Staff Unit Assessment Report

**Date**: May 28, 2010

**Staff Unit:**  Retention

**Supervisor**: Steve Woodburn

**Individuals** **participating**: Christina Sullivan

**Academic Year**: 2009-2010

Goal/Objective/Process to be assessed: Project Graduation—retention program intended to increase graduation rates of select populations of current and/or former WVNCC students.

**Assessment Methods:**

Qualitative data: documented notation of counseling sessions with students via phone, email, and face-to-face meetings to track the methods used and progress made with each individual student

Quantitative data measuring (by manual calculations):

* the number of students targeted in the program,
* the number who graduate (considered successful),
* the number of those who cannot graduate but who earned a degree previously from WVNCC (considered successful),
* the number of those who cannot graduate, who have not previously earned a degree, yet who are continuing to pursue a degree at Northern, (considered successful), and
* the number of those who cannot graduate this academic year, who have not previously earned a degree at WVNCC, and who are NOT continuing to pursue a degree at WVNCC (considered NOT successful)

**Results (Data):**

**Qualitative**: Please see attachment for chart of qualitative notes

**Quantitative**:

**Analysis (Discussion):**

Overall, the success rate for students assisted in Project Graduation was higher than predicted. First, definitions of “successful” and “unsuccessful” need to be established to interpret the results. In this study, “successful” is considered:

* the number of degrees awarded in the 2009-2010 academic year (labeled as “Degree Awarded”),
* those who previously earned a degree or certificate from Northern even if they could not graduate in the sought-after program in this year (these students do not affect graduation rates for the year) (labeled “Ineligible, Previous Graduate”),
* those who are persisting despite being ineligible for 2009-2010 graduation (persistence is a positive trait in retention) (labeled “Ineligible, Continuing at WVNCC”), or
* those who are provisional for graduation, pending completion of summer courses in June 2010 (labeled “Provisional Summer 2010”).

“Unsuccessful” students are those who were not eligible for graduation and who are not re-enrolled to persist at Northern at the time of this report (labeled “Ineligible, Not Continuing or Previous Graduate”).

The following lays out the distribution of data:

* 41 students were assisted through this program
* 42 degrees or certificates were applied for by these students
* 28 degrees were awarded (Degree Awarded)
* 4 students were ineligible but had completed a degree or certificate previously (Ineligible, Previous Graduates)
* 2 students were ineligible but re-enrolled for a subsequent semester (Ineligible, Continuing at WVNCC)
* 4 students are provisional for summer 2010 graduation (Provisional Summer 2010)
* 1 student’s status is pending
* 3 students were ineligible and neither were continuing nor had previously earned a degree or certificate.

With these definitions and totals in mind, 91% of the 42 sought-after degrees and certificates in this project are currently deemed successful; the predicted rate of success was above 85%. Once the final statuses of students who are finishing requirements in June 2010 are determined, this rate of success could change by as much as 10%. More than likely, though, assuming a majority of those students will be successful, the final determined rate will still remain at or above the predicted rate of 85%.

One student’s status is currently pending. The student has technically met the graduation requirements, but because the transfer credits to complete the degree were received after the student’s intended graduation date of December 2009, the student’s status for graduation has not been changed to “Degree Awarded.” I have followed up with the Records Office to determine if the student can be certified for graduation.

This seems to suggest that the methods used in Project Graduation promote student success, retention, and degree completion at Northern—all of which are key goals in retention. The methods used primarily focus on assessing each student’s options for completing requirements, close attention to each student’s status to allow for timely and continuous follow up, and effective advising.

Continuing ineligible graduation applicants are considered successful because they have been retained and are, thus, on track to complete a degree.

**Recommendations**:

The current process in place should be maintained. The process for assisting students who apply for graduation but are ineligible has a high success rate. Therefore, the process of coordination between the Records Office, which informs the Retention Office of students initially rejected for graduation, and the Retention Office, which implements follow up and advising with the students, should be sustained.

In order to increase the overall total of graduated students, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Generate lists of potential graduates in each program—those with a 2.0 or higher who are within 15-20 hours of graduation within the next academic year—through a Hyperion report. If the list can be made available for potential graduates by the end of the previous spring or summer term (before the academic year in which requirements could be earned), the number of hours considered could be as many as 30. If this list could at least be generated in the fall by October, the hours within graduation could be within 15-20 hours to potentially allow students the spring and summer term to complete courses. The list should include students’
   * names,
   * ID numbers,
   * contact information (address, email, phone),
   * program,
   * advisor,
   * GPA, and
   * academic standing.
2. Request that faculty advisors contact the students generated in the list described in item 1 above. Advisors only be asked to contact only their advisees. Because faculty advisors are specifically assigned advisees in a program, they are the best resource for assisting students in following degree requirements and completing requirements in a timely, successful manner.
3. Implement the other goals of Project Graduation. These include, for instance, identifying students who may be eligible to graduate in degrees other than their declared degrees. This would require special reports that will allow one to easily identify such students. This could be a challenge as students would have to be identified strictly based on requirements they have completed outside of their declared programs. If this cannot be generated through an automatic report, the only other option would be to use manual data collecting, which would require more manpower and more involvement from other offices because of the time commitment that would be needed.
4. Increase student awareness of degree requirements and tracking through *Northern on the Web* to make students accountable for their own success. This could be completed through orientation, workshops, College Success courses, or classroom presentations, among other methods. By making students aware of graduation requirements sooner, they will be better able to understand what is required of them and why, which will hopefully lead to faster completion of degrees.

Summary/Conclusions:

Because the Office of Retention implements several projects throughout the year and is only a half-time retention focus, expanding the reach and success of Project Graduation would require additional staff and faculty participation in the project, which is, understandably, not easily done due to other obligations these individuals have. Over time, hopefully, resources will become more available, and this can be achieved.