

**Focus Group Recommendations and Minutes
2008**

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Focus Group Recommendations and Minutes
2007-2008

Introduction

In Spring 2008, the Pearl River Community College Campus Climate Survey was administered to students at the main campus in Poplarville, the Forrest County Center, and Hancock Center. After the survey results were tabulated the information was disseminated to the Focus Group members appointed by Dr. Adam Breerwood.

This report is a compilation of the recommendations and minutes from the Focus Group and will be shared with the Dean of Student Services who oversaw the administration of the Campus Climate Survey and the Chief Planning Officer who coordinates the administration of all College surveys. Recommendations and actions taken as a result of these discussions are included in this document.

Members of the Focus Group are as follows:

Dr. Adam Breerwood, Chair
Dr. Cecil Burt
Dr. John Grant
Mr. Roger Knight
Dr. Jim Moore
Mr. Doug Rowell
Ms. Brenda Wells

Demographics of Survey Respondents	
Poplarville Campus	1199 responded to survey 86% ages 19-25 10% ages 26-35
Forrest County Center	478 responded to survey 78% ages 19-24 21 % ages 26-35
Hancock Center	80 responded to survey 73% ages 19-25 11% ages 26-35

Observations, Concerns, and Recommendations

Focus Group Minutes

June 12, 2008

Present: Adam Breerwood, Doug Rowell, Roger Knight, Cecil Burt, Brenda Wells

Dr. Adam Breerwood called the meeting to order. Members were requested to review results of Spring 2008 Campus Climate Survey and produce a list of suggestions for ways to improve areas of concern before the next meeting.

A recurring theme was found to be customer service – Students apparently do not feel respected and this needs to be addressed.

Dr. Breerwood charged the group to look at items having less than a 70% satisfaction rate and make recommendations for improvement in the areas as follows.

Dr. John Grant – Instructional Effectiveness
Dr. Cecil Burt – Forrest County Center
Dr. Jim Moore – Counseling and Advisement
Mr. Roger Knight – Business Office
Mr. Doug Rowell – Safety and Security

The meeting was adjourned with the next meeting being scheduled for July 2, 2008, at 11:00 o'clock a.m. in the Administration Building Conference Room.

Focus Group Minutes July 2, 2008

Present: Adam Breerwood, John Grant, Jim Moore, Doug Rowell, and Brenda Wells

The Focus Group met to review recommendations/suggestions in response to the results of the Spring 2008 Campus Climate Survey.

Doug Rowell presented the responses concerning safety and security issues. The group unanimously agreed with the responses listed, and Dr. Breerwood suggested that one item concerning student IDs be added to the seven (7) responses already listed (see attached list).

Due to time constraints, Dr. Breerwood requested that the recommendations for remaining areas (Instructional Effectiveness, Admission and Financial Aid, Registration Effectiveness) be emailed to Brenda Wells in order to be compiled into a report. After the Focus Group members review this report, it will be presented to the President.

The Focus Group members unanimously agreed to schedule the Campus Climate Survey during Fall Semester so the Focus Group meetings could be in early spring in order to expedite the recommendation process.

The Focus Group members made the following suggestions for improvement to the Campus Climate Survey:

1. Consider dropping Question 5 – (At which campus location have you completed most of your coursework?)
2. Delete Question 6 – (Which of the following best describes how you have completed most of your course work at PRCC?)
3. Change Question 11 into two questions to read:
 - a. I chose my schedule with the help of:
 1. A counselor, 2. A faculty member, 3. A staff advisor, 4. On my own
 - b. My classes were entered by:
 1. Myself - online, 2. A faculty member, 3. A staff advisor, 4. A counselor
4. Consider rewording question 25 concerning registration – (Registration personnel are friendly and helpful.)
 - a. Determine what we want to do about registration. Students currently go through three or four different stations during registration.
5. Delete Question 41 which reads: The quality of instruction by adjunct faculty is adequate. (*Students may not know which instructors are adjunct.*)

In addition during this meeting, the results of the Graduate Survey were also distributed and discussed. The low response rate on the Graduate Survey was noted and the following suggestions were made:

- *Consider distributing the survey at the point of application for graduation.*

(Note: Not all applicants graduate so this must be taken into consideration.)

