PVCC’s Completion Agenda sets aspirational goals that require us to be intentional about the delivery of our programs and courses. While we cannot guarantee student success, we can positively influence the teaching and learning environment to substantially increase their probability to succeed and complete academic, career and personal goals. Improving and enhancing teaching and learning on the broadest levels is the platform upon which the Completion Agenda is built. This Agenda sets forth strategies to achieve the best possible completion results.

Background

The Fourteenth Annual President’s Advance, held in March/April 2011, attended by approximately 110 Paradise Valley Community College employees and students yielded strong support for a College Completion Agenda. Participants met for nearly three hours to explore the theme, “Student Success/Learning and the Completion Agenda for All Learners.” In general participants reported that:

- It was important to have the Completion Agenda discussion.
- Very relevant data was included to inform the conversation.
- PVCC employees want to be involved and do care about student success.
- Not enough students and programs are being affected/impacted by the Agenda.
- A Completion Agenda implementation plan is needed.
- PVCC’s 2012-2013 Strategic Goal “Empower All Students to Succeed” and related planning objectives are in direct alignment with our Completion Agenda.

The Completion Agenda is not the Sole Measure…Student Learning Is!

Public policy cannot simply assume that program completion and high-level student achievement on key learning outcomes are one and the same. Access and completion are necessary but far from sufficient...{we} must work both to increase degree attainment and to improve significantly the breadth, level, and quality of students’ actual learning.” ~ The Quality Imperative, Association of American Colleges and Universities

“…{we should not focus}on degree attainment as the sole measure of success. Degrees are a proxy for skill attainment, but they are far from a perfect one...real {learning} outcomes and real mastery are more important.” ~ Disrupting College: How Disruptive Innovation Can Deliver Quality and Affordability to Postsecondary Education
The Completion Agenda in the Context of a Learning-Centered College

“Innovation experts and consultants stress repeatedly that innovation isn’t a matter of subject knowledge. It’s about thinking in flexible, integrative, and multidisciplinary ways, across many fields and types of knowledge. It’s about being able to synthesize and integrate different perspectives and models; of understanding and taking into account different human, cultural and economic needs, desires, values, and factors, and, from all that, glimpsing a new way forward that nobody else managed to see.” (Wallace, 2011)

All of the literature suggests that the single biggest indicator of student success is the degree to which students are engaged as active learners in educationally purposeful tasks and that learners spend a significant amount of time on these tasks. As reflected by Wallace, deep student learning and active engagement then becomes the single biggest predictor of student success leading to course completion, degree or certificate completion, and/or successful transfer to a four-year college or university.

The notion of completion is tied to learning. “Completion ought reliably to mean that students have demonstrated—cumulatively, over time—their acquisition of the knowledge and skills they will need for the complex and fast-changing challenges of work, citizenship, and contemporary life.” (Schneider, 2012)

MCCCD, State, and National Attention on the Completion Agenda

“...the community colleges will need to increase the number of certificates, associate degrees, and transfers to universities or four year colleges.” ~ Doyle Burke, MCCCD District Governing Board President, State of the District Address, January 2012

Arizona ranks 35th in Degree Attainment for 2-year or 4-year Diplomas ~ The Arizona Board of Regents goal is to double the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded on an annual basis by 2020.

“Jobs requiring at least an associate degree are projected to grow twice as fast as jobs requiring no college experience.” ~ President Obama

“College enrollment has been growing steadily over the past decade. The problem is completion: nearly half of those who enroll leave without a degree.” ~ Pathways to Prosperity Project

PVCC’s Completion Goals

1. Completion will be increased through continued enhancement, application of best practices, and learning-intensive efforts. Therefore, PVCC will increase the number of courses/experiences that are: “high engagement,” assessment based (significant progress made towards learning outcomes), and embedded with high impact practices (learning communities, service learning, research opportunities, intern and externships, mentoring, etc).
2. Increase on an annual basis the percent of students who successfully complete AGEC designated courses by 2 percent.
3. Increase on an annual basis by 6 percent the number of students completing: AGEC certificates, associate degrees, and occupational certificates.
4. Increase on an annual basis the number of students successfully transferring to a four-year college or university by 6 percent.
Strategies

1. PVCC will have a clear pathway for students to begin their PVCC Experience. We will implement the student success strategies of iStartSmart for all cohort groups on a mandatory basis (inclusive of orientation, testing, advising, and student success course experiences). Those students testing into developmental courses will begin at least one developmental course their first semester.

2. We will implement a thoughtful model of student success where we make explicit and understandable aspects and elements of student success for our students. “Get a Grip” will be implemented and made visible to students in all aspects of the entering pathway and student success initiatives. Critical student success factors such as: personally identifying with the College; learning how to establish relationships with faculty and staff; developing meaningful relationships with peers; learning how to navigate our systems and processes; goal setting; learning how to be an engaged learner.

3. We pledge to create opportunities where students will choose to engage in co-curricular and student development programming.

4. We are committed to high school bridge programs (Early College, ACE, Hoop of Learning, etc.) as a way to ensure that access is made available for all students. We expect that these programs are rigorous and engaging.

5. We are committed to fostering, enhancing, and expanding cohort-based learning through – Honors, Athletics, declared major/degree seeking students, Veterans, fine and performing arts, education, occupational, etc.

6. Students will develop educationally meaningful goals related to their own success and course and program completion utilizing tools such as iGoal.

7. Student and academic support programs will be integrated intentionally into the PVCC student experience.

8. We are committed to offering courses that are high engagement oriented, assessment based (where significant progress made towards learning outcomes is achieved), and embedded with high-impact practices (critical thinking, learning communities, service learning, research opportunities, intern and externships, mentoring, etc.).

9. Data will be collected and disaggregated in order to understand where student success is achieved and where gaps exist.

References
