Dear PPCC Team,

Our Focus Goal Planning team came together on August 6th to evaluate our progress on the goal we established last year, and to identify strategic goals that will drive the college forward over the coming years. The team worked hard in reviewing our progress and looking forward to new objectives. Our work produced the following goal:

**Focus Goal: Advance Student Persistence – Established August 2013**

Pikes Peak Community College aspires to assist students on their educational journey, to encourage their continued efforts towards their educational goals, and to raise institutional retention rates through two action goals:

1. Transform our Centennial Campus Library into a dynamic Learning Commons that supports academic success across disciplines with tutoring, technology, educational resources, and facilities that encourage student engagement in the learning process.
2. Identify and implement an electronic Academic Planning Tool designed to engage students with long-range, accurate, academic plans and continuous connection to their academic goals, progress, and college support functions while improving the efficiency of course scheduling and aiding us in maintaining continuity in our connection and communication with students.

Measures of PPCC student retention show Fall-to-Fall persistence rates of 48.7% for all students between Fall 2011 and Fall 2012. This unofficial measure kept only by CCCS and PPCC includes both part-time and fulltime students. Our official retention number based only on new, first-time, fulltime students is 50.2% Fall-to-Fall retention. The best performing urban schools in our state include Front Range Community College at 58.1% and Community College of Aurora at 56.3%.

With respect to student persistence our college faces challenges. We serve many military students (24% of our students attend using military benefits) who relocate before completing their educational goals; we serve many first generation students (50% of PPCC students) who arrive at PPCC uninformed about the expectations of college work, and many underprepared students (64% require remediation) who begin college in developmental courses.

Our college also has strengths on which we can capitalize. We have spectacular innovators bringing new ideas to teaching including gaming, integration of basic skill instruction with career and technical knowledge, and new uses of technology. We are committed to professional development with the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning leading the way, including new opportunities emerging across the college for all employees. We have resources with a college reserve of over $30 million dollars with more than $10 million available for use based on our internal guideline of maintaining a 30% reserve. Perhaps most importantly our college has a strong collective will to better serve our students.

I believe over the next three years through strategic investments, improved student support practices, and, further reinforcement of our “Students First” culture that we can raise our
student persistence rates by 10%. Achieving this goal would be a huge win for our college, but that isn’t why it’s important. This goal is vital because it is about the lives of our students. Students who drop out aren’t likely to return; their educational goals and hopes are dashed. Our dreams of those students becoming successful professionals in our community are also lost. Working to significantly improve our college in order to improve the odds for our students is a worthy and noble goal for our entire college. Together we can raise our persistence rates to 60%.

At PPCC focus goals are by definition large efforts that involve faculty, staff, students, and significant college resources. They are goals for our college that cross functional boundaries and impact most or all PPCC stakeholders. College-wide focus goals also represent the overall direction of our college. Therefore, these goals may also be translated into specific goals at the individual, department, and division level to improve student persistence. I encourage all PPCC departments to consider the roles they play in helping students successfully stay in college and attain their goals. We will be wildly successful if all departments and groups at the college also commit to developing goals to support student persistence.

**Review of Progress for the Goal of Perfecting the New Student Experience:**

November 5th of last year you received the note below from me regarding establishment of an annual focus goal area and details of our focus goal.

*Dear PPCC Colleagues,*

*Last Fall Semester our college built a five year Strategic Plan* that serves as our roadmap to improvement and meeting institutional goals. All employees were asked to participate in the process through surveys and feedback instruments. The broad base of participation from PPCC provided for the development of an exceptionally robust plan that outlines goals and tactics for successfully navigating the complex landscape of higher education in Colorado, while also catapulting us toward our vision of “Students Succeed at PPCC”.

*In building a five year plan, we recognized from the beginning that some parts of the plan warrant immediate attention, and other parts would necessarily be deferred to future years. Recently, I convened all of our Vice Presidents, Deans, and Executive Directors to spend an entire day reviewing our Strategic Plan, our current efforts to improve PPCC, and our goals for the next twelve months. Throughout the day we worked to understand the major ongoing and planned initiatives from each part of the college. Then we undertook the really difficult work of aligning our efforts into a strategic, achievable, and impactful set of goals for the current year. Our intensive workday resulted in the development of a unifying focus goal:*

*Aspire to perfection in each student’s first year experience by:*

1) *Removing barriers that prevent students from having a positive, successful entry to the College. (Enrollment Services)*
2) Offering mandatory student orientation by fall 2013 to ensure students can take full advantage of our resources and supportive services. (Student Success)

