AALANA Student Success Tiger Team

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The AALANA Student Success Tiger Team was charged to review RIT's undergraduate AALANA student success and provide recommendations concerning those efforts. To some extent, the Tiger Team and AALANA Student Success Tiger Team reports illustrate common challenges and parallel each other's work. The AALANA Team is in general agreement and supports the Tiger Team's recommendations. The following recommendations will strengthen RIT's efforts and support AALANA student's persistence and successful graduation.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS: FACILITATING STUDENT SUCCESS

Recommendation 1: Coordination, Communication and Collaboration
Create a system to ensure the coordination and communication among academic support services and service providers. Centrally coordinate and assess academic support services across the Institute.

Recommendation 1a: Identify who is specifically responsible for AALANA retention. Create a culture of "Retention Responsibility" and accountability among Institute partners and promote congruency between core teaching mission, scholarship and research.

Recommendation 1b: Standardize data requirements with policies and set criteria to ensure reporting consistency across the Institute. Require quarterly data collection processes with routine sharing of information and best practices across service units. Collection and analysis efforts should emphasize cohort comparisons, particularly AALANA/Non-AALANA student factors, and benchmark transfer populations in recognition of their increasing enrollment and growth potential.

Recommendation 2: Academic Advising
Thoroughly review RIT's Academic Advising System including consistency and standardization of professional advisors. Standardization of advisor training, job descriptions, and qualifications *is required* to work effectively with students and should be supported at the highest levels.

Recommendation 2a: Support an intentional model of academic support for all students (e.g., holds on registration, AIM programs, financial support and counseling). Implement an intrusive *Just-in-Time* model for at-risk students across the Institute including the identification of appropriate professional (s) to facilitate timely interventions, with special attention to academic challenges and drop-out factors related to class rank with particular emphasis on sophomore through graduation.

Recommendation 2b: Review and update institutional policies specific to academic actions, standardization, and consistency by College. This recommendation supports the Tiger Team's Recommendation #2, Institute Advising and Advising Information Center.

Recommendation 3: Technology
Greater utilization and maximization of existing RIT technologies (i.e. My Courses and Early Alerts) will promote communication and support student success. It is important to include professionals focused on AALANA student success in the development of our internal infrastructure and supporting systems and their subsequent implementation.

Recommendation 3a: Require all faculties to utilize My Courses as a means of posting current grades, course syllabi and requirements.

Recommendation 3b: Development of a Student Contact Management System would facilitate and streamline the advising process and allow access to a student's points of contact and interaction with on-campus professionals. This recommendation supports the Tiger Team's Recommendation #20.

Recommendation 4: Students
Attendance in the first year is critical. Intrusive attention to this can result in an increase toward our 93% first year retention goal. Three or more absences need to be flagged by faculty and a three-prong response by advisor, FYE instructor, and RA gets the best results (Education Advisory Board, *Improving Student Retention Through Early Intervention*, 2008).

Recommendation 4a: Resilient students persist through challenges. Enhance our identification and training of students to operate with a mastery-oriented coping style instead of a helpless pattern. (Dweck, C. & L. Sorich, Mastery-Oriented Thinking [in Snyder, C. R., *Coping: The Psychology of What Works*, Oxford Univ. Press: 1999]).

Recommendation 5: Academic
Complex issues infused within a culture of "Retention Responsibility" include lecturer and contingent faculty group skills and quality of teaching, salaries and benefits, workloads, work conditions, and integration into the RIT community.
RIT may be able to address the issue of instruction for difficult courses by creating a faculty-based committee to provide suggestions for helping students' master difficult content or by providing other incentives to faculty that demonstrate the capacity to successfully teach students in identified challenging areas.

Recommendation 5a: Develop a vehicle to continuously explore innovative means to deliver "difficult" curriculum and assess student learning. The core recommendations presume that keys to closing the graduation and retention gap reside in supplementing existing instruction. Remediation is only an effective strategy when content has been taught well initially. Remediation cannot span the chasms that exist when the core content is missing.

Recommendation 5b: High risk courses (most math and physics) need intrusive academic support. Provide supplemental instruction for some cohorts as a positive support strategy and special trailer courses.

Recommendation 6: Social Environment
Create a process by which faculty, staff, and students jointly work to improve the social environment within RIT for AALANA students. This will use constituencies from Student Government, the ALANA Collegiate Association, and other special interest clubs and organizations. It will consider student social needs, calendaring, funding sources, communication, advertising, and membership. Emphasis will be placed upon enhancing opportunities for collaboration, improving meaningful programming, and developing more systematic (on-going) assessment for student organizations.