- *Put a student ID on graduate survey and pull those who didn't graduate.*
- *Reiterate to the Bookstore Manager and staff the importance of the Graduate Survey with instructions to issue cap and gown after survey is completed.*

Note: The last suggestion was discussed as being the best avenue for success, perhaps with a memo being sent to the Bookstore Manager prior to issuance of the survey materials.

Instructional Effectiveness:

Areas in which a performance gap of one or greater existed between what students believed to be very important areas of concern and their satisfaction were reviewed and addressed. In some cases, items are addressed collectively since the items are interconnected and the recommendations would impact each of them. Although some areas may receive a satisfactory rating from students, administration believes higher expectations should be emphasized.

The survey instrument currently has five questions which fall within the sphere of instructional effectiveness. These are questions 21, 23, 42, 44, and 45.

The first area involves student perception of faculty

- **Q21 – Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available.**
- and
- **Q23 – If I thought an instructor was unfair, I would feel comfortable requesting a conference to discuss the situation.**

Fewer than 50% of students surveyed from all three campuses agree or strongly agree that channels for expressing student complaints are readily available (Poplarville – 42%; FCC – 46%; Hancock – 56%). The cumulative percent for all campuses of students who indicated that they were undecided about expressing student complaints was 34%.

Fewer than 70% of students surveyed from all three campuses agree or strongly agree that they would feel comfortable requesting a conference to discuss what they perceive as an unfair instructor (Poplarville – 53%; FCC- 66%; Hancock 62.5%).

Recommendations: Instructors and instructional department heads are to be advised about the students' complaints concerning fairness and feeling uncomfortable about requesting additional help.

Note: Memos from the Vice President for Instruction have been sent to instructors and instructional department heads

- **Q42 – Academic achievement is stressed as a goal in the classroom.**

Although all campuses received a satisfactory rating from students surveyed, the Poplarville campus reflected a rating of 76%, while the other campuses rated above 80% for stressing academic achievement.

Recommendations: This information from the campus climate survey will be shared with department chairs, and department chairs will be requested to express to instructors that they are expected to stress academic achievement.

- **Q44 – Instructors provide timely feedback, typically within one week of testing.**

Each campus received a satisfactory rating concerning timely feedback. However, the Poplarville and Hancock campuses both had a 76% rating, while the Forrest County Center scored 84% satisfaction.

Recommendations: This information is to be shared with department chairs who will be advised to **emphasize** the need to provide feedback to students within one week of testing.

- **Q45 – Classroom environments are conducive to learning.**

Note: Although student satisfaction among students surveyed reflected a satisfactory average of 82%, providing an environment conducive to student learning is of paramount importance, and significant funds are being designated to improvement of classrooms.

Safety and Security

After reviewing the campus climate survey results and student comments, the following responses/actions are being suggested and implemented to increase safety and security on all campuses:

1. Scheduled training meetings with police personnel should be conducted to promote public relations. These trainings will provide police officers the opportunity to improve public relations skills and communication skills.
2. A memo has been sent to all officers on night shift requiring them to ascertain that all dormitory buildings are locked, so that no dorm students will feel that he/she is being treated differently from others.
3. A new Public Safety/Student Conduct Manual has been written outlining all rules and regulations so that students are aware of rules and policies before they begin classes.
4. Evening and night shift officers are required to patrol a predetermined number of miles per shift so that they are more visible on campus at night. The mileage is recorded on a trip sheet which outlines what each officer did during his/her shift. The trip sheet is turned in at the end of every shift.
5. There are a required number of walk-through patrols in the dormitories.
6. During orientation, Campus Police will stress the importance of all students locking their vehicles and their dorm rooms.
7. Information pertaining to crime statistics is made available to all students. Victim's rights information is also available.
8. All students will be required to wear/display personal identification at all times.
9. Resident assistants will be trained as a first line of defense in determining at risk students and will also receive training in suicide prevention and early intervention in order to provide a safer environment.

