

# Letters and Science Department

## Mid-Year Progress Report for Academic Year 2014-2015

March 2015

---

### Mid-Year Progress

#### Mid-Year Progress Report

##### **Implement a first-week survey or practice designed to establish an immediate connection with students**

Pushed to next year. As explained in the Visual and Performing Arts mid-year progress report, this goal--which was to have originated in a collaboration between the VPA department and student services--was subsumed by the broader institutional need for improving the college experience, collecting data on students, and developing a more robust orientation program. Institutional efforts are being aimed more comprehensively at the students' initial experience with the college. Instructionally, this means what happens on the first day, the first two weeks, the first semester, the first year. The enrollment management task force, for instance, called for the Vice President of Academic Affairs to "work with the faculty flex coordinator to provide ongoing faculty professional development on topics related to early-term best practices for reducing attrition and improving retention and persistence, such as effectively using the first day to develop connections, engaging first generation students, raising cultural awareness, and addressing achievement gaps." Administering a first week survey or other get-to-know-you instrument could be a key part of those practices.

##### **Establish a set of writing guidelines to be used section-wide**

In progress. On the one front, the Social Sciences department has completed and approved a set of guidelines for research papers that can be used as a model. On another front, CIC has undertaken a much more sustained conversation about the level of writing rigor in 100- and 200-level courses. Since most of those courses are in letters and sciences, what needs to happen next is bringing the two strands together: creating a document (most likely short, one or two pages) that indicate some specific expectations of 100- and 200-level writing in the letters and sciences section. A recent conversation among LAS chairs shows there is still great support for this goal and a way has been charted for a May 2015 completion.

##### **Continue to scale up transformative change in basic skills**

In progress. So far this year, scaling up best practices in basic skills has taken steps backward and forward. Backward, the math department was not able to secure supplemental instructors for classes in either the fall or spring semester and has, in fact, decided to move ahead with acceleration rather than supplemental instruction. Forward, the English department began the fall semester with four classes with supplemental instruction and ended with two but began the spring semester with all eight basic skills classes at IWV and KRV (70 and below) with supplemental instruction.

On the other hand, the Achieving the Dream project has identified 'reforming tutoring practices' as one of its interventions to go forward with over the next few years. This led to the proposed creation of a writing and math lab and the hiring (in process) of a dedicated LAC Coordinator. It is anticipated the new Coordinator will take ownership of the tutoring reform in a way that more directly and consistently supports basic skills instruction college-wide. On the instructional end, one hour a week to be completed in the lab will be required in all basic skills English and math courses.