



Hardwiring Student Success

Building Disciplines for Retention and Timely Graduation

University Leadership Council

Project Directors

Edward P. Venit

Jennifer Mason

Contributing Consultant

Monica Hlavac

Managing Director

Perri Strawn

Executive Director

Christopher Miller

Lead Designer

Hillary Tisdale

Creative Services

Dustin Almond • Jaime Buckley • Allison Driscoll • Karen Hutchinson • Nini Jin • Karyn Lance • Kevin Matovich • Keith Morgan
Karen Ressue • Lane Robbins • Sharlene Salvatierra • Jesse Schoch • Matt Starchak • Mysoon Taha • Joy Turner

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About the Education Advisory Board



The Firm

Since 1979, The Advisory Board Company has been providing best practice research to the world's leading hospitals, academic medical centers, and health systems. With a staff of over 1,000 in Washington, D.C., we serve health care CEOs, administrators, and clinical leaders at 2,700 institutions, publishing 55 major studies and 10,000 customized research briefs yearly on progressive management practices. The work focuses on the industry's best (and worst) demonstrated practices, helping member institutions benefit from one another's hard-learned lessons.

A New Practice in Higher Education

Encouraged by academic medical centers that our model and experience serving nonprofit institutions might prove valuable to universities, the Advisory Board began a higher education practice in 2007, with memberships serving the provost (the University Leadership Council), student affairs (the Student Affairs Leadership Council), and business and finance executives (the University Business Executive Roundtable). As of this writing we are honored to serve over 200 of the nation's leading colleges and universities on whose advice and goodwill we rely.

A Member-Led Agenda

Our members set the agenda for the University Leadership Council's research. Each year, we poll the membership to better understand their "up-at-night" issues—topics of genuine aspiration or urgency. The most widely voiced issues become the focus of our best practice work.

Casting the Net Wide

Our search for innovative practice is not limited to the membership. The Advisory Board believes it serves members best by exposing them to ideas and practices beyond the narrow confines of their peer groups as traditionally defined. We scan the entirety of the higher education sector for effective and replicable models, typically reviewing thousands of pages of literature and interviewing hundreds of institutions to find the 10 to 15 top ideas worthy of provosts' attention.

Specializing in Best Practice Inquiry, Not Policy Analysis

New to the higher education community, we are acutely aware of how much we have to learn and modest in our ambitions in serving our members. Our work is not intended to propose national policy (or to lobby policy makers), nor is it peer-reviewed academic research. Our narrower intention is to distill the empirical experiences of institutions like yours, profiling success stories (and failure paths) to help prioritize investments and improve performance. At our best, we offer original insight into "what's working" in higher education and critique the popular wisdom and fad-like trends that take hold in all fields and industries.

Advisors to Our Work

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Rob Hradsky
Assistant Vice President for Campus Life
and Dean of Students
American University

Margaret Weekes
Associate Dean, School of Public Affairs
American University

Susan Black
Program Coordinator, Academic Advising Center
California State University, Long Beach

Erika Chaney
Destination Graduation Coordinator,
Academic Advising Center
California State University, Long Beach

David Dowell
Vice Provost
California State University, Long Beach

Marilee Samuelson
Director, Academic Advising Center
California State University, Long Beach

Jose-Luis Vargas
Director, Educational Opportunity Program
California State University, Northridge

William Baeslack
Provost
Case Western Reserve University

Don Feke
Professor and Vice Provost
Case Western Reserve University

Jason Bentley
Coordinator, First-Year Experience
Central Michigan University

Valerie Konczal
Director of Academic Services and Systems
Duke University

Michele Rasmussen
Director of Academic Advising
Duke University

Jeff Carpenter
eArmyU Deputy Project Manager for Operations
eArmyU

Larry Abele
Provost
Florida State University

Alice Earp
Director of Retention Studies
Florida State University

Bruce Janasiewicz
Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences
Florida State University

Karen Laughlin
Dean of Undergraduate Studies
Florida State University

Sheryl Biel
Assistant Vice President for Academic Planning
and Institutional Research and Assessment
George Washington University

Lauren Adamson
Dean of College of Arts and Science
Georgia State University

Ron Henry
Provost
Georgia State University

Theresa Pacella
National Sales Director
Hobsons

Vishal Saboo
Product Manager
Hobsons

Jena Burgess
Vice Provost
Humboldt State University

Robert Snyder
Provost
Humboldt State University

Scott Evenbeck
Dean of the University College
**Indiana University Purdue University
at Indianapolis**

Kai Drekmeier
President
InsideTrack

Chris Tilghman
Director of Program Development
InsideTrack

Mari Normyle
Assistant Dean of Academic Services
Lynchburg College

John Pauly
Provost
Marquette University

Gayle Ormiston
Provost
Marshall University

Sherri Hughes
Provost
Marymount University

Joe Murray
Director of Academic Advising and Retention
Miami University Hamilton

Ty Abernathy
Research Associate
Mississippi State University

David McMillen
Research Professor
Mississippi State University

Nell Valentine
Researcher with the Social Science Research Center
Mississippi State University

Linda Mills
Senior Vice Provost for Undergraduate
Education and University Life
New York University

Kate Peterson
Assistant Provost for Enrollment Management
Oregon State University

John Hawthorne
Provost
Point Loma Nazarene University

John Campbell
Associate Vice President for Teaching
and Learning Technologies
Purdue University

Paula Harbecke
Provost
Regis College

Jack Mahoney
Director of Institutional Research
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Robert Palazzo
Provost
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

David Carr
Provost
Richard Stockton College

Jo Volkert
Vice President for Enrollment Management
San Francisco State University

Carla Hradisky-Coffelt
Director of Retention Services
Slippery Rock University

Amanda Yale
Associate Provost for Enrollment Services
Slippery Rock University

Vincent Tinto
Distinguished University Professor of Education
Syracuse University

Mike Scott
Director of Scholarships
and Student Financial Aid
Texas Christian University

Jen Beck
Director of Retention Management and Planning
Texas State University—San Marcos

Cam Cruickshank
Vice President for Enrollment Management
Tiffin University

Jennifer Benson Jones
Professor of Education
University of Alabama

Cali Davis
Associate Director of Data Analysis
and Specialized Recruitment
University of Alabama

Kathy Van Laningham
Vice Provost for Planning and Director
of Institutional Research
University of Arkansas

Vu Tran
Director of Admissions
University of California, Los Angeles

Gene Lucas
Provost
University of California, Santa Barbara

Bernadette Jungblut
Associate Director of the Office
of Assessment and Planning
University of Central Florida

DeLaine Priest
Assistant Vice President for Student
Success Services
University of Central Florida

Gersham Nelson
Dean of the College of Arts,
Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Central Missouri

Jay Corwin
Executive Director of Academic
Advisement and Retention
University of Central Oklahoma

Phil DiStefano
Provost
University of Colorado at Boulder

Joseph Glover
Provost
University of Florida

Albert Matheny
Associate Dean, College of Liberal
Arts and Sciences
University of Florida

Brian Ray
Associate Dean, School of Business
University of Florida

Domonic Cobb
Assistant Provost for Recruitment and Retention
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Roger Thompson
Vice Provost for Enrollment Management
University of Indiana-Bloomington

Deb Balogh
Provost
University of Indianapolis

Randolph Hollingsworth
Assistant Provost
University of Kentucky

Connie Ray
Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness
University of Kentucky

Kumble Subbaswamy
Provost
University of Kentucky

Lisa Kiely
Assistant Dean
University of Maryland, College Park

Scott Wolpert
Associate Dean
University of Maryland, College Park

Vanessa Shields
Project Coordinator, the Graduation Project
University of New Mexico

Cynthia Demetriou
Retention Coordinator
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Bernadette Gray-Little
Provost
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Mary Kay Aston
Assistant Provost for Student Enrollment
University of Scranton

Jimmie Gahagan
Assistant Vice Provost for Student Engagement
University of South Carolina

Roger Blais
Provost
University of Tulsa

Roger Sorochty
Vice President of Student Affairs
University of Tulsa

John Francis
Senior Associate Vice President
for Academic Affairs and
Undergraduate Education
University of Utah

Laura Avila
Assistant Director of Advising
University of Washington

John Braxton
Professor of Education
Vanderbilt University

Seth Sykes
Assistant Dean, University College
Virginia Commonwealth University

Mark McNamee
Provost
**Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University**

Steven Angle
Provost
Wright State University

Molly Maher
Assistant Director, Student Success
and Retention
Xavier University

Adrian Schiess
Director, Student Success and Retention
Xavier University

Top Lessons from the Research

Retention and Graduation Suddenly, Finally a Top Priority

- #1 **Long overlooked, America's lackluster retention and graduation rates are suddenly in the public spotlight.** The Obama administration is directing attention and funding to improving completion rates over the next decade. Meanwhile, a growing number of state governments are shifting allocations to reward those universities making measurable improvements.
- #2 **Student retention remains a challenging but not intractable problem.** National retention and graduation rates have remained stagnant for decades, despite increasing institutional investment in a myriad of costly support programs. Increased access for traditionally higher-risk populations has left many schools running just to stay in place. Nonetheless, individual institutions can make significant retention improvement in short periods of time. Some universities perform much better than their peers despite enrolling students of comparable academic backgrounds.
- #3 **Improving retention is worth the investment.** In spite of the recent increased focus on learning outcomes, retention and graduation are much more likely to resonate with the priorities of legislatures and families. Success rates are quantifiable and measurable, and improvement yields concrete economic benefits. For many universities, a modest improvement in first-year retention could translate to millions in additional revenue over four years.

Connecting Support Resources and Students Who Need Them Most

- #4 **The problem is not availability of support services, but underutilization.** Most universities already have the full range of support resources necessary to improve retention rates. Instead of creating even more expensive new programs, progressive schools are improving performance by proactively connecting students with the right services early enough to impact persistence.
- #5 **Relying on students to be self-aware and self-motivated will not move the dial.** Conventional retention strategies often fail because they expect students to have the wherewithal and maturity to understand when they need assistance and then take the steps necessary to seek out support. However, it is often the underprepared or under-engaged students who are the most at-risk.
- #6 **Improving retention rates requires a proactive approach, starting with a broad network of alert sensors.** Student attrition is multi-causal. Universities making retention gains use multiple early alert mechanisms to spot warning signs of academic, financial, and social struggles among first-year students. While some of these efforts require collection of new data, many are based on already existing data streams.
- #7 **We can no longer rely solely on the faculty to report risk.** Most universities depend on instructors teaching first-year courses to play a key role in identifying students who are struggling. Unfortunately, faculty often lack the time, tools, or motivation to serve as a comprehensive early warning measure.
- #8 **Hardwiring follow-up and accountability is critical.** Early alert networks are most effective when linked to a defined system of rapid institutional follow-up and backed by an authoritative and adequately funded retention administration.
- #9 **First-to-second-year retention is only the first step.** Half of all student attrition occurs in the first year; thus the significant investment most universities make in first-to-second-year persistence is warranted. However, this investment is wasted if students fail to progress to graduation.
- #10 **Most universities are missing opportunities to reduce time to degree and improve graduation rates.** The longer students remain in school, the less likely they are to finish. Universities should aspire to graduate students in four years, not five or six. Council research shows that success rates improve when students are shown a clear path to timely degree completion and given assistance with avoiding graduation obstacles.

Top Lessons from the Research (cont.)

I. Creating Accountability for Success

- #11 **Retention can no longer be “owned by everyone and no one.”** Retention efforts at most universities span academic affairs, student affairs, enrollment management, and the academic departments. Most universities have yet to define clear ownership for this issue.
- #12 **Retention czars are emerging but typically under-resourced.** Many universities have tried to establish ownership for retention by appointing an accountable administrator; however, few schools have invested in making this a full-time position. Most do not have authority to implement or fund new initiatives.
- #13 **Practice #1: Retention Management Office:** Xavier University funds an office that serves as a single point of contact for all retention-related issues. This office manages the school’s early alert network, meets with walk-ins, and has the authority to issue small amounts of emergency financial aid.
- #14 **Large-scale retention initiatives often require coordination among multiple campus units.** Many universities convene a retention task force to bring together officials that otherwise would rarely have an opportunity to interact. Unfortunately, committee meetings often devolve into lengthy discussions of theory instead of focusing on tangible solutions. Few retention committees receive significant participation from senior administrators.
- #15 **Practice #2: Retention Steering Committee:** At Florida State, senior administrators meet once every two weeks to review university retention strategy and identify opportunities for improvement. The commitment from senior authority and the focus on decisive action has allowed this committee to make significant improvements in campus retention policy.

II. Building the Retention Early Warning System

- #16 **Student risk rarely can be pinpointed to a single cause.** The Council recommends investing in a broad network of academic, financial, and social engagement early warning indicators to maximize the university’s ability to identify and intervene with struggling students.
- #17 **Behavior is more telling than demographics.** Most universities identify at-risk students among the incoming class based on demographic characteristics historically correlated with lower rates of success. Council research indicates that student actions once on campus are usually a better predictor of success.

Academic Early Alerts

- #18 **Midterm grades are insufficient indicators.** Most universities rely on midterm grades to identify academically struggling students. Midterm grade reports occur too late in the semester, provide too little information, and suffer from chronically low faculty response rates. Progressive universities are moving beyond midterm grades by monitoring more granular academic information obtained earlier in the semester.
- #19 **Faculty reluctance to retention initiatives can be overcome.** Low faculty participation presents the greatest challenge to success for an academic early alert program, but this problem is not intractable. Participation rates can be improved through advisor feedback reports and the use of quantitative success data to demonstrate to instructors that their efforts are generating a positive result.
- #20 **Practice #3: Early Academic Progress Reports:** A growing number of universities ask faculty members to submit alerts on a broad range of early indicators of academic struggles. Instructors report alerts through the online class roster, selecting from a menu of alert options according to the best indicators of risk in their course.
- #21 **Practice #4: Absence Tracking:** Class attendance is the earliest and most accurate indicator of academic struggles. Faculty at Mississippi State submit alerts on first-year students missing more than two class sessions, with an inexpensive follow-up conducted by residential advisors.

- #22 **Practice #5: Course Management Software Usage Tracking:** Purdue University is obviating the need for faculty reporting by pioneering an alert system based on student engagement with course materials on Blackboard. Students are automatically alerted when their usage rates fall below threshold levels, triggering self-help behavior.

Financial Early Alerts

- #23 **Financial issues can quickly derail students from their ideal course progression, but such problems are often preventable.** Students are often caught unaware when unpaid bursar balances prevent them from registering for classes. Even when resolved, bursar holds can interfere with students taking the classes they need, adding to frustration and length of time in college.
- #24 **Most students can resolve financial problems without university assistance if given sufficient advance notification.** By prompting students to clear bursar holds or complete missing financial aid paperwork, the university can reserve scarce counseling and emergency grant resources to assist those students with more serious financial challenges.
- #25 **Practice #6: Financial Distress Monitoring:** Retention staff at Xavier University and Tiffin University proactively audit bursar records several weeks before registration. Students with impending holds are notified and offered counseling. Tiffin also monitors the progress of financial aid applications, offering assistance when incomplete paperwork may delay distribution of award funding.

Engagement Early Alerts

- #26 **At some institutions, the departures of top students are a pressing concern.** A significant portion of the attrition rate at some schools results from students transferring to other institutions. These students are often among the most academically gifted on campus.
- #27 **Practice #7: Transcript Request Monitoring:** Deans at American University meet with students requesting transcripts to intervene with those who are considering a move. Many students can be convinced to remain if connected with desirable academic or social opportunities. Transcript monitoring also identifies students moving to less expensive schools, providing a second line of defense for identifying and intervening with students in financial distress.
- #28 **Practice #8: Social Engagement Flash Polling:** A few universities are experimenting with polling technology hosted on the first-year student information portal that solicits student attitudes on adjustment issues related to attrition. Concerning responses receive follow-up from advisors. These flash polls supplement or replace the traditional engagement surveys used by many institutions.

III. Hardwiring Institutional Intervention

- #29 **Alerts are only the first step—and a wasted one—if universities are not following up on alerts and tracking results.** Universities often struggle with coordinating intervention processes across colleges or administrative units. Few institutions have a centralized system for cataloging the results of intervention meetings or tracking the progress of alert follow-ups.
- #30 **Practice #9: Intervention Tracking System:** When an instructor submits an alert at California State University, Northridge, a tracking system automatically opens an electronic case ticket that can only be closed once the advisor completes the intervention meeting. The ticket queue is monitored by central advising staff, ensuring that every alert receives a timely follow-up.
- #31 **Practice #10: Unified Advising Records:** Advisors at Washington University in St. Louis log the results of all student interactions into a shared system that provides all stakeholders with a complete history of each student. The system simplifies record keeping and allows for a seamless hand-off whenever a student changes advisors.

Top Lessons from the Research (cont.)

IV. Charting a Path to Degree Completion

- #32 **Often overlooked, half of all attrition occurs after the first year.** With the majority of attention justifiably focused on the challenge of retaining students through the first year, many universities under-invest in ensuring that the students they retain ultimately graduate.
- #33 **Upperclass student retention can be improved by reducing time to degree.** The longer a student remains in school, the more likely it becomes that accumulating costs, growing frustration, or extrinsic factors will prevent that student from finishing. Many schools, especially large public universities, could improve their graduation rates by ensuring that students make timely progress to degree completion and by reducing the frequency of preventable graduation delays.
- #34 **Degree progress delays can originate as early as the first semester.** Students are at risk for adding time to their degree when they put off taking a full complement of introductory and general education coursework, repeatedly fail critical gateway classes, or earn grades that are insufficient for gaining admission to the upper division of their major.
- #35 **Face-to-face advising is often a prohibitively expensive solution for keeping students on course.** Many large universities lack sufficient staff to mandate semesterly advising meetings for all students. Schools that cannot hire additional staff should invest in less-expensive resources that improve students' ability to self-advise and automatically alert advisors to those students that need the most help.
- #36 **Practice #11: Prescriptive Degree Maps:** A handful of universities mandate that every major in every department produce semester-by-semester course progressions to provide students with models to follow for completing their degrees within four years. Major and general education requirements are mapped out with recommended order and pacing.
- #37 **Practice #12: Degree Map Milestones:** Degree maps at the University of Florida and Florida State University include mandatory course completion and minimum GPA milestones that students must satisfy each semester. These milestones act as guardrails ensuring that students follow their degree maps and remain on course to graduation. Students who go off-map are forced to meet with an advisor and may be reassigned to a new major.
- #38 **Practice #13: What-If Degree Maps:** Traditional degree maps do not enable easy customization for students who wish to explore a more complex degree path. Students at Duke University create their own course progressions using an online tool that allows them to plan for double majors, study abroad, and other opportunities. The system accounts for future course availability and notifies users when their current plans will not fulfill all outstanding requirements.

V. Intervening with Off-Course Students

- #39 **Seniors represent an opportunity to immediately improve graduation performance.** Many seniors experience last minute graduation delays resulting from faulty course selection, opaque graduation requirements, or difficulties with class registration. These delays drag down graduation rates and are largely preventable.
- #40 **Many seniors fail to understand their outstanding graduation requirements.** At most schools, students are expected to self-assess their progress to graduation and understand their outstanding requirements using the university's degree audit system. Degree audits are often difficult to interpret and create unnecessary confusion.
- #41 **Transfers and non-traditional students are especially susceptible.** Students with credits from multiple institutions or who attend part-time often have questions about where they stand in their progress to degree. Universities enrolling large numbers of these students can do more to ensure that they graduate with a minimal amount of hassle.

V. Intervening with Off-Course Students (cont.)

- #42 **Practice #14: Transcript Audit Consultant:** Advisors at California State University, Long Beach, host twice-daily walk-in sessions to assist students with interpreting their degree audits and understanding what courses they still need to graduate. The sessions are advertised to students at key moments, such as transfer orientation and when seniors apply to graduate.
- #43 **Opaque graduation requirements are a common source of preventable graduation delays.** Many universities require students to meet a series of minimum GPAs and earn a certain number of natively-earned credits in addition to fulfilling their major and general education coursework. The complexity of these requirements often creates situations where students believe they have qualified for graduation even though they have not.
- #44 **Practice #15: Unfulfilled Requirement Fixer:** Each semester, Cal State Long Beach audits the registrar records of all seniors who have applied for graduation. Seniors who will have unfulfilled requirements at the end of the current term are offered special advising sessions designed to identify course substitutions or a major change that would expedite graduation.
- #45 **Some seniors will still drop out despite the university's best efforts.** Many of these students can be recruited back to campus when their situation improves, or if they are extended supplemental personal support in navigating final few hurdles to graduation.
- #46 **Practice #16: Senior Drop-Out Re-enrollment Outreach:** Each summer, the University of New Mexico reaches out to several hundred seniors who recently left the school prior to completion. The university recruits these students back to campus with a simplified re-enrollment application, a small offer of financial aid, and a dedicated administrator that can override enrollment caps and help students get into the final courses they need.

Understanding Your Current Practice

Where to Start?

This report profiles innovative student success practices gathered from a broad spectrum of universities. The challenge of retaining and graduating students manifests differently depending on the composition and academic caliber of the student body of your institution. While the Council believes that most universities would benefit from the full range of practices advanced in this report, we recommend that individual institutions start first by considering the practices that directly address their greatest need. We suggest that the following diagnostic survey be completed by your retention manager, vice president of undergraduate studies, vice president for enrollment management, or dean of students.

I. Creating Accountability for Success

	Yes	No
1. Is there a single, full-time administrator with “Retention” in their title on your campus?	☐	☐
2. Is this administrator accountable for measurable improvement in the university’s retention statistics?	☐	☐
3. Do students, parents, and faculty have a clear point of contact for concerns that might impact a student’s persistence at the university?	☐	☐
4. Are the university’s multiple early alert mechanisms coordinated through a single office?	☐	☐
5. Does a retention-focused administrator have the authority to distribute emergency grant aid?	☐	☐
6. Do academic affairs and student affairs administrators meet jointly on a regular basis to discuss retention policy and performance?	☐	☐
7. Are the most senior administrators included in these meetings whenever possible?	☐	☐
8. Are these meetings focused on decisive action instead of discussions of theory?	☐	☐
9. Is the provost kept apprised of committee progress and asked to propose agenda items?	☐	☐
10. Are committee members expected to report back on their progress at subsequent meetings?	☐	☐

If you answered “No” to any of the above questions, please turn to:

Practice #1: Retention Management Office. Page 18

Practice #2: Retention Policy Committee Page 29

II. Identifying At-Risk Students

	Yes	No
Academic Alerts		
1. Does the university have an academic alert program beyond midterm grade reporting?	☐	☐
2. Do at least 80 percent of the faculty members teaching first-year students participate in the academic alert program?	☐	☐
3. Do instructors have an alert reporting tool built into their online course roster?	☐	☐
4. Can instructors submit alerts on a range of different behaviors indicative of academic struggles?	☐	☐
5. Are new faculty instructed on the use and importance of the alert reporting system during their orientation?	☐	☐
6. Do instructors teaching first-year courses take attendance or note absentees?	☐	☐
7. Does the university have a low-cost, managed system for following up with first-year students who miss more than two sessions of a single class?	☐	☐
8. Does the university have data documenting the extent of first-year absenteeism or its impact on attrition?	☐	☐

Understanding Your Current Practice (cont.)

	Yes	No
9. Are deans and instructors made aware of these data and are instructors encouraged to take attendance?	☐	☐
10. Is the importance of class attendance repeatedly emphasized to incoming students during orientation and at the beginning of the semester?	☐	☐
11. Has the university explored options for identifying academic struggles without the need for faculty reports?	☐	☐

If you answered "No" to any of the above questions, please turn to:

Practice #3: Early Academic Performance Reports	Page 36
Practice #4: Absence Tracking	Page 46
Practice #5: Course Management Software Usage Tracking	Page 57

Financial Alerts

1. Are students on bursar hold notified of their status at least two weeks prior to registration?	☐	☐
2. Are students given clear directions on how to resolve their holds and offered personalized support if needed?	☐	☐
3. Does the university distribute small emergency grants to clear holds for students in extreme circumstances?	☐	☐
4. Does the university track completion of financial aid paperwork and notify students when a form is missing?	☐	☐
5. Does the university reach out to returning students who have applied for aid in the past but have yet to do so in the current year?	☐	☐

If you answered "No" to any of the above questions, please turn to:

Practice #6: Financial Distress Monitoring	Page 70
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Engagement Alerts

1. Does the university have a system for identifying potential transfer risks?	☐	☐
2. Has the university estimated what share of the attrition problem is due to academically elite students transferring out?	☐	☐
3. Do senior administrators understand where their students transfer and why?	☐	☐
4. Once identified, do students considering transfer receive personalized follow-up from an administrator?	☐	☐
5. Are academic high-performers in the first-year class identified and offered spots in the honors college?	☐	☐
6. Does the university survey first-year students on adjustment issues across the entire year?	☐	☐

If you answered "No" to any of the above questions, please turn to:

Practice #7: Transcript Request Monitoring	Page 80
Practice #8: Social Engagement Flash Polling	Page 86

Understanding Your Current Practice (cont.)

III. Hardwiring Institutional Intervention

	Yes	No
1. Are advisors automatically notified when an instructor submits an academic alert?	☐	☐
2. Are most academic alerts followed up on by advisors in fewer than three days?	☐	☐
3. Are advisors held accountable for following up quickly on all alerts?	☐	☐
4. Do central administrators have the ability to monitor the queue of open alerts?	☐	☐
5. Are referring instructors kept apprised of intervention progress and notified of the outcome?	☐	☐
6. Do advisors use a strategy of communications escalating in intensity and seriousness to reach students for intervention?	☐	☐
7. Can advisors access an electronic profile containing key information on each student?	☐	☐
8. Does this profile include a complete history of alerts and advising interactions with the student?	☐	☐

If you answered "No" to any of the above questions, please turn to:

Practice #9: Intervention Tracking System Page 92

Practice #10: Unified Advising Records Page 97

IV. Charting a Path to Degree Completion

	Yes	No
1. Are new students encouraged to fulfill introductory courses and general education requirements as soon as possible?	☐	☐
2. Can students self-advice on course selection by following recommended four-year course progressions, sometimes called "degree maps"?	☐	☐
3. Do these degree maps exist for every major in every department?	☐	☐
4. Are degree maps published together in a consistent format on a central website?	☐	☐
5. Are degree maps made a part of the advising discussion as early as the first year?	☐	☐
6. Does the university have a system for identifying students off-track for graduation in four years?	☐	☐
7. Is that system automated through the registrar's office?	☐	☐
8. Are students notified and required to meet with an advisor when they are off-path?	☐	☐
9. Can advisors force off-track and struggling students to switch to "Plan B" majors?	☐	☐
10. Can students opt to make and follow customized degree maps that fit their plans for college?	☐	☐
11. Do students have access to an online schedule planning tool that facilitates the creation of several model course progressions?	☐	☐
12. Does the schedule planning tool take into account future course availability?	☐	☐
13. Do all students need to have at least one proposed schedule on file before declaring a major?	☐	☐

If you answered "No" to any of the above questions, please turn to:

Practice #11: Prescriptive Degree Maps Page 106

Practice #12: Degree Map Milestones Page 111

Practice #13: What-If Degree Maps Page 126

V. Intervening with Off-Course Students

	Yes	No
1. Do upperclass students at your institution have a clear understanding of the outstanding courses and requirements they need to complete for graduation?	☐	☐
2. Are students instructed during advising sessions on how to read their degree audits?	☐	☐
3. Does the university have a clear credit articulation process for transfer students?	☐	☐
4. Do students with questions about unfulfilled requirements have a convenient way to get quick and accurate answers?	☐	☐
5. Is this resource publicized to students at critical moments (transfer orientation, application for graduation, etc)?	☐	☐
6. Is it uncommon for seniors on your campus to experience problems fulfilling their final few graduation requirements?	☐	☐
7. Are students aware of strategies (such as course substitutions or major changes) that could obviate requirements and expedite graduation?	☐	☐
8. Do advisors proactively audit registrar records to surface seniors with preventable graduation delays?	☐	☐
9. Is the university tracking seniors who have recently dropped out?	☐	☐
10. Does the university reach out to these students and invite them back to complete their degrees?	☐	☐
11. Does the university have a method for locating students who did not leave up-to-date contact information on file?	☐	☐
12. Are these students offered an easy path to re-enrollment?	☐	☐
13. Are they provided with a modest amount of supplemental financial aid?	☐	☐
14. Do re-enrolled students have designated administrative support to help them overcome the challenges that precipitated their original dropout?	☐	☐
15. Can an administrator override enrollment caps to ensure that re-enrolled seniors can access the courses they need to graduate?	☐	☐

If you answered "No" to any of the above questions, please turn to:

Practice #14: Transcript Audit Consultant	Page 134
Practice #15: Unfulfilled Requirement Fixer	Page 139
Practice #16: Senior Drop-Out Re-enrollment Outreach	Page 144



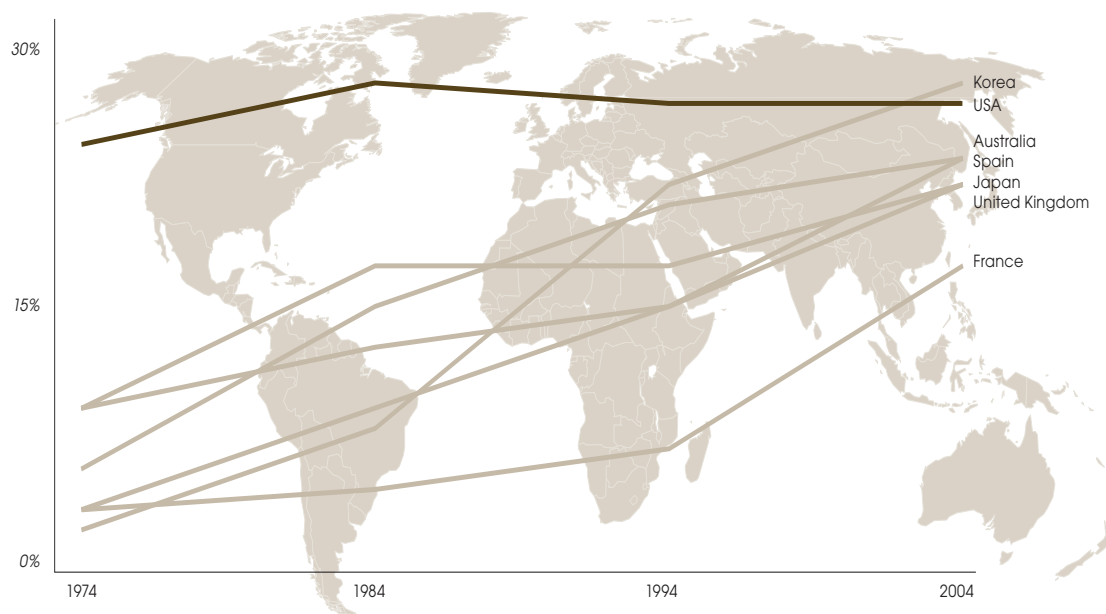
Rising Expectations in an Era of Receding Resources

Retention and Student Success Suddenly in the Public Spotlight

After years of leaving higher education virtually unaccountable, federal and state governments are taking an increased interest in college degree attainment. The rate of bachelor degree attainment among Americans aged 25 to 34 has remained effectively unchanged for decades. Meanwhile, the rest of the industrialized world has caught up to, and even surpassed, the United States. In an era of globalization and knowledge-based economies, the United States could be facing an increasing disadvantage.

America's Competitive Edge at Risk

25- to 34-Year Olds with Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent

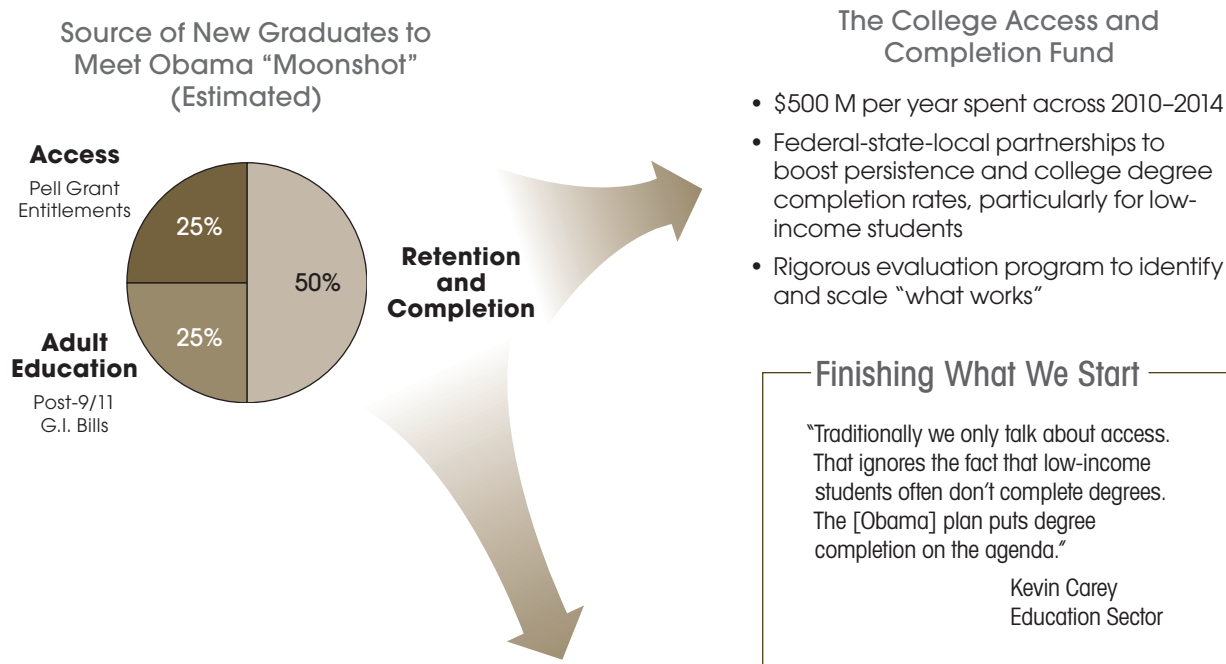


Source: University Leadership Council analysis of data from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The Obama administration is committing unprecedented federal funding to regain America's standing as the world leader in college attainment by 2020. Some gains will be made through expanded access to non-traditional populations and increased enrollment of adult learners; however, the majority of this shortfall will need to be met by improving the completion rates of those already enrolled. Community colleges will play an important role in meeting this goal by aiming to produce an additional five million graduates in the next decade.

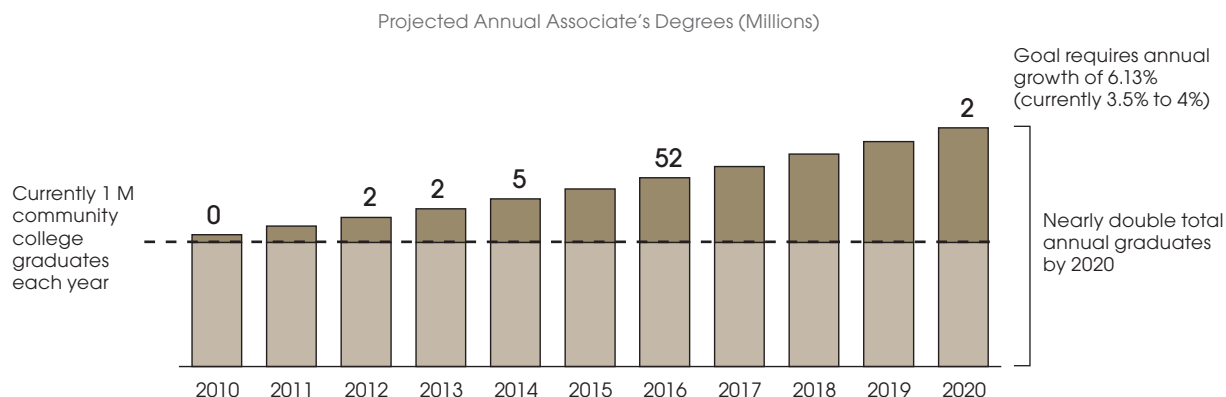
Federal Focus on Success, Not Just Access

Early Graduation Initiatives from Obama Administration



Special Focus on the Two-Years

Producing Five Million Additional Community College Graduates by 2020



Source: Dervarics C., "Obama Agenda Focuses on Degree Completion," *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, April 16, 2009, <http://diverseeducation.com/article/12435/1.php>, (accessed December 1, 2009); University Leadership Council analysis.

State governments increasingly are building retention and graduation rates into their funding models. A growing number of states offer meaningful financial incentives for improvement in persistence and completion. Some are now including measures of institutional performance in their standard allocation formulas. Trends suggest that other states may soon follow. Public universities that anticipate this paradigm shift and act accordingly should benefit financially.

