroom Activity Contest encouraging PCC faculty to submit strategies used in class to teach course material and facilitate student retention. There were a total of 89 entries submitted, spanning numerous disciplines. The winning submissions and the additional entries are online at www.pcc.edu/retention for PCC faculty to use as a resource in teaching and further strengthening PCC's commitment to student success and retention.

In 2008, in collaboration with the Teaching and Learning Centers, grant staff co-sponsored the Spring Part-time Faculty Institutes at each of the PCC campuses. The Institutes focused on addressing student retention and campus resources, while bringing part-time faculty together. Title III staff sponsored workshops that highlighted the various retention resources, MyPCC, Ask the Panther, and Course Progress Notification to name a few. Additionally, a keynote speaker at both Cascade and Southeast Center addressed the issues surrounding first generation students and PCC's role in retaining these students.

Recommendations

It is certain that more work and effort should be focused on faculty and staff training as it relates to student retention. Recommendations for the future are to reinstate the district-wide faculty retention workgroup. Additionally, it is recommended that each campus establish a faculty-led "retention committee" to address the needs of students. Such committees have convened on campuses over the years, but often are composed primarily of student services staff, with little faculty participation.

Addressing student retention at campus in-service events through workshops, online demonstrations, and keynote speakers should also continue within the college. Feedback from past in-service events, suggests that faculty have been appreciative of the opportunity to hear from Title III staff regarding both online services and classroom teaching techniques used to improve student retention and success.

Conclusion

'Access' and 'Success' are important cornerstones that PCC has focused on in recent years since the Title III grant was awarded to the college. Title III has set the foundation for providing exceptional and innovative services online for students, faculty and staff. The work done during the Title III grant is not only serving PCC, but also universities and community colleges from around the state. They are seeking our expertise as an innovative leader addressing student retention and online resources.

The online portal service gives students access to most college services without having to step foot on campus. This has been a great benefit to our growing student body who often have commitments that make getting to campus difficult during regular business hours. The portal and online tools developed have given more students access to PCC programs and services since the inception of the grant. These services will continue thanks in part to the college's continued commitment to technology and student retention.

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