



ROLE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS IN ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION

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Introduction to the Problem

- Key focus area of Academic Affairs related to enrollment and retention is to clarify the role that academic faculty and staff have in helping students to succeed.
- Role of educators is to create and maintain **optimum conditions** under which students can make progress toward their goals.
 - *Conditions are implemented in classrooms, offices, online learning environment, teaching/learning process and through advisement and academic supports.*
 - *Connections are forged with high schools, employers, and other educational institutions and those who will provide the next steps in success of students, including transfer colleges and employers.*
- The success in living up to the obligations to students will be enhanced by periodic thoughtful and **purposeful discussion** about how best to create or refocus these conditions.

Student expectations of graduation requirements

- *What is the educational institutions role and responsibility to assist students in navigating through the process?*
 - Research
- *Students Point of View*
 - Many decisions students have to face from beginning to the end of the academic experience.
 - What should student expect of Academic Affairs?
 - Accessing these resources?

Literature Review & Best Practices

Article/Report Title: *Characteristics of Early Community College Dropouts (Peter Crosta, Community College Research Center/ Teachers College, Columbia University)*

- Primary goal of article is to identify the community college early drop outs. Analyzed six years of data on 14,429 students (2005-2006). Part-time students were included in the data with the focus on "Early Dropouts"
- Definitions - **Early Dropouts** - those who enrolled for one term of study but never returned to the same college for another term. **Early Persisters** - Those who enrolled at least twice in the first four enrollment terms (fall, spring, summer, fall)
- There were five main areas:
 - *Financial Aid/Status - Early dropouts were about 40% less likely than early persisters to receive FA in their first semester. Possible explanations are that the early dropouts were of higher socioeconomic status or they did not fill out FA papers. In addition, Early Dropouts took fewer classes (7.3 credits compared to 10).*
 - *Academic Preparedness - Early dropouts were more likely to be placed in developmental courses (some even two or more levels below college level in all 3 subject areas - reading, write, math).*
 - *College course success - Early dropouts were about 30-40% more likely to have failures, withdrawals, and incomplete grades the first semester.*
 - *Online courses - Early dropouts were more likely to enroll in online courses but less likely to enroll in hybrid courses. In general, the data supports other studies that online courses have a higher failure rate.*
 - *Age - Early dropouts came from an older population - less academically prepared (more dev courses).*

Article/Report Title: Research and Practice of Student Retention: What Next? (Author: Vincent Tito, (2006). Syracuse University. Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education.

- After reviewing the state of student retention research and practice, past and present, the author looks to the future and identifies three areas of research and practice that call for further exploration. These concern issues of
 - institutional action
 - program implementation, and
 - the continuing challenge of promoting the success of low-income students.
- When the issue of student retention first appeared on the higher educational radar screen (40 years ago) student attrition was typically viewed through psychology—a reflection of individual attributes, skills, and motivation.
- Views changed during the 1970's, “the Age of Involvement,” and learned that involvement matters and that it matters most during the critical first year of college.
- Second, we learned how the process of student retention differs in different institutional settings, residential and non-residential, two-and for-year
- Today, there are sociological, psychological, and economic models. They all agree that “engagement” matters, especially during the first critical year.
- Unfortunately, many institutions have not been able to translate what we know about student retention into forms of action that have led to substantial gains in student persistence and graduation.

Article/Report Title: *Remediation: Higher Education's Bridge to Nowhere (Complete College America)*

- “Remediation is a broken system. There’s a better way – start many more students in college courses with just-in-time support.”
- The data was provided by the 33 states who are participating in the National Governor’s Association (New York is not listed as a member). Fall 2006 cohorts were used for most of the data. The report breaks out the data by each state that participated.
 - *50% of entering two-year students placed in remedial classes*
 - *40% of student in remedial classes do not complete those classes*
 - *Less than 25% of students who pass remedial classes ever complete college-level English and math courses*
 - *Fewer than 10% of students who started in remediation graduate in three years*
- End traditional remediation.
- Fully prepare students in high school for college.
- Start students in college classes with needed support.
- Embed academic support in gateway courses for a program.
- Encourage students to enter a program ASAP (For those not ready to enter a specific program, place them in a pathway that will allow them to finish in two years.)

Article/Report Title: *Not Just Math and English: Courses that Pose Obstacles to Community College Completion* (Matthew Zeidenberg & Davis Jenkins, Community College Research Center/ Teachers College, Columbia University)

- Gatekeeper math and English courses present no greater obstacle to completion than other gatekeeper courses which are identified by an institution or program (i.e. Intro to Accounting is a gatekeeper course for business majors); To identify gatekeeper courses, this study examined the gaps in grades between students who completed a credential and those who did not complete a credential.
- Student performance in gatekeeper math and English courses could be improved by contextualization.
- Student success rates could possibly be increased by requiring students to enroll in college-level gatekeeper math and English course while still in high school.
- There are substantial numbers of non-completers who have good grades and yet do not complete.
- The grade in a course may be a proxy for other things which may be more fundamental to success than the acquisition of knowledge and skills – like student motivation, amount of time on task, mastery of learning strategies, time management skills, etc.