Some States Beginning to Experiment with “Pay for Performance”

Oregon

Distributing up to \$7.5 M in targeted incentive funds to institutions showing improvement in retention, graduation, and time to degree

Ohio

Revamping state allocations to fund public institutions entirely based on their ability to retain and graduate students

Indiana

Phasing in performance funding for 2009–2011 budget based on institutional improvements in degree attainment, course completion, and on-time graduation

New Mexico

Institutions that meet targets on retention and graduation earn up to an additional 1% on top of normal allocations

Pennsylvania

Individual public institutions awarded between \$1 M and \$4.5 M in retention performance allocation in 2008–2009

Texas

Performance funding introduced for the 2010–2011 budget includes \$178 M (\$100 M for community colleges, \$78 M for four-year school) to incentivize degree completion

Alaska

Distributing over \$2 M annually based on seven measures, including retention rates

Hawaii

Starting in 2009, up to 2% of the University of Hawaii’s budget is based in part on number of graduates

Source: Alderman C, Carey K, *Ready to Assemble: Grading State Higher Education Accountability Systems*, Education Sector, June 10, 2009, p. 97–102 (“Funding” subsection) http://www.educationsector.org/usr_doc/Funding.pdf, (accessed December 1, 2009); Midwestern Higher Education Compact, *Completion-Based Funding for Higher Education*, February 2009, <http://www.mhec.org/pdfs/0209completionbasedfunding.pdf>, (accessed December 1, 2009); University Leadership Council analysis.

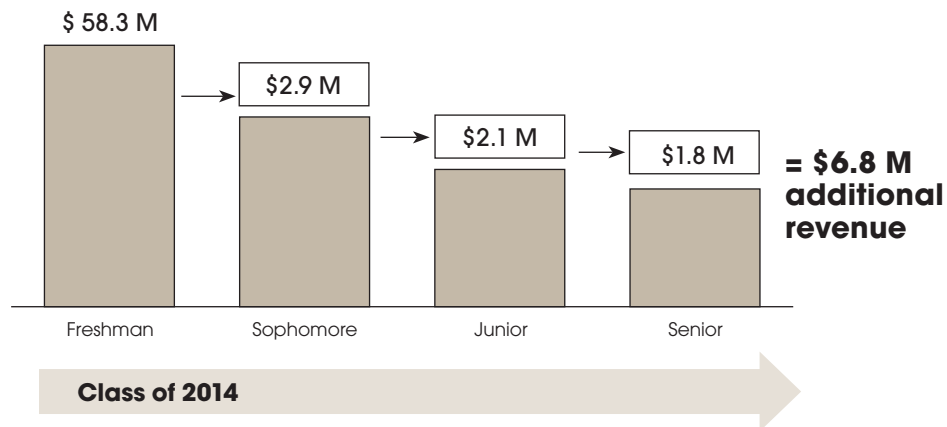
A Revenue Opportunity That Can No Longer Be Ignored

The current tough economic environment has renewed institutional focus on student retention as a revenue source. With public institutions facing slashed state allocations and private institutions wondering if they will be able to maintain the enrollment necessary to meet budget, many schools are seeing the potential for deriving additional tuition revenue from retaining more students.

Doing Well by Doing Good

Potential Additional Revenue from a Five Percent Retention Gain (Estimated)

Tuition Plus State Allocations, Sample Large Public Research Institution



Speculating on the Overall Revenue Opportunity

Retention Improvement	1%	2%	3%	5%	8%
Private Master's 3,000 undergraduates 80% retention	\$141 K	\$282 K	\$424 K	\$706 K	\$1.1 M
Private Research 6,000 undergraduates 85% retention	\$653 K	\$1.3 M	\$2.0 M	\$3.3 M	\$5.2 M
Public Master's 12,000 undergraduates 75% retention	\$437 K	\$874 M	\$1.3 M	\$2.2 M	\$3.5 M
Public Research 18,000 undergraduates 80% retention	\$1.0 M	\$2.0 M	\$3.1 M	\$5.1 M	\$8.2 M
Public Research 24,000 undergraduates 80% retention	\$1.4 M	\$2.7 M	\$4.1 M	\$6.8 M	\$10.9 M
Public Research 36,000 undergraduates 80% retention	\$2.0 M	\$4.1 M	\$6.1 M	\$10.2 M	\$16.3 M

Cumulative revenue over four years

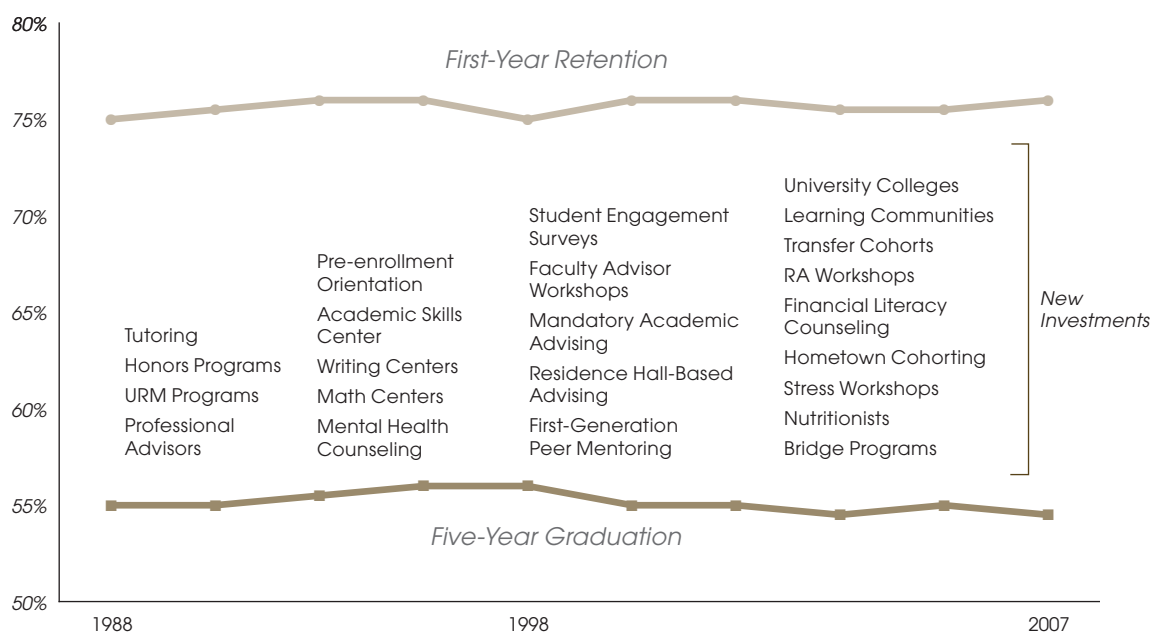
Source: National Center of Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics: 2007 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2008); U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS), <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/> (accessed May 1, 2009); University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

We Can Do Better

National persistence rates are virtually unchanged over recent decades despite significant new investment in support resources. Financial investment in academic support and student services is growing at a rate almost double that of investment in instruction, yet this investment has done little to move the dial. As college access to at-risk populations expands, universities are likely to find that they are running harder just to stay in place.

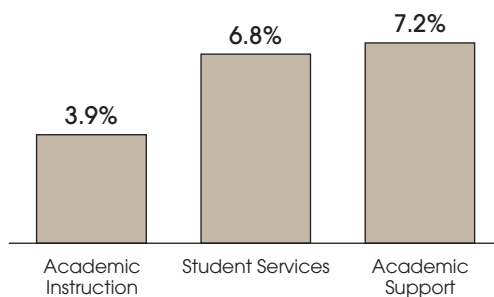
Running to Stay in Place

Retention and Completion Rates Stuck Despite Decades' Investment



Growth in Expenses per Student at a Large Public University

Compound Annual Growth Rate 2004–2008

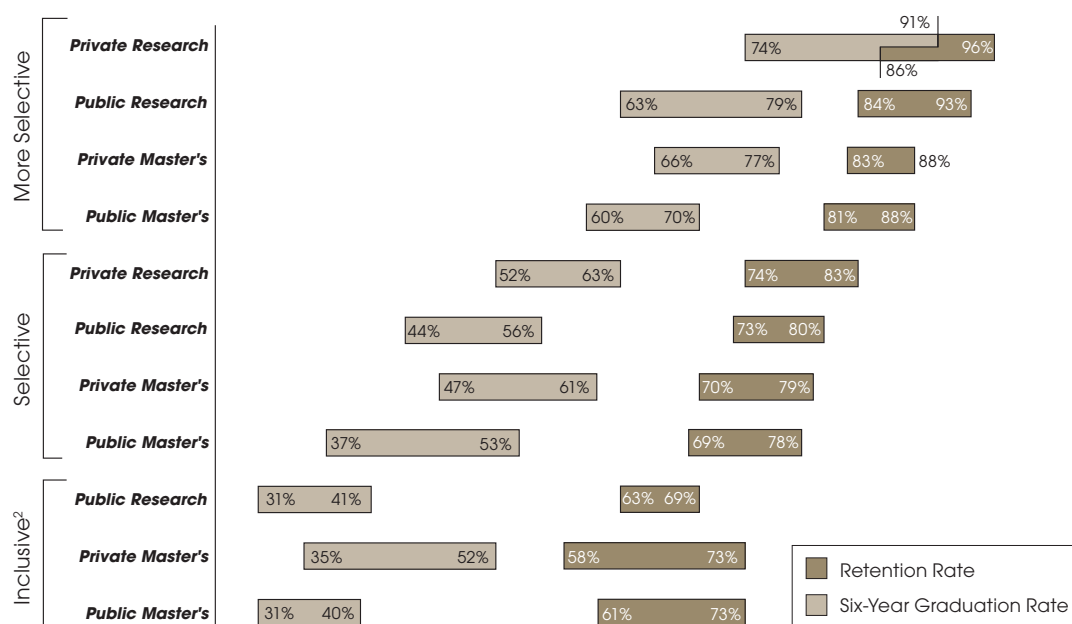


Source: "Cost Diagnostic," University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, April 2009, http://universityrelations.unc.edu/budget/documents/2009/UNC%20Efficiency%20and%20Effectiveness%20Options_FINAL.pdf, (accessed May 2, 2009).

Nonetheless, some schools perform much better than peers, and others are making significant advances. There is considerable variation in retention and graduation rates among institutions of similar selectivity and market segment, suggesting that most universities can dramatically improve performance without raising admissions standards. The rapid improvement in retention rates observed at some universities further suggests that performance is malleable and quick gains are possible.

How Much Better Could We Be?

*First-Year Retention and Six-Year Graduation
25th to 75th Percentiles, by Carnegie Segment¹*



Quick Gains Are Possible

Notable Retention Rate Improvements, 2003–2007

Private Research, More Selective

• University of Tulsa	+4%
• University of Miami (FL)	+3%
• University of Chicago	+3%
• Cal Tech	+3%
• Boston University	+3%
• Clark University	+3%
• Polytechnic Inst of NYU	+3%

Public Research, More Selective

• Ohio State University	+4%
• Texas A&M University	+4%
• Florida State University	+3%
• Univ. of Maryland—Balt. Co.	+3%
• University of Vermont	+3%
• Univ. of Nebraska—Lincoln	+3%
• University of South Carolina	+3%

Private Master's, More Selective

• Bryant University	+9%
• Seattle Pacific University	+7%
• Iona College	+7%

Public Master's More Selective

• Appalachian State University	+3%
• Truman State University	+3%

Private Research, Selective

• St. Mary's Univ. of Minn.	+3%
• Seton Hall University	+3%

Public Research, Selective

• University of Colorado Denver	+6%
• University of Tennessee	+6%

Private Master's, Selective

• Lynchburg College	+25%
• Dominican University of CA	+22%

Private Research, Selective

• Montana State University	+9%
• East Stroudsburg Univ. of PA	+9%
• Sam Houston State University	+7%
• LSU—Shreveport	+7%

Public Research, Inclusive

• Texas A&M Univ.—Kingsville	+6%
• Cleveland State University	+3%

Private Master's Inclusive

• College of St. Joseph	+19%
• Nyack College	+12%

Public Master's Inclusive

• Prairie View A&M University	+9%
• Lincoln Univ. of PA	+5%
• UNC—Pembroke	+4%
• Francis Marion University	+4%

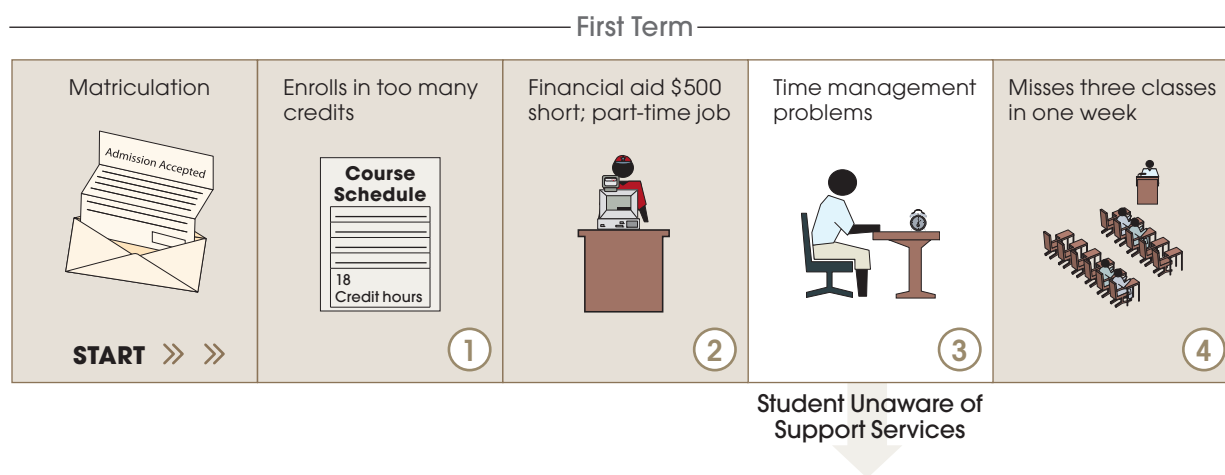
¹ Selectivity is a Carnegie measure based on standardized test scores. Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS), <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/>, (accessed May 1, 2009); University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

² There are fewer than five inclusive research privates.

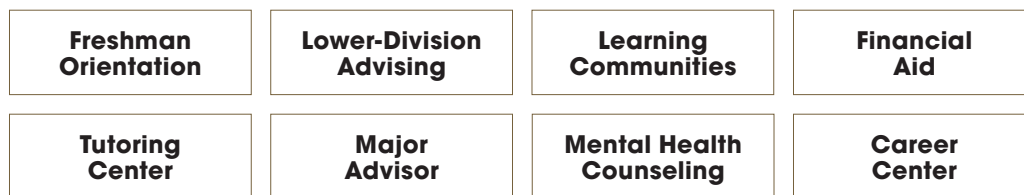
So Why Aren't We Doing Better?

Individual cases of student attrition rarely have a single, treatable root cause. More commonly, students will drop out after experiencing a complex series of academic, social, and financial setbacks. Trying to deduce root causes of attrition from student exit interviews is unproductive; most students are unwilling or unable to offer useful data and often explain their departure merely as a financial issue.

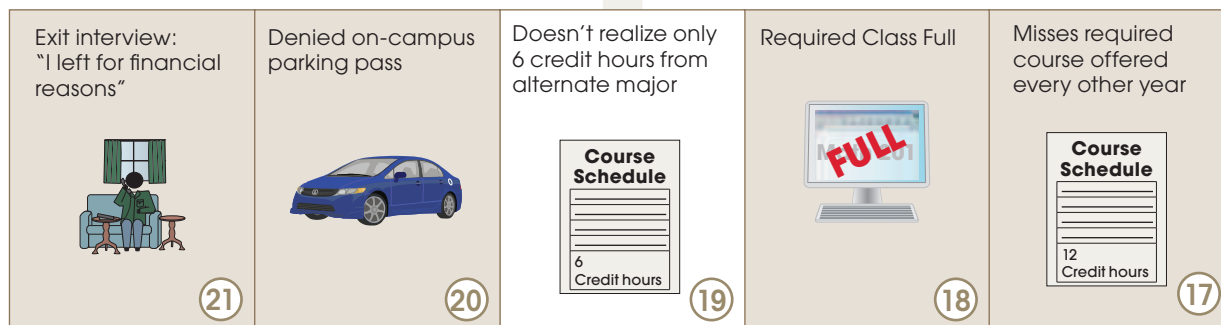
Students Unaware of, Reluctant Biggest Retention Risks Are the Least



Providing Help to Those Who Ask, Not Those Who Need It



Overestimates Graduation Obstacles



Upper Division

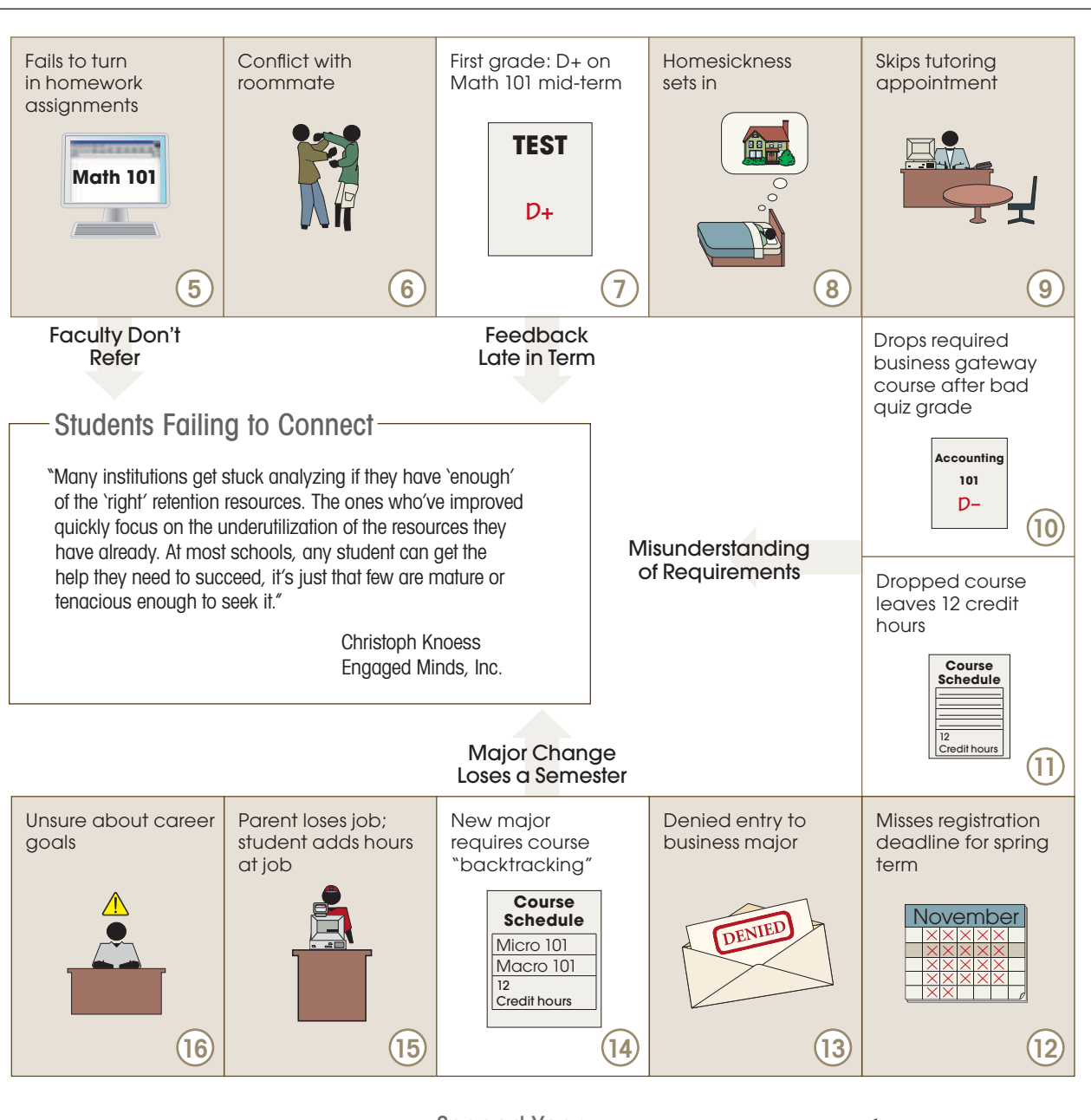
Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

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Most campuses already have sufficient support resources; however, at-risk students often fail to seek this help on their own. Universities already offer the correct advising and counseling services necessary to help students succeed. Unfortunately, many struggling students lack the awareness or motivation to engage with these support resources when they need assistance.

to Use Retention Resources

Likely to Self-Refer at Critical Moments

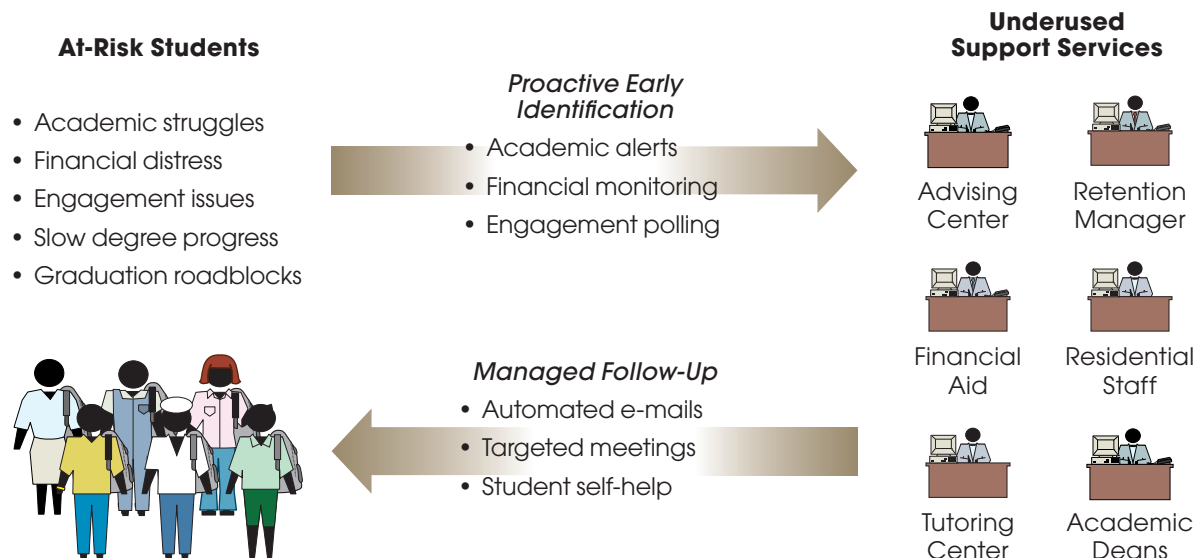


Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Progressive universities are raising their success rates through proactive intervention with at-risk students, not through investment in expensive new support services. Universities improving their retention and graduation rates are getting the most out of existing resources by investing heavily in early warning mechanisms that proactively identify troubled students and route them to the right resources. In addition, targeted efforts to keep students on course to graduation are reducing time to degree and improving completion rates.

Making Better Use of What We Have

Early Identification Routes Students to Services They Need



Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Hardwiring Student Success

Building Disciplines for Retention and Timely Graduation

Building the Retention Early Warning System

I

Creating Accountability for Success

- #1 Retention Management Office
- #2 Retention Policy Committee

II

Identifying At-Risk Students

- #3 Early Academic Performance Reports
- #4 Absence Tracking
- #5 Course Management Software Usage Tracking
- #6 Financial Distress Monitoring
- #7 Transcript Request Monitoring
- #8 Social Engagement Flash Polling

III

Hardwiring Institutional Intervention

- #9 Intervention Tracking System
- #10 Unified Advising Records

**Profiled
Institutions**



Removing Barriers to Timely Graduation

IV

Charting a Path to Degree Completion

- #11 Prescriptive Degree Maps
- #12 Degree Map Milestones
- #13 What-If Degree Maps

V

Intervening with Off-Course Students

- #14 Transcript Audit Consultant
- #15 Unfulfilled Requirement
Fixer
- #16 Senior Drop-Out
Re-enrollment Outreach





Building the Retention Early Warning System



I. Creating Accountability for Success

- ☞ Practice #1: Retention Management Office 18
- ☞ Practice #2: Retention Policy Committee 29

Practice #1: Retention Management Office

Description

Comprising a director and one or more staff, the Retention Management Office oversees the university's network of early warning systems and serves as the designated point of contact for most retention-related issues on campus. A small staff of counselors works with at-risk students identified via early warning systems or on a walk-in basis. The retention director acts as the appointed spokesperson for retention issues with the faculty, parents, and administration and serves as the retention advocate to the senior administration. The office is adequately staffed and has the resources to distribute small emergency scholarships to students in financial peril. Such offices typically report up through academic affairs, enrollment management, or student affairs.

Recommended For: All colleges and universities (especially private institutions)

Council Assessment of Effectiveness

Student retention is frequently lamented as “belonging to no one and everyone.” To create true ownership and accountability, many universities have appointed an administrator responsible for managing the school's retention enterprise. These positions vary considerably in authority, seniority, and placement within the university organizational structure; however, the typical university actually dedicates less than one-third of an FTE to this role.

Many schools could significantly inflect retention performance by appointing a full-time retention director, complete with budget and staff, to manage the university's on-the-ground retention operations. While this represents a significant resource commitment, the Council feels that the benefits of centralizing early warning systems, creating ownership transparency, and providing at-risk students with an unambiguous destination to receive face-to-face support far outweigh the costs.

This practice fits well with the high-touch culture of most private institutions. Public institutions with larger enrollments might consider using the retention office as an authority to oversee intervention efforts occurring at the advising offices in the individual colleges.

Implementation Tips

The Council estimates that the retention management offices should be staffed at a ratio of roughly one FTE per 400 first-year students. Key attributes for a retention director include a passion for the well-being of undergraduates and the interpersonal skills for working with deans and faculty to secure their participation in academic early warning measures. Ideal staff members have backgrounds in counseling and may be hired inexpensively on a part-time basis from the graduate student population.

Implementation Toolkit

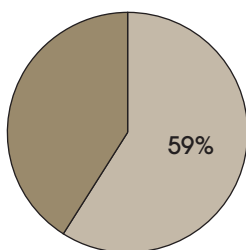
Tool #1A: E-mail to Students with a Single Alert.	p. 23
Tool #1B: E-mail to Students with a Multiple Alerts.	p. 24
Tool #1C: Twenty-Five Tips for Faculty.	p. 25

The majority of schools have designated retention coordinators, but few schools are committing real resources. The typical college or university devotes less than one-third of an FTE to overseeing the retention enterprise. Full-time retention managers are rare. Few have the authority to implement new initiatives, and even fewer have the resources to fund them.

The Retention Coordinator Strawman

Retention Coordinators Common...

Institutions with Designated
Retention Administrator



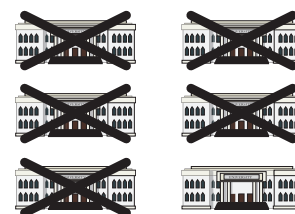
...but Inadequately Resourced...

Less than 1/3 FTE
on average



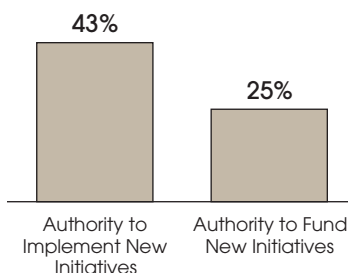
**Retention
Coordinator**

Fewer than 1 in 6
universities have a full-time
retention administrator



...and Lacking the Power to Make a Difference

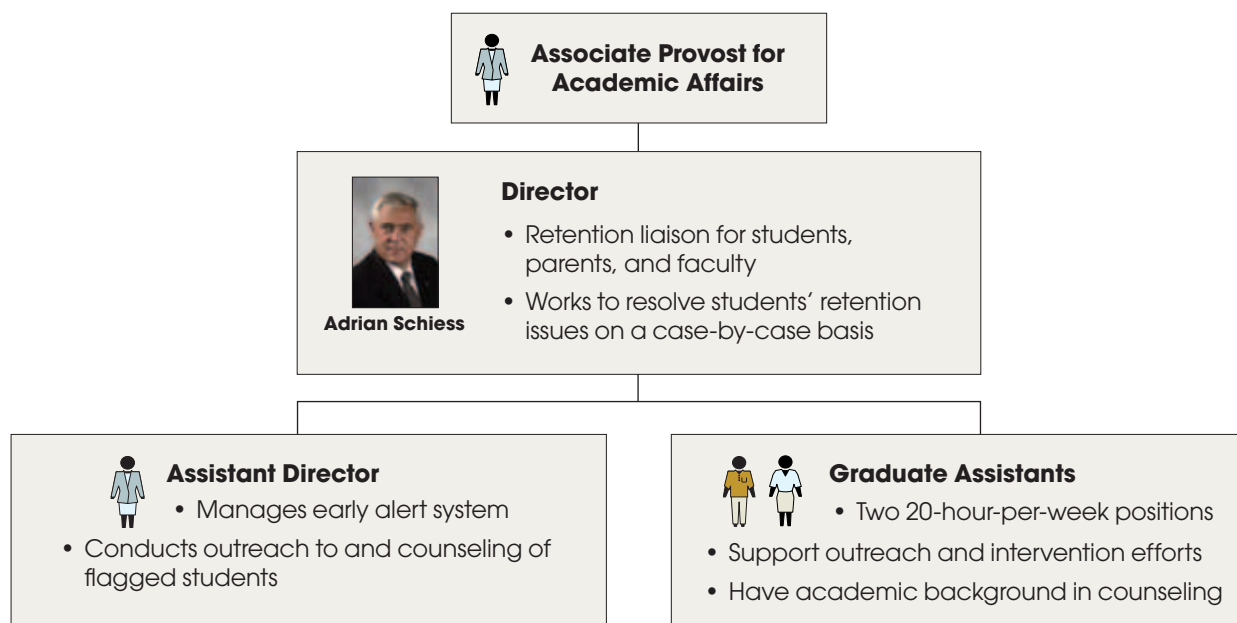
Retention Coordinator Authority



Source: College Board, *How Colleges Organize Themselves to Increase Student Persistence: Four-Year Institutions*, April 2009, available at: <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/college-retention.pdf> (accessed December 1, 2009); University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Xavier University funds a full student-facing office responsible for managing the retention enterprise. Founded in 1990 and believed to be one of the first offices of its kind, the Office of Student Success and Retention has established Xavier as a national leader in supporting student persistence.

The Office of Student Success and Retention *Xavier University*



Case in Brief

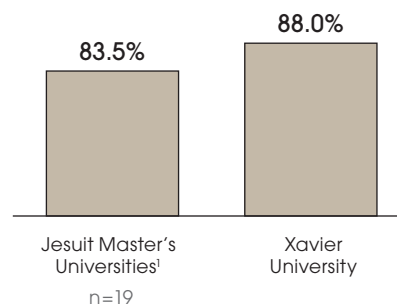


Office of Student Success and Retention
Xavier University
Cincinnati, OH

- Urban private master's university with 4,000 undergraduates
- Dedicated point of contact for all retention-related issues on campus
- Oversees academic and financial alert programs
- Educates students, parents, and faculty on retention principles and practices

Outperforming Peers

Retention Rates at Jesuit Master's Universities, 2007



¹ Canisius College, Creighton University, Fairfield University, Gonzaga University, John Carroll University, Le Moyne College, Loyola College in Maryland, Loyola Marymount University, Loyola University New Orleans, Regis University, Rockhurst University, Saint Joseph's University, Saint Peters College, Santa Clara University, Seattle University, Spring Hill College, University of Detroit Mercy, University of Scranton, Wheeling Jesuit University.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS). <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/> (accessed May 1, 2009); University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

The Office of Student Success and Retention (OSSR) coordinates Xavier's network of financial and academic early warning systems and conducts interventions with flagged students. Aggregating and centralizing early warning reports allows Xavier to make 360-degree assessments of students' academic and financial risk. The OSSR relies on multiple early warning inputs to prioritize the most urgent cases and conduct more comprehensive counseling sessions.

Managing the Early Alert Network

Collecting Alerts

Academic Alerts

- ☑ Attendance Problems
- ☑ Performance Concerns
- ☑ Midterm Grades

(See Practice #3: *Early Academic Performance Reports*, pages 36–45)

Financial Alerts

- \$ Bursar Holds
- \$ Financial Aid Paperwork

(See Practice #6: *Financial Distress Monitoring*, pages 70–79)

Conducting Follow-Ups



Outreach prioritized for students with multiple alerts

Implementation Tip: Larger universities should coordinate interventions with college advising offices to manage large volume of alerts.

(See Practice #9: *Intervention Ticketing System*, pages 92–96)

Distributing Retention Micro-Scholarships

Xavier's retention director has the authority to distribute emergency micro-scholarships to students with urgent financial issues. A few hundred dollars is often all that is needed to help many students remain enrolled during a time of financial crisis.

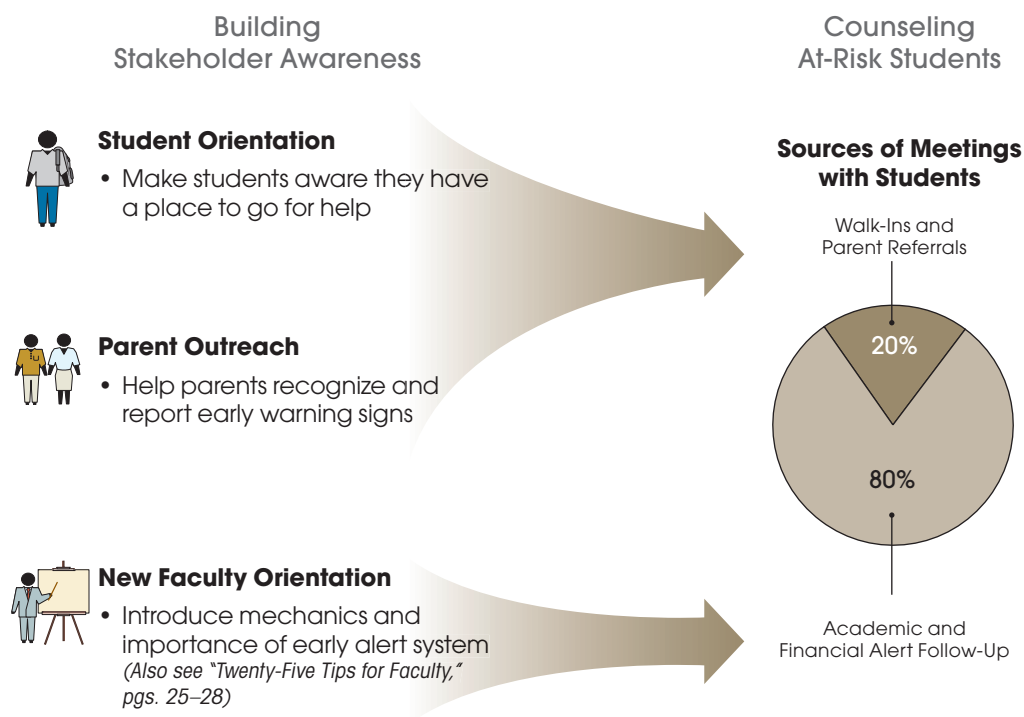
- Typically \$1,000 or less, funded by small alumni donations
- Distributed on a case-by-case basis, usually for emergency relief of bursar holds
- Dozens of students benefit annually, 98 percent go on to graduate

Source: Sloat, France Giggs, "The Little Things," *Xavier Magazine*, Spring 2009, http://www.xavier.edu/magazine/read-article.cfm?art_id=1876 (accessed May 22, 2009); University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Xavier promotes a “culture of persistence” by offering a central, visible location for retention advocacy. The director introduces the OSSR during student and new faculty orientations as a “catch-all” destination for retention concerns. New students and parents are strongly encouraged to approach the office when issues arise that may threaten continuation. As a result, Xavier intervenes with a substantial number of walk-in and referral cases not identified through typical early warning mechanisms.

It Takes a Village

Leveraging the Community to Solve Retention Problems



Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tool #1A: E-mail to Students with a Single Alert—Xavier University



Dear Kevin,

Every semester the Office of Student Success and Retention contacts the faculty who are teaching freshmen and sophomores and asks them to provide us with information regarding how well the students in their classes are progressing academically.

The following professor has contacted our office regarding your academic progress in his/her class.

Subject: Political Science 113

Instructor: Greg Johnson

At Xavier there are a number of campus resources available to help students who are experiencing difficulty in a class. These academic resources include:

The Learning Assistance Center (where you can obtain a tutor), the Writing Center (ALTER HALL B-12), the Mathematics Laboratory (HINKLE HALL 126) and most importantly your professors.

The staff in the Office of Student Success and Retention is very interested in your success at Xavier. We invite you to stop by and visit us in Alter Hall, room 103 or call us at 513-745-3036.

Sincerely,

Adrian A. Schiess
Director
Office of Student
Success and Retention

Molly Maher
Assistant Director
Office of Student
Success and Retention

Source: Office of Student Success and Retention, Xavier University;
University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tool #1B: E-mail to Students with Multiple Alerts—Xavier University



Dear Susan,

We're concerned about your current academic progress. According to our records two or more of your professors have indicated that you are either not attending class or are earning a D or F grade in their class.

