

OPAS Prepare Workgroup Interview
June 28, 2007

Interview with: Marcia Fischer, Portland State University
Interview by: Dick Knight, Jo Oshiro
Subject: Explore key aspects of preparation that impact students progress and how these may be monitored
Background: Provided background questions prepared by Jo Oshiro. Also, Jo previously interviewed Marcia. Please refer to those notes also.

Data

- Need better data. Have good resources to extract and use the Banner student data base (David Burgess, OIRP). Does require clearly stated questions.
- MCECS just joined a Stanford study/research project on this topic: APPLEF (has a website). This is NSF funded, initially worked with 4 universities and in this stage are expanding to 21. Project starts this year with surveys of 35-40% of students. The focus is engineering student success and retention.

Retention

- PSU has low retention generally
- Successes: freshman inquiry and learning communities appear correlated with improvement
- The university offers a freshman math self-placement tool. There is also an advising tool available for “calculus headstart”. This can guide students into a 2 week summer pre-calculus review course. This is not intended for engineering only, but the majority of participating students in the first year of this program were from engineering. This offering is anticipated to be particularly valuable for “returning students” who have not been in classes recently.
- Calculus 1 is among the top 5 “most often dropped” classes
- Once students reach the “upper division” (junior status), they have an 80% persistence to degree success rate.
- About half of the PSU students come through CC’s. In addition, a significant number transfer from ITT programs.

Programs for “At Risk” Students

- Significant number of programs to encourage education equity. Focus is on defined categories such as under-represented ethnic groups, first in family to go to college, disability, etc.
- Programs include: Academic Success Program (ASP); TRIO; others. These are managed by the university, not the engineering college.
- Other support programs include: IST199 a college success class and the Undergraduate Academic Support Center.