CSCC Continuous Improvement Team Award

Application

Submitted by Kellie Brennan, J.D., Student Conduct Program Coordinator

May 10, 2011

Nominated Team: Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT)

The BIT is the campus multi-disciplinary threat assessment team that addresses incidents of concern which may (1) disrupt the educational process or impose on the immediate safety of oneself or others, (2) violate the rights of others, and (3) violate the Student Code of Conduct. The BIT also responds to incidents involving students with mental illness and coordinates support services within the college and the community.

Team Members:

Kellie Brennan, J.D., Student Conduct Program Coordinator  PH: 287-2117

Ms. Brennan is the team leader and manages all functions of the BIT, including taking incident reports from faculty, staff, and students, coordinating investigation efforts with Columbus State Police, interviewing witnesses to behavioral incidents, coordinating emergency team meetings which determine the immediate status of the accused student, communicating with faculty, staff, and victims on the status of the accused student, checking local law enforcement records for student criminal history, maintaining due process for the accused student, keeping statistics and running quarterly reports on student incidents, identifying and managing academic impact of behavioral sanctions with department chairs and instructors, developing proactive measures to maintain campus safety. Her daily BIT responsibilities bridge potentially all departments within both divisions, which involve both campuses and off-campus centers. Ms. Brennan has also taken the initiative to create and implement training modules on threat assessment across campus, such as incident reporting, classroom management, dealing with disruptive behavior, and student conduct process and procedure.

Dr. Mark Querry, Psychologist, Coordinator, Counseling Services. PH: 287-5416

Dr. Querry is the campus psychologist, who serves on the team to address the student’s mental functional capacity (MFC). Problems in the student’s MFC, leading to violations of conduct or risk potential, may be grounded in various areas of etiology such as mental health (i.e., mental disorders or personality disorders), addictions, developmental disabilities (i.e., intellectual functional impairment or conditions on the Asperger’s – Autism spectrum), traumatic brain injuries (TBI), Adjustment Disorders or simply behavioral conditions commensurate with neurological and neurobehavioral
substrates such as Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, hypothyroidism, seizure disorders, etc. Dr. Querry also acts as a mental health liaison with external medical providers for purposes of validating any medical or psychological conditions and orchestrating the external provider in conducting required mental health evaluations when the BIT imposes such conditions in the process of determining the appropriateness for continued enrollment. Dr. Querry also consults on the nature of any sanctions, corrective measures or conditions for continued enrollment. As a member of the BIT, he has trained many academic and student-services department members at CSCC in student violence prevention and how to bridge a violation of student conduct to the BIT.

Tiffany McClain, M.A. Interim Director, Department of Disability Services. PH: 287-2571

Director McClain serves as an integral BIT member, with her expertise being in disabilities. She consults on various disabilities, with specific emphasis on the learning disabilities to the point of any association between the disability(s) in question and behavioral/conduct issues pertaining to the student in question. Director McClain also reviews any pre-existing documentation, on a need-to-know basis that may have bearing on a specific student conduct violation and relative consequences. Director McClain also ensures that the student's accommodations, when present in the case of a disability, are upheld to Americans with Disabilities (ADA) compliance standards, as conduct violations are addressed with the student in question.

Lieutenants (LTs) Daniel Werner, Benjamin Cassucio and Kevin Smith, Alternate representatives from Department of Public Safety, CSCC Police. PH: 287-2525

LTs Werner, Cassucio and Smith serve the BIT membership on a rotational basis, depending on their collective availability; they each serve on approximately one-third of all cases staffed by the BIT. The LTs provide security in the event that the accused student engages in disruptive or physically aggressive behavior while being interviewed by the BIT. LTs Werner, Cassucio and Smith provide vital expertise to the BIT on criminal behaviors and associated charges under the Ohio revised Code (ORC). They also assist in the investigation of incidents and interviewing of accuses students, victims and witnesses, and collection of information related to a student’s criminal history.

All BIT members partake in the interview process, monitoring and adhering to civil rights compliance throughout the interview and investigation process. The BIT members are trained in the discipline of threat assessment through the NaBITA model (National Behavioral Intervention Team Association).

Project Summary

The College values of which this team summarizes are:
- Being an integral, respected, trusted partner in our community
- A dynamic, evolving institution
Continuous Improvement Team Award Application

- An outstanding learning environment
- A diverse learning community
- Accountable

The College strategic planning goals which this team summarizes are:
- Technology support
- Community building
- Workforce Development
- Human capacity development
- Financial stewardship

The modern concept of the BIT was developed in response to the increasing trend of violence in higher education, culminating in the tragedy at Virginia Tech in 2007. In particular, the Governor's Report, issued after an extensive investigation into possible causes of the shooting and the University’s response, indicated that the University lacked a centralized location to report incidents of concern involving students. A best practices model was developed, and every higher education institution was counseled to create and train a team to address these concerns. Through a comprehensive study of our structure and needs at CSCC and consultation with national experts on threat assessment and higher education law through NaBITA and NCHERM (National Center for Higher Education Risk Management), CSCC created its BIT in the 2007-08 school year.

