



**A Compendium of  
Successful, Innovative  
Retention Programs and  
Practices**

**Winners of the Lee Noel & Randi  
Levitz Retention Excellence Awards  
1989-2015**

**RUFFALO**<sup>SM</sup>  
NOEL LEVITZ

## **A Compendium of Successful, Innovative Retention Programs and Practices**

### Winners of the Lee Noel & Randi Levitz Retention Excellence Awards 1989–2015

The following pages provide brief descriptions of programs that have been recognized in the Lee Noel and Randi Levitz Retention Excellence Awards Program sponsored by Ruffalo Noel Levitz. The program was established in 1989 to honor the retention achievements of post-secondary institutions throughout North America.

Each year, awards are given to recognize the most successful, state-of-the-art retention programs in use at many different kinds of institutions, with many different target groups of students. Nominees for awards are judged on identifiable and measurable institutional outcomes, originality and creativity, use of resources, and adaptability for use at other institutions. Winners are selected by a national panel comprising leading campus-based retention practitioners.

Since the program began, 167 colleges and universities have been honored with Retention Excellence Awards. As a result of this national exposure, these award-winning programs have served as models of retention excellence to stimulate the creativity and energy of hundreds of two-year and four-year institutions.

For more information about the Lee Noel and Randi Levitz Retention Excellence Awards Program, please write to Retention Excellence Awards, Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2350 Oakdale Boulevard, Coralville, Iowa 52241

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2009

**Albion College (MI)***Academic Success Course*

Albion College is a private four-year liberal arts college that takes pride in challenging its students with a rigorous curriculum while offering students high levels of academic and personal support. Although many students make a relatively smooth transition into college life, some students struggle to adjust to the increased demands of college, which can result in poor academic performance. Albion College has three levels of academic probation, Terminal Probation (TP) being the most severe. Prior to 2006, the college's support staff spent a significant amount of time and energy providing individual support to students who were on TP, but for the most part, the staff's efforts to help these students were unsuccessful. Dr. Barry Wolf, an Academic Affairs staff member and Clinical Psychologist, developed the Academic Success Course (ASC) in an attempt to provide an effective and efficient support service that directly addresses the issues related to academic underperformance and significantly improves the retention and achievement of TP students. In fall 2006, Albion College instituted the ASC, requiring TP students to attend and complete the course; in fall 2007, the ASC changed to a .5 unit (2 semester hours) course for credit. Although the ASC has evolved since its inception, the core structure and focus of the course have remained the same.

**Focus on Strategy, Readiness to Change, and Effort**

The ASC is a demanding and comprehensive theory-based course that directly addresses a broad range of issues related to academic underperformance. The ASC utilizes insight, structure, and support to help students become self-regulated learners and responsible students. Historically, retention based courses (i.e., study skills and learning to learn courses) have primarily focused on improving students' academic strategies. Although students who are experiencing severe academic difficulties often struggle with study skills, there are other profound "psycho-academic" issues affecting their performance. Two important constructs that have largely been ignored in other retention based courses are readiness to change and effort. Typical TP students are intelligent and have the ability to perform well in college, but often have poor work ethic and low frustration tolerance related to effort. Their study strategies were relatively effective in high school, but they are reluctant to adopt new strategies that are more appropriate for the increased demands of college. When encouraged to confront their academic problems, many underperforming students are ambivalent about receiving help, changing

their academic behavior, and increasing effort. The ASC is designed to integrate interventions that focus on strategy, readiness to change, and effort in an attempt to address the specific issues that TP students experience.

The course employs discussion and activity based class meetings, readings, study sessions, and the use of peer mentors (ex-ASC students) to help TP students work through their academic difficulties. A collaborative relationship between the instructor and each student is a critical part of the course. The instructor of the course is not simply an instructor to the students, but also an advisor, mentor, advocate, academic coach, and "point person" during their TP semester. A solid student/instructor relationship facilitates students' willingness to address academic issues, provides the opportunity for students to build a meaningful connection with a supportive campus figure, and promotes connection with other faculty and staff.

**Results**

The ASC has proven itself to be an effective support service that has improved the retention and academic achievement of Albion College's highest risk students. Assessment of the data for TP students indicates that ASC students were retained at significantly higher rates than non-ASC students (i.e., students who were on TP before the ASC's inception) for every time point assessed (i.e., one semester, one year, and two years). Specifically, the one-semester retention rate has increased from 40 percent for non-ASC students to 76.7 percent for ASC students; the one-year retention rate is up from 31.4 percent for non-ASC students to 55.6 percent for ASC students; and the two-year retention rate has increased from 25.7 percent for non-ASC students to 50.0 percent for ASC students. The data also indicates that the ASC has helped to significantly increase the academic achievement of TP students. ASC students entered their TP semester with an average semester GPA of 1.08 (i.e., the semester that resulted in their TP status), which increased to an average semester GPA of 2.47 for their TP semester (i.e., the semester that they were enrolled in the ASC). ASC students also significantly outperformed non-ASC students. During their TP semester, non-ASC students earned an average semester GPA of 1.72 and ASC students earned an average semester GPA of 2.47. The ASC not only helps students survive their TP semester, it also helps them push through their academic difficulties and thrive at Albion College.

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1994

## Amarillo College

**fka: Texas State Technical College, Amarillo (TX)**

*Strategic Retention Program*

Texas State Technical College-Amarillo is a two-year, public, residential college serving 600 students enrolled in 19 programs of study. An additional 7000 students participate in Economic Development and Industrial Training contract classes.

Begun in 1991, the Strategic Retention Program was designed to increase retention by 20 percent through a comprehensive program involving all college employees in providing initial and ongoing positive campus experiences for each student.

### **Program Description**

Key elements of the Strategic Retention Program are campus wide staff and student involvement, individualized assessment and counseling before enrollment, creation of support networks for each student, training and placement of positive role models for at-risk students, and follow-up tracking of retention activities to measure success and identify program strengths and weaknesses. Prior to registration, prospective students participate in placement testing and the College Student Inventory. Results are discussed with counselors within 48 hours of testing. During these initial conferences, at-risk students are assigned mentors and referred to support services. At registration, each student is assigned a faculty advisor and enrolled in an orientation class and any recommended developmental courses. Advisors assist students each quarter with study plans and schedules. Mentors for at-risk students are drawn from highly diverse campus groups including administrators, custodians, public information personnel, housing and security staff, faculty, student services staff and others. Mentors undergo 10 hours of training for which they receive

continuing education credits. Students trained as mentors receive tuition assistance.

### **Retention and Success Results**

Average quarterly retention from fall 1988 through summer 1991 was 63 percent, 59 percent and 58 percent respectively. Since implementation of the Strategic Retention Program, average quarterly retention from fall 1991 through summer 1993 increased to 84 percent and 87 percent respectively. Yearly retention has been at least 23 percent higher than other campuses in the Texas State Technical College System. Minority retention has increased by 17 percent.

Grade point averages have increased since fall 1991 with 6 percent fewer students on probation between fall 1991 and summer 1993 as compared to the previous three years. Of 318 at-risk students assigned mentors, 184 have been successfully retained. Retention statistics show that 93 percent of TSTC-Amarillo students who persist for at least three quarters do, in fact, graduate.

Since fall 1991, 11 percent of students “stopping out” one or more quarters have returned to campus, compared to 4 percent in the previous three years. A fall 1993 TSTC System student climate survey indicated that Amarillo students ranked satisfaction with their college higher than did students on other campuses within the system.

Texas State Technical College-Amarillo has responded to requests for program information from more than 65 other institutions, and has worked closely with individual colleges to adapt the key elements of the Strategic Retention Program to their campuses.

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## 2002

**Appalachian State University (NC)***Freshman Learning Communities in General Studies*

Appalachian State University—located in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Boone, North Carolina—has traditionally taken pride in its commitment to students. The university has consistently sought to promote students' intellectual, cultural, and personal development. When the institution saw the freshman-to-sophomore retention rate decrease from 86.6 percent in 1989 to 82.3 percent in 1996, the university decided to undertake a new program for student success. The Office of General Studies began a planning process to:

- Develop and implement new learning community models;
- Identify which models increased retention and grade point averages; and
- Connect as many freshman-focused offices and services as appropriate in the execution of these ideas.

**Targeting the “Average” Freshman**

Appalachian State already had in place strong learning community programs for disadvantaged and honors students. The campus wanted to develop programs for the students that were between these two academic spectrums and ultimately have 100 percent of freshman enrolled in a learning community option. In 1997, the university began the program that eventually became the Freshman Learning Community (FLC) program. Starting with just four courses and 84 freshmen, by 2001 the program expanded to 52 courses with an enrollment of more than 1,000 new freshmen.

The FLC program brings together students, faculty and academic support team members in an effort to improve freshman-to-sophomore retention. It connects Admissions, Orientation,

Registration, Academic Advising, Learning Assistance, Summer Reading, Freshman Seminar, and Residence Life to the general education curriculum.

The program consists of two types of courses:

- All FLC students are enrolled in a graded, three-hour credit Freshman Seminar course or other appropriate “anchor courses.” The course instructor identifies academic and personal concerns that may hinder college success and connects students to the appropriate academic support resources.
- Each cohort is co-enrolled in one or two core curriculum or major-specific introductory-level courses. Faculty in these courses assist students in making connections to academic departments and resources that can support their graduation goals or career interests.

**Results**

The FLC program has accomplished its main goal of increasing retention among freshmen involved in the program. Since 1998, the retention rate of the FLC students has been approximately five to six percent higher than students not enrolled in FLC programs. Also, during the same period, the GPA of FLC students after one semester is slightly higher than non-FLC students.

Finally, with more than 1,000 students in FLC courses and more than 500 in other learning community options, 71 percent of first-year students at Appalachian State were involved in an integrative academic experience during their first semester. The projected learning community enrollment in fall 2002 is over 90 percent of first-year students. The campus has made great strides toward its goal of 100 percent freshman participation in a very short period of time.

2003

## Arkansas Tech University (AR)

*Bridge to Excellence Program*

Through teamwork and careful planning, Arkansas Tech University has incrementally made the retention of the freshman class a central focus for the entire campus. Through the Bridge to Excellence program, the divisions of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs have been collaborating since fall 2001. This fall, an expanded team of staff and faculty volunteers will work together to provide mentoring to the entire freshman class—a first-ever achievement in the history of the university.

### **A Phased-in Approach to Retention Programming**

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The Bridge to Excellence program grew out of the university's commitment to the learning and development of its students. The program combines early intervention and mentoring to support freshmen during the critical first six weeks of the semester. Each incoming freshman is matched with a trained mentor who meets with the student soon after orientation and again at midterm. Mentors assess student needs and make referrals to existing campus resources. An assessment tool assists with this process, the College Student Inventory™ (CSI) of the Retention Management System.

The Arkansas Tech program illustrates a cost-effective, phased-in approach to implementing a campus wide retention program. In the fall of 2001, the Housing Office at Arkansas Tech initiated Phase I of the program for a random sampling of 105 first-time, full-time residential students. After seeing success, Phase II of the program was expanded to 310 students and began to integrate faculty as volunteer mentors. This fall, Phase III is projected to reach 1,100 students with a commitment of 100 faculty to serve as mentors. To facilitate the program, staff from Student Affairs have developed specific programs to address the needs of the students and coordinate referral agencies and services.

Funding for the program has been from institutional funds, without outside support.

### **Results**

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The Bridge to Excellence program has demonstrated a significant increase in the retention of freshman students. Notable gains have also been made in tuition revenue. The results for Phase I revealed a 16 percent retention rate increase from fall 2001 to fall 2002 for the initial pilot group, as well as a .50 GPA increase when compared with the nonparticipating freshmen. Phase II results, though still in process at the time of this writing, reflect a continuation of the upward trend, with fall to spring retention rates of the second pilot group 6.16 percent higher than the nonparticipant rate.

Among the university's initial motivations for the program was a desire to bring retention rates in line with the national average for comparable universities. Through the Bridge to Excellence program, this gap is well on its way to being closed. The university's president, Dr. Robert Charles Brown, adds: "We are excited about the opportunity to incorporate additional faculty volunteers in our effort.... The benefits we realize as an institution are significant and the benefits to our students are immeasurable."

1990

## Baylor University (TX)

### *Academic Support Services for Student Athletes*

In May of 1987, Baylor University embarked upon the “Academic Support Services for Student Athletes” Program. This was started to provide a unified program of support services to student athletes, focusing on retaining and graduating this special population. The Academic Support Services for Student Athletes Program consists of six major parts: orientation, testing and development, advisement, monitoring, intervention and awards.

#### **Orientation**

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The orientation process is divided into two phases.

**Phase One:** takes place during the recruiting process; it gives the recruit an opportunity to meet with the Academic Athletic Coordinator to discuss athletic and academic responsibilities of an intercollegiate athlete. Afterwards the recruit meets with a faculty member to discuss a potential field of study.

**Phase Two:** is a four-day event called “Welcome Week.” All student athletes are required to attend this program, which provides various activities including an introduction to Baylor, get-acquainted mixers, small groups, speakers, and musical presentations.

#### **Testing and Development**

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Students who have not achieved a certain level of competency determined by a standardized test, are retested by the University. Those whose scores are not satisfactory are required to enroll in certain developmental classes. At the end of the semester students are evaluated; if satisfactory progress has not occurred, an extension of the class is required.

#### **Advisement**

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The Athletic Academic Coordinator serves as an advisor to all student athletes for the first three semesters. Also available to the student athletes is the Enrichment Program and the Foundation

Program. The Enrichment Program is comprehensive in nature and focuses on providing information toward a successful transition from high school to college. The Foundation Program focuses on “Academically at-risk” student-athletes, and builds a foundation upon which any major can be developed.

#### **Monitoring**

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Every semester a high-risk list is compiled by the athletic academic coordinator and the head coach for each NCAA sport. The list includes any student athlete who is in the Foundation Program or on academic probation or deemed at-risk by a head coach. During each week of the semester, a grade and attendance check is made and given to the athletic director, head coaches, counseling assistant, and tutors. This provides the opportunity for a conference with coaches and support staff, and for punitive action when necessary.

#### **Intervention**

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This consists of three major programs: study hall, tutorial services and an academic probation student agreement. The students’ involvement in each program is monitored, giving program directors the opportunity to catch possible problem areas.

#### **Awards**

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The College of Arts and Sciences presents the Dean’s Academic Improvement Award each year to those students who have made significant progress.

The results from this program include:

- A rise in freshman GPA from 2.42 before the program to 3.05 after the program;
- An increase in the freshman retention rate to 88 percent;
- A substantial increase in the first-time pass rates for English, religion and math.

1990

**Bellevue College****fka: Bellevue Community College (WA)***Student Assessment and Success Systems*

Bellevue Community College implemented an institution wide effort to meet the increased diversity of students' needs, skills and motivation, while simultaneously ensuring excellence, providing access, and supporting student success. To accomplish this a four-part retention program was initiated which includes the following: (1) an integrated assessment, advising, orientation, and registration process; (2) major curricular changes; (3) student intervention and counseling program; and (4) outcomes assessment.

**Part I: Integrated Assessment, Advising, Orientation, and Registration**

Each student is sent a standardized letter informing them about the entire admissions, assessment, advising, and registration process. They are instructed to call for appointments, and when they do so they receive an Intake interview. This provides an occasion on which to help students clarify their needs, to set up interviews and to update student information.

Full assessment sessions are provided to all newly matriculated students who call in. The assessment includes reports of the student's assessment results in the areas of math, English, reading and study skills, education background in these areas, courses they are eligible to take, a brief assessment of career goals and a list of campus services.

Students are advised during the summer, by trained advisors, in preparation for fall. Advisors not only focus on scheduling, but also address the student's goals (life, career and academic), and what is necessary to enhance success in reaching these goals.

**Part II: Student Intervention and Counseling**

A comprehensive counseling program has been well established, including individual education

planning and academic, career and personal/social counseling. As part of Student Assessment and Success Systems, a Student Intervention Committee was formed to make recommendations on specific activities and systems that would enable students to achieve their academic goals.

**Part III: Curriculum**

Every student who receives a degree from Bellevue Community College must have developed competency in 24 learning objectives, which are clustered into six outcome areas. The Interdisciplinary Studies program consists of two variations; the Coordinated Studies and the Linked Format. Both variations of the program are designed to develop a curricula that more actively involves students in the learning process, increases their motivation and ability to succeed, and helps them persevere in completing their goals. The skills encouraged by the Interdisciplinary Studies program are ones that have application both within the classroom and beyond it, and for both the short and long term.

**Part IV: Outcomes Assessment**

The results of this program have been striking. Bellevue now has the highest retention rate in the state of Washington at 84 percent. Full assessments of entering students increased from 299 in 1987-88 to 2,734 in 1989-90. During the fall quarter of 1988, 74 percent of new enrolled students received advising compared to 43 percent for fall 1987. Offerings in developmental English and math increased by 30 percent in fall of 1989. Additionally, longitudinal studies show that transfer students at Bellevue Community College perform better than those from any other community college in the state.

## 1996

### Berry College (GA)

*Freshman Center Program*

Thanks to careful planning and modest investments of time and money, freshmen are experiencing greater levels of success at Berry College, a residential private college in Mount Berry, GA., enrollment 1,850. The college's newly established Freshman Center has quickly achieved its goal of improving the first-year experience to improve retention. The successful effort began in the fall of 1995, following an 11-year low in freshman retention.

#### **Scope of the Program**

The initial emphasis of the Freshman Center was to provide direct individual attention to struggling first-year students. While this remains a priority, the center's scope soon grew to include developing programs for the entire freshman class and to finding ways to support the relationships between students, professors, resident advisors, and work supervisors.

#### **Program Objectives**

The following is a sampling of Freshman Center objectives. These objectives help guide the work of four staff, including a half-time director who is also a half-time faculty member, a half-time secretary, and two part-time student assistants.

- Early exposure to academic expectations. Because students at Berry have been found to struggle with academic adjustment during the initial weeks of the fall semester, all freshmen attend a two-hour pre-semester "crash course" in college success. In addition, during orientation, freshmen participate in a book discussion based on a book they are sent early in the summer.
- Improved Freshman Seminar. Recent initiatives include stepping up the seminar's academic emphasis, developing a locally produced course textbook consisting of essays written by faculty, students, and staff, and developing a standardized instructor's manual.

- Increased peer support. Upperclassmen welcome freshmen to campus through the "Berry Buddy" program. In addition, some serve as freshman mentors assigned to sections of the Freshman Seminar. Also, an inventive essay contest invites freshman submissions on the theme, "Things I Know Now That I Wish I Had Known Before Coming to College," with winners' essays published in the following year's seminar text.
- Improved "early warning system" for at-risk students. Freshmen self-identify their support needs by completing the College Student Inventory of the Noel-Levitz Retention Management System<sup>a</sup>. Freshman seminar instructors then use the findings in face-to-face advising sessions and supportive connections are made to the Freshman Center and other support staff such as instructors, advisors, R.A.s, and work supervisors.
- Enhanced informational network for freshmen. A newsletter for freshmen is distributed every other week, and a Freshman Speaker Series offers weekly discussions during the first half of the fall semester on key freshman issues such as selecting a major, joining clubs, and identifying community-service opportunities.

#### **Results**

In just two years, Berry's fall-to-fall freshman retention rate increased 9.4 percentage points, from 66.7 percent to 76.1 percent. In addition, the rate of enrollment in the optional freshman seminar course increased from 80 percent to 96 percent. The college also reports that it has faced the unusual situation of having too many faculty and staff offer to teach the freshman seminar course, a course that normally required pleading and begging in order to recruit the needed number of instructors.