Admission and Financial Aid

After reviewing the campus climate survey results and student comments, the following responses/actions are being suggested and implemented:

1. Financial aid workshops will be offered for incoming students in order to provide training and proper procedures to follow when applying for all aspects of financial aid. It is the intention of the Office of Student Services to offer these sessions in our learning lab so student can access federal, state, and institutional websites.
2. Training sessions will be provided to work study students who work in the Financial Aid Department and Admissions office so that they will be better prepared to provide correct information and answer questions.
3. The Admissions and Financial Department Directors will be requested to have a full-time employee at the front desk at all times.
4. All forms currently being used by the Offices of Admissions and Financial Aid will be located on PRCC's website for easier accessibility.

Registration Effectiveness

In response to the campus climate survey results and students comments, the following actions are being suggested and implemented:

1. Recruitment teams will be formulated to assist current district high school seniors with a smooth transition to PRCC. Each team will be assigned a different school and will visit with students at that school.
2. Teams will also provide PRCC College Nights at each high school. Teams will provide information to students and assist with their registration, in hopes that the registration process will be a smoother and easier transition for students.

Miscellaneous

Student comments indicate a need for more activities on campus. The following recommendations were made:

1. Tom Smith as instructor for the Recreational Leadership class will utilize students to expand areas of activities on campus. Students will be responsible for organization and implementation of activities.

Forrest County Center

Areas in which the cumulative score was less than a 70% satisfactory rating were reviewed and the recommendations are as follows:

The survey instrument for Forrest County Center had seven questions which fell below 70%.

- **Q21 – Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available.**
- and
- **Q23 – If I thought an instructor was unfair, I would feel comfortable requesting a conference to discuss the situation.**

The questions are somewhat related and are addressed as follows:

Students may not understand how or to whom to express a complaint or grievance. They may simply be uncomfortable discussing this with the instructor.

Recommendations:

- The Dean of the Forrest County Center will stress to faculty members that they try to make students feel comfortable talking with them.
- The Dean will also ask faculty to encourage students to see the Dean or appropriate administrator if they feel the need. This information is also covered in orientation.
- This grievance process is outlined in the Cat Country Guide and faculty members will be encouraged to cover this with students.

(Note: Since the Vice President of Instruction for the College is sending notification to all department chairs and instructors concerning these issues, these recommendations were not included in the Action Chart).

Only 69% of students indicated that they found the process of gaining financial aid information an easy process.

- **Q31 – I find the process of seeking and gaining information from the Financial Aid Office to be easy.**

However, the question relating to the business office services received a 77% approval rating and at the Forrest County Center, this is the same office.

Recommendations:

- The Director of Student Services will be requested to try to make the process of obtaining financial information more seamless.

There was a 49% approval rating concerning sufficient opportunity for student involvement in student activities on campus.

- **Q36 There is sufficient opportunity for involvement in student activities on campus.**

Although there has been much improvement in this area in recent years and monies have been provided for Fall and Spring Fest activities at the Forrest County Center, the following recommendation is provided:

Recommendation:

- Student government organization will seek student suggestions for student activities
- The new Director of Student Services will seek student suggestions and solutions for more student activities.

Only 51% indicated that information at orientation was helpful.

- **Q37 Information at Orientation was useful and helpful.**

Recommendation:

- Refer the area of student orientation to Dr. Gandy and suggest that we call it early registration.

Q39 and Q43 are both related to advisement.

- **Q39 I would prefer to have an advisor assigned to me.**
- **A43 I was provided adequate notice concerning standard entrance requirements and exams oftentimes required to transfer to a four-year institution.**

Recommendation:

- Assign an advisor to every student, especially full-time students.

Hancock Center

The recommendations for improvements at the Hancock Center are as follows:

Survey results indicate that there was a decrease in the level of student satisfaction at the Hancock Center regarding admission and registration services from 78% last year to 69% this year. Only 51% of students indicated that they found the process of gaining financial aid information an easy process and 64% found gaining information from admissions to be an easy process.

- **Q30 - I find the process of seeking and gaining information from the Admissions Office to be easy.**
- **Q31 – I find the process of seeking and gaining information from the Financial Aid Office to be easy.**

Recommendation:

Admission and Financial Aid workshop to be offered in the spring for local seniors in order to provide training in proper procedures for applying for financial aid.

