Participants’ Comments:

1. Most students do succeed when they are engaged, attending class regularly and submitting all or most assignments. What action or actions can professors take to manage student dis-engagement—missing too many assignments and/or classes?

- Reaching out by phone and/or being sure all students feel comfortable seeking help before something goes wrong.
- Contacting them, asking to meet, writing words of encouragement on their papers, urging peer review so that fellow students are stake-holders in the success of other students.
- Early in the course, inviting early engagement as a ‘hook’ to develop the habit of engagement over time—completing assignments in a timely way, asking questions, making a habit of getting extra material when it’s needed.
- Making a one-on-one contact with students when early warning signs appear—just ask the question, “What’s going on?”
- If students drop too far behind to catch up, and have to drop the course for any reason, conducting an “exit interview” — following up to get the student’s story (what issues contributed, and what needs to change on the “reset”), track the student’s progress in next enrollment, encourage the student to see a particular advisor, and pass along a short assessment to that advisor.

2. About two weeks from today (Mar. 2), students will be invited to participate in a session called “How to Talk to Your Professor.” If you were given a chance to provide one tip or suggestion to pass along to students on how to approach a professor, what would it be?

- Start by learning your instructor’s name—and tell it to three other people, just to set the memory up inside your head.
- You are in a relationship with your professors, who have the same goal—your learning—so make it your goal to meet them halfway.
- Professors are in the learning business—so show them you want to learn.
- Work to let down your mask—be open and honest, because professors are people too. Just “take the leap” and go talk with them.
- Don’t expect to meet right before or after class—that time is for quick questions only. Professor’s minds are focused on a dozen different things when they are getting organized to teach or to move to the next meeting or class.
- Make an appointment outside class time, when you will have more time for a real conversation.
- Don’t just say, “I don’t understand” or “I’m lost in your course.” Those are fine to start the conversation, but then be prepared to follow them up with specific information on what you have done and what you need. If you ask specific questions, you open the door.
for real help—for example: “I worked the problem to this step and then didn’t know what
to do next.”
- Save personal issues to discuss during your appointment—not in front of the class.
- Get comfortable asking questions in class (as long as your question doesn’t stray off topic
or address something the professor just said!). This can be a delicate balance—informed
questions (those that follow careful listening) are valued by professors, because they are
not just your questions, and often are in the minds of other students as well.
- When a professor “opens a door” for you to come in for a conference, walk boldly
through that door, be honest about your academic challenges, and be open to follow
his/her directions on how to address them.

3. Write down one idea you got from today’s conversation—something you will do
differently in your work after today:
- A simple rule but crucial: learn students’ names asap and use them in and out of class. If
necessary, set a deadline date to get this done.
- Have my students write me a letter about themselves at the start of each semester.
- Say to my students: “If you really knew me you would know ___” and follow up with
personal details. This encourages them to take a turn themselves, and to share some
things I can then remember and use in my later conversations with each one.
- Greet students individually whenever possible, and end class with a wish for a good day
(again, individually if possible).
- Use a metaphor to encourage students to focus on their learning and not to be distracted
by issues they cannot control: “Stay in your lane.”
- Discuss in class how to speak with instructors and when.
- Make it easier for my students to communicate with me throughout the semester
regarding my overall performance as their professor.
- Find new ways to reach out to students, to show them that I care about their education,
that I believe they have the skills to succeed, to build higher level skills with time and
work.
- Point out areas crucial to their success—including the courses they take and the sequence,
relationships with professors, time management. When necessary, be willing to discuss
the value of stepping back sometime and resetting their plans (always with a view
towards what will be different next time—in other words, a revised plan for success).

4. What specific topics should we discuss the next time we have a faculty-advisor
conversation on this subject?
- What can advisors do to help students complete their classes? What are students expecting
from advisors?
- How can advisors and professors interface in their work to support students?
- How to focus students on their academic plan—what role can it play in the classroom as
well as in advising session.
• What are some creative new ways we can reach out to get students to trust, find and use learning pathways, and form relationships with advisors and professors?
• What are some ways advisors and professors can help with the transition into academic literacy and college life—how to help students “let go” of the high school model of learning which continues to influence them.
• How can we develop activities to get them to find a new peer group, other college students with the same goals, so that they become more connected to the college and less dependent on approval from their former high school peer group. This way, they “learn to learn” via new college peer groups as a form of reinforcement.

List of Participants:
• Ericka Landry, Faculty Fellow/Director, HETI (Lone Star College System)
• Debbie Farrell, Advisor
• Stacy Alley, Advisor
• Robert Goady, MATH Faculty
• Sharon Caleb, EDUC Faculty
• Tnatasha Robinson-Harris, EDUC Faculty
• Megan Judd, Upward Bound Coordinator (McArthur High)
• Gabriel Cardenas, WSI Machining Faculty
• Jack Dixon, ENGL Faculty
• Michael McFarland, ENGL Faculty (Adjunct Faculty Fellow)
• Rhonda Cannon, Counselor, Math and Science Division
• Kristy Young, Professional Development Intern