1995

## Bethany Lutheran College (MN)

### *Comprehensive Freshman Retention Program*

In 1989, Bethany Lutheran College, a small two-year liberal arts college, instituted a college wide program designed to retain full-time freshmen for their sophomore year. The program is based on a team approach to recruitment and retention, and every member of the campus community has a role to play. To coordinate this campus wide effort, an enrollment management committee was established. This committee meets monthly to discuss the “state of the campus.” Meetings allow input from all members of the campus community and student concerns are brought to the attention of committee members, who then develop appropriate action plans. Meetings also provide an opportunity to discuss the best ways to organize major campus events such as preregistration, orientation, parent/family weekends and open houses. The increased awareness of retention at Bethany Lutheran College has caused several specific changes in admissions, faculty and communications.

#### **Adapting Admissions for Retention**

The admissions department at Bethany Lutheran College now recruits with retention in mind, and it makes a special effort to recruit students who are likely to be successful at Bethany. As a result of informal academic performance studies, the admissions standards at Bethany Lutheran College have been raised. Bethany no longer has an open-door policy for admission.

With the end of the open-door policy, the college has established a conditional acceptance policy for at-risk students. At-risk students are accepted with the provision that they must show satisfactory academic progress in their first two semesters in order to continue their education at Bethany. The admissions department has also redesigned its publications in an effort to more accurately reflect what Bethany has to offer

students. Members of the current student body are consulted when publications and other promotional materials are being created or rewritten.

#### **Improved Student Learning**

The teaching faculty at Bethany has made changes to increase student satisfaction. Faculty members study critical thinking, collaborative learning and writing across the curriculum. Through visits with consultants, faculty development meetings, participation at conferences and active experimentation, the faculty is continually seeking ways to improve student learning. In 1991, the faculty instituted a required one-credit freshman seminar course aimed at orienting new students to the academic community. One of the primary objectives of the course is to increase the likelihood of student success.

#### **Strengthening Communication**

Communication among various campus groups is a crucial aspect of Bethany College’s retention program. The dean of enrollment management regularly addresses faculty members at their monthly meeting to keep them involved in the enrollment management process. Members of the support staff are often reminded that they are a crucial part of the “big picture.” Above all else, the Comprehensive Freshman Retention Program has aimed to motivate all members of the campus community to share in the responsibility of student success and satisfaction.

When the program was instituted in 1989, Bethany’s retention of full-time freshmen was 70 percent. In 1994, the rate had increased to 82 percent, and full-time enrollment had increased 21 percent.

1989

## **Boston College (MA)**

*The Office of AHANA Student Programs*

The office of AHANA (African America, Hispanic, Asian, and Native America) Student Programs at Boston College serves as a center for academic and personal support for students from ethnic/racial groups subsumed under the program's acronym. All minority students may take advantage of the AHANA House and many of its services.

### **Options through Education**

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The OTE program serves 40-50 students in each class who are identified as having potential, but who otherwise do not meet the normal admissions criteria for entrance into Boston College. Students accepted into the OTE program receive full funding for their four years at Boston College. The OTE student must sign a contractual agreement in which he/she agrees to specific conditions for the study halls, and agrees to seek help when experiencing difficulty in courses.

Through (OTE) a six week summer transition program is offered. The program focuses on improving basic skills in math and English and provide an orientation to college life. During the academic year, OTE students receive monitoring and advising. OTE students may make up academic deficiencies during the summer on a tuition free basis. Students must meet with advisors monthly, and as an additional check to performance, the AHANA Office requests progress reports from teachers asking about students' performance.

### **Tutorial Services and Writing Workshops**

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The Office of AHANA hires tutors every year to provide resources in approximately thirty subject areas. The purpose of tutors is two-fold: to assist students to successfully complete their courses, and to transform good students into better ones. Beyond tutoring, Writing Workshops are provided to any student who feels they need to improve their skills.

### **Academic and Career Counseling**

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The Office's professional staff encourages regularly scheduled meetings with students for course selection, identifying strengths and weaknesses and examining the progress being made towards eventual graduation. The office also encourages students to make use of other College resources such as the Career Planning and Placement Office, and the Expo, which affords the opportunity for students to prepare resumes and meet representatives from corporations.

### **The AHANA Hotline**

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The Hotline provides a forum for addressing the concerns of the AHANA community on campus including events, activities, and programs of interest to students. The Office also lists internships, post-graduate job possibilities and graduate schools in the publication. Opportunities for student employment and scholarship are also listed in an attempt to provide avenues for financial assistance and academic recognition for deserving students. During the past ten years under the AHANA program, minority retention has increased percent to 75 percent.



1991

## Bowie State University (MD)

### *Summer Emerging Scholars Program*

The Summer Emerging Scholars Program at Bowie State University is a pre-college experience for academically at-risk students who are not eligible for regular admission but who give evidence of having potential.

Applicants who are denied admission to Bowie State are considered for the Summer Emerging Scholars Program. The program director invites the students displaying potential to apply to the program. Two committees composed of directors and staff from the Center for Learning Assistance Support Services (C.L.A.S.S.) and Admissions (plus other selected faculty members) interview the students and make the final selections for admission.

Students participating in the Summer Emerging Scholars Program receive daily academic reinforcement courses in English, mathematics, reading and writing. Course content concentrates on bringing students to the level of competence necessary to succeed in their beginning college courses.

Beyond coursework, the Program provides workshops, seminar programs and other activities to assist students in developing the motivation for academic achievement, and provide them with cultural and social enrichment. These include a “College Readiness Workshop”, covering topics such as time management, study skills and the college classroom environment, and evening programs dealing with current and relevant topics to students at Bowie State. On a more relaxed note, the residence hall staff and the students also put on a talent show, have a number of night “rap” sessions on timely and relevant topics, and enjoy scheduled recreational and cultural activities on the weekends.

During the summer program, each student is given a placement test to determine their math and English ability. The results are used to place students in classes where they will be challenged

and where they can succeed. Academic advising is also provided to help students in selecting courses and a major. Each student pre-registers for the fall semester and is assigned a C.L.A.S.S. counselor who provides regular ongoing monitoring and intervention if any difficulties or problems arise.

As part of the overall effort to help assure that the Emerging Scholars had a chance to succeed academically and personally, the director founded Parents and College Together for Student Success. This group of program staff and faculty, along with the university president, share information with parents about academic policies and procedures, restrictions and services available to students. This provides parents with a better understanding of the environment their sons and daughters are in, making it easier for them to become partners in advising, motivating, and assisting the students.

The Summer Emerging Scholars Program has been successful in more ways than one. The Program admits students not normally given access to a four-year institution and provides them with the academic and personal support necessary to develop the internal motivation to succeed at the University level. At the end of the 1990 summer program, 41 of the 43 Emerging Scholars who participated were admitted to the University for their first semester under the condition that they meet with their C.L.A.S.S. counselor on a regular basis. In addition, each student is given the opportunity for one-on-one counseling and tutoring (in basic skills and course content), and they are assigned to a faculty or staff mentor who establishes a personal relationship with the student and provides support, motivation and assistance when needed.

None of the 41 students admitted to the University after attending the Summer Emerging Scholars Program in the fall of 1990 were academically dismissed. Beyond that, 31 of the 41 students earned a grade point average above 2.0!

2001

## Bridgewater College (VA)

*Personal Development Portfolio Program*

One of the first tasks of all first-year students at Bridgewater College is to begin developing a plan of personal development. This plan, its continuing development, and its execution, is at the heart of the college's significant success in student retention.

### **A Foundation for Retention**

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Bridgewater College's Personal Development Portfolio Program (PDP) begins during orientation and continues through graduation. Goals of the program include:

- Improvement of the advising relationship
- Increased use of student peer leaders
- Development of a personal development portfolio
- Assessments in personal growth
- "Real-world" application of practical skills

To implement its plan, Bridgewater restructured freshman orientation and advising to reflect the above goals, emphasized the importance of community involvement in the personal development process, and effectively reorganized how students make contact with different offices on campus.

### **How it Works**

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Advising is a significant part of the PDP program. A PDP advisor is assigned to guide students through orientation, their first year of college, and a required success course, PDP 150. In the sophomore year and beyond, an advisor in the student's field of major then guides students through PDP 250, 350, and 450. Students receive credit for completing each year of the program.

In the advanced courses during the sophomore, junior, and senior years, students articulate and defend their personal development portfolio to peers and faculty.

Throughout the four-year process, students are required to perform ten hours of community service and to set goals related to future personal development and career aspirations.

Residence hall counselors are a significant support to the program, as is an "Early Warning Committee" comprised of the deans of the college and officers from admissions, student affairs, and most branches of the college.

### **Use of Resources**

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A significant budget covers costs for the PDP program. Funds pay for student and faculty trips to museums, exhibits, seminars, workshops, and professional training. Additional funds are provided as stipends to faculty mentors, student program assistants, and student organization developers. Priority has also been placed on the continuing training and development of faculty.

### **Results**

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Freshman-to-sophomore retention rates at Bridgewater improved from 65 percent to 79 percent from 1993 to 1999. In addition, students have become more involved in campus life and in the community, as evidenced by emerging student programs such as a Community Service Organization, student chapter of Habitat for Humanity, Book Buddy programs for local schoolchildren, and participation in the local rescue squad and forest service.

1999

## Brooklyn College, City University of New York (NY)

*Freshman Year College: A Comprehensive Approach to the Retention of First-Year Students*

A study showing that only 50 percent of entering students still enrolled after three semesters has led to a renewed and highly successful retention effort at Brooklyn College, City University of New York (enrollment 11,500). The renewed effort focuses on all first-year students and brings together a variety of campus resources and programs.

### **Comprehensive and Innovative Approach**

The Freshman Year College offers a comprehensive approach to freshman retention. It is offered to all first-year students except those in special pre-professional or honors programs. Components of this “college within a college” include, but are not limited to:

- Block programming in which the same students share three thematically coordinated classes for the purpose of developing a community of learners;
- Pre-freshman Summer Institute offering instruction in writing, mathematics, and English as a Second Language to address skill deficits prior to the initial semester;
- Redesigned courses to take advantage of the Web’s interactive learning potential;
- Transformations, a bi-weekly faculty development seminar, held each spring to solidify faculty commitment to integrating first-year students into the college community and to foster faculty collaboration across disciplines. These acclaimed seminars serve as a think-tank for programmatic innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration;
- Workshops and close collaboration with feeder high schools to acquaint students with college entrance requirements and the significance of assessment tests required by the City University of New York; and

- Annual and special conferences such as a 1997 conference to encourage faculty dialogue, “Building Blocks: Models of Excellence for First-Year Students,” with keynote speeches by Vincent Tinto and Uri Treisman.

### **Block Programming**

Block programming offers students mutual support for negotiating the complexities of a large urban institution. Each block includes an English composition course, a social science core course, a science core course, and an elective. Special Faculty Fellows and tutors work together in interdisciplinary teams to help students in each block to actively shape their own learning. The block format allows students to make friends, develop mutual support and study groups, and become socialized into academic life.

### **Results**

Brooklyn College studies have shown that Freshman Year College has had a major effect on persistence, credit accumulation, skills assessment test pass rates, and student satisfaction with college services. In the early 1990s, 50 percent of students entering Brooklyn College dropped out within two years, many earning just 12 credits or less. For the fall 1997 entering class, 79 percent of the students who participated in Freshman Year College were still enrolled after three semesters. In addition, the Pre-freshman Summer Program has achieved pass rates of 87 percent in writing and 100 percent in mathematics, as compared to 60 percent in writing and 45 percent in mathematics in regular semester-long remedial classes. To fund projects for the Freshman Year College, faculty at the college have applied for and been awarded more than \$1.7 million in institutional grants from the National Science Foundation, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, and other sources.

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1990

## Brooklyn College, City University of New York (NY)

### *Peer Tutoring in Basic Courses*

In the Brooklyn College program, peer tutoring is available for the six basic courses in which students typically experience academic difficulty. The tutoring is presented in two different models: the Core Curricular Peer Tutoring Program and the Immerse Remediation Program. Freshman are pro-actively drawn into in-class and out-of-class tutoring through promotional materials, explicit faculty referrals and computerized student tracking.

#### **Core Curricular Peer Tutoring Project (PTP)**

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Faculty and tutors work closely together to develop innovative strategies for writing, reading and critical thinking. Tutors work with students in and out of class in a broad range of settings from one-on-one diagnosis and teaching to large group presentations reviewing course material. Other special tutoring projects include the showing of videos and slide shows (e.g., Review of the Iliad, How to Write a Core 4 Term Paper, Concentrating on Academic Tools), and developing Glossaries of Terms for applicable classes.

To help maintain a strong tutor-professor relationship which is necessary for the success of the program faculty are asked to recommend as tutors those students who received an A in the course and have good communication skills.

Tutors are given responsibility for three sections of a particular course. Each tutor regularly attends every meeting of one section to keep abreast of the progress of the course. The tutor maintains liaison with the professor to follow the progress of the students in the other two sections. At mid-term an attempt is made to reach students who have been deemed by the

computerized Early Warning System as experiencing academic difficulties.

The tutor also attends a weekly training meeting which focuses upon study strategies, means of assisting students in setting priorities, and procedures to help students achieve their own understanding of course material.

#### **Immerse Remediation Program**

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The Immerse Remediation Program focuses on the needs of students who have failed to pass an assessment test after one semester of traditional remedial instruction. Students attend in the summer or winter intermission, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for eight full days.

Groups of 15 students are assigned to one faculty member and three tutors. The tutors are responsible not only for daily academic work, but also for addressing the students concerns about remediation, their academic planning in general, the project they are in, and for conveying and interpreting assessment test results.

Ninety-nine percent of the students who came for tutoring sessions in basic courses in the fall of 1989 re-enrolled in the spring of 1990. Since the program began, 99 percent of the students have passed the Mathematics Assessment Test as compared to 39 percent of the students in the traditional version of the course. Students working closely with peer tutors became significantly better readers and writers, more active thinkers and communicators and more confident members of the college community.

1993

**California State University Northridge (CA)***Developmental Mathematics Program*

The California State University system requires students either to complete or be exempted from its mathematics proficiency examination. In addition, CSUN students must successfully complete a mathematics class as a graduation requirement. They cannot enroll in this class, however, until they pass the proficiency exam. Hundreds of students are unable to do so. In addition to the proficiency exam, there is a prerequisite exam for calculus which hundreds of students fail. The Developmental Mathematics Program (DMP) was developed over the past 14 years to increase the retention of students unable to pass these requirements.

**Description**

The DMP, a highly structured yet flexible program, meets the needs of more than 2500 students a year. The program is based on the philosophy that students learn in different ways. Thus, the program offers them a variety of options in ways to learn, all of which focus on their active participation. Pedagogy developed for the program includes collaborative learning, writing, a variety of out-of-class support, and assessment of student outcomes.

The DMP is staffed by 2 mathematics faculty members, 15 graduate instructors, and 25 peer tutors. Several courses are offered by the DMP, each taught by an instructor and two peer tutors. Math 095 (algebra and geometry) prepares students enrolled in mathematics-based majors for calculus classes; Math 094 (arithmetic, geometry, and algebra) prepares liberal arts majors for classes such as statistics; and Math 094A and 094B (arithmetic and geometry), a two semester sequence, assists students with the lowest mathematics skills.

**Course Components and Approaches**

All courses, no matter what the focus, have certain similarities in format as described below.

- Group work/collaborative learning is the primary method of instruction. Instructors lecture only 10 minutes per class, and students work in groups for the remainder of the class.

- Writing is a strong course component. Faculty write while solving problems at the board, and students write during group activities and on tests.
- Testing is an opportunity for learning (not just evaluating) and motivates students, informs them of their progress and enables them to learn from their failures as well as successes. Testing is frequent and uses the Berkeley Testing System.
- Out-of-class support includes tutoring labs, videotapes, audiotapes, computer programs and interactive video/computer programs keyed to the students' curriculum. The media labs have material available for every topic in the developmental classes. Students who fail a test are required to spend one hour in a media lab to be eligible for a retest.

**Results**

The DMP has proven to be successful in addressing the needs of a diverse population. The DMP provides students with options for learning that are based on their active involvement in the learning process. Students who have started out in the DMP have even gone on to declare mathematics majors, as well as majors that are math dependent.

Because of the structure of the DMP, the dropout rate is very low – only 10 percent. For the three academic years, spring 1990 through fall 1992, 48 percent of the 1,151 developmental students who took the math placement test to qualify for calculus passed the test. The passing rate for all students at CSUN was 34 percent. Of the 1,214 developmental students who took the Elementary Level Mathematics Examination, 68 percent qualified for university mathematics courses; the rate for all CSUN students was 39 percent. In addition to these impressive statistics, the performance of developmental students in subsequent mathematics course work has been evaluated every semester since 1983. Developmental students consistently perform as well or better than students not enrolled in developmental classes.

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1993

**California State University Northridge (CA)***Student Academic Involvement Retention System (STAIRS)*

STAIRS is targeted for the access and retention of under-represented students. CSUN's students reflect the changing demographics of the University's service area, changing from a predominantly white, non-Hispanic population to a much more racially and ethnically diverse community. As a result, the University recognized the need to develop a program which meets the unique educational needs of Educational Equity (EE) students. CSUN developed a comprehensive retention model which serves students from initial enrollment through graduation.

STAIRS is administratively located in the Academic Services Support unit which allows for program integration and acceptance within the academic community. All EE components report to the same administrative unit, thereby reducing risks associated with decentralized service delivery systems.

**Program Specifics**

The student-centered systematic retention approach identifies five stages of student involvement with the University, and itemizes the processes and programs available to support the student in each stage. Each stage represents movement through milestones or stages of involvement in the college experience and are facilitated by the appropriate support services. These stages include the following:

- The Determination Stage involves the student, community, parents, teachers and peers in reviewing information about CSUN through open houses, personal interviews, introduction to support services and diagnostic testing.
- The Contract Stage involves the student in selecting a college through application processing, housing services, financial aid services and major advisement.

- The Reinforcement Stage involves the student in the processes of orientation and registration through Orientation, Summer Bridge, course registration, diagnostic referrals, academic advisement and support services such as peer counseling/mentoring and time and money management workshops.
- The Involvement and Incorporation Stage centers on involving the student in the learning community. Each academic school is charged with developing an Educational Equity Plan tailored to the needs of its EE students. School-based programs enable the student to become a member of a specific community and involve internships, peer advising, tutoring and independent study. Student progress checks include early warning systems, a variety of student tracking systems, tutoring, and student clubs and organizations. In addition to the school-based programs, there is a School of Discovery for undecided students.
- The Completion and Decisions Stage is based on career focus, completion of graduation requirements, student internships, and in-depth relationships with faculty and academic departments.

**Results**

From 1988-1992, almost all school-based programs show increased retention of under-represented students, with many schools showing an increase of more than 10 percentage points. In addition, the retention of non-targeted students has increased, although the focus of this program has been on specific populations of students.

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1999

## Centennial College (CAN)

Year One

The scope of Year One is broader than many student retention programs. Its focus goes beyond transition initiatives to include pre-enrollment decision support delivered through a retention-oriented recruitment program. Enrollment results have been positive for Centennial College (two-year institution, Scarborough, Ontario, enrollment 11,500).

### More than Just Transition Support

Basing its direction on the retention literature, Centennial determined that student success begins long before students step into the classroom. Year One is the name used to describe a range of student recruitment and transition initiatives targeted to high school seniors and entering students. The unifying theme for the program is “Helping You Find Your Way in a Changing World.”

