Minutes were approved from the Oct. 30 and Nov. 13 meetings.

Wolff-Murphy handed out information on the Cross-Disciplinary Readiness Standards – THECB and TEA hired a consulting firm called Epic to create college readiness programs in core areas. The intent is to address the failure of TEKS - students are coming to college unprepared. The standards have been adopted and teachers will be responsible for teaching these standards. Cross-disciplinary standards lists same concerns about student capabilities, critical thinking, analytical thinking and work habits. George Tintera, College Readiness Representative is heading up the Math Vertical Team; SWM is heading up the English/Language Arts Vertical Team –working with high school teachers and community college teachers to discuss how we can start addressing these issues. In January, they will meet again. Tintera’s proposes to start conversation with Huerta’s faculty group (first year instructors) to confirm what we want students to do and what we feel is most needed, and give feedback to high school teachers. Concept aligns with QEP. If high schools address these issues, students will come better prepared. However, can we use seminar and core classes to fill in the gap. Wolff-Murphy has the full document and power point, if needed.

Huerta shared ideas from the FYIC Conference in Kansas City.
Nov 13 – 15 – National Learning Community Conference – Huerta & Hartlaub attended
Presentation#1: Tinto recommends (evidence shows) a basic learning community, not remedial, for a core focus on basic skills. Composition and seminar instructors will be trained in basic skills – reading, write, study. Designate certain learning communities as basic skills, linked to composition. TAMUCC constraints are in training seminar leaders when most are first semester graduates.
Presentation#2: School in MO - Bridge programs – used a statistically model to predict if students will be on probation and admitted them conditionally. These students are presented a contract stating they will be admitted if they do the following things: attend a one-week bridge program, before semester started, attend various programs, classes, and be placed in a basic skills learning community. They would not admit if student wouldn’t agree to this. TAMUCC – come up with some sort of prediction – formula to identify students at registration, with advisors. Name basic learning community something cool – “Island Advantage,” or choose not to name it. Students in this program had a higher retention than others.

Wolff-Murphy mentioned we already have a procedure intact with THEA, but is it effective? Sterba-Boatwright says students at risk can pass the THEA. State sets passing score standards, TAMUCC can set different scores. Sterba-Boatwright working with BANNER administration to suggest changing this to place students better. We need administrative support. Dechant mentioned that we can’t use THEA as an admission requirement at all, it is against the law. We would have to use other evidence: capture class rank, test scores, GPA, years of high school math broken down by topic. She also mentioned that we have some already built but needs to be rebuilt.

Bantell asked how difficult to get seminar leaders trained properly. Wolff-Murphy mentioned that Moreno has expertise to develop training.
N. Nelson said we have a lot of new learning strategies for the reading program. UT has a profile of students’ strength and weaknesses in terms of learning. Let the students identify their own weaknesses. Handout.

The items on the list of Student Services interventions were discussed. This list was developed from the FYE meeting made up of many student affairs folks. The obstacles that students are facing and the need for more parent communication were discussed. Conversation was made on the lack of communication with parents and a need of a parent relations staff position. Byus suggested a newsletter to parents could be linked with the FYI theme “From/For Your Islander.”

Grisé mentioned that a big barrier to undergraduate research assistants is that faculty is too busy already. We need to be careful of faculty work load and make sure they don’t take on something they can’t do.

Discussions were made as to how to motivate, engage and encourage students in seminar classes and learning communities.

Further discussions were made on student employment barriers. Byus suggested contacting Chamber of Commerce/Hispanic Chamber for ideas on how to set best practices when employing students.

Sutton reported on the literature review. The literature review will be incorporated within the content rather than having a separate section. Assistance to pull resources and organizing review will be available. Focus is still very broad and will be beneficial to narrow the focus to prevent creating too much work. N. Nelson mentioned it would be helpful to have a theme for finding literature. Byus suggested the mission statement as the common theme.

The Intervention Matrix was discussed.

“Task Groups”
Student Learning – Overall
Improving Learning Environment
  Math – Sterba-Boatwright
  Reading – N. Nelson
  Core Courses – Hartlaub, Grisé, Huerta, Wooster
  Learning Community – Keys
  Support Services – Degaish
  Transition – Needham, Bantell
  Student Work – Byus

Task groups will decide on an intervention and come up with two-three action plans. In the spring, we’ll decide which one to prioritize, propose a budget, eliminate some ideas and narrow down focus.

First Year Success Program – Texas A&M International
Site visit the first week of December – email Wolff-Murphy if you are interested.

Next meeting: Thursday, December 11, 2008, 2:30 – 4:30 p.m., UC Tejas Room 106B
Approved by Susan Wolff-Murphy for submission to Committee