Survey results indicate that 50% of students surveyed at the Hancock Center did not attend orientation.

Recommendation:

Improve attendance for Hancock Center student orientation.

Over 60% of students surveyed at Hancock Center indicated that they would prefer an advisor assigned to them.

- **Q39 I would prefer to have an advisor assigned to me.**

Recommendation:

Work with Counseling Center to assign an advisor to each student at the Hancock Center who can help students make wise choices on courses needed and even a program plan.

Only one-half (50%) of the students surveyed indicated that there is sufficient opportunity for student involvement in student activities on campus.

- **Q36 There is sufficient opportunity for involvement in student activities on campus.**

Recommendation:

Seek suggestions from students for having student activities at the Hancock Center

Actions

POPLARVILLE CAMPUS			
<i>Area Focus</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Progress Made and/or Date Completed</i>
<i>Instructional Effectiveness</i>	Instructors and instructional department heads are to be advised about the students' complaints concerning fairness and feeling uncomfortable about requesting additional help.	<i>Memo from the Vice President for Instruction will be sent to instructors and instructional department heads</i>	<i>Memo distributed via email on September 26, 2008</i>
	Department chairs will be requested to express to instructors that they are expected to stress academic achievement.	<i>Memo from the Vice President for Instruction will be sent to instructors and instructional department heads</i>	<i>Memo distributed via email on September 26, 2008</i>
	Department chairs will be advised to emphasize the need to provide feedback to students within one week of testing.	<i>Memo from the Vice President for Instruction will be sent to instructors and instructional department heads</i>	<i>Memo distributed via email on September 26, 2008</i>
<i>Safety and Security</i>	Scheduled training meetings with police personnel will be conducted to promote public relations. These trainings will provide police officers the opportunity to improve public relations skills and communication skills.	<i>Trainings to be scheduled for Spring 2009</i>	<i>Continuing education beginning on Thursday, September 18, 2008</i>
	All officers on night shift should ascertain that all dormitory buildings are locked, so that no dorm students will feel that he/she is being treated differently from others.	<i>Memo will be sent to all officers on night shift with instructions concerning this issue.</i>	<i>Memo dated _____</i>
	A new Public Safety /Student Conduct Manual has been writing outlining all rules and regulations so that students are aware of rules and policies before they begin classes.	<i>The Office of Student Services distributed this information prior to the Fall Semester of 2008.</i>	<i>Completed Fall 2008</i>
	Evening and night shift officers are required to patrol a predetermined number of miles per shift so that they are more visible on campus at night. The mileage is recorded on a trip sheet which outlines what each officer did during his/her shift. The trip sheet is turned in at the end of every shift.	<i>The Chief of Campus Police is responsible for checking this documentation.</i>	<i>Nightly logs are completed and on file with the Chief of Police</i>
	There are a required number of walk-through patrols in the dormitories	<i>These duties will be added to the nightshift list of responsibilities. The Chief of Police is responsible for maintaining the list of responsibilities and seeing that this is done.</i>	<i>Daily records maintained</i>