Article/Report Title: *Changing Course: A Guide to Increasing Student Completion in Community Colleges (Completion by Design)*

- Describes a Gates Foundation initiative underway in four states which seeks to raise community college completion rates for large numbers of students, while containing costs, maintaining open access, and ensuring the quality of college programs and credentials. While there is no single model for effective completion, the following design principles have been developed, based on research and practice
 - *Seamlessly connect such areas as academics, career, and technical education, professional development, and student supports **with K-12 schools, transfer partners and employers.***
 - *Provide **coherent and clear sequences of courses** within college-level programs of study, **communicate them clearly** and consistently to students, and **enroll students as quickly as possible** in a program.*
 - ***Define student competencies and learning outcomes** within and across programs, in order to facilitate quality and to accelerate learning.*
 - ***Improve student engagement**, including through education planning, career planning, and individualized and interactive forms of alerts, messaging, and updates.*
 - ***Customize, contextualize, and differentiate instruction** to improve and deepen student learning.*
 - ***Make it a responsibility of all instructional programs and student services to help students catch up academically**, using such strategies as acceleration, modularizing courses, and integrating developmental education within or alongside entry-level coursework.*
 - ***Integrate student services and instructional supports with college-level programs** of study, including entre-level gatekeeper courses.*
 - ***Leverage technology** to broaden, improve, and reduce costs of curricular options and student services.*

Article/Report Title: Student Retention and Graduation: Facing the Truth, Living with the Consequences (Author: Vincent Tito, (2004). Syracuse University. Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. Occasional Paper 1.

- Since the National Defense Education Act of 1958, a primary objective of federal higher education policy has been to increase access to higher education for those who would not otherwise attend, especially those from low-income backgrounds.

Retention of Low-Income Students:

- The chances of earning a college degree (both 2 & 4-year) vary not only among types of institutions, but also among students.
 - For beginning students from high-income backgrounds, 65% earned some type of college degree within 6-years, with 56% earning a bachelor's degree.
 - For beginning students from low-income backgrounds, 50% earned some type of college degree within 6-years, with 26% earning a bachelor's degree.

Why?

1. High and Low-income youth began their studies at different types of institutions—even when in the same institutions there is a large difference.
2. Youth from low-income backgrounds are, on average, generally not as well-prepared academically when they finish high school.
3. Even with adequate academic preparation, many students fail to complete their degree, which may reflect social and cultural factors that pose additional barriers for low-income students.

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EXPLAINING DIFFERENCES IN DEGREE ATTAINMENT BY INCOME LEVELS:

1. **Differences in Preparation**—Cabrera, LaNasa & Burkum (2001) found that only ¼ of low-income youths were academically well-prepared (B+– A)
2. **Social & Cultural Barriers**—In some cases these students are important contributors to the economic well-being of their families, so their attempts to combine the roles of family provider and student or their inability to contribute while enrolled may undermine their academic commitment and performance.
3. **Unmet Need**—The balance remaining after all financial aid and their family/student contribution towards the cost of education is taken into account—at all types of higher education institutions. Faced with this unmet need, low-income students select two-year rather than 4-year options, reduce their attendance from FT to PT, live off campus rather than on campus, and work longer hours...all which reduce their chances of graduating.

Subsequently...there are huge consequences of enrollment without completion! Especially, for low-income students and their families.

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Colleges can enhance Retention & Graduation:

1. Provide students clear guidelines as to what they have to do to be successful. EFFECTIVE ADVISING!
2. Provide academic, social, and personal support. Connect Academic support to Everyday Learning.
3. Effective Assessment—entry assessment of student academic skills, monitoring student progress (early-warning systems) and classroom assessment.
4. Engaging Students in Learning—involve students with other students, faculty, and staff, especially in regard to student learning.

Enhancing Retention & Graduation:

1. Provide financial support in an amount and form that enables low-income students to attend FT and work fewer hours.
2. Emphasize academic support—and what it takes to be successful in college.
3. provide faculty, staff, and peer advising, counseling, and mentoring.



Organization of an Academic Retention Initiative

1. *Bring together a coordinating group focused on the academic experience to:*

- Review current campus successes in retaining students
- Create a *collaboration plan*
- Set a timeline for review

2. *Relevant factors:*

- Review college retention statistics which can show significant and growing attrition rates
- Recognition of declining demographics may limit the college's ability to attract new students.
- Financial impact is congruent with emphasis placed on “shared sense of urgency” for strengthened enrollments.

Approach & Framework

Data Analysis

- *Dashboards are focused trend reports prepared by the Office of Institutional Research, which provide comprehensive information about a specific student cohort or for a specific audience within the college. These dashboards are tools, updated annually or semi-annually, to assist in future decision-making.*

- *Retention Dashboard Includes:*
 - Retention & Graduation Trends by Location
 - Retention & Graduation Trends for Selected Student Cohorts
 - National & Peer Retention, Graduation & Attrition Rate Comparisons

- *Determine what academic factors are related to attrition*
 - High school QPA
 - Developmental courses
 - Timeframe for student to drop out
 - Demographic information – gender/age
 - Instructional/Engagement methods

Organization of Principles/Framework for Action

- *Conduct prompted dialogue about how best to organize information which can serve to form a foundation for future action by faculty and others*
 - **Collective responsibility - Collaboration**
 - *Faculty*
 - Constructivism verse behaviorism
 - Are we stuck in a “Banking” model?
 - *Admissions*
 - *Financial Aid*
 - *Supports*

“Strategic Plan”
&
Financial Conditions

- Funding has caused, in some cases, departmentally driven initiatives rather than a collective effort
 - *Human resources*
 - *Financial resources*
- Educational Institutions support of the effort
- Financial barriers in place

Conclusion

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CONCLUSION

- Increased student retention and graduation is possible (and supported by research)!
- Though these actions are costly, inaction is even more expensive. Our society cannot afford to keep losing 4-out-of-every 10 students who begin college, or graduate only 3 bachelor degrees for every 10 students.
- Nor can it afford a system of higher education in which low-income students are less than ½ as likely to earn a bachelor's degree.

WE KNOW THAT INCREASING RETENTION AND GRADUATION IS POSSIBLE - WHAT IS REQUIRED NOW IS THE COMMITMENT TO DO SO.

**REFLECT, ENGAGE, COLLABORATE, and EMPOWER, for
RETENTION EXCELLENCE**