Among the program’s goals are increasing the number of applicants to the college, increasing student retention, and improving the academic performance of first-year students. The program was first fully implemented in 1996.

The two main directives of Year One are outlined below:

1. Implement a recruitment program designed for retention, with the goal of giving prospective students the information they need to ensure they make the right decision about their postsecondary education.
2. Once students have chosen a college, support them during the transition from high school to college.

### Recruitment for Retention – Program Elements

Rather than viewing their work as “sales,” the liaison (outreach) team members tend to view themselves as educators. Initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- Centennial College presentations which stress student success issues;

- Success workshops that focus on helping high school seniors make a successful transition to college, no matter which institution they choose;
- A calendar that helps students plan for college and the achievement of long-range academic goals;
- New student newsletter addressing key new student issues, written by current students;
- A number of program-specific, pre-admission orientation sessions to help students make the right program decision;
- Pre-admission study skills course at no charge offered to all students accepted for admission; and
- “Upgrading programs” offered to students who are ineligible for entry into the program of their choice. Letters of admission for these programs state that the programs are a “success” stream requiring an additional semester or two in school.

### Transition Support Elements

Centennial’s strategies to support students in their transition to college and throughout their college career include, but are not limited to:

- “Find Your Way,” an orientation program focused on sharing student success strategies;
- Learning Strategies workshops covering time management, test taking, note taking, concentration, memory, and handling reading assignments;
- An early-warning system consisting of a new student questionnaire to identify support needs and a resulting personalized success plan to link students with matching resources for each identified need; and
- Aggregate reviews of the early-warning system findings to identify priority support needs for incoming students at the college.

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2000

**Central New Mexico Community College  
fka: Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute (NM)**

*R2/D2: Relationship-based Retention/Dimensional Development*

R2/D2 is a student-driven, practical approach to retention that has demonstrated significant success for students enrolled in Technologies programs at Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute (TVI).

**Preparing Quality Employees**

With an enrollment of over 22,000, TVI is the largest postsecondary two-year institution in New Mexico. TVI provides education and training in a variety of occupations, liberal arts, and adult education disciplines.

The Institute is a major hub for training a qualified workforce for Intel Corporation and several other technology-based companies in the Albuquerque/Rio Rancho area.

During 1995 and 1996, the first-to-second-term retention rate in key programs in the Technologies Department was estimated at below 30 percent. Industry interest in obtaining an adequate supply of quality-trained employees and the desire to retain more students launched the retention efforts that are currently used for all Technologies Department programs.

**Integrated Support**

The Technologies Department offers ten rigorous degree and certificate programs involving a stringent number of required technical labs, math, physics, and chemistry courses. The Technologies Department resource center, the TECH Center, was established in 1997 to provide an integrative environment that helps students meet the challenges of their coursework.

The Center is designed to:

- Provide services to technology students and faculty that support a positive learning process;
- Retain students so that goals are achieved;
- Direct students to services which the Center cannot provide;
- Assist with resumé preparation and job market research; and

- Promote co-ops, internships, and hiring of Technologies Department students/graduates.

At the heart of the Center is the premise that positive relationships between people are essential to an effective learning environment. That premise forms the basis for the Center's retention model, a strategy called Relationship-based Retention/Dimensional Development (R2/D2). This multidimensional, relationship-based retention model emphasizes positive student development through the identification and promotion of supportive human interactions.

For example, peer mentors (work-study students with a technology major) provide ongoing academic and personal support for first-term students. In addition, these more experienced students develop individual and team projects related to their field of study that contribute to the enhancement of all student learning.

**Tracking Results**

A retention tracking system was developed in 1997 and first used during the fall of 1998 to permit immediate term-to-term retention analysis of all programs in the Technologies Department. This powerful tool has enabled the department to address retention issues in a timely fashion, thereby increasing the potential for student and program success.

The Relationship-based Retention/ Dimensional Development model has proven to be highly effective in promoting student success in the highly competitive and demanding technology field. During the 1998-99 academic year, there were 6,495 visits to the TECH Center. Compared to the estimated 30 percent retention rate prior to 1997, TVI's Technology Department experienced a drastic increase in first-to second-term retention since the implementation of the TECH Center and the R2/D2 model. All programs combined yielded an average of 93 percent retention from fall 1998 to spring 1999 and a 90 percent average from fall 1999 to spring 2000.

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## 2001

### Central Wyoming College (WY)

#### *SUCCESS: Students Utilizing Comprehensive College Educational Services Successfully*

High-risk, first-generation, and economically disadvantaged students are now succeeding at historically high levels at Central Wyoming College, a community college of approximately 1,700 students. Thanks to the SUCCESS program, which was founded through a Title III grant, the college has increased its retention rates significantly.

#### **Comprehensive Retention Plan**

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In October 1995, Central Wyoming College was the recipient of a \$1.7 million Title III Grant. A Student Development Task Force comprised of faculty and student services staff was immediately created to help develop a comprehensive student success plan. The plan included funds for needed computers, software, staff training, consulting, and supplies. Most of the SUCCESS strategies were in place by fall 1996. These strategies have been continually modified and improved each year based on institutional data and service evaluations.

Elements of the SUCCESS program have included:

- Identification of student attrition risk factors by an institutional researcher;
- Implementation of a student tracking system to track students' need for assistance, to ensure they receive assistance, and to monitor progress;
- Identification of students' needs for developmental coursework through the COMPASS test;
- Effective course placement and remedial support;
- A required college success course;
- Career counseling and workshops; and
- A new computer-assisted learning lab staff with tutors.

For the required college success course, students have two options: they can option enroll in a one-credit, five-week course called Freshman Seminar or a three-credit, fifteen-week course called Orientation to College.

#### **Outcomes**

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From 1992-95, the fall-to-fall retention rate for first-time, full-time students at Central Wyoming College was just 33 percent. For students who benefited from the first year of SUCCESS (fall 1996-fall 1997) and who successfully completed the college success course, retention stood at 61 percent. For fall 2000, this same cohort's retention rate rose to 74 percent.

An additional, unexpected outcome of the project was the college's 15 percent enrollment increase from 1996-1999 while enrollment at other Wyoming community colleges remained static or dropped. This increase has been attributed in part to the SUCCESS program.

1991

## Chicago State University (IL)

### *Academic Enrichment Studies Program*

Chicago State University is one school actively trying to address the nationwide shortage of nurses. The College of Nursing designed the Academic Enrichment Program to identify at-risk students early in their academic careers and implemented teaching/learning strategies to meet these students' identified academic needs, including:

- Providing at-risk students an academic support program;
- Providing a training program for faculty to facilitate effective teaching of the "at-risk" student;
- Establishing academic support for "at-risk" students through peer tutoring.

Pre-admission tests are administered to all students entering the nursing program. From the results, students can be identified as at-risk prior to enrollment and placed immediately into the Academic Enrichment Program upon entering the College of Nursing. To continue monitoring students and identifying deficiencies in study skills, a second phase of diagnostic testing is administered to sophomore students early in the fall semester, and each year post testing is completed for all students.

Each level facilitator plans, prepares and conducts remediation sessions for their respective group based on the results of the diagnostic testing. All levels of students can also attend weekly Academic Enrichment Group Sessions. The group sessions and practice activities correlate with the theoretical topics being presented in the student's respective nursing courses, thus increasing the attendance as students see that these sessions are relevant to their other classes.

The College of Nursing also implemented a nursing peer tutoring program. The tutoring network provides individual student tutoring for both nursing students and intended nursing majors. All peer tutors receive an eight hour orientation and ongoing support provided by the peer tutor faculty advisor.

A unique component of the Academic Enrichment Program is the participation of a reading consultant in training the nursing faculty to teach reading comprehension, diagnose students' academic deficiencies and use remediation strategies according to the student's identified learning needs. Using this approach, at-risk students receive assistance tailored to the nursing curriculum from an instructor knowledgeable about the difficulties they are having.

Faculty also attend enrichment seminars/workshops to help them be better prepared to assist students. During the summer, a five-week academic enrichment training session is conducted and is followed with monthly sessions conducted by the reading consultant during the academic year. Faculty members also participate in special faculty development workshops.

The Academic Enrichment Program provides an academic program for at-risk students giving them the opportunity to succeed by completing the baccalaureate nursing program and passing the National Council Licensure Examination for registered nurses. Prior to the Academic Enrichment Program, the student retention rate was 55 percent; since the program began, the student retention rate has steadily increased to 90 percent as of the end of 1989-90. Also, for the last six years the Licensure Examination pass rate is 20 percentile points higher than the six-year mean preceding the pilot project.

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1992

**Chicago State University (IL)***Developmental Mathematics Program*

With the Developmental Mathematics Program, Chicago State introduced bold and creative curricular innovations to make basic math courses a path rather than a roadblock to success. Writing assignments were introduced into the 50 sections of developmental math courses, and instructional hours were increased to accommodate tutoring and small group collaboration. Other innovations include a “Math Hotline,” humorous videotapes, as well as extensive preparation for math placement exams.

Chicago State University is a four-year commuter institution enrolling about 8,000 students. The typical CSU student is a 31-year-old black, working mother who must juggle commitments to work, family and school, as well as overcome the deficiencies and anxieties created by under preparation and/or years away from formal education. Mathematics is one of the greatest hurdles facing the students. The Developmental Mathematics Program was created to promote mathematics success and increase student retention. The program includes the following features:

**Correct Placement**

Incoming students are given a placement test geared precisely to CSU’s courses. Before the test, students are provided a manual discussing the placement test and the various mathematics programs. The manual is provided to ease pre-test jitters by providing sample questions and a review of all the material on the test. In addition, practice/review sessions are conducted just prior to the test.

**Developmental Courses**

At-risk students are placed into one of two special developmental courses, basic math or elementary algebra, depending on their placement test score. Approximately 50 percent of the students take basic math, and 80 percent

need algebra. The classes meet four-hours per week (an increase from the original three-hour format) and there are more than 50 sections per term. In-class tutoring is provided by the instructor and tutor.

In order to reduce test anxiety, sample tests are sold at the bookstore and a calendar of test days is published. In addition, videotapes which approach mathematics humorously have been developed which help students review course material. Tests themselves contain about 75 percent new material and 25 percent review material from previous tests. In both courses, student are allowed to use hand calculators.

Another important component of the programs is its grading. All students receive a passing grade if all requirements are completed. If students are deficient in completing requirements, they receive an incomplete and are given the full next term to complete the course in special sessions given in the Learning Assistance Center.

Another innovative feature is that writing assignments, five 100-word papers on myriad topics, were added to the course work. The goal of this writing is to reinforce students’ writing skills and to encourage articulation of mathematical concepts and feelings about mathematics.

Additional Assistance for Commuters  
Mathematics tutoring is available 70 hours a week at the Learning Assistance Center. Students receive one-on-one tutoring or work in small groups. An unusual feature offered by the Center is a “Math Hotline,” a telephone number students can call for help with questions.

As a result of this program, students gain confidence and competence in mathematics which enhances the probability of success in math-related courses. Pass rates for the two developmental math courses have increased from 50 percent to almost 67 percent.

1990

**City College of New York**

**fka: City College of the City University of New York (NY)**

*Program for the Retention of Engineering Students*

The City College Program for the Retention of Engineering Students (PRES) focuses on lower-division minority engineering students. PRES is not a remedial program but rather offers services for enhancing students' academic, personal, and social development.

The Program for the Retention of Engineering Students offers many services to aid students in their studies, and in their adjustment to the University. These include the following:

Tutoring is available on an individual and group basis. Tutors are engineering students who are trained to be more effective.

Professional/academic counseling is available. Students are required to talk with a PRES staff member before adding or dropping a course or before taking a leave of absence from the school.

Students are required to attend one of three problem solving courses each semester which provide theoretical and hands-on experience solving mathematical problems.

Review sessions are offered in math, chemistry, and physics throughout the academic year, focusing on course content, vocabulary and problem solving.

The course "Learning to Learn" is offered to aid students in developing effective study skills and task management, and in improving overall grade point averages.

"Professional Skills for Engineers" is a ten-week course designed to develop skills necessary in the work place, including interviewing skills and the writing of a resume.

"RAP Session" is a ten-week course that meets for 1-1/2 hour sessions and uses peer counseling to address common, affective concerns.

Career orientation sessions provide information on specific engineering disciplines and areas of employment.

With City College being a commuter college, the Group Study Center was developed to provide reserved space for individual and group study of PRES students.

Math/science coursework is monitored continuously by PRES staff. Each PRES student must attend a mid-term meeting to discuss their coursework, grade status and other information recorded by tutors.

Mentoring by corporate representatives is available for students to encourage discussions about such areas of interest as career choices, coursework, and jobs.

Block registration of math and science courses is done to facilitate peer study groups.

Summer job placement is available to students who have progressed well in their coursework and have actively participated in PRES.

Social activities are provided including a luncheon at the beginning of the semester and a Christmas Party and Annual Dinner.

As a result of these efforts, PRES students showed a 2.58 average increase in their GPA compared to only a 2.04 increase among their non-PRES counterparts. Even more significant results are seen in the pass rate in math/science courses: 64 percent for PRES participants compared to 31.5 percent for non-PRES students. And finally, the retention rates have increased significantly, from 52 percent (for non-PRES students) to 86 percent (for PRES students).

1989

## City University of New York (NY)

### *Pre-Freshman Summer Basic Skills Program*

The Pre-Freshman Summer Program at the City University of New York is designed to help underprepared students improve their basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics and English as a Second Language, and to meet University proficiency standards prior to enrollment.

The Pre-Freshman Program varies among the 18 CUNY campuses, depending on the student population. The typical program offers intensive small-group instruction for eight hours a week in each subject, for six weeks. Intensive tutoring takes place in classes, both individually and in small groups. City College also offers a comprehensive program of individual and group counseling, consisting of private appointments, academic advising, career workshops, and formal orientation courses in study skills and adjustment to college requirements. The University provides all colleges with guidelines for the organization, staffing, and budgeting of their Pre-Freshman Programs.

All programs provide the equivalent of one semester of instruction in classroom, laboratory, or other specified sections. Class size is limited to 15 students. Classes are offered tuition-free and may not carry academic credit.

Eligibility for the Program is based on the students' scores on the Freshman Skills Assessment Tests. The Program requires that students be both pre-tested and post-tested once they are in the program. Careful attention to assessment, is an essential feature of the program, so that colleges may measure individual and program progress and so that the University may have data important for evaluation and planning.

Other important program features have developed at different colleges. These include:

work-study and employment referral opportunities to help students cope with the financial pressures that so often drive them from college; early detection of transfer students so that counseling and advisement may be tailored to the individual's goals and needs so that long-term retention may be enhanced; on-site child care to ease the pressures on students with children and help them stay in college; flexible scheduling, in evening and weekend formats, to serve a large number of students who must work while attending school.

Instructors in the Pre-Freshman Summer Program are experienced teachers, mostly full-time faculty. Counselors are experienced faculty or counselors drawn from college's counseling staff. Tutors may be peer tutors or experienced teachers, and are trained to work in the Pre-Freshman Summer Program. Colleges are expected to regularly provide faculty planning and development workshops and to actively involve faculty in developing and evaluating curricular plans and materials. The faculty development is essential to the program's success. Colleges conduct intensive pre-program planning sessions as well as ongoing workshops, seminars, and informal meetings to discuss the program's progress and to respond to needs as they arise.

The Program has had success on all of the CUNY campuses. Students who participated in the 1987 Summer Program had a 20 percent higher rate of retention into the sophomore year than nonparticipants with comparable initial test scores. They also earned an average of three to four more degree credits in their freshman year than students who did not participate.

1991

**Clemson University (SC)***Program for Engineering Enrichment and Retention (PEER)*

In 1987 the Clemson University College of Engineering implemented the Program for Engineering Enrichment and Retention (PEER) to combat the low retention rates of its African American students. PEER addresses four issues many new minority students face on predominantly white campuses: loss of community, lack of peers and role models, lack of information and reluctance to approach professors and administrators. Peer mentoring is the major avenue through which these issues are addressed.

The mentor's purpose is to provide each advisee with a caring friend to whom (s) he can turn for support or information. PEER mentors are assigned six to eight freshmen "advisees" whom they meet with weekly on an individual and group basis. Individual meetings incorporate any activity that both mentor and advisee enjoy; the only requirement is that the meetings take place in relative privacy so that the advisee may feel free to talk on a personal level. PEER mentors also meet with all of their advisees as a group. This meeting may be purely social, an opportunity for the advisees to compare notes, let off steam and provide each other support; or it may be informational, with the mentor instructing the group in University policies and procedures. Mentors also use this time to inform students of important events and deadlines.

During a weekly meeting with the PEER Coordinator, mentors are provided with ongoing counseling training and receive information to pass on to the advisees. They also meet with the coordinator in groups of two each week to report their activities and to alert the coordinator of any students needing extra emotional or academic help. The coordinator supervises the mentors and provides counseling for the students. This includes personal counseling, study skills and time management assistance, and career counseling. A significant amount of the coordinator's time is spent on "outreach," calling students who are in academic difficulty or those whose mentors have indicated they might benefit from some assistance.

The PEER program has been very responsive to student requests and needs, and has resulted in a number of additional programs to assist students in their educational career including:

- PEER Study Hall - The study hall is staffed by upper-class and graduate student tutors and is open four nights a week on a voluntary basis.
- All-PEER Seminars and Social Events - Optional seminars open to all PEER students and covering study skills and time management, careers in engineering, stress management, co-op education.
- Pre-Professional PEER (P3) - An extension of the freshmen PEER Program in which older minority students work with a faculty mentor and area African American professional engineers as industry mentors. Mentors serve as resources on coursework, course selection, and career opportunities.
- P3 groups also go on plant trips, meet recruiters and consider the relationship between present coursework and application in the workplace.
- Job Hunting Skills - The coordinator offers individual and group assistance with resume writing, interviewing techniques, letter writing and graduate school plans.
- Continued Counseling Support - The PEER office is open to any minority student in need of assistance. The coordinator provides referral or counseling as needed.

The results of the PEER program have been impressive with retention of the original 60 students from the freshman to the sophomore years at approximately 80 percent, a figure which exceeds the majority retention rate and has been sustained in subsequent years.

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1990

**Clemson University (SC)**  
*Science and Technology Entrance Program*

The Science and Technology Entrance Program (STEP) was initiated in June of 1988, with the focus of attracting new students to the agriculture, textile management, industrial technology education and forestry programs. Students who have expressed an interest in one of these programs, but whose high school record and SAT scores place them below the required level for admission, are identified by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and sent to the director of undergraduate academic services who coordinates STEP.

Students admitted to STEP will be classified as majors either in agriculture (undecided), textile management, industrial technology education, forest management or forest products for one academic year. During this period students cannot change their major and must comply with the STEP admission requirements.

The program includes a required seven-week summer program during which students enroll in either English Fundamentals or Mathematical Sciences. (Composition I can be substituted for the English Fundamentals course.) Students also enroll in a reading improvement course and Agriculture Education (University Survival Skills).

To provide assistance in coursework during the academic year, students in STEP meet individually with their academic advisors on a weekly basis to discuss progress and any problems.

Tutoring by graduate students and faculty is available for students in STEP. Pre-science tutorials in biology and chemistry are also offered during the summer program. Study hall is provided for two hours a day on Monday-Thursday, and is required of students in STEP.

Students in STEP are advised to register for no more than 13 hours for each semester during

their first year. The 26 hours include a math or English class (depending on the configuration of their summer program) and an introductory course in agriculture, forestry, textiles or industrial technology education, depending upon their major. In addition, students enroll in introductory biology or chemistry plus electives such as departmental courses of ROTC.

