

HELPING STUDENTS SUCCEED AT OCC

Anna Katsuki, Counselor

1. How do we define and measure student success?

As a new faculty member it is important to decide how you can help your students be successful in your courses. Some questions to think about:

- What do you perceive to be an indicator of whether or not a student will be successful in your class?
- Is there anything you can do, that you aren't now doing-at the beginning of your class or otherwise-that might increase the level of success in your class?

Our students at Orange Coast College are becoming more and more diverse. We have a wide range of student abilities from the Honor student to the English as a second language student. The average age is 26 with students just out of high school, still in high school and re-entry students. The definition of "success" varies, but for this purpose it is when students reach their educational goal at O.C.C. This goal could be for enrichment purposes, a certificate, A.A. degree or transfer.

2. Retention is a key measure of student success.

We have a college mandate to improve student retention. This is not an easy problem to solve; however, there are some points that I believe are important with regards to the campus-wide role in retention:

- Retention is not a job of student personnel workers but a campus-wide effort.
- Retention is not the goal, but the by-product of improved educational programs and services to students.
- Faculty and Staff need to be helpers and developers of relationships with all students.
- Enrollment management is a campus-wide project. Happy students are our best recruiters. (We are in a "no-growth" district, we must recruit to receive funding. This is a daunting challenge).
- Colleges need to provide the most hassle free campus environment possible.
- When referring students it helps to hand deliver them to the referral source

3. What does the research show we can do to retain students?

- The single most important factor in student retention, as reported in a national survey, was the concerned, caring attitude of faculty and staff.
- The more frequent the contact between student and instructor, if contact is personal and meaningful, the greater the chance that the student will persist. Whether or not a student has this kind of contact is the single most important predictor of persistence.
- Retention is a personal affair. It is enhanced when faculty keep office hours, are available before and after class, stop and talk to students and encourage them to come and talk.

- Retention can be increased if colleges and instructors will facilitate connections between students through study groups and other activities.
- Faculty need to be aware of the importance of the first class meeting. The student must be “engaged” at that time. Faculty who short-change their students at the first class meeting, who just meet for a short time to give instructions, do not, as a rule, have good retention rates.
- To retain “high risk” students, study skills must be enhanced, progress must be intrusively monitored and interventions must be effectively applied.

4. What do I do to improve student retention?

- My first class is one of the most important classes. I want my students leaving having learned or experienced something new so they see a “value” in my class.
- I also work on a point system and give points for attendance. I have learned that students do not “get” the importance of attendance. I now give the most points to attendance, over everything else. I care if they are there or not. If they are there I can teach them, if not I lose that opportunity. When students do not attend class, I call them. This lets them know I am aware they were not in class, and it also lets them know that it is important to attend my class.
- A phone call may reveal a problem a student is having, and I can give them a resource that they may not be aware of on campus that may help. I will refer to some of these resources later.
- In class I give a learning style test, and have found out that most students are visual and tactile learners. Visuals of any kind are very helpful. This is especially true for our growing population of E.S.L. students.

5. The study skills many of our students lack

- How to prioritize their time and how much time is needed to study. Remind students that they are expected to study two hours per unit. They need to do a time plan to make sure they can commit the time needed for their classes.
- College level Reading skills. Try to determine if students are struggling in your class because of reading difficulties – which a high percentage of our students have. Encourage them to take Reading classes at the college and, when possible, give them tips on how to read material effectively in your discipline.
- Understanding the value of study groups. Encourage students to make use of this study skill technique as a means to review, clarify, support.
- How to use a syllabus as a guide. It is very important that students know right away what they can expect to learn in class, the skills they need to succeed in the class and your expectations of them. The syllabus tells students what the purpose of the course is, what will be covered and how they will be graded. Spend time reviewing the syllabus at the beginning of the course and referring back to your guidelines and expectations throughout the course.

6. Resources available to students on our campus

- **Health Center:** Has a psychologist available. Students can receive up to 10 free visits. Unlimited group sessions are

available in many areas such as AA, abuse, anger control etc. Nurses are on staff as well as a Doctor (hours vary). Bio- feedback is available as well as information on all aspects of health and sexual issues. Everything is confidential.

- **Resource Center:** For students who have writing or reading difficulties or who need help on papers etc. Faculty are available to help students improve these skills. E.S.L. students are encouraged to use this resource. They may register for this class anytime during the semester and can sign up for ¼ unit or more, depending on the amount of time they believe they need. This is located in Lit. & Lang. 222.
- **Tutorial Center:** Students can receive one hour of free tutoring per week. They need to sign up, and will receive a tutor in the area needed. Students can also be paid tutors. This service is located in the Special Services building.
- **Financial Aid:** If they do not ask they will not know if they qualify for financial help. Students can receive “free” monies if they qualify. The most common grants available are the BOGG Grant (this waives the \$11.00 a unit fee), FAFSA (monies from the federal government) and Cal grants (monies from the state of California). Students may also receive an interest free loan of \$100.00, if they qualify, for emergency school needs. Scholarship information is available in the Career Center, the ASOCC office and Financial Aid Office.
- **Counseling Center:** Students must meet with a Counselor at least once to do an educational plan. After that it is encouraged that they come in at least once a year to go over their plan. Counselors are available to help with academic, personal and career issues. Students can meet with any Counselor. This is another positive connection for students on campus. Appointments can be made beginning on Thursday of every week for the following week.
- **Counseling courses related to Student Success:** Counseling 100, a “nuts and bolts” class on student success issues, rules of college, educational planning and learning about the services available; Counseling 102, like Counseling 100 but based on the book, Master Student, by Dave Ellis, delves more into study skills; Counseling 120, a career planning course to help students define their values, interests etc. and to research career possibilities. Study Skills and Personal Development Workshops are offered every semester through Counseling and the ASOCC. These workshops are free, and a list will be placed in your mailbox. Workshop Topics include: Time Management, How to Take Notes, Self-Esteem, How to Read a Textbook, Career Speakers. Extra credit slips are given to students if their instructors give extra credit for their attendance.
- **ASOCC:** It is very easy to get involved in campus activities. Research, as already pointed out, reveals that if a student has a “bond” with the college institution they will have a higher rate of success. Students can take a leadership class to get involved with the ASOCC (Associated Students of O.C.C.). I would also encourage students to get involved in a club, especially one that relates to their career or personal passion. Employees and

Universities look for leadership skills and this is a positive way to exhibit these abilities. The ASOCC also offers an opportunity for students to meet with a lawyer for legal issues they may have.

- **Transfer Center:** An excellent resource for students planning to transfer. One of the goals at OCC is to improve our transfer rate. University representatives meet individually with students, workshops on the U.C. and C.S.U. applications and Essay are available, several large college fairs are held on the main quad area, as well as other resources that are available in the center. There are also special programs that students may be involved with such as D.A.P., Dual Admission Program with UCI; CAP, special admission program with UC Berkeley; TOP, Transfer Opportunity Program and other such programs.
- **Career Center:** This is a hidden treasure at OCC. Students have access to the internet, computer programs to be able to research colleges, careers and scholarships are available. There is a wide range of books dealing with all types of careers as well as college catalogs in the Center. It is located in the Counseling Office.

Support for Faculty

As a member of the OCC faculty it is important to be involved in Campus-wide committees. As with students, personal contact with other faculty promotes professional growth. The Academic Senate is another great arena to accomplish this. I, personally, have learned through these connections with my involvement in the Academic Senate and in several campus committees. It has been a wonderful way to share ideas with faculty from all different areas. An involved faculty is a must if a college is going to grow in a positive manner.