Student Retention Committee - Minutes
December 19, 2012 – 2pm
International Conference Room (SC-238)

Attended: Caroline Anderson, Ebonie Atkins, Russ Bloem, Ken Bratt, Todd Dornbos (chair), Dana Hebreard, Matt Jeltema (guest), Tom Steenwyk (guest), Tom Van Eck, and John Witte.

Absent: Elicia Ariai, Ebonie Atkins, Andrew Harris, & Rana Huisman.

Opening
(1) Todd opened the meeting.

Old items
(2) Student concerns referral system (Todd)
   • The SRC reviewed and discussed the retention system presentations given during the last two meetings (Dec 14 and Dec 18), and determined not to pursue a contract with either company at time – See comments below.

Adjournment
(3) Next meeting: TBD – Spring 2013

Student Concerns Referral System (Items below from previous minutes)

March 1, 2010 – While members of the Student Retention Committee have varying opinions regarding the necessity of an electronic referral/alert system, Todd will coordinate a demonstration of Datatel’s ‘Student Retention Alert’ software to help determine whether or not this product (or perhaps a similar “home-grown” system) could be useful. Further discussion about possible next steps is deferred until after the demo.

May 18, 2010 (update) – With general consensus from the membership, the committee will move forward cautiously (yet optimistically) toward the implementation of Datatel’s retention alert software. However, before confirming a decision: (1) Todd will coordinate a few conversations with reps from other schools that are already using this tool, to gauge effectiveness and evaluate usefulness, (2) Dana will connect with reps from the Calvin faculty (dept chairs, etc.) to determine whether or not they would find it useful, (3) all committee members will talk with their colleagues about possibilities for using it to enhance current processes, (4) Todd will begin working with Matt, Gary, and Dana to draft a possible implementation plan and schedule, and (5) Todd will reconvene the committee next summer to consider the draft plan and finalize a decision.

October 19, 2010 (update) – John and Todd will meet to review the system more carefully, and consider possibilities for implementation. Perhaps some existing processes (i.e. attendance checks) could be managed with this program. Russ will mention the concept to Henry. Todd will draft a possible memo from SRC to CIT regarding implementation.

November 22, 2010 - Todd will reconnect with Matt Jeltema to reiterate SRC’s continued interest in the software and to investigate options for testing a live demo before committing to an 11/FA pilot and/or start date. Todd will arrange a meeting with Matt Sink (former Datatel staffer) for his insights, as well.

January 26, 2011 – SRC members will be invited to participate in a hands-on “sandbox” demo of Datatel’s RA software.

March 7, 2011 – SRC members agreed to move forward with Datatel’s RA software. Todd will edit the request/proposal letter, and route it to Matt J. and Henry DV. ASAP. If/when approved, Todd and Matt will begin drafting an implementation plan. SRC should remember to include transfer students as possible “concern” group in RA system.

May 10, 2011 – With guests (noted above) SRC decided to move forward with a 4S grant proposal (State of Michigan) to fund Datatel’s RA software and a possible retention specialist to manage it. Todd and Megan will take the lead on the proposal and will keep the SRC and other key student support teams abreast of progress.

October 28, 2011 - Todd reported that our attempt to obtain 4S grant funding for this project was denied by the State of Michigan. While disappointing news, the committee would still like to see the college adopt this system, and possibly hire a retention specialist to manage it. Furthermore, the SEM plan will likely include this item within the list of retention objectives.

November 28, 2011 – Russ has plans to follow-up with Claudia and Henry about costs, possibilities, etc.

February 15, 2012 – Megan Berglund and Todd D. submitted a preliminary letter of interest for a grant proposal entitled "Retention Alert: Improving Student Persistence" to the TG Public Benefit Grant Program (Texas Grant). Committee members discussed alternative plans for the RA system, if this request is rejected. In general, the SRC would still like to move forward with the RA system. Todd will follow-up with Claudia, Russ, and Matt J. if TG funding is impossible.

September 21, 2012 – After some summer conversations about possible alternatives, the SRC will plan to compare the benefits/costs of Datatel’s Retention Alert and Pharos-360 at the next meeting. Todd will prepare a summary in advance of the next meeting and will invite Matt Jeltema (CIT) to join us for the conversation. If/when a system is selected, the SRC will pursue a proposal for PPC and the President’s cabinet.

October 25, 2012 – Matt joined our meeting to offer his observations regarding the Retention Alert and Pharos360 retention systems. After a conversation about possible opportunities and drawbacks, the SRC decided to schedule one more demo with each vendor this fall, and prep for these meetings by contacting representatives from other schools that are using each. Todd
will schedule demos with each vendor and a meeting with Dana, Ebonie, and John to discuss questions to ask colleagues from other schools.

December 14, 2012 – SRC participated in an interactive demonstration of the Pharos-360 student retention software.

December 18, 2012 – SRC participated in an interactive demonstration of the Retention Alert (Ellucian) retention system.

December 19, 2012 – The SRC reviewed and discussed the retention system presentations given during the last two meetings (Dec 14 and Dec 18), and determined not to pursue a contract with either company at this time. While each system has differing and distinct benefits, the SRC was not convinced that our rationale for investigating these systems was compelling enough to justify the costs necessary to effectively deploy and maintain them. In short, the SRC determined that we already have mechanisms for identifying drop-out/at-risk students, relatively good cross-divisional communication, and a strong safety net for those who are connected with the right resources. Furthermore, the SRC was not convinced that either of these systems would directly leverage improvement of our current retention rates. Alternatively, the SRC determined that some benefit would be gained by assigning Academic Services staff to the task of tracking, facilitating, and quantifying support for drop-out prone students. Todd was tasked with drafting a memo from the SRC to Academic Services (via Tom Steenwyk), expressing the group’s request to allocate resources in Academic Services (part-time position?) toward this effort.