

The Ten Most Effective Retention Strategies for Community/Technical Colleges

David S. Crockett



Noel-Levitz®

The Secret of Retention

“The secret of successful retention programs is no secret at all, but a reaffirmation of some of the important foundations of higher education. In short, retention is no more than, but certainly no less than, successful education.”

Dr. Vincent Tinto, Syracuse University

The Importance of Brevity

“There is a time when nothing must be said and a time when something must be said, but never a time when everything must be said.”

William Caxton
15th Century English Printer

Topics

- A Brief Overview of Student Retention
- Ten Common Key Community/Technical College Retention Planning and Implementation Strategies

“A Rose By Another Name”

Retention vs. Quality of Student Life and Learning (QSLL)

The Need to Keep Improving

“Even if you are on the right track, you are going to get run over if you just sit there.”

Will Rogers

“The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.”

John F. Kennedy

What is Needed in Developing a More Successful Retention Program?

A Premise

- More strategic institutionwide retention thinking and action and less emphasis on fragmented and diffused tactical responses.

“Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least.”

Goethe

Six Strategic Features that Foster Student Engagement and Persistence

- A “living” mission and “lived” educational philosophy
- An unshakeable focus on student learning
- Environments adapted for educational enrichments

“Student Success on College:
Creating Conditions that Matter”

Six Strategic Features that Foster Student Engagement and Persistence

- Clearly marked pathways to student success
- An improvement-oriented ethos
- Shared responsibility for educational quality and student success

“Student Success on College:
Creating Conditions that Matter”

A Brief Overview of Student Retention

(Or, What We Already Know)

The “Gap” Problem

The failure to translate the voluminous research findings on student retention into models that can guide institutional actions to enhance student retention

Vincent Tinto
College Student Retention
ACE 2005

What is Known About Student Retention

- Why it is important
- Working definition
- Formula for student success

What is Known About Student Retention

- National and System “Benchmark” Retention and Graduation Rates
- Why students drop out
- What retention-related strategies really work

Current Retention-Related Foundational Literature: A Must Read List for Those Interested in Improving QSSL

- *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter* (Kuh and Associates)
- “*College Student Retention: Formula for Student Success*” (Seidman and Associates)

Current Retention-Related Foundational Literature: A Must Read List for Those Interested in Improving QSSL

- *How Colleges Affect Students: A Third Decade of Research – Volume Two (Pascarella and Terenzini)*
- *“What Works In Student Retention” (Habley and McClanahan)*

Current Retention-Related Foundational Literature: A Must Read List for Those Interested in Improving QSSL

- *“Degree Attainment Rates at American Colleges and Universities” (Astin and Oseguera)*
- *Tinto, V. (2004). “Student Retention and Graduation: Facing the Truth, Living with the Consequences”. (Occasional Paper One) Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education: Washington, D.C. (222.pellinstitute.org)*

Current Retention-Related Foundational Literature: A Must Read List for Those Interested in Improving QSSL

- *Hersh, R. And Marrow, J., (2005). Declining by Degrees: Higher Education at Risk. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.*
- _____., (2005). *A Matter of Culture and Leadership: Student Success in State Colleges and Universities. Washington, D.C.: AASCU. (www.aascu.org)*

Current Retention-Related Foundational Literature: A Must Read List for Those Interested in Improving QSSL

- *“A Matter of Degrees: Improving Graduation Rates In Four-Year Colleges and Universities” (Carey)*
- *“Engagement by Design” (Community College Survey of Student Engagement)*

Four Reasons Why QSSL Initiatives Are Important

- 1) Intrinsic belief in the value of higher education to transform lives.
- 2) Linkage to increased enrollments and institutional funding.

Four Reasons Why QSSL Initiatives Are Important

- 3) Institutional commitment to student satisfaction and success.
- 4) Retention and completion rates serve as an accountability measure of institutional effectiveness and quality.

Retention Definition

Successful retention programs encompass virtually everything an institution does to improve the quality of student life and learning.

Retention should not be an institutional goal but rather a by-product of improved educational programs and services for students.

The Overall Retention Strategy

- Continuing to do even better what is already being done well
- Focusing on those things that are important to student success and satisfaction and need to be improved

Assessing Current State

Noel-Levitz Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Self-Inquiry

Students Persist When:

- They are making progress towards educational and career goals; and
- They are satisfied with the quality of educational programs, services, and environment.