The following professor(s) have contacted our office regarding your academic performance in his/her class(es).

Subject: Physiology 102

Instructor: Sarah Reid

Subject: Women's Studies 121

Instructor: Jane Will

Subject: Peace Studies 104

Instructor: Juan Mendes

The staff in the Office of Student Success and Retention is very interested in your success at Xavier. We would like to meet with you to discuss this semester and make recommendations regarding improving your current academic progress. We look forward to seeing you and helping you to get back on track academically. Please stop by our office in Alter Hall, room 103 or call to schedule an appointment by calling 513-745-3036.

Sincerely,

Adrian A. Schiess
Director
Office of Student
Success and Retention

Molly Maher
Assistant Director
Office of Student
Success and Retention

Tool #1C: Twenty-Five Tips for Faculty—University of Kentucky



What Faculty Can Do to Help Students Succeed—25 Tips

Several faculty have expressed great interest in joining the Provost's War on Attrition, but are not sure what role they can play in helping students succeed, beyond the usual good teaching and holding office hours. This paper is an attempt to give practical tips on how faculty can help students succeed and stay in the university.

Personal Challenges

1. Money problems, self-destructive alcohol use, and homesickness are the biggest challenges our entering students face in the campus environment. Before class, you may have opportunity to encourage students by acknowledging these issues, and suggesting positive ways to overcome them. Or you can also make available a list of campus resources they can turn to. Just your acknowledgment of the issues may help these students to know they are not alone. We are preparing a web site with resources for undergraduate students for Spring term. In the meantime:

Counseling Center: <http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Counseling/>

Resources for graduate students: <http://www.research.uky.edu/gs/GradOrient.html>

2. Notice if students miss multiple classes in the first two weeks, and report this through our Academic Alert system. The first two weeks of class are critical to student performance and success. Tell them that class attendance, sitting up at the front, and doing all assignments are the best indicators of student success in classes.
3. Make entering students aware of academic support services on campus:
 - a. The Study: <http://www.uky.edu/UGS/study/>
 - b. Math Resource Center: <http://www.mathskeller.com/>
 - c. Writing Center: <http://www.uky.edu/AS/English/wc/>
 - d. Research help in the library, the Hub at WT's: http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/lib.php?lib_id=17:
4. Tell students about on-campus events scheduled over weekends and encourage them to stay in Lexington to participate. The more they are engaged in meaningful activities on campus, the more likely they are to stay at UK and finish successfully.
5. Take a class visit on campus to an academically related venue or event: the art museum, Special Collections, the anthropology museum, the recital hall, or a lab. Many first-generation college students have never seen these sites before. It will give them hands-on ownership of their campus.

Source: Jeannine Blackwell, Dean of the Graduate School, University of Kentucky; University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tool #1C: Twenty-Five Tips for Faculty—University of Kentucky (cont.)

6. Encourage students in your classes to work on campus if at all possible, even if it is a less prestigious job. Students who work on campus rather than off campus tend to stay at the university and do better in classes.
7. Be explicit about class projects that will entail time investments over the semester. Know that more than 75 percent of our entering students had to spend less than five hours per week on homework during their senior year in high school.
8. Say hello to students if you see them looking your way when you cross campus, even if you are not sure they are in your class. They probably know who you are, and they will remember the acknowledgement.
9. If a student does a great job, or improves substantially, please tell them so. Do so verbally and/or in writing (on a paper, via e-mail, etc.). Personal connection to a teacher is one of the best indicators for student retention.

Helping Students Control Costs

10. Submit your book list through the official UK textbook order form. Do not add extra required texts in mid-semester unless absolutely necessary. These will always be more expensive. <http://www.uky.edu/AuxServ/textbookinfo/>
11. Be aware of the UK bookstore website. Check it for accuracy right before the semester starts. Students can order and hold books online; please encourage them to do so, so they can secure the cheapest editions. <http://www.bkstr.com/CategoryDisplay/10001-9604-16403-1?demoKey=d>
12. If you require course packets, give the prepared packets to both the UK Bookstore and to Kennedy's, so that they will be priced competitively. (Kennedy's refuses to sell copies of the packets to the UK Bookstore for duplication.) Set the price at cost only—do not try to make a profit on these for yourself or your department. According to national experts, up to 80 percent of course packet content is available electronically through university libraries and other electronic sources. Using these will create substantial savings for your students. For example, we have a variety of full-text journal articles available on line through UK libraries: <http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/>
13. Investigate whether your required text may be legally available online or in an electronic format. Indicate on your syllabus whether students may use this e-version in your class. Check with UK libraries to locate these resources: <http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/> Click on the databases and e-journals areas to find items available online.

Tool #1C: Twenty-Five Tips for Faculty—University of Kentucky (cont.)



14. Students are spending \$900 a year on textbooks. Determine whether your course actually needs to have the newest edition of the course textbook. If you can use any edition, or any edition within the last three years, it can mean substantial savings to your students. Encourage your department to check on all introductory course texts to see if multiple editions may be used. Often, these orders are on automatic pilot and the Bookstore will choose the newest and most expensive edition automatically.
15. Post your required texts for each department course on your website, complete with acceptable editions and ISBN numbers. Students may be able to purchase these before they get to UK.
16. If the publisher makes it possible, “unbundle” textbook-media packages if you do not plan to use all items in the bundle.

Academic Engagement

17. This goes without saying: set high expectations from the outset, for yourself and the TA's and instructors you supervise. Model good academic behavior (e.g., come to class on time, be prepared, pass out detailed syllabus, do not waste the first class, make sure to return homework and tests in a timely fashion).
18. Get involved on the new all-campus Summer Reading starting with our fall 2009 cohort. We will start the publicity roll-out on this in a few weeks. Incoming students will be required to read Stephen McBride's *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to his White Mother* (1996). Read this book. Consider volunteering to lead a discussion on it with a small student group. If appropriate, consider including the book or parts of it in your syllabus next year. We would like this book to spark campus-wide discussion. We will be accepting your nominations for future summer readings as well.
19. Give a short entry survey/pre-test in the first week of class. Ask students to identify concerns about taking the class. This assessment will help you anticipate student challenges with your course.
20. Give students detailed feedback. Please submit your midterm grades on time. They will appear in the student's “myUK” web page, and will be used by advisors for academic counseling.
21. Require more writing assignments to get students engaged with the work. According to the NSSE survey, UK students report having fewer pages of assigned writing than our benchmarks.

Source: Jeannine Blackwell, Dean of the Graduate School, University of Kentucky; University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tool #1C: Twenty-Five Tips for Faculty—University of Kentucky (cont.)

Provide and publicize proven high-impact activities for each student in your degree programs. The more a project forces students into active engagement over time, the more likely that that student will have a meaningful academic experience. George Kuh has investigated which activities contribute the most to student success. He has also determined that minority students, first-generation college goers, and students from poorer socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to do one of these projects. We aim for students to have at least two high-impact academic experiences during their careers at UK. Think about the high-impact offerings your department offers. Do you have some that are economically feasible for poorer students who must work during the year and summers?

When you redesign your degree curriculum to align with the proposed new Gen Ed requirements, consider including one of the high-impact activities.

These activities are:

- Living Learning communities (themes within a residence hall, with academic programming)
 - Service learning (project-based academic work), including internships
 - Research with a professor (independent study projects, lab work, creative productions)
 - Study Abroad (short or long term, either language based or discipline based)
 - Capstone project
22. If your department is not involved with a living learning community in a residence hall, consider either proposing one or engaging with a current one:
<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/ResidenceLife/livingLearning.html>
23. Develop service learning activities in your programs. You can find out more about service learning and internships at this site: <http://www.uky.edu/CareerCenter/faculty.htm>

Examples of service learning projects can be found here:

<http://www.uky.edu/CareerCenter/files/service-learning.doc>

24. Investigate opportunities for your students to work, study, or intern in a different country or language area. Go to <http://abroad.ad.uky.edu/> and click on “faculty/staff” for contact information.
25. Organize research projects with professors and practitioners in your discipline. Research with a professor can be organized in your department or through the undergraduate research offices on campus: <http://www.uky.edu/EUREKA/>

Practice #2: Retention Policy Committee

Description

A cross-functional committee of university administrators and directors holds brief, regular meetings to review performance against key retention indicators and discuss the retention implications of changes in university policy. The goal is to anticipate and proactively correct systematic issues that impact retention performance. The committee comprises roughly 20 mid- and high-level administrators from every major student-facing division on campus, including academic affairs, student affairs, enrollment management, and undergraduate affairs. Discussions are kept brief and action-oriented, focusing on identifying tangible solutions to issues.

Recommended For: All colleges and universities

Council Assessment of Effectiveness

Many universities convene retention task forces or committees. Unfortunately, the majority of these committees are ineffective; they lack the influence to make real change and meetings often devolve into lengthy discussions of theory.

Retention committees are most likely to succeed when they include senior administrators and meetings focus on tangible solutions. Although responsibility for retention is shared across the campus, the heads of student-facing divisions rarely have an opportunity to discuss policies impacting the university's ability to retain students. By convening a group of division heads, the university instills the retention committee with the authority to make decisions and take action.

Some smaller universities attempt to use their retention committees to track and follow up with individual at-risk students. The Council believes that this function is better served by a Retention Management Office (Practice #1, pages 18–28).

Implementation Tips

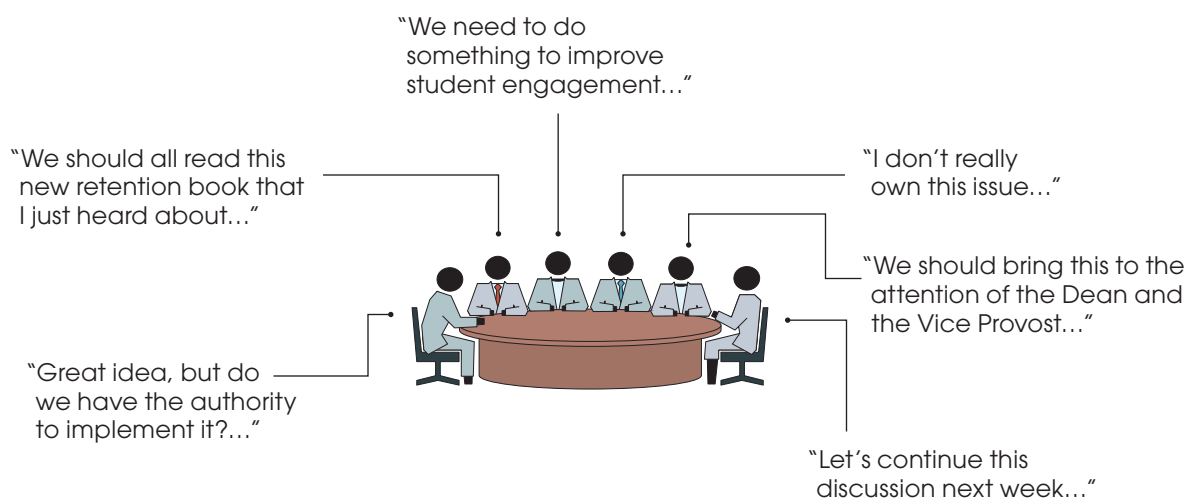
Establishing a high-level committee can prove difficult without a mandate from the senior academic affairs leadership. The Council recommends that the committee be chaired by a vice provost with mandatory participation for at least the initial year to demonstrate the university's commitment to the group. Committee members should be the head or second in command of their respective divisions. Participation can be optional or on an as-needed basis for some less central divisions.

Senior administrators may chafe at the addition of another standing item to their calendars. To minimize the burden on these officials, the Council recommends a strict policy limiting meetings to one hour or less, occurring just once every two weeks.

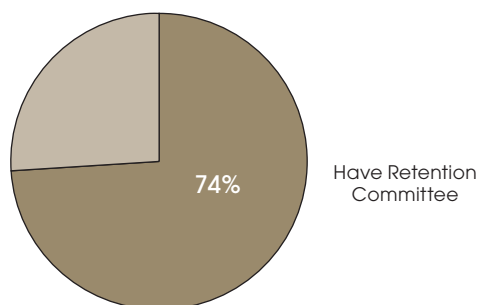
Retention committees are commonplace but often ineffective. Nearly three-quarters of colleges and universities report having a retention committee composed of administrators, faculty, or both. Many of these committees lack clearly defined objectives and devolve into unproductive debates over theory instead of focusing on practical solutions. Others lack the senior influence necessary to achieve positive change.

Does This Sound Familiar?

Typical Retention Committee Lacks Authority, Action



Colleges and Universities with Retention Committees



Source: College Board, *How Colleges Organize Themselves to Increase Student Persistence: Four-Year Institutions*, April 2009, available at: <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/college-retention.pdf> (accessed December 1, 2009); University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Effective retention committees convene senior leaders from across the university to address concrete issues. At Florida State University, senior leaders from major undergraduate-facing divisions meet every two weeks to discuss strategic retention concerns and monitor university performance against retention metrics. The committee affords an opportunity for cross-silo retention planning that would otherwise lack a forum. Meetings are limited to one hour and abide by a strict agenda set beforehand.

Inclusive but Decisive

Making the Retention Committee Work



A 360-Degree Perspective

Functions and Programs Represented

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| • Dean of Undergraduate Studies | • Advising |
| • Assistant VP for Academic Affairs | • Orientation |
| • Associate VP for Student Affairs | • Housing |
| • Assistant VP for Enrollment Management | • Health Center |
| • Dean of Faculty | • Counseling Center |
| • Retention Manager | • Admissions |
| • Dean of Students | • Financial Aid |
| • Registrar | • Withdrawal Services |
| • Bursar | • Special Needs Programs |
| | • Honors Program |
| | • Disciplinary Committee |



Frequent Action-Focused Meetings



Regular meetings set once every two weeks



Limited to no more than one hour



Agenda items often directly nominated by provost



Discussion centered on developing concrete solutions

Case in Brief



Enrollment Management Committee Florida State University Tallahassee, FL

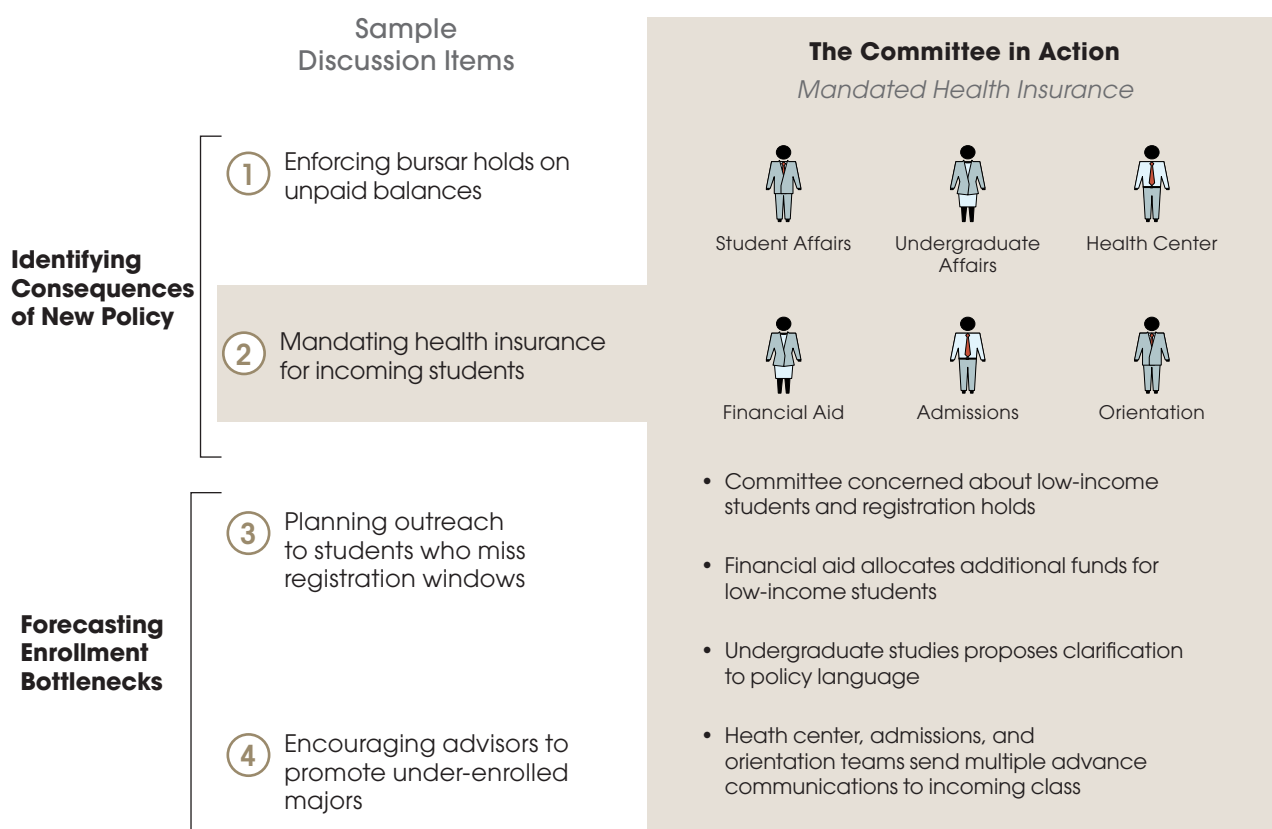
- Urban public research university with 31,600 undergraduates
- Assistant VPs, deans, and directors meet once every two weeks to anticipate and preempt looming retention problems
- Cross-functional representation brings together a diversity of perspectives from campus leaders who otherwise would not have an occasion to interact
- Meetings focus on developing actionable solutions to tangible retention problems
- Meetings are kept short to respect the time committed by senior leadership and encourage their continued participation
- Standing agenda items monitor enrollment trends; special agenda items are nominated directly by the provost

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Agenda items focus primarily on assessing and improving the impact of university policies on retention. The committee seeks to proactively address the consequences of new university policies and initiate strategic changes to improve overall retention performance. Solutions often involve coordination among several campus units.

Solving Problems Before They Occur

Cross-Silo Discussions Anticipate and Preempt Attrition Risks



Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.



II. Identifying At-Risk Students

☞ Practice #3: Early Academic Performance Reports.	36
☞ Practice #4: Absence Tracking	46
☞ Practice #5: Course Management Software Usage Tracking	57
☞ Practice #6: Financial Distress Monitoring	70
☞ Practice #7: Transcript Request Monitoring	80
☞ Practice #8: Social Engagement Flash Polling	86

Practice #3: Early Academic Performance Reports

Description

Instead of relying exclusively on midterm grades, some universities are identifying academically struggling students via a range of academic performance indicators such as absenteeism and class participation. Instructors submit alerts through an interface built directly into the online course roster. The checkbox-style, exceptions-based reporting tool allows faculty members to quickly alert advisors to those students exhibiting risky academic behavior. Reporting at some universities occurs on a rolling basis, while other schools request that alerts be submitted at a single moment four weeks into the semester.

Follow-up typically is managed by the retention management office (if one exists) or by the central advising office (or by the individual colleges' advising offices at larger universities). Some progressive universities have developed automated systems that notify the referring instructor of the outcome of the advising meeting, encouraging future participation.

Recommended For: All colleges and universities

Council Assessment of Practice Effectiveness

Midterm grades are widely regarded as too blunt an instrument that comes too late in the semester to be effective as an academic intervention tool. In addition, most universities find it difficult to attain the rates of faculty response necessary to ensure comprehensive midterm grade coverage for the first-year class.

Early academic performance reports allow instructors to provide information on a wider range of academic risk factors that can be tracked much earlier in the semester. The range of choices affords instructors the flexibility to decide which risk factors are relevant to their courses—for example “class participation” would be relevant to a small seminar but not a large lecture. Faculty no longer need to modify their syllabi to include graded assignments in the early weeks of the semester or submit information on those students not exhibiting concerning behavior.

Implementation Tips

Most universities ask their IT staff to build the reporting tool directly into the electronic course rosters to minimize the burden on instructors. A link next to each student's name takes the instructor to the reporting form, which auto-populates with the relevant course and student data. Upon submission, the reporting tool sends an automated message notifying the advising office to initiate follow-up.

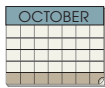
Implementation Toolkit

Tool #3A: Early Alert FAQ for Faculty	p. 42
Tool #3B: Early Alert System Description for Course Syllabus	p. 44
Tool #3C: Provost Letter to Faculty	p. 45

Midterm grades are insufficient as a stand-alone academic early warning system. Most universities rely on midterm grades as the primary mechanism for surfacing academic struggles among first-year students. The consensus among retention administrators is that midterm grades are too difficult to collect, occur too late in the semester, and offer too little information.

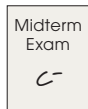
Too Little, Too Late

The Problem with Midterm Grades



Not Early Enough

Interventions launched after mid semester succeed far less often than those begun as soon as the student's performance begins lagging



Not Detailed Enough

Grade on a single assignment (typically the first paper or exam) offers little insight into root cause of student's academic struggles



Low Response Rates

At many institutions, low levels of faculty participation leave as much as 50%–80% of the first-year class unmonitored

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Universities are beginning to supplement or replace midterm grade reports with next-generation early alert mechanisms. Progressive universities are pulling forward the alert process much earlier in the semester, collecting more robust information to identify students at risk, and looking for creative ways to mine pre-existing data streams instead of relying exclusively on faculty reports.

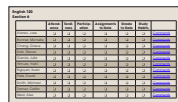
Three Options for Moving Beyond Midterm Grades

Focus on Attendance



- Concentrate efforts on getting faculty to report throughout the first half of the semester first-year students who have missed two or more classes
- Attendance data can be reported very early and is highly predictive of student success

Make Reporting Comprehensive, Yet Flexible



- Create an interface that prompts faculty to report on multiple facets of student performance—attendance, preparedness, performance on assignments—without requiring precision
- Faculty can be prompted to report either once early in the semester (typically in week four) or at multiple points across the first nine weeks

Obviate the Need for Faculty Reporting



- Identify students likely to perform poorly based on students' usage of the class's course management software
- System automatically provides students with direct and ongoing feedback on performance

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Reporting tools built into the online course roster allow faculty to submit alerts on a wide range of early warning signs. These warning signs are easily observable in the first weeks of the semester, and faculty may choose to report only on those behaviors that appropriately represent risk in their specific course. A comments section encourages the instructor to add additional details.

The Early Warning System (TEWS)

California State University, Northridge

Class Roster
Permission Numbers
TEWS

Class Roster Early Warning Evaluations

Math 92 DEVELOP MATH 1 Fall Semester 2008

Class Number: 15284 Days: MWF

Times: 8:00 a.m.—8:50 a.m. Faculty: BH316

Enrolled: 42 Capacity: 42 Remaining Seats: 0

Name	Student ID	Evaluation	Advisement
Ahman, Allie	001-4568	Create	Create
Brooks, Daniel	214-7514	Create	Create
Knowles, Megan	658-1035	Opened 08/05/08 11:46 a.m.	Updated 08/06/08 3:05 p.m.
Pils, Robert	023-1578	Create	Create
Steiner, Jim	401-9867	Opened 08/06/08 2:23 p.m.	Create

Accessed from a tab in the online course roster

Instructor clicks link next to name to submit alert

Instructor can use second link to view advisor's notes

Alert Form

[Home](#) » [CSUN SA Self Service](#) » [CSUN Faculty Launch Page](#) » [Management](#) » **TEWS Student Eval**

Student: Steiner ID: 401-9867 *Status: OPEN ▼

Term: Fall Semester Opened:

Class: 15284 MATH 92 DEVELOP MATH 1

Instructor: Richardson, Mesan C

Email Student: jim.steiner@csun.edu

Warning Signs

☐ Attendance

☐ Assignments to Date

☐ Overall

☐ Tardiness

☒ Grade to Date

☐ Study Habits

☐ Participation

Notes: Additional Observations

Student has not turned in any of the 6 assignments that have been assigned

Course information auto-populates

Instructor selects from range of academic concerns

Additional comments to assist advisor with follow-up

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Alerts may be collected on a rolling basis or called for at a single point in the semester. This is a tradeoff. Rolling alerts allow for more rapid identification and intervention, while one-time alerts provide a more comprehensive picture of a student's performance across all courses and allow advisors to triage the most severe cases.

Two Approaches to Alert Collection and Follow-Up

	Single Submission Deadline  <i>(3,900 Undergraduates)</i>	Rolling Submission  <i>(29,800 Undergraduates)</i>
Reporting Schedule	Faculty asked to report on any students exhibiting concerning behavior in the fifth week of the semester	Faculty asked to report on students as concerns arise; reminders to use system sent in weeks 0, 3, and 6
Alert Recipient	Office of Student Success and Retention	Advising office in student's college
Follow-Up	Program coordinator triages alerts; program staff of 2 FTEs and 2 part-time graduate students follow up on alerts	Advisors decide appropriate outreach, contact over 90% of students within three days
Advantages	• With all faculty submitting alerts in same window, students performing poorly in multiple courses are easily identified • Evaluation of all alerts at same time maximizes efficiency of triage process • Face-to-face meetings reserved for students with greatest risk of attrition • Fixed deadline facilitates follow-up on faculty participation	• Encouragement of reporting from beginning of semester increases opportunities to identify, intervene in student problems as early as possible • Submission of alerts directly to advisors obviates need for additional staff to evaluate alerts and conduct interventions
Caveats	• Separate efforts required to encourage faculty to send alerts on students whose problems materialize after the submission window • Larger universities likely to have too many alerts for a single centralized person to evaluate; most suitable for smaller institutions	• Asynchronous reporting in most cases leaves advisor with only partial data on student's performance across courses • Large number of advisors involved in outreach necessitates centralized monitoring of advisor follow-through • Rolling deadline prolongs follow-up with faculty who fail to submit alerts

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Universities are investing in a wide range of strategies to encourage faculty participation in the early alert program. In combination, these strategies can shift faculty attitudes and formalize alert reporting as part of campus culture.

Increasing Faculty Participation in Alert Reporting

Six Strategies for Securing Faculty Buy-In



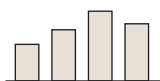
Course
Schedule
Math
English Comp
Spanish
Intro to Psych

1 Messaging During Faculty Orientation

Training sessions teach new faculty to use the early warning system and clearly state that reporting is an expected part of their job

2 Focus on First-Year Courses

Efforts to partner with instructors teaching first-year students reduce the reporting burden on the faculty at-large



3 Making the Case with Data

Data collected by the university demonstrate to faculty the correlation between alert reporting and student success

(See Practice #4: Absence Tracking, pgs. 46–56)



4 Encouragement from the Provost

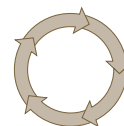
A special message from the provost at the beginning of each semester re-emphasizes the importance of alert reporting

(See an example on page 45)



5 Periodic E-mail Prompts

Instructors teaching first-year courses receive automated e-mails every two weeks reminding them to submit alerts.



6 Close the Loop on Reporting

E-mails update instructors on the outcome of advising meetings triggered by the alerts they submit

(See Practice #9: Intervention Tracking System, pgs. 92–96)

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tool #3A: Early Alert FAQ for Faculty—Cal State Northridge



California State University
Northridge



—TEWS Protocol—
—FAQs for Faculty Users—

Q: When do I use TEWS?

A: After you have had contact with the student and you discern the student has additional needs.

Q: After I initiate a TEWS alert for one of my students, where will it go?

A: The TEWS alert will go directly to the Student Service Center/EOP satellite contact person of the student's current major.

Q: What if a student never shows to class?

A: Attempt contact with the student, and then utilize TEWS

Q: What if a student does not return to class after several meetings?

A: Attempt contact with the student, and then utilize TEWS.

Q: Can I refer a student directly to a student service center?

A: Absolutely, although TEWS will provide a method of tracking this interaction.

Q: How will I know I have a TEWS alert or a TEWS response e-mail?

A: You should check your CSUN portal as well as your e-mail on a regular basis.

Q: What should I do if I do not receive a response from the Student Service Center/EOP Satellite contact within the three day allotted time frame?

A: It is advised you go around the TEWS system and send an e-mail to the designated Student Service Center/EOP satellite contact to inquire about the student.

Q: Is TEWS the only way I can interact with the Student Service Center/EOP Satellites or other student services regarding TEWS students?

A: No, TEWS is not a replacement for faculty interaction, it is merely a supplement.

Tool #3A: Early Alert FAQ for Faculty—Cal State Northridge (cont.)



California State University
Northridge



Educational Opportunity Program
www.csun.edu/eop/tews

Q: If I receive a midterm evaluation for a student, will I have to complete the paper evaluation as well as TEWS?

A: No, utilize the TEWS system only for your TEWS linked courses.

Q: What happens if the student contacts the Student Service Center/EOP Satellite after day three?

A: The Student Service Center/EOP Satellite contact person will continue the TEWS process by responding to you via e-mail.

Q: Do I use TEWS if I have a disruptive student?

A: No, TEWS is only a tool. It should not circumvent processes that the university already has in place, i.e., campus police, etc.

Q: What happens to the TEWS ticket after the advisor responds?

A: The Advisor will “close” a TEWS ticket if: (1) the advisor has made contact with the student and had delivered necessary services, or (2) the advisor has received feedback from a student services referral indicating the student has made contact with them.

Q: What should I do if I need to send a second TEWS alert for a student with a “closed” ticket?

A: You can change the status of the ticket from “closed” to “open” and then it’s an open ticket again.

Tool #3B: Early Alert System Description for Course Syllabus—Cal State Northridge

The EARLY WARNING System (TEWS)

California State University
Northridge



Educational Opportunity Program
www.csun.edu/eop/tews

—Facts for Faculty—

Statement about TEWS for course syllabus:

This class is linked with The Early Warning System (TEWS), a student centered support system. This tool was created with the sole purpose of helping student retention by facilitating early interaction of faculty, students, advisors and other student service areas.

Answers to Students Questions Regarding TEWS:

- ✓ This class is linked to The Early Warning System or TEWS.
- ✓ CSUN loses almost 21% of first year students by the end of the first year. Retention is a pressing problem for the vast majority of the country's higher education institutions—CSUN included.
- ✓ TEWS is an integrated student centered support system, created with the sole purpose of helping students with any need that may arise during their first year.
- ✓ TEWS facilitates early interaction of faculty, students, advisors, and other student service areas.
- ✓ As a student in a TEWS linked course you may receive e-mails or telephone calls from me and/or your advisor in your college Student Service Center/EOP satellite or the Advising Resource Center/EOP if you are an undecided student.
- ✓ You are encouraged to utilize the services outlined on your TEWS handout. TEWS is a tool for faculty to use as a resource to communicate with student support services areas in the university about students who may be in need of some level of intervention to ensure their persistence and academic success at the university.
- ✓ TEWS recognizes the importance of:
 - Easing the new student's transition into the college environment
 - Early systematic identification of those students who may be academically at risk
 - Early identification of students who may be having difficulties in and out of the classroom
 - Establishing a common communication link between students and their instructors, advisors, and relevant support services.

Tool #3C: Provost Letter to Faculty—Creighton University



Dear Colleague:

As you know, at Creighton we pride ourselves on individual attention to students. Recently you received a survey from Mary Higgins regarding potential warning signals regarding students in your courses (low quiz scores, absences, etc.). It is very important that you complete the survey and return it promptly. Even if you feel that you are addressing the issues in your course with any students who are having difficulty, it is important that we get a clear picture as to whether students are having difficulties in multiple courses. As you know, our chances of helping a student succeed are exponentially greater if we can address the issues at this juncture rather than later.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Borchers

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of Law

Source: Personal communication; University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Practice #4: Absence Tracking

Description

Instructors use an electronic form to submit alerts on first-year students missing two or more class sessions. A specially trained team of resident advisors deliver brief, carefully scripted, in-person interventions designed to communicate the importance of class attendance.

Recommended For: All colleges and universities

Council Assessment of Practice Effectiveness

Data shows that first-year students with class attendance issues earn lower GPAs and experience higher rates of attrition, despite being academically indistinguishable from their peers based on standardized test scores. This suggests that absenteeism in the first year is more a function of irresponsibility and immaturity in the face of newfound freedoms than one of academic quality. By tracking class absenteeism early in the first semester, the university can quickly and inexpensively intervene with wayward students before poor class attendance habits reduce their chances for success. This practice is cost-effective and thus recommended for all universities; however, practitioners caution that absentee tracking will not be sufficient as a stand-alone practice at universities with large populations of non-traditional or remedial students requiring more extensive academic support.

Implementation Tips

University IT resources should find it straightforward to set up the necessary electronic reporting tools. The intervention team should be selected from the existing pool of RAs. The toughest challenge will be in convincing faculty to participate. Mississippi State University succeeded in securing faculty buy-in by presenting department heads with data that clearly showed the link between absenteeism and attrition. The Council recommends starting with humanities departments that tend to offer small classes in which attendance is easiest to track.

Implementation Toolkit

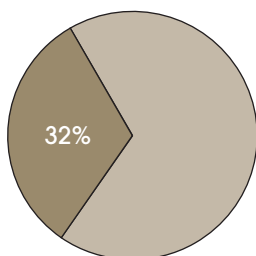
- Tool #4A: Contact Process and Scripting for RA Intervention p. 54
- Tool #4B: Resource Information Card for RA Intervention p. 56

The Council recommends that universities put a special emphasis on class attendance as an early warning indicator. Attendance problems are readily identified very early in the semester and are highly correlated with success. Researchers at Mississippi State University found that nearly one-third of first-year students exhibited attendance problems and that these students earned worse grades and persisted at a rate far below that of their peers.

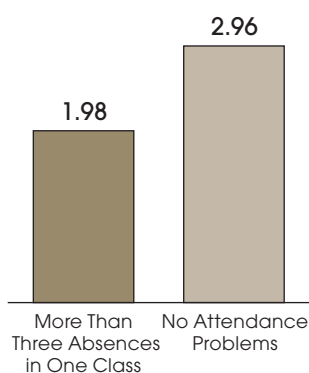
Class Attendance Highly Predictive of Persistence

First-Year Students at Mississippi State University, 2005–2006

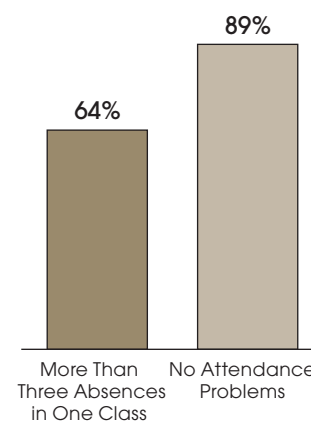
Percentage of First-Years with More Than Three Absences in One Course by Midterm



Average First-Year GPA



Retention to Sophomore Year



Case in Brief



Pathfinders Program *Mississippi State University* *Starkville, MS*

- Rural public research university with 13,200 undergraduates
- Instructors in all first-year courses report names of students who have missed two or more classes
- Team of specially-trained RAs conduct brief, non-confrontational, scripted face-to-face check-ins to remind students of the importance of attending class
- Program produced an immediate 3 percent gain in first-year persistence, growing to 8 percent over the last decade as faculty participation increased

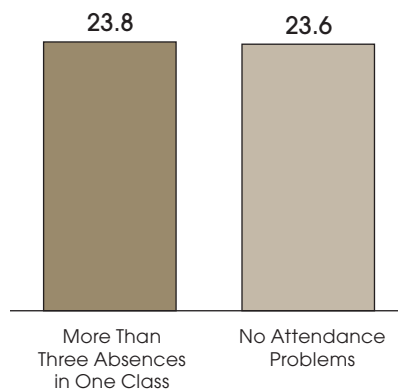
Source: Pathfinders Website, <http://www.msstate.edu/org/pathfinders/> (accessed May 15, 2009); University Leadership Council analysis.

Contrary to prevailing faculty attitudes, students who struggle due to absenteeism are just as well-prepared as their peers. Mississippi State drew the conclusion that many students lost in the first year are academically qualified for college but have yet to develop the discipline and maturity necessary to complete the adjustment from the more structured life of high school.

It's Effort, Not Aptitude

Students Missing Class Are Just as Well Prepared as Peers

First-Year Students at Mississippi State University
Average ACT Scores, 2005–2006



Source: Pathfinders Website, <http://www.msstate.edu/org/pathfinders/> (accessed May 15, 2009); University Leadership Council analysis.

Mississippi State aggressively intervenes to reduce first-year absenteeism. Instructors in first-year classes report students with repeated absences to an office that coordinates outreach designed to reinforce the importance of attendance for success. The goal is to give students a wake-up call and gently nudge them back on course.