Students in STEP are required to satisfy all the program requirements during the summer session and freshman year. After the freshman year, eligibility to continue at Clemson is the same as for students admitted through regular admissions channels.

In the first year of the program the average GPA for the 39 entering students rose from a predicted 1.72 to 2.15, with a freshman to sophomore retention rate of 90 percent, a higher rate than for regularly admitted freshman.

1993

**Cloud County Community College (KS)***Student Development Program*

Cloud County Community College operates a small, rural campus in North Central Kansas, serving 760 day students, 400 night students and 1,800 students at outreach centers in 11 counties. In 1987 Cloud received a Title III grant which led to the development of centralized advisement, the Learning Skills Center and an integrated retention program. This comprehensive Student Development Program has had a dramatic impact on student success and persistence.

**Academic Advisement**

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In 1990, a centralized Advisement Center opened in the Student Union to accommodate both day and evening students. Before centralized advising, full-time students were assigned to one of 44 faculty advisors across campus. Evening and off-campus students received no advising. In contrast, students now come to the Advisement Center, staffed by 13 trained faculty, for assessment, academic planning, enrolling, schedule changes, transfer information and mid-term grades, among other things. Faculty advisors receive three semester hours release time for advising in the center. Monthly in-service provides advisors up-to-date information and techniques. Students evaluate advisors through annual surveys coordinated by the Advisement Center staff.

**Academic Support**

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Also built in 1990, the new Learning Skills Center is staffed by a director, assistant director and a paraprofessional. The LSC offers a variety of developmental courses and has peer tutors trained in 15 different areas of study. During fall 1992, over 500 students totaling 6,300 contact hours were served in the LSC.

**Student Assessment**

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Cloud recognizes that student assessment is the foundation for effective retention. The assessment consists of ASSET reading, writing

and numerical skills subtests along with a faculty-scored writing sample and the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory. The Myers-Briggs is used in several ways. Cloud research shows that certain personality types run a greater risk of academic failure. Advisors use this information to predict a student's need for study skills courses. In addition to English placement, the combined ASSET scores are used as indicators of student readiness for general education courses.

**Freshman Planning Conferences**

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At the fifth week of the term, freshmen are asked to schedule a Planning Conference with their advisor. During the session, potential problems are noted and referrals made if necessary.

**Instructor Referrals**

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Students who experience academic difficulty are referred to the Advisement Center by instructors using Student Progress Reports. At-risk students are contacted via phone or mail, and a student retention specialist coordinates and tracks referred students. To address the instructor's concern, students respond in writing on the progress report.

**Results**

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Since the expansion of advisement and LSC services, freshman to sophomore retention has improved from 51 percent in 1987-88 to 67 percent in 1991-92. At current funding levels, this has meant additional funding of more than \$430,000 over four years. Not only has retention improved, but other college wide changes have occurred as well. Advisement and academic support are more accessible and available to more students. In addition, a two-year faculty development program was implemented in 1989.



2012

## Coconino Community College (AZ)

CCC2NAU

Recognizing the transfer process between community college and a four-year institution contains hurdles, the presidents of Northern Arizona University (NAU) and Coconino Community College (CCC) created a bridge program that goes far beyond the traditional articulation agreement model. The program, CCC2NAU, began with a Memorandum of Understanding that allowed for close collaboration to share staff, student records, and office space. Both presidents saw a potential win-win with increased retention and degree completions. The colleges jointly established eligibility requirements and support services for participating students. The program allows students to take advantage of the smaller class sizes, more personalized instruction, and lower tuition at the community college while getting the connection to the university community.

### **Successful transition and retention of community college students**

As a result of the partnership, NAU provided a full-time CCC2NAU advisor to work from an office at CCC. Key program features introduce and encourage students to feel connected to the university community at the start of their academic career at the community college. Tailored advisement by NAU staff housed on site at the CCC campus provides students with customized associate degrees that match requirements for NAU's bachelor's degrees. There is a clear pipeline and trajectory where students begin their academic career in a community college environment and end with a baccalaureate degree in a university environment.

Key program features include:

- One-on-one advising from NAU advisors providing tailored degree plans and knowledge of articulation with an intended university major.
- Participants feel a connection early on with NAU and are given free access to NAU clubs and organizations, waived application fee, free access to athletic events, and the option to join campus

recreation services, live on campus, or purchase a meal plan.

- When ready to transition to NAU, students benefit from a comprehensive individualized transition program that eases admission, advising, and registration hurdles.
- Financial incentives include a \$4,000 NAU scholarship for associate degree graduates with a 3.5 GPA or higher, and a new joint President's annual scholarship that awards one student with free tuition at both institutions for four years.

The goals of the CCC2NAU program include increasing: the number of CCC students who qualified for admittance to NAU; the number of CCC students who completed a CCC credential; the number of CCC students who successfully transitioned to NAU; and the number of transitioned NAU students who retained and completed degrees.

### **Results**

From fall 2008 to fall 2011, student participation has grown 5,000 percent from 12 students to 623 students, with 165 successfully transitioned students. Between fall 2009 and fall 2011, CCC2NAU participants have experienced an average 94 percent success rate from their first term to their second term, compared to an 82 percent rate for all other CCC transfer students who would have been eligible for the program. One year retention rates during the same time period showed CCC2NAU participants with 87.7 percent retention versus 72.6 percent for other eligible CCC students; and two year retention rates of 91.5 percent compared to 66.45 percent of CCC2NAU versus non CCC2NAU students.

A snapshot comparison of spring 2011 showed CCC2NAU students have a .05 higher cumulative GPA at CCC and a .36 percent higher cumulative GPA at NAU compared to non-participants. Degree completion in this sample was 61 percent for participants compared to 53 percent for non-participants.

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1999

## College of Charleston (SC)

*A Comprehensive Approach to the Retention of Transfer Students*

Approximately four of every 10 new students are transfer students at the College of Charleston (Charleston, South Carolina; enrollment 9,500). That means the retention of transfer students is critical to the college and to the achievement of its mission. With the approach described below, retention rates have climbed upward and the college has realized a number of additional enrollment benefits.

### Program Components

Components of the College of Charleston's comprehensive transfer retention program include, but are not limited to:

- An accurate transfer course inventory that allows the college to tell students quickly and accurately which courses will transfer;
- "open house" advising at two-year feeder schools in which students can learn which courses will transfer and begin exploring possible course sequences and the time necessary to complete a degree;
- advising sessions at orientation that go beyond credit evaluation and result in a plan for degree completion;
- a Transfer Counselor Day on the campus for primary transfer advisers from the two-year feeder institutions so these advisers can learn the latest information to advise students accurately;
- formalized articulation agreements with other postsecondary schools in South Carolina;
- careful results tracking of student performance, retention, and graduation rates; and
- the administration of two surveys: one for new transfer students and one for enrolled students who indicate their intent to transfer elsewhere.

### Fast Turnaround on Credit Evaluations

Below is a brief look at the development of the college's transfer credit evaluation process.

- Before 1990, transcript evaluations were often still in process even after students had attended orientation, been advised and registered, and were attending classes.
- From 1990-1995, a Transfer Evaluation Session allowed students to have most of their transfer credit evaluated primarily on the first day of orientation.
- From 1995 to the present, through the use of the college's transfer course inventory, students can learn which credits will transfer far in advance of their on campus orientation either at an "open house" held at a feeder school or by sending transcripts to the college for evaluation at the time of admission.

### No Money Down

The provost at the College of Charleston reports that no new funding was initially needed for these initiatives. Instead, a collaborative effort among numerous student support and service offices and deans and department chairs provided the initial effort. Funding was then provided for additional staffing and services based on the program's enrollment results and carefully assembled assessment and evaluation data.

### Results

The college's retention rate of first-time, full-time transfer students has increased from 61 to 73.9 percent since 1986 when the program was initiated. This substantial increase in juniors and seniors has led to an infusion of additional tuition revenue, additional satisfied alumni, and substantial enrollment enhancements such as:

- The ability to decrease the number of new incoming students and;
- the ability to raise the quality of incoming freshmen and transfers.

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1991

## College of Charleston (SC)

*A Comprehensive Retention Program for the College of Charleston*

The College of Charleston Comprehensive Retention Program is an institution wide effort to address the specific academic needs of a diverse student population in an urban, liberal arts college. Every office on campus focuses on improving the service provided to enhance overall student success and satisfaction. A variety of programs were initiated to successfully reach this goal:

- Expanded orientation, including a separate session for family members and added components for incoming students on academic expectations and multiculturalism.
- A new course, Learning Strategies, which provides provisional, probational and academically deficient students the information necessary for academic success: time management, textbook reading, critical thinking, etc.
- Expanded services of the College Skills Lab, including tutoring in accounting, biology, languages and philosophy. Seminars and in-class presentations are provided on study skills and preparation for graduate and professional school test-taking skills.
- Development of a freshman seminar course, offered to incoming freshmen, emphasizing the areas of responsibility to self, responsibility to the community and nation, and responsibility to the world.
- An Advising Center for undeclared majors established to centralize efforts for these students.
- Provisional matriculation for students who appear to have the potential to succeed academically, but don't meet admissions requirements. Admitted students sign a contract agreeing to limit their work and to enroll in Learning Strategies, plus basic and minimum degree requirement courses. Provisional students are closely monitored and must meet the general academic standards to remain at the College. A special session is also provided for provisional students during orientation.
- A series of programs specifically designed to assist minority students and help ensure their success, including - SPECTRA - A five-week summer residential program for new freshmen involving enrollment in six semester hours, plus academic support and cultural programs. - Each One, Reach One - A mentoring program which pairs new minority students with minority faculty, staff or senior students as mentors. - Academic Support Programs - Provides leadership seminars, support groups and cultural programming.
- An Early-Warning System has been designed to contact non-probation students having academic difficulties. These students are urged to meet with advisors and deans and to use support services.
- Effective teaching seminars provided for professors by their colleagues or consultants.
- The annual customer service session for all "front-line" staff, during which they are provided information on all student services, important dates for students and communication skills as a customer service representative.
- Although it's difficult to measure the complete effect of overall institutional changes, in the fall of 1990 the College of Charleston improved its freshman to sophomore retention rate more than 10 percent and in the fall of 1989 retention rates for first time minority freshman students to sophomore year improved more than 25 percent. The College also noted significant results in transfer student retention, and a decrease in the number of these students on probation.

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1992

## College of Charleston (SC)

### *Program for Academically Deficient Readmitted Students*

The Program for Academically Deficient Readmitted Students at the College of Charleston has enjoyed remarkable success in retaining one of the highest risk groups of students at any college, students on academic probation and suspension. Using a combination of grade point average contracts, counseling sessions, and the introduction of a required Learning Strategies course, the program promotes success, even for students academically dismissed prior to their entry into the program.

The readmission process begins with an application review which includes a letter from the student explaining reasons why he or she should be readmitted. The applications are screened for factors which identify students who are academically capable of achieving the graduation standard of a 2.0 GPA. If a student is readmitted, attendance is required at a one-day workshop.

#### **The workshop consists of:**

- Individual evaluation of student's past performance, a review of past and prospective classes, and advice on how to balance school and work;
- Description of the College resources available, including the Skills Lab and a

Learning Strategies Course; v career planning;

- Signing of the contractual agreement; and
- Advisement and registration.

The contractual agreement has two elements. The first is that students must provide verbal reassurance that they will not be employed an excessive number of hours and that they have resolved or are being assisted in resolving personal and family problems. The second is that students must agree to a minimally acceptable GPA for hours taken during the first semester of their return and subsequent semesters until they have reached good academic standing.

The Learning Strategies course is a study skills course. All readmitted students are urged to take the course, and approximately 85 percent do enroll. Those students who take the course experience a higher success rate than those who do not.

During the period from fall semester 1985 through spring semester 1988, 372 academically deficient readmitted students returned to school. Based on the results of a seven-year longitudinal study, the graduation rate of the readmitted students is virtually the same as for the college as a whole.

2005

## College of the North Atlantic (CAN)

*Access for Success*

### **Program Type**

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#### Academic Advising and Orientation Program

The College of the North Atlantic (CNA) developed a provincial strategy, Access for Success, designed to address issues and processes related to student success. The program involves the assessment of students' strengths and needs, the development of personal career plans, a student success tracking computer program, and structured academic advising interviews.

### **Targeted Support and Intervention**

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Responding to data that indicated the main reasons students were leaving CNA, under-preparedness and career uncertainty, CNA developed pre-enrollment inventories/assessments used for early identification of at-risk students. All applicants take the surveys and are measured on a variety of indices.

The academic advising program was restructured into a systematic process based on the use of pre-assessment/inventories, at-risk indicators, and structured academic advising interviews supported by a computerized student success tracking program. The interviews are spaced to ensure contact with students before they enroll, during registration, at the six week point (prior to the college course drop date), and at the end of term. Each interview has structured content and encourages advisors to refer students to programs on campus that would address any need identified.

The Student Success Tracking System is a Web-enabled software package developed to track and monitor a student's progress from pre-entry to post graduation, as well as track the assessment and advising components in the Access for Success strategy. The tracking system provides staff with several key element areas, which include:

- Applicant assessment/inventory report;
- Academic advisement form;
- Student program orientation;
- Student faculty information;
- The program learning plan;
- Academic referral form;
- Program/course matrix;
- Faculty class progress form; and
- Faculty class attendance.

These elements are incorporated into the academic advising interviews and strategies to maximize the impact of the intervention.

### **Results**

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Access for Success was piloted with 120 students during September 2003 to April 2004. During the time of the pilot, attrition rates declined by 2.4 percent on one pilot campus and 1.5 percent on the other. The retention rate on one pilot campus improved from 89 percent to 95 percent and from 83 percent to 88 percent on the other campus.

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2002

**Columbia College Chicago (IL)***Comprehensive Freshman Initiative*

Until the 1990s, Columbia College Chicago—the fifth largest private institution in Illinois and the country’s largest visual, performing, and media arts college—had taken a hands-off approach to student retention. An open admissions college, Columbia worked on the assumption that talented, motivated students could overcome any barrier, including poor academic preparation for college. However, the college was retaining students below the national rate for similar institutions. Columbia realized it had to take action to help more students succeed.

**Changing Direction toward Student Success**

Throughout the 1990s, Columbia changed its entire approach to student retention. In 1991, it instituted a mandatory Freshman Seminar to develop skills critical to college success. The college developed and adopted a fully articulated strategic retention plan in the mid-1990s, and in 1998 a presidential task force completed the proposal for a comprehensive, coordinated freshman retention program. Thanks to these decade-long efforts, Columbia has taken a number of steps to improve its approach to retention:

- The admissions process now seeks to create a bond between the applicant and the institution at first contact. The college also created the Office of Student Financial Services to improve the financial aid process.
- A developmental education program in reading writing, and math helps underprepared students improve basic required skills. The college hired specialized faculty to teach and oversee the program.
- Summer and spring bridge programs help at-risk freshman persist. The program assists these students with their transition to college, introducing them to services and resources that can help them succeed.
- Freshman orientation was expanded from a single-day session to an extensive, multi-day

event that acquaints students with the campuses programs and services, including academic advising.

- A new Freshman Center serves as the focal point for efforts to integrate first-year students into the Columbia community. The center manages the bridge program, orientation, advising, early interventions, and programs for special populations.
- The college created an Office of Multicultural Affairs to serve the needs of students of color and other special student populations.
- Student services were completely overhauled to promote a friendly, student-centered environment.

**Results**

While the demographic and academic composition of Columbia’s undergraduates has remained virtually the same, its retention and graduation rates have improved dramatically, especially in the last few years. Between 1996 and 2000, fall-to-fall retention rates for first-time freshmen rose from 51 percent to 59 percent. Transfer student retention also increased from 59 percent to 68 percent during this period. The six-year graduation rate for the class of 1995 was 26.5 percent, more than five percentage points higher than the rate for the 1991 class. The college expects these rates to keep rising and especially hopes to exceed the national retention rate for private, open admissions colleges.

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1997

## Columbus State Community College (OH)

*Integrated Student Development Retention Model*

The Counseling Center at Columbus State Community College, Ohio, enrollment 18,000, implemented a comprehensive retention program in the spring of 1996 that emphasizes personalized advising for all students, many of whom are adults. The model makes good use of technology and coordinates efforts in a practical, yet theory-based approach. Faculty, professional academic advisors, student leaders, and placement testing personnel are the key players involved.

### Pre-enrollment Services

Services prior to the start of classes include, but are not limited to:

- A welcome packet sent to all applicants with the name and phone number of their personal academic advisor. (Contact information is given again at registration.)
- A computerized placement test to assist with effective course selection COMPASS test from (ACT) administered to all incoming students prior to registration.
- During registration, an explanation of, and encouragement to participate in, the advising system.
- Orientation including a college success skills workshop; overview of the college's academic program; introduction to personalized advising system; opportunity for students to meet their personal advisors at a pizza party.

### Post-enrollment Services

Services after enrollment include, but are not limited to:

- Initial meetings with advisors, in which advisors introduce themselves as the student's personal advisor while attending Columbus State. Advisors encourage students to set up appointments as needed or at least once a quarter.
- Personal phone calls during the fourth week of class from a student leader serving in the Student Ambassador

- Tele-retention program. Student callers ask how things are going and if help is needed. Advisor contact information is given if students request help, and advisors are notified with a communication form.
- A Freshmen Seminar course for freshmen interested in transferring to a four-year school and a College Success Skills class that has traditionally targeted students in developmental English and math classes.
- Restricted registration for the next quarter for students who drop below 2.0 GPA until they meet with their academic advisor.
- Counseling Center-related programs including an open house; SOAR (Student Organization for Adult Reentry) for adult students; Sister Friend for African-American women, Project Brotherhood or African-American men, As We Are for women; and workshops covering topics ranging from test anxiety to self-esteem.
- Programs for students planning to transfer to a four-year college, including a college fair for transfer students and advisor liaisons to clarify transfer policies and procedures to area institutions.
- A longitudinal database that uses Microsoft Excel in conjunction with the Office of Research and Planning to track enrollment patterns and use of services.

### Favorable Outcomes

The college's new student fall-to-winter retention rate climbed 15 percentage points to 78 percent. In addition, a post-implementation study revealed a significant difference in retention rates for students seen or not seen by an advisor. The college also saw the success rate improve for students placed on academic probation. In 1996, the Counseling Center served over 14,000 students in individual contacts, and over 6,000 calls were delivered to new students by student ambassadors.

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2012

## Community College of Philadelphia (PA)

Center for Male Engagement

The Community College of Philadelphia's (CCP) Center for Male Engagement (CME) was established in 2009 through a Predominantly Black Institutions Program grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Geared toward African-American males, CME provides a community where males are supported by peers and mentors and encouraged to take advantage of the myriad of academic and social opportunities within the college environment. CME takes an innovative approach toward student success by employing a directed, multifaceted, and structured in- and out-of-class program in a communal environment offering positive peer relationships to address the individual academic needs, learning styles, attitudes, and social and academic backgrounds of the students while engaging their family members as collaborators in the student's academic success.

### **Building a community**

The CME operates on both a cohort model and a service model. Recruitment efforts for the program target African-American males who have recently graduated high school, as well as other high need groups such as formerly incarcerated individuals and non-traditional aged adults entering college for the first time. Once selected, these prospective students are assisted in securing financial aid and enrolling at the college.

150 of the 200 students in each cohort begin the program by enrolling in the Summer Enrichment Program, a four-week intensive summer transition program. The summer participants become engaged with the College prior to becoming immersed, and potentially lost, among the larger college population. Further, each participant receives a cash merit award for successfully completing the summer program and become eligible for scholarships. During the first weeks of school, the 200 students participate in an orientation where each student is assigned a Support Coach who helps the student develop an individualized plan based on their academic and career goals, monitors their academic progress and tracks their level of participation in CME-supported activities.

