Strategic initiatives drive positive trends in enrollment, student math metrics

While the Russ College continues to make strong advances in research—as you’ll read about President McDavis’s column on page 10 and the feature story on pages 12-13—academics are a continued area of growth and strength as well.

The Russ College is already seeing results from several areas targeted in strategic metrics I shared in the last issue of Ingenuity. In the key area of enrollment, one new tactic in the last year is targeted scholarships. The result? For fall 2010 (as of July), the Russ College had received 1,073 applications, with 341 first-year students committed to attend. This is compared with fall 2009’s final numbers: 1,187 applications with 314 students enrolled. Applications are down for this year almost 10 percent—but admissions are up almost 9 percent. This shows us that even though the applicant pool decreased, more students are choosing the Russ College and Ohio University. We are successfully attracting more students—with the same high quality—from a smaller available group. The number of high school graduates is declining across the nation, particularly in Ohio.

Keeping these students—what we call “retention”—is just as important as bringing them into the Bobcat fold. In fall-to-fall retention, the Russ College saw a five percent increase from academic year 2007–2008 (67.2 percent) to academic year 2008–2009 (72.1 percent). Math retention is a specific strategy aimed at continuing to improve this number. Getting tactical, the Russ College hired its own math instructor for fall 2009; as we know, mathematics preparation is key to success in engineering and technology. If we can ensure that our students gain the skills they need and are confident and secure in their knowledge and environment, we have a better chance that they’ll succeed with their career choice.

The results are significant. For fall quarter, in Math 115 (pre-calculus), the Russ College pass rate was 83 percent—as compared to Russ College students’ previous success rate of about 50 percent in the same course. During winter quarter, in Math 263A (calculus), the Russ College success rate was 74 percent, again compared to the previous pass rate of about 50 percent in the same course.

These are just two tactics in two strategic focus areas. Several Board of Visitors members spent a retreat weekend this summer with Dean Irwin, department chairs, center directors, and other Russ College leaders to review and refine our metrics, with the goal of making the Russ College a top choice in engineering and technology education. We look forward to reporting more good news next year! 🌟