We Know The Formula

Student Learning

Plus

Student Engagement

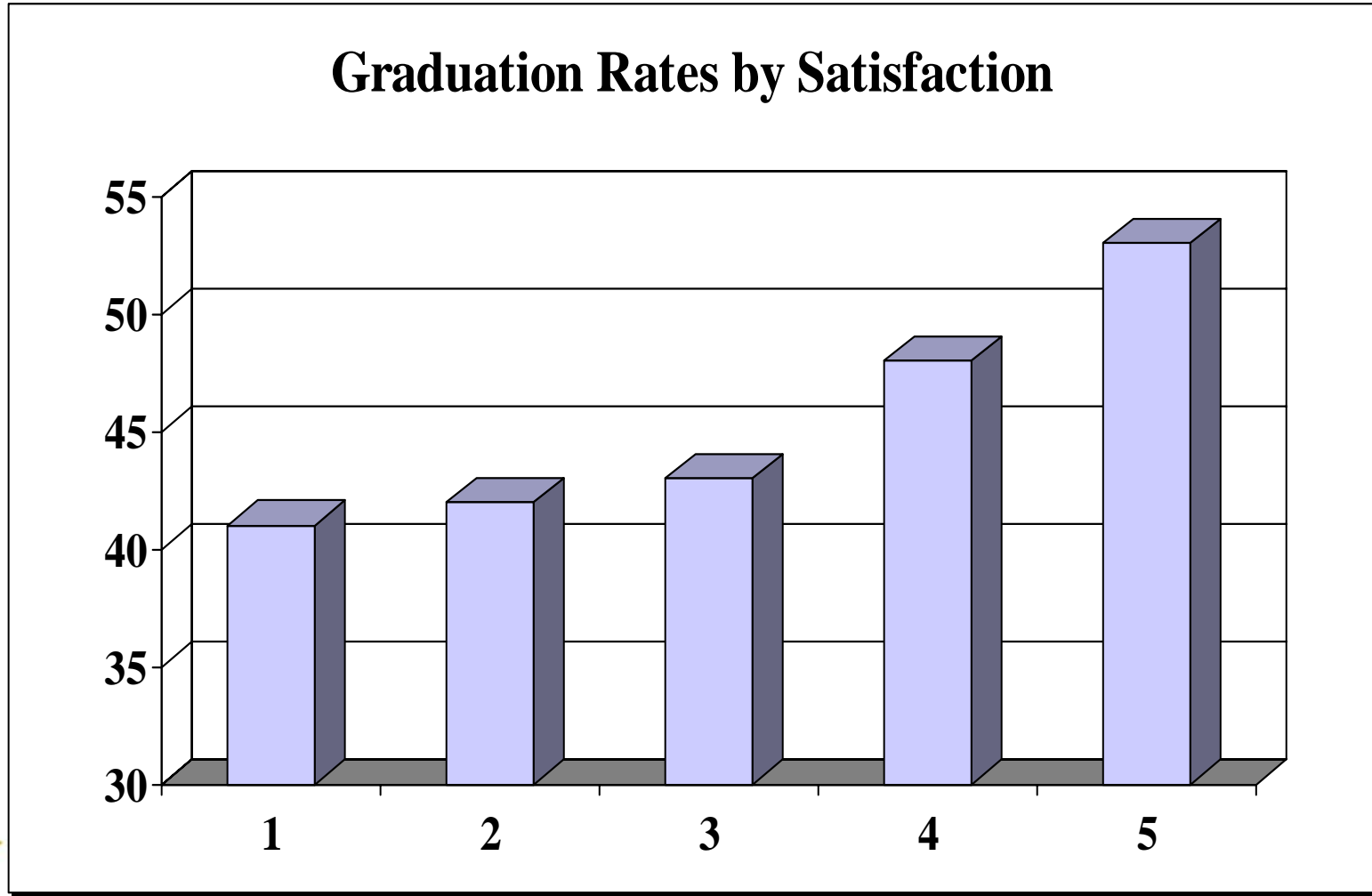
Plus

Student Satisfaction

Equals

STUDENT SUCCESS

Satisfaction Begets Success



Seidman Retention Formula

Retention = Early ID + Early Intervention +
Intensive and Continuous Intervention

“College Student Retention:
Formula for Student Success”

Why Students Drop Out

Attrition is the result of an extremely intricate interplay among a multitude of variables. As such, attempts to isolate single causal factors are misguided and ultimately futile.

Pantages and Creedon

Causes of Students Leaving

- Goal change or attainment
- Uncertainty of educational/career plan
- Extra-institutional factors
- Adjustment/transition difficulties
- Academic difficulty
- Congruence/fit (e.g., boredom, dissonance, irrelevance, isolation)
- Finances

Voluntary Retention Models

- ***Expectancy Model***: The institution fails to meet student expectations on one or more key measures.
- ***Academic/Career Model***: The student leaves for specific academic/career reasons (e.g. unavailability of major, career change).
- ***Financial Model***: The student leaves for primarily financial reasons (cost/benefit).
- ***Extra-Institutional Model***: The student leaves for reasons over which the institution has little control (e.g., personal, health).

Distribution of Student Commitment

Some students will leave no matter what you do



Some students will stay no matter what you do



Some students will allow you to influence their decisions to stay or leave



Retention is a Complex and Challenging Problem and Process

- The scope of institutional retention strategies is extensive and varied.
- Some important retention strategies require behavioral or attitudinal changes.

Retention is a Complex and Challenging Problem and Process

- Responsibility/accountability cannot be easily assigned organizationally.
- Retention efforts require the support and involvement of the total institution.
- Attrition is a multi-variant phenomenon requiring multiple strategies.

Retention is Everybody's Business

Improving the Quality of Student Life and Learning is what you are paid to do.

A Retention Reminder

“For every complex problem there is a simple solution, and it’s wrong.”

Henry L. Mencken

Four Institutional Actions that Enhance Retention and Graduation Rates

1. Providing support (e.g., tutoring, developmental courses, student groups, summer bridge programs, academic advising, personal counseling, freshman seminar)
2. Connecting academic support to everyday learning (e.g., Supplemental Instruction, linked classes)

Dr. Vincent Tinto, 2004

Four Institutional Actions that Enhance Retention and Graduation Rates

3. Effective assessment (e.g., entry assessment, early warning systems, student learning, student satisfaction, student engagement, educational outcomes, advising, teaching)
4. Engaging students on learning (e.g., cooperative/ collaborative teaching strategies, learning communities)

Dr. Vincent Tinto, 2004

Empirically Documented Retention-Related Strategies

- Freshman seminar/extended orientation
- Supplemental instruction
- Learning communities

Extended Orientation (Freshman Seminar)

- Developing academic skills and integration and providing academic advisement
- Easing transition/adjustment/social integration
- Providing ongoing orientation to campus resources and services

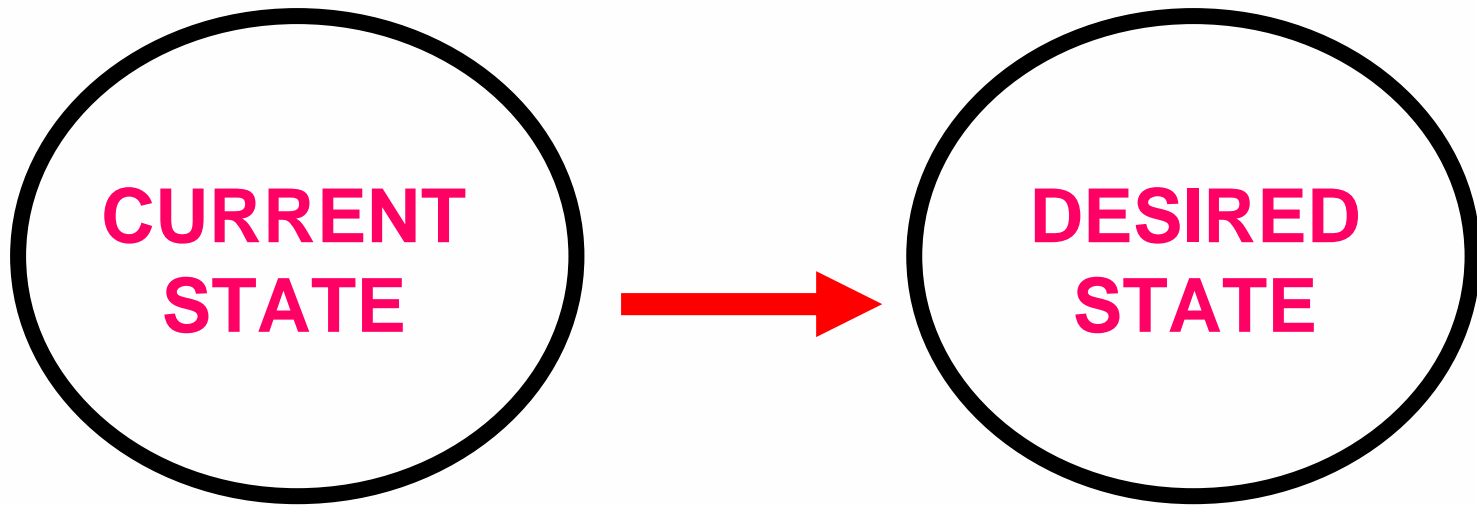
Supplemental Instruction (SI)

A model of academic assistance which targets “high risk” courses and assists students to master content while developing and integrating learning and study strategies.

