The committee charged with designing and implementing the Achieving the Dream plan to improve student performances at Athens Technical College met Feb. 7 to continue outlining their course of action for the multi-year project.

The group covered a variety of questions related to policy and procedures at the college to determine what changes, enhancements or other steps might be taken to ensure that students continue their courses and complete their educational goals.

**STUDENT ADVISING**

In the category of student advising, Vice President for Student Affairs Andrea Daniel recommended providing DegreeWorks as a web-based tool to help students monitor their progress toward degree completion. DegreeWorks is a software package that would combine ATC’s different degree requirements and a student’s coursework into a simple worksheet that shows how courses completed count toward the degree requirements to determine what other courses are needed.

DegreeWorks is an expensive proposition, though it is recommended as a top priority. One suggestion was to have the graduating class of 2012 make their gift toward that cost.

Recommendations in the advising area also included forming an advisory task force to assist students in their career planning.

**ADMISSIONS**

Lenzy Reid discussed the effects of having a hard deadline for at-risk students and suggested that late admissions are not good for the college. The group talked about the need for clear facts and data regarding students who opt for late admissions and who end up dropping out. The committee also discussed dropping the late admissions. He noted that more than 50 percent of those students who do enroll through late admissions, either don’t attend at all or drop out within the first two weeks of class. The time and effort faculty and staff put into the effort for late admissions are not paying off.

**ASSESSMENT & PLACEMENT:**

Celeste Taylor gave this update. Many at-risk students need learning support courses but are not eligible for financial aid to cover those class costs. Recommendations include low-cost no-cost computer-based instruction with a classroom instructor to assist; expanding the Learning Express program at the library and making Internet service available to students not served at their homes; stepping up learning support with adviser visits to classrooms at beginning of semester; and allowing students who wish to switch from diploma to associate degree status another chance to retest, possibly through a “prescription.” It was noted that there are about 15 to 40 students who might fit this scenario but that there needs to be a safety net and time window instituted. The question was asked if overrides have to be personally approved.

**COLLEGE SUCCESS COURSE:**

Tawana Mattox noted that students who take the ATC College Success Course did do better afterward according to data. Students and instructors are highly satisfied with classes and textbooks. Students reportedly like the new John Gardner textbooks. Students are interested in FastPass. Trying to figure an automated way for students to take and the required learning support courses in first semester and before they graduate. Need to continue monitoring retention rates of students who complete College 0099 course.

**COUNSELING:**

It was noted that the college has no counseling center and only one licensed counselor, even though the needs for service is increasing. There has been some discussion of Advantage Behavioral Health working with grad students at College of Education at UGA to assist. Now Counseling Center at UGA is a referral service.

**CURRICULAR ALIGNMENT:**

Currently working with other colleges and K-12 on alignment
DEGREE AUDITING:
Degree Works would be a good service for monitoring progress of students’ degree work. Right now there is no regular review of student outcomes. ATC needs to establish a regular scheduled for student review.

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION:
We need to establish a mechanism to gather data on student placement test scores, course completion rates, success in core courses, 1-year retention rate and program completion rates. Faculty needs to meet annually to review that data. Send faculty to workshops/conferences; update resources at the library for developmental education.

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY:
ATC mission statement can address diversity

EARLY ALERT
We need more participation by instructors and ideas for a plan of action to reach students as early as possible when they are having difficulty with course material and college. We need assessments, so we might look at other ATD colleges for their best practices and development for faculty and tie in with student assessment. The committee broached the idea of an attendance policy, which drew a lot of debate. It was cited as a “logistical nightmare” and a financial aid loss, but the question was posed about whether the college would lose money whether a student withdrew or was let go. It was suggested that a committee form to look at: financial aid, other ATD schools’ attendance policies – the pros and cons – and recommendations. Another idea proposed was making soft deadlines for financial aid and not denying the aid if the student doesn’t meet the deadline.

INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION:
The obvious weakness here is a lack of a central coordinator to oversee student success efforts either current ones or planned strategies. Consequently, there may be duplication and instances of students or issues being overlooked. The recommendation is to form a student success task force of students, faculty and staff members to create a plan for institutional organization and incorporate with Early Alert system.

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH CAPACITY
The college collects research data on student success rates through the office of Institutional Effectiveness and posted on the website. Student Affairs also conducts studies and interviews with students to determine why students withdraw. The question was asked about what is definition of student success. Committee members have recommended that the communications coordinator create a newsletter that could highlight student success information along with profiles of students who are succeeding. The newsletter could be used to ask some of the questions being asked by the committee about student success.

LATE START CLASSES:
The main recommendation on the policy and procedure analysis calls for implementing and evaluating the Fast Pass program.

LEARNING COMMUNITIES: Discussion suggested investigating Learning Communities for effectiveness of clustering courses aimed at a common cohort of students.

MISSION STATEMENT: To serve all students should be included in the statement

OUT OF CLASS INTERACTION:
We are administering the Community College Survey on student engagement spring semester and should have results at the end of the term. We should also look at Best Practices at other colleges for how faculty and students interact outside classrooms without creating problems.

LATE REGISTRATION:
The college could offer late registration two times a semester – one for new students and one for returning students so that student affairs staff members could spend more time with new students who might need more guidance.