

**CRITERION THREE:** *The Community College of Aurora is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.*

## Chapter 7

### STUDENT SERVICES

#### Strengths

The Community College of Aurora has the following strengths in the areas discussed in this chapter:

- Students are very satisfied with the quality of the Student Services Division's services and customer service.
- Faculty and staff are satisfied with the services provided in the Student Services Division.
- Improved availability of retention, completion and transfer data.

#### Challenges

The self-study found challenges for the future. The College is challenged to:

- Meet expanded hours of operations and operate efficiently and effectively with smaller budgets and reduced staff.
- Continue to improve the performance of the financial aid department.

#### Issue for the Future

The self-study identified an issue for the future. This issue is the following:

- Providing the level of student services needed to match enrollment growth at the Lowry campus.

## Introduction

The Community College of Aurora provides a wide range of services to students. Provision of these services is one of the College's five stated purposes and is implicit in the College mission statement. Moreover, by providing these services, the College ultimately expects to help students achieve their own educational and professional goals.

The College values (respect, quality, access, diversity, inclusion, and collaboration) guide the types of services the College offers and the manner in which it delivers them. For example, the record number of students on financial aid in the spring of 2002 and the priority the CCA Foundation now places on developing new scholarships testify to how highly CCA values access. The College's staff training and other recent efforts to improve customer service testify to the value of respect. Cross training of student services staff and the "one-stop" approach for services at the Lowry campus demonstrates the importance of collaboration.

Four CCA strategic goals focus on student services, including a goal to increase retention and completion rates and a goal to serve more students—particularly underserved students—in the College's service area. To ensure that the College meets these goals, the student services and enrollment management division ties its divisional and departmental planning directly to the College's strategic plan. The division's data booklet has a copy of the strategic plan draft and unit goals for each of the six units. The division inserts strategic planning goals directly into the unit goals and staff performance evaluations. (*Resource Room document 7.1*)

CCA provides most services to students through the division and its seven departments: advising, admissions and registration, financial aid, learning resource center, student life, recruiting, and Lowry campus services. Until 2001, when the College increased its focus on enrollment management, the division had been titled student, faculty, and staff services.

Four student services directors report to the vice president of student services and enrollment management and provide day-to-day administration and leadership in these areas. Primary offices are on the CentreTech campus and basic "one-stop" services are at the Lowry campus. As of August 2002, the division employed 34 staff members to service an annual nonduplicated headcount of more than 8,200 credit students. Reduction in the number of student services employees over the past several years (from 42 in 2000 to 34 in 2002) is a major challenge for the College.

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The division has made several significant adjustments since 2001 to increase enrollment and operate more efficiently and effectively. These adjustments include the following:

- Developed the “one-stop” model to deliver services at the Lowry campus, where cross-trained staff members provide registration, admissions, advising, assessment and financial aid services. At the CentreTech campus, the division uses a traditional departmental model but cross trains staff members with other departments. For example, registration trains its staff members to read financial aid screens, and advising trains staff to provide assessment services.
- Focused on enrollment management, sending staff members to visit other campuses and to attend conferences and workshops on recruiting, retention and customer service.
- Improved student access to information with new degree, certificate and transfer guides; an improved, user-friendly Web site; updated degree audit software and a “just-in-time” financial aid application process.
- Created a positive climate for students and employees through changes in financial aid, access to financial aid screens for admissions and registration staff, a computer replacement strategy, an emergency loan fund for students and a strategy to improve the predictability of budgets.
- Increased the use of technology and data to improve decision-making in recruiting, retention, marketing, budgeting and staffing. The division has created a variety of databases and reports and used the resulting information for many purposes, including a ZIP code analysis to assist in marketing, a re-recruiting strategy, enrollment predictions and determination of goal accomplishment for underrepresented students. (*Resource Room document 7.2*)
- Improved decision-making and communication through an open, non-hierarchical decision-making style, the sharing of budgeting information and decision-making and inclusion of instruction in decision-making and information sharing.

With many changes under way or complete, the division also has a number of opportunities. These include the electronic transfer of transcripts, predictive modeling to improve retention, improvements in Learning Resource Center labs and tutoring, recruiting partnerships with Workforce Development, relationships with Aurora Public Schools, keeping pace with enrollment growth at the Lowry campus, and institutionwide training in retention and telephone techniques.