Learning Communities

A curricular structure that links together existing courses to foster both intellectual and social connections.

QSSL (Retention) Initiatives are About Moving From



Quality of Student Life and Learning

Successful Two-year Colleges Share Three Important Attributes

- They focus on the needs of their students
- They work to continually improve the quality of the educational experience
- They rely on student satisfaction assessment results to shape their QSSL (retention) agenda

“The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with, but whether it is the same problem you had last year.”

John Foster Dulles

Ten Common Key Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Planning Strategies



Noel-Levitz®

Ten Common Key Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Planning Strategies

- 1) Collect, compile, and analyze pertinent retention-related data, information, and research to aid and abet retention-related planning and strategizing

Employ Culture of Evidence Indicators

In a culture of evidence, institutional and individual reflection and action typically are prompted and supported by data about student persistence, student learning, and institutional performance.

Source: McClenney, B., and K. McClenney, *Student Learning, Persistence, and Attainment*. 2003

Retention/Attrition Research Goals

- To determine the retention/attrition rates by selected student characteristics (who).
- To determine when students drop out.
- To determine why students drop out.
- To determine what strategies to employ.

Common Retention-related Measures and Tracking Variables

- Successful course completion
- Term-to-term persistence
- Annual return rate
- Degree, diploma/certificate completion rates

National First to Second Year Retention Rates

	N	SD	Mean
Two-year Public Community/ Technical Colleges	447	16.4	51.6%

ACT, Inc.

National Persistence to Degree*

	N	SD	Mean
Two-year Public Community/ Technical Colleges	313	19.1	30.1%

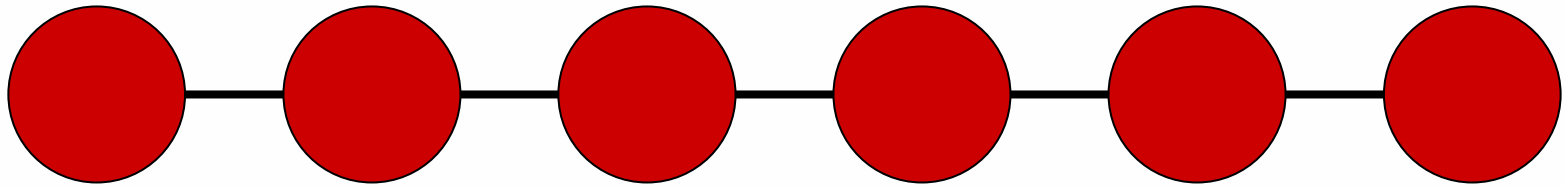
* 3 years

ACT
Institutional Data File
2005

Common Retention-related Measures and Tracking Variables

- Success rates by selected student characteristics (e.g., racial, ethnic, gender, age, ability, classification)
- Persistence and completion rates by program of study
- Persistence and completion rates for students in special retention-related initiatives and programs

A Cohort Survival Rate Study: Determining Enrollment Status by Term



- Persisters
- Completers
- Stopouts
- Dropouts

- Attainers
- Academic Dismissal
- Social Dismissal

Issues in Tracking Student Retention/Success and Graduation Rates

- Educational Intent
(Community/Technical Colleges)
- Time to Completion
- Transfer Students
(“Swirling Student Syndrome”)

Determining Student Success at a Two-Year College

Importance of tracking/monitoring
individual student educational intent and
validating student achievement of
personal/educational goals

A Key Definition

Attainer: To succeed or achieve a goal.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary
Fourth Edition (1999)

Reasons for Attending a Two-Year College

- Take courses leading to associate degree
- Take transfer courses and plan to transfer to a four-year institution
- Take courses leading to technical degree or certificate
- Take courses to upgrade job, career skills, or maintain career licensure; no plans to pursue degree
- Take courses for credit, but unsure about future educational plans
- Take courses for personal growth, pleasure, or interest; no intent to pursue career

An Important Reminder

Do not focus too much on the quantitative measures of retention (e.g., annual return rate, cohort graduation rate) and lose sight of the qualitative goal of retention initiatives (e.g., quality enhancement).

Ten Common Key Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Planning Strategies

- 2) Implement an early identification/alert system and appropriate intervention strategies

Early Alert/Warning System

Goals:

- Identify, in advance of enrollment, “high-risk” or dropout prone students who could benefit from institutional intervention.

Noel-Levitz Retention Management System: An Early Alert Diagnostic Tool

Early Alert/Warning System

Goals:

- Identify enrolled students experiencing academic and/or personal problems that might be ameliorated by institutional intervention.

Definition of a High-Risk Student

A student who possesses one or more attributes or characteristics that in the past have been associated institutionally with higher rates of attrition is a high-risk student.

Compilation of Research “At-Risk” Characteristics

- Low high school grades and/or standardized test scores
- First-generation college student
- Lack of college preparatory high school curriculum
- Low S.E.S.
- Low level of educational aspiration/motivation

Compilation of Research “At-Risk” Characteristics

- Late applicant or registrant
- Physical or learning disability
- English as a second language
- G.E.D. graduate
- Uncertainty about program of study or reasons for attending college

Compilation of Research “At-Risk” Characteristics

- Non-continuous college attendance pattern (stop-outs)
- Work full-time while enrolled
- Single parent with children
- Lack of participation in extracurricular activities while in college
- Low first-year college GPA
- Excessive number of class absences

Caution

“Do not assume that categorical attributes or experiences are perfect predictors of future behaviors. Early warning systems, at best, are signals of the likelihood of potential problems, not absolute predictors of their occurrence.”

Vincent Tinto
Syracuse University

An Early Alert Admonition

“The race isn’t always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but that’s the way to bet.”

