
A Cross-Sector Initiative: Student Retention

Background:

It is not just the national, state and regional discussion of outcomes data, rankings, and institutional profiles that have brought forward a discussion of retention, but also the need to engage students differently to increase retention. With changing demographics and the emphasis on public accountability in higher education (the value proposition), innovative thinking and cross-cutting ideas are needed in order to include effective retention strategies in University-wide planning (and budgeting as necessary).

It becomes clear that various retention activities are implemented (and even have been piloted) in particular areas of programming. While some of these initiatives do have evidence of success and involvement from faculty and staff, others need further expansion and thinking . . . and at the same time, there are additional areas of programming or service delivery across campus which have yet to be assertive about an approach even though their area of responsibility touches upon components of student persistence, retention, and/or engagement. The “sum of the various activities” does not seem robust enough to make a difference campus-wide.

The Initiative:

The organization appears to need a comprehensive (campus-wide) and strategic initiative to improve retention. Data are needed to inform this planning conversation, representatives from across sectors and program disciplines must be active participants, benchmarks and successful models should be studied, and recommendations need to be made that are feasible (given the context of the organization itself) and lead toward a shared commitment to engagement and retention. The timeline is short ... the end of the semester is in sight, along with all that needs to be done at that time of the academic calendar.

What approaches would you use to create and engage your team?

What are the motivational approaches you would use?