

2008 Best Practices Winners

February 19, 2009

Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning

Category One: Academic Affairs

- **First Place – The University of Mississippi - "Contractual Readmission Program"**: The University of Mississippi's Contractual Readmission Program is an effective low-cost service provided to undergraduates returning from academic suspension or dismissal. . The purpose of the program is to support students by providing individual consultation and/or small groups and exercises designed to elicit discussion, application, and practice of effective study strategies. The program is administered by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (the Center) in close cooperation with the Department of Leadership and Counselor Education (the Department). The assistant director of the Center, also an assistant professor in the Department, is an approved clinical supervisor and serves as site supervisor. The primary goal for this program is to facilitate students' development into self-directed and self-regulated learners via structured and unstructured learning activities, mentoring, and counseling. The program is a three-tiered system of support that has evolved as the program has been refined. In the program, students returning from academic suspension or dismissal are required to take EDLD 202, Fundamentals of Active Learning, during their first regular (fall or spring) semester back as a condition of their re-enrollment. EDLD 202 is a 2-credit pass/fail class that requires students to (1) participate in weekly meetings, (2) log study hours in the J.D. Williams Library, (3) attend Academic Success Training (AST) workshops, and (4) complete weekly planner checks. The Center provides the study skills workshops and monitored study hours; the Department provides the weekly face-to-face meetings and online check-ins. Students must repeat the course until a passing grade is recorded and after being re-dismissed. Benefits are realized at three levels: (1) undergraduates are the primary recipients of academic counseling and consulting services, (2) counselors-in-training receive clinical supervision and on-site training, and (3) doctoral level Counselor Educators gain valuable administrative and supervisory experiences.
- **Second Place – Mississippi University for Women - "Improving Student Success Through Mentorship"**: MUW's College Success Mentorship program promotes the academic success of incoming first-year and transfer students by providing them with the personalized attention that they need to be successful in a new and often alien environment. The program identifies ten mentors from the Columbus community with appropriate skills and college degrees and assigns them fifty first-time students each. After initial training, the mentors contact their students, ideally once a week via e-mail or phone. In their conversations, mentors assist students with their adjustment to college life, direct students to campus resources, and remind them about important academic policies and deadlines. The mentors also help their students set academic goals. Every two weeks, the mentors submit their time logs and summaries of conversations to the director of academic support services, who tracks contacts and offers suggestions to improve the

quality of mentorship. At the end of the semester, the director evaluates the program by asking students to submit online evaluations and by holding an exit session with mentors. Ultimately, the program should promote students' successful transition to the university and persistence to the next semester and beyond.

Category Two: Student Services

- **First Place – University of Southern Mississippi - "Southern Miss CARE":** The University of Southern Mississippi is committed to creating a culture of academic success for its students. One way that its student affairs division contributes to this vision is through the CARE System. The strategic focus of the CARE System is to promote the culture of healthy minds as it creates a safe and secure campus environment. The CARE System (Campus Action Referral and Evaluation System) of Southern Miss was established in response to the recognized need for collaborative services to manage students with mental health issues and behaviors that interrupt the learning environment. In the spring and summer of 2007, IHL contracted with Brett Sokolow to implement student behavioral intervention teams at all Mississippi institutions of higher education. Southern Miss, however, was ahead of the curve. An informal meeting in 2005 between the directors of housing, counseling, and the Dean of Students Office grew to be the 2008 CARE System: a four-leveled, streamlined intervention system to provide collaborative communication and services to manage students with mental health and behavioral issues on campus. The CARE System has become a sustainable cost-effective best practice intervention that is a benefit to both the campus and the surrounding Hattiesburg community. With the support of a three-year federal SAMHSA Grant awarded to USM Student Counseling Services in 2006, a multi-disciplinary team of representatives from various student affairs departments meets weekly in order to (1) improve communication between key departments regarding student mental health; (2) facilitate rapid and effective referral of students with mental health issues; and (3) optimize function of students with mental health and behavioral issues in order to reduce risk of harm to self or others.
- **Second Place – University of Mississippi - "Luckyday Success Program":** The Luckyday Success Program, established in 2003, at the University of Mississippi provides high school to college adjustment training to approximately 130 incoming freshmen each year who are recipients of the Luckyday Scholarship. Research indicates that academic success/retention programs for college freshmen (i.e. First Year Experience programs) are crucial in helping bridge the gap between high school and college. The Luckyday Success Program provides a unique academic training program aimed at individual success for every Luckyday Scholarship recipient. Students selected for the Luckyday Scholarship begin academic training by participating in a week-long retreat prior to the fall semester of their freshman year. During the course of the freshman year, Luckyday Scholars enroll in a First Year Seminar course (EDLD105) during the fall semester, attend mandatory study hall for seven hours per week, meet with an academic trainer every two weeks in their first year, attend required social events

with a Peer Mentor, participate in service learning projects, and reside in specific Luckyday Scholar learning communities on campus. Student success at the University of Mississippi is the principal benefit of the Luckyday Program. In a span of five years, retention of freshmen from the first year to the second year has increased every year. For the 2007-2008 Luckyday Scholars Cohort, the retention rate from first year to second year was 88.5% compared to an institutional rate of 78.3%. The Luckyday Scholarship and Luckyday Success Program provide the financial and academic training components most needed by students for successful transition to college.