Damon Runyon

Six Common Obstacles to Successfully Implementing an Early Alert System

1. Unwillingness of faculty and staff to cooperate
2. Failure to identify correctly “high-risk” students and to ensure their participation in the appropriate intervention strategies
3. Failure to respect the confidentiality and privacy of students in a system highly dependent on communication and pro-active intervention

Six Common Obstacles to Successfully Implementing an Early Alert System

4. Lack of an adequate automated system for monitoring/tracking individual students
5. Ineffectiveness of the intervention strategies
6. Awareness of the tendency for any “system” to encourage unintentional stereotyping or self-fulfilling prophecies

Typical “High Risk” Intervention Strategies

- Summer bridge program
- Assessment and placement (cognitive, non-cognitive)
- Proactive/intrusive advising/counseling
- Developmental math

Common “High Risk” Intervention Strategies

- Academic support services (tutoring, study skills, writing and math labs, developmental course, SI, etc.)
- “Contracts for Success”
- Continuous monitoring and support

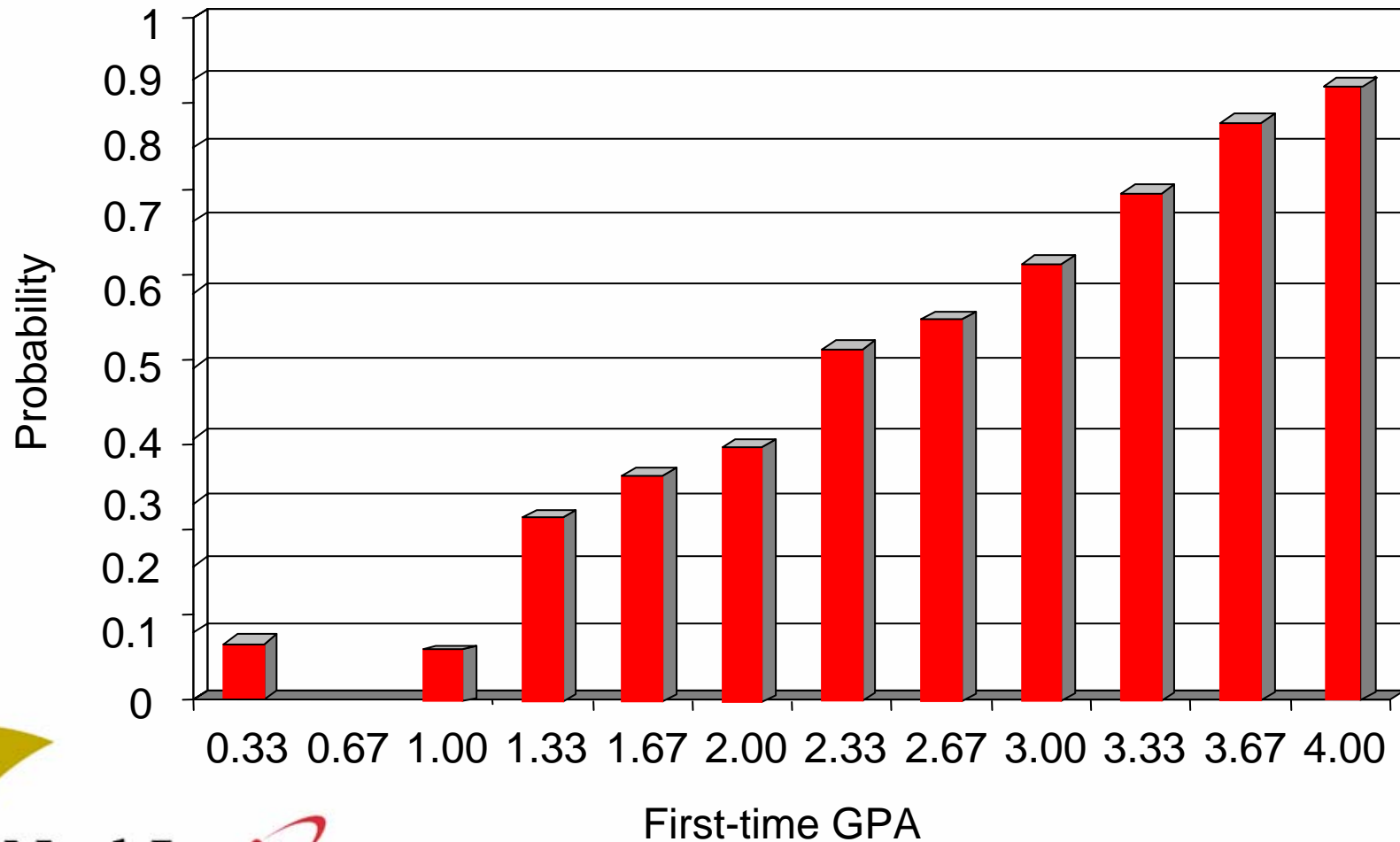
Ten Common Key Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Planning Strategies

- 3) Commit to both a “front-loading” and “progressive responsibility” philosophy in prioritizing action plans and determining degree of proactiveness

The Concept of Front-Loading

Placing emphasis and resource allocation on services and programs designed to assure a successful transition to the institution. It involves a proactive and interventionist approach with new students.

Probability of Graduating (Students Entering 1991-1996)



Foundations of Excellence in the First College Year

Foundational Dimensions (Standards)

A tool to evaluate and improve the first
year of college.

Foundations of Excellence in the First College Year

Dimensions Assumptions

- The academic mission of an institution is preeminent.
- The first college year is central to the achievement of an institution's mission and lays the foundation on which undergraduate education is built.

www.brevard.edu/fyc

Foundations of Excellence in the First College Year

Dimensions Assumptions

- Systematic evidence provides validation of the Dimensions.
- Collectively, the Dimensions constitute an ideal for improving not only the first college year, but also the entire undergraduate experience.

www.brevard.edu/fyc

The Concept of Progressive Responsibility

As students increasingly become more comfortable with the campus environment, get involved, and strengthen their institutional commitment, faculty and institutional support/intervention can lessen in intensity.

Ten Common Key Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Planning Strategies

4) Focus on the importance of the teaching/ learning process

An Observation

Too many retention strategies simply “work the edges” and are only tangential to student learning, which is at the core of the educational process.

An Observation

Many institutions unfortunately do not treat the assessment and improvement of the teaching/learning process as a continuous institutional priority and concern.

A Key Teaching/Learning Strategy

Teaching/learning centers are a key strategy for assisting instructional staff to continuously improve teaching and student learning.

Why is Teaching/Learning Critical?