Participants are also provided access to CCP's early alert system, professional learning specialists, social integration assistance, and support for transfer to a four-year institution. In addition, participants become engaged in the academic environment through life and leadership skills training and cultural enrichment opportunities. The family members are also provided with engagement activities to increase their academic knowledge and support for student participants.

### **Specific goals of the program include:**

- To achieve higher levels of academic performance and persistence rates among African-American male members of the CME.
- To increase student engagement and social responsibility of African-American male students at CCP.
- To provide a summer enrichment program for African-American males who are entering college for the first time.
- To provide recommendations for best practices for retention and satisfaction of African-American males students at community colleges.

### **Results**

Since its inception, the CME has recruited 510 eligible students for intensive services through its cohort model and 163 students have participated in the summer enrichment program. CME students overwhelmingly outperform other students in terms of persistence with CME students persisting between fall 2009 to spring 2010 at 99 percent compared to 70 percent for total FTIC African-American males and 74 percent for total FTIC students. Fall-to-fall retention from 2009 to 2010 was 93 percent for FTIC CME students compared to 41 percent for total African-American male FTIC and 49 percent for total FTIC students. Fall 2010 to 2011 saw 50 percent persistence among CME students compared to 41 percent for FTIC African-American males and 48 percent for total FTIC students.

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1991

**De Anza College (CA)***A STARTING POINT Minority Transfer Program*

De Anza College implemented A STARTING POINT (Minority Transfer Program) for minority students who are the first in their family to attend college. The program focuses on assisting students from four minority groups, Black/African American, Latino/Chicano/Mexican American, American Indian, and Filipino, by providing them with the opportunity to become fully involved in the academic, campus and community life of the College and to ultimately transfer to a baccalaureate-granting institution.

Minority students in this program generally overcome numerous obstacles to complete their education, including long commutes and working to pay for school and to help support their family. The applicants to the program are identified by ethnic background and their intent to transfer to a baccalaureate institution. Prospective students attend a prerequisite two-hour program orientation meeting. During this time students desiring to take part in the program complete an agreement detailing the conditions and policies of program participation.

Students enrolled in A STARTING POINT are required to attend a one-week orientation course. In addition, a special class is offered for students who are undeclared/undecided. As a part of regular coursework, students can take a one-year, transferable communication sequence that focuses on strengthening verbal and writing skills and on developing self-confidence. To assist students more specifically, regular counseling interventions are provided along with the following services:

- Math study groups
- Scholarship search program
- Personal statement workshops
- NASA-Ames Internship Assistance Program

- Local/National/International Academic/Service Internships/Study Program
- Regular quarterly group meetings
- Directory of Transfer Ready Minority Students
- Monthly newsletter
- Financial aid application assistance workshops for parents
- Parent orientation in English and Spanish
- Student Performance Appraisal Reviews (quarterly faculty feedback)
- Instructor Opinion Poll Resource File
- Peer mentors
- Alumni network

A STARTING POINT was initiated (a) to help students feel more secure on campus, (b) to help them take more risks, and (c) to develop self-confidence and social and intellectual skills to succeed academically, both at De Anza, and as they continue their education at baccalaureate-granting institutions. A study by the College's Office of Institutional Research showed that program students maintained an 80 percent retention rate compared to 40 percent rate for non-program students.

Within five years, more than 150 of the students participating in A STARTING POINT have transferred to baccalaureate institutions. Beyond numbers, A STARTING POINT participants have been involved in various experiential educational or service programs; they are commonly involved in college clubs or student government, and serve as college peer advisors and student ambassadors. More than 40 scholarships of recognition have honored A STARTING POINT students.

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1991

## Eastern Michigan University (MI)

### *Equity Programs - Summer Incentive Program*

The Summer Incentive Program at Eastern Michigan University provides minority graduating seniors, who have been denied admission at the University, the foundation necessary to complete a four-year college degree. This intensive seven-week program, affectionately labeled “Academic Boot Camp,” starts with a brief introduction to university life before the students are “immersed” into the rigors of the program.

Every Monday through Thursday morning, students attend two non-remedial classes which focus on improving writing skills and understanding content. Friday mornings, students attend the Introduction to College Courses seminar which provides information on various topics including survival skills on a predominantly white campus; the five different colleges within the University; critical study strategies with application to course materials; and Career Explorations, a workshop which discusses information on careers in different programs of study and assesses students’ employability.

During the afternoon, students work 20 hours a week in an academic department or support services office of the University. Students are compensated for their work from which they pay for tuition, room and board for the summer. This work experience gives participants the opportunity to learn the value and importance of attendance, dress, punctuality, teamwork, cooperation and positive attitude related to work. These experiences are so positive that many students continue their employment once they are officially admitted to the University.

Throughout the summer, students receive academic support through supplemental instruction tutors. Tutors attend class, conduct group review sessions, and help students learn content material and quality study methods. On Sunday through Thursday evenings, students attend study sessions providing both individual support and collaborative learning sessions. These required sessions instill within the students both structure and discipline,

setting the foundation for success in their classes and their future at Eastern Michigan University.

Support is also provided on an individual basis from a mentor at the University. Mentors focus on being involved with the students, encouraging them and helping them feel welcome on the campus. This relationship is continued during the academic year as it is pivotal in helping students adjust and remain at the University.

The Summer Incentive Program also gives students academic feedback from faculty regarding their performance through weekly updates of their grades. This not only motivates students to do better, but also gives them a realistic appraisal of their academic performance. Program staff meet to discuss each student’s academic progress and adjustment to the college environment; they look at the student’s use of tutors, recommended academic support services, and weekly faculty progress reports. Individual academic intervention sessions are conducted as needed.

Students are required to participate in all components of the program and any student not abiding by the guidelines is released. Students who receive at least a 2.0 in each of the two classes are officially enrolled at Eastern Michigan University for the fall semester and the credits received during the summer go toward basic studies requirements. During the following fall semester and throughout their matriculation at the University, students are provided support which is similar, but not as intrusive.

At least 96 percent of the students participating in the Summer Incentive Program have converted into fall enrollees. These students generally live on campus longer than non-program participants, and are more involved in leadership positions. It has also been noted that Summer Incentive Program students are more committed to enter tutorial programs and take advantage of other support services offered to all minority students.

2015

## Edgewood College (WI)

### *Strategic Retention Plan at Edgewood College*

Edgewood College serves about 3,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Rooted in the Dominican tradition, its mission is to engage students within a community of learners committed to building a just and compassionate world and to educate them for meaningful personal and professional lives of ethical leadership and service.

#### **Strategic Retention Plans**

The Edgewood College Strategic Retention Plan is a multi-year, college-wide project. The plan serves to coordinate and communicate the college's efforts to strengthen the Edgewood College student experience. Increased retention and graduation rates are among the measurable outcomes of the plan's success. The plan has evolved from a series of action steps crafted in 2006, to its current form which includes one overarching goal, nine criteria for success, several measures/data sets, and six objectives, each with several action steps. From 2006 to the present, the Strategic Retention Plan has guided efforts to nurture an institutional culture that puts students and their success at the heart of all Edgewood College does.

One of the initial steps included chartering a faculty, staff, and student group to research and make recommendations to strengthen the first-year experience. Based on the recommendations from that group, a number of best practices were instituted, such as a Common Reading Program and expanding the first-year seminar from one-credit to a three-credit academically-oriented class for which the faculty serve as mentors and peer leaders work to build community. Other examples include the expansion of their Early Alert program (which provides freshmen, sophomores, and key support staff mid-term grades and early notification regarding absences/poor academic performance in addition to academic alert notices for undergraduates at all levels) and revisions to the academic advising infrastructure and approach. Edgewood College conducted an extensive qualitative research study of sophomores and shared that research with faculty, staff, and students in a day-long Sophomore Summit. The

results of these efforts led to the development of "welcome to the academic department" activities and a more comprehensive approach to working with students who have not yet declared a major. As a result, the plan's objectives (and action steps) have evolved over time. The objectives are reviewed annually and the action steps are updated quarterly by the Retention Council.

#### **Results**

The projected first-year retention rate for a college with traditional admissions selectivity is approximately 73%. Since committing to a strategic planning approach, retention for first-year students has steadily increased from a low of 66% for the 2005 cohort to a high of 82% for the 2012 cohort. Current first-year retention for all students is 81% and 80% for students of color. This steady increase in retention rates has been achieved while increasing the percent of domestic students of color in the first-year cohort, from 5% in 2005 to 17% in 2014, and without any changes to admissions standards. Four-year graduation has increased from 27% in 2005 to 40% in 2014. Five-year graduation has increased from 48% in 2005 to 55% in 2014.

In addition to experiencing important gains toward the benchmarks they have set in the Strategic Retention Plan, they know that the overall quality of the student experience has improved. Students indicate higher levels of engagement and satisfaction, and alumni continue to report strong employment and graduate school placement rates. The college has been able to grow full-time undergraduate enrollment without having to increase the size of the incoming classes and incur additional recruitment expenses. This has resulted in increased tuition revenue and decreased financial aid expenses. Additionally, it has been helpful in filling upperclass course sections that previously had capacity. Overall, the increased retention, persistence, and graduation rates have helped deliver their mission to help students prepare for meaningful personal and professional lives.

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## 1996

### El Camino College (CA)

*Project Success*

The mission of Project Success is to aid African-American students in the transition from high school to community college in order to facilitate the student's educational and career goals. In the process, the program aids El Camino College in its efforts to recruit, retain and encourage African-American students.

#### **The Components of Success**

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These dual missions are being accomplished through the use of five basic components:

- **Recruitment.** The Project Success coordinator, faculty and students visit high schools in Los Angeles County to stimulate interest in El Camino College among high school seniors. Many of these seniors are invited to a campus orientation to learn more about the college and Project Success.
- **Learning.** Students are required to take two academic courses and a learning skills course. The first, "Strategies for Success in College," provides students with the knowledge, skills, and personal awareness critical for achieving success in college. The second is an African-American Literature course that introduces students to the achievements of African-American writers and develops pride and self-esteem. The learning skills course is a study techniques course designed to assist students in developing an organized system of time and study management.
- **Support Services.** These consist of academic and career counseling, workshops, and field trips to cultural events and colleges and universities to help students develop academic and career goals. Student progress is also monitored so that mentors and students can discuss steps that may help improve academic performance.
- **Mentoring.** Students are matched with faculty or staff members whose focus is in areas that interest the student. Students and

mentors meet every two-to-three weeks to discuss career goals, academic progress, financial aid and other concerns. Two continuing Project Success students are also trained to work as peer mentors to new students.

- **Scholarships.** Awards are given each spring to Project Success students who have achieved high academic standards. These scholarships are presented at an awards reception where all Project Success participants are recognized by having their names added to a plaque displayed at the Student Activities Center.

#### **Retention and Student Success**

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Project Success was started in 1987 to combat the high dropout and academic dismissal rates among African-American students. At that time, African-Americans made up only 19 percent of the student body, but accounted for 60 percent of academic dismissals. Since that time, El Camino College has committed time, money and energy to the recruitment, academic improvement and retention of these students, and these efforts have met with considerable success. For 1995-96, the fall-to-spring retention rate among project participants was 95 percent. By utilizing the programs offered through Project Success, most participants were able to maintain a high academic standard, far exceeding the achievement of the College's African-American students in 1987.

Much of the success of the program is due to the fact that each of the five components is designed to respond to students' needs. Project Success awards achievement, responds to financial difficulty, alleviates isolation through mentoring, and helps students develop and achieve education and career goals.

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1990

## Emporia State University (KS)

*Daring to Excel Program*

The Daring to Excel Program has two chief elements: an intrusive advising system delivered through the Student Advising Center (developed in 1984), and a freshman orientation class. Both programs focus on the freshman population and are designed to assist students in making a satisfactory adjustment to college, to enhance the quality of all aspects of student life and to retain students to graduation.

All freshman and undeclared students at ESU are advised in the Student Advising Center (SAC), a facility which is staffed by one faculty member from each division that grants an undergraduate degree. Advisors are given extensive eight-hour pre-service and monthly in-service training.

The training covers three basic areas: 1) motivation and team building, 2) knowledge of general education and requirements for majors, and 3) advising skills, such as active listening, reflecting, paraphrasing and summarizing.

Because advising is viewed as coequal with teaching in the retention, promotion and tenure process, it is evaluated rigorously. Students complete an evaluation after each substantive advising contact and advisors are encouraged to review their evaluations on a weekly basis. In addition to student evaluations, individual advisors evaluate themselves periodically and are evaluated annually by the director of the Student Advising Center.

This retention program has become an all-campus effort. Advisees needing academic assistance are referred to developmental classes in reading, writing, and math as well as to the Math Lab, Writing Lab and Reading Lab. Faculty

and staff use Student Concern Forms to refer students with problems to SAC. Additionally, the registrar has turned over the actual enrollment process to trained SAC staff who enroll students directly by means of the computer. This facilitates course changes and provides a quicker way of solving problems that arise when classes are filled.

The second element in the Daring to Excel Program is a freshman orientation course entitled Freshman Seminar. This is an eight-week, one-credit, pass-no credit course offered to all new freshmen. Enrollment is voluntary. Freshman Seminar is taught by administrators, the president, vice presidents, deans, division chairs and directors of units across the University.

The course provides a supportive group environment where students discuss, practice and learn about time management, study skills, budgeting and interpersonal relationships. The

Freshman Seminar also focuses on the culture of higher education courses and what it means to be an educated person.

Freshman Seminar benefits not only the students but also the administrators who gain an in-depth understanding through the course of the nature and concerns of ESU freshmen.

In the third year after the program was established, freshman to sophomore retention increased 9 percent. Involvement in the Freshman Seminar yielded a 6.9 percent greater retention rate over the control group in a matched pair study.

1989

## Evergreen Valley College (CA)

ENLACE Program

The ENLACE Program at Evergreen Valley College is a cultural specific model focusing on the successful student completion of English and math. ENLACE takes on a highly individualized and community approach, while incorporating various activities to ensure the students success: instruction, counseling, and mentorship.

### **Instruction**

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Instruction in ENLACE includes a two-semester class sequence in English and math. In the English classes sections are scheduled back-to-back. This allows new ENLACE students to frequently meet continuing students as class hours change. The professor also uses the scheduling as a means of allowing continuing students to participate in the new class—sharing mentoring experiences as an ENLACE student, and experiences at ENLACE activities—with some activities resulting in extra credit for continuing students.

Math instruction, set up similarly to the English instruction program, is also available. This section focuses on student participation, through questioning; computer-aided math instruction; tutoring, by former ENLACE students and peers; and the availability of mentors, to assist student on class projects.

### **Counseling**

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Recruitment and counseling of ENLACE students is now an ongoing process throughout the academic year. Classroom visitations take place on a weekly basis and there is daily contact between the counselor and the instructors for

ENLACE courses. Counseling is also available on a walk-in basis.

### **Mentorship**

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A mentor training workshop has been implemented. The primary goal of the workshop is to provide a training session to orient and prepare mentors for effective participation in ENLACE. The following skills are emphasized: supporting educational and career goals, demonstrating problem-solving and leadership abilities, stressing the importance of effective communication, boosting self-esteem, and serving as role models.

To support the academic aspect of ENLACE, two scholarships funds have been started, one for continuing ENLACE students and one for student transferring into the ENLACE program. Also mentor/student receptions are held. These serve as an “icebreaker” activity to allow students to meet mentors in a group/social atmosphere. They also provide the opportunity for mentors to meet each other and share in their participation in the project.

As a result of the programs established for ENLACE students, they are ten times more likely to complete the transfer level English composition courses. In math, they have been retained from Algebra 1 to Algebra 2 at a rate of 80 percent.



1989

**Fairleigh Dickinson University**

**fka: Edward Williams College of Fairleigh Dickinson University (NJ)**

*The Edward Williams Retention Model*

Edward Williams College, a two-year institution within Fairleigh Dickinson University, employs a retention model grounded in the essentials of orientation, assessment, counseling and advising. This model endeavors to stimulate close, personalized contact among students and faculty in an informal, self-contained academic environment.

At Edward Williams College the retention process begins with Admissions. Each student is interviewed personally by faculty members, often at length. Admission is determined by administration after consultation with appropriate faculty. Some students are put on a reduced full-time load (i.e., 12 credit hours).

**Orientation**

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Orientation takes place in the spring and summer prior to the fall semester. Students are introduced to the College and University faculty and administration, to grade policies, major fields of study, financial aid, and student activities. These sessions are also attended by appropriate University officials.

**Evaluation**

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Diagnostic tests designed by Edward Williams College faculty are administered in English and mathematical skills. In general, there is no correlation between the results of these tests and subsequent academic performance. Those students in need of skills improvement are assigned to developmental sections of Mathematics and English. Subject expectations in these sections remain the same, with

differentiation a matter of instructional techniques. Emphasis is placed on extra-help sessions and peer tutoring and on seminars in study skills, time-management, and more effective reading.

All freshmen are assigned full-time faculty as counselors during the summer. The initial meeting between counselor and student take place during the first week. During this time information is exchanged, encouragement given, and early problems of adjustment discussed. A second meeting after the fourth week of the semester is held with each student individually. Throughout the remainder of the semester an average of three more meetings are held between the counselor and the student.

Through faculty cooperation, attendance and academic performance can be monitored. At a later meeting in the fall semester, counselors aid students with the comprehensive Spring Registration packet that includes the student's fall grade performance and spring class schedule checklist for academic majors, learning center workshops, grading procedures, honor scholarships, information on Financial Aid, and several other items. Initial counseling contact is made by the third week of the spring semester. Three other sessions are scheduled for the remainder of the semester.

The success of the Edward Williams Retention Model is grounded in the unified effort of administration, faculty, and staff. In an 11 year period the attrition rate was reduced from 59 percent to 9 percent.

2010

## Fayetteville State University (NC)

*CHEER Scholars*

Fayetteville State University's (FSU) CHEER Scholars program is a summer bridge learning community that was created mainly to address the success of academically underprepared students who are disproportionately of low-income and underserved backgrounds. The program structure and course design are based on the assumption that the more engaged students are, the better their grades and the more likely they will persist. CHEER is a five-week, full-time intensive curricular and co-curricular experience that encompasses 12-hours per day, six days a week.

### **Creating Higher Expectations for Educational Readiness**

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Since 2002 the CHEER program has provided a rigorous summer program that helps students just out of high school gradually adjust to the freedom of an academic environment. The specific goals for the program include:

- Strengthen participants' academic preparation for the first year;
- Help Participants adjust to university life and expectations; and
- Foster the development of habits essential to college success.

During the program, students can earn up to eight college credits before their first year of college. The program includes courses in English and mathematics, comprehensive academic support activities, and programs that promote personal development.

The English course focuses on academic literacy with emphases on reading, writing, and proofreading skills. The math course focuses on pre-algebra. Students are assigned to a community of roughly twenty students with whom they attend class, participate in the required tutoring sessions, and attend "Wise Choices," a series of evening and weekend programs and workshops that address co-curricular aspects of college life such as character and ethics, health and wellness issues, and goal setting.

### **Results**

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Participation in the program significantly increases both academic performance and retention rates of CHEER Scholars relative to non-participants. This is remarkable given that participants' incoming SAT scores and high school GPAs are comparable to or below those of their counterparts in the larger freshman class. CHEER Scholars one-year retention rates over a five year period range from six to 17 percent higher than their non-CHEER peers'/ Relative to nationwide HBCU peers, FSU also performs quite well. Between 2005 and 2007 HBCUs averaged a 62 percent retention rate versus a 71 percent rate for FSU cohorts and a 79 percent rate for CHEER Scholars.

