Student Learning Symposium 2015

Discussion Summary

Student Focus Group Discussion:

Participants reflect on their learning experience at KU and share their thoughts on milestones and barriers in student progress to degree.

- **Barriers**
  - Undergraduate students have high expectations for their courses. They are easily frustrated if they find some required courses not interesting, especially math and science courses. They are not sure why they have to take those courses.
  - Students want courses to be more flexible, which would help them transfer across departments. Also, instructors should explain the applicability of the course at the beginning of the semester.
  - For undergraduate students, in order to build their network, it is important to get involved in some student organizations and activities outside the class.
  - Lack of instructor's information before students sign up for a course makes it harder for students to determine how certain courses would fit them.
- **Support**
  - Good student advisors help undergraduate students select effective courses and plan their career paths. Some departments like Engineering have mentor groups, which are helpful. Also, advisors play an important role in graduate students' academic life.
  - Good faculty members would help students get involved in and pay attention to students' personal development.

Table Discussions at the Brunch Session

At my table, most are students and staff members who work closely with students.

- How are students progressing through your degree programs? What conditions prevent or delay their progression?
  - Advising is important to get students involved.
  - Financial problem will prevent or delay students' progression. If they don't have enough budgets, they will need to work more and slow their progress toward degree.
  - Sense of belonging will help students progress through their degree program.
  - In order to transfer to professional programs, students need to get a high GPA in their transcript. They will withdraw from one course rather than getting a C in the

class because they believe C will negatively impact their GPA. This action would delay their progress to degree.

- What is a milestone course for? What does it tell you if preformation in milestone courses is not related to student progress in degree?
    - The group believed that a milestone course helps students to be competitive and selective (weeding out weak students).
    - Our table said, based on the data, it is possible that these students were not good in this field thus they'd better change their major.
- Performance in next course for students who pass course A. Image course A is in your program. What are the data telling you? What else do you want to know? What are the limitations?
    - Our table wanted to know if it was the difficult time and difficult semester for the students.
    - The group wanted to know how the grade distribution (more As) impacted the course enrollment for the next semester.
    - Our table asked: Does course A relate to course B? How are they connected?
- How can you learn about milestones and barriers in student progress to your degree
    - Methods: Students' grades and the evaluation by faculty members.
    - Students in our group reflected that students don't know what they really wanted to do.
    - If students got a lower grade, he/she assumed that instructor did not like him/her.
    - Students in our table wanted to know more information about instructors because they cared about their grades. For instance, if only 5 students in 100-size-class got As in one class, he would not select this course.