To understand how effectively the College is providing student services, the division collects assessment data from five institutional effectiveness measures:

- The annual Survey of Currently Enrolled Students; (*Resource Room document 7.3*)
- The annual Graduate Survey; (*Resource Room document 7.4*)
- Student services report cards (customer service surveys, collected daily and tabulated by frequency count); (*Resource Room document 7.5*)
- The CLARUS Report (a firm hired to do enrollment research at all Colorado community colleges in 1998); and (*Resource Room document 7.6*)
- Faculty/staff constituency evaluations (other departments in the College evaluate student services). (*Resource Room document 7.7*)

Some results from these surveys are provided below. The student services data booklet has additional assessment information. (*Resource Room document 7.1*)

Overall, these assessments reveal high mean ratings for CCA's student services:

- Respondents on the last three Surveys of Currently Enrolled Students rated "overall quality of services" at 3.2, 3.2 and 3.29 (1=low, 4=high).
- On the three Graduate Surveys given from 1999 to 2001, recent CCA graduates responded to the question, "Are you satisfied with student services?" with mean ratings of 2.77, 3.46 and 3.25 (1=not satisfied, 4=very satisfied).
- Annual constituency surveys completed by employees since 1998 indicate increased satisfaction with student services.
- Student services report card data (FY01) indicate strong grades in "courtesy" and "quality of operations."



## Advising

The College encourages new and continuing students to talk with an academic advisor in the Advising Center for help in choosing courses. The Advising Center also provides specialized assistance to international students and veterans.

The Advising Center at the CentreTech campus has five full-time advisors and three part-time faculty advisors. At the Lowry campus, the “one-stop” Student Services Center has two advisors cross-trained in financial aid, admissions, registration and assessment skills, as well as one part-time faculty advisor. The Advising Center also uses staff from the Learning Resource Center during peak registration periods.

Since the summer of 2001, the Advising Center has implemented new products and processes to improve service to students. These improvements include:

- Formal, user-friendly advising and transfer guides to assist both students and advisors; (*Resource Room document 7.8*)
- “On-Course” online degree audit software that identifies what a student has taken and what he or she needs to take to complete a degree; (*Resource Room document 7.9*)
- Regular meetings with faculty members to update information about academic programs; and
- Adjunct faculty members hired to work as part-time advisors throughout the year to provide flexibility in serving students during busy periods and to link advising with instruction.

Advising Center staff members visit instructional departments monthly to build relationships and learn about program changes. Staff members are active in Systemwide initiatives in basic skills assessment for developmental courses.

The College has measured the effectiveness of advising and its services as follows:

- Respondents in the last three Survey of Currently Enrolled Students rated “advising” with means of 3.14, 3.07 and 3.09 (1=low, 4=high).
- Employees who completed the annual constituency surveys from 1998 to 2001 indicated that advising “meets or exceeds expectations” in all performance indicators measured.
- Student services report card data (FY01) indicated 81 percent of students gave advising a grade of “A” or “B” in courtesy, and 11 percent gave it a grade of “F.” Eighty-three percent graded it “A” or “B” in quality.

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## Admissions and Registration

The Admissions/Registration Office provides a variety of support services to students, including processing admissions applications and registrations, evaluating transcripts, providing transcript services, maintaining the degree audit program (On-Course), and conferring degrees. All services are available to students at CentreTech and Lowry campuses with primary services located at CentreTech. In addition, the office enforces compliance with state residency regulations, the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, and with State Board policies and procedures.

The admissions/registration staff includes a registrar and four full-time and three part-time staff. The departments use the Student Information System software, a customized package used by most Colorado community colleges.

The College continues to welcome walk-in registration, offering extended office hours during peak periods. However, in recent years, the admissions/registration office has expanded its use of technology in order to provide more convenient service. For example, students can now apply for admission, register for courses, adjust schedules, obtain commonly used forms and access their student records online. Likewise, they can register, adjust their schedules and access their grades via the telephone.