Further, the CHEER program has been so successful it has been designated a model for the state system. FSU has been called to advise three other institution in the system with planning similar summer bridge programs and has received special funding from the state higher education system for the program.

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1993

## Fayetteville State University (NC)

*The University College*

Fayetteville State University is a historically Black university that enrolls the most diverse student body in the 16-institution University of North Carolina system. The University College programs designed to promote student success were developed in 1988. They fall in the areas of academic initiatives, advising/mentorship initiatives and accountability initiatives. Specifically, the goals of the student success initiatives were accomplished through improvements in the following areas:

- Enrollment of students adequately prepared for college work
- Advisement policies and procedures  
Pedagogical practices
- Academic programming and course sequencing
- Academic support services.

### Program Specifics

Academic initiatives include block registration, tutoring, a new “R” grade strategy, curriculum development, an honors program and student support services.

- Block Registration - First-time freshmen are Block Registered into classes for the first semester to ensure they are properly placed in support, regular or honors-level courses.
- University College Tutoring Program - Tutoring is provided to those students who have been identified through Block Registration and Profile Examination processes as needing academic support in math, English and reading.
- “R” Grade Strategy - Participants in the University College Tutoring Program are eligible to receive an “R” grade if they fulfill the requirements of a course but cannot achieve a grade of “A,” “B” or “C.” The “R” grade is a merit grade for those who have made significant progress in the course and is designed to be a positive and motivational incentive.
- Honors Program - Students engage in a challenging study of English, critical thinking and

humanities, focusing on the theme of Great Ideas. Designated courses focus on library research and incorporate writing intensive assignments designed to increase students’ abilities to write scholarly papers in any field.

- Student Support Services - This unit is a federally funded program that offers individual tutoring, counseling and exposure to cultural activities for 175 qualified students.

Advising/mentorship initiatives consist of a mentoring program, summer orientation and improvements in technical advisement.

- Technical Advisement - To ensure that students can be advised accurately and properly, student course schedules, addresses, mid-term and final grades, transfer course evaluation, profile score reports and profile interview sheets are provided. A computerized advisement system has been developed to assist faculty with the administrative tasks of technical advisement.
- Mentoring - Mentoring is designed to provide a supportive and nurturing atmosphere that will help develop self-motivation, independence and the interpersonal skills necessary to ensure success, retention, and graduation. Students are aided academically and involved in cultural, social and personal development activities.

Accountability initiatives include a review of core curriculum course syllabi to ensure that they include clear objectives and competencies that are tied to assignments. Rising-Junior Examinations are given to assess student competencies in the skills necessary for upper division undergraduate work. The examinations help in evaluating academic programs as well as to predict student success rates.

### Results

Since implementation of these initiatives, FSU has experienced a dramatic increase in enrollment, retention, SAT scores for entering freshmen, and continuing improvement of the four-year graduation rates. First-year retention rates have increased from 55.4 percent in 1987 to 75.4 percent in 1991.

1990

## Firelands College of Bowling Green State University (OH)

*“Don’t Veg...Pre Reg”*

The “Don’t Veg...Pre Reg” Program at Firelands College of Bowling Green State University is designed to encourage the commitment of commuter students to continuing their education by preregistering for their next semester’s classes.

The program consists of a number of creative ways to encourage students to preregister. The “Don’t Veg...Pre Reg” program is an all-campus effort, involving faculty and receptionists, using all resources from a promotional campaign to development of volunteer faculty for academic advising.

The promotional facet of the program includes a direct mail campaign, posters, faculty announcements in class about new coming course offerings, and the development of a promotional video urging students to preregister for fall classes.

The promotional video capitalizes upon a closed-circuit television. Each classroom has a monitor that is controlled through a central office. From 50 minutes past the hour until the professor starts class, the promotional video appears on the classroom monitor, featuring testimonials by successful students, the most respected professors and the dean urging students to make a commitment to continue their education. The repetition makes an impact on students while some of the testimonials spur comments by professors before they start class.

In conjunction with the promotional campaign, in-service meetings for faculty academic advisors are conducted. The importance of student retention is stressed as well as the methods for moving students from mere class scheduling to academic program planning. This provides a

sense of teamwork on the part of the faculty advisors.

Another effort that has been mounted is the use of college receptionists in the day and in the evening to better communicate with students. Instead of waiting for phone calls to come into the campus, the receptionists are trained to make outgoing calls to students to remind them of preregistration dates and to urge their participation.

Those students who indicate that they are unsure of their ability or willingness to continue are identified. Their names are given to the academic services staff who compiles an advising background on each student and calls them to provide suggestions as to how they can best continue their education.

There are social events scheduled during preregistration periods to help build both a rallying point and enthusiasm. The dean holds forums with students aimed at motivating them to perform at their peak in their upcoming spring exams as well as to plan for their fall semester.

The Office of Registration, College Relations and Financial Aid are all heavily involved in the design and implementation of the plan to insure the best publicity is backed up by responsive administrative procedures when a student does decide to preregister.

In the spring of 1989 the number of students preregistering for the fall semester increased 13 percent. The program was carried on into the next semester with the number of students preregistering for the spring semester increasing 19 percent. At the same time, full-time students increased 16.5 percent between the spring of 1989 and the spring of 1990.

1997

## Fort Valley State University (GA)

### *Early Alert Program for New Freshmen*

For five years running, beginning in the fall of 1992, Fort Valley State University, Fort Valley, GA. (enrollment 3,000) has operated its Early-Alert Program, an aggressive retention program to detect and address identified student characteristics that negatively affect student success. The program has been recognized by the Georgia Board of Regents as one of the five best retention practices in the university system.

#### **Early Interventions**

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Coordinated by the university's Counseling and Career Development Center, the Early-Alert Program is based on overwhelming evidence in the retention literature that retention of freshmen should start as soon as matriculation occurs. Consequently, the program begins during freshman Orientation Week, the week before classes begin. During this week, all entering freshmen complete the College Student Inventory™ (CSI) of the Noel-Levitz Retention Management System™. This instrument provides valuable insight into students' academic motivation, propensity for educational stress, and receptivity to assistance from the institution.

Staff counselors and trained graduate assistants interpret the CSI findings with students and make recommendations regarding available academic support services. Students are also given a detailed copy of their assessment profile. Counselors refer "at risk" students and other students with significant areas of concern to more structured academic support programs. The support services for freshmen include counseling sessions, sessions on study skills, tutoring, freshmen assembly programs and seminars, student development workshops, and freshmen orientation classes.

Staff counselors also train faculty advisors on the interpretation of the CSI results and suggest ways advisors can use these results as they provide academic advising to students. Names of faculty members who serve as academic advisors

for students participating in the program are obtained from the Office of the Registrar.

#### **Persistent Monitoring and Tracking**

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While some students may be given the liberty to select the support activity of choice, students "at risk" are not given this option. Such students are required to adhere to a more structured academic program. The academic performance of these students is monitored closely. Continuous counseling and support are provided throughout the year. Attendance at prescribed intervention services are recorded and monitored. In addition, students' academic progress and persistence are tracked on a quarterly basis, with resulting early warning reports and midterm grade reports triggering mandatory conferences with counselors.

#### **Outstanding Reviews**

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Because the Early-Alert Program is funded with Title III funds, both internal and external evaluations are conducted. Internally, new students who participate in the program evaluate it on a quarterly basis. Additionally, the program coordinator, counselors, and graduate assistants meet on a weekly basis to discuss the delivery of services. Externally, evaluators from the U.S. Department of Education conduct annual formative and summative evaluations of the program. Each year, the program receives outstanding evaluations.

The ultimate test—retention rates for participating students—have shown steady improvement. The first-to-second year retention rate rose from 75.2 percent in fall 1993 to 90.8 percent in fall 1996. In contrast, the fall 1996 retention rate for nonparticipants was 37.6 percent.

2004

## Georgia Institute of Technology (GA)

### *The Challenge Program*

The Challenge program at the Georgia Institute of Technology (more commonly known as Georgia Tech), is an intensive five-week program held every summer for incoming minority Georgia Tech freshmen. Students live on campus in the dorms, take core courses that simulate a typical student's freshman year, and generally make mental, social, and academic preparations for the transition to college.

#### **Engineering a Successful Retention Program**

The Challenge program grew out of the specific nature of Georgia Tech's position as the leading producer of bachelor's degrees in engineering in the United States. The school is also first nationally in awarding engineering degrees to African-American undergraduates. Students in the engineering disciplines experience a high rate of attrition or change of major. Since 1979, Georgia Tech has used the OMED: Educational Services (OMED) division to promote high academic performance in science and engineering. The Challenge program grew out of OMED.

While Challenge originated in 1980 as a program to acclimate new students to campus life, in 1992 it made a paradigm shift to a more comprehensive academic model. OMED had found a strong correlation between minority students' first-term GPAs and their graduation rates, which prompted this shift to a program with increased student expectations.

During its five-week period, Challenge uses a combination of academic and social elements to

lay the foundation for success in minority undergraduate engineering students:

- Students live in a freshman dorm during the entire period;
- Participants take core courses that simulate a typical student's freshman year, with the courses following the same pace and manner of instruction as actual Georgia Tech Courses; and
- Upperclassmen, known as "Challenge Counselors," live in the dorms with the Challenge students, providing day-to-day interaction while also conducting field trips and workshops. These counselors are chosen based on academic merit, community involvement, and prior Challenge experience.

#### **Results**

The Challenge program during the 1990s and 2000-2003 was especially effective with African-American students. Traditionally at Georgia Tech, African-American retention rates were significantly lower than those of Georgia Tech students as a whole. African-Americans in the Challenge program, however, met or exceeded the general retention rate in nearly every year of the program. Furthermore, with first- to second year retention, Challenge students have a 5 percent increase over their non-Challenge peers. In fact, the retention rate for Challenge students has been higher than the overall retention rate during the entire program.



2010

## Georgian Court University (NJ)

### *Lion Heart Program*

Georgian Court University's Lion Heart Program is a retention program comprised of three core functions: an Academic Early Warning System, an "Intent to Leave" survey, and institutional aid for up to ten semesters, for those who need it. The program is primarily focused on minority students and those with at-risk academic profiles or financial need. Students are identified at summer orientation and then tracked by the Assistant Dean for Student Success with an Academic Early Warning System.

#### **Reaching Out**

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The retention task force was developed that included university wide participation. Georgian Court identified two key offices, the Vice President for Enrollment and a new position, the Assistant Dean for Student Success, to craft a new retention program. Through the collaborative efforts of various campus entities including faculty and the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research, Lion Heart Program was created to address issues such as the poorly retained incoming class of 2006 and a declining first-to-second year retention rate.

Specific goals of the program include:

- Reaching student populations of:
  - First generation, full-time first-year women;
  - Minority students;
  - Resident students; and
  - Students coming from high schools that have historically excelled at having their graduates persist through graduation at the university.
- Equally dispersing funding to both in and out of state at-risk, financial needy students.

To effectively reach its target populations, Georgian Court University developed a technology-based Academic Early Warning system to identify at-risk students early in the

semester. Via the system, faculty members are able to log attendance or behavioral issues and make referrals sent as electronic reports to the university's Advising Center. Within 24 hours, advising staff help connect the identified students to the appropriate support services. At-risk indicators also come from the students themselves through the "Intent to Leave" survey. Taken by first-year students during the fall semester, the survey reveals levels of institutional commitment, campus involvement, connection to majors, and goal commitment. Based on survey results, students are assigned peer mentors or referred to the proper student services such as Career Services, the Counseling Center, or the Financial Aid department.

#### **Results**

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Since the launch of the Lion Heart Program, student success at Georgian Court University has flourished.

- In the fall of 2008, 71 percent of the academically at-risk students who were referred to the Early Warning System maintained GPA's that kept them off academic probation.
- In the spring of 2009, this number rose to 74 percent.
- Of the targeted groups of at-risk students in the Lion Heart Program, 90 percent were retained to their second year.
- Sixty percent of students who identified in the survey that they planned to leave the university were retained from first to second year.
- Overall retention at Georgian Court increased from 70 percent in 2007 to 78 percent in 2008.
- Even with a freshman class increased by 25 students over the previous year, first semester retention stabilized at 92 percent in spring 2009.

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1995

**Graceland University**  
**fka: Graceland College (IA)**

*From Retrenchment to Retention: An Integrated Model*

The institution wide effort to make Graceland College, a private liberal arts college with a student body of 1,000 students in Lamoni, Iowa, a “student centered” campus has resulted in a comprehensive and successful program that encourages all college employees to take responsibility for enrollment and retention.

**The Student Satisfaction Inventory**

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For the past two years, Graceland College has administered a satisfaction survey through its student publication, Student Life, to approximately half the student body. After the results of the survey are received, focus groups are conducted by the Enrollment Management Committee to gain more information on areas where students expressed low satisfaction. Members of all categories of employment serve on the committee and the composition of the focus groups is determined by the results of the survey. The information received from the focus groups is then used by the college when it does its annual strategic planning.

**Strategic Planning for Everyone**

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Graceland College involves all employees in its four-step strategic planning process: 1) determining goals and objectives, 2) allocating resources, 3) gathering and analyzing data, and 4) revising goals and objectives. Each vice presidential area must develop objectives to help Graceland College meet its goals, the first of which pertains to recruiting and retaining students.

**A Student-centered Campus**

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By using the student satisfaction survey to guide its strategic planning, Graceland College has been able to develop some impressive programs and improvements. The president of the college has supported employee training and development by bringing in guest speakers to deal with topics such as serving customers

better. The financial aid office was moved from the business area to the enrollment management area to make the department more responsive to student retention concerns.

New and more extensive programs have been developed, including an honors program for the academically gifted, a chance program for students with learning problems, an induction ceremony for new students, a more extensive freshman orientation course, and developmental courses in math, English and effective reading and study skills for marginal students.

**Improvements to Campus Life**

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The coordinated retention efforts of Graceland College have allowed for improvements in campus living for students and faculty. Maintenance of buildings and grounds has improved. A fiber optics network has been installed with connections to residence halls for increased student convenience and communication. Residence hall living has been improved by expanding visitation hours, redecorating lounges, purchasing new furniture and installing phones with voice mail in every room. Student services have also improved as the college strives to meet its students’ needs. An “early alert” system now identifies students having difficulty adjusting. The career, advising and personal counseling services have been integrated into one center. An alumni network has been developed to assist students with career planning.

Since implementing its campus wide retention strategy in 1987, Graceland College has had a 30 percent enrollment increase of full-time students. Retention of full-time students to their sophomore year has increased 26 percent, and the number of continuing full-time students has increased 40 percent. The increased tuition revenue as a result of these improvements is \$5 million.

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2015

**Grand Rapids Community College (MI)***Fast Track to College Success*

Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), in Grand Rapids, Michigan, enrolls 16,500 students in liberal arts and occupational courses each year. Throughout its 100-year history of academic excellence, GRCC has maintained a solid reputation as a premier transfer institution and is nationally recognized for both its liberal arts and occupational programs.

**The Retention Program**

Improving the success and retention rates for students placing into developmental education has long been a goal at GRCC. The college, supported by a U.S. Department of Education Title III grant, created FastTrack—a program to help students bypass developmental education with an emphasis on retention and completion.

FastTrack is an intensive three-week, 14-hour-per-week learning lab in which students remediate academic skills through a combination of web-based and tutor-guided activities. Each FastTrack lab has an enrollment capacity of 22 students. Reading FastTrack labs use *My Foundations Lab* and math labs use ALEKS, with both technologies supported by tutors. English FastTrack is facilitated by tutors in a traditional classroom method. Forty-two total hours are spent in each FastTrack lab over the three-week session. At the conclusion of FastTrack, students are eligible to retake the placement exam for the subject they remediated.

The purpose of the FastTrack program is to give developmental students an opportunity to accelerate skill building so they are able to bypass developmental course work and move directly into college-level courses. Eligible students are referred to FastTrack once they have completed the Accuplacer®. Once a student has accepted the invitation to participate in FastTrack, he or she is informed about the requirements of the program. Students in FastTrack are required to do the following:

- Complete two affective assessments: GRIT and Barriers Checklist.
- Attend New Student Orientation.
- Complete the financial aid process (if needed).
- Complete a mandatory Student Success Plan with an advisor/counselor.

- Complete the Roadmap to Success (a pre-semester checklist).
- Work with a College Success Coach (follow-up/monitoring, classroom visits).

Once in FastTrack, new students are acclimated to learning in a college environment. Study skills are reviewed and the importance of attending all sessions is emphasized by the FastTrack facilitator.

**Goals and Objectives****The objectives of the FastTrack program are:**

- FastTrack completion rate of 70% or higher.
- FastTrack success rate (successful bypass of developmental course) 60% or higher.
- Reduce the incidence of developmental education from the 2011 rate of 51%.
- Increase fall-to-winter and fall-to-fall retention of FastTrack students over non-FastTrack developmental students.
- Increase fall-to-fall retention rate, college-wide.
- Increase the success rate for students in any developmental education course over the fall 2011 rate of 48%.

**Results**

FastTrack has shown great promise at GRCC. Since implementation in 2012, 837 students have been recruited for the program, and 651 students successfully completed the three-week program. This yields a 77.7% completion rate. Of those 651 students, 449 were successful in their retake of the placement test and were able to avoid one or more developmental education courses. This yielded a success rate of 68.9%. In 2011, the success rate for a student taking any developmental education course averaged 48%. That rate rose to 52% in 2012 and to 53% in fall 2013. FastTrack participation saved a total of \$324,000 in in-district tuition, fees, and books for students and a total of 33,480 hours of instruction for students who bypassed their placement. It reduced a total of 25 sections of developmental education for the institution and the number of developmental education placements for students, thus extending financial aid eligibility.

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2008  
**Grand View University**  
**fka: Grand View College (IA)**  
*GVC Student Success Program*

Grand View College (GVC), a four-year private college, received a Title III Strengthening Institutions Grant. With the resources, the college developed and provided comprehensive student success programs and added two key positions to oversee early alert and academic support. Learning communities and faculty development were the initial components of the program. Since its inception, the culture slowly evolved to the present where every first-year student experiences the benefits of learning communities, active learning, and the early alert process.

**Creating a Strong, Pervasive Web of Student Support**

The goal of the GVC Student Success Program is working cooperatively through the learning communities model to improve the retention and achievement of the college's predominantly at-risk student population. Activities are directed toward early identification of students exhibiting risk factors even prior to matriculation; providing proactive intervention; and improving student engagement in the college environment.

**The program consists of four cornerstone strategies:**

1. **First year Connections.** Virtually all first-time, full-time students are enrolled in either a curricular-linked learning community (LC) or a living-learning community. Academic content and assessment are linked with students enjoying an almost instant relationship with their fellow LC classmates, increased understanding of content and the interdisciplinary nature of learning, as well as a higher quality relationship with their advisor/instructor.
2. **Early alert and student support.** The identification of risk factors is more intentional through the use of the College Student Inventory™ and an early alert process. The college goes beyond identifying risk factors by

intervening with identified students through a "Council of Success," using a case management and strengths-based approach.