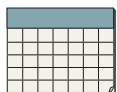
Reaching Out to Students with Two or More Absences

Mississippi State's "Pathfinders" Program



1 Faculty Prompted to Submit Alerts

- Every two weeks through midterms, department head e-mails faculty reminder to submit alerts on any first-year student missing two or more classes
- Faculty also encouraged to submit alerts on rolling basis
- Deans and chairs contact faculty who do not submit alerts



2 Pathfinders Office Processes Alerts

- Program coordinator processes alerts daily, creating spreadsheets with flagged students' contact information
- A student receives only one class attendance intervention per semester
- 60–100 alerts received per day at beginning of semester; by late semester, volume drops to 20 per day (first-year class size: 2,400 students)



3 Residency Status Determines Intervention Delivery Method

On-Campus Students

- Specially-trained RAs contact students living in residence halls
- 80 percent of alerts



Off-Campus Students

- Program coordinator contacts students living off campus
- 20 percent of alerts

Two Simple Reporting Mechanisms

Banner Overlay



- IT-designed overlay for Banner enables faculty to check attendance alert box next to student name on course roster



Pathfinders Website

- Reports also submitted via web-based submission form
- Enables teaching assistants, who do not have access to Banner, to submit alerts

Resident advisors inexpensively deliver quick and effective interventions. MSU has found that students respond positively to non-threatening attendance interventions delivered by peers instead of administrators. Brief scripting assures these students that the university is looking out for them, and that this is not a punitive action. RAs require no incremental staffing investment and are highly effective.

Leveraging RAs for Low-Cost Interventions

Key Elements of Pathfinders Interventions



Delivered by Peer

- Ten specially chosen and trained RAs meet face-to-face with students



Brief

- Discussions last no longer than two minutes



Supportive and Non-Threatening

- RA knocks on student's door for unscheduled, informal conversation
- With upbeat tone, RA communicates concern for student; critical or confrontational tone assiduously avoided



Carefully Scripted

- RAs undergo rigorous training and closely follow approved script
- Students with questions extending beyond script are referred to academic support offices
(See scripting on page 54)

A Three-Part Message

①

Greeting and explanation of Pathfinders program

②

Connection between attending class and academic success

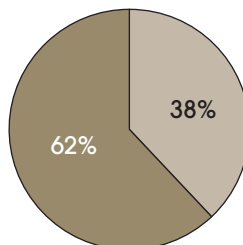
③

Presentation of information card detailing support services

Making an Impact on Student Behavior

Student Attendance Following Pathfinders Intervention

**No Further
Attendance Problems**
(Retention Rate 78%)



**Continued
Attendance Problems**
(Retention Rate 64%)

Source: Pathfinders Website, <http://www.msstate.edu/org/pathfinders/> (accessed May 15, 2009); University Leadership Council analysis.

Faculty resistance is the main obstacle to practice adoption. Unsurprisingly, Mississippi State experienced pushback from instructors. The most common objections were over issues of student autonomy and the misperception that students with attendance issues do not belong in college.

Facing Faculty Opposition

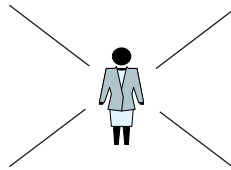
Why Faculty Don't Want to Take Attendance

"I Don't Want to Be a Police Officer"

"Policing" class attendance conflicts with the friendly, supportive persona I want to present to my students.

"We Have to Respect Students' Autonomy"

Students are adults. Don't they have a right to choose whether or not they come to class?



"I Don't See How It's Worth the Trouble"

It's a lot of work. Why bother?

"Aren't We Better Off Without These Lazy Students?"

Perhaps these students shouldn't be at this institution in the first place.

No Excuse to Let Them Fail

"Faculty tend to think attendance is solely the responsibility of the student. I certainly used to think this when I started teaching. Over time, I learned that although first-year students should be more responsible, many are not. This isn't an excuse to let them fail."

David McMillen
Pathfinders Program Director
Mississippi State University

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Faculty resistance can be overcome with compelling data and a tight focus on first-year courses. An MSU faculty member led the charge, department-by-department, armed with data demonstrating the clear connection between attendance and success. Recruitment efforts began in departments hosting small first-year courses where attendance tracking is easiest. Absentee data also convinced stakeholders to emphasize attendance at key events attended by incoming students.

Winning Faculty Support

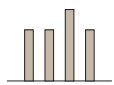
Key Elements to Attendance Tracking at Mississippi State

Making the Right Case



Faculty Champion

- Respected faculty member, not administrator, leads the charge
- Meets individually with chairs and faculty



Research-Focused Approach

- Data demonstrates impact of attendance
- Faculty asked to support continued research through reports

ACT
Score:
23.8

Challenge to Persistent Myths

- Data shows faculty they are losing qualified students

Targeting the Right Courses



Focus on First-Year Students

- Faculty asked to submit absence alerts on first-year students only



Starting with Likely Allies

- Efforts begin with departments and individual faculty most inclined to support student success initiatives
- Early efforts also target small first-year courses (e.g., English composition) where attendance tracking is easiest

Creating a Culture That Values Attendance

Importance of Attendance Emphasized at:

Orientation



Convocation



Residence Hall Welcome Meetings



The First Session of Class

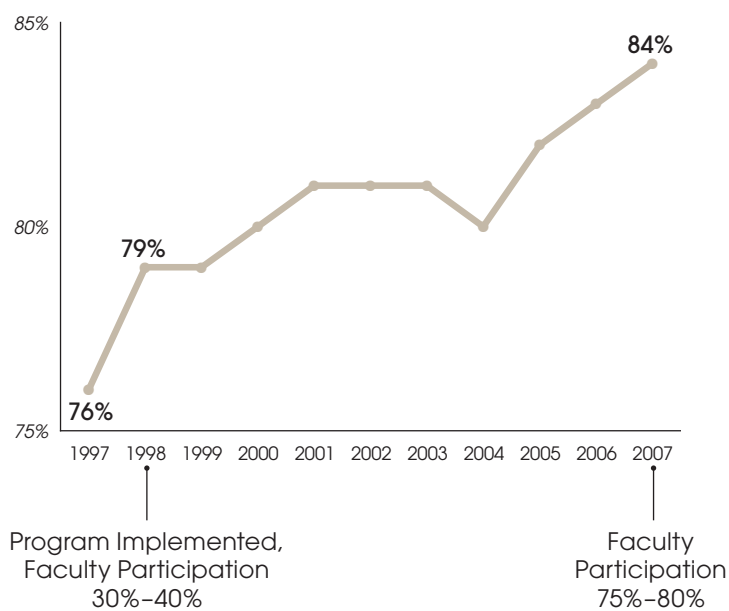


Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

MSU's retention rate is rising while admission standards remain constant. Mississippi State's retention rate rose by 3 percent in the first year of the Pathfinders program, with further gains made as faculty participation in the program has increased. However, the mean ACT score of entering students has held constant over the same time period, suggesting that Mississippi State's retention gains are not attributable to a change in the academic background of the student body.

Driving Impressive Results

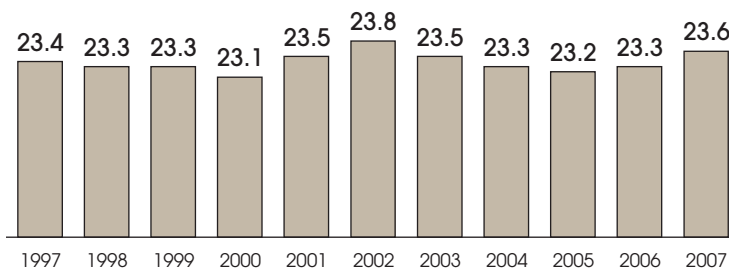
Mississippi State First-to-Second-Year Retention, 1997–2007



Retention Rising While Student Academic Preparation Remains Constant

Median ACT Scores of Entering Class

Mississippi State University



Source: Pathfinders Website, <http://www.msstate.edu/org/pathfinders/> (accessed May 15, 2009); University Leadership Council analysis.

Tool #4A: Contact Process and Scripting for RA Intervention—Mississippi State



PATHFINDERS
MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

Ty Abernathy
325-0595
ty@ra.msstate.edu

Amanda Butts
325-9590
pathfinders@org.msstate.edu

<http://www.msstate.edu/org/pathfinders/>

Resident Contact Procedure (1 minute)

Step 1 - Greeting

- Introduce yourself (Resident Advisor on the first floor) and tell the resident that you work with Pathfinders. Then, ask the resident if they've heard of Pathfinders? Yes/No
- Response—Pathfinders is a program that attempts to help freshman students be successful at Mississippi State.

Step 2 - Absence Information

- One of the things Pathfinders does is monitor class attendance because going to class for freshman students is important for them to do well and make it here at Mississippi State.

***Missing class is the first sign that a freshman student is having trouble or about to have trouble in school.**

***Please talk to your instructor if you are having any academic problems in a course.**

***Please make class attendance a top priority.**

Step 3 - Academic Resource Card

- Present the card to the resident and encourage him/her to contact any of the people or academic resources listed on it if he/she needs help with anything.
- Remind the resident how important class attendance is and tell him/her that if you, in any way, can be of any further help to him/her to let you know.

We're just here to help.

We just want you to do well.

We just care about freshman students.

Please be familiar with the Pathfinders weekly schedule, and please know what you are responsible for doing each day of the week.

Tool #4A: Contact Process and Scripting for RA Intervention—Mississippi State (cont.)

Common Student Responses and Questions

- I haven't missed that class.
Talk to your instructor next class and let them know.
- I dropped that class.
Check your schedule on line just to make sure.
- I'm not in that class.
Check your schedule on line just to make sure.
- How many days did I miss that class?
I'm not sure, but at least twice.
- I haven't missed that many days?
Talk to your instructor next class and let them know.
- What days did I miss class?
I'm not sure.
- Is someone else going to tell my parents?
No, we're here to help you, not get you in trouble.
- What about this or that? Who? Why?
Call or e-mail Amanda or Ty, they can give you more information.

Things to Remember

- Smile and keep smiling.
- Try not to alarm the resident, but get the message across to them.
- Always remain friendly and positive. cool---great---right---sure---good luck

If you don't know the answer to a question, don't know what to say, or don't know how to respond, simply tell the resident to call or e-mail Amanda or myself. We'll be glad to discuss the situation with the resident further and give them more information.

Tool #4B: Resource Information Card for RA Intervention—Mississippi State



PATHFINDERS MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

Welcome to Mississippi State University. MSU is committed to helping students make a productive transition to college life. Central to this commitment are various academic programs, resources and services that are **free** and available to **all** students, not just those having academic difficulties. Assistance is available in many areas, including tutoring in various subjects, preparing for tests, developing effective study skills, writing assignments, choosing a career, changing your major and using the library. Please call, e-mail, drop by, or visit the websites for further information. MSU looks forward to you having a great year and hopes you enjoy your time at State.

Pathfinders Advising Center (first house behind Rice Hall)

<http://www.msstate.edu/org/pathfinders/>

Ty Abernathy ty@ra.msstate.edu 325-0595

Amanda Butts pathfinders@org.msstate.edu 325-9590

Provides information concerning various academic assistance programs, resources and services. The primary focus of Pathfinders is class attendance by freshmen. Regular class attendance is a major factor in determining the academic success of freshmen.

The Math Domain Allen Hall Room 111

Ms. Marjorie Crittenden MCrittenden@math.msstate.edu 325-5805

Monday – Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Friday 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Faculty and graduate teaching assistants provide tutoring and help with online homework for Intermediate Algebra, College Algebra, Trigonometry, and Business Calculus.

Student Counseling Services Lee Hall Room 101

<http://www.health.msstate.edu/scs/>

Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. 325-2091

Student Counseling Services supports the academic mission of Mississippi State University by facilitating the social, psychological, and academic functioning of students. In pursuit of this objective, we offer a variety of direct student services ranging from preventative psycho-educational programming, student mentoring, supportive counseling, group counseling, intensive psychotherapy, and 24-hour crisis intervention.

The Learning Center (TLC) Allen Hall Room 267

<http://www.tlc.msstate.edu/> email: tlc@colled.msstate.edu

Dr. Anna Dill anna.dill@msstate.edu 325-2957

Ms. Kathy Forrester kforrester@colled.msstate.edu 325-2957

Main Office 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday – Friday

Tutoring 2:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Monday – Thursday

Open Computer Lab 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Monday – Thursday

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Friday

Provides tutoring in various subject areas and courses in study skills and reading; all courses have an LSK prefix; computer labs available.

The MSU Writing Center Lee Hall Room 315D

<http://www.msstate.edu/dept/english/writingcenter.html> 325-1045

Ms. Sarah Sneed sds9@ra.msstate.edu 325-2349

Monday – Thursday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and Friday 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

The Writing Center is a free service to all MSU students! Graduate teaching assistants are available to assist all MSU students, including freshmen, with their writing assignments and projects. Please call or email for more information.

Holmes Cultural Diversity Center

Suite 220 Colvard Student Union

<http://www.hcdc.msstate.edu/> Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Ms. E. Maria White emw1@saffairs.msstate.edu 325-2033

The Holmes Cultural Diversity Center strives to enhance the college experience of culturally diverse students via various services and programs designed to help students achieve their academic and career aspirations.

Student Support Services Montgomery Hall basement floor

<http://www.msstate.edu/dept/ssss/> Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Ms. Julie Berry jberry@saffairs.msstate.edu 325-3335

Provides supportive services for students who have an academic need and are first generation, low income, or disabled.

The Career Center Montgomery Hall Room 300

<http://www.career.msstate.edu/> Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Cassandra Latimer clatimer@career.msstate.edu 325-3344

Provides assistance to all students, including freshmen, about a variety of career issues. Also, provides information about the co-op office (located in McCain Hall Room 335–325–3823). See a career advisor and talk about choosing/changing your major; take career assessments to help narrow your choices; start a resume; find internships, co-op opportunities, and part-time jobs; attend career fairs and talk to employers.

University Academic Advising Center

150 Magruder Street (first house behind Rice Hall)

http://www.msstate.edu/dept/academic_advising/ 325-4052

Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. e-mail: advising@org.msstate.edu

Academic advisors Mr. Wes Ammon, Ms. Jan Odom, Mr. Andrew Sharp, Ms. Sandra Powe, or Mr. Tim Fancher can be contacted at the above telephone number or e-mail address.

Specializes in student academic advising and program of study alternatives, primarily for undecided/undeclared students.

Mitchell Memorial Library Resources

<http://ml.library.msstate.edu/> Access Services/Help Desk 325-7668

Ms. Gail Peyton gpeyton@library.msstate.edu 325-7671

Reference Librarian/Desk reference@library.msstate.edu 325-7667

- **Undergraduate Research Center** – Serves all undergraduate students who are unsure of a research topic and need information for term papers and speeches.
- **Research Consultation** – An individual appointment is made with a reference librarian to locate in-depth materials on a given topic.
- **MSU Libraries Outreach Program** – Specifically designed to assist students in utilizing the library easily and efficiently.
- **Instructional Media Center** – Provides computers with web authoring and print software and trained staff available for assistance. Also has free DVD and video rentals and equipment check-out of laptops, cameras, camcorders, etc.
- **Ask-A-Librarian** – You can click on the Ask-A-Librarian link at the top of the menu bar and ask any question you might have. You can also now access the Ask-A-Librarian link through any EBSCO Host research database.

**The numbers listed above can be used for further information regarding any of the library's resources or hours of operation.*

Practice #5: Course Management Software Usage Tracking

Description

Software designed by teaching technologies researchers uses a sophisticated algorithm to automatically calculate each student's risk for failing a specific course based on his or her level of engagement with the Blackboard course management system. Students receive weekly updates of their risk levels via e-mails and text messages, as well as via a stoplight indicator on their Blackboard homepage. Students can reduce their risk level by increasing their use of course materials on Blackboard.

Recommended For: All colleges and universities (but see caveats below)

Council Assessment of Effectiveness

Purdue University's "Signals" program automates academic early warning to a degree that far exceeds most traditional early alert systems. Automatic weekly updates provide students, faculty, and administrators with dynamic feedback on how students' behavior changes across the semester. The burden on faculty to submit risk alerts is greatly reduced, allowing instructors to focus their efforts on assisting struggling students. Students receive continuous feedback on their risk levels and guidance on developing academic habits that will increase their chances for success in college.

This system is still in the development phase, and therefore remains unproven as a student retention strategy. The degree of impact on retention rates will depend on the extent to which students who are not actively using materials on the course management system are at elevated risk for failing that course and how this translates to likelihood of dropping out.

While the Council lacks conclusive data on this practice's effectiveness, we believe it serves as a promising example of how to leverage existing data streams—such as the course management software system—to reduce the burden on instructors to identify at-risk students.

Implementation Tips

The Signals program was developed over three years by a small team of researchers and programmers at Purdue's Teaching and Learning Technologies group. Development of the underlying software is time and labor intensive; however, the benefits of reducing reliance on faculty to participate in an early warning system make this investment worthwhile for a university that can afford to commit the necessary resources.

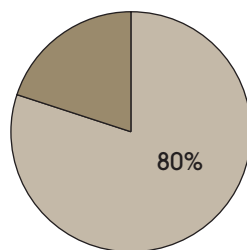
This early warning practice depends on extensive instructor use of course management systems to be effective. Courses that rely heavily on CMS are typically large lecture classes and predominantly in STEM fields.

Implementation Toolkit

Tool #5A: Sample Weekly Signals Messages.p. 66

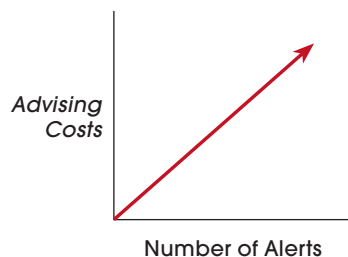
Some progressive universities are looking to develop highly automated early warning systems that do not suffer from the limitations inherent in traditional reporting-based systems. Traditional early warning systems are overly reliant on human action. Faculty who do not submit alerts create gaps in the identification network, and costly advising resources must be committed to the intervention efforts.

Limitations of Faculty-Dependent Early Alert Systems



Best Case Faculty Response Rate

- Early alert exemplars rarely attain faculty response rates above 80 percent



Variable Cost Increase

- Alerts generate more traffic for advising offices, requiring additional resources

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

While still rare, automated early warning systems offer some promising advantages. Automated systems are based entirely on monitoring data already collected by the university with interventions requiring almost no support from advisors. Universities are just beginning to experiment with fully automated early warning systems; however, Council view is that the clear advantages presented by automation will likely lead to wider adoption as these technologies mature in coming years.

Advantages of Automation Over Faculty-Dependent Reporting



Use of Existing Data

- Automation relies primarily on data already being collected at the university



Reduced Faculty Burden

- Total workload for instructors is reduced and can be pulled forward to before the semester



Automatic Intervention Communications

- Risk levels triaged electronically, triggering automated intervention messages



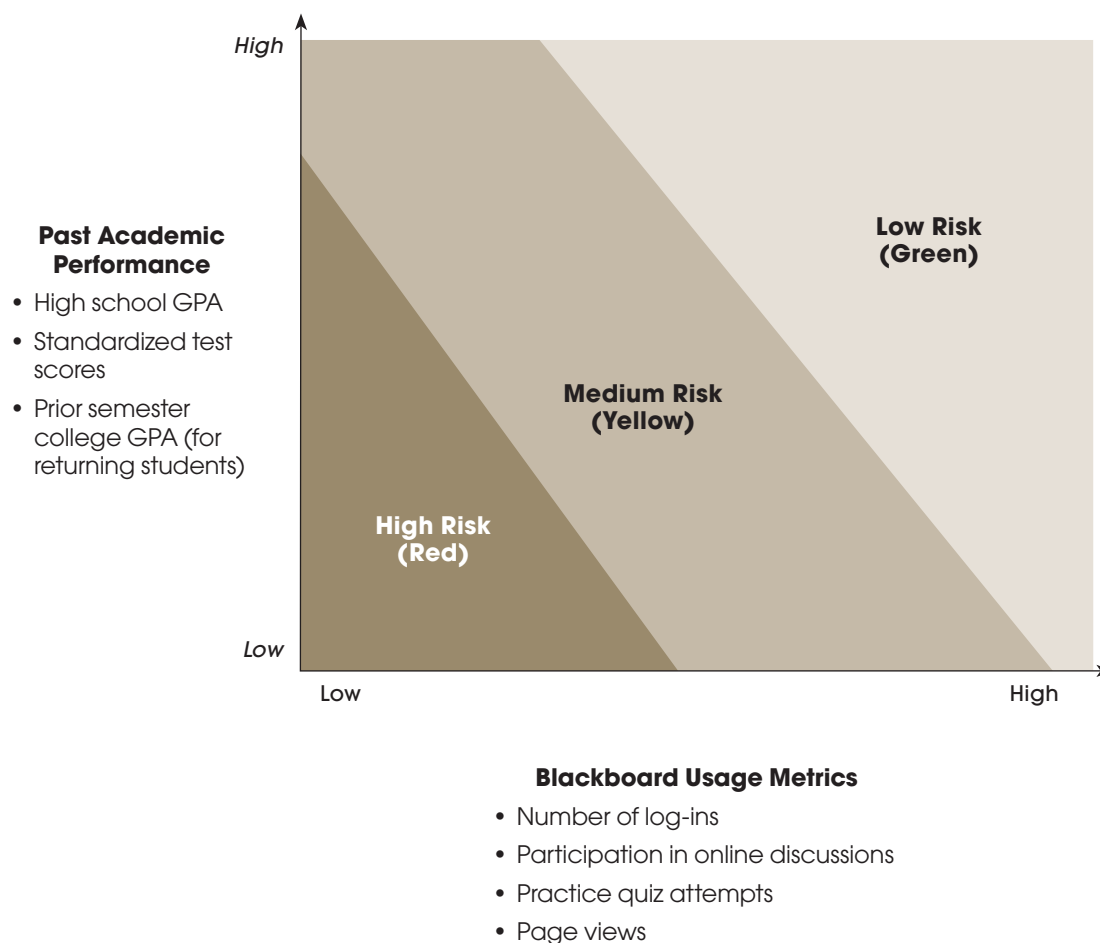
Engaged Students

- Highly visible risk indicators can be effective at compelling students to seek help on their own

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Purdue University is developing an automated alert system based on usage data from the Blackboard course management system (CMS). Purdue's system obviates reliance on faculty alert reports by instead basing risk assessments on a combination of students' academic performance history and their usage of the course website. A predictive algorithm uses these data to assign each student a green/yellow/red risk assessment representing their likelihood to fail the class based on historical patterns of success.

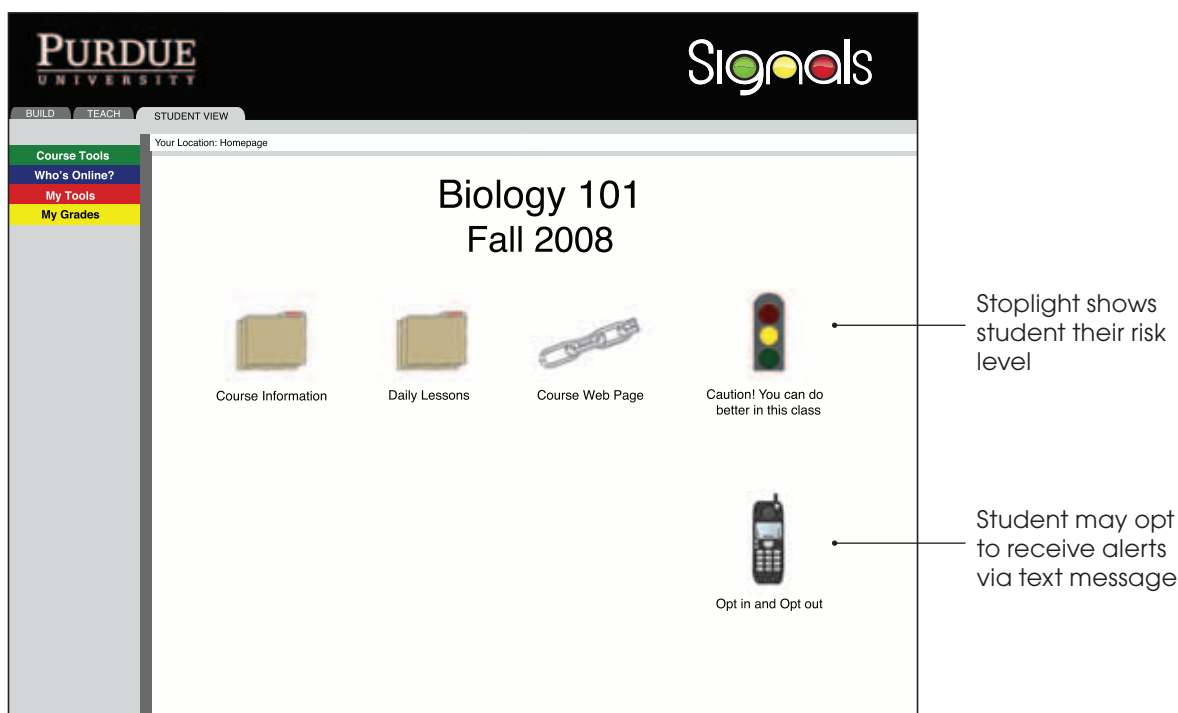
Calculating Risk Scores from CMS Data



Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

E-mails, text messages, and a stoplight indicator on the Blackboard course homepage notify students of their risk status. Students see their red/yellow/green indicator each time that they log into the course page. Students are also notified of their risk levels via weekly e-mails containing instructions on how to improve. Students have the option to receive their risk alerts directly on their mobile phones using the university's text message emergency alert notification system.

Purdue's Blackboard "Signals"



Case in Brief



Signals
Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN

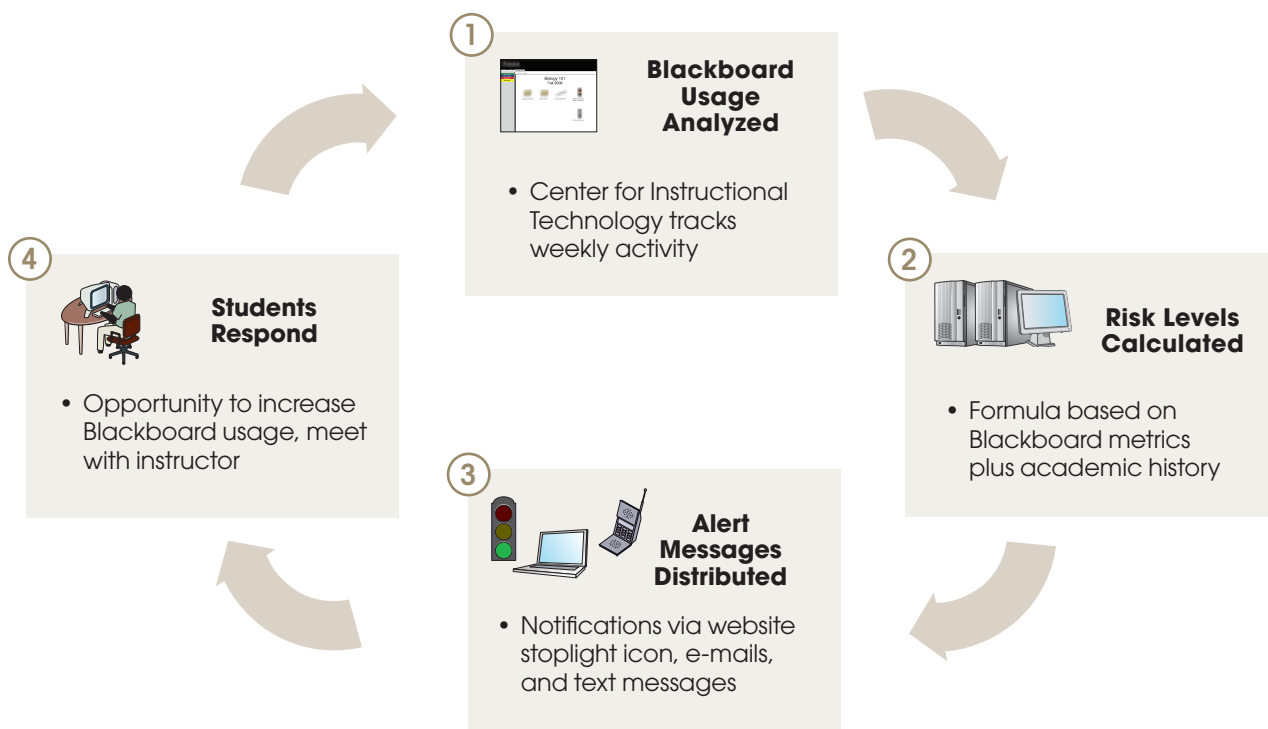
- Suburban public research university with 32,600 undergraduates
- Students receive weekly updates on their risk for failing a course based on their Blackboard usage patterns and past academic history
- Notification of risk levels are made via e-mails and text messages prepared by the instructor prior to the semester
- A stoplight indicator on the Blackboard homepage shows each student his or her risk level
- Students can decrease their risk level by increasing use of course materials on Blackboard
- Students notified of their risk levels tend to get better grades and engage in more "help-seeking behavior"
- System rolled out to 12 introductory courses covering majority of 7,000 first-year students in Fall 2009

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Updated Blackboard data is used to recalculate risk levels each week, helping students and administrators see improvement across the semester. Each week, students have the opportunity to respond to undesirable risk assessments by increasing their Blackboard usage, which in turn will improve their risk standing in the next week's calculations. This creates a positive feedback loop promoting good academic habits. The entire process happens without reliance on costly advising resources to execute interventions with flagged students.

Continuous Feedback

Risk Levels Recalculated Weekly Until Midterms



(See examples starting on page 66)

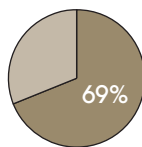
Students exposed to the Signals program earn higher grades and make better use of support resources. In pilot testing, Purdue found that encouraging increased engagement with Blackboard resulted in fewer Ds and Fs. Signals students were also more likely to seek out available academic support resources, even after the intervention messages ceased at midterm.

Helping Students Help Themselves

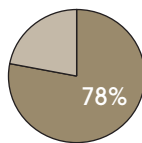
Signals Students Increase Blackboard Use, Get Better Grades

Flagged Students Improving
Risk Scores by Week Six

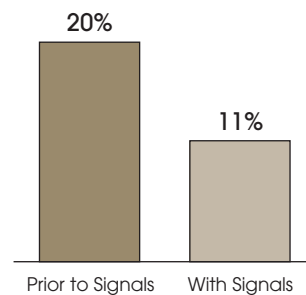
Students with Yellow Alerts



Students with Red Alerts



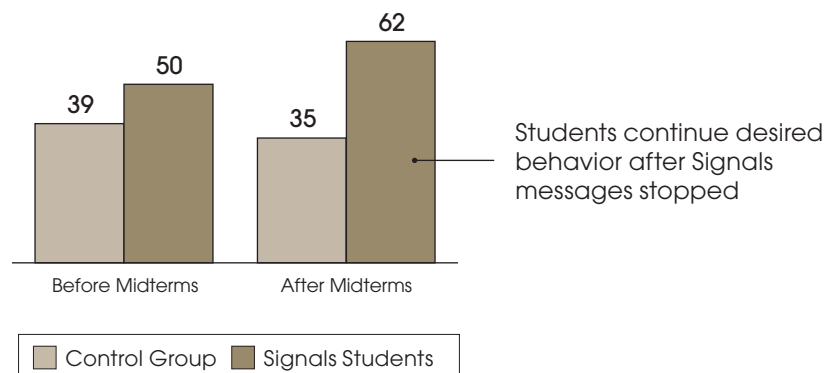
Students with Final Grade of
D or F in Sample Pilot Course



Flagged Students Also Increasing Use of Academic Support Services

Student Visits to Biology Resource Center

Fall 2007



Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

The Signals program allows faculty to concentrate on working with struggling students instead of submitting alerts. Before the semester, instructors specify the series of weekly intervention messages that flagged students will receive. Once the semester commences, participating faculty are asked to do nothing more than meet with students who seek their assistance. The majority of the program work is handled by the development team.

Letting Faculty Do What Faculty Do Best
Signals Reduces the Burden on Instructors

Distribution of Labor with Signals Program

	Work Involved	Teaching and Learning Technologies	Faculty
Prior to Semester	Develop risk algorithm	X	
	Choose alert messages (samples provided)*		X
During Semester	Monitor Blackboard usage	X	
	Calculate weekly risk levels	X	
	Distribute alert messages	X	
	Meet with students seeking help		X

*(See examples starting on page 66)

Better Leveraging Faculty Time

“The faculty are most helpful to retention efforts not when they are collecting data or submitting alerts, but when they are actively working with students in trouble.”

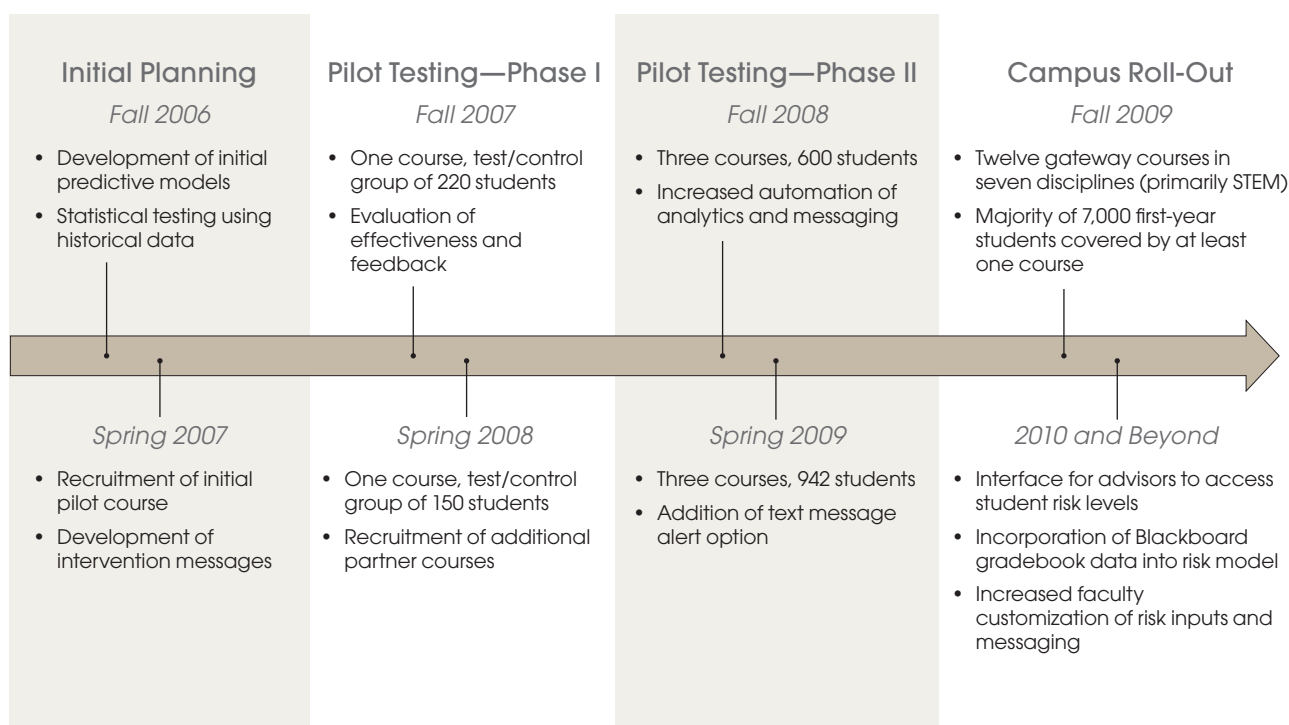
John Campbell
Associate Vice President for Information Technology
Purdue University

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Development at Purdue required several years and a significant investment in IT resources. This groundwork could shorten development for subsequent adopters; however, universities should still anticipate a multi-year commitment to implement a similar system. Purdue estimates programming and support staff costs to be roughly \$47 per student annually.