Since the summer of 2001, CCA has implemented new processes, including several statewide initiatives, to improve service to students and faculty. These processes include:

- Cross-training of front-office staff in information related to financial aid. For example, front-office staff can check the status of a student's application, which reduces the student's wait in line.
- Implementing a Web-based program through which faculty can submit grades, check course enrollments and monitor wait lists. (*Resource Room document 7.10*)
- Participating in a program (Colorado Mentor) that allows students to send a common application to a number of Colorado colleges. (*Resource Room document 7.11*)

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The College has measured the effectiveness of admissions/registration and its services as follows:

- Respondents in the last three Surveys of Currently Enrolled Students rated “walk-in registration” at means of 3.43, 3.29 and 3.5 (1=low, 4=high).
- Respondents to the Graduate Survey responded to the question, “Are you satisfied with the registration process?” with mean ratings of 2.62, 3.61 and 3.42 (1=not satisfied, 4=very satisfied).
- Annual employee constituency surveys indicate the department consistently “meets or exceeds expectations” in all performance indicators measured.
- Student services report card data (FY01) indicated 77 percent of students gave admissions/registration a grade of “A” in courtesy, and 63 percent gave it a grade of “A” in quality.

## **Financial Aid**

The Financial Aid Office, with five full-time employees, is responsible for assisting students with applying for and receiving federal, state and institutional financial aid, including grants, scholarships, work-study support and student loans.

The Financial Aid Office collaborates with other College departments to ensure that services are available for students. For example, the office works with:

- the Business Office to create a system in which the transfer of financial aid funds to eligible students’ accounts results in accurate balances on those accounts.
- the CCA Foundation to establish, process and publicize scholarship opportunities, as well as to develop and adopt a single application for all scholarships.
- the Admissions and Registration Office to determine the accuracy of student data.
- the Learning Resource Center to ensure that an ability-to-benefit test (Accuplacer) is available to students and that the LRC reports these scores promptly and accurately.
- the Advising Center to ensure that advisors monitor students on financial aid to be sure they continue to meet eligibility requirements when planning their course schedules.

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The Financial Aid Office has used technology to improve the administering and awarding of financial aid funds. The awarding of grant funds is automated and loan applications can be transmitted electronically and funds may be transferred electronically. Student financial aid records are imaged, allowing financial aid staff to access student files from their own computers. Apply-in-time awarding is now in effect so that students with a tax form in hand can get their financial aid award in less than one hour.

Many improvements in the Financial Aid Office have been implemented since a less-than-ideal audit in March 2001 and the receipt of numerous student complaints. Several indicators revealed there were problems:

- Student services report card data [FY 01] indicated that while 58 percent of students gave the Financial Aid Office a grade of “A” in courtesy, 25 percent gave it a grade of “F.” Similarly, 47 percent gave the department a grade of “A” in quality, and 26 percent gave it an “F.”

During 2001 and into 2002, the College acted to resolve the problems and address the student complaints, including hiring several financial aid consultants. Currently, the office has a relatively new staff, and the number of students on financial aid has returned to an all-time high. (*Resource Room document 7.12*)

## **Learning Resource Center**

The Learning Resource Center (LRC) plays a critical role in supporting student success at CCA. Located on the second floor of the Student Centre on the CentreTech campus, the LRC houses a computer lab with 32 PCs and adaptations for students with disabilities. Many LRC services are also available at the Lowry campus. The LRC services include the following: (*Resource Room document 7.13*)

- study skills development through workshops and individualized assistance;
- support services and resources for special-needs students;
- media resources, including classroom equipment and instructional materials;
- assessment and placement in reading, math and English;
- testing for a variety of purposes;
- tutoring in math, writing, accounting, computers and chemistry; and
- open computer labs, writing lab and self-paced math software.

*The Learning Resource Center (LRC) plays a critical role in supporting student success at CCA.*

In general, the Learning Resource Center has operated well in the past few years. At the same time, CCA's Learning Resource Center does not have the same depth and breadth of support services as do larger community colleges or those in states with greater support for higher education.

The following LRC services are addressed below: accessibility services, career services, testing and tutoring services.

### **Accessibility Services**

Accessibility services helps CCA students and employees with disabilities gain equal access to College programs and services. The accessibility coordinator collaborates with the advising staff and faculty members to arrange for accommodations and address special concerns. Each semester, the department assists approximately 190 students with identifiable disabilities.

