



# Institutional Efficiency + Effectiveness

Executive Summary

**Total Number of Sessions:** 5 all-inclusive sessions with faculty, staff, and students.

Date	Modality and Location	Audience	# of Participants
April 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2023	Virtual	Faculty and Staff	51
April 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2023	In-Person, LPC	Students	44
May 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2023	In-Person, Loop	Faculty and Staff	23
May 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2023	In-Person, LPC	Faculty and Staff	24
May 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2023	In-Person, LPC	Faculty and Staff	24
<b>Institutional Efficiency and Effectiveness Total Participants:</b>			<b>166 community members</b>

**Faculty and Staff Discussion Questions for the April 6<sup>th</sup> and May 2<sup>nd</sup> sessions:**

1. Can you think of other areas to include (aside from retention, student advising, career services, and university organizational structure)?
2. For each of these four areas (plus any other areas we identify today),
  - a) What obstacles to engagement do you see?
  - b) Where do you see this playing out well at the university?
  - c) What ideas do you have to remove the obstacles identified?

**Faculty and Staff Discussion Questions for the May 5<sup>th</sup> and May 15<sup>th</sup> sessions:**

1. What would need to change in our current structure/processes for us to start using [this data](#) effectively; how could we use this information to increase retention?

**Narrative of the efforts:**

This topic is unique in that the President had three focus areas within the Institutional Efficiency + Effectiveness topic he wanted the university community to prioritize: retention, career services, and student advising and support. We held four traditional, open design sessions for faculty and staff, as well as one student session the covered all topics; all sessions allowed participants to contribute their feedback on the given topic and questions. We then scheduled invitation-only sessions for each focus area, or sub-group. The Office of the President asked university leadership to identify experts in their areas who were then invited to a series of focused meetings on each subject of interest. The sub-group meetings followed a different structure than our traditional design sessions because it was critical for us to document how we currently offer student services to collectively design the best path forward.

*All-inclusive Institutional Efficiency + Effectiveness design sessions*

The President, Chief of Staff, or a member from the Office of Continuous Improvement began each session by welcoming the group and introducing the initiative. For the first two sessions, they asked the community to think about how we can better use our resources to retain our students and remove the barriers that prevent us from providing excellent career and student support services. In the second two sessions the President introduced a dataset managed by IRMA that identifies courses in which students most frequently struggle (earn grades of D, F, or W) and could signal a students' likelihood to persist or graduate. He asked the group to discuss what would need to change, in terms of data analysis, organizational structure, policies, and procedures, for DePaul to effectively use this dataset to identify and fully assist these struggling students.

After the introduction, we split into groups of about 10 community members, either in person or through Zoom break-out rooms, for small group discussions. Each discussion was facilitated and documented by a member from the offices of the President or Continuous Improvement.

Community members discussed the need for better systems that allow for proactive outreach to students based on a series of indicators. Much of the conversation on this theme described how many of our support offices are not granted access to data that would allow for this type of outreach, but rather, forced to rely on students to self-identify and know where to find the resources they need. Our existing system to flag students for a variety of reasons doesn't provide transparency for what happens next or for resolution. Many faculty members commented that they've raised flags on struggling students but aren't sure where that information goes or who, if anyone, reaches out to the student. Conversations also echoed the president's idea of having a concierge model for student support services – a centralized office that can triage almost all student needs to eliminate duplication and simplify the student experience.

**Recommended Initiatives to improve our institution's efficiency and effectiveness:**

We documented over 350 pieces of feedback from the all-inclusive Institutional Efficiency and Effectiveness discussion questions. From this feedback, 35 overarching themes represent some of our community's thoughts on the current obstacles to retaining DePaul students, and ways to improve our retention rates across all student populations. We connected many of these themes to the initiatives developed by career services, retention, and student services experts among the DePaul community. 69 potential initiatives emerged from the excellent work completed by experts from all sub-groups, the four all-inclusive design sessions, and the single student session. Four initiatives unique to the all-inclusive sessions are listed below. *Note: initiatives from the all-inclusive design sessions are not repeated in the documentation of sub-group initiatives:*

**Initiative 1: Review the flexible work week policy and approval process to make it easier for individual units to design a work schedule that fits their needs.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Would like to review our current academic calendar and flexible work week options.

**Initiative 2: Develop a system to identify specific student engagement opportunities across campus that allow for employee volunteers from around the university.**

Discussion themes supporting this initiative:

- Develop a system for all employees to volunteer for student engagement opportunities across campus to reduce the burden placed on a small group of employees.
- Investigate system or tool for staff to track other employees' interest and availability to support on-campus events or programs.

**Initiative 3: Review the different readmit process for each college and develop a consistent university-wide process for all students looking to be readmitted to DePaul.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Creating a consistent academic advising and readmit experience for students across all colleges.

**Initiative 4: Review current student fair calendar and topics to understand gaps and develop additional success fairs to engage students.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Develop a robust offering of "success fairs" to foster student involvement and academic success.

**Initiative 5: Create and execute communication strategy and standards for student contact, so that communications to students are coordinated and consistent across the university and are an efficient use of students' time.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Review and improve communication plans, eliminating white noise, and finding appropriate methods to connect with our students.

**Initiative 6: Improve advising model so that advisors are more adequately supported and advising experience is consistent across colleges. Review of their roles and responsibilities and the simplification or systematization of parts of their job to allow for more in-depth counseling and conversation instead of paperwork; might include students answering in-depth intake forms before appointments so that they can get the most out of a 15-minute appointment.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Varying academic advising experiences across different colleges and the need for coordination and consistency.