Three Years in the Making

Development Timeline



Development Team



Programmers (1–2 FTEs)

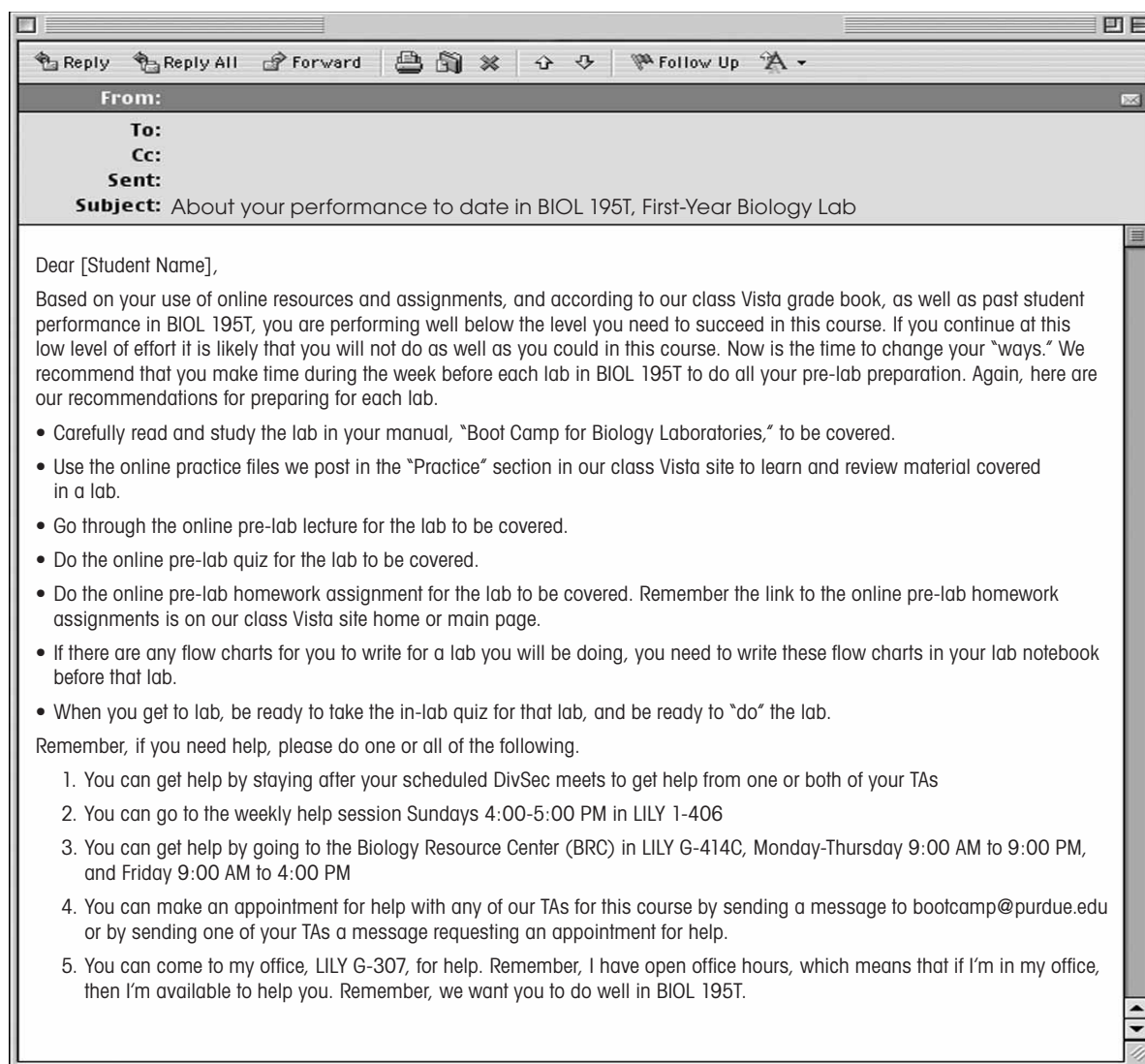
- Database specialist pulls data from Blackboard
- Predictive modeler develops risk algorithm and runs weekly updates



Assessment Specialist (0.75 FTE)

- Works with faculty to develop intervention messages

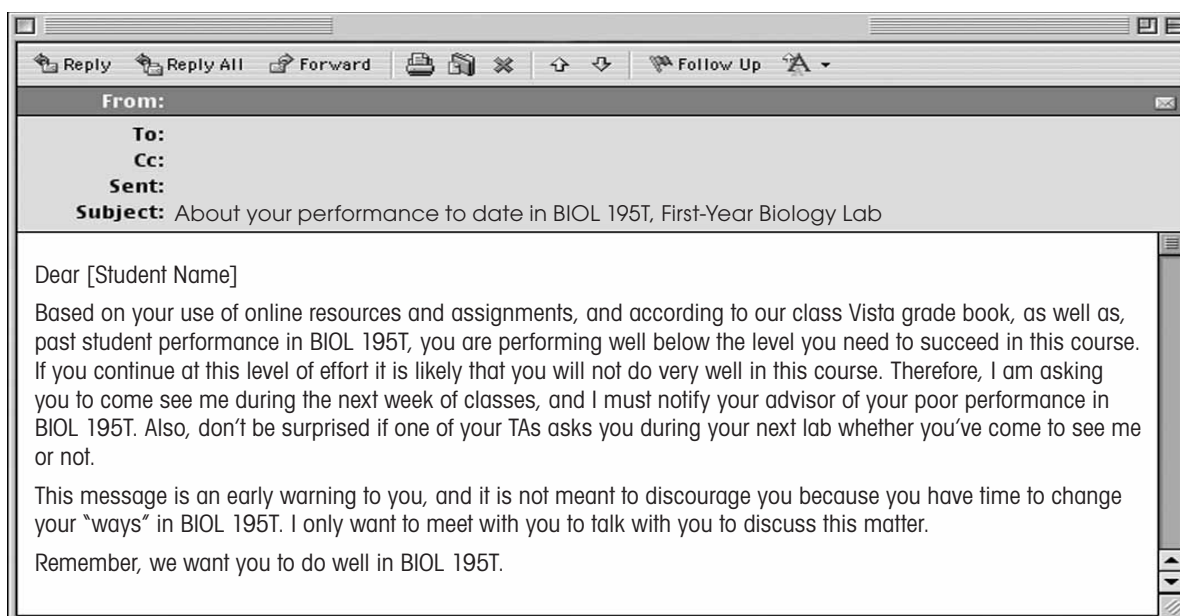
Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

*Tool 5A: Sample Weekly Signals Messages—Purdue University***Week 2***High Risk and Medium Risk*

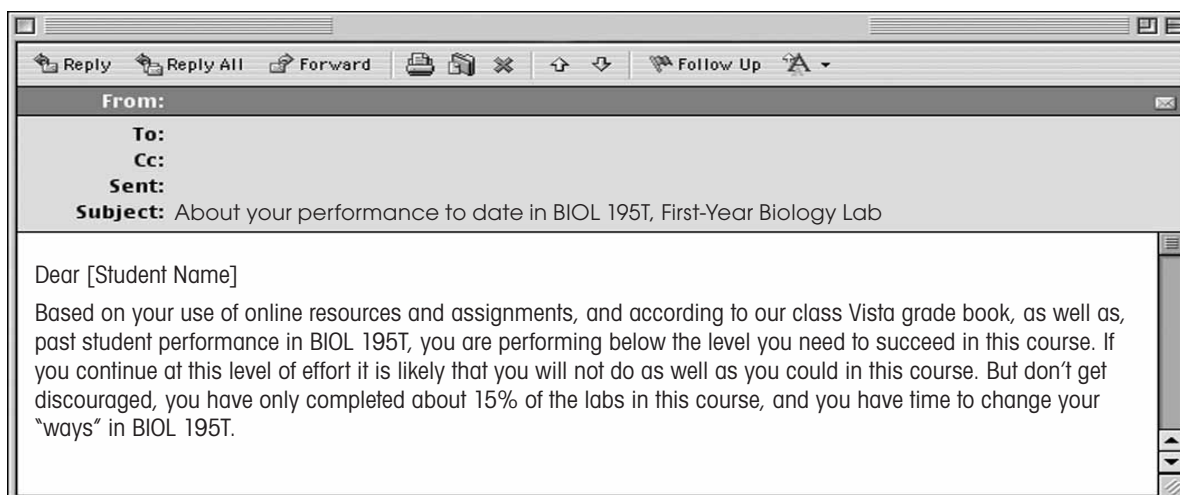
Tool 5A: Sample Weekly Signals Messages—Purdue University (cont.)

Week 4

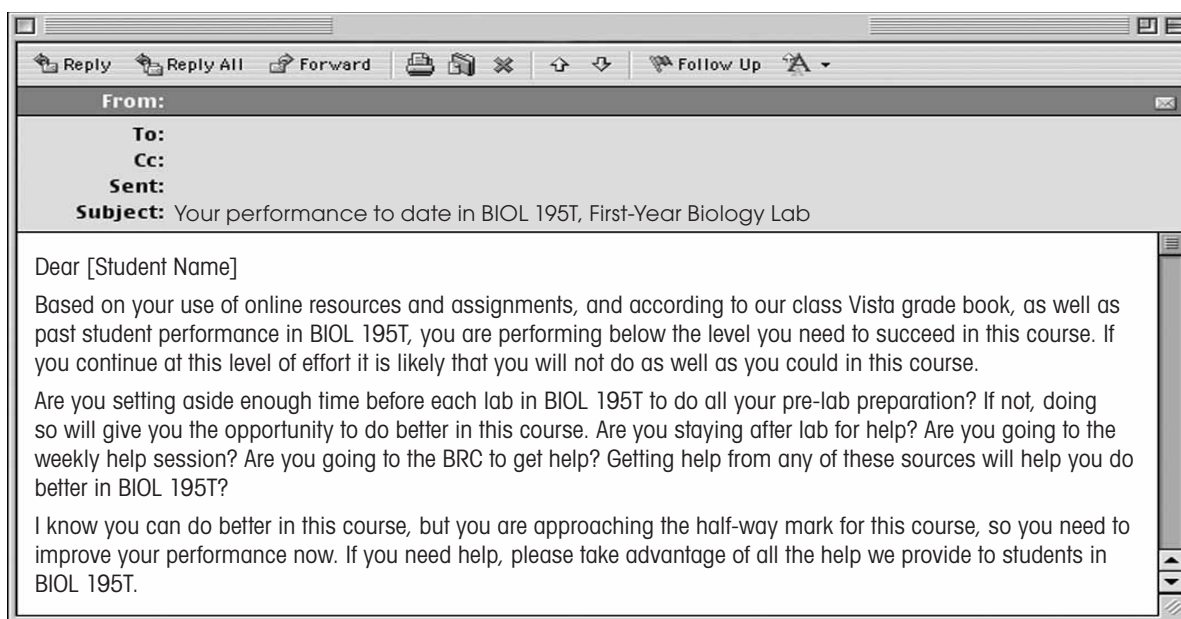
High Risk



Medium Risk



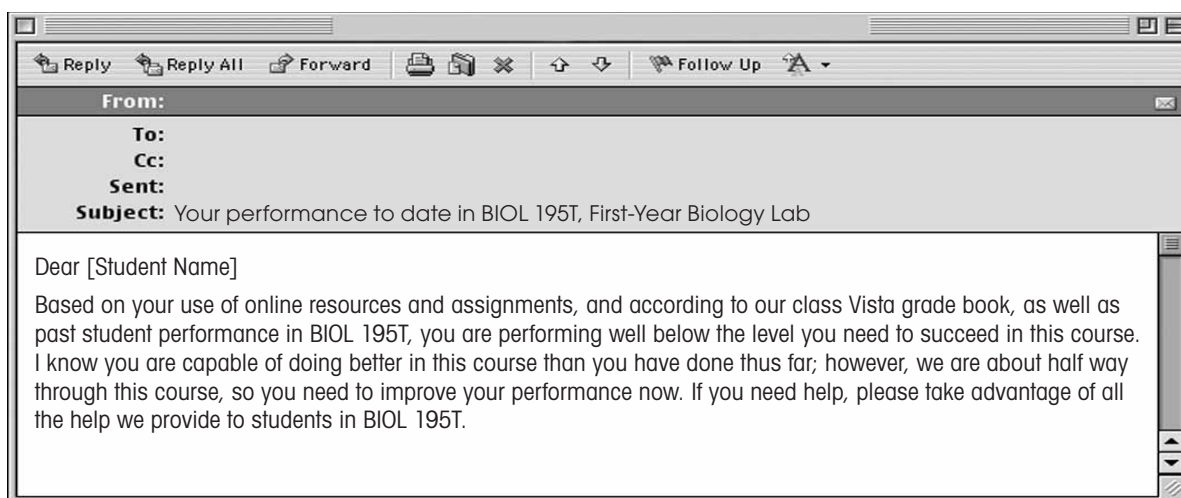
Source: Arnold, Kimberly and John P. Campbell, Academic Analytics: Using Data to Improve Student Success, EDUCAUSE seminar, October 28, 2008; University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

*Tool 5A: Sample Weekly Signals Messages—Purdue University (cont.)***Week 6***Medium Risk*

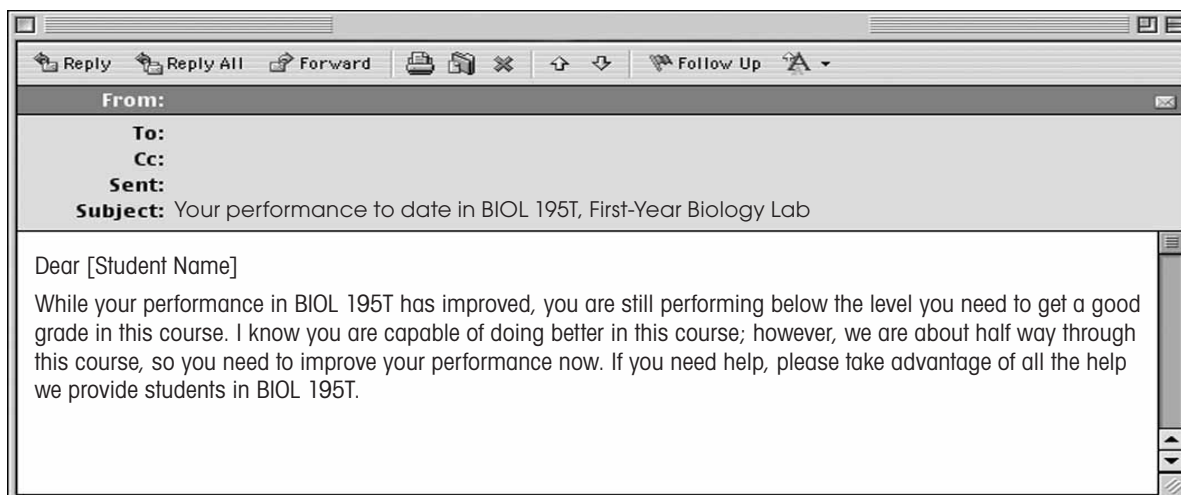
Tool 5A: Sample Weekly Signals Messages—Purdue University (cont.)

Week 7

High Risk and Medium Risk



High Risk Improving to Medium Risk



Source: Arnold, Kimberly and John P. Campbell, Academic Analytics: Using Data to Improve Student Success, EDUCAUSE seminar, October 28, 2008; University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Practice #6: Financial Distress Monitoring

Description

The department or office responsible for retention monitors student progress in completing financial aid paperwork each semester, proactively notifying students when a missing form could delay the distribution of fund, and offering assistance in getting the necessary paperwork in order. Special walk-in help sessions assist students in understanding and completing missing paperwork.

Two weeks prior to registration, the bursar office provides the retention office with a roster of students who will be prevented from registering due to a bursar hold. The retention office notifies these students, who are often unaware of the hold and suggests steps for resolving the situation. Students who need more extensive assistance are invited in for an appointment to explore options for securing additional funds. Bursar audits continue each week until the end of the semester.

Recommended For: All colleges and universities (especially tuition-dependent private institutions)

Council Assessment of Practice Effectiveness

Many students leave college due to entirely preventable cases of financial distress. As currently structured, financial aid and bursar offices are task-oriented and not organized to provide the kind of proactive support necessary to assist students through financial troubles. In some instances, bursar holds are simply the result of a delinquent payment or missing financial aid form, problems that the student could resolve if made aware early enough. In other cases, a small financial aid supplement can reduce a student's outstanding balance below the registration threshold. It's estimated that intervening early with financial problems could reduce attrition at some schools by as much as 5 to 8 percent annually. This practice is cost effective, assuming the university has the infrastructure enabling it to audit student financial aid records (see below).

Implementation Tips

From a technological standpoint, this practice requires the university to be able to audit student bursar and financial aid records, then link students' names to a system for sending automated notification e-mails. The majority of universities already have some or all of these functionalities in house. All others will have to invest IT resources to build the necessary software.

This practice also requires an investment in retention staff with the capacity to support students requiring additional counseling. The exact staffing commitment will vary according to size of the student body and the degree of financial need. It is strongly recommended that these officials have the authority to distribute emergency institutional grants.

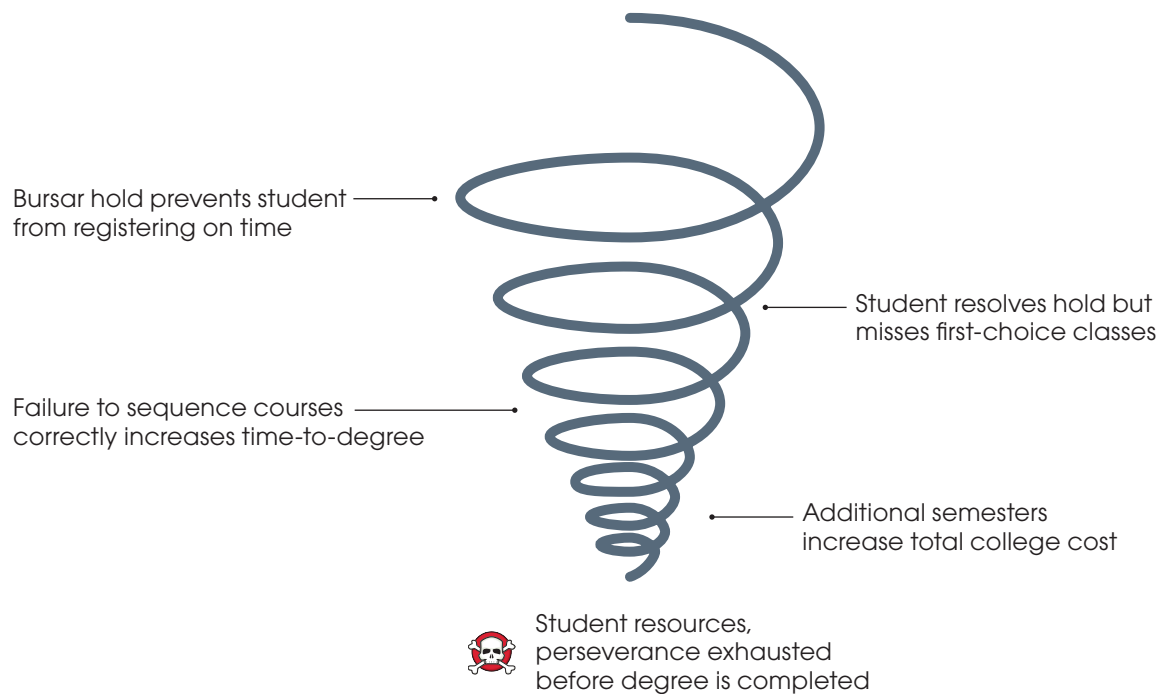
Implementation Toolkit

Tool #6A: E-mail to Students on Bursar Holdp. 79

Universities can be doing more to prevent student attrition triggered by bursar holds. Small unpaid bursar balances may block students from registering, catalyzing a series of events that increase attrition rates and decrease the odds that the university will ever collect the missing revenue. Yet a surprising number of universities do little to inform students of financial hurdles prior to registration. Since it is typically parents, not students, who monitor bursar statements, students are frequently unaware of an unpaid balance until the moment they are blocked from registering.

Preventable Losses from Financial Distress

The Bursar Hold Death Spiral



Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Registration delays can be prevented by auditing student financial records to identify unpaid balances and financial aid problems. Proactive outreach is essential to reaching students who are unaware they are in financial peril or who may be too ashamed or disheartened to seek help. Xavier and Tiffin Universities audit bursar accounts and financial aid paperwork to help students overcome potential financial roadblocks before their problems reach a critical stage. These efforts require roughly one FTE per thousand undergraduates for one month each semester.

Catching Financial Problems Earlier

1

Resolve Bursar Holds Prior to Registration Period



- Students alerted to bursar holds two weeks before registration begins
- Retention expert offers assistance navigating problems

2

Ensure Timely Submission of Financial Aid Paperwork



- Retention expert works with financial aid office to identify and assist students missing financial aid paperwork

Case in Brief



*Xavier University
Cincinnati, Ohio*

- Urban private master's university with 4,000 undergraduates
- Office of Student Success and Retention contacts students on bursar hold two weeks prior to beginning of registration
- Students who cannot resolve holds on their own are encouraged to meet with program staff for financial counseling
- Students who truly lack resources required to continue at institution may be offered emergency funding

Case in Brief



*Tiffin University
Tiffin, Ohio*

- Rural private master's university with 1,650 undergraduates
- Chief Retention Officer and Director of Student Retention Services proactively identify and offer support to students who have bursar holds or who have not completed necessary financial aid paperwork
- Currently, efforts are focused on ensuring that all incoming students complete all paperwork prior to arrival on campus and on helping continuing students resolve bursar holds before departing for the summer
- Program based in enrollment management division

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Many students can resolve registration holds with minimal additional assistance if given enough notice. Retention staff at Xavier University audit student records for bursar holds two weeks before the start of registration. These students receive an automated e-mail notifying them of their status, suggesting steps for resolution, and extending an offer of assistance. Bursar audits and outreach continue each week until the end of the semester.

Timeline for Resolving Bursar Holds

October

- Initial registrar audit two weeks prior to registration
- E-mails sent to students with outstanding balances
(see example, on page 79)
- Audits re-run once a week to identify new holds

November

- Registration opens
- Weekly audits continue, confirming that students are clearing their holds
- Students still on hold targeted with in-person counseling

December

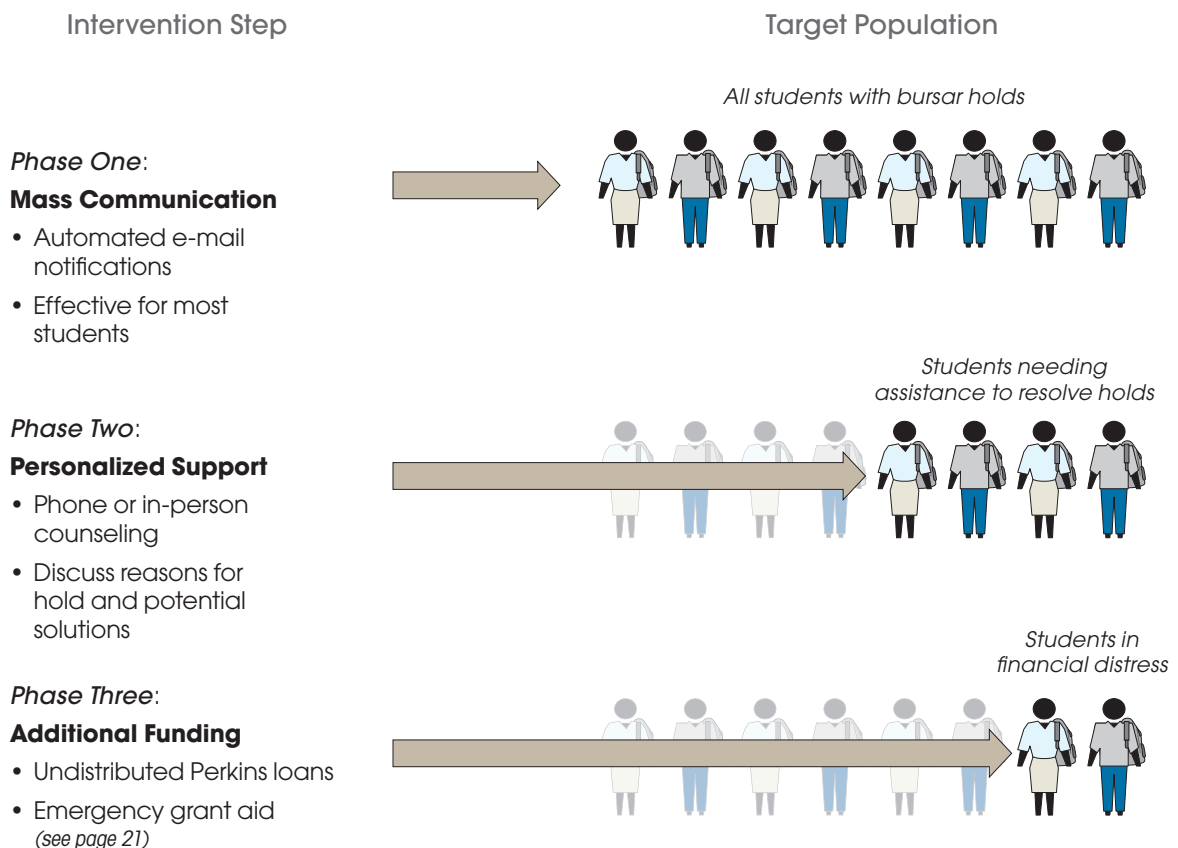
- Audits and counseling continue
- Students still on hold are connected with supplemental financial aid

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Xavier uses a series of escalating interventions to optimize their limited financial and human resources for serving those students with the most need. Many holds result from late tuition payments or unpaid fees that most students can quickly resolve following e-mail notification or a brief financial counseling session. The OSSR provides the small remainder of students with money from undistributed Perkins loans or a special donor-established fund earmarked to provide students with emergency scholarships (see “Distribution Retention Micro-Scholarships” on page 21 for details).

Escalating Interventions

Directing Scarce Resources to the Greatest Need



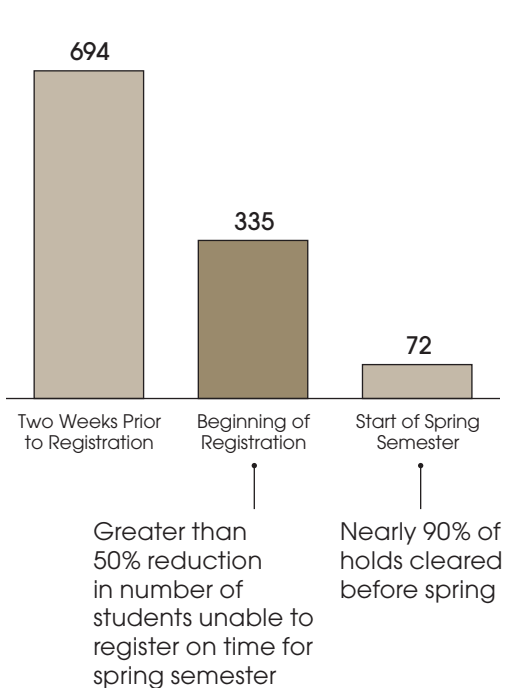
Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Inexpensive bursar hold interventions can have a significant impact on retention. In just the two weeks prior to registration, Xavier is typically able to reduce the number of students on bursar hold by over half. Nearly 90 percent of holds will be cleared before the start of the next semester. Xavier estimates that these efforts reduce attrition rates by 5 to 8 percent annually.

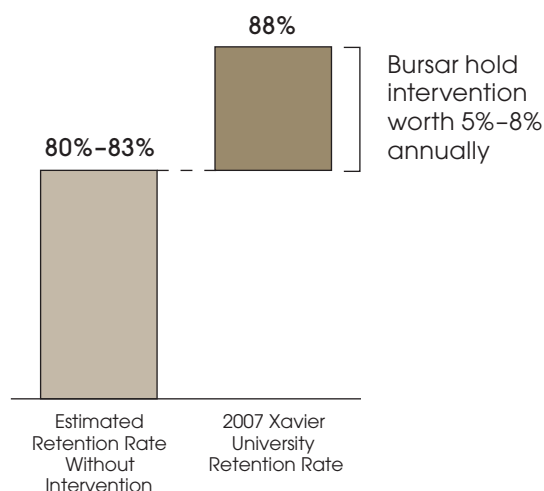
Resolving Bursar Holds Credited with Improving Retention Rate

Reduction of Students with Bursar Holds

Xavier University, Fall 2006



Estimated Impact on Retention



Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

The complexities of the financial aid application process often overwhelm students and obstruct the distribution of funds. Bursar holds may result from missing or incomplete financial aid paperwork that delays deposit of expected funds to the student's account. These problems are especially common for first-generation and non-traditional students. Tiffin University closely monitors each step of the financial aid application process and proactively extends counseling to students with missing or incomplete forms.

Ensuring Timely Submission of Financial Aid Paperwork

Tiffin University

Targeting Assistance Across the Year



Spring Term—Returning Students

- Monitor missing applications from current students on aid
- Set goal of resolving all issues prior to departure for summer



Summer Term—Incoming Students

- Monitor incomplete applications
- Work remotely with students to resolve majority of issues before their arrival on campus

A Complex Process

Financial Aid Forms



FAFSA Application



Master Promissory Note



Entrance Counseling



Acceptance of Award



Revolving Credit Agreement



Verification Worksheet

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

En masse financial aid counseling is a cost-effective alternative to individual meetings. To reach more students without adding staff, Tiffin has begun offering en masse counseling sessions where students with outstanding paperwork can get all of their financial aid application issues resolved on the spot. Tiffin found that it is much easier to get students to show up and complete paperwork at a special event than it is to get them to come one by one to the financial aid office.

Tiffin University's "Financial Aid Frenzy"

Special Event for Solving Financial Aid Issues

① Personalized Invitation



- Retention expert generates letters outlining missing financial aid paperwork, inviting student to special workshop



② No-Miss Delivery



- RAs hand deliver invitation to students in their residence halls



③ Solution-Focused Workshop



- One-hour session in a classroom with computers, forms, treats, and financial aid staff to walk students through completion of paperwork
- Three workshops offered in fall semester, one in spring

Getting Students to Show Up

"What we've found, surprisingly, is that students are more likely to come to Financial Aid Frenzy than they are to come to the Financial Aid Office. Maybe the Financial Aid Office is intimidating to them, or maybe they feel like they're getting called to the principal's office. All I know is that we schedule time in a classroom, arrive with a bag of candy, and have more students show up than we can get to go to Financial Aid."

Cam Cruickshank
Vice President for Enrollment Management
Tiffin University

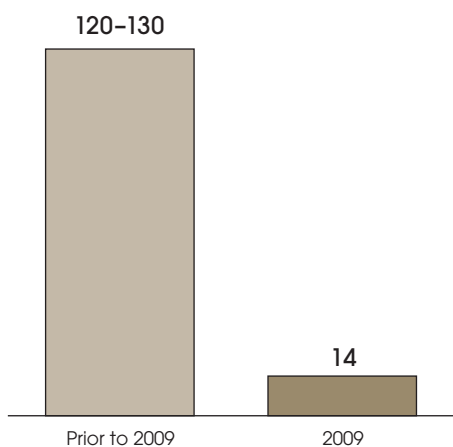
Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tiffin's financial distress outreach efforts have dramatically reduced the number of students leaving campus for the summer with bursar holds. Tiffin enrolls just 1,650 students, thus this improvement is expected to have a significant impact on retention rates.

Resolving Problems Before Summer Departures

Students with Bursar Holds
at End of Spring Term

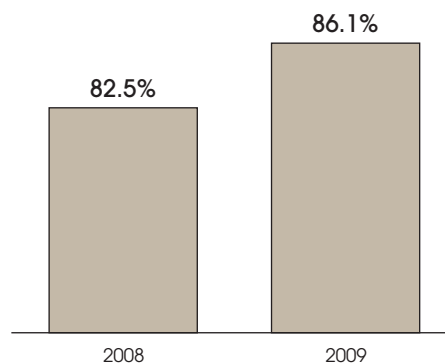
Tiffin University



New outreach
produces >85%
reduction in
students leaving
campus for
summer with
bursar holds

Retention Improvement

Tiffin University, 2008 to 2009



Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tool #6A: E-mail to Students on Bursar Hold—Xavier University



Dear Student,

As Director of the Office of Student Success and Retention, I would like to bring to your attention that the Bursar's Office at Xavier University is placing a "Hold" on your priority registration for the fall 2009 semester. Your account needs to be current (if you are on the five payment plan) or paid in full prior to your being able to register for the fall 2009 semester. Please contact the Bursar's Office to make payment arrangements.

Should you need any assistance from my office, please contact me or Molly Maher, Assistant Director in the Office of Student Success and Retention. Molly and I can be contacted at 503-745-3036. The Financial Aid Office is also available to assist you with any financial aid concerns. Priority registration for the fall semester is Monday, March 30 through Friday, April 3, 2009.

Realizing that your education is very important to you and to us, as every student matters, we want to help you to the best of our ability. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us for our assistance or if you should have any questions.

If you would like to make a payment you may go to the Bursar website at www.xavier.edu/bursar/payment.

Sincerely,

Adrian A. Schiess
Director
Office of Student
Success and Retention

Molly Maher
Assistant Director
Office of Student
Success and Retention

Source: Office of Student Success and Retention, Xavier University;
University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Practice #7: Transcript Request Monitoring

Description

An associate dean meets with first-year and second-year students who have requested their transcripts be sent to other universities. The goal is to identify students considering a transfer, discuss their concerns, and see what can be done to persuade them to stay.

Recommended For: All selective colleges and universities (especially selective private institutions)

Council Assessment of Effectiveness

Often overlooked in discussions of student retention are students who leave the university not because of academic or financial struggles but because they are transferring elsewhere. Often times these students are among the most academically promising on campus, making this type of student attrition particularly painful.

It can be difficult to identify transfer risks in time to intervene. Some universities are monitoring transcript requests to spot students who might be making a move. The process is far from perfect—most students who request transcripts have no intent of transferring, and the face-to-face process necessary to determine legitimate transfer risks is time consuming. Nevertheless, the Council believes that monitoring transcript requests has promise as an early warning system for universities focused on reducing transfer rates. This practice will be especially effective at smaller private universities that can provide extensive one-on-one attention for students dissatisfied enough to consider leaving the institution. Larger universities will have to develop this practice further to make it scalable to their student body size.

Implementation Tips

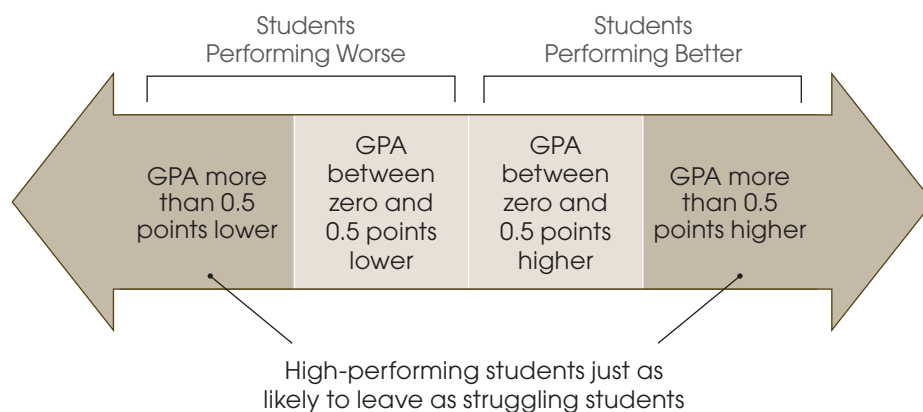
The technological infrastructure and personnel necessary to implement this practice are already in place. The dean of students should work with the registrar to generate rosters of students requesting transcripts every two weeks. These rosters should then be distributed to the colleges for follow-up by associate deans or advisors.

Transfers account for a significant portion of attrition at some schools, and these students are often among the most academically well-prepared. American University found that first-year students performing well above their high school GPAs were just as likely to leave as those performing poorly. Unfortunately, students considering transfer will rarely self-present to university officials and thus can be difficult to identify.

Suffering Losses at the Top

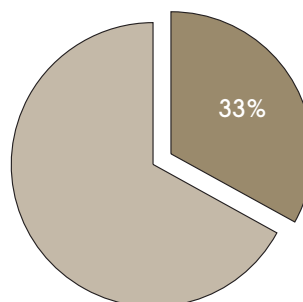
High-Performing Students Transferring Out

Difference Between College GPA and High School GPA
American University First-Year Students



And It's Not Just the Privates

Percentage of Departing Students with GPAs Over 3.0
Florida State University



Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

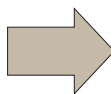
American University is using transcript requests to spot potential transfers. At AU, lists of students requesting transcripts are distributed every two weeks to the associate deans in the colleges for follow-up. The deans meet with students who have requested transcripts to determine if they are considering a transfer and see what the university could do to sway the student's decision. At larger universities, these conversations could be conducted by advisors.

Identifying Students Considering a Move



Biweekly Audit by Registrar

- Generates roster of students requesting at least one transcript
- Names sent to individual colleges
- Roster includes destination institution for transcript



Personal Meeting with the Associate Dean

- "What courses are you taking?"
- "How do you feel about your professors?"
- "Are you concerned about paying for college?"
- "What sort of activities are you interested in?"
- "Do you feel challenged?"

Case in Brief



*American University
Washington, DC*

- Urban private research university with 6,000 undergraduates
- Every two weeks, the Registrar provides Associate Deans with rosters of all students who request transcripts be sent to other universities
- Associate Deans follow up with students to identify those that are imminent risks for transfer, working with these students to see what can be done to help them stay
- Two common reasons for transfer are financial concerns and feelings of being academically under challenged
- The associate deans meet with 100 to 125 students per semester; roughly two-thirds of transfer risks are first-year students

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Transfer conversations connect dissatisfied students with campus opportunities and identify students in financial peril. While some students will transfer for reasons outside the university's control, many others will reconsider if introduced to academic or social resources that they may have overlooked. Some students considering transfer to less expensive schools can be persuaded to stay if provided with additional financial assistance.