3) Assisting students to define their academic goals when they enter college by piloting a program with specific students during the coming year. (Instructional Services)

4) Creating academic pathways for full-time and part-time students to show them the most direct route to successfully accomplish their goals. (Instructional Services)

5) Learning everything we can from institutions with successful academic advising systems while developing a plan to transform our own. (Enrollment Services)

6) Developing a baseline benchmark of students’ first year experiences to assess the impacts of the changes we make and determine which outcomes to measure to evaluate our success. (Enrollment Services)

This college-wide goal was chosen because we believe improving students’ first year experience will vastly increase their ability to succeed. If we teach new students how to navigate PPCC’s processes and procedures, ensure they are headed down a firm academic path and offer the right services at the right time and place, we will show them we believe they can be academically successful.

While each objective has a “lead department,” achieving every objective will require all departments to contribute. In addition, each employee should be contributing individually: seeking new ways to improve the first year experience for our current students, and sharing suggestions for achieving these specific objectives with their coworkers and supervisors. The Leadership Team will be responsible for coordinating these efforts and will monitor progress continuously throughout the year.

It is my intention we will continue convening annually to review our progress and set forth annual guiding goals and principles. It is also my intention to provide all faculty and staff with a first-year report card of our Strategic Plan progress in January at our PDW meetings.

Please feel free to offer comments and suggestions about this goal to your supervisor or to me directly.

Sincerely,
Lance Bolton

Since publishing this note we have, working together, made significant progress. Dr. Randy Weber assisted me with drafting the update below regarding our progress:
As a result of efforts from many cross-divisional work groups, real progress has been made to support the college’s first focus goal:

- **Barriers addressed to support students at entry:**
  - **Dean/Instructor signature requirements**—1) processes have been developed by instructional deans to be enforced through CP&A for academic probation/suspension and semester hour overload, 2) implementation of electronic waitlist to address courses at capacity, and 3) a process to monitor previously evaluated transfer course equivalency.
  - **Evaluation of and posting new transfer coursework to PPCC transcript**—new software has been purchased to better manage workflow between records office and instructional divisions for new transfer courses to be evaluated.

- **The college has developed a new student orientation offered through the Student Success division.** Orientations are offered multiple times during the week to newly enrolled students in a format designed around current PPCC courses. The orientation utilizes D2L and the common syllabus to introduce students to their new college experience. Workshops will be offered on Fridays to support students with electronic and other support needs.

- **The instructional divisions have developed new Program Templates and Student Program Plans to assist students and advisors in setting attainable academic goals.**

- **An academic advising task force has been evaluating the college’s current model; reviewing best practices from other colleges; and gathering information from PPCC students, faculty, and staff on what they deem necessary for future advising needs.** The task force will make a new academic advising model recommendation in late fall to include focus on the purpose of advising at PPCC and what training & resources are needed for successful implementation.

- **Starting in fall 2015, entering students will be surveyed a few weeks into their first semester to measure satisfaction and effectiveness of their initial college experience.**

**Advancing Student Persistence Focus Goal Details:**
The Focus Goal Planning Team this year consisted of the same positions as last year, but some different individuals from last year’s team. The entire college is represented by the Focus Goal Planning Team. Our work this year and last was guided by expert facilitation from Debbie Sagen. If you would like more information about the process please see one of the attendees listed below:

**Academic Deans**
- Carol Jonas Morrison
- Bree Langemo
- Evan McHugh
- Fran Hetrick
- Chelsy Harris

**Executive Directors**
- Carlton Brooks
- Allison Swickard
- Sue Fenske

**Vice Presidents**
The Learning Commons Focus Goal is guided by requirements agreed to by the planning team. They include:

- Integration of library functions and tutorial functions
- Cross-training of personnel to ensure a seamless experience for students
- Support for all academic areas
- Long hours of service reflecting student needs for flexibility.
- Technology support and technology-based solutions integrated into the facility
- Physical design supporting individual, group, and class-based instruction
- Welcoming atmosphere, food, comfortable seating, as well as quiet areas and study rooms
- Inclusion of student support that goes beyond academic needs and helps students connect with college and community resources to resolve life issues
- Inclusion of training and staffing to be part of the plan

A cross-functional team is already working on designing the most effective Learning Commons possible. This team includes the following individuals:

- Danen Jobe
- Cyrille Parent
- Crystal Cyr
- Earnest Hughes
- Shelly Harper
- Bob Lund
- Mathew Burnett
- Brenda Lauer
- Felix Lopez
- Carol Jonas Morrison
- Bree Langemo

Cindy Buckley leads the Learning Commons Task Force. Much of the important design and implementation work is still ahead. Please contact VP Buckley if you are interested in participating with this group.