3. **Viking Edge.** Following the review of GVC's first National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), GVC developed the Viking Edge to increase student engagement and help students maximize their opportunities. The plan fostered a sense that all campus constituencies are moving in the same direction to improve student success. The Viking Edge is a web of people, services, and opportunities that connects students to the campus community, to the broader community, and to their life ahead.
4. **Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL).** CETL is a comprehensive faculty development program to enhance student learning through improved teaching and advising. Through the Summer Institute, experts come to campus to discuss active learning strategies, assessment, learning community pedagogies, course design, and student engagement. Monthly sessions and a weekly e-newsletter support and encourage faculty and staff to implement the new techniques and strategies.

**Results**

The GPA and percentage of students earning a C or above in LC classes are generally higher than students enrolling in non-LC sections. Student-faculty interactions (as measured by NSSE benchmark) have increased from 33.7 to 36.2 for freshmen and from 41.6 to 42.9 for seniors since 2004. GVC increased the five-year average freshman to sophomore retention from 61 percent to 68.3 percent and the freshman to junior retention rate from 47 percent to 54 percent. Further, the five-year graduation rate increased from 33 percent to 37.9 percent.

1990

## Hampton University (VA)

*The Assessment and Learning Support Center*

The Assessment and Learning Support Center at Hampton University targets the academically underprepared first-time freshman. The goal of the program is to improve student retention by fostering an environment in which the academic needs, affective needs and career needs of each student are addressed.

To accomplish this, the Assessment and Learning Support Center evolved consisting of six major components: counseling services, diagnostic and prescriptive services, Learning to Learn, program planning, a reading program and student support services.

### **Counseling**

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The Counseling component offers a number of different services to meet students' needs. The services include one-on-one counseling, peer counseling, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Personal Growth Groups, Lost a Loved One Group, Friendship Group, and seminars. All deal with specific areas of concern a student may have.

### **Diagnostic and Prescriptive Services**

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These services focus on the objective assessment of academic aptitude and level of academic achievement of each student, with a treatment plan being implemented when warranted. Each treatment plan is personalized and includes established time frames for evaluating its effectiveness and the individual's progress.

### **Learning to Learn**

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Students whose cumulative GPA falls below 2.00 are required to take Learning to Learn. This course is designed to enhance the skills of students in many areas, including generating questions, reading for comprehension, scheduling course work, studying for exams and

writing term papers. Individual conferences are held to confirm weekly progress.

### **Program Planning**

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Program Planning serves as a foundation of the learning experience at Hampton University. The various components comprising this service include the following: orientation, a structured program of activities held one week prior to the beginning of classes; academic planning and advising, which assists student in the selection and scheduling of courses appropriate to career goals and interests, academic readiness, and major requirements; Education 103, a vocational orientation class designed to assist undecided students in choosing a field of study; and academic counseling, which focuses on academic performance and uses strategies which foster positive attitudes, improved study habits and alternative programs of study.

### **The Reading Room**

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Courses offered in the Reading Room Program are designed to improve reading and comprehension skills in basic courses and enhance analytical and comprehension skills in specific content area courses.

### **Student Support Services**

This is a vital aspect of Hampton's retention efforts which provides educational support services for student from low-income/first generation families and to students with physical handicaps in an effort to help them overcome difficulties.

After implementing the program, the failure rate in English 101 course was reduced by an average of 30-50 percent. There was also a significant drop in the percentage of first-time freshmen on probation and those dismissed for academic reasons.

1989

**Harper College (IL)**

**fka: William Rainey Harper College (IL)**

*Athletic Academic Advisement Program*

The Athletic Academic Advisement Program at Harper College involves all currently enrolled students who are participation in intercollegiate athletics, as well as those who have recently participated or who have indicated an interest in participation in the future. The Program was created to provide academic advisement services, promote the use of campus support services, and assist student athletes in defining and attaining their educational goals.

#### **Student Athlete Orientation**

Prospective students who indicate an interest in involvement in athletics at Harper College are invited to a two-part orientation program in the summer prior to classes. Each student is required to complete a “Student Athlete Check List” which provides the student with pertinent information on the enrollment process.

The Student Athlete Orientation starts off with a mandatory Information Seminar. During this time many topics are covered, including the following: the responsibilities and conduct of student athletes; drug awareness program; overview of health services and insurance; training room

rules and regulation; injury reports; overview of financial aid; overview of Athletic Advising Program; the students athlete’s academic responsibilities and the academic progress monitoring system; faculty expectations of students; studying myths, time-management strategies, and study skill tips. The remainder of the Athlete Orientation is provided for registration and assessment testing.

#### **Academic Progress Monitoring System**

Through the Student Athlete Academic Progress Monitoring System, students experiencing academic difficulty have been quickly identified. The faculty complete reports on the student athletes in their courses. This information provides the Athletic Academic Coordinator with specific information and recommendations which enables him to make concrete suggestions for improvement and to make timely referrals to appropriate College support staff.

Over 80 percent of the student athletes are maintaining “satisfactory academic progress” and team cumulative grade point averages have remained consistently over 2.00 each year.



1992

**Harris-Stowe State University**  
**fka: Harris-Stowe State College (MO)**

*Strengthening the General Education Experience for Targeted Freshmen and Sophomores*

Harris-Stowe State College, a historically black institution for commuter students, increased the persistence of high-risk students through a variety of academic support services. The Student Support Service (SSS) Program serves a target group of several hundred students, 70 percent of whom are both low income and first generation college, and 80 percent of whom are black. The SSS program, which features supplemental instruction, peer tutoring and academic advising, was developed for ten of the lower division courses that traditionally produced the lowest average grades. When the program began, over 50 percent of the freshmen dropped out.

The SSS Program was developed to strengthen the general educational experience for eligible freshmen and sophomores. In the 1990-91 academic year, the program served 243 freshmen and sophomores. The students selected were first generation college students, low-income, and considered most at risk to drop out. The program uses several approaches to meet these goals:

**Improved Academic Advising**

All students are assigned the SSS Program Coordinator as their academic advisor. In addition to the individual advising every student receives, one-third of the students receive personal counseling as well.

**Assistance with “Killer Courses”**

Fifteen freshmen/sophomore classes which produced the lowest grade point averages were identified. Peer tutors and faculty associates

were hired to work with target students in ten of the courses. Individual and small-group instruction was available, and faculty associates also served as mentors.

**Supplementary Instruction**

The Program Coordinator schedules the supplementary instruction for the students. Full-time students may take up to eight hours of supplementary instruction.

Other program components include monitoring of classes, social involvement and meeting financial needs.

Specific goals of the program include the following:

- To raise the sophomore cumulative GPA to 2.5 and the freshmen CGPA close to 2.5;
- To retain at least 70 percent of the SSS students;
- To ensure that 70 percent of the SSS students in a given semester will meet academic performance goals required to remain in good standing;
- To admit the students into the professional level (junior and senior) with graduation as the final goal.

The average CGPA for targeted students has risen every year the program has been in operation. The program also surpassed the 70 percent retention goal; in 1992, 83 percent of the students returned for their second year. SSS students have also won numerous academic honors and scholarships.

1997

## High Point University (NC)

*Achieving Intellectual Maturity Program (AIM)*

Since 1989, approximately 50 conditionally admitted first-year students have participated annually in the mandatory Achieving Intellectual Maturity Program at High Point University (High Point, N.C., enrollment 2,500). Based on the program's success, the university has adapted the program and now requires it of approximately the lower 35 percent of its entering freshman class for completion in the summer or during the fall semester.

### **Six Required Elements**

Requirements of the AIM program have traditionally included:

5. Successful completion of the Summer Advantage Program
6. A reduced course load (12-14 hours) during the fall semester
7. A weekly conference with the program director
8. Completion of at least 15 library hours weekly
9. Weekly participation in an AIM Support Class (no academic credit)
10. Computer skills development and personal tutoring through the university's Learning Assistance Center

### **The Centerpiece**

As originally designed, the centerpiece of the AIM program is the program known as Summer Advantage. During this program, students complete two three-hour courses with a grade of C or better: English Grammar Composition and Foundations for Academic Success, a student success course focusing on academic and life skills, life/campus issues, values, relationships, and more.

Students enrolled in this course...

- Become proficient in using the university library, including informational technologies;

- Learn Microsoft Word and are required to use word processing packages for all written assignments; and
- Become familiar with all university facilities, campus services, and community resources.

The course is conducted in three segments. A "lecture class" presents and explains learning skills, techniques, and theory. An "application class" offers the opportunity to practice and apply new skills and techniques. A "mentor class" conducted by rising senior students facilitates discussion on life/campus issues.

Transitions, the text for the course, was written specifically for the AIM program by Dr. D. Allen Goedeke, program director. He has also produced instructional video and audio programs to enhance the curriculum.

In addition to the academic coursework, an extensive extracurricular program builds community among students and encourages them to help each other succeed both academically and personally. Included is an overnight camping trip, weekly cookouts, athletic tournaments, and weekend excursions.

### **Strong Results over Time**

Retention and graduation rates for AIM students have greatly exceeded the university's expectations. Initially, the objectives were to increase retention and graduation rates of program participants by 10 percentage points. However, the success of the program resulted in a revision of these objectives.

The revised goals include persistence and graduation rates equal to or greater than those of the class as a whole. In most cases, the university reports that even the revised goals are being met or exceeded. Retention rates for eight years of the students participating in AIM stand at 94 percent from first to second semester and at 73 percent from the freshmen to sophomore year. Graduation rates for program participants have averaged 51.8 percent the past four years, a higher rate than for the university as a whole.

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1989

## Illinois Central College (IL)

### *The Basic Skills Testing Program*

The Basic Skills Testing Program at Illinois Central College is an innovative and successful effort to assess the basic skills of late decision-makers. The purpose of the Basic Skills Test is to be able to enhance the advisement process of these students.

The Advisement and Assessment Office has taken on the task of administering, scoring, profiling, and delivering of the results of the Basic Skills Testing Program. The Department Chairpersons and faculty are responsible for interpreting the test results as part of the advisement process.

A two and one-half hour test is required for all new full-time students who have not previously submitted the required admissions test. The test consists of the Mathematical Association of American Math Placement Test, the Gates-MacGinite Reading Comprehension Test, the Written English Expression Placement Test, and short writing sample.

To make the test as accessible as possible, tests are administered daily, with no appointments necessary. It is also available in the evening every other week. The Basic Skills Test has no

fee, and the results are available immediately to students. After the results are received, students are referred to their assigned departments for advisement.

Once the test had been administered, a follow-up study was conducted to determine retention rates. The assumption that those students described as “late decision makers” are often deficient in the basic skill areas was supported by the composite profile of the students taking the Basic Skill Tests. The profile clearly indicated the large percentage of students needing remediation in their basic skills. Over 60 percent of the new students were recommended for remediation in English and reading, while over 90 percent were recommended for remediation in math.

Retention rates since implementation of the Basic Skills Testing Program indicate a positive impact on student retention. In the first year of implementation, the overall retention rate of new full-time students was 81 percent, an 8 percent increase over the year before; the retention rate of undecided students increased 15 percent during the same period.

1989

## Illinois Central College (IL)

### *Quality Undergraduate Education for Student Transfer (QUEST)*

The Quality Undergraduate Education for Student Transfer (QUEST) at Illinois Central College is designed for entering freshmen who will be transferring to a university after two years. Since Illinois Community College is a two-year community college, all QUEST students commute to school daily.

The curriculum in the QUEST program defines 15 basic competencies to be developed by the time the student receives an Associate of Arts and Science degree. Some of these competencies are skills (communications, mathematics, critical thinking, information gathering, effective group interaction); some are bodies of knowledge (understanding our society, the natural world, technology, our cultural heritage); and some involve growth in attitude and values (self-examination and a sense of one's own worth, an appreciation of physical well-being, tolerance and social responsibility, intellectual curiosity, leadership and a system of values).

Many of the courses used to achieve these competencies are existing ones, but some, particularly the interdisciplinary courses, are new courses. The curriculum calls for greater breadth (46 semester hours of general education rather than the previous 35). On the other hand, there is recognition of the need to make progress in an area of specialization. In addition to the 16-20 elective hours, students have the option of taking more specialized general education courses in a specific area needed to progress toward a "major."

The third quality of the program is a greater emphasis upon active methods of teaching and

learning. The teaching methods planned for the program are calculated to engage the student's active participation: small group work, study groups, independent study, tests that call upon the student to connect pieces of information and generalize from them rather than merely repeat memorized information. More "open-ended" kinds of assignments are offered, assignments whose outcomes are less predicted and whose means and direction are left to the responsibility of the student.

During the summer preceding the start of the student's participation in the program, an orientation session acquaints students with the campus. Assessment testing also takes place during this time. A mentor system was added to the advising process in which the mentor "adopts" two or three students, meets with them regularly to monitor their academic progress, makes referrals for any special needs, and helps them clarify their life goals.

To foster a community of learning among the entire college campus, students participate with the faculty in a number of cultural events, field trips, and other activities outside the classroom. The parents, spouses, and children of the students are invited to participate in some of these events as well as in a "family day" on campus.

QUEST addresses the basic question of the purpose and priorities for the first two years of college. During the initial two years of the program, QUEST students had a higher retention rate between semesters than a non-QUEST students.

1990

## Indiana University of Pennsylvania (PA)

### *The Graduate Scholars Program*

The goal of the Graduate Scholars Program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) is to recruit, retain and graduate American citizens of minority heritage. Since spring of 1984, all American citizens of minority heritage admitted into a full-time, degree seeking status have been guaranteed a graduate assistantship throughout their graduate studies at IUP.

The assistantship pays stipends in which the value is determined both by the academic discipline and by the degree level sought. Stipends are awarded for the nine month academic year. In addition, students receive a full tuition waiver for each fall, spring and succeeding summer term.

The conditions of the assistantship, which are consistent with the Graduate School's assistantship program policies, are that the student must: 1) maintain academic good standing (3.0 or better); 2) successfully perform 20 hours per week of research, teaching or service related tasks for the academic department in a mutually agreed upon outside unit; and 3) be enrolled full time.

At the beginning of the semester, a wine and cheese social is hosted by the Graduate School to which all incoming and continuing program participants are invited, as well as all racial minority faculty, staff and administrators. The students also receive welcoming comments from the University president, provost, vice-president for student affairs and the graduate dean. In addition, brief service descriptions are given by the director of the library, Counseling and Student Development Center, Black Cultural Center, Career Services, Office of Minority Affairs, the Learning Center and the Six O'Clock Series (evening presentations on relevant topics, open to the University community).

Two weeks into the semester each student receives a personalized letter from the director of the Graduate Scholars Program reminding them of the interest the Graduate School has in their adjustment and satisfaction with IUP, and inviting them to stop in the director's office for coffee or soda to "chat."

Throughout the remainder of the semester, luncheons are sponsored at which the graduate dean, program director and the two graduate students assigned to help in program administration dine in an informal setting with various students in the program. There is no set agenda, yet the luncheons allow opportunities for students to advance any problems, questions or issues. Out of the informal luncheons have developed a student-only function at the beginning of the semester to give incoming students a chance to talk freely and comfortably about their concerns, and the establishment of a monthly "potluck" held at students' homes on a rotating basis.

At the conclusion of each semester, the director receives grade reports for each student and contacts those who are not progressing satisfactorily. Efforts are made to assist the student in returning to good academic standing. When the student graduates, personal congratulatory letters are sent.

In the 1990 spring semester the school enrolled the largest number of racial minority students in the history of graduate education at IUP. The retention rate of 82 percent is approximately 30-50 percent above retention rates for predominantly white institutions. Proportionate to the total number of Ph.D.'s awarded, IUP ranks sixth in granting the Ph.D. to African-Americans.

1992

## Indiana University School of Nursing (IN)

*Enhancing Minority Nursing Student Success Through a Comprehensive Retention Program*

Increasing the representation of minority students in professional programs such as nursing is a high priority across the country. The Program for Enhancing Minority Nursing Student Success has promoted both success and persistence through a combination of academic, personal and financial support. Components include an early- warning system, peer and faculty tutorials, special review sessions, and academic skills workshops. Features of the program include the following:

- **Minority Academic Counselor:** Hired to address concerns of the minority nursing students, the Counselor found many areas for improvement and implemented a plan which dealt with students' need for financial aid, academic assistance, and support systems.
- **Minority Nursing Student Organization (MNSO):** The goals of MNSO include providing support to all minorities; serving as a liaison between minority students, faculty, community organizations and groups; and maintaining students' interest in nursing.
- **Newsletter:** "Code Blue" is mailed three to four times per semester to every minority student apprising them of available financial assistance, workshops, program changes and tutorial/support services.
- **Social Activities:** Three social activities during the academic year include a fall reception, holiday mixer and spring picnic. As students share experiences and provide support while attending the events, these

social activities contribute to improving students' ability to complete school.

- **Advisory Counsel on Minority Affairs:** The Advisory Counsel includes representatives from students, faculty, school administrators, professional nursing organizations, state legislators and community leaders. They meet three to four times a year to discuss minority community concerns and ways to improve retention.

Academic support systems include an early-warning system, peer/faculty tutorials and academic advising provided by the director of Minority Student Affairs. The peer/faculty tutorials have serviced over 1,277 students for the past five years. Students who were tutored passed their course 80 percent of the time. In addition, weekend and summer review sessions are held for minority students experiencing difficulty with math, science and nursing theories courses. Students can either attend academic skills workshops or review videotapes on topics which include stress and time management and test taking.

Since 1984, minority enrollment in all nursing programs almost doubled, from 134 to 261, and retention has improved steadily. Reports indicate also that the number of students passing the nursing qualifying exam is almost 100 percent. An added benefit is that due to the proactive efforts of this comprehensive retention program the relationship between the minority community and the School of Nursing has improved considerably.

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1996

## Inter-American University of Puerto Rico Ponce Campus (PR)

### *Campus Retention Program*

Since 1987, faculty and staff at the Ponce Campus have been involved in the process of reinventing the institution to better serve the needs of local students and communities. This process revealed challenges in developing new teaching styles, improving assessment for better class placement, and enhancing technology for instruction and information access.

#### **Meeting the Needs of Spanish-speaking and Adult Students**

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The campus wide retention program responds to a variety of student needs through programs designed for the largely Spanish-speaking population of Ponce Campus and for the increasing number of adult and returning students. The program offers adult students alternative course options and expanded instructional modalities, including instructional technologies and specialized support services. These services are tailored to meet students' specific cultural, linguistic, and educational needs

- Special classes for adult learners are offered in a half-semester format to fit work schedules. Independent study is also offered for working adult students.
- Faculty development workshops have helped teachers become better informed about specialized instructional strategies for Spanish-speaking and adult learners.
- The Student Assessment Center offers an adaptive computerized assessment instrument for academic placement in English. In addition, the Center is developing instruments in Spanish, mathematics, learning styles and vocational exploration.

Since instruments must be in the Spanish language, much development time has been dedicated to translating existing instruments and developing new ones.

#### **Technology, Learning Styles, and Information Access**

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To merge technology with changes in instruction, all classrooms on campus are now connected through a fiber-optic network with interactive monitors. Realizing the value of instruction in many forms, faculty conducted one of the first major studies of Hispanic learning styles which they used as the base for further faculty development. The library at the Ponce Campus has become a worldwide information network through the use of computer technology and the internet. With the addition of an electronic network of over 60 PCs, students can now access databases, the Internet, CD-ROMs and online libraries around the world. Over 3000 students have internet accounts and regularly communicate around the world.

#### **Improvements in Retention and Pass Rates**

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The innovations and intervention strategies employed by Ponce Campus have increased student success and retention. The first to second-year retention rate has gone from 68 percent to 72 percent over a three-year period. The pass rates in beginning courses in English, where the Assessment Center results were used in placement of students, are also significantly better than in classes where the assessment program is not yet available.