Preventing Avoidable Losses

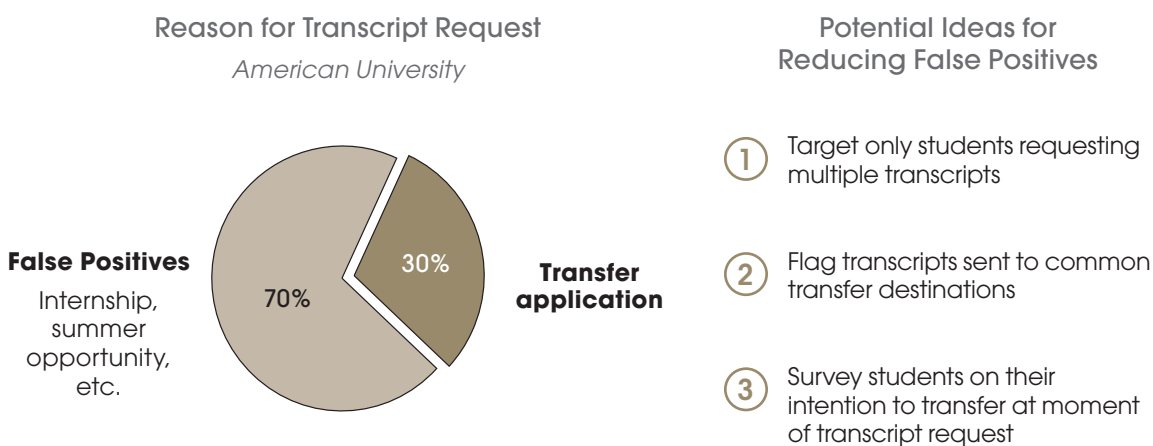
Meetings Surface Reasons for, Response to Intended Transfer

Reasons for Intended Transfer		University Response
Largely Controllable Factors		
Under-challenged academically	➡	Admit to honors program and/or connect with faculty for research opportunity
Dissatisfied with campus life	➡	Connect with appropriate student life or co-curricular resources
Financial difficulties	➡	Connect with Financial Aid Office to discuss options
Largely Uncontrollable Factors		
Serious family illness Boyfriend/girlfriend in another state Desired major not offered	➡	Explore possible alternatives and then wish student well

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Refinements in the registrar auditing process are necessary to reduce the number of false positives. Most transcript requests are for purposes other than transferring, and the AU system generates a large number of false positives. Currently, this critical distinction is made during the student meeting. To make the practice more cost effective and scalable, universities will need to explore ideas for more accurately identifying transcript requests that indicate an imminent transfer.

False Positives Could Be Reduced Through More Precise Audits



Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Reviews of transcript destinations can provide administrators with important insight into the reasons why students transfer. At AU, the dean of students and other senior administrators will review the rosters of transcript requests to spots trends in the number of transcripts going out to more prestigious or less expensive schools.

Transcript Trends Reveal Areas for Improvement



Dean of Students

Are we losing more students to the Ivies?

What can we do to improve the honors college?



Vice President
of Student Affairs

Are students transferring to similar schools closer to home?

Can we do more to address homesickness?



Vice President for
Enrollment Management

Is the economy causing more students to make the move to less expensive schools?

Do we need to commit more funds to financial aid?

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Practice #8: Social Engagement Flash Polling

Description

The university uses student reactions to a rotating, single-question quick poll on the front page of the first-year student web portal to identify students who are having social or adjustment issues. Likert-scale questions, such as “Are you getting along with your roommate?” and “Are you able to balance academic and social life?” rotate weekly and are timed to specific points in the semester. Concerning responses generate an automatic message to the student offering guidance and trigger an e-mail to an advisor for further follow-up.

Recommended For: All universities (but see caveats below)

Council Assessment of Practice Effectiveness

It is difficult to identify and intervene with first-year students who are struggling with the social adjustment to college. The most common early warning measures, one-time engagement surveys administered in the first two weeks of school, have two key drawbacks: 1) the survey is static, only measuring student opinion at a single moment in time, and 2) many students lack the interest or attention span to complete a 30–60 minute survey with precision.

Flash polls are an as-yet unproven replacement for the traditional first-year engagement survey. Instead of comprehensively surveying student attitudes, flash polls aim to catch a student in a moment of candor, leading to more reliable responses. While it is difficult to enforce participation in a voluntary poll, universities hope to maintain high response rates by reducing the survey to a single question and presenting it in a high-traffic location on the web. The greatest potential advantage of flash polling is in its dynamic adaptability. Relevant polling questions can be pre-programmed to capture student reactions at key moments during the first semester, such as move-in or midterms.

Implementation Tips

This practice requires a pre-existing first-year student web portal that has a mechanism for identifying specific users, such as a log-in. Campus IT can be relied on to develop a polling module and a system for automatically notifying advising staff of concerning responses. Polling questions and automated responses may be prepared and preloaded prior to the semester. Content should be developed by the first-year advising staff.

This practice requires a fair amount of work for a university seeking to develop a home-grown solution. Commercial products exist, most notably the FYRE software from EducationDynamics.

Traditional engagement surveys have key limitations. Many universities struggle with identifying first-year students experiencing difficulties with the academic and social adjustment to college. Current practice relies heavily on extensive engagement surveys administered in the first two weeks, although these surveys have shortcomings. Students find survey completion (typically requiring 30–60 minutes) to be onerous. More critically, one-time surveys can only capture student attitudes at a single moment in time and thus cannot be used to detect issues that might come to the forefront later in the semester.

Engagement Surveys in Need of an Update



One-Time Surveys Do Not Track the Student Life Cycle

Surveys administered in the second week of the semester can only capture student attitudes in a single moment of time, missing out on engagement concerns that may develop later in the semester.



Participation Is Burdensome and Difficult to Secure

Surveys may take up to an hour for students to complete, sapping student willingness to offer meaningful data.



Follow-Up Is Rarely Instantaneous

Survey results are typically reviewed centrally before initiating follow-up, delaying the university's response to students who would benefit from immediate assistance and advice.

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Some universities are experimenting with replacing traditional surveys with adaptive next-generation “flash polls.” A single Likert-scale question appears on the front page of the first-year student web portal throughout the semester, and students voluntarily offer responses in the moment. The poll questions change each week to address issues relevant to the time of the semester, prompting students to register their impressions regarding common adjustment issues, such as roommates, academic/social balance, and “fit” of school. Flash polling is a relatively new and thus far an unproven concept for raising retention rates. That being said, the Council believes that the potential for dynamic early alerts and automated intervention makes this practice worthy of consideration.

Catching Students in Moments of Candor

Checking In on Social Indicators Across the First Term

Representative Flash Polls



- Week 1:** *Finding friends at college will be easy for me*
- Week 2:** *I enjoy the social atmosphere*
- Week 3:** *I am satisfied with my roommate situation*
- Week 4:** *I have found at least one student organization*
- Week 5:** *Work obligations have kept me from getting the most from school*
- Week 6:** *I am unable to balance my academics and social life*
- Week 7:** *I have close friends at school*
- Week 8:** *This school is a good fit for me*

① Single-question
“point and click”
reduces survey time

② Questions
sequenced to
match typical onset
of student problems

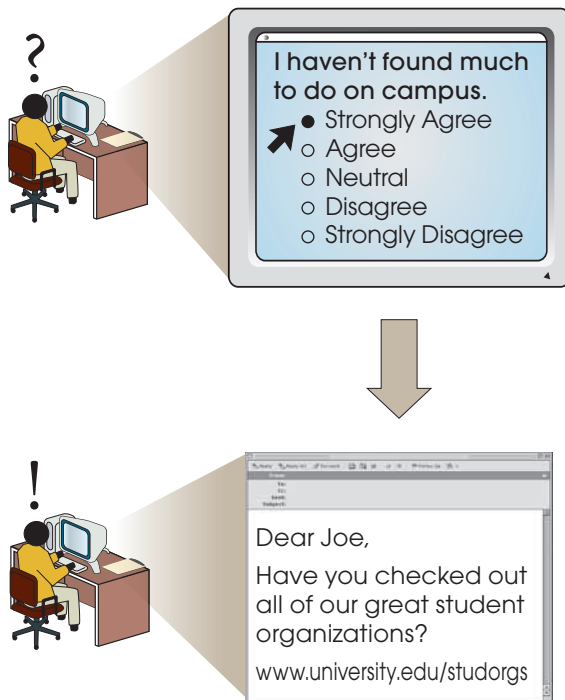
③ Web interface
reduces stigma of
admitting problems

Implementation Tip: An engagement flash-polling module is available as part of the First-Year Retention and Engagement (FYRE) software package from EducationDynamics. Learn more at <http://www.educationdynamics.com/>

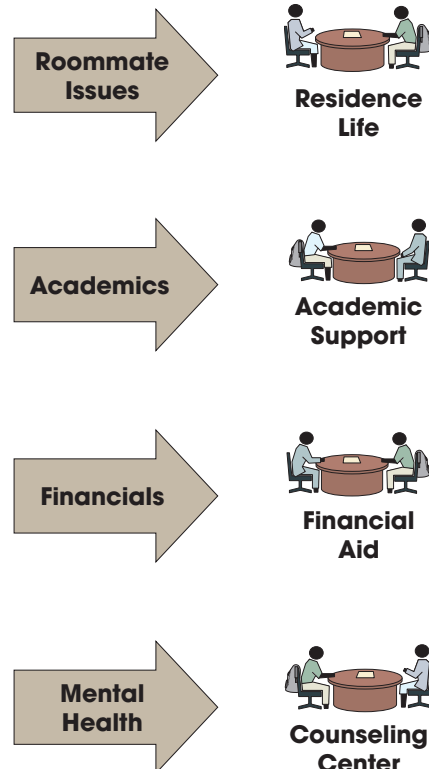
Concerning poll responses trigger instantaneous feedback followed by personalized support. Student responses that indicate concerning attitudes generate instant electronic feedback with guidance on available resources. These automated responses are prepared by the retention or first-year advising office and pre-loaded into the polling software prior to the semester. The retention office also distributes rosters of flagged students sorted by risk type to relevant support offices for independent follow-up offering personalized support.

The Next-Generation Engagement Survey

*Student Responses
Generate Instant Feedback*



*Support Offices Conduct
Personalized Follow-Up*



Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.



III. Hardwiring Institutional Intervention

- ☞ Practice #9: Intervention Tracking System92
- ☞ Practice #10: Unified Advising Records97

Practice #9: Intervention Tracking System

Description

When an instructor submits an academic alert through the online course roster, the system automatically prompts the responsible advisor in that student's home college to initiate follow-up. The alert opens a "ticket" that cannot be closed until the advisor meets with the student, assesses the problem, and enters the outcome in the system along with any action steps. The referring instructor is automatically updated via e-mail on the outcome of the intervention. The system allows central administrators to monitor the progress of interventions, promoting accountability among advisors for following up on alerts in a timely manner. If the queue of open tickets becomes unmanageable, the central advising office redirects resources to ensure coverage.

Recommended For: All colleges and universities

Council Assessment of Effectiveness

At most universities, interventions with flagged students are conducted in a haphazard, uncoordinated fashion by multiple offices in isolated colleges. Administrators have no way of holding advisors accountable for following up with flagged students in a timely manner, or at all.

Prompt follow up is critical when intervening with at-risk students. An intervention ticketing system allows the university to build accountability for rapid intervention, monitor performance, and ensure that individual college advising offices have sufficient resources to fulfill their obligation to assist struggling students. Universities that have adopted a case ticketing system have been able to reduce the lag time on follow-ups from weeks down to just a few days (and, in some cases, just a few hours).

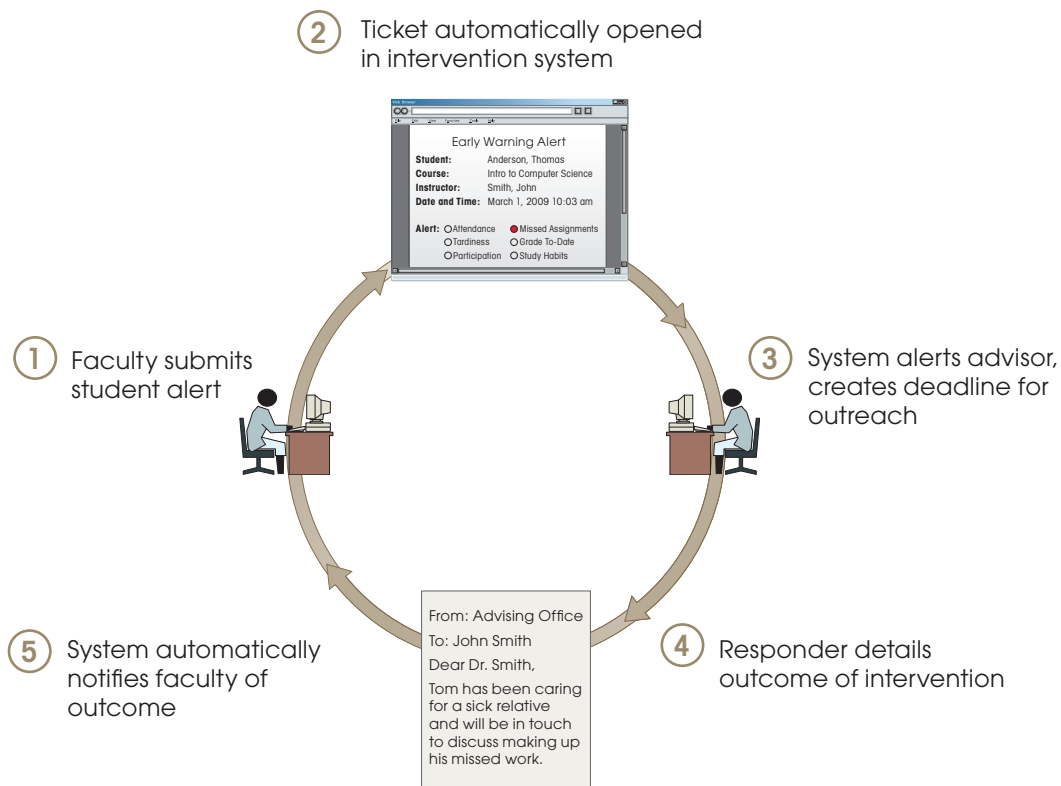
At California State University, Northridge, the intervention ticketing system automatically notifies instructors when the advisor receives the alert and when the intervention is completed. Faculty respond positively to being shown the results of their efforts, and the university credits this policy with increasing instructor engagement with the alert system.

Implementation Tips

The software underlying the case ticketing system can be designed inexpensively in-house by the university IT staff. Time of development to implementation is roughly one semester in length.

Closed-loop ticketing systems ensure that every alert receives timely follow-up. At California State University, Northridge, advisors use a case ticket system for automatically tracking the progress of follow-up on each academic alert. The system opens a unique electronic case ticket each time an instructor submits an academic alert through a special form built into the online course roster. The ticket cannot be closed until an advisor meets with the student and enters the results of this discussion in the system. The system then automatically notifies the referring instructor of the outcome of the advising conversation.

Closing the Loop on Each At-Risk Student



Case in Brief

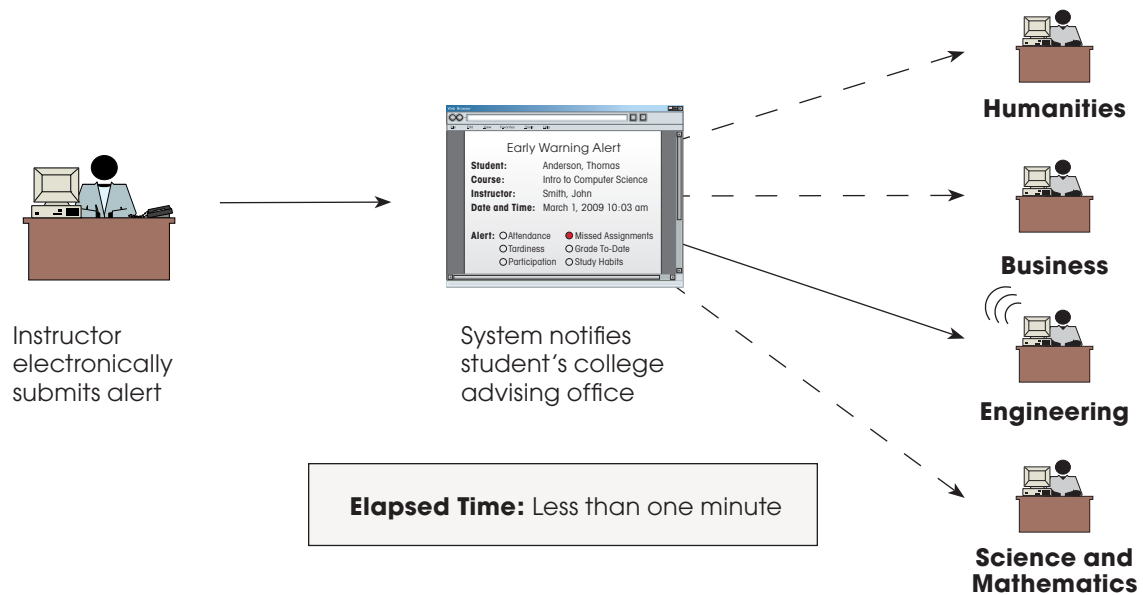
California State University
Northridge

The Early Warning System (TEWS)
 California State University, Northridge
 Northridge, CA

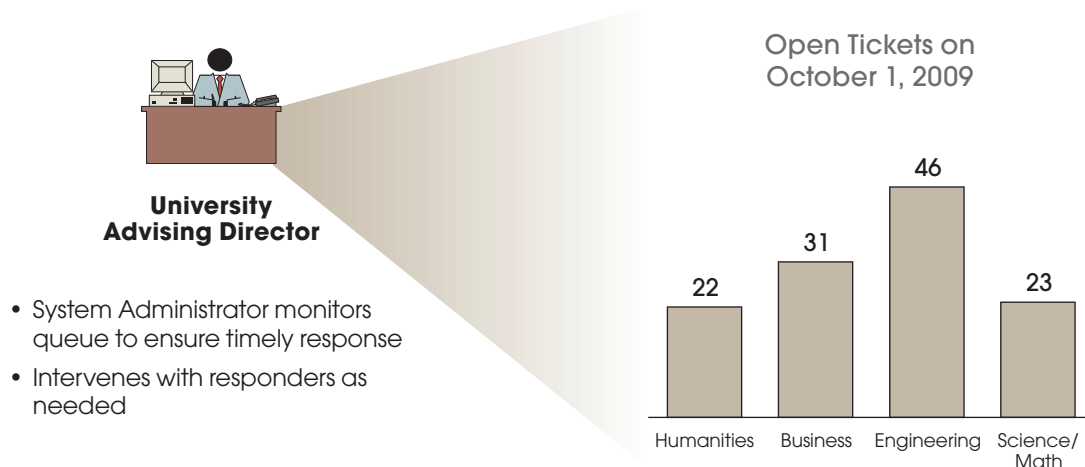
- Urban public master's university with 29,800 undergraduates
- Intervention ticketing system facilitates follow-up on academic alerts within 48–60 hours of submission
- A ticket is opened automatically when an instructor submits alert via PeopleSoft class roster and is closed only when the advisor has completed follow-up with the student.
- Central oversight ensures that advisors are processing alert tickets in a timely manner
- The system automatically notifies the referring instructor once the student has been contacted

The system automatically distributes alerts to college advising offices and tracks each advisor's open ticket queue. When an instructor submits an alert, the system automatically sends a notification to the desktop of the designated advisor in the student's home college. Administrators in the central advising office monitor each college's case queue on a daily basis and deploy additional advising resources to deal with unusual volumes.

Alerts Automatically Distributed to Advisors



Alert Volume Monitored Centrally to Ensure Accountability



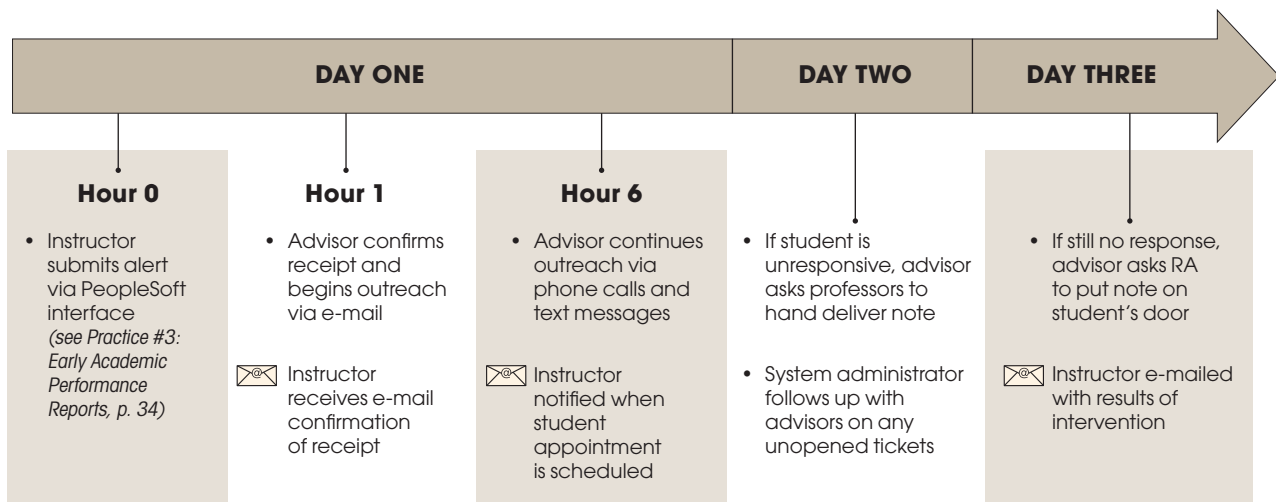
Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Advisors are accountable for completing follow-up within three days, and the system automatically keeps instructors informed of their progress. The CS-Northridge system is designed to facilitate rapid interventions. Advisors initiate outreach within minutes of alert submission and use an escalating communications strategy to make contact with the student within three days.

What “Fast” Looks Like

Securing Student Response in Three Days or Fewer

Timeline of Alert Follow-Up



Building Faculty Buy-In

“When faculty get the advisors’ reports, they want to participate more in the alert process. These reports keep our system going.”

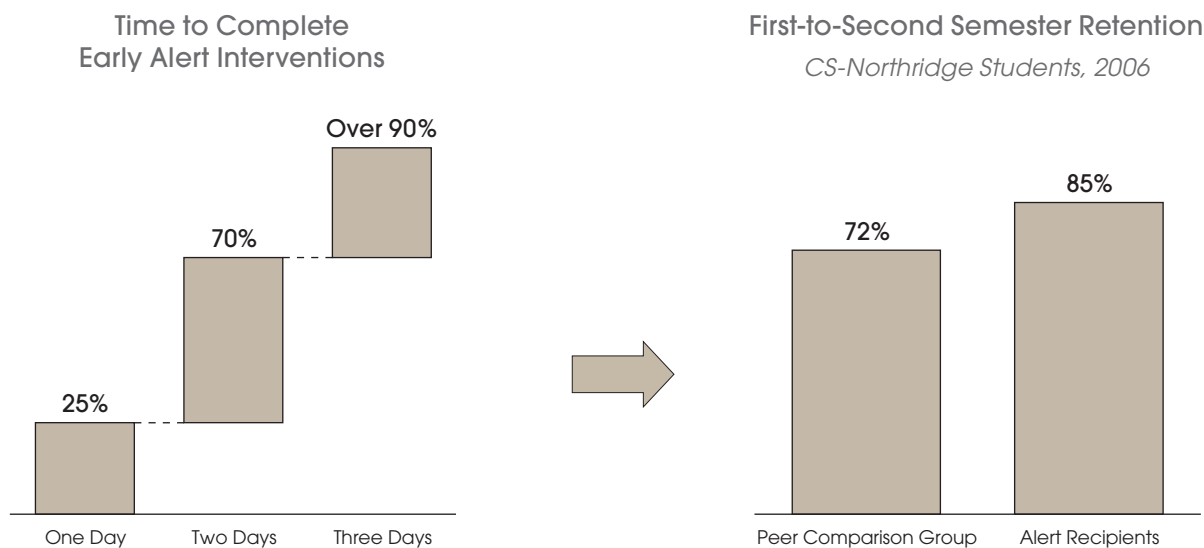
José Luis Vargas
Director, Educational Opportunity Program
Cal State Northridge

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

The case ticketing system has accelerated the pace of interventions and improved retention at CS-Northridge. Advisors are nearly always successful in reaching flagged students within three days. The combination of rapid intervention and guaranteed follow-up on every alert has had a measurable impact on first-to-second semester retention at CS-Northridge.

Catching Problems Quickly

Rapid Intervention Translates into Significant Retention Gains



Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Practice #10: Unified Advising Records

Description

Advisors maintain a common online record of their interactions with students, adding detailed notes when appropriate. Multiple advisors contribute to a single student's record, allowing viewers to get a complete digest of the student's history of interactions with advising and support resources across the university. The system also includes key information on the student's academic plan and alerts advisors to unfulfilled graduation requirements.

Recommended For: All colleges and universities

Council Assessment of Effectiveness

On many college campuses, advising records are anything but unified. Offices rarely share information with each other regarding their interactions with a student, and advisor turnover within a single office can disrupt the continuity of record-keeping. As a result, advisors who intervene with a flagged student are often operating off of little more than the information contained in the alert and their own personal files. Students may receive guidance that is incomplete, redundant, or even contradictory from what they have been told before, fostering frustration and hostility toward the university advising system.

A unified record system improves the quality of alert interventions by providing the advisor with quick access to what colleagues have discerned about a student's circumstances. Rather than spending valuable time regathering information from a reticent student, the advisor can instead focus the meeting on helping that student find solutions.

Implementation Tips

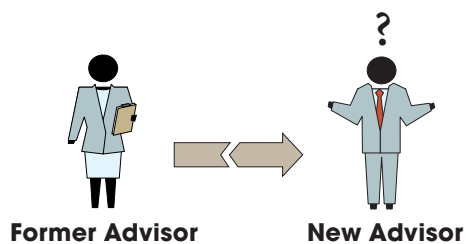
Commercial advising record systems exist, notably Educational Benchmarking, Inc.'s MAP-Works software. Alternatively, universities could rely on their in-house IT staff to develop a home-grown system. The Council estimates that this project would take one developer a little over a year to complete.

The Council notes that this system is only as good as the extent to which advisors regularly contribute relevant information. Institutions that choose to implement this system should take measures to ensure advisor participation.

Most advising offices suffer from communication gaps that result in an incomplete picture of the student and hamper intervention efforts. Few advising offices collect robust data from multiple stakeholders, transfer detailed student records when students switch advisors, or use the advising record system to facilitate and track intervention efforts.

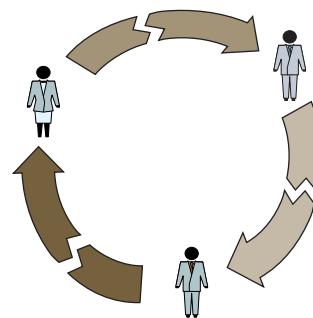
Shortcomings of Traditional Advising Records

Lack of Continuity



Advisors rarely are able to easily access old notes when taking on new advisees, such as when a student declares a major

Lack of Cross-Communication



Advisors cannot easily notify other stakeholders of intervention efforts or track their progress

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Washington University has developed a single online advisory record system that aggregates detailed information on a student in a single location. Advisors can access basic information from the SIS, see a complete history of university interaction with the student, and maintain detailed notes that can be shared with other advisors.

Getting a 360° View of the Student

Single-Source Access to Cross-Silo Information

Washington University in St. Louis Advising Record (Illustrative)

Smith, Jane (8151623) DIV: NS LVL: 6 FC:

Programs Courses GPA by Semester Contact

NS9309 B.S. MAJOR IN BIOLOGY
 LA1401 A.B. MAJOR IN FRENCH LITERATURE
 LA77M3 MINOR IN HISTORY
 (Prime program in bold.)

Student Status (SP2009)
 No Holds: ✓
 Registered SP2009: ✓
 Full Time: ✓
 Declared Major: ✓
 Approved Plan: ✓
 Registered FL2009: ✗
 Filed ITG: ✓

History Records Student Plans Distr. Reg. Auth. Schedule Reg. Wksh Course Summary **Notes** Activities Meetings

Student History Tab

Advisor	Meeting Type	Meeting Status	Time
Norman Cole	Dean of the Day	Completed	2:53 PM 9/29/2008
Norman Cole	Dean of the Day	Completed	12:49 PM 11/3/2008
Kevin O'Flynn	Registration	Completed	12:35 PM 11/15/2008
Kevin O'Flynn	Registration	Completed	9:00 AM 1/23/2009
Kevin O'Flynn	Registration	Completed	2:00 PM 2/27/2009

Public Notes
 It is her second month at the university, but Jane is already overwhelmed by her demanding science and math course load. She has not had any tests, but she claims that her chemistry homework takes her twice as long as her peers.
 Jessica Modell, academic advisor
 Jane visited my office concerned about her C- on the midterm exam in introduction to chemistry. She is having difficulty in this course yet seems intent on staying on the pre-med track. She expressed time management concerns, and I referred her to a campus tutor. She will need to re-visit her pre-med track next term if her science grades continue to suffer.
 Miriam Conley, pre-professional advisor

Private Notes
 Jane is a first-generation college student and experiences a lot of pressure from her parents. We talked about her desire to fulfill her (and her family's) dreams to become a doctor

Advising History

- At-a-glance assessment of level of engagement with advising services
- List of relevant advisors and staff serves as a reference if specific student concerns arise

Public Notes

- A single location for sharing and reviewing notes preserves student information and allows for coordinated action

Private Notes

- Personal documentation for review by contributor only, can be shared with subsequent advisors if desired

Graduation Obstacles Dashboard

- Simple "✓" or "✗" allows for quick evaluation of student progress toward graduation

Case in Brief



Washington University in St. Louis St. Louis, MO

- Urban private research university with 6,200 undergraduates
- New system provides advisors with a digest of key information regarding advisees
- Complete history of advising interactions provides advisors with a 360-degree view of the student

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Development at Washington University took almost two years and involved ongoing feedback from **key advising stakeholders**. The university emphasized the importance of incorporating end-user input at multiple stages in the design process.

Development Timeline

Phase One: Brainstorming

(9 months)



- Designers meet weekly with advisors and academic deans to model desired system functions
- Discussions focus on developing a system that will be useful and accepted by advising staff

Phase Two: Programming

(One FTE, 12–14 months)



- Data from legacy advising systems incorporated into new system
- Prototypes shared periodically with lead advisors for feedback
- System piloted with small advising team before full campus rollout

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.



Removing Barriers to Timely Graduation



IV. Charting a Path to Degree Completion

- ☞ Practice #11: Prescriptive Degree Maps 106
- ☞ Practice #12: Degree Map Milestones 111
- ☞ Practice #13: What-If Degree Maps 126

Practice #11: Prescriptive Degree Maps

Description

Academic departments prepare and publish model four-year course progressions for all arts and sciences majors. These “degree maps” show students the proper timing and pacing of major and general education requirements necessary to ensure graduation in four years.

Recommended For: All colleges and universities (especially public universities with limited advising resources)

Council Assessment of Practice Effectiveness

Degree maps improve students’ ability to self-advise, acting as a proxy for in-person advising when resources are scarce. Without this guidance, many first-year students will delay taking gateway and general education courses and potentially extend their time to degree. The longer a student spends in college, the more likely it is that frustration, course availability, or life events will prevent degree completion. These problems are avoidable if the university helps students understand the importance of taking a critical concentration of requirements in their initial semesters, when graduation may be far from their minds. Degree maps are likely to have the greatest impact at large public universities where students are less likely to receive in-person advising on a regular basis.

Implementation Tips

Degree maps are a familiar concept in higher education, having long been used by professional colleges such as engineering, nursing, and business to ensure that students are taking the right courses in the right order at the right times. The Council recommends that members extend this practice and install degree maps in all arts and sciences departments as well.

The adoption of this practice by necessity starts at the top, typically with a mandate from the provost. Individual departments can delegate degree map creation to the most appropriate person, usually a faculty member with an interest in the curriculum or an experienced staff member in the department office. Maps are created by placing the existing major requirements in an eight semester degree progression along with prescriptive guidance on the timing of general education classes and electives.

The Council recommends that the university collect the degree maps from all departments together in a common format on the university registrar website. The central location makes the maps more easily accessible and allows students to make quick comparisons between several potential majors they may be considering.

Graduation delays often result from preventable academic missteps made early in a student's career. Many universities do not have the advising resources necessary to meet face to face with students each semester and ensure that they are taking the shortest path to their degree. Students who fall behind are forced to extend their stay in college, leading to frustration, adding to total cost, and decreasing the odds that they will stay in school long enough to finish.

All Too Common

Poor Academic Planning



First Year

- Failed gateway course
- Puts off general education classes



Second Year

- Denied admission to upper division
- Late-stage change of major



Third Year

- Last minute decision to study abroad



Fourth Year

- Scramble to fulfill general education requirements



Fifth Year

- Required course not available



Sixth Year

- Frustration and costs lead to drop-out

**Average time to degree
at a public university:
4.75 years**



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. The Condition of Education 2003, NCES 2003-067, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2003. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2003/pdf/21_2003.pdf (accessed December 1, 2009); University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

To improve timely graduation, some schools are mandating that all departments provide students with clear semester-by-semester guides to degree completion. These “degree maps” show students the proper timing and progression of required major and general education courses. Students are encouraged to fulfill major and general education requirements early, allowing flexibility later for a semester abroad or a double major. Degree maps can be made the centerpiece of an advising conversation or they can help students self-advise in the absence of a face-to-face meeting.

A Clear Path to Graduation

Arts and Sciences Department Creating Prescribed Four-Year Course Progressions

Political Science Degree Map

TERM 1	Credits	TERM 2	Credits	Students encouraged to take general education requirements early
English Comp 1101 or higher English	3	English Comp 1102 or other second English	3	
Mathematics (Gen Ed)	3	Mathematics or Statistics (Gen Ed)	3	
History (Gen Ed)	3	Natural Science (Gen Ed)	3	
Computer Science 2060	3	History/Humanities/Social Science (Gen Ed)	3	
Elective	3	Elective	3	
Total Hours	15	Total Hours	15	
TERM 3	Credits	TERM 4	Credits	Early focus on major requirements rather than electives
Introductory Political Science course	3	Introductory Political Science course	3	
Oral Competency course	3	Humanities/Literature (Gen Ed)	3	
History/Humanities/Social Science (Gen Ed)	3	Social Science (Gen Ed)	3	
Humanities (Gen Ed)	3	Natural Science with Lab (Gen Ed)	4	
Elective	3	Elective	3	
Total Hours	15	Total Hours	16	
TERM 5	Credits	TERM 6	Credits	Potential minors are budgeted into the course progression
Introductory Political Science course	3	Political Science course	3	
Political Science 3713	3	Political Science 3000/4000 level course	3	
Minor course	3	Minor course	3	
Minor course	3	Minor course	3	
Elective	3	Elective	3	
Total Hours	15	Total Hours	15	
TERM 7	Credits	TERM 8	Credits	Flexible senior year schedule allows for academic exploration and catch-up on missed requirements
Political Science 3000/4000 level course	3	Political Science 3000/4000 level course	3	
Political Science 3000/4000 level course	3	Political Science 3000/4000 level course	3	
Minor course	3	Elective	3	
Minor course	3	Elective	3	
Elective	3	Elective	3	
Total Hours	15	Total Hours	15	

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

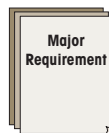
Degree map creation should be mandated by the provost but owned by the departments. To avoid concerns over academic freedom, the Council recommends allowing departments to craft their own degree maps, with the central administration offering support and guidance.

Guidance for Departments Developing Maps



Tap the department's curriculum expert

Most departments ask their in-house curriculum expert, typically a faculty member or knowledgeable administrator, to create their degree map. Some departments form small committees for the task.



Craft degree maps from existing degree requirements

Do not ask departments to change their degree requirements. Instead, instruct the departments to place their current major requirements in a recommended temporal progression.



