

Lake Superior College



Student Academic Achievement Committee

October 29, 2008
Special Meeting

Members Present:

Kent Richards
Matt Whitehill
Jim Drake

Jody Langseth
Paula Young
Bridget Reistad

Theresa Hornstein
Wendy Graves

1. Attendance Project

A. Members reported on a total of approximately 15 conversations with colleagues about a possible attendance project. Reaction was very favorable. Many believe there is a strong correlation between attendance and success in their classes, but they would like data to confirm that. There was only one negative comment reported (“it would be a waste of time because there’s nothing we can do about student attendance anyway”) and a couple of others that questioned whether there would be extra work involved. It appears that most instructors already take attendance and would be willing to participate in a project.

B. Kent reported that he had approximately 15 responses to his all faculty email. They mirrored the responses reported above, but also included several very detailed and insightful responses. Kent also talked at length to SAA’s student representative, Mitch Tuomala, and he supports the idea.

C. Jody indicated that she might have the opportunity to incorporate the project into her PhD work. If so, what she has in mind would be over and above whatever project SAA ultimately undertakes.

D. Based on the feedback from colleagues, there was considerable discussion about expanding the scope of the project to determine not only the rates of attendance but also the primary reasons why students miss classes. Instructors think they know, but it would but knowing would tell us the extent to which absences could be prevented or the impact ameliorated.

E. There are many variables that could be looked at in interpreting attendance data, including those involving the nature of the class (e.g. day/night, meeting time, online/on-ground, regular/late start, required/elective?), the student (e.g. work status, full/part-time, receipt of financial aid, placement scores, traditional/non-traditional, motivation, reason for attending college), or other factors (whether absences cluster at certain times of the semester).

F. Jim handed out a graph of attendance data he collected in two of his classes, comparing grades with attendance. They showed a strong correlation between the two.

G. Bridget reported that she undertook a quick search of the literature on attendance and academic success. She handed out copies of a short article she found and provided Kent with several much longer ones.

H. Wendy suggested and the group agreed that a pilot project in the spring would be a good idea.

I. The group agreed to try and meet one more time between SAA’s next regular meeting on November 12th and Thanksgiving to complete general planning, followed by a smaller working group that will plan the actual pilot project before the end of the semester.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:55 p.m.