**Initiative 7: Review student support infrastructure to ensure that we are offering the programs that serve our current student population in both size and unique needs; adjust staffing so that it is adequate.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- We're operating as though our total student population has not decreased, and we need to pause and reevaluate what we are offering that is still critical and what we can let go.

**Initiative 8: Review financial processes for improvement opportunities so that students (traditional and graduate/adult) can get answers in a timely manner.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- A centralized "one-stop shop" for student resources and assistance is important, as are formal committees or groups to address diverse student needs and triage issues effectively. There are challenges in identifying and supporting students who don't self-identify for financial aid or other services.

**Initiative 9: Review commencement processes for more efficiency and a better, scaled experience for staff and students.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Need for improved processes and systems to resolve student issues like registration holds.

**Initiative 10: Consider simplifying program offerings, especially when there are many different programs being offered by different colleges in the same subject area. Our curricular**

**portfolio is complicated and needs to be reviewed.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- We're operating as though our total student population has not decreased, and we need to pause and reevaluate what we are offering that is still critical and what we can let go.

**Initiative 11: Standardize different engagement opportunities between current students and alumni, providing adequate resources to departments supporting these issues, like ASK in Career Center, as well as encouraging ongoing cross-department collaboration.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Enhancing the alumni network and streamlining process by which alumni opt-into different opportunities, like Alumni Sharing Knowledge (ASK), would likely increase retention, create efficiency and more adequately resource initiatives tied to alumni.

**Initiative 12: Review availability of professional development options and potential disparities between the different levels of employees and their opportunities to build skills and grow—seems to be at manager or department level, and it could be more standard, potentially leading to more staff retention or higher staff morale.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Develop a system for all employees to volunteer in student engagement opportunities across campus to reduce the burden placed on a small group of employees.

**Initiative 13: Review internal structure and communications to ensure we can support students in the best possible way and ensure that employees have streamlined access to resources.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Need to centralize announcements and create a consistent communication forum.

**Initiative 14: Review DePaul Central Loop decision to separate Financial Aid and Student Accounts—brings the bounce for students from one office to the next, something that is an even larger challenge for certain student populations.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Need for a centralized triage office and a clearinghouse to manage student support information.

**Initiative 15: Review separation of Office of Research Services (ORS) from Restricted Accounting and the impact it has on the overall grant process and work.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Need to break down silos and foster collaboration across departments and areas, especially when streamlining organizational structures and reducing complexity so we have a more unified and centralized retention strategy.

**Initiative 16: Explore possibility of consortiums with other local universities to share resources, like IS.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Evaluating and improving the use of technology and information systems, while establishing clear technology strategies and effective change management processes, is important to university's effectiveness.

**Initiative 17: Review data on adjunct faculty's role in student academic lifecycle—are most first- and second-year courses taught by adjuncts? Do adjuncts have access or understanding of the student support resources that exist? Do they have a defined role and set of responsibilities tied to student retention?**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Enhance faculty development tied to understanding of student resources and directive/encouragement to connect students to these resources.

**Initiative 18: Proactively identify students who are at risk of registration holds or in need of additional funding sources and are a match for an existing scholarship. This proactive identification of students will help remove some of the responsibility of students to self-identify to an office and may contribute to better retention.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Staff and faculty who work most with students do not always have a basic understanding of ways in which to engage with students on common issues, like their reasons for withdrawing from courses.

**Initiative 19: Explore expansion opportunities for two-credit-hour courses to help students take advantage of the full 18 hours, and to learn life skills in the process.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Would like to explore additional cohort models, small learning communities, co-curricular programming, and experiential learning opportunities for increased support.

**Initiative 20: Expand Welcome Week Involvement Fair events into smaller success fairs or activities, so that students can fully understand what it means to be successful at DePaul.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Develop a robust offering of "success fairs" to foster student involvement and academic success.

**Initiative 21: Educate students in ways to be their best advocates, knowing how, when and to whom they should reach out at the university; conversely better educate DePaul employees on these student resources and how to best teach students behaviors on appropriately accessing support services.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Provide better education and resources to all employees especially regarding support services and proactive student connections, and then evaluate the impact of student interactions with different employees (term faculty, adjunct faculty, staff, etc.) to determine the impact on student retention.

**Initiative 22: Integrate faculty into the pre-attendance and post-graduation communications with students; right now, communication with these students is siloed in Admission and Advancement offices.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Enhance faculty development tied to understanding of student resources and directive/encouragement to connect students to these resources.

**Initiative 23: Improve the follow-up communication that happens with faculty after they raise concerns about a student with Dean of Students or advising offices.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Lack of a trusted reporting mechanism for faculty to flag at-risk students.

**Initiative 24: Explore ways to better engage and support commuter students both on campus and off—from creating regional hubs where students can gather, space on campus for students to safely relax between classes and commuting, and by increasing engagement with alumni in their local area.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- There's a perception that we provide inconsistent support and resources depending on student population – and a need to make this more equitable regardless of student type.

**Initiative 25: Create more and differentiated learning communities.**

Discussion theme supporting this initiative:

- Would like to explore additional cohort models, small learning communities, co-curricular programming, and experiential learning opportunities for increased support.

### **Next Steps**

The Office of the President will review the comprehensive list of initiatives created by the sub-groups and all-inclusive design sessions determine which ones to pursue.