Best Practices in Programs Designed to Improve Access and Diversity in Florida Higher Education

February 23, 2006

Guiding Principles for Best Practice

As new access and diversity programs are developed and existing programs are reviewed and/or expanded, these guiding principles provide a valuable lens through which program designs and processes may be evaluated:

➢ **Student-centered:** Personalized attention through coordinated programs which provide the levels and types of support needed by individual students to address the challenges faced at different points in their educational journeys.

➢ **Cost-effective:** Periodic analyses of effectiveness and efficiencies to identify opportunities for consolidation, elimination, replication, etc., as appropriate.

➢ **Collaborative:** Active involvement of students, as well as family, educational, and community partners at critical points in the process.

➢ **Sustainable:** Dedicated recurring resources; sufficient infrastructure; and long-term partnerships with other educational sectors and communities.

➢ **Replicable:** Design that allows for duplication of best practices in new settings.

➢ **Accountable/Measurable:** Evidence of institution-wide commitment to access and diversity; evidence of regular review to determine if articulated expected outcomes are achieved and principles of best practice are utilized; evidence of use of evaluation results for continuous program and process improvement.

Examples of Best Practices

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Practices that are worthy of emulation for supporting improved access to higher education, as well as successful retention to graduation, include*:*

- Early intervention and exposure to college, beginning at middle school, with a strong focus on mentoring and advising.
- Effective marketing and focused assistance to help students and their families/supporters understand the value and the possibility of higher education as an option.
- Academic intervention that encourages middle and high school students to take and pass rigorous courses which prepare them for collegiate studies.
- Assistance in preparing for college entrance examinations.
- Support to make higher education financially accessible.
- Initiatives that help students and their families/supporters understand and successfully navigate college admissions and financial aid procedures.
- Transition programs that welcome and affirm newcomers (freshmen and transfer students).
- Redundant early warning systems that identify and respond to students whose academic performance or other behaviors put them at risk of failure or dropping out.
- Advising networks that respond effectively to the academic and related needs of students.
- Mentoring and other initiatives that help students understand and successfully navigate institutional policies and comply with procedures.
- Learning support resources that are available and used by students when they need them.
- Peers who provide academic and social support in formal and informal ways.
- Residential living environments that provide academic and social support.
- Diverse faculty and staff members who are perceived by students as accessible and helpful.

Primary Sources:
(1) George Kuh, et al, 2005, _Student Success in College_.
(2) Members, State University System of Florida Access and Diversity Team and Resource Partners.