The Learning Commons Task Force has established the following preliminary milestone dates:

- Task Force recommendations due and communicated through Town Hall Meetings to the campus by 1-31-14
• Acceptance of or further negotiation of the recommendations complete by 2-28-14
• Engage an Architect & Engineer firm to fully develop the concept plans 3-15-14
• Budget for the project 4-30-14
• Construction and renovation to commence 9-1-14

Please bear in mind that all of the dates are tentative and mutually dependent. We will be flexible as events dictate.

**Warning!** This project comes with a very important word of caution to the college. This will be a large, expansive project. The current library space and potentially other adjacent spaces will be off-line for several months or more. During that time the college must maintain access for students to library functions including reference materials, books, periodicals, and study space. The college will relocate these functions and no ideal solutions exist. We are considering several spaces, but please understand that we will experience disruption and inconvenience on our way to becoming a college that serves our students better.

**Academic Planning Tool**
The Academic Planning Tool Task Force is charged with:

• Identifying attributes of an electronic academic planning tool that address student barriers identified by the Advising Task Force
• Providing a comparative study of available electronic tools & associated costs
• Producing an IT feasibility study of recommended electronic tool
• Identifying process, IT and training support needed for recommended electronic tool
• Identifying the resources needed for full implementation and support of electronic tool

A cross-functional team will include the following members:

• Bree Langemo, Dean of Business, Public Service & Social Sciences (Lead)
• Fran Hetrick, Dean of Communication, Humanities & Technical Studies
• Mike Madsen, Associate Dean of Health & Sciences
• Randy Weber, Vice President of Enrollment Services
• Lincoln Wulf, Career Planning & Advising Director
• Brook Bean, Career Planning & Advising Advisor, ME Division Liaison
• Megan Smith, Intervention & Advising Specialist, Retention Services
• Cyrille Parent, Information Technology Support Services Director
• Emily Forand, College Prep English Faculty, CETL Instructional Technology Faculty Fellow
• Gina Swanson, Sociology Faculty & Chair

Much of the important exploration, planning and implementation work is still ahead. Please contact Bree Langemo if you are interested in participating with the task force.
The Academic Planning Tool Task Force has established the following preliminary milestone dates:

- Task Force recommendations due and communicated through Town Hall or open Leadership Council Meetings to the campus by 1-31-14
- Acceptance of or further negotiation of the recommendations complete by 2-28-14
- Budget for the project 4-30-14

Please bear in mind that all of the dates are tentative and mutually dependent. We will be flexible as events dictate.

Planning and Budgeting
Finally, I want to provide clarity to the college regarding strategic planning and budgeting. Ideally our focus goals would fit nicely into fiscal, or academic, or even calendar years: they don’t. Our focus goal from last year has many components and is driving change in many areas. In fact, our new goals are essentially outgrowths of the original focus goal. They take the planning and execution to the next level going beyond improving the experience of new students to support the ongoing success of all students.

We would like for the process to work as follows:
- Develop focus goal and plan for implementation – 1st year
- Fund and execute implementation – 2nd year

Clearly even this process creates overlap if we develop a new goal each year. The process is further muddied by the fact that planning doesn’t always take one year; it might take more or less. Even less reliable is the funding and execution cycle. Therefore the process must be viewed as flexible and adaptable with respect to timing, but not with respect to our collective commitment.

The figure below attempts to illustrate the planning and budgeting cycle as I hope to have it operate.
Fall '14 - Develop Focus Goal 1 in support of strategic plan

Summer '14 - Develop Focus Goal 4 in support of strategic plan – Continue work on Focus Goal 1 and 2&3

Spring '14 - Fund Focus Goal 1 and Focus Goals 2&3 to the extent they are ready

Fall '13 - Complete planning/budgeting for Focus Goal 1 AND Accelerate 2 & 3 Planning

Summer '13 - Identify next Focus Goals 2 & 3 supporting strategic plan and Continue Focus Goal 1 work

Spring '13 - Planning for Focus Goal 1

Fall '12 - Develop 1st Focus Goal in support of strategic plan

Fall '14 Focus Goal 1 is fully implemented and 2&3 are progressing with implementation / Focus Goal 4 Planning Begins

Spring '15 Complete Funding of Focus Goals 2 & 3. Budget for Focus Goal 4