The Student Achievement Initiative and TCC: Celebrating our Success

WA State’s Student Achievement Initiative (SAI) is a program that provides incentive funding to colleges which improve student success. Success is measured by students achieving specific benchmarks—called momentum points—which once accomplished, significantly improve the likelihood of student retention and degree/certificate completion. These momentum points are:

- Passing a basic skills course.
- Passing a precollege writing or math course.
- Earning the first 15, then 30 college level credits.
- Passing a required math course for a technical or associate degree.
- The awarding of a degree, certificate, or completion of apprenticeship training.

These momentum points help us focus on student accomplishments which significantly increase the potential for student success. Points are calculated by the State Board for each TCC student achieving one or more of the benchmarks, and in November we received our first SAI incentive award. Competing only against ourselves, we improved significantly over the program’s baseline year of 2006-07—a combined 22% increase in student achievement. Our gains were distributed across the six momentum point categories and ranged from a 7% increase in degree/certificate completion to a 47% increase in basic skills. As Tim Stokes notes,

“We should all ‘celebrate this success’—great job on this effort.”

TCC’s incentive award was $66,994; 50% as one time funding, 50% added to our base budget. The State Board’s commitment to this program was recently fortified with funding from the WA State Legislature, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Ford Foundation. The momentum points will now be a part of a larger initiative which aims to dramatically increase WA State community college completion rates, entitled the Washington State Student Completion Initiative.