	During orientation, Campus Police will stress the importance of all students locking their vehicles and their dorm rooms.	<i>Director of Public Safety presented this information during the fall orientation sessions.</i>	<i>August orientation session</i>
	Information pertaining to crime statistics is made available to all students. Victim's rights information is also available.	<i>Information is provided in Cat Country Guide and on the College website. Student Right to Know Brochures are placed in racks in the Admissions Office and Business Offices.</i>	<i>Clery Act information will be completed in October Student Right to Know Brochure completed in September</i>
	All students will be required to wear/display personal identification at all times	<i>The Bookstore has agreed to provide the first lanyard for student IDs.</i>	<i>Implemented in Fall 2008</i>
	Resident assistants will be trained as a first line of defense in determining at risk students and will also receive training in suicide prevention and early intervention in order to provide a safer environment.	<i>The Office of Student Services will implement this training.</i>	<i>Early Alert systems implemented in Fall 2008</i>
<i>Admission and Financial Aid</i>	Financial aid workshops will be offered for incoming students in order to provide training and proper procedures for applying for all aspects of financial aid.	<i>The Office of Student Services will implement this training.</i>	<i>Plans are currently being developed (began in August 2008) and training will be implemented in 2009</i>
	Training sessions will be provided to work study students who work in the Financial Aid Department and Admissions office.	<i>The Office of Student Services will implement this training.</i>	<i>Plans being developed in Fall 2008 with training to follow in Spring 2008</i>
	The Admissions and Financial Department Directors will be requested to have a full-time employee at the front desk at all times.	<i>The Dean of Student Services will discuss this with the directors of these departments.</i>	<i>Fall 2008</i>
	All forms currently being used by the Offices of Admissions and Financial Aid will be located on PRCC's website for easier accessibility.	<i>The Dean of Student Services will direct the directors of these departments to work with the Webmaster to keep updated forms on the website.</i>	<i>Began in Fall 2008 – ongoing</i>
<i>Registration Effectiveness</i>	Recruitment teams will be formulated to assist current district high school seniors with a smooth transition to PRCC. Each team will be assigned a different school and will visit with students at that school.	<i>The new recruitment plan will be initiated in FY 09.</i>	<i>Plans currently being developed – implementation in Spring 2009</i>
	Teams will also provide PRCC College Nights at each high school. Teams will provide information to students and assist with their registration, in hopes that the registration process will be a smoother and easier transition for students.	<i>The new recruitment teams will be initiated in FY 09.</i>	<i>Plans currently being developed – implementation in Spring 2009</i>

<i>Miscellaneous</i>	Tom Smith as instructor for the Recreational Leadership class will utilize students to expand areas of activities on campus. Students will be responsible for organization and implementation of activities.	<i>Tom Smith will oversee all student project activities.</i>	<i>Fall 2008 – class implemented</i>
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FORREST COUNTY CENTER

<i>Area Focus</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Progress Made and/or Date Completed</i>
<i>FCC - Financial Aid</i>	The Director of Student Services will be requested to try to make the process of obtaining financial information more seamless	<i>The Director of Student Services will work on this throughout the year</i>	<i>The position of Director of Student Services will be implemented in 2008-2009 and changes will be ongoing</i>
<i>FCC - Student Activities</i>	Seek student suggestions for student activities	<i>Student government organization</i>	<i>Suggestions will be sought on an ongoing basis.</i>
	Seek student suggestions and solutions for more student activities.	<i>The Director of Student Services will work on this throughout the year</i>	<i>Ongoing after implementation of new position of Director of Student Services</i>
<i>FCC – Student Orientation</i>	Refer the area of student orientation to Dr. Gandy and suggest that we call it early registration	<i>Separate registration and orientation activities</i>	<i>New plans are currently being developed - ongoing</i>
<i>FCC- Student Advisement</i>	Assign an advisor to every student, especially full-time students.	<i>Plans continue to be developed to try to improve our current advisement</i>	<i>All C/T students have instructor advisors; ongoing discussion about academic student advisors</i>

HANCOCK CENTER

<i>Area Focus</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Progress Made and/or Date Completed</i>
<i>HC – Admission & Financial Aid</i>	Admission/Financial Aid workshop to be offered in the spring for local seniors to provide training and proper procedures for applying for financial aid.	<i>The Director of the HC will work with the Director(s) of Admission, Financial Aid, and Recruitment and Orientation to make this a reality.</i>	<i>Plans being developed- implementation in Spring 2009</i>
<i>HC – Student</i>	Improve attendance for HC student orientation.	<i>Director of HC will work with Dr. Gandy.</i>	<i>Plans to be implemented in</i>

Orientation			<i>Fall 2009</i>
HC – Student Advisement	Work with Counseling Center to assign an advisor to each student at the Hancock Center who can help students make wise choices on courses needed and even a program plan.	<i>Plans will be developed to improve the current advisement program.</i>	<i>Number of advisors available to students have been doubled</i>
HC – Student Activities	Seek suggestions from students for having student activities at the Hancock Center.	<i>Maggie Smith will work with Director of Student Services on this.</i>	<i>Student activities will be implemented in 2009</i>