Category Three: Technology

- **First Place – The University of Mississippi - "An Automated Solution for Processed Transfer Work"**: The University of Mississippi (UM) has taken a campus-wide approach to implement Equivalency Determination and Transfer Articulation in SAP. About 53 percent of undergraduate UM students have completed academic courses elsewhere. These courses must be recognized and equated to UM academic work to support the automated enforcement of academic rules such as prerequisite checking and degree audit. The project formally began in spring 2005 with an audit of external institutions, external courses, and transfer regulations. These were then entered into SAP in summer and fall of 2005, and are now updated on a continuous basis. SAP provides an equivalency determination transaction that automatically "equates" external academic work to UM academic work based on the transfer regulations that are active in the system. In fall 2005, the UM Registrar's Office entered transfer details for currently enrolled students, and the UM Admissions Office began entering transfer details for admitted students. By December 2005, equivalency determination had been run for the majority of UM students, and automated pre-requisite checking was enabled. Students, advisors, and dean's offices have access to a dynamically generated PDF Transfer Equivalency Report that lists transfer work for a given student and how it maps to UM work. Also, a publicly available Web interface lets anyone see how a given course from another institution maps to UM courses. This was an enormous project involving the academic community and IT, which paved the way for subsequent projects such as automated prerequisite checking (December 2005) and degree audit (May 2008).

Second Place – The University of Southern Mississippi - "Sustainable Data Center": The purpose of the ESX VMWare Virtual Farm project was to support The University of Southern Mississippi's vision to become a model of sustainable thought and practice within our state and region. The project allowed Southern Miss to consolidate servers and optimize its infrastructure through virtualization. Virtualization makes it possible to achieve significantly higher resource utilization by pooling common infrastructure resources and breaking the legacy "one application to one server" model. The project also allowed the university to reduce its physical infrastructure costs and operational costs. With virtualization, the university is able to reduce the number of servers and related IT hardware in the Data Center, which leads to reductions in real estate, power and cooling requirements, resulting in significantly lower IT costs. The project has resulted in

improved operational flexibility and responsiveness. Virtualization offers a new way of managing IT infrastructure and can help USM iTech administrators spend less time on repetitive tasks such as provisioning, configuration, monitoring, and maintenance. The project has increased application availability and improved business continuity by eliminating planned downtime and enabling quick recovery from unplanned outages with the ability to securely backup and migrate entire virtual environments with no interruption in service. Finally, the project has improved desktop manageability and security. IT can deploy, manage, and monitor secure desktop environments that end users can access locally or remotely, with or without a network connection, on almost any standard desktop, laptop, or tablet PC.

Category Four: Finance, Business and Administration

- **First Place – Delta State University - "Energy Conservation"**: Raising the energy conservation awareness of faculty and staff at Delta State University reduced energy consumption to historic lows in FY08. Beginning in fall 2007, Delta State began an aggressive program of reducing energy consumption. During the Thanksgiving break, the campus heating and lighting systems were closed down. The program intensified during the Christmas break, resulting in further savings. In January, an energy newsletter was issued each month to the campus, encouraging energy wise consumption through such practices as turning off desktop computers, lights, and other electronic devices at the end of each day. A table calculating the cost savings from turning off computers was widely publicized, inspiring faculty and staff. An energy website was created and it now serves as a campus resource on energy issues. A campus "hotline" was also established, encouraging campus personnel to report energy savings ideas or wasteful practices to energy@deltastate.edu. Because there are few state of the art HVAC control systems on campus, manual systems were created that further reduced consumption. Set point temperatures were standardized. Air handlers, lights, pumps, and other equipment are monitored, whereas before they ran constantly.
- **Second Place – The University of Mississippi - "Interactive Employee Appraisal System"**: Over the past three years, the University of Mississippi (UM) has designed, developed and deployed an online, interactive employee appraisal process for university faculty and staff. This development was the result of a collaborative effort between the offices of the Provost, Human Resources (HR) and Information Technology (IT) to deliver more streamlined, efficient, and robust 'self service' applications to the university community. Built in reporting tools allow the Office of Human Resources to monitor the progress of appraisals to assure that departments meet stated deadlines for submission, which results in an overall higher number of completed appraisals by the published deadlines. The electronic storage of this information will greatly reduce the need for paper files for each employee.