CAMPUS COMMUNICATION

TO: The MSUB Community

FROM: Matthew Redinger, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Chair, Student Success Committee

RE: Status Report on the Work of the Student Success Committee

DATE: May 8, 2015

Chancellor Mark Nook issued a charge to the Student Success Committee (SSC) on December 17, 2014 to investigate and recommend programs, processes, and services that would help MSUB better serve its students and thereby improve our measures of student success. With the beginning of the spring semester, the SSC began working toward its goal of submitting a report to the chancellor and the Cabinet by October 1, 2015. Part of that charge called on me to inform the campus community of the committee’s work and progress.

The chancellor invited the participation from across the campus to establish a broadly representative committee that includes faculty members, staff members, administrators, students and community members. The members of the SSC are: Barb Shafer, Director of Business Services; Rob Bishop, Baseball Coach; Mary Susan Fishbaugh, College of Education; Susan Hayes and Joseph Wyatt, students; Jenny Howie, Computer Systems Analyst; Tammi Watson, Director New Student and Retention Services; Stephanie Cowen, Associate Director Student Services, City College; Jeff Rosenberry, Interim Associate Dean of Students; Cindy Dell, Assistant Professor, Education Foundations; Joy Barber, Instructor, General Education/Writing, City College; Lynne Fitzgerald, Assistant Professor, Health and Human Performance; Tom Nurmi, Assistant Professor, English; Kathryn Plymesser, Assistant Professor, Engineering; Debra Johnson, Dept. Chair; Associate Professor, Accounting/Business Law; Alex Tyson, Billings Chamber; Paul Foster, Executive Director of International Studies Office; Joann Stryker, Institutional Researcher, and me.

In his charge, the chancellor asked the SSC to address two questions:

1. What are the major areas in which our university could make the biggest gains in improving the success of our students?

2. What are the programs, processes, and cultural changes we could implement that would have the biggest positive impact on the success of our students and university?
Committee members have done a number of things to gather information on best/promising practices regarding student success. We have gone to professional conferences, pored over research briefs and reports, dived into institutional reports provided by members Joann Stryker and Jenny Howie, and attended webinars and WebX events to bring as much data to the table as possible.

Among the areas that the committee has identified as likely topics for further examination are:
- Holistic, multi-tiered advising
- Early alerts
- The “Campus Experience”
- Customer service
- High impact practices, such as living-learning communities, learning communities, first year experiences, undergraduate research, study abroad, and capstone experiences
- Gateway/High DFWI/High Risk Courses
- The focus and goals of the General Education program

The committee has also been hard at work lately on helping craft a multimillion dollar Department of Education Title III grant proposal in conjunction with the Chancellor’s “Title III SWAT Team” (Tessie Rose Bailey, Cindy Bell, Dave McGinnis, Ken Miller, Joe Oravec, Kathryn Plymesser, Christine Shearer, Lisa Skriner, Andrew Sullivan, Joann Stryker, and me), with the goal of securing funding to help make the committee’s recommendations a reality here at MSUB.

Chancellor Nook, in his charge, acknowledged that the work of the SSC would be daunting:

As you can see, this is a major undertaking that won’t be easy. You will ask questions and make recommendations that will challenge and encourage our university to aim higher, while continuing our commitment to be an open access university. Your work is essential to the long range future of our university.

We anticipate that the work of the committee will aim toward something of a culture-shift on campus as we focus our attention and energies on the chancellor’s primary goal of meeting each student where he or she is and getting them to where they need to be to meet their academic, personal, and professional goals. The key in this endeavor, however, will be for the committee to maintain focus on the first element of the chancellor’s charge: to focus on our mission and motto of Access and Excellence as we provide broad access to higher education and seek to deliver an excellent education to all committed to reaching their educational goals while maintaining the rigor, integrity, and value of our degrees.

If you have any ideas, questions, or recommendations about the work of the SSC, please let me know. I am at your service.

Matt