The BIT is a resource that is continually evolving through best practices and aligns with exemplary sister programs at other college across the country. The BIT at CSCC has been cited by national experts as a model program, combining elements of traditional threat assessment techniques with issues unique to the community college setting, i.e. students with violent criminal histories. The mission of the BIT is to ensure campus safety via the management of the entire student population with respect to regulated rules and practices that align with the Student Code of Conduct. Inclusive of managing the student population is the insurance of student safety with regard to intentional self-harm, i.e., suicidal ideation, intent, and/or plan.

The BIT supports the vision of CSCC in that the Team is positioned to respond to any emergent conduct or safety situation which meets the criteria of its mission. In short, the BIT intervenes in situations to ensure a stable learning environment to allow the mission of the College to endure, without threat or continued disruption.

The BIT supports the values of CSCC in the following ways:
- The BIT is an integral, respected, trusted partner in our community, across campus and with certain constituencies in greater Columbus. For example, members of the BIT were requested by the College administration to present on student violence prevention for Spring In-Service Day, reflecting that we are trusted and recognized as a collaborative partner with the College population. The BIT is partnering with Admissions, Workforce Development, and Human Resources to create a comprehensive resource to address potential threats from applicants with
criminal history, non-credit students, and employees. The BIT works with community providers and agencies to conduct business to better serve the College. Members often collaborate with mental health providers, law enforcement and state funded agencies in a truly comprehensive approach to managing student conduct or safety cases.

- The BIT is trained and very effective in responding to the needs of our diverse learning community, including issues specific to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, social background, health concerns and barriers to learning. We do not let any form of diversity bias our delivery of services.

- The BIT is accountable. Once the BIT is placed on notice relative to a situation involving threat or safety issues we respond, often within the same hour as the notification of its occurrence. Each member of the BIT has their role and function to execute so that when we come together to staff the case and formulate a response, we are fully prepared with plan and timeline. We do not quit until the situation is resolved, even if our scheduled need to be revised or extended.

The BIT supports the strategic planning goals of CSCC in the following ways:

- The BIT uses technology to help meets its mission. The newest support of technology has been with the acquisition of the Maxient database, purchased in the Fall of 2010. The database is interfaced with Datatel, to provide real-time access to student information. This system is instrumental in maintaining complete records, allowing the team remote access to student information, communicating with parties, tracking incidents over time, and running statistical reports on incidents using any number of variables.

- The BIT supports Community Building by collaborating with many parties on, and off, campus, such as faculty, staff, full academic departments, chairpersons, administration, student services departments, and service providers in the community. Recently we collaborated with the campus Classroom Safety Committee to develop the In-service Day training program. The BIT is also directly linked with the Felony Enrollment Review Committee to ensure our students accurately report and account for criminal history, particularly any violent crime. BIT members also invest much time as internal consultants with faculty on student situations to help define the nature of concerning behaviors from students. Ms. Brennan routinely conducts training on behalf of the BIT with staff and academic departments on customized topics related to the needs of the department.

- As noted above, the BIT in involved and supports Human Capacity Development, through our countless hours of consulting and training of employees throughout both campuses and the satellite locations. We have even been involved in our prison instructional sites.
The BIT strives to support Financial Stewardship, by running the Team on virtually no budget. Our services evolved from all the BIT members stepping up to create the BIT without asking for any funds. We do not create any needs for services that require additional monies. The BIT members themselves are all volunteers.

The BIT is a results-oriented, accountable entity. It is important to realize that the intent of the BIT, once safety has been re-established, is to foster the interactions with the student(s) in question into a “teachable moment,” to afford them an opportunity to turn their situation around, if possible, so they get on a functional track and succeed at CSCC. One of the goals of the BIT is to retain said student, while developing any skills that may be lacking in their pursuit of integrity and professionalism. We have, through our interviews with students, addressed their agendas and motives for improper behavior, been a resource where otherwise the student may have given up on his/her education, broken through hostile defenses and natural instincts toward violence, and witnessed marked improvement in social function, response to conflict, and attainment of educational goals. Without this intervention, there is little hope that they could persist in their pursuit of a degree.

In conclusion, the BIT team’s mission is to enhance campus safety and security and to help retain students while giving them opportunities to reassess their own values. Through cooperation with every department and division on our campus, we strive to increase students’ access to education by giving them the skills to succeed in the classroom and achieve educational goals. We also foster development of professionalism, so they may represent CSCC proudly in the local workforce or through transfer to a 4-year program. We maintain this level of support purely through volunteer efforts and without a budget. This tireless work translates to a better learning environment in the classroom through decreased disruption and empowerment of faculty to respond to behavioral incidents, increased retention of students who are least likely to succeed in higher education based on behavior, and an overall sense of safety for staff, faculty, and students on our campus.

**Sponsor:** Wayne Cocchi, M.A., Interim Dean of Student Life  
PH: 287-5004; wcocchi@cscc.edu

**Team Leader:** Kellie Brennan, J.D., Coordinator, Student Conduct Services.  
PH: 287-2117; kbrenna1@cscc.edu