CCA strives to address the rights of students with disabilities and to make them aware of their responsibilities. Students learn about accessibility services from course syllabi, the College Web site, the CCA catalog and schedules of classes, and in a letter the College sends to all students. To receive accommodations, students must document their disability each semester. To ensure that the College meets the needs of all students with disabilities, the accessibility services director spends one afternoon a week at the Lowry campus.

Accessibility services provides tutors, readers/writers, interpreters for the deaf, textbook recording, equipment, note taking and study-skills training. Accessibility services also refers students to additional services in the community and acts as an advocate to improve the environment as it affects persons with disabilities.

Respondents to the spring 2001 Survey of Currently Enrolled Students ranked accessibility services 3.44 on a scale from 1 (low) to 4 (high). The survey did not ask about accessibility services before 2001.

### **Testing**

The Testing Center serves students, faculty, staff, and community residents. The center provides the following services:

- academic testing in a secure, proctored environment for students requiring makeup exams, distance education course exams, or credit for prior work or life experience via credit-by-examination programs;
- assessment testing of students' academic skills, in partnership with advising, which interprets the results (available at both the CentreTech and the Lowry campuses);



- outside testing services for individuals, students, workers or professionals from other organizations, academic institutions or business/professional associations; and
- pre-GED testing and support of local GED testing services.

The center works with accessibility services in accordance with ADA provisions to provide students with necessary accommodations, materials and support. The center is also continuing to look at new ways of serving the CCA population and the community at large.

Over the last three survey periods, respondents to the Survey of Currently Enrolled Students rated the testing center at 3.21, 3.17 and 3.28 (1=low, 4=high). The 1998 CLARUS report ranked CCA's testing and assessment services higher than those at other metro area community colleges in every category measured.

### **Tutoring Services**

Tutoring services provides extra help and assistance to students in math, writing, chemistry, computers and accounting. One part-time coordinator supervises 16 tutors (eight faculty members, one student and seven volunteers). Tutoring services may be provided in group or individual sessions. Tutors play an important role in helping students achieve their educational goals and completing their course of study.

Over the last three survey periods, respondents to the Survey of Currently Enrolled Students rated tutoring at 2.98, 3.0 and 3.13 (1=low, 4=high). Tutoring services also receives student comments from the drop-in tutoring labs. Most of the feedback provided is positive, although there have been some complaints about scheduling and the type(s) of tutoring available. Additional statistics about tutoring services are available in the student services data book.

### **Career Services**

The Career Center is located in the Advising Center and is staffed by one full-time employee. Career services software is also available at the Lowry Campus. The center helps students in their job search and hosts a schoolwide job fair with approximately 40 employers every fall. The center helps students assess their career interests, learn more about careers and prepare for a job.

The center offers seminars in resume writing, interviewing techniques, job-search strategies and career choices. Career staff members also provide career information to College groups and classes. Career services receives numerous referrals from advising.

In the spring of 2001, respondents to the Survey of Currently Enrolled Students rated the career services at 3.1 (1=low, 4=high). The survey did not ask about career services before 2001. Log-in sheets located in the LRC track Career Center usage.



## Student Life

Student Life plays a critical role in supporting student success at CCA. By taking part in special activities, students are able to build relationships and develop friendships that help them to grow personally and academically. This integration is an important component of retention. One director, assisted by several student workers, coordinates the following options for students: (*Resource Room document 7.14*)

- organizations, including Phi Theta Kappa, athletic clubs, business clubs, Black Student Alliance, Criminal Justice Club, religious clubs, International Student Alliance, Lazos Culturales, Women of Wisdom and the Lesbian/Gay Alliance;
- activities such as dances, cookouts, cultural events, games, athletic competitions, speaking events, student leadership programs, films and “pizza with the President;”
- Student Government Association, which represents the student body and regulates all clubs and organizations;
- the CCA Fitness Center, which opened to students and the public in January 2002 on the Lowry Campus;
- the CCA residence hall, which opened in the summer of 2001 and doubled the number of residents in one year; and
- student ID discounts negotiated with local businesses.

The College has measured the effectiveness of student life and its services as follows:

- On the spring 2001 Survey of Currently Enrolled Students, respondents rated student life 3.04 on a scale of 1 (low) to 4 (high). This was the first year the survey asked about student life.
- The 1998 CLARUS report compared CCA's student life program to other metro area colleges and other colleges across the country. CCA scored consistently higher in most categories.
- Another measure of effectiveness is provided on sign in-sheets and evaluations after major student events. Those who planned the event meet to evaluate its effectiveness and this information is usually entered into club meeting minutes.