- Efforts to improve the quality of classroom teaching can have a profound impact on learning, education's most critical outcome.
- A growing number of studies document the linkage between effective teaching, improved learning, and increased persistence.
- It is important to students.

Establishing Priorities

- “The number one priority for this institution is the teaching/learning process. The second most important priority is assisting students to successfully achieve their educational and career goals by providing high quality advising.
- All other activities and programs, while not unimportant, rank significantly below these two institutional priorities.”
- “Plan your activity accordingly!”

Top Three “Killer Courses” That Prevent Students From Advancing in College

- Developmental basic algebra
- Developmental intermediate algebra
- Developmental pre-algebra

National Center for
Educational Statistics

The Question

What can colleges do to enable improved student success in developmental mathematics courses, which are a primary barrier to student retention?

One Answer: EnableMath™

The EnableMath™ program is grounded in the theory that students who persist in the completion of relevant homework will succeed. A unique Web-based homework delivery system can bring pass rates in developmental mathematics courses in line with the pass levels of other courses for entering students.

Next Steps to Learn More

- Information
www.enablelearning.com
- Schedule a free Web demonstration
john-schmitz@noellevitz.com
1-800-876-1117

Three Conditions for Excellence in Education

1. High expectations of students' performance
2. Student involvement in the learning process
3. Regular/systematic assessment and feedback

Involvement in Learning

Role of Teaching/Learning

“No matter what the organizational or programmatic efforts are to set higher standards and to more closely evaluate educational outcomes, the unquestionable pivotal point in the educational system has been – and always will be – the teacher.”

Dr. John Rouche
University of Texas at Austin
Community College Leadership Program

A Worthy Goal

Moving from a teaching to a learning institution

Connecting Retention Activities to Student Learning

“From Teaching to Learning: A New
Paradigm for Undergraduate Education”

Robert Barr
John Tagg
Change Magazine
January 1995

Ten Common Key Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Planning Strategies

5) Emphasize a deliberate strategy of student engagement and involvement

A Definition of Student Engagement

“The time and energy students devote to educationally sound activities inside and outside the classroom and the policies and practices institutions use to induce students to take part in these activities.”

Definition of a Marginally Involved Student

- Not necessarily marginal academically
- Generally invisible to the institution
- Typically quiet, somewhat shy, and unobtrusive

Definition of a Marginally Involved Student

- Will not proactively get engaged in extracurricular activities
- Does not follow up on invitations for assistance
- Avoids contact with faculty and staff when possible

Why Student Engagement?

Research shows that the more actively engaged students are – with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter they study – the more likely they are to learn and persist toward achieving their academic goals. Student engagement, therefore, is a valuable yardstick for assessing whether, and to what extent, an institution is employing educational practices likely to produce successful results – more students across all subgroups achieving their academic goals.

Engagement by Design
2004 Findings

What is The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)?

- A survey to assess the extent students participate in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and personal development
- A way to think about institutional quality and outcomes

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Benchmarks/ Clusters of Educational Practices

- Levels of academic challenge
- Active and collaborative learning
- Student/faculty interaction
- Enriching educational experiences
- Supportive campus environment

“Though the NSSE survey doesn’t assess student learning outcomes directly, it does provide the kind of information that every school needs in order to focus its efforts to improve the undergraduate experience.”

George D. Kuh, Chancellors’ Professor and Dir. of the NSSE for the Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning at Indiana University – Bloomington.

Measuring Student Engagement

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)

Kay McClenney, CCSSE Director
The University of Texas at Austin
Community College Leadership Program
kmcclenney@ccsse.org

Conclusion

“These results suggest that one immediate step the vast majority of schools can take to improve undergraduate education is to identify students who are essentially disengaged and try to involve them in educationally purposeful activities.”

Dr. George Kuh

“What Were Student Benchmarks for Effective Educational Practices” Change, March/April 2003

Ten Common Key Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Planning Strategies

- 6) Enhance the organization and delivery of academic advising/counseling services

“If a boy has enough intelligence he should consider studying for the ministry, unless when he goes to the university he is given to carousing, drinking, and winching, in which case he ought to consider law.”

J. Collyer, 1761

Relationship Between Academic Advising and Student Persistence

Successful retention programs focus on strategies that enable students to clarify educational and career goals and relate these to academic offerings. Advising is the most significant mechanism by which this is accomplished.

Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience

Dr. Richard Light

*Making the Most Out of College:
Students Speak Their Mind*

Advising Outcomes

- Improved educational and career planning
- Academic success
- Student growth and development
- Student satisfaction
- Increased student retention

Student Satisfaction with academic advising

“National studies of student satisfaction indicate that advising is the area of their educational experience with which students are the least satisfied.”

George Kuh and Associates
*Student Success in College: Creating
Conditions That Matter*, AAHE,
www.josseybass.com

Two-year Community/Technical College Student Ranking of Importance of Academic Advising/ Counseling

SSI Scales

- 1. Instructional Effectiveness**
- 2. Registration Effectiveness**
- 3. Academic Advising/Counseling**

Noel-Levitz 2003 National Student Satisfaction Report

The Noel-Levitz Definition of an Institutional Challenge

Challenges are defined as SSI scores being above the median in importance and in the bottom quartile of satisfaction and/or the top quartile of performance gaps.

Advising-Related Challenges for Two-Year Colleges

- Classes are scheduled at times that are convenient for me.
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts.
- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about my program requirements.
- This school does whatever it can to help me reach my educational goals.

Julie Bryant, Noel-Levitz, *National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report*. 2004

Advising-Related Challenges for Two-Year Colleges

- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about the transfer requirements of other schools.
- The college shows concern for students as individuals.
- Faculty are understanding of students' unique life circumstances.
- My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.

Julie Bryant, Noel-Levitz, *National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report. 2004*

CCSSE Findings

“While students attribute relatively high importance to academic advising and career counseling, one-third to one-half rarely or never take advantage of those services.”

Engagement by Design
2004 Findings

Highest Correlate of any NSSE Item with Overall Student Satisfaction

“Overall, how would you rate the quality of academic advising you have received?”

