

Student, Faculty and Staff Focus Group Summaries

(Distilled from 28 focus groups held during the Spring 2008 semester at Pulaski Technical College.)

The most commonly cited barriers to student persistence and success at PTC are (in rank order):

1. Student non-academic personal issues (family, health, lack of maturity/confidence/social skills).
2. Student academic issues (under-prepared – poor reading/math/writing/computer skills).
3. Instruction including teaching methods, lack of enthusiasm/motivation/communication/accessibility.
4. PTC in-take procedures (including admissions, registration, advising, orientation and scheduling) and insufficient personnel (including inadequate telephone support).
5. Lack of computers and internet access at home.
6. Lack of time management skills.
7. Lack of reliable transportation and lack of knowledge of public transportation.
8. Inadequate financial aid or lack of knowledge of available financial aid (including high textbook costs).
9. Mismanagement of personal finances.
10. Day care availability and cost.

Pulaski Tech provides effective support to students by providing (in rank order):

1. Instruction including required syllabi, study guides, class discussions, group work, allowing make-up work, instructor evaluations, some attendance policies, some supportive and flexible instructors.
2. Career Pathways.
3. Technology including open labs, student email, online orientation, online tutorials, web page information.
4. College Seminar.
5. SOAR and all orientations.
6. Student life opportunities/events and Office of Student Life and Leadership.
7. TRIO.
8. Learning Assistance Center and tutors.
9. Instructional innovations including course redesign, smart classrooms, Reading Task Force, learning communities.
10. Counseling.
11. Single Parent Scholarship Fund (mentoring).
12. Classes scheduled online, Saturday, evening and multiple locations.
13. Facilities (wireless, compact campus, multiple locations).
14. Day care.
15. Financial aid.
16. Advising Center.
17. Title III.
18. Varied curriculum.
19. Admissions and recruitment.

Pulaski Tech can improve student persistence and success by offering (listed by organizational unit or area):

Instruction

1. Standardized attendance and make-up work policies.
2. Mandatory College Seminar.
3. Professional development for faculty to improve instruction.
4. Evaluating faculty and using results.
5. Assessing student computer skills and requiring Computer Concepts if lacking.
6. Hiring more full-time faculty.
7. Assigning pre-requisites to reading-intensive courses.
8. Limiting "TBA" in schedules and allowing 2 semester registrations.
9. Choosing texts more carefully considering cost, availability of used (don't work with online code access), buy-back availability, and announcing if text optional.
10. Day care with extended hours, reduced prices, expanded eligibility options, and payment with tuition and fees.
11. More student publications.
12. More workshops on budgeting, time management, interviewing and career preparation.

Student Services

1. Mandatory advising with designated advisors.
2. Mandatory orientation that includes financial aid information, web page exploration, public transportation information, and maps.
3. Expand Career Pathways, TRIO and develop similar support programs.
4. Streamlined registration with telephone support.
5. Streamlined financial aid process with mandatory financial aid counseling and more financial aid staff with telephone support.
6. More counseling staff offering career, mental health, personal, social, and financial counseling services.
7. Student life opportunities such as debate team, family events, faculty/student interaction, student pride and student recognition.
8. Traffic direction at busy times by campus police.
9. More involvement with high school counselors.

Administration

1. Free or reduced price computers.
2. Advertising of all available services (day care, counseling, advising, career).
3. Health center with nurse on campus.
4. Required student email.
5. More and better signage.
6. Bus and carpooling information on web pages and publications.