Student Retention Committee - Minutes  
August 29, 2013 – 1:00pm 
International Conference Room

Attended: Russell Bloem, Elicia Davis, Todd Dornbos (chair), Christina Edmondson, Dana Hebreard, Rana Huisman, Annie Mas-Smith (guest), Darren Proppe, Tom Van Eck, Amy Wilstermann, and John Witte.

Absent with notice: Annie Bultman

Opening
Prayer (Todd)

(1) Reviewed and approved minutes and action items from last meeting (SRC Minutes #6-12/13) – March 25, 2013.

(2) Reviewed the agenda.

Old Items
(3) Retention plan (Todd, Russ)
   • No report; See action item #1 below.

(4) Student concerns referral system (Todd)
   • No report; See action item #2 below.

(5) From Every Nation (FEN) and student retention (All)
   • Annie Mas-Smith (Residence Life) and Elicia Davis (Student Academic Services) shared the results of a study conducted by the Residence Life staff regarding the social/integration experiences of Calvin’s AHANA students in the residence halls.
   • A copy of the presentation has been archived as SRC Comm. #5-13/14.
   • See action item #3 below.

(6) Fall-to-Spring Retention Stats (Tom VE)
   • No report; See action item #4 below.

New Items
(7) Committee Mandate
   • Briefly reviewed the committee mandate (SRC Comm. # 1-13/14)

Adjournment
(8) Next meeting: September 2014

Outstanding action items

(1) December 7, 2009 – Retention Plan - To help the Student Retention Committee (SRC) establish/refine a current list of retention goals and possible strategies for achieving them, a small task-force (short-term sub-committee) was charged with outlining a draft retention plan for the SRC to review and adopt. Given that (1) this plan will likely serve as a supplement to the broader enrollment objectives defined by the Enrollment Management Committee (EMC) and (2) that Dale Kuiper will be leading the EMC’s effort to reform the college’s existing enrollment plan, Russ requested that Dale also facilitate the SRC task-force. The following SRC members have also agreed to participate: Jacque R., John W., Russ B., & Todd D. While no deadline for completion was established, it is assumed that this group’s work will likely parallel the EMC’s time-line for constructing a broader enrollment plan.

November 22, 2010 - After a conversation regarding recent FEN updates with Michelle Loyd-Paige, MAC Chair and Dean for Multicultural Affairs, the retention committee will intentionally remember FEN’s retention objectives/goals [B1] for AHANA and International students when developing the SEM retention plan.

March 7, 2011 – Dale and Todd will meet soon, to discuss next steps.

May 10, 2011 – Planning team (noted above) has met once, and some work has been initiated to brainstorm a possible outline and important metrics for measuring success. The team will continue to work on this important task.

October 28, 2011 - Dale and Todd have met a few times to consider possibilities, and will convene the larger working group, once a more substantial framework has been constructed. Given Jaque’s departure, both Alicia and Bob Crow have volunteered to join the working group. A working group meeting has been prescheduled for mid-November.

September 21, 2012 – Now that the SEM plan has been adopted, Todd and Russ will discuss next steps for the construction of a retention plan. Perhaps the SRC could partner with the metrics committee to develop measurable retention objectives for this section, which could then serve as a reasonable alternative to a separate retention plan.
March 25, 2013 – SRC should consult with Mike Stob as we work to further define the metrics that will be used to measure our retention goals. Calvin’s argument for re-accreditation must include a section on student retention and should be completed by summer of 2014. Tom VE is leading the SEM plan metrics team, and will include SRC members when they are ready to determine appropriate measures for the Retention/Graduation section of the plan.

(2) March 1, 2010 – Student Concerns Referral System - 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 this 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 compromises (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.

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-departmental 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.

March 25, 2013 – SRC reviewed the first draft of a memo to Tom Steenwyk, and shared several comments and suggestions for revision. Todd will update the memo accordingly, discuss it with Tom S., and route a final draft to the SRC for review.

(3) November 22, 2010 – From Every Nation (FEN) – After a conversation with Michelle Loyd-Paige, MAC Chair and Dean for Multicultural Affairs, the retention committee will: (1) clearly document current efforts to support student retention of both AHANA and international students and report to MAC with a written summary, (2) intentionally remember FEN’s retention
objectives/goals [B1] for AHANA and International students when developing the SEM retention plan, and (3) possibly host a committee discussion about finances including representatives from financial services and financial aid.

January 26, 2011 – SRC members are reminded to submit a list of current retention strategies for AHANA and International students. These items will be include in the report noted above.

May 10, 2011 – Elicia, Jaque, & Todd met to discuss the need for a formal assessment of the social/integration experiences of Calvin’s AHANA and international students. Todd will pursue this idea with Mike Stob and/or Tom Van Eck.

October 28, 2011 – The committee agrees that an assessment of the social/integration experiences of Calvin’s AHANA and international students would be useful. John reported Residence Life is planning something similar for the 12/SP, and will keep the committee informed.

September 21, 2012 – The SRC plans to hear more from John and Elicia (current project leader) regarding their report on the assessment study conducted in 12/SP.

March 25, 2013 - John reported that Annie Maas is now heading up this project, but is not quite ready to present on the results. Todd will follow-up with John at a later date. Perhaps the SRC could schedule another meeting for this purpose.

August 29, 2103 - Annie Mas-Smith (Residence Life) and Elicia Davis (Student Academic Services) shared the results of a study conducted by the Residence Life staff regarding the social/integration experiences of Calvin’s AHANA students in the residence halls.

(4) March 25, 2013 – Fall-to-Spring Transfer Retention – While reviewing the Fall-to-Spring retention numbers, Tom VE pointed out that 14 of the 19 students who left had 12/FA GPAs lower than 2.0. Todd will follow-up with Tom VE and Dana regarding possible investigation.