Richard Miller, Noel-Levitz
2004

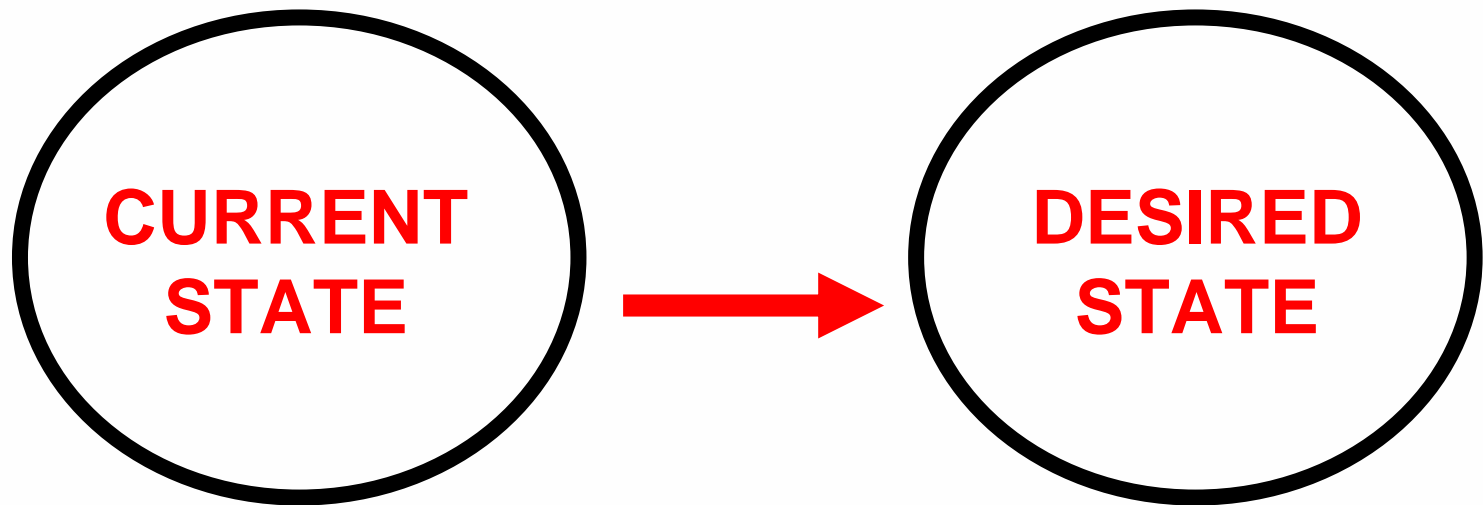
“Academic advising on many college campuses today is a low status/low priority activity, poorly organized, performed in a perfunctory manner, and largely ineffective in meeting student and institutional needs.”

David S. Crockett
Noel-Levitz

Lowest Advising Effectiveness Elements as Rated by Colleges/Universities on all Six ACT National Surveys of Advising

- Rewarding good advising
- Systematically evaluating advisors
- Systematically evaluating the advising program
- Implementing training for advisors

Academic Advising Planning Model



Clarifying Current State

Noel-Levitz Academic Advising Self-Inquiry

An Assessment of Current Practices in the Organization and Delivery of Advising Services

Benchmarking Your Academic Advising Program

“The Status of Academic Advising:
Findings from the
ACT Sixth National Survey.”

NACADA
Monograph Series
Number (10) 2004

Academic Advising Publication

Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook

Virginia N. Gordon, Wesley R. Habley, and Associates
Jossey-Bass Publishers
www.josseybass.com
(888) 378-2537
2000

National Academic Advising Association (NACADA)

Kansas State University
2323 Anderson Avenue, Suite 225
Manhattan, KS 66502-2912
(785) 532-5717
nacada@ksu.edu
[Http://www.nacada.ksu.edu](http://www.nacada.ksu.edu)

Ten Common Key Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Planning Strategies

- 7) Create proactive programs and services based on meeting students' individual needs and differences

Importance of Proactive Intervention with Students

Eighty-six percent of students who say they need assistance do not seek out the service voluntarily.

ACT

Why Intrusive/Proactive Intervention Is Necessary

Student self-referral simply does not work as a mode of operation in promoting intervention and persistence.

Eight Important Student Target Groups with Special Needs

- 1) Academically under-prepared students
- 2) Undeclared/undecided students
- 3) New students (FTIC)

Eight Important Student Target Groups with Special Needs

- 4) Adult learners
- 5) Students of color
- 6) Students in transition

Community College Student Characteristics

64% enrolled part-time

60% work 20+ hours per week

34% spend 11+ hours per week caring for dependents

20% six to twenty hours per week commuting to and from class

Traditional Age vs. Older Community College Students

- There is no way that traditional-age and older students behave in a similar manner.
- No matter how you slice the age distribution of beginning students, those who start <24 and those who start later come from different planets.

Dr. Clifford Adelman
Senior Research Analyst
US Dept. of Education

Traditional Age vs. Older Community College Students

Of community college beginners	>24	24 and up
Principally employee	27%	74%
Had children	7	58
1 st to 2 nd year retention	72	49
Transferred	50	18
Always part-time	17	55
Minority	29	24

CCSSE 2004

The Retention of Low-income Students: A Challenge

Students from high income backgrounds (>\$70,000) earn college degrees at a significantly higher rate when compared with students from low-income backgrounds (<\$25,000) (65% vs. 50%).

National Center for Educational Statistics (2003)

Key Strategies for Retaining Low-income Students

- Provide adequate financial aid
- Emphasize academic support services
- Focus on advising, counseling, and mentoring

Dr. Vincent Tinto

Eight Important Student Target Groups with Special Needs

- 7) Students on academic probation
- 8) Marginally involved students

Key Retention Strategies for Special Target Groups

- 1) Early identification
- 2) Continuous monitoring/tracking
- 3) Proactive/intrusive academic advising/counseling

Key Retention Strategies for Special Target Groups

- 4) Special interventions, programs, and services
- 5) Encouragement of affiliation/engagement activities

Key Retention Strategies for Special Target Groups

6) Removal of obstacles/barriers to success

7) Build personal, caring, and supporting relationships

Ten Common Key Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Planning Strategies

8) Design institutional systems, policies, and processes to be more student-centered

What Students Want From Service Transactions

- 1) Solutions to problems
- 2) A sense of caring/concern
- 3) Personalization
- 4) Fast delivery of service
- 5) No “hassle” service systems

Definition of a Customer in Higher Education

Any individual or organization who exchanges tuition or fees for educational programs and/or services.

Are Students Really Customers?

Yes!

- When they interact with the various service systems, they have consumer rights:
- Admissions
- Financial Aid
- Business Office
- Registration
- Academic Advising
- Food Services
- Library
- Safety/Security

No!

- When they have a larger responsibility and role as a student learner. They are not “buying” a degree or have the same status as a customer.

Implication for Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Initiatives

Students must be viewed and treated as both customer and learner.

