Stay Current! Workshops Designed to Increase Student Success

Twenty students gathered for the first of 11 Stay Current! workshops on January 20 in Seal Hall. The workshop series is designed to help students learn what it takes to be a successful college student. Topics range from how to communicate with instructors to time management to test taking strategies. Plus, students who have the highest attendance at the workshops will be entered into a drawing to win an iPad.

The next workshop, scheduled for February 3, will include a panel of PRCC staff members who will answer any questions students may have concerning college resources. The panel will include staff and administrators from the Counseling, Advisement and Placement Center; the Online and Extended Education Office; Student Life; the Student Success Center; and more. Two sessions of each workshop will be offered on the Poplarville campus on Thursdays throughout the spring semester, one at 11:00 in the Student Success Center and the other at 3:00 in Seal Hall, Room 114.

For a complete listing of workshop topics and dates, please visit the PRCC Title III website and check the Calendar of Events (www.prcc.edu/t3/index.php/calendar-of-events).

Spring 2011 Peer Mentors

The spring semester is well underway, and the Title III peer mentors are busy working with the students enrolled in the College Study Skills course on the Poplarville campus. Each peer mentor is assigned two to five students for the semester. They lead their small groups through a variety of games and activities that help them review the course content. Recently, the peer mentors were responsible for introducing the students to their academic advisors. The goal of this approach is to ease any anxiety the students may have about sitting down one-on-one with a faculty member.

This semester’s peer mentor group is composed of three returning peer mentors and four new peer mentors. The returning peer mentors include:

- Rachel Leah Huff – a sophomore criminal justice major from Forest
- Andrea Maxwell – a sophomore from Oak Grove studying pre-nursing
- Kimberly McAndrew – a sophomore from Poplarville studying music

The new peer mentors include two full-time peer mentors:

- Jon Geiger – a sophomore anthropology major from Bogalusa, LA
- Lisa McCance – a sophomore from Columbia studying healthcare data technology

There are also two new part-time peer mentors:

- Lauren O’Leary – a sophomore from Chalmette, LA, studying to be a nurse anesthetist
- Alysa Stevens – a freshman criminal justice major from Poplarville
PRCC is Making a Difference

Studying in the Student Success Center. Hanging out in the Great Hall. Walking the track in the Wellness Center. Wandering the hallways of Seal Hall. Students are the heart of PRCC. As more than 5,000 students pass through our doors each semester, the PRCC faculty and staff leave a mark on each of them. But are we truly making a difference? Are we actually impacting the futures of these students?

Take Matthew Head, a sophomore from Poplarville, for example. Head attended PRCC in 2008 before transferring to William Carey University. Unexpectedly, Head had to withdraw from WCU to care for his father. However, he hoped to one day re-enroll at PRCC and focus on his true interests: anthropology and education. Living by a motto that his grandfather instilled in him, which was “anything worth doing is worth doing the right way,” Head came up with a plan to continue his education. He planned to obtain a job through the WIN Job Center so that he could earn enough money to pay for school. The one downfall to this plan was that he had already missed the deadline to apply for the center’s program.

One day, while on the Poplarville campus, Head heard about the Student Success Center from Dr. Stephen Black, history instructor. When he visited the SSC he met the Title III Director Dr. Amy Townsend, who proceeded to make several phone calls in search of a solution for Head’s dilemma. Once Head cleared admissions, Townsend referred him to Leslie Butler, Title III learning specialist. Butler helped him with creating a schedule, completing his FAFSA, and defining his two-year plan, which included his transferring to the University of Southern Mississippi.

Head boasted that numerous individuals have offered guidance to him along the way: the Office of Student Services, the Office of Financial Aid, and the PRCC Bookstore staff, just to name a few. Head said, “There is a lot of caring at PRCC and you can see it through most of the faculty. They do not treat you as a student but as a person.” He mentioned that “the faculty remember your name and even things you have talked about in the past. It is nice to know your teachers are not just your teachers, but they actually do care.”

Alysa Stevens, a freshman from Poplarville majoring in criminal justice, is another example of how PRCC’s faculty and staff have reached out to their students. Stevens enrolled in the redesigned College Study Skills course last semester taught by Butler. She said that every topic covered in the book applied to her life. “Learning who you are, time management, and coping with school and life as a mom and a wife – I went through it, reading every chapter of the textbook and trying all the exercises,” she explained. “About three weeks into the class, I had a mental meltdown. Then, while sitting in class, tears started coming down my face. After class, Mrs. Butler came to me and asked if everything was O.K.” Stevens said that she was overwhelmed from trying to incorporate going back to school into her schedule. “After talking for a while, Mrs. Butler directed me to the counseling center and the tutoring services offered in Jefferson Davis Hall, which have been a great help to me,” Stevens added.

This semester Stevens has joined the group of Title III peer mentors and is now working alongside the students enrolled in the College Study Skills course. She said that she wanted to be a peer mentor in order to help new students make the transition to college. “Some students may be intimidated by their instructors and having a peer on the side that is on their same level creates a comfort zone for them to ask questions.” Stevens wants to encourage other students to take the success course. She said, “The course is definitely worth taking. It gives you the skills you need to learn how to manage college and how to make the right choices.”

So, there it is. Simply take a minute to stop a student on campus and ask them who has helped them along the River Road. You will be pleasantly surprised by their answers. You will quickly see that individuals from all departments and corners of campus are impacting the lives of PRCC students.

Written by Casey Rawls