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## Recruiting

Recruiting services provides new and prospective students with information about the College in the form of brochures, schedules and catalogs. Recruitment personnel also provide tours and are available to answer student questions.

Recruiting services reports directly to the vice president of student services and enrollment management. One full-time employee and two to four student ambassadors provide pre-enrollment services, including attending high school fairs, recruiting at high schools and businesses, managing the inquiry database and recruiter log, coordinating tours, and updating recruiting materials. Lowry staff provide recruiting assistance where overlap or schedule problems occur. (*Resource Room documents 7.15*)

To strengthen recruiting, the vice president for student services and enrollment management worked with staff to introduce new information technology in 2001-02:

- The inquiry database now tracks all inquiries by type and yield (who has applied, who has enrolled), indicating inquiry sources and totals. The College now has the capacity to do much more specific reporting and to give many more people access to this information. (*Resource Room document 7.16*)
- The recruiter log tracks all recruiting activity, including who represented the College at an event, whom that person spoke to, and so forth. The log allows for year-to-year comparisons of recruiting activity starting with the 2001-02 year. The student services data booklet contains recruiting information.
- The creation of the inquiry database and the recruiter log were part of a larger effort to use information to generate additional enrollment. Over the last year, the division has continued to build the College's capacity to understand more about inquiries to the College, particularly which of those inquiries went on to apply and which of those applications went on to enroll. This information has been compared to national data and used for specific purposes, including:
  - deciding what ZIP codes to include in specific mailings, and
  - continuing to place more emphasis on the World Wide Web as inquiries via the Web increase.

Recruitment resources sometimes limit the potential for using the information to its best advantage. For example, the inquiry database provides a list of persons who have applied but who have not enrolled. With additional resources, these persons could be "re-recruited" and encouraged to enroll.

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To reach Hispanic and other underrepresented groups, the College does the following:

- hires a bilingual student worker every year to act as an interpreter or assist in answering questions from Spanish-speaking students;
- uses Hispanic staff to recruit at events that focus on Hispanic students; and
- develops strong relationships with foundations (the Latin American Educational Foundation and the Daniels Fund) and community agencies that serve a variety of underrepresented students.

The residence hall that the College opened in 2001 at Lowry has proved to be an unexpected asset to recruiting. Open to any student registered at an area college who passes a background check, the residence hall is now promoted by other area schools as a housing option for incoming students.

The College has not assessed recruiting using the traditional college surveys. However, since the College restructured recruiting and strengthened its technology tools, CCA's FTE increased 5.5 percent in FY 02 and is on track to increase again in FY 03.

## **Online Student Services**

In the fall of 2002, more than 200 students were taking courses at CCA exclusively online. For these and other students, the process for applying, registering, advising, buying books and getting financial aid for an online course is much the same as for any other CCA course:

- Online students register and apply three ways: the Internet, the telephone system or in person.
- Online students get advising by visiting the Advising Center or using online advising sheets for degrees and certificates and online transfer guides; some students e-mail the department chairs for information.
- Online class information is available at <http://www.ccaurora.edu/infosheets/index.html>. The information includes a course description and a class syllabus link with detailed sub-links to information on faculty, announcements, class notes, homework, tests, grades and how to contact the instructor.
- Online students can apply for financial aid online at the CCA Web site or in person at the Financial Aid Office.



- Online students use the Learning Resource Center for testing, tutoring and using learning software.
- Online students can purchase books through the Internet or in the campus bookstore.

The College has an e-mail account and voicemail that are checked and responded to daily for questions about distance learning classes.

CCA has a Web test to help students prepare for online classes. It includes short demonstrations and a practice exercise to help them determine if they have the basic skills required to take a course online.

To aid students in their use of College services via the Internet, CCA has paid special attention to designing and maintaining a user-friendly Web site. Evidence of the College's success in this area came in the fall of 2002, when Stone/Ward Fuse Box, a national public relations and marketing firm, rated CCA's Web site third among the more than 1200 college Web sites it had reviewed.