Student-Centered Systems

Student-centered systems never subordinate student convenience and needs in favor of the convenience and needs of the people who work within the system or the institution itself.

An Example of a Student-Centered Policy

If a student cannot enroll in a required course because it is filled, the institution would be required to waive tuition for the course when the student enrolls in it the subsequent semester.

Building a Quality Service Culture

1. Development of an institutionwide service strategy.
2. Conduct a comprehensive review of major service systems.

Building a Quality Service Culture

3. Provide staff development and training for managers, supervisors, and frontline personnel.
4. Create “Service Champions” teams in individual work units.

Ten Common Key Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Planning Strategies

- 9) Monitor, on a systematic basis, student expectations, levels of satisfaction, and educational outcomes.

An Observation

Assessment is frequently the missing link in many QSSL (retention) initiatives

Successful Institutions Share Three Important Attributes

- They focus on the needs of their students
- They work to continually improve the quality of the educational experience
- They rely on student satisfaction assessment results to shape their QSSL (retention) agenda

The Satisfaction-Priorities Surveys from Noel-Levitz

- Student Satisfaction Inventory™
 - 1,600+ clients since its debut in fall 1994
- Institutional Priorities Survey™
 - 600+ clients since its debut in fall 1997
- Adult Student Priorities Survey™
 - 130+ clients since its debut in fall 2000
- Adult Learner Inventory™
 - New survey as of fall 2003; pilot completed by 25 institutions
 - Developed in partnership with CAEL
- Priorities Survey for Online Learners™
 - 50+ clients since its debut in 2001

Who Each Survey Is For:

- SSI: Primary student population
- IPS: Faculty, staff, administrators, and boards of trustees
- ASPS: Primarily for students 25 years of age and older
 - Graduate, evening, weekend, and continuing education courses
 - NOTE: Most appropriate for four-year institutions where the experience of adult/graduate students is significantly different than the experience of the traditional-aged student
- ALI: Undergraduate adult students at adult learning focused institutions
- PSOL: Students in distance learning programs over the Internet

The NSSE and the SSI: Implications for Retention Planning and Decision Making*

“Understanding the undergraduate student experience is central to promoting student learning, success, and educational attainment. The SSI and NSSE are very useful tools that provide timely, systematic, and relevant information on various facets of the undergraduate experience; hence they both play an important role in crafting retention systems that improve student and institutional performance. Colleges and universities should understand that there is a role for both instruments in informing and guiding retention efforts. Ideally both instruments should be included in the assessment program.”

NSSE and SSI

“What are the primary correlates with student satisfaction”?

- The SSI provides more items that appear to correlate significantly with overall student satisfaction
- Moreover, the level of correlation observed is generally higher

Noel-Levitz
2004

Ten Common Key Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Planning Strategies

- 10) Establish a permanent organizational structure to pursue quality of student life and learning and an institutional change process.

Characteristics of Successful QSSL (Retention) Programs

- Sustained
- Systematic
- Participatory
- Institutionalized
- Supportive organizational structure

Organizing For a Comprehensive QSSL (Retention) Program

- 1) Select an appropriate QSSL (retention) organizational structure
- 2) Appoint (or reaffirm) a standing institutionwide QSSL (retention) team

Organizing for a Comprehensive QSSL (Retention) Program

- 3) Designate (or reaffirm) a campuswide QSSL (retention) coordinator
- 4) Develop and successfully implement a comprehensive QSSL (retention) plan

“Perfection is not attainable. But if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence.”

Vince Lombardi

“What we think, or what we know, or what we believe is, in the end, of little consequence. The only consequence that matters is what we do.”

John Ruskins

Definition: Excessive Activity Syndrome

The condition that exists when many different activities have been widely implemented, with limited measurable and visible results to show for the effort over a reasonable amount of time.

Richard Chang

Activity-oriented

- Redefining problems/issues
- Failing to set priorities
- Focusing on trivial and non-critical problems/issues
- Working to improve too many procedures simultaneously
- Involving a large number of people in the improvement process

Results-oriented

- Recommending specific actions to address problems/issues
- Establishing top priorities
- Selecting the problems/issues that are the most important and that make the biggest difference
- Working to improve a small number of critical processes
- Involving participation of a limited number of interested persons in the improvement effort

Developing a Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Plan



Noel-Levitz®

Two Ways to Fail:

- Do an equally good job of everything (all things are not equally important)
- Do an excellent job of the wrong thing

“The Plan is nothing.
Planning is everything.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower

The Value of Not Planning

“The nicest thing about not planning is that failure comes as a complete surprise and is not preceded by a period of worry and depression.”

John Preston
Boston College

Planning

- Gets people together
- Gets people to focus on what is important
- Gets people to do something about what is important



Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Plan Definition

A QSSL (retention) plan, by definition, is a set of clear and unambiguous retention-related goals with associated key strategies and activities (action plans) that, when taken in totality, lead to the achievement of retention goals. The plan establishes the direction for the QSSL initiative during the time period set for the completion of the goals. Further, it establishes, in advance, responsibility, resources required, timetable, and method of evaluation, thus facilitating control of progress.

Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) Plans

- Results-oriented
- Understandable to others, including those who must implement them
- Complete and specific enough to provide direction (neither over- nor under-plan)
- Workable and realistic to accomplish
- Adaptable to changing situations

Initiating The QSSL (Retention) Planning Process

- Appoint a Quality of Student Life and Learning (Retention) planning team
- Review the institutional mission statement that describes the basic reason for the existence of the organization
- Review the institutional strategic plan, if one exists: the strategic plan and retention plan need to be consistent with each other

Initiating The QSSL (Retention) Planning Process

- Assess current retention-related strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- Compile and review historical retention data, both overall and by specific program/major, if available
- Review appropriate retention data by student characteristics (e.g., racial, ethnic, gender, age, commuter/resident, academic ability)

Initiating The QSSL (Retention) Planning Process

- Review results of any local retention-related research
- Conduct a review of retention literature and national retention “benchmark” data
- Reconfirm retention target groups (e.g., academically underprepared, undeclared, athletes, commuters)

Initiating The QSSL (Retention) Planning Process

- Analyze the results from the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) or other opinion research
- Review recommendations and the work to date of any retention committee/task forces
- Identify successful retention strategies and activities that have worked well in the past

Initiating The QSSL (Retention) Planning Process

- Compile a catalog of all current retention-related programs
- Develop a list of retention planning assumptions
- Clarify definitions and nomenclature that may be used in the retention planning process (e.g., dropout, attainer, stopout)
- Complete and discuss the Noel-Levitz QSSL (Retention) Self-Inquiry

A Triad QSSL (Retention) Planning Process

- Establish Goals
- Formulate Key Strategies
- Develop Action Plans

Retention Goal Setting

A goal without a plan is a dream; a plan without a goal is an activity.