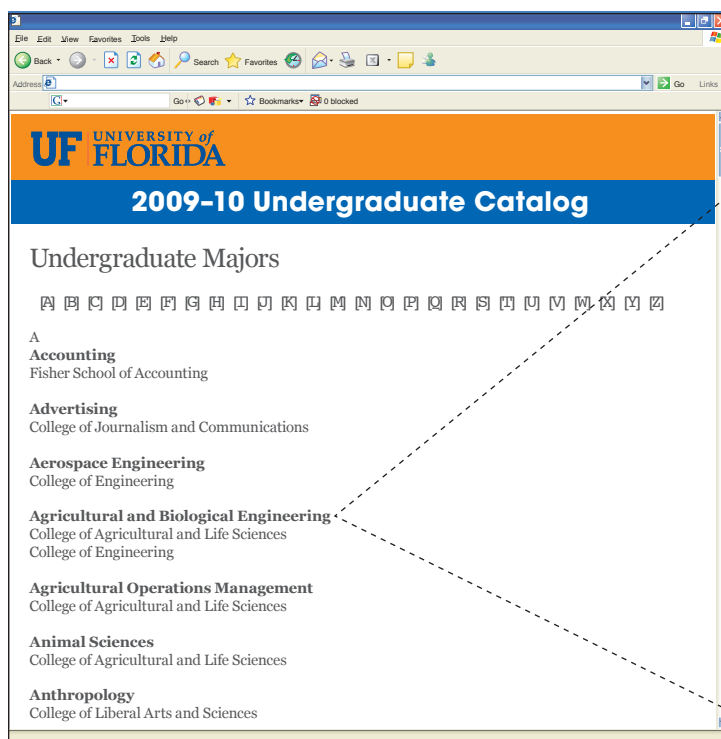
Adopt a level of prescription appropriate to the field of study

STEM departments typically opt for a more prescribed degree map format suggesting specific classes to take at precise times. Arts and Humanities departments may opt for more flexible maps that promote timely completion of major requirements without specifying exact course numbers.

Publish all degree maps in a common format on a central website to allow for ease of student use. At the University of Florida and Florida State University, all degree maps are collected together in a common format hosted on the website of the university registrar. The centralized location makes it easy for students and other stakeholders to locate and review degree maps from different departments.

In addition to the prescribed course progressions, the UF and FSU departments use their degree map pages as an opportunity to deliver generalized advising on minors, research opportunities, careers, and other information pertinent to the major.

Building an Online Self-Advising Resource



Each Major Page Contains:

- ① Degree offerings and credit requirements
- ② Brief summary of the field of study
- ③ Potential careers
- ④ Minors, certificates, and concentrations
- ⑤ Degree map
- ⑥ Degree map milestones
(See Practice #12, p. 111)

Degree Map Websites



[http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/
catalog/programs/majors/](http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/programs/majors/)



<http://www.academic-guide.fsu.edu/>

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Practice #12: Degree Map Milestones

Description

Using a prescribed set of course progress and GPA milestones, the university audits student progress to degree each semester, alerting students who are off course. Course milestones ensure that students follow their degree maps and stay on track to graduation. Failure to meet a milestone results in a registration hold and a warning from the advising staff. A second consecutive milestone miss may result in forced ejection from the major.

Recommended For: Public universities with limited advising resources

Council Assessment of Practice Effectiveness

Prescriptive Degree Maps (Practice #11) become more effective as a tool to ensure four-year graduation if the university has a mechanism to enforce student compliance and intervene with those who go off course. Many universities lack the advising resources necessary to hold mandatory advising meetings each semester to check up on student progress. For these schools, a milestone system can quickly identify those students who are at-risk for falling behind in their major's course progression, allowing the university to focus scant advising resources where they are most needed.

In addition to keeping students on track, this practice encourages struggling students to move to a better fit "Plan B" major as soon as possible. Unassisted, these students may repeatedly fail required coursework, waste valuable semesters, and cause irreversible damage to their GPA. Milestones are especially effective for intervening with students who repeatedly fail gateway courses in STEM majors and students who are unlikely to gain admission to the upper division of limited-access majors.

Implementation Tips

Development occurs in two stages. First, departments design course completion and GPA milestones for each semester based on historical patterns of success in the major. Next, campus IT works with the registrar to create a system for auditing student progress against these milestones. Students who miss a milestone are flagged with a registration hold and automatically notified to set an appointment with an advisor to get the hold lifted.

Implementation Toolkit

- Tool #12A: Degree Map and Milestone Policy.....p. 117
- Tool #12B: Sample Degree Maps and Milestonesp. 118

A significant number of students will go off course in their first two years, even when benefiting from the guidance of a degree map. These students are often struggling in their first choice major and need to move to a “Plan B” major as soon as possible to avoid further delays in graduation.

Common Academic Pitfalls in the First Two Years

All Students



Underloading
introductory courses

STEM Majors



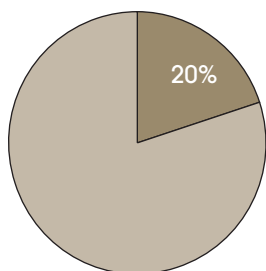
Repeatedly failing
gateway course

Professional Majors

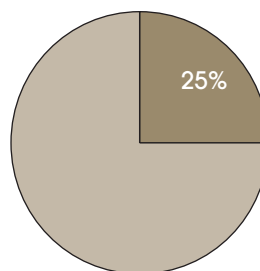


Denied admission
to upper division
due to low GPA

Estimated Percentage of First- and Second-Year Students at Risk of Failing in Intended Major



UF UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA




Florida State
UNIVERSITY

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

The University of Florida and Florida State University are using advising staff to intervene with off-course students by building mandatory milestones into their degree maps. Each semester, students in all majors must complete specified courses and attain prescribed minimum GPAs. Missed milestones result in a registration hold that is lifted only after the student meets with an academic advisor. Advisors have the option of forcibly reassigning students who repeatedly miss milestones. The milestone system allows these universities to focus their limited advising resources on the students most in need of assistance.

Getting to “Plan B” Faster

Student Progress Audited at Two Key Points

Example Degree Milestones

	Chemistry	Business
Term One	2.0 minimum GPA - One Chem course - One Math course	2.5 minimum GPA in Business - Intro to Comp Science - Microeconomics or Macroeconomics
Term Two	- Chemistry 101 - Calculus 101	2.75 minimum GPA in Business - Microeconomics and Macroeconomics - Calculus 101
Term Three	- Chemistry 102 - Calculus 102	3.0 minimum GPA in Business - Intro to Financial Accounting - Intro to Statistics
Term Four	2.75 minimum GPA on all Chem coursework	3.0 minimum GPA in Business - Intro to Managerial Accounting

Registrar Audits Twice per Semester

First Audit: At the end of drop/add

- Identify students whose current schedule will not meet milestones
- Hold must be cleared prior to registration

Second Audit: After final grades

- Identify students who fail a milestone class or fall below a minimum GPA
- Hold must be cleared before the end of Drop/Add the following semester

Missed Milestone Results in Registration Hold and Advisor Meeting



First Semester Missed: Warning

- Student encouraged to catch up over summer
- Advisor urges student to consider “Plan B” major



Second Semester Missed: Forced Ejection from Major

- Advisor assists student in finding good-fit major
- Students must be able to meet milestones in new major within one semester

Source: Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability. Student Tracking Systems Can Be Used to Enhance Graduation and Retention Rates. Report No. 06-48, Tallahassee, FL: OPPAGA Report Production, May 2006. <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/reports/pdf/0648rpt.pdf> (accessed December 1, 2009); University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

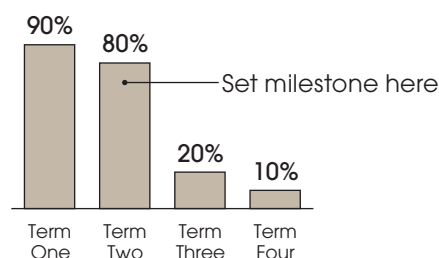
Departments should define milestones based on historical patterns of success in the major. For a gateway class, departments should set the milestone according to the semester by which past experience shows that the majority of successful students have completed the course. For GPA milestones in limited access majors, departments should consider the threshold GPA necessary in each semester to be on track for entry into the upper division.

Building a Degree Map Milestone Program

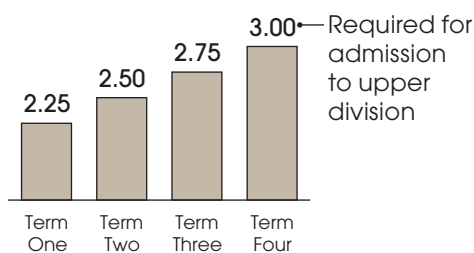
Engaging Academic Departments in Developing Milestones

1. Set a campus-wide deadline mandated by the provost
2. Nominate a respected faculty member to champion the university-wide effort
3. Emphasize how milestones will help struggling students get to "Plan B" faster
4. Encourage departments to base milestones on pre-existing program guidelines
5. Time milestones according to the historical patterns of success in the major
6. Publicize non-compliant departments on registrar website

Student Success in Major by Timing of Critical Gateway Course Completion (Illustrative)



Escalating Minimum GPA Milestones for Limited Access Majors



Development Steps (One Year)

①

Training sessions and seminars to help departments design milestones

②

Remind departments delinquent in submitting milestone plans

③

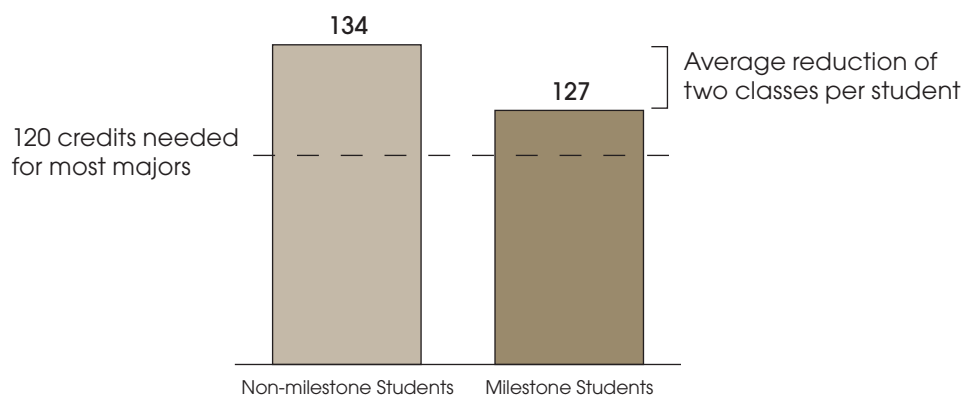
Work with campus IT to design the registrar record audit system

Students take fewer “wasted” courses when exposed to a milestone system. Not all of Florida State’s departments had finalized their milestones when the university’s system debuted in 2002, creating a de facto control group of students for comparing the impact of the initiative. FSU has found students in milestone majors graduated with an average of seven fewer credits than their peers, reducing their cost and time in college by more than two courses.

Reducing Time to Graduation

Credits Completed by Graduates

Florida State University, 2008



Overcoming Faculty Resistance

Florida and Florida State experienced some initial pushback from faculty expressing concerns over the seemingly punitive nature of their new milestone systems; however, these reservations quickly abated as departments realized that milestones would reduce the number of struggling students enrolled in their majors. Departments hosting common “destination” majors welcomed the boost in enrollment.

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tool #12A: Degree Map and Milestone Policy—University of Maryland, College Park

The University of Maryland, College Park recently implemented a degree map milestone program. This policy was agreed upon by the administration and faculty, circulated to departments, and posted on the university website.

Student Academic Success-Degree Completion Policy



The goal of the Student Academic Success-Degree Completion Policy is to promote undergraduate student success. The policy establishes a structured framework and criteria to guide all students to completion of an undergraduate degree within a reasonable period of time.

Full-time degree seeking students normally are expected to complete the undergraduate program in four years. Within this timeframe, all students are expected to demonstrate continuing progress in their majors by completing prerequisite or required courses with the appropriate grades, and by completing other requirements consistent with graduation progress or benchmarks established by their academic units (see 2, below). It is ultimately the responsibility of the student to meet these requirements. To help students meet these requirements the University will facilitate student progress to degree by providing enhanced student advising through the following measures:

1. Academic units will create four-year graduation templates that will specify the degree requirements for each major and provide semester-by-semester course schedule models that achieve graduation within four years. Students will prepare individualized plans for completing their degrees in accordance with the academic units' four-year graduation plans. Students are also encouraged to periodically update their plans with the assistance of their academic advisors.
2. Academic units will establish graduation progress benchmarks for each academic major. These will specify the credit and course criteria that will indicate satisfactory progress to degree. Academic units will establish schedules for regular periodic reviews of student progress, and students who are in danger of falling behind the program benchmarks will be required to consult with an advisor prior to registration.
3. Students who do not achieve the progress expectations or benchmarks will be permitted to continue in the major only upon the approval of the dean of their college. If it becomes necessary for students to change majors, they will be given assistance in identifying and enrolling in a suitable alternative major.
4. When students change majors, they will be required to present an academic plan to the new major unit that demonstrates their ability to complete their degree in a timely manner.

While some students will have valid reasons to take additional time to degree, any student who completes 10 semesters or 130 credits (see *footnote 1* for credits not counted towards these limits) without completing a degree will require mandatory advising in his/her college prior to registration for subsequent semesters. Students with exceptional circumstances, students whose programs include minors, double majors/degrees, enrichment activities or who need to pursue a degree part time will have on record approved plans with approved program benchmarks. Program benchmarks will be developed by the student in consultation with and approved by an advisor.

Footnote 1: Degree credits include University of Maryland credits and all applicable transfer credits from other postsecondary institutions. The equivalent semesters applicable to the enrollment limit for transfer credits will be determined by dividing all transfer credits applicable to the degree by 15. However, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) credits, and credits earned for college courses taken while in high school and prior to matriculation at a postsecondary institution, will not count toward this semester or credit limitation. Such courses may, however, count toward degrees. Summer Session and Winterterm will not be included in the semester count. Credits earned during Summer Sessions or Winterterms will be included in the credit count.

10.27.04

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Source: Office of Undergraduate Studies, University of Maryland, College Park, <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/academicsuccess.html> (accessed December 1, 2009); University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tool #12B: Sample Degree Maps and Milestones—University of Florida and Florida State University



Full list of FSU degree maps online of
<http://www.academic-guide.fsu.edu/>

ART HISTORY

To complete a major in Art History, a student will need 33 hours of coursework in art history with grades of C or better, and 9 hours of coursework in studio art with grades of D or better.

Sample Schedule	
Term 1	Hrs.
ENC1101 or higher English	3
LS Mathematics	3
LS History	3
LS Natural Science	3
Elective	3
Total hours	15

Term 2	Hrs.
ENC1102 or other second English	3
LS Mathematics	3
LS Social Science	3
LS Natural Science w/Lab	4
Elective	2
Total hours	15

Term 3	Hrs.
ARH3056	3
Oral Communication Competency	3
LS History/Social Science	3
Elementary Foreign Language I	4
Elective	3
Total hours	16

Term 4	Hrs.
ARH3057	3
Computer Literacy	3
ART2003C	3
Elementary Foreign Language II	4
LS Literature	3
Total hours	16

Term 5	Hrs.
ARH Advanced Course	3
ARH Advanced Course	3
Elective	3
Intermediate Foreign Language III	4
Elective	3
Total hours	16

Milestones
Term 1
Complete ENC1101
FSU GPA $\geq$ 2.0

Term 2
Complete ENC1102 or other second English
FSU GPA $\geq$ 2.0

Term 3
FSU GPA $\geq$ 2.0

Term 4
Complete LS Math or Statistics course
See Academic Advisor in Art History
Satisfy CLAST
FSU GPA $\geq$ 2.0

Term 5
FSU GPA $\geq$ 2.0
Complete ARH3056 and ARH3057 or equivalent Course
Complete Second Advanced ARH Course

Source: Undergraduate Academic Program Guide, Florida State University,
<http://www.academic-guide.fsu.edu/> (accessed December 1, 2009);
 University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tool #12B: Sample Degree Maps and Milestones—University of Florida and Florida State University (cont.)

Sample Schedule		Milestones	
Term 6	Hrs.	Term 6	
ARH Advanced Course	3	FSU GPA $\geq$ 2.0	
ARH Advanced Course	3	Complete Third Advanced ARH Course	
ART1201C	3	Complete Studio Art	
Elective	3	Must start foreign language, if needed	
Elective	3		
Total hours	15		
Term 7	Hrs.	Term 7	
ARH Advanced Course	3	Complete Sixth Advanced ARH Course	
ARH Advanced Course	3	Complete departmental pre-graduation check	
ART1300C	3	FSU GPA $\geq$ 2.0	
ARH Seminar	3	Complete Second Studio Art course	
Elective	3		
Total hours	15		
Term 8	Hrs.	Term 8	
ARH Advanced Course	3	Complete Art History coursework and seminar requirement	
ARH Advanced Course	3	Minimum overall GPA of $\geq$ 2.0	
ARH Seminar	3	Apply for Graduation in first two weeks	
Elective	3	Complete Studio Art requirement	
Total hours	12		

Employment Information

Representative Job Titles Related to This Major: Antiquarian Book Trade, Architectural Conservation, Art Advisor, Art Gallery, Art Investment, Artist Representative, Art Law, Art Librarian, Arts Organization, Consultant, Corporate Curator, Curatorial Consultant, Freelance Collection Manager, Freelance Writing, Governmental Agencies, Museum Work, Preservation and Conversation Publishing, Teaching, Visual Resource Curator

Representative Employers: Museums/Archives, Art Galleries, Television & Radio, School Systems, Colleges & Universities, Art Libraries, Publishing Houses, Newspapers & Magazines, Advertising Agencies

International Opportunities: International study is available for all students and may include opportunities for internships or taking course work towards various minors. International study may have an impact on the MAP; therefore, it is important to consult with the academic advisor for this major before participating in an International Programs opportunity. Interested students should also contact the Office of International Programs.



Tool #12B: Sample Degree Maps and Milestones—University of Florida and Florida State University (cont.)



Full list of FSU degree maps online of
<http://www.academic-guide.fsu.edu/>

BIOCHEMISTRY

Biochemistry, as a science, attempts to understand the chemical basis for all life processes. It draws information from, and has an impact on many fields: chemistry, zoology, botany, microbiology, virology, physiology, pharmacology, genetics, medicine, agriculture, and even ecology. The major is intended to provide the student with a strong background in chemistry, in physics, and in math, together with a broad introduction to biochemistry and biology, which will equip him or her with the tools needed for more specific applications or for advanced, more specialized study.

Sample Schedule	
Term 1	Hrs.
ENC1101 or higher English	3
CHM1045 and CHM1045L	3
MAC1140	3
LS Course	3
(MAC1114 or BSC2010/L)	2–4
Total hours	14–16

Term 2	Hrs.
ENC1102 or other second English	3
CHM1046 and CHM1046L	4
MAC1114	2
BSC2010	3
BSC2010L	1
LS Course	3
Total hours	17

Term 3	Hrs.
CHM2210	3
MAC2311	4
BSC2011	3
BSC2011L	2
LS Course	3
Total hours	15

Term 4	Hrs.
CHM2211	3
CHM2211L	3
MAC2312	4
PCB3063	3
LS Course	3
Total hours	16

Milestones
Term 1
Complete ENC1101
Complete MAC1105

Term 2
Complete CHM1045 AND CHM1045L
Complete MAC1140
Complete ENC1102 or other second English

Term 3
Complete CHM1046 and CHM1046L
Complete BSC2010/L
Complete MAC1114

Term 4
Complete CHM2210
Satisfy CLAST

Source: Undergraduate Academic Program Guide, Florida State University,
<http://www.academic-guide.fsu.edu/> (accessed December 1, 2009);
 University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tool #12B: Sample Degree Maps and Milestones—University of Florida and Florida State University (cont.)

Sample Schedule		Milestones
Term 5	Hrs.	Term 5
BCH4053	3	Complete CHM2211
CHM3120 and CHM3120L	4	
PHY2048C	5	
Oral Communication Competency	4	
Total hours	15	
Term 6	Hrs.	Term 6
BSC4054	3	Complete PHY2048C
Upper-Level Bio Elective	3	Must complete graduation check with College of Arts and Sciences and Registrar's Office
PHY2049C	5	
Foreign Language	4	
Total hours	15	
Term 7	Hrs.	Term 7
CHM4410	3	Complete PHY2049C
CHM4130	3	Complete BCH4053
LS Course	3	Must schedule exit interview with Associate Chair of Department
Foreign Language course	4	
Total hours	14	
Term 8	Hrs.	Term 8
CHM4411	3	Apply for Graduation in first two weeks
BCH4053L	3	
Major or Elective	3	
CHM4130L	1	
Foreign Language course	4	
Total hours	16	

Employment Information

Representative Job Titles Related to This Major: Baccalaureate level—Laboratory Assistant/Technician, Laboratory Tester/Analyst, Inspector (Ex: Food & Drug), Medical Technologist, Environmental Analyst, Crime Laboratory Analyst, Technical/Scientific Writer, Technical Sales and/or Service

Representative Teacher: high school (with appropriate education preparation), Consumer Safety Officer. With further study: Biochemist/Researcher/Engineer, Physician, Pharmacist, Veterinarian, Dentist, Chemist/Researcher/Engineer, Food Scientist, Teacher—College/University, Geneticist

International Opportunities: International study is available for all students and may include opportunities for internships or taking course work towards various minors. International study may have an impact on the MAP; therefore, it is important to consult with the academic advisor for this major before participating in an International Programs opportunity. Interested students should also contact the Office of International Programs.



Tool #12B: Sample Degree Maps and Milestones—University of Florida and Florida State University (cont.)

Full list of UF degree maps online of
<http://www.register.ufl.edu/catalog/programs/majors>

Philosophy	
College	Liberal Arts and Sciences
Degree	Bachelor of Arts
Hours for the Degree	120
Minor	Yes
Combined-Degree Program	No
Website	web.phil.ufl.edu/

Philosophy addresses the most fundamental problems that arise in reflecting on the nature of the world and our place in it. Philosophers ask such questions as: What can we know? What are the most general features of reality? What is the relation between mind and body? How ought one live?

Philosophical examination of problems is primarily conceptual rather than empirical, in that philosophers work at developing conceptual accounts adequate to the phenomena they want to understand. The study of philosophy equips one to address difficult issues in a wide range of areas. It fosters critical thinking and sound reasoning, skills essential to effective thought and communication.

The philosophy major provides excellent preparation for professional schools in law, business, medicine, and journalism, and for careers in the private and public sector. For more information, refer to the undergraduate and career handbooks on the department website.

Recommended Semester Plan

The plan below enables you to stay on track, but it is not the only way to stay on track. Generally, it is a good idea to take the area requirement classes as early as possible; in particular, PHI 3130 Symbolic Logic is best taken earlier rather than later.

Critical Tracking and Recommended Semester Plan

Semester 1:

- 2.0 UF GPA required for semesters 1–5

Semester 2:

- Complete 1 philosophy course

Semester 3:

- Maintain coursework from semester 2

Semester 4:

- Complete 1 additional philosophy course with a 2.5 GPA on all critical-tracking coursework

Semester 5:

- Complete 1 additional philosophy course (1 of the 3 courses must be at the 3000 level) with a 2.5 GPA on all critical-tracking coursework

Source: 2009–10 Undergraduate Catalog, University of Florida, <http://www.register.ufl.edu/catalog/programs/majors/#m> (accessed December 1, 2009); University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Semester 1	Credits
Composition (GE-C, WR)	3
Electives	7–6
Foreign Language	4–5
Total	14

Semester 3	Credits
Biological Science (GE-B)	3
Elective (or Foreign Language, if 4-3-3 option)	3
Mathematics (GE-M)	3
Required philosophy course ¹	3
Social and Behavioral Sciences (GE-S)	3
Total	15

Semester 5	Credits
Required Philosophy course ¹	3
Required Philosophy course ¹	3
Electives	6
Social and Behavioral Sciences (GE-S)	3
Science Laboratory (GE-P or GE-B)	1
Total	16

Semester 7	Credits
Philosophy elective (3000 level)	3
Philosophy elective (4000 level)	3
Electives (3000 level or above, not in major)	9
Total	15

¹ PHH 3100 (GE-H, N), PHH 3400 (GE-H, N), PHI 3130 (GE-M), PHI 3300 (GE-H), PHI 3650 (GE-H).

Semester 2	Credits
2000-level Philosophy course (GE-H)	3
Electives	6–4
Foreign Language	3–5
Physical Science (GE-P)	3
Total	15

Semester 4	Credits
3000-level Philosophy elective (GE-H)	3
Required Philosophy course ¹	3
Biological Science (GE-B)	3
Elective	3
Physical Science (GE-P)	3
Social and Behavioral Sciences (GE-S)	3
Total	15

Semester 6	Credits
Required Philosophy course ¹	3
Philosophy elective (3000 level)	3
Electives	9
Total	15

Semester 8	Credits
Philosophy elective (3000 level)	3
Philosophy elective (4000 level)	3
Electives (3000 level or above, not in major)	9
Total	15

Tool #12B: Sample Degree Maps and Milestones—University of Florida and Florida State University (cont.)

Full list of UF degree maps online of
<http://www.register.ufl.edu/catalog/programs/majors>

Spanish	
College	Liberal Arts and Sciences
Degree	Bachelor of Arts
Hours for the Degree	120
Minor	Yes
Combined-Degree Program	Yes
Website	web.rll.ufl.edu/spanish/

The Spanish major is excellent preparation for careers in business, journalism and communications, law, medicine, the service professions and teaching. All students are encouraged to consult with the undergraduate adviser as soon as they begin to consider a major or minor in Spanish. Those whose second major is Spanish are especially urged to seek guidance from the undergraduate adviser since they do not receive an audit for this major.

Overseas Study

Candidates for a major or a minor in Spanish are strongly encouraged to spend a summer, a semester or an academic year in a Spanish-speaking country. UF programs are the best since they allow for easy transfer of UF credits and courses or course equivalencies. Most financial aid applies in this case as well. Interested students should contact the undergraduate coordinator and the UF International Center, 170 Hub.

The undergraduate coordinator must approve each student's program of studies before departure. Up to 15 credits toward the major and up to nine credits toward the minor may be awarded for work abroad; additional credits may also be earned in satisfaction of the CLAS elective requirement (in art, history, etc.). Students who participate in approved overseas study programs can earn up to 15 credits beyond those required for the degree. Moreover, courses taken in a pre-approved UF study abroad program can be applied toward the six-hour international studies and diversity requirement, if approved by an adviser.

Critical Tracking and Recommended Semester Plan

Semester 1:

- 2.0 UF GPA required for semesters 1–5

Semester 2:

- Maintain 2.0 UF GPA

Semester 3:

- Complete SPN 1130 or higher-level Spanish coursework

Semester 4:

- Complete SPN 1131 or maintain higher-level Spanish coursework with 2.5 GPA on all critical-tracking coursework

Semester 5:

- Complete SPN 2200 and SPN 2201 or higher-level Spanish course with 2.5 GPA on all critical-tracking coursework

Source: 2009–10 Undergraduate Catalog, University of Florida, <http://www.register.ufl.edu/catalog/programs/majors/#m> (accessed December 1, 2009); University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Semester 1	Credits
Composition (GE-C, WR)	3
Humanities (GE-H) ¹	3
Mathematics (GE-M)	3
SPN 1180 Elementary Spanish: Review and Progress (3) or SPN 1130 Beginning Spanish 1 ²	3–5
Social and Behavioral Sciences (GE-S)	3
Total	15–17

Semester 3	Credits
Social and Behavioral Sciences (GE-S)	3
Physical Science (GE-P)	3
Science laboratory (GE-P or GE-B)	1
SPN 2200 Intermediate Spanish 1 ²	3
Elective	5–3
Total	15–13

Semester 5	Credits
SPN 2240 Intensive Aural and Reading Comprehension ³	3
SPN 3300 Spanish Grammar and Composition 1 ^{2,3} or SPN 3350 Spanish Grammar and Composition for Bilingual Speakers ⁴	3
Composition (GE-C, WR)	3
Elective	6
Total	15

Semester 7	Credits
SPN or SPW courses, 3000-/4000-level ^{1,4}	9
Electives (3000 level or above, not in major)	6
Total	15

¹ Some Spanish courses may also fulfill the H and N general education requirements: SPW 3030, SPW 3031, SPW 3100, SPW 3101, SPN 3510, and SPN 3520; SPN 3440 fulfills the S and N general education categories.

² Non-bilingual students with prior preparation in Spanish must select an initial course on the basis of their SAT II, IB, or AP test scores. Bilinguals should see the coordinator of the bilingual courses for a placement test. Students are then exempted from all courses below that level.

³ SPN 3300 can be taken concurrently with SPN 2240. SPN 2240 (or SPN 2340) is the first course that earns credit toward the major or minor. For Spanish

Semester 2	Credits
Mathematics (GE-M)	3
Social and Behavioral Sciences (GE-S)	3
Biological Science (GE-B)	3
SPN 1131 Beginning Spanish 2 (5) or SPN 1182 Preparation for Intermediate Spanish ²	3–5
Elective	3–1
Total	15

Semester 4	Credits
Humanities (GE-H) ¹	3
Biological Science (GE-B)	3
SPN 2201 Intermediate Spanish 2 ²	3
Electives (3000 level or above, not in major)	6
Total	15

Semester 6	Credits
SPN or SPW courses, 3000 level ¹	9
Physical Science (GE-P)	3
Elective (3000 level or above, not in major)	3
Total	15

Semester 8	Credits
SPN or SPW courses, 4000 level ^{1,4}	9
Electives (3000 level or above, not in major)	6
Total	15

language (SPN) courses, there are two tracks: one for bilinguals and one for non-bilinguals. Students may not take courses in both tracks. Once placed in the bilingual track (e.g., SPN 2340), students may not subsequently take SPN 2240, SPN 3300, etc. for credit, and vice versa. Exceptions to this rule are subject to the approval of the undergraduate coordinator.

For a definition of bilingual speaker, refer to the course description for SPN 2340. Majors must earn a grade of B or better in SPN 2240 and SPN 3300 (or SPN 2340 and SPN 3350, for bilingual).

⁴ SPN 3350 and SPN 4314 also may fulfill general education requirements.

Practice #13: What-If Degree Maps

Description

Instead of relying on degree maps pre-prepared by academic departments, students create their own four-year degree plans using an interactive online schedule modeler. The system uses records of unfulfilled requirements, previously completed credits, and projected course availabilities to assess whether or not the proposed schedule will allow the student to graduate on time. Students may prepare multiple four-year plans outlining the feasibility of different “what-if” educational objectives, such as studying abroad or double majoring.

Recommended For: All colleges and universities

Council Assessment of Practice Effectiveness

Prescriptive Degree Maps (Practice #11) are a useful tool for promoting four-year graduation at large schools with modest advising resources; however, they lack the adaptability preferred by those universities placing an especially strong emphasis on student academic choice and exploration. For these institutions, the Council recommends expanding upon the principle of Prescriptive Degree Maps by adding a dynamic functionality. Students enjoy greater flexibility in planning out a personalized college experience while still conforming to a defined course progression that ensures on-time graduation. The underlying technology reduces the opportunity for student or advisor errors and thus represents an advance over pencil-and-paper degree planning. By requiring all students to plot out a course of study before declaring or changing their majors and by using these plans during advising meetings, the university assures that each student has an accurate understanding of the course progression necessary to complete their degree on time.

This practice will have the greatest impact at universities which have unusually complex degree requirements that may interfere with a late-stage change of major and at universities in which a large number of students study abroad or double major.

Implementation Tips

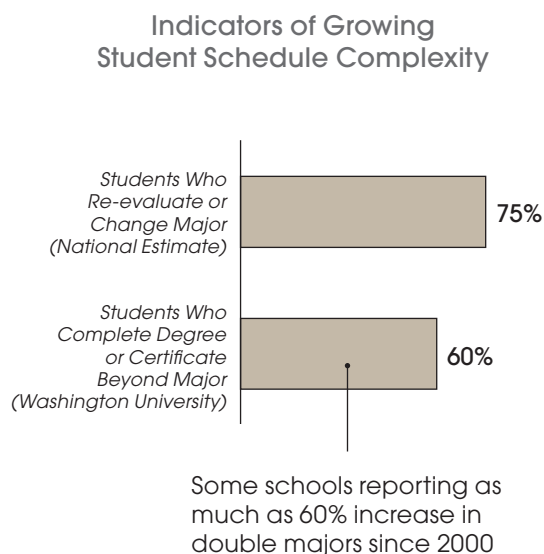
The Academic Advising Center at Duke University developed their what-if schedule modeling tool in partnership with SIS administrators as part of a planned upgrade to the PeopleSoft Student Administration tool. Software development cost an estimated \$136,000 and required the commitment of 2 FTEs over 17 weeks. Most of this effort was spent on coding the software for the tool and collecting together all major, minor, and certificate requirements from departments on campus. Once developed, the tool requires regular maintenance and upgrading to keep the system current with continuously evolving program requirements.

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Many students pursuing complex academic paths find it difficult to plan their own four-year course progressions. Pre-formed degree maps may be insufficient for helping some ambitious students follow a timely path to graduation while fulfilling all of their educational objectives. The alternative is for these students to map out a personalized four-year degree plan on their own; however, this exercise can be error-prone and sometimes prohibitively complex. Furthermore, students rarely have transparency into the long-term availability of courses they need to graduate.

The Burdens of Choice

Complex Schedule Questions Are Error Prone and Labor Intensive



Developing Alternate Course Plans



- Obtain transcript
- Cross-reference course catalogue
- Check major requirements
- Check graduation requirements
- “Check boxes” with advisor

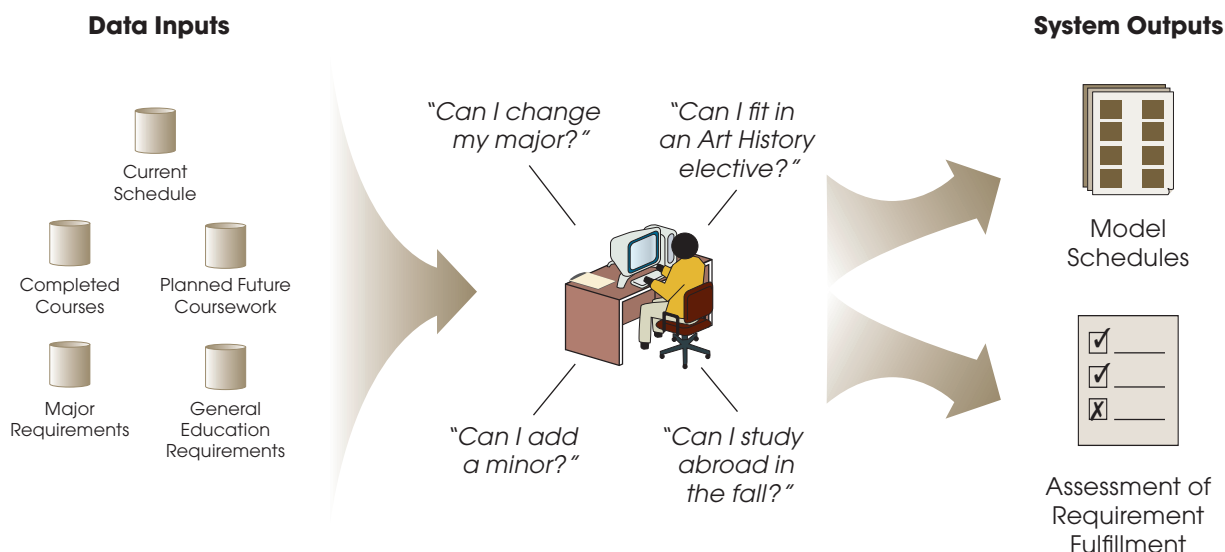
Completion requires 2+ hours

Source: George E. Steele and Melinda L. McDonald, *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook*, 2nd ed., ed. Virginia N. Gordon, Wesley R. Habley and Thomas J. Grites (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008; Washington University of St. Louis, <http://admissions.wustl.edu/faq/Pages/Academics.aspx>, (Accessed June 4, 2009); David Ottalini, “Terps Like Mixing Their Double Majors,” *UM Newsweek*, December 16, 2004; University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Duke University has created an online tool with a drag-and-drop interactive interface that allows students to easily plan their course of study and make updates as frequently as necessary. The system auto-populates the model with the student's prior coursework and current major requirements. Students then model future course paths that explore alternate plans to graduation, such as a double major, study abroad, etc. The system accounts for future course availability and alerts students when their proposed model plan of study will not fulfill all graduation requirements.

Dynamic Querying

"What-If" Report Modeler Automatically Generates Full Path to Graduation



Case-in-Brief



Duke University
Durham, NC

- An upgrade in the PeopleSoft Student Administration tool afforded Duke the opportunity to develop the what-if functionality for use with its Long Range Plan, an interactive online tool which encourages students to reflect on their academic plans prior to major declaration
- The what-if tool responds to student queries regarding alternative course plans by utilizing data from the course catalogue and their course planner to indicate fulfillment of major and graduation requirements
- What-if reports are kept on file for advisor review, freeing up time for more sophisticated developmental advising sessions

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

The university requires all students to have at least one model course progression in hand before declaring a major. In this way, the university assures that all students are equipped with a mutually agreed upon, feasible, and accurate plan they can follow to graduation. Students who change majors or take on a double major or minor are required to update their model. In addition, the schedule modeling tool allows students and advisors to spend more time on mentoring and development by reducing the amount of time spent on course planning during advising meetings.

