

Eight Simple Ways to Increase Student Retention in Higher Ed

 [facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/eight-simple-ways-to-increase-student-retention-](https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/eight-simple-ways-to-increase-student-retention-)

February 12,
2020



Educational institutions have a great responsibility of graduating all students with the essential knowledge and skills necessary for success in their chosen field. As faculty, we are responsible to do our best to retain as many of our students as possible. This is key for any institution of higher learning we represent.

While the term student retention may sound a little clinical, and one we may not consider in the midst of setting up, managing, and teaching our online courses, it is one we cannot ignore. Your institution may have a specific expected student retention rate for each instructor, such as 95% or better. The pressure is on to make sure you meet or exceed that expectation to remain as a top performer. Whether you are an experienced instructor or new to online teaching, meeting the faculty expectation may require developing or revising your retention strategies. Here are eight simple strategies that will help you to keep your students engaged and improve retention:

1. **Make a Great First Impression**

It's so much easier to win students over when they feel you are dedicated to their success. Sending welcome emails shows you are excited to meet them and that you will be there for them throughout the journey. When those first-week questions fill your inbox, respond

immediately with an extra warm tone. When a student asks for help, commend them for doing so.

2. Closely Monitor

Show students you are paying attention to their progress early in the course. Weekly letters of concern to students who are below a certain average shows them that you care they are not meeting expectations and want to help them improve their performance. "High five" emails show students you have taken notice of their hard work and want them to continue their efforts.

3. Social Media

Connecting with today's students on approved social media platforms will put more of a face to your name and make you seem more real to students who may view you as the "sage on the stage."

4. Clear Feedback

When students see you are taking time to provide clear and meaningful feedback to help them improve, the better engaged they will be in the learning process. Do not only tell students what they did wrong but also offer suggestions, tips, and resources that they can reference to improve future assignments.

5. Texting and WhatsApp

Texting and other free messaging services like Whatsapp are faster and more effective modes of communication in reaching students. Offer students as many ways to connect with you as possible to make it easier for them to reach out and ask for help when needed.

6. Inspire Students

All of us need reminders or a little nudge to be able to see beyond the present. Get into the habit of posting random announcements and/or send emails with inspirational quotes to remind them of their ability and that if they are determined to succeed, they will. Students like to hear that their instructor believes in them, so remind them of this and that you are always there to help. This will create a pleasant and trusting classroom environment where students feel valued and motivated to be their very best. They will be excited to hear what you'll share with them next.

7. Use a Retention Center

If you are using Blackboard, the retention center is an excellent tool for tracking and identifying students who are at the highest risk. Once in the retention center, there is a risk status bar that provides a quick summary of how many students are at risk. This allows for

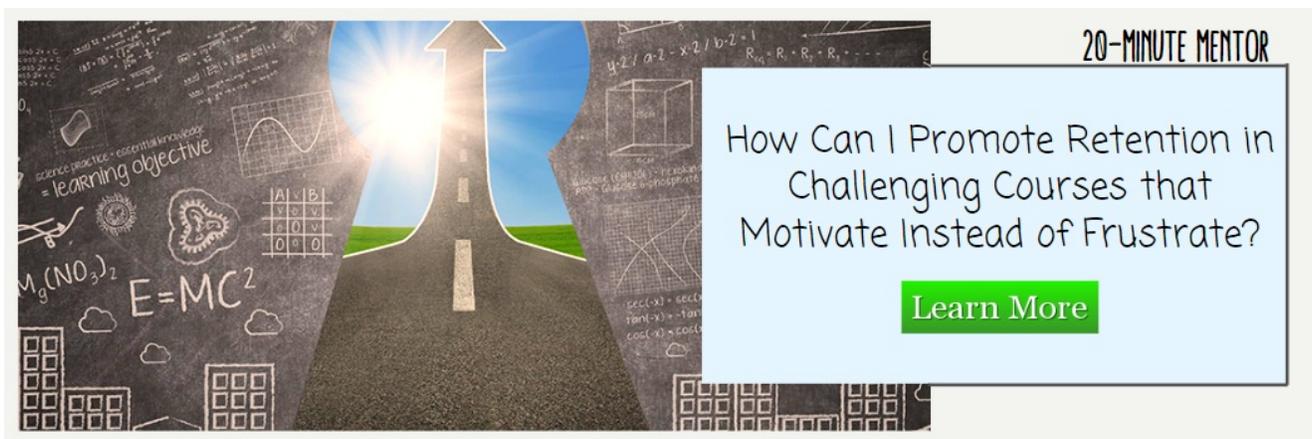
closer monitoring and provides outreach efforts for faculty to help with student persistence and retention. When you send a message via the retention center, it is automatically documented with a date and time stamp in the retention center notes for easy tracking.

8. Address “at-risk” Students Early

Do not wait to address “at risk” students at the mid-point or close to the end of a term but do so as early as possible to allow for more effective prevention and early intervention. Develop an early warning system to identify students who are at risk and have intervention strategies readily available to help them. This will help you have a better chance of retaining your students and guiding them to success.

These are some of the ways that will make for a more pleasant teaching and learning experience which will result in increased student persistence and retention.

Recommended Magna Product:



20-MINUTE MENTOR

How Can I Promote Retention in Challenging Courses that Motivate Instead of Frustrate?

[Learn More](#)

Dr. Edna Murugan has over 22 years of higher education experience to include both teaching and administration in online and on ground learning. She is currently an online faculty manager at West Coast University.

Dr. Noura Badawi has been teaching online for 15 years.