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<http://www.mansfield.edu/~academic/>

This is the first of an occasional series of communications from Academic Affairs, intended to help keep the university community up to date on what is happening at Mansfield University.

Gauges on the Dashboard

The bad news is that the state provides less than 40% of our budget. Strangely enough, that is also the good news. Why? Because it means that our future is much more under our control than many people here believe. By now, everyone recognizes that our budget is "tuition driven." This means that if we don't have enough students, our financial obligations can very rapidly outstrip our resources. That's one reason persistence is important.

But it would be circular and silly to say that Mansfield University exists so that students will stay here. A student that persists stays here because something important is going on at MU. They stay because they believe that the time, effort and money they spend here are gaining them something that they value.

Persistence is not the car or even the engine; it's one of the gauges on the dashboard. Persistence is just one of the most visible indicators that students believe they are getting what they need from Mansfield for their own success in the future. So what we are really about here is student success.

Please don't misunderstand. I'm *not* saying that we should pretend that every student has succeeded no matter what really happens. I am saying that we need to prepare our students so that they can truly be a success if they do their part. If we are effective at explaining why this is important, and we're good at making it happen, then students will recognize that what they're getting here is valuable to them and they will stay.

Because of all this, we have reconstituted the former persistence committee into a new group called the Student Success Task Force.

The task is to build an environment from soup to nuts – from the first postcard a prospective student receives to commencement and beyond – that prepares students for success. We must help them develop the habits of mind and heart that will help them succeed in whatever they choose to do with their lives. This task force has been divided into five working groups. Each has three questions to answer:

- 1) Based on what we already know, what should we be doing immediately?
- 2) What should we do in the near future to build Mansfield University into an environment centered on student success?
- 3) What more do we need to know?

The first reports, on question #1, will be prepared before spring break.

Everyone has a role to play. We must have world-class faculty. But we also must have plumbing that works someone to help us in the library, and fair and open personnel processes. There are hundreds of jobs on this campus that must be done in order for the university to realize its mission. And every adult on this campus, like it or not, is a role model for our students.

I hope that I have convinced you that the concept of student success is not simply an excuse for pretending that all of our children are above average. Used in an academically healthy way, student success becomes a quick and efficient way to describe the idea that the entire Mansfield experience has a single goal of making our students ready. It is a scary world out there, and we need to help them prepare for what they will face when they leave us. There's much to be done, and the future is up to us.

- Michael Renner

News in Brief

- * The new TRIO Student Support Services grant is operational. The search for a director is underway, and the first cohort of students has begun to receive services.
- * Our teacher education programs' self-study documents have been submitted as part of our re-accreditation process. The PDE site visit will occur February 27-28 and the NCATE site visit is April 22-26.
- * The student voice mail system is being upgraded, and over 70 new computers were installed in laboratories over the holiday break.
- * The upper level of Manser and the entire library now have wireless network access.

Spotlight on Scholarship

Congratulations to...

- * Karen Guenther (History and Political Science) on the publication of her book, *Remembering our Time and Work is the Lords* by the Susquehanna University Press.
- * Prof. Holly Pieper (Communication and Theatre), who presented a paper "Fortifying the Impromptu Speaking Exercise" at the National Communication Association's 2005 Conference.
- * Duo Montagnard (Drs. Joseph Murphy and Matthew Slotkin, Music), who performed at the Gmeiner Arts Center in Wellsboro.