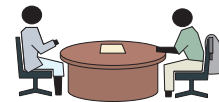
Pre-made Degree Plans Improve Advising Sessions

Prior to Advising Meeting



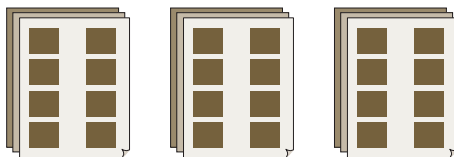
- Students create viable, customized plans to follow to graduation
- New plans take just five minutes to create, allowing student to explore multiple options

During Advising Meeting

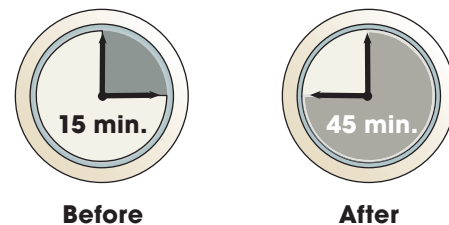


- Advisors review, discuss, and approve student-created degree plans
- The majority of the meeting is spent mentoring, not on prescriptive advising

Most Students Create 2-3 Potential Plans



Advisors Now Spend More Time Mentoring



Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Duke built their system on course-planning elements native in PeopleSoft 9.0 modules. The Academic Advising module and Record module contain course planning tools. Duke adapted these elements to accommodate the university's specific degree requirements and added a user-friendly drag-and-drop interface. The system pulls on student registrar records, the university course catalog, department program requirements, and projections of future course availability.

Pulling Together the Pieces

Building on Existing SIS Infrastructure

PeopleSoft 9



1 Leverage Existing Course Planning Elements

- Academic Advising module
- Record module

2 Input University Graduation Requirements

- Major requirements
- General Education requirements
- Other required coursework

3 Design User-Friendly Interface

- Drag-and-drop schedule creation
- Easy-to-read reports match proposed plan with outstanding requirements and future course availability

“What-If” System Development Team

2 FTEs for 17 weeks (estimated cost \$136,000)



**Advising
Center Expert**

- Gathers degree requirement information from departments
- Conducts fit/gap analysis of advising processes
- Crafts instruction text for student users



**Campus IT
Technician**

- Writes script to pull student transcript data from SIS
- Builds student interface
- Beta-tests and trouble shoots software

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.



V. Intervening with Off-Course Students

- ☞ Practice #14: Transcript Audit Consultant 134
- ☞ Practice #15: Unfulfilled Requirement Fixer..... 139
- ☞ Practice #16: Senior Drop-Out Re-enrollment Outreach 144

Practice #14: Transcript Audit Consultant

Description

A small team of transcript specialists in the university advising center hold twice-daily walk-in sessions to help students learn how to interpret their transcript audits and better understand what courses they still need to take before they can graduate. Sessions are open to all juniors and seniors.

Recommended For: Public universities (especially those with large transfer populations)

Council Assessment of Effectiveness

Most universities rely on students to self-assess their unfulfilled graduation requirements using transcript audit technology built into the registrar online interface. Students often find these audits confusing and difficult to interpret, opening the door to error in selecting the right courses needed to complete their degrees. Ambiguity surrounding the application of transfer credits further exacerbates this problem.

Advising specialists can help students read their transcript audits and understand their outstanding requirements, inoculating them against unwelcome roadblocks as they move toward graduation. This practice will have the greatest impact at universities with large numbers of “swirling” students applying credits from multiple universities toward graduation requirements.

Implementation Tips

The advising office at California State University, Long Beach, designates two knowledgeable advisors to be transcript specialists, committing a total of 10 FTE hours each week. Each specialist runs a one-hour daily workshop (one in mid-morning and one in mid-afternoon) to counsel students on understanding their transcripts. Sessions can be conducted one on one but more often occur in groups of six to eight.

Implementation Toolkit

Tool #14A: Promotional Letter Sent to College Advising Officesp. 138

Students at many universities need help interpreting transcript audits and determining their outstanding graduation requirements. Transcript audits are often difficult to understand, putting students at risk for making critical errors in course selection that may delay graduation. Transfer credits may not integrate perfectly with the university's transcript audit technology, exacerbating audit confusion at universities with large numbers of "swirling" students.

Am I Finished?

Degree Audits Often Need Expert Interpretation

Degree Audit

Major Requirements

General Education

SENIOR SEMINAR—POSC 429—3 Units Required						
UNITS:	Required	3.00	Taken	3.00	Needed	0.00
Term	Course	Title	Grade	Units	Code	Requirement Designation
Spr 2007	POSC 326*	CA Govt Comparative Perspective	D	3.00	EN	
* Use in place of POSC 429 Senior Sem American Gov & Pol						

“Does this course substitution satisfy this requirement?”

General Education

LITERATURE/PHILOSOPHY/FOREIGN LANGUAGES COURSES						
6 Units In 2 of 3 Subjects required						
UNITS:	Required	6.00	Taken	6.00	Needed	0.00
Term	Course	Title	Grade	Units	Code	Requirement Designation
Fall 2005	SPAN 101A	Fundamentals of Spanish	C	4.00	TR	AREA: C2C
Spr 2006	AFRS 140	Intro to African Amer Lit	B	2.00	EN	AREA: C2A
HUMANITIES/ARTS ELECTIVE—3 Units Required						
UNITS:	Required	3.00	Taken	3.00	Needed	0.00
Term	Course	Title	Grade	Units	Code	Requirement Designation
Spr 2006	AFRS 140	Intro to African Amer Lit	B	1.00	EN	AREA: C2A
Spr 2007	AFRS 454I	Africana Womanism Intel Hist	A	2.00	EN	AREA: C2B, D2 DES: Global, I-Cap

“Why is this course fulfilling two different requirements?”

“The course I took was three credits—why am I only receiving two?”

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

At California State University, Long Beach, the University Center for Undergraduate Advising has set up twice daily walk-in sessions to help students understand their outstanding graduation requirements. Students bring their paperwork for review by an advisor with expertise in interpreting transcripts and transcript audits. The goal is to educate students on how to read their results and understand what courses they still need to graduate.

Easy Access to Expert Advisors

Helping Juniors and Seniors Understand Unfulfilled Requirements

Quick Answers to Transcript Concerns



Twice daily walk-in workshops



Unfulfilled requirements reviewed by expert advisor



200–300 juniors and seniors served per month

Preventing Future Problems

- ☒ Advisors demystify graduation requirements
- ☒ Students learn to interpret degree audits
- ☒ Potential graduation concerns identified and resolved semesters in advance

Case in Brief

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
LONG BEACH

Graduation Check-Ups
California State University, Long Beach
Long Beach, CA

- Urban master's university with 31,500 undergraduates
- The main advising center hosts twice daily walk-in workshops for juniors and seniors seeking to better understand their unfulfilled graduation requirements
- Students receive assistance from expert advisors in learning to interpret their degree audits and transcripts and gain insight into the right classes they need to take in order to complete their degree
- Advisors make follow-up appointments with any students who have more complicated questions or require a more in-depth conversation

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Walk-in sessions are publicized to key populations at critical moments, resulting in impressive foot traffic. Incoming transfer students and seniors applying to graduate are targeted as two populations most likely to benefit from this service. College advising staffs across the university are encouraged to direct students to the walk-in sessions as needed.

Targeted Marketing Yields High Response Rate

Publicizing the Program to Upperclass Students

- ① Flyers distributed to transfer students at orientation
- ② Announcements to seniors applying to graduate
- ③ Outreach through college advising offices
- ④ Reminders made during university advising council meetings

ATTENTION JUNIORS & SENIORS



Want to check your
graduation requirements?

Come to a **Graduation Check Up**
workshop at the University Center for
Undergraduate Advising
Horn Center Room 103

Monday through Friday at 10:00 a.m. or 3:00 p.m.

Please bring copies of your Unofficial Transcripts, Transfer Credit Report,
and Degree Progress Report available on my.csulb.edu

Tool #14A: Promotional Letter Sent to College Advising Offices—Cal State Long Beach

THE UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR UNDERGRADUATE ADVISING ANNOUNCES:

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
LONG BEACH

“Graduation Check-Ups”.....they make a huge impact in the lives of our graduating seniors!

WHY?

1. They help juniors and seniors evaluate their academic progress and identify missing degree requirements.
 2. They identify GE coursework and/or general progress toward the degree and provide information about how to satisfy outstanding requirements.
 3. They refer juniors and seniors to their major and/or minor departments to work with their faculty advisors to address any major and/or minor requirements still to be met.
- * Graduation Check-Ups are part of the University Center for Undergraduate Advising's Graduation Green Light Project which was responsible for a huge increase in our CSULB's graduation rates in 2008!

HELP US DO EVEN BETTER—Let prospective and “in-progress” graduating seniors know about our Graduation Check-Ups Workshops.

A flyer promoting the workshops is attached. Help us help students by printing out and displaying the flyer in your office or on your Beachboard site for majors. In preparation for the workshops, students should print (1) **Unofficial Transcripts**, (2) **Transfer Credit Reports**, and (3) **Degree Progress Reports** from my.csulb.edu, and bring them to the workshop.

If you have any questions about the **Graduation Check-Ups Workshops**, please contact any of the following UCUA staff:

Marilee Samuelson,
Director
(562) 985-7958
msamuels@csulb.edu

Kimberly Machan,
Associate Director
(562) 985-7920
kimber@csulb.edu

Susan Black,
Associate Director
(562) 985-8206
sjblack@csulb.edu

Thank you so much for your support. We look forward to working collaboratively with you to help students earn their baccalaureate degrees at California State University, Long Beach.

Sincerely,

Marilee Samuelson
Director, Academic Advising Center

Practice #15: Unfulfilled Requirement Fixer

Description

Each semester, the registrar produces a roster of seniors who have applied for graduation but will finish the current term with some requirements still unfulfilled. Transcript specialists in the advising center review these students' paperwork to identify cases in which a change of majors, course substitution, or other measures would fulfill the outstanding requirements and expedite graduation. Once these cases are identified, the advising office contacts the students and assists them through the process.

Recommended For: Public universities (especially those with modest graduation rates)

Council Assessment of Practice Effectiveness

Complex and non-transparent graduation requirements often result in additional semesters and unnecessary delays for seniors who are in the final stages of degree completion. The resulting frustration and additional financial burden puts many of these students at risk for dropping out, despite being quite close to graduation.

In many cases, these delays are preventable. Proactive transcript auditing and outreach by the advising center can help seniors avoid missteps when registering for their final few courses. In many cases, advisors can even expedite graduation by helping students circumvent problematic requirements through course substitutions, late-stage major changes, or the application of credits earned externally. Students are generally unaware that such measures are possible, thus it falls on the advising center to be proactive in identifying these opportunities. This practice will be most effective at public universities with unusually complex requirements and universities that enroll large numbers of students with transfer credits.

Implementation Tips

The main cost associated with this practice comes from hiring advisors dedicated to reviewing the transcripts and meeting with seniors needing assistance. One specialist (plus one part-time student assistant) can process a case load of 600–750 students per semester. Staffing allocations should be made according to a self-study estimating the quantity of seniors experiencing preventable graduation delays each year.

Technologically, this practice requires the registrar to have the capability to provide the advising center with an audit of all seniors and their progress to graduation.

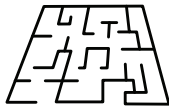
Implementation Toolkit

Tool #15A: E-mails to Students with Unfulfilled Requirements p. 143

Complex degree requirements often lead to preventable graduation delays. Many institutions require students to fulfill complicated credit completion and threshold GPA requirements in addition to their major and general education obligations. Students who are unaware of these requirements may suffer preventable and frustrating graduation delays.

Last Minute Pitfalls

Graduation Often Delayed by Complicated Requirements



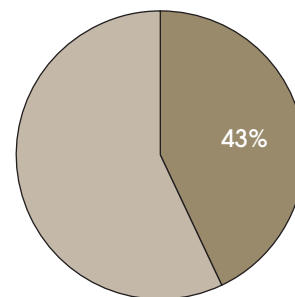
Complex Degree Requirements

California State University, Long Beach

- 40 upper division credit hours
- 30 credit hours at CSULB
- Four different minimum GPAs
 - All college coursework
 - All CSULB coursework
 - Coursework in major
 - Upper division coursework in major

Seniors with Preventable Graduation Delays

California State University, Long Beach



Simple Math?

"Major classes plus general education classes do not always equal degree. It's much more complicated than that."

Marilee Samuelson
Director, University Center for Undergraduate
Advising, Cal State Long Beach

At California State University, Long Beach, advisors proactively review the transcripts of graduating seniors to reduce the number of preventable graduation delays. Each semester, two specialists in the university advising center carefully review the transcripts of hundreds of seniors searching for opportunities to expedite graduation. These seniors are contacted and offered special advising sessions, with several avenues to resolution.

Intervening to Overcome Graduation Roadblocks

Identifying Problem Transcripts



Registrar pulls names of students facing imminent roadblocks

- ✓ Minimum 90 credits
- ✓ Applied for graduation
- ✓ Incomplete requirements at the end of the current semester (typically 1,200–1,500 students per semester)



“Destination Graduation” staff review each transcript individually to spot false positives and identify students who can be helped



Two transcript specialists meet with students to develop solutions to their problems

(See sample outreach e-mails on page 143)

Potential Solutions to Unfulfilled Requirements

- ① **Apply outside credits**
 - Students may have earned AP or transfer credits not currently appearing on their transcripts
- ② **Get a course substitution or waiver**
 - Advisor advocates for the student with academic departments
- ③ **Consider other majors**
 - Switching majors may obviate some GPA minimums and course requirements

Case in Brief



Destination Graduation
California State University, Long Beach
Long Beach, CA

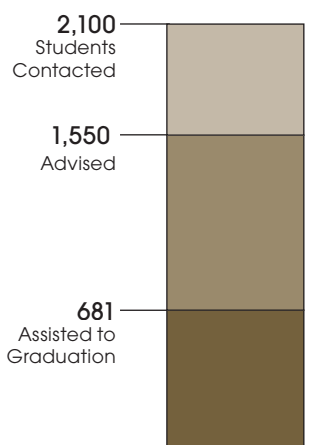
- Urban master's university with 31,500 undergraduates
- Each semester, the registrar queries the names and transcripts of seniors who have applied for graduation, but who will have unfulfilled requirements at the end of the semester (typically 1,200–1,500 students per semester)
- Two transcript specialists in the University Center for Undergraduate Advising (aided by two student workers) review each transcript to identify cases in which a course substitution or major switch could help the student graduate more quickly
- Transcript advisors conduct outreach and meet with students, prioritizing those seniors who are approaching the six-year mark or who could potentially graduate in the current semester
- Advisors negotiate course substitutions or waivers with the department offices on behalf of the students
- In 2008, 681 students were assisted to graduation, boosting the six-year graduation rate to 54 percent from 48 percent the year before

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Proactive intervention has an immediate impact on graduation rate. In 2008, the advising center at CSULB was able to facilitate graduation for nearly 45 percent of the students who accepted the offer of assistance, translating to an immediate and significant improvement in the institution's six-year graduation rate.

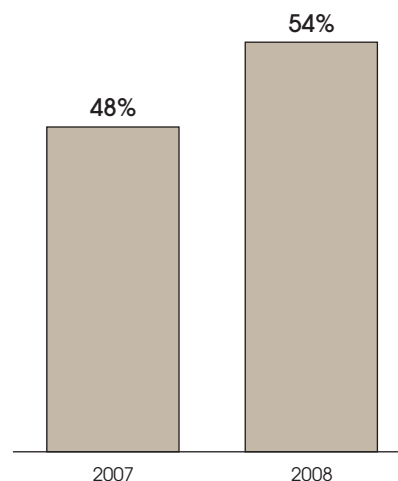
Making a Measurable Impact on the Graduation Rate

Program Outreach, 2008



Six-Year Graduation Rate

California State University, Long Beach



Prioritizing the Six-Year Rate

While CSULB advisors ultimately will contact all seniors with fixable graduation delays, outreach begins first with students enrolled natively who will be able to graduate in six years and improve the university's federal graduation rate. Students nearing the crucial six-year window are prioritized ahead of those with more time remaining.

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tool #15A: E-mails to Students with Unfulfilled Requirements—Cal State Long Beach

First Outreach Attempt

To: CSULB Student Cc: Sent: Subject: IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CSULB GRADUATION
Hi (student name), My name is Erika Chaney, and I am the Destination Graduation Coordinator at CSULB. My role is to help you graduate on time! All seniors have outstanding requirements on their Degree Progress Report. Have you checked your Degree Progress Report at my.csulb.edu to make sure that you are on track for graduation? Please let me know what your availability is so that we can make an appointment to review your plan for timely graduation. You can reach me at (562) 985-4759 or via e-mail at dstgrd@csulb.edu Best wishes, Erika Chaney Destination Graduation Coordinator University Center for Undergraduate Advising—Horn Center Room 103 562-985-4759

Second Outreach Attempt

To: CSULB Student Cc: Sent: Subject: IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CSULB GRADUATION
Hi (student name), My name is Erika Chaney, and I am the Destination Graduation Coordinator at CSULB. My role is to help you graduate on time! Our records indicate that there are some issues that need to be resolved on your Degree Progress Report. Please let me know what your availability is so that we can make an appointment to review your records together. Thank you! Erika Chaney Destination Graduation Coordinator University Center for Undergraduate Advising—Horn Center Room 103 562-985-4759

Source: University Center for Undergraduate Advising,
 California State University, Long Beach; University
 Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Practice #16: Senior Drop-Out Re-enrollment Outreach

Description

Each summer, a coordinator in academic affairs conducts outreach aimed at re-enrolling seniors who withdrew from the university in good academic and financial standing within the last 12 months. Students are provided with a simplified re-enrollment application and made eligible for small amounts of additional tuition assistance. Once re-enrolled, these students receive special support in navigating registration and administrative processes to ensure a smooth path to graduation.

Recommended For: Public universities with modest graduation rates

Council Assessment of Practice Effectiveness

Senior drop-out is surprisingly common, especially at universities with large enrollments of part-time, non-traditional, and transfer students. The specific reasons for drop-out vary, but the most common are transitory or easily rectifiable, such as financial struggles, frustration over an inability to register for their final few required courses, administrative red tape, or external events. Unlike drop-outs in the first or second years, the vast majority of seniors leave the university in good academic standing and just a few credits shy of degree. Therefore, most of these students stand an excellent chance of graduating if sufficiently encouraged to re-enroll. In most cases, a small amount of administrative or financial support is all that is necessary to resolve whatever issues precipitated the student's original withdrawal.

These seniors represent an easy target for a university seeking to quickly increase its annual number of graduates. Some public universities with lower-than-average completion rates may be able to increase their number of graduates by more than 100 each year. That being said, the actual impact on federal six-year graduation rates may be minimal, as many of the targeted students are non-natively enrolled or will complete their degrees in more than six years.

Implementation Tips

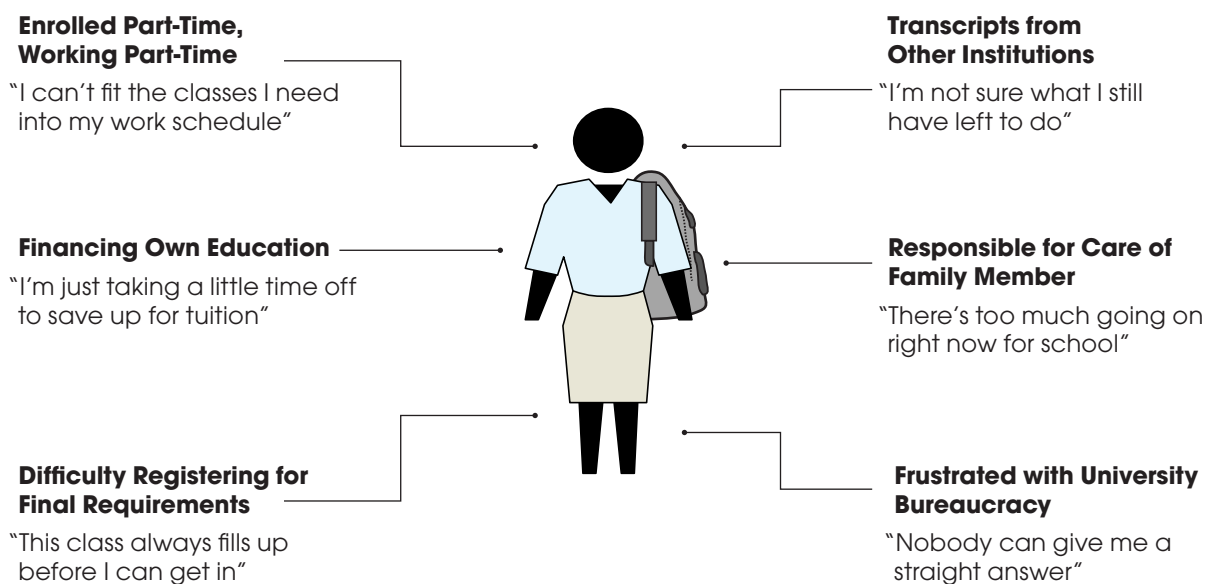
This practice requires investment in one FTE housed in advising or academic affairs to coordinate outreach and support for re-enrollees. The size of financial aid awards is contingent on the availability of funds. The University of New Mexico makes up to \$750 in supplemental funding available to each re-enrolled senior per semester. These funds are drawn from a special allocation made available by the regents. Most registrar offices already have the capability to generate rosters of seniors who drop out. The larger challenge lies in locating these students, as many do not leave up-to-date contact information upon departure. New Mexico has succeeded in locating students using contact information obtained by contracting with a credit reporting agency for a nominal fee.

Implementation Toolkit

Tool #16A: Re-enrollment Outreach Letter	p. 148
Tool #16B: Graduation Project Welcome Letter	p. 149
Tool #16C: Simplified Re-admission Application	p. 150
Tool #16D: Graduation Project FERPA Release	p. 152
Tool #16E: Tuition Assistance Award Letter	p. 153
Tool #16F: Degree Audit Cover Letter	p. 154

Senior drop-outs represent an easy win for universities seeking to quickly improve diploma output. At some large universities, the number of seniors failing to graduate may reach several hundred per year. These “lost seniors” typically depart in good academic standing but have become frustrated with navigating the university bureaucracy. Others are forced to withdraw due to extrinsic factors or short-term financial hardship.

Anatomy of a Senior Drop-Out



It Doesn’t Take Much

Feedback from these seniors indicates that many would readily return to school if provided with a small amount of financial support and an assurance of assistance from the administration in navigating the final few hurdles to graduation.

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Each summer, the University of New Mexico proactively reaches out to lost seniors and recruits them back to campus. Outreach focuses on recent drop-outs with the academic and financial qualifications necessary to re-enroll and graduate quickly.

Contacting Lost Seniors

Senior Re-Enrollment Outreach Eligibility Criteria

- ☒ Left school at least one semester ago
- ☒ GPA of 2.0 or better at time of departure
- ☒ Earned enough credits for senior status
- ☒ In good financial standing with university

Finding the Students

Few students leave current contact information, presenting a challenge for the outreach team. UNM recommends the following:

- 1 Rely on paper outreach, not electronic.** Many students stop checking their campus e-mail accounts once they withdraw from school. Paper mail sent to the most recent address on file has a greater chance of reaching the student.
- 2 Be creative.** In the past, UNM has contracted with a credit reporting agency to obtain the most current addresses for hard-to-locate students. The university first ensured that no fiscal harm would come to the students before sharing names.

(See sample outreach letters on page 148)

Case in Brief



The Graduation Project *University of New Mexico* *Albuquerque, NM*

- Each summer, UNM contacts 300 to 500 seniors who left school in good standing within the last year with an invitation to re-enroll and complete their degree
- Students are offered a simplified re-enrollment application, a small amount of financial aid, assistance with registration, and regular check-ups on progress
- Many students report leaving school due to frustration with inconsistent advising and class registration; program is designed to give these students a single point-of-contact to advocate for any issues that may arise
- Program run by two FTEs out of the provost's office
- University regents have allocated \$120,000 in scholarship money to be distributed to program participants each year
- UNM successfully re-enrolls 50 to 70 students each semester, with 250–300 students typically participating in the program at any time. To date, 2,600 seniors have re-enrolled, and 1,850 have graduated

The Graduation Project staff provide re-enrolling seniors with personalized support. Students are offered assistance in overcoming registration, finance, administrative, and personal obstacles that precipitated their original withdrawal from the university. The Graduation Project office serves as a single point of contact to help re-enrolled students with any issues that may arise.

Smoothing the Road to Graduation

Prior to Re-enrollment



Create Simplified, No-Fee Re-enrollment Application

- Minimize the transaction necessary to come back
- Specially designed in collaboration with the admissions office
(See example on page 148)



Offer Up to \$750/Semester in Grant Aid

- Reduce the number of hours a student must work
- Funded by a \$120,000 annual allocation from the UNM Board of Regents.



Once Back on Campus

Override Enrollment Caps in Required Courses

- Decrease frustration and likelihood of further delays



Closely Monitor Registrar and Bursar Accounts

- Students reminded of deadlines or payments

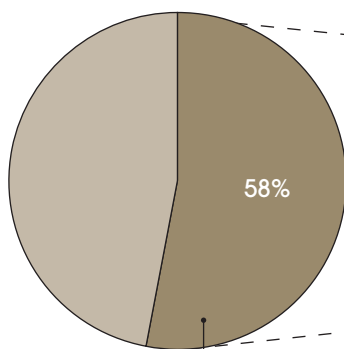


Conduct Bi-Weekly E-mail and Phone Check-Ups

- Regular communications alert students to upcoming deadlines

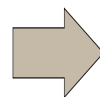
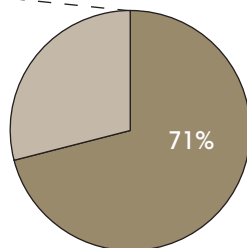
UNM Graduating Hundreds of Additional Students

Re-enrollment Rate



2,600 students re-enrolled out of 4,500 students contacted

Graduation Rate



1,850 Additional Graduates Since 1997



- Majority of beneficiaries are transfers or outside the six-year window
- Hundreds of graduates needed only help with paperwork, no additional coursework

Source: University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tool #16A: Re-enrollment Outreach Letter—University of New Mexico



May 25, 2009

Dear Student,

We at the University of New Mexico care about you and your academic success, and have contacted you because our records show that you left UNM in good standing without finishing your bachelor's degree.

We have pre-qualified you for the Graduation Project—a program that makes it easier for you to return to complete your studies. Please let us know your continued interest in achieving a bachelor's degree:

☐ **YES, I would like to finish my bachelor's degree at UNM.**

(Complete the reverse side of this letter and the enclosed admissions application, and then return both in the pre-paid postage envelope provided.)

We would like to help by offering the following services:

- **Admissions:** Simplified re-admit application: shorter than UNM's regular application and no application fee.
- **Correspondence and Online Courses:** Along with these courses, evening and weekend classes are available.
- **Tuition Assistance:** Students with a minimum GPA of 2.5 automatically qualify for the Regents' Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), which awards a tuition credit up to 50% of your tuition, not to exceed \$750 per semester (up to a total of \$3,000).
- **Tuition Payments:** The Graduation Project allows for monthly tuition payments (no additional fees) rather than requiring students to pay the entire amount of tuition before the semester starts.
- **Degree Summary:** We will provide you with a PROGRESS report to help you determine which classes you need to graduate, and recommend that you meet with your advisor (every semester) to create and revisit your plan.
- **Enrollment:** If you find that you are "shut-out" of a course that is a specific requirement needed for your degree, call our office by Thursday before financial disenrollment and we will make every effort to get you into that class.

☐ **NO, I am not interested in completing my degree at UNM because** (please check below and return in the pre-paid postage envelope provided):

☐ I completed my degree at another university. Please note university and semester completed:

☐ I'm not currently interested, but might be later, so please keep me on your mailing list.

☐ I'm not interested; please take me off your mailing list.

☐ Other: _____

If you have questions or would like further information regarding the Graduation Project, please contact our office at (505) 277-0896. We wish you well and hope UNM will be a part of your future success.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Shields, M.S.

Project Coordinator

Tool #16B: Graduation Project Welcome Letter—University of New Mexico



The Graduation Project: 277-0896

Dane Smith Hall, Room 220

WELCOME TO THE GRADUATION PROJECT.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU COMPLETE YOUR DEGREE!!

- ☞ Complete and return the enclosed forms. We need this information to complete your file.
 - If you need to be re-admitted, you will hear directly from the Admissions Office when you are re-admitted.
- ☞ After we receive your completed materials, you will receive a Progress Report. This report will help when you meet with your academic advisor.
- ☞ Make an appointment with your academic advisor. Do not register for classes until you determine what classes are needed to complete your degree. Your advisor will help you understand the Progress Report and verify what classes you need to graduate.
- ☞ Also, ask your advisor about applying for graduation. Graduation is not automatic. You must apply for graduation so that your name is added to a pending graduation list.
- ☞ Once you have been re-admitted, and met with your advisor, it is time to register for classes.
 - If a class you need for graduation is closed, call us immediately—we will make every attempt to get you into that class. We are able to over-enroll only PRIOR to financial disenrollment. After financial disenrollment has occurred, you will have to “yellow card” into any closed class. We are not permitted to over-enroll labs, online course, PE courses, classes limited with computers or courses restricted with studio space.
- ☞ Set up a payment plan with the Bursar’s Office or pay tuition in full. You are financially responsible for your tuition.
 - Please note the financial disenrollment date each semester.
- ☞ You are ready to attend class. Please remember, we are here to help and to answer your questions.

You are welcome to call our office at 277-0896, stop by Dane Smith Hall Room 220, or e-mail thegrad@unm.edu.

Tool #16C: Simplified Re-admission Application—University of New Mexico

[illegible]

Source: The Graduation Project, University of New Mexico; University Leadership Council interviews and analysis.

Tool #16C: Simplified Re-admission Application—University of New Mexico (cont.)

In-State Tuition Classification

If you are a New Mexico resident, you must complete the following section. Failure to provide complete information will result in automatic non-resident status. You must answer every question, including state and date.

18. Did your parents or legal guardian claim you as a dependent on federal income tax returns in the immediate past tax year? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If you are under the age of 23 or answered "Yes" to question 21, you must answer Questions 23–30 of "Parent/Guardian/Spouse" section in addition to the "Yourself" column. You may be asked to submit a copy of page one of your parents' or guardian's New Mexico Income Tax Return for the immediate past year.
19. Are you a non-resident married to a New Mexico resident? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, answer questions 23–30 in "Yourself" and "Spouse" columns. You may be asked to submit proof of marriage.
- If you answered no to either questions 21 or 22 above, answer questions 23–30 in the "Yourself" column only.

	Yourself	Parent/Guardian/Spouse
20. What state do you regard as your permanent home?	_____	_____
21. Have you lived in New Mexico for the past 12 months?	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
22. Dates and reasons you have been absent from the state longer than one month in the past two years:	Dates: _____ Reason: _____	Dates: _____ Reason: _____
23. Are you a registered voter?	☐ Yes ☐ No State: _____ Date of Reg.: _____	☐ Yes ☐ No State: _____ Date of Reg.: _____
24. Do you have a current drivers license?	☐ Yes ☐ No State: _____ Date of Reg.: _____	☐ Yes ☐ No State: _____ Date of Reg.: _____
25. Do you own a vehicle?	☐ Yes ☐ No State: _____ Date of Reg.: _____	☐ Yes ☐ No State: _____ Date of Reg.: _____
26. Have you filed New Mexico tax returns?	☐ Yes ☐ No Calendar years you have filed: _____	☐ Yes ☐ No Calendar years you have filed: _____
27. List employers and dates of employment during the last two years:	Employer: _____ Dates: _____ Employer: _____ Dates: _____	Employer: _____ Dates: _____ Employer: _____ Dates: _____

28. Have you ever paid in-state tuition at an institution outside NM? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, when?
29. Do you intend to maintain permanent New Mexico residence? ☐ Yes ☐ No
30. Are you a certified member of the Navajo tribe? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, do you maintain permanent residence on the reservation? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If you answered yes to both questions, you are eligible to claim residence for tuition purposes. Please ask for a Navajo certification form from this office.
31. Are you a member or a dependent of a member of the US Armed Forces who is stationed in New Mexico? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Note: Members of the US Armed Forces (or their spouses or dependents) may claim residence for tuition purposes during the period they are assigned active duty within the state of New Mexico. Please contact the Office of Admissions for more information.

I certify that all information given in this application is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. If I am accepted as a student at the University of New Mexico, I agree to conform and abide by the letter and spirit of all rules, regulations, and procedures of the University. Misrepresentation in any statement by the applicant or failure to abide by University academic regulations will be considered adequate grounds for denying admission, for cancellation of registration, or for suspension from the University.

Signature

Social Security Number

Date of Birth

Date

Tool #16D: Graduation Project FERPA Release—University of New Mexico



THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW MEXICO

VICE PROVOST, ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Room 220, Dane Smith Hall (505) 277-0896

THE GRADUATION PROJECT

General Information

Name: _____ Social Security Number: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone #: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Cell Phone #: _____ Work Phone #: _____

Intended Major: _____ Minor (if applicable): _____

Banner ID Number: _____

If admitted: Your Banner ID can be obtained by going to <http://www.unm.edu>; click on My UNM (one of the red blocks) and sign in using your UNM Net ID; scroll down to Demographic Self Service (on left side of page) and click on DSS (here, you will be prompted to sign in again); click on Demographic Information; this will take you to your personal demographics page where your new UNM ID (Banner ID) is located. This is also where you can update your name, address, and phone number.

If NOT admitted: You must first be admitted before you can create a UNM Net ID. Once admitted, follow the above instructions.

I am interested in the following:

- ☐ Tuition Assistance Award Program (please sign here: _____)
- ☐ Monthly Payment Plan
- ☐ A personal degree summary
- ☐ Course Tutoring (Through the Center for Academic Support: CAPS)

FERPA Requirement

I hereby allow the Graduation Project at the University of New Mexico to discuss my academic file and anything that pertains to my degree completion with me over the phone or through my UNM e-mail account.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Tool #16E: Tuition Assistance Award Letter—University of New Mexico



August 6, 2009

Dear Student,

Congratulations! You have been awarded the Regent's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) award, which will offset your tuition up to \$1,500.00 per academic year for two years—disbursed as 50 percent of your tuition, up to \$750.00 per semester. The TAP award is designed to provide additional financial assistance in the form of a tuition credit to students participating in the Graduation Project. Qualification for this award is automatic if you request it, and have a 2.5 GPA or better.

Please note: The following requirements need to be met in order for you to receive your TAP award.

- First, register for classes (that have been approved by your academic advisor).
- Next, visit the Bursar's Office to set up a payment plan for your tuition. You will be exempt from the fees associated with the UNM online payment plan.
- The TAP award will be credited automatically to your account typically the third or fourth week of school.
- The TAP award is for tuition only—if a third party, scholarship, or grant pays your tuition, you will not be eligible to use the TAP award.
- Should you fail to meet your financial obligations to the University, your TAP award will be cancelled.

Finally, call us immediately (before the semester financial disenrollment date) if you find that you are “shut out” of a course* that fills a specific requirement needed for your degree, and we will make every effort to get you into that course. (**Not available for labs, PE courses, classes limited with computers, or those courses restricted with studio space.*)

We look forward to a continued relationship, working together to achieve your goal of earning an undergraduate degree. We are here to support you in this quest!

Sincerely,

Vice Provost
Academic Affairs

Tool #16F: Degree Audit Cover Letter—University of New Mexico

August 6, 2009

Dear Student,

Enclosed is a degree audit we received from the University of New Mexico, PROGRESS system. Please read the entire report carefully. The PROGRESS report lists UNM graduation requirements first, followed by graduation requirements for your college or school, and then specific requirements for your major and minor. The second half of the report is your transcript. Here are several items to keep in mind:

- If you are CORE exempt (NO CORE), you may disregard the portion of the degree audit that refers to CORE requirements.
- An “OK” means that all requirements within a certain area have been met.
- A “NO” indicates that some requirements are still needed. Specific requirements that are still needed within an area will be marked either by “—> NEEDS” or a “-”. These are the parts of the report that you should focus on.
- If you think you have completed a course that satisfies a requirement, but you do not see it reflected in that area, check in “University Electives” at the end of the report (before your transcript). If you find that the course has been listed as an elective and you feel that this is incorrect, you must speak to your advisor.
- Please note that PROGRESS reports are updated twice a year, and therefore some changes may not be reflected on this report.
- If you still have questions, please contact your advisor or the Records Office via e-mail at progress@unm.edu.

In addition to this report, you should meet with an academic advisor every semester to make sure that you are on track. Regularly meeting with your academic advisor is important to ensure your success. Also, the semester prior to the semester in which you plan to graduate you will need to be placed on a prospective graduation list. This is done through your advisor.

If you have any questions, please call the Graduation Project Staff at (505) 277-0896.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Shields, M.S.
Project Coordinator
The Graduation Project



References and Selected Readings

References and Selected Reading

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