Common Categories of Two-Year College Retention-related Goals

- Increase course completion rates
- Increase term to term cohort persistence rates for part-time students
- Increase annual cohort return rate for full-time students

Common Categories of Two-Year College Retention-Related Goals

- Increase specific program rates
- Increase transfer rates
- Increase retention rates of at-risk student populations
- Increase three-year graduation rates

LTC Retention-Related Goals 2005-2009

- Annual Return Rate

Increase the percentage of first-time, full-time, degree seeking freshmen retained to the second year by 3 percentage points from the fall 2003 baseline level of 35% by fall 2009

LTC Strategic Plan (2005-2009)

LTC Retention-Related Goals 2005-2009

- Three-Year Graduation Rate

Increase the three-year graduation rate by 2 percentage points from the 2002-2003 academic year baseline level of 19% to 21% by spring 2009

LTC Strategic Plan (2005-2009)

Sample QSSL (Retention) Goals

Overall Goal: The overall goal is to improve the quality of student life and learning through improvements, modifications, and additions to the institution's educational programs, services, and facilities.

“Setting goals is not the main thing. It is deciding how you will go about achieving them and staying with that plan.”

Tom Landry
Former Head Coach
Dallas Cowboys

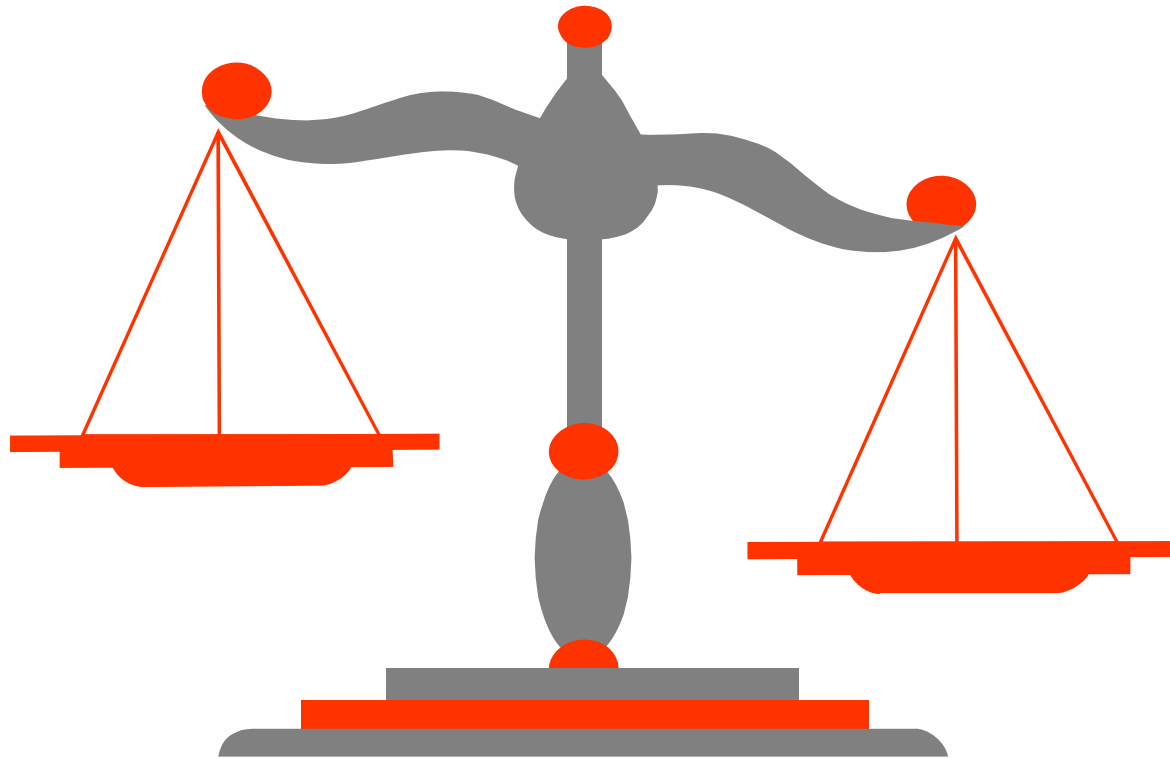
Identifying Key Strategies

Definition of Key Strategies

Key strategies are those things that are important to goal achievement, but they do not describe how it will be done.

Selecting Key Strategies

80/20 Rule



Common Key Retention Strategies

- Improve delivery of freshman intake services.
- Improve academic support services.
- Improve effectiveness of the academic advising program.
- Improve classroom instruction.
- Integrate individuals into the educational and social life of the institution.

Developing Action Plans

QSSL (Retention) Action Plan Development

- The most difficult task of planning
- The most time-consuming task of planning
- The most important component of the planning process

Action Plan Components

- *What are you going to do?* Describe activities in detail in a narrative form that would make the activities clear to any reader
- *When are you going to do it?* Provide timetables that clearly show key dates and deadlines
- *Who will be responsible?* Assign specific tasks and communicate assignments clearly to those who will be responsible for performing them

Action Plan Components

- *How much will it cost?* Include budget information showing the cost of implementation
- *How will you know when it has been accomplished?*
Define the methods of evaluation or control that will be used to monitor progress or measure success or failure of the actions undertaken

An Evaluation Admonition

Do not mistake activity for results (goal achievement)

The QSSL (Retention) Planning Cycle

- 1) Analyze
- 2) Plan
- 3) Implement
- 4) Review
- 5) Modify

Tips for QSSL (Retention) Planning

- 1) Select carefully, the QSSL (retention) planning team
- 2) Develop a planning schedule with deadlines
- 3) Designate a team leader

Tips for QSSL (Retention) Planning

- 4) Assign responsibility to one person for writing the situation analysis section
- 5) Obtain senior administration approval of retention goals
- 6) Delegate the writing of action plan drafts

Tips for QSSL (Retention) Planning

- 7) Develop a list of planning assumptions
- 8) Determine new or reallocated resources (fiscal, human, physical) necessary to successfully execute plan
- 9) Decide on cover design, binding, section tabs, report format and style, use of color, charts/graphs, and typography

Tips for QSSL (Retention) Planning

10) Conduct final review of plan

11) Recognize and reward the planning team

12) Plan the work, but don't forget to work the plan!