1996

## Jacksonville State University (MI)

*Experiencing Success in Education and Life (ExSEL)*

Jacksonville State University enrolls a high-need population. Half of the undergraduates are first-generation; 34 percent are over the age of 25. Many entering students are underprepared: 70 percent place in developmental math courses and 38 percent place in developmental writing.

To increase the academic competencies of entering freshmen and improve their probability of success, the Center for Individualized Instruction offers an intense six-week summer developmental program. This program assists freshmen to become better prepared socially and academically for the university experience. Students receive individual attention and mentoring, adjustment strategies and have an opportunity to develop close friendships and ties within the University. The ExSEL Program is required for students with an ACT composite below 16 or SAT below 650, and is encouraged for any student who feels underprepared for college.

### **Structured Support**

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After extensive assessment, a program is designed to help each student reach a higher competency level in the areas that need improvement. Students are given one-on-one attention by instructors, graduate students, and undergraduate tutors. The ExSEL instructional team uses Precision Teaching, Direct Instruction and other individualized strategies to guide learners. In addition to regularly scheduled class times, students must master between 20 and 50 computer modules in each area and work on competencies during structured study sessions. Weekly data shares keep students motivated by

showcasing their progress to other students in a socially supportive atmosphere.

### **Keeping Students “Up to Speed”**

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Because progress through the core curriculum is at the student’s discretion, many students delay completing difficult subjects until late in their academic careers. In addition to the original six week intensive study program, ExSEL students are offered extensive mentoring, academic advising services and continued tutoring in difficult subjects, which often encourages these students to complete difficult work earlier and more successfully than the general student population. This helps them make satisfactory progress towards completion and graduation.

### **Achieving Results for Students and the University**

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Students’ success in the ExSEL program is assessed according to competency level reached in each course and scores on the residual ACT after the ExSEL courses have been completed. Virtually all students finish the program with at least a “C” in each course, and an improved ACT score averaging 2.43 points. The average GPA for ExSEL students their freshman year is 2.28 compared to 2.03 for the general freshman population. For African-American students in the program, the average freshman GPA was 2.49. The GPA for African-American students not in the program was 1.88. While 64 percent of JSU students return for the second year, 75 percent of ExSEL students return. ExSEL students persist at a rate of 91 percent through their freshmen year, as compared to an 80 percent retention rate for the general student population.

1993

## Johnson C. Smith University (NC)

### *Freshman Studies Program*

Johnson C. Smith University is a small, historically black, liberal arts college in North Carolina. Unlike many institutions, it has achieved substantial gains in retention and performance almost entirely on “the academic side” through a variety of curricular strategies and changes. However, like many of the best retaining institutions, the university has grounded its efforts to improve the teaching/learning environment in a strong faculty development program.

#### **Program Features**

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One of the most distinctive features of the Freshman Studies Program is the absence of remedial courses. Instead, the freshman curriculum integrates skill development for underprepared students with challenging college-level content for students who are academically well prepared. Personal and academic support is available through the Learning Resource Center and through a two-year mentoring program (13 students per faculty mentor) which replaced the traditional faculty advising program. The curriculum is standard for all freshmen. Four new interdisciplinary courses have been developed and are required each

semester: rhetoric, humanities, social science and natural science. All courses are writing and speaking intensive, and the social and natural science courses incorporate quantitative reasoning skills. The method of instruction is directed inquiry as opposed to lecture. Further, all faculty are expected to offer at least one section of Freshman Studies.

With assessment such a key to the program’s success, an assessment coordinator was assigned to track and evaluate the extensive assessment data that has come from this program.

#### **Results**

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Since the Freshman Studies program began in 1988, retention rates have remained steady at 70 percent. The average retention rate for the four years immediately preceding implementation was 57 percent. The success of the program is shown also by higher freshman GPA’s and by fewer students placed on academic probation. In addition, there have been convincing gains in academic performance by sophomores on the ETS Academic Profile. The JCSU program has shown that an inquiry-based curriculum can produce cognitive as well as retention gains.

1990

**Kean University**

**fka: Kean College of New Jersey (NJ)**

*Comprehensive Freshman Retention Program*

The Comprehensive Freshman Retention Program was designed to have maximal impact on students with high risk of attrition who are admitted to the College in such programs as the EEO and Special Admits as well as on members of ethnic minority groups, particularly African-Americans and Hispanic students. There are three components of the program that have had significant impact on retention rates: the Freshman Center, the Freshman Seminar, and the Learning Assistance Center.

The Freshman Center, located on the first floor of the library, was developed to provide the optimum academic, social and co-curricular environment for student involvement at the start of the student's academic career. Peer Liaisons Assisting New Students (PLANS) provides tutoring, presents workshops, serves as campus tour leaders and helps support the functions and activities of the Freshman Seminar course.

Beyond the PLANS program, the Freshman Center has become a "home" for freshmen, providing a variety of student life events and activities designed to be responsive to the special needs of freshmen. These include aid in developmental studies courses, advising for students needing this assistance orientation, and student life events. Walk-in advisement is also available to all freshmen and addresses such issues as registration, academic decision-making, major selection, tutoring and personal problems. Referral to other offices and agencies is also available.

Freshman Seminar, administered by the Freshman Center, is a mandatory orientation course for incoming freshmen. It meets once a week, and is graded on a pass-fail basis. Instructors for the course include both full-time faculty and members of the professional staff. The instructors are assisted by trained peer liaisons, who provide freshmen with useful information and personal support.

The goal of the Freshman Seminar is to provide freshmen with an orientation to college life and a support system that helps them cope with the stresses and strains of their daily lives, on and off campus. The course also seeks to help students handle the academic challenges of college life, to understand college policies, become aware of campus resources, and to learn skills that will support their education and vocational aspirations. The course instructor serves as both teacher and advisor, and is responsible for students' advanced registration for the following semester.

The Learning Assistance Program consists of a variety of programs designed to help students succeed in their academic work. Learning to Learn is a three-credit course required for all EEO students, designed to provide students with a variety of learning strategies. The Supplemental Instruction course is designed to assist students in high-risk courses. These supplementary, voluntary sessions provide a review of the lecture material, mock exams and practice sessions in problem solving. Also available in the Supplemental Instruction course is the Student Academic Feedback/Evaluation (SAFE), an early warning system providing students with information on their academic performance prior to the last date to withdraw. The final aspect of the SI is tutoring. The Learning Assistance Program coordinates all tutoring programs on campus, with tutoring provided by some academic departments as well as by the EEO and ESL programs.

From 1985 to 1988 retention percentages increased for new freshmen from 70 percent to 75 percent. Retention of black students increased 68 percent to 74 percent, and of Hispanic students from 59 percent to 79 percent.

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## 2012

### Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (KY)

#### *Project Graduate*

Project Graduate is a statewide initiative designed to recruit, retain, and graduate returning adult learners with 80 or more credit hours but no bachelor degree. It is a collaboration among all public four-year institutions in Kentucky. The components of the program include campus action plans that outline the high-touch student incentives and services designed to recruit and retain students, highly skilled Project Graduate advocates who serve adult students at each campus, and a Project Graduate team to implement campus-specific action plans.

#### **A program to target college dropouts**

Kentucky state data analyzed by the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) in 2007 showed more than 300,000 Kentucky adults between the ages of 25 and 50 had some college credit from a Kentucky public institution, but no degree. More than 7,000 of those former students had earned 90 or more credit hours but had stopped out before earning their degrees. In May 2007, the CPE convened a workgroup to target those students and the resulting Project Graduate program was launched in January 2008.

Each institution developed a campus action plan to provide essential, high-touch services for returning adult learners. Additionally, the plans identified a Project Graduate campus response team and a one-point-of-contact, or advocate, to ensure former students who respond and qualify can take advantage of incentives and support services so they can become successful students and graduates.

The goals for the program are to increase bachelor degree completion of former Kentucky students with 80 or more credit hours. The objectives include:

- To develop a statewide network of campus representatives focused on serving the adult learner;
- To develop campus action plans that address the needs of adult learners and outline student support services and incentives;

- To identify former students with 80 credit hours or more;
- To develop a strong statewide brand identity and marketing templates for campus outreach;
- To recruit these former students back to campus;
- To retain and graduate these students; and
- To focus attention on the needs of adult learners and to showcase successes.

To accomplish these goals, the CPE developed marketing materials, communication materials, and advertisements to drive brand awareness and build support for the program. The programmatic and marketing components were in response to a CPE adult learner research project that identified barriers and motivators to re-entry and completion. On-campus initiatives and student services vary by institution and are designed to recruit and retain students at each campus. Examples include motivators such as: tuition assistance, application fee waivers, priority enrollment, degree audits, credit for prior learning, simplified admissions paperwork, personal advising, one-on-one academic advising, career counseling, and study support skills.

#### **Results**

Project Graduate is affecting adult student enrollment, persistence, and completion. Between spring 2008 and spring 2011, 1,958 adult students returned to one of Kentucky's eight four-year institutions under Project Graduate and 605 students graduated. The fall 2011 enrollment report shows 651 students enrolled, an increase of 97 percent from fall 200. Additionally, graduation numbers have increased by 510 percent in that time. All campuses report an increase in inquiries and readmission from former adult students; however, only those with 80 hours are classified as Project Graduate, so the full impact of the campaign on returning adult students cannot be measured but there are strong indicators that the campaign is having an impact on bachelor-degree attainment in Kentucky.

1999

## Kutztown University of Pennsylvania (PA)

### *Student Support Services Program*

More than 175 disadvantaged students benefit each year from innovative academic support delivered through the Student Support Services Program at Kutztown University (Kutztown, Pennsylvania, enrollment 7,000). Students in the program are economically disadvantaged and educationally underprepared. Many are freshmen, conditional admits, learning disabled, students of color, and first-generation college students. The program is one of several programs, commonly referred to as TRIO Programs, funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

The Student Support Services Program is specifically designed to address students' academic, affective, behavioral, and financial needs. Its primary goals are to improve grades and increase retention and graduation rates.

#### **A Highly Structured Program for Disadvantaged Students**

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Mandatory requirements and incentives form the core of this highly structured retention program. Core elements of the Student Support Services Program include, but are not limited to:

- A minimum of 16 support contacts per semester for each freshman, including four individual academic counseling sessions and two group advising sessions;
- Additional professor evaluations beyond the number most students receive;
- Mandatory Freshman Colloquium;
- Mandatory diagnostic and prescriptive testing;
- Mandatory peer mentoring;
- Required attendance at tutoring and other study skills sessions;
- Mandatory attendance at one cultural or social activity each semester;
- Student and parent newsletters;
- Financial aid counseling, including deferments by the university bursar from meeting regularly scheduled payment deadlines for tuition and fees in instances where students' inability to pay interferes with enrollment; and

- An early registration incentive that allows students who meet the above requirements to register for classes earlier than they would otherwise.

#### **Program Origins**

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To establish the program, the university identified 10 measurable program objectives and introduced the objectives to various campus constituents, emphasizing the program's innovative approach, ambitious goals and objectives, and sound data-collection system to monitor student outcomes.

Also important to the program's founding were successful efforts to adjust university policies which were adversely affecting retention. For example, to ensure that no program participants are compelled to leave the university due to an inability to pay or to meet payment deadlines, the project director collaborated with the offices of the president, bursar, and financial aid to establish the deferred payment policy for program participants.

#### **Impressive Results**

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Retention and graduation rates for participants in the Student Support Services Program have far exceeded the rates for Kutztown's student population overall. To date, the program has achieved an 83 percent first-to-second-year retention rate for participants compared to a 69 percent retention rate for freshmen overall. By May 1999, 68 percent of all students who entered the project during the 1993-94 academic year had graduated, far exceeding the six-year graduation rate of 55 percent for non-participants. In addition, the university reports an enrollment revenue increase of 1.75 million dollars over the first six years of the program's existence.

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2003

## Lehigh Carbon Community College (PA)

### *Early Alert Referral System*

At the request of its teaching faculty, Lehigh Carbon Community College has taken significant steps to identify and address the needs of its at-risk students. The college's Early Alert Referral System serves nearly 2,000 full-time and 3,500 part-time students at five locations. Results to date show that the program is making a real difference in the lives of this institution's students.

#### **Faculty Identification of At-risk Students**

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The Early Alert Referral System is managed by the college's Retention Office and is a key component in the college's comprehensive retention plan. The system invites teaching faculty to identify potential at-risk students based on behaviors exhibited on the classroom.

In this model, teaching faculty use two modes of early alert communication to highlight student needs for support services to the director of the Retention Office, who is a member of the administrative faculty. This person, known as the "Retention Advisor," serves as a liaison between teaching faculty and academic support services and manages the system.

The first mode of early alert communication is an Early Alert Referral Form that can be used at any point in the semester. On this form, checkboxes are provided for faculty to identify area(s) of concern and space is provided for comments. Faculty submit the form to the Retention Advisor, who then follows up with students personally or coordinates follow-up by various campus personnel.

The second mode of early alert communication is an Early Alert Roster that is sent to all teaching faculty during the second week of the semester. Faculty return the rosters to the Retention Office for follow-up by the end of the fourth week. The rosters are created for each course being taught each semester.

After a referral is made, referring faculty members receive a copy of the original documents they submitted indicating the follow-up steps that were taken. Support resources most commonly used include education support services (tutors and labs), career services, counseling, student life, athletics, and financial aid.

Faculty training for the system was accomplished during regular monthly faculty meetings, averting the cost of supplemental training sessions.

#### **Results**

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Early indications are that the Early Alert Referral System is contributing significantly to improving student retention at Lehigh Carbon Community College. In 2000-2001, the college's retention rate for full-time students was 59 percent. A year later, the rate stood at 64 percent, an increase of 5 percentage points. Although multiple factors were responsible for this increase, college administrators believe the referral system was central in this achievement.

As one indicator of the referral volume, faculty referred 638 students to the Retention Advisor during the fall 2002 semester.

1989

## Long Island University (NY)

### *Freshman Program*

The Long Island University integrated freshman program was established to increase retention and decrease the number of students on academic probation. To achieve this a four-part program was initiated.

Freshman Seminar is a one credit-hour course meeting two times per week for seven weeks, require for all freshman. Sections are limited to fifteen students and are staffed by faculty and staff. In addition an upper-class peer counselor is assigned to each section to provide a student's perspective on issues discussed in class.

Freshman Seminar is designed as an extended orientation, which enables students to address pressing issues as they are experienced. Students are consulted in designing the syllabus. As a result, syllabi may vary from section to section. Typically, the curriculum includes areas such as familiarization with campus resources, coping skills, time management, values clarification, decision making, drugs and alcohol, sexuality and career planning.

Frequent contact with faculty and peer counselors provides a supportive environment. It also allows for intercession if the student experiences academic or social adjustment problems.

The Freshman Seminar instructor also serves as the academic advisor for students in his/her section for the first term, and if a student's choice of major is unsure, into the second term as well. Faculty selected to teach Freshman Seminar have a special interest in students and an affinity for advising. A spin-off benefit of

Freshman Seminar staffing is that interaction between student affairs and faculty has increased, and has made faculty more aware and appreciative of student services. In addition, advisors advising out-of-major become informed about other major requirements beyond their own disciplines.

Peer counselors are specially selected upper-class students who live with groups of approximately 14 freshmen and receive intensive training in counseling and communications skills, crisis intervention, academic advising, substance abuse, sexuality, campus policies and resources, etc. Freshman Seminar Advisors (FSA's) conduct group activities during Orientation (three-day program) and serve as leader, advisor, friend, confidant, referral agent and advocate for their freshman. They work under the direction of the Freshman Program Director who provides guidance on any problem situations they may be dealing with. The FSA component provides an additional opportunity for close, daily contact with a "significant other," one who has been through the process and succeeded.

To the extent possible, freshmen live together, either in exclusively freshman residence halls or clustered in groups of 10-15 in mixed dormitories. The arrangement is to encourage bonding by providing a common experience that is beneficial to freshmen.

As a result of the Program, the number of students on academic probation has decreased, while the mean GPA for freshmen has increased.

1990

## Loyola University New Orleans (LA)

*“Mentored” General Studies Program*

The “Mentored” General Studies Program at Loyola University has a number of specific goals from a student development perspective:

- To provide the undecided student with a peer group and a support system which decided freshman students find in their respective departments;
- To give students access to a caring faculty member who knows them as individuals and to whom they can turn for academic information and for support in times of frustration, stress and doubt;
- To provide students with academic and adjustment survival skills; and
- To give students the message that being “undecided” is a normal and acceptable freshman phenomenon.

To accomplish these goals undecided Arts and Sciences freshmen are provided with faculty advising and mentoring through special sections of required core courses.

Courses selected for the program include those which all freshmen must take: English composition, introduction to philosophy, introduction to religious studies, and world civilization. Although such courses usually enroll 30 to 40 students, the “mentored” sections enroll no more than 20. The normal academic material of the courses is covered fully and with rigor.

During the regular class period, approximately ten minutes is devoted to timely discussions on

topics frequently found in “University 101” courses: the purpose of the liberal education and requirements, academic regulations, adaptation to college life, availability of majors, student services like writing and math labs and the Counseling Center.

Besides the in-class discussions, special workshops are held outside of class on time management, study skills, use of the library and selection of major. The undecided student also schedules private meetings with advisors, when they need to talk with someone.

Social events, similar to those found in the other academic disciplines are set up and encouraged. Participants either include students from the same class or from other General Studies sections.

Although General Studies students participate in one of these special sections only during the fall semester, the instructor/advisor continues to serve as the students’ academic advisor until a major is selected. The “mentoring” by faculty advisors aids in increasing the opportunity for a closer bond for both the student and the faculty member/advisor as they also share the classroom experience.

The “Mentored” General Studies Program has achieved dramatic results in the four years it has existed. The retention rate of undecided students is higher than for the freshman class as a whole. In addition, students from the mentored sections have higher grade point averages and more earned hours.

2001

## Loyola University New Orleans (LA)

*It Takes a Campus to Graduate a Student*

An unusually collaborative approach is the hallmark of the successful retention initiative at Loyola University New Orleans. By involving virtually everyone on campus, the members of the university's 120-member Task Force on Student Success and Retention have been able to implement a successful, broad-based plan that has yielded results in retention.

### **Working Together**

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The Task Force on Student Success and Retention consists of faculty, staff, administrators, students, and alumni. The goal of this broad-based group has been to plan and lead a cultural transformation of the campus, making student success the number one priority. The group also brings together the key areas of influence on campus for the purpose of developing successful, university wide initiatives.

The Task force is divided into the following 10 workgroups:

1. Instructional Effectiveness
2. Academic Advising
3. Academic Support and Career Development
4. Campus Diversity
5. Freshman Experience
6. Post Baccalaureate Programs
7. Student Life and Campus Traditions
8. Campus Services
9. Alumni Affairs and Public Relations
10. Recruitment and Financial Aid

The role of each workgroup is to review available institutional data related to its focal area, and to develop action plans to enhance student life and learning. Data collection is supported by a Common Data Warehouse designed to support the retention data-tracking and assessment needs across the university. In addition, the

university annually assesses student satisfaction levels and faculty and staff perceptions.

Overseeing the efforts of the workgroups is a steering committee comprised of the chairs of each workgroup. The steering committee is responsible for planning, evaluation, implementation, and celebrations of accomplishments.

To encourage campus wide participation, the task force stays in close touch with the campus community through regular assessments, progress reports to committees, online and print publication of feature articles and updates, town meetings and special events, and a listserv for retention information.

### **Outcomes**

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The university has seen a significant upward trend in its freshman to sophomore retention rates, from 74.2 percent in the fall of 1995 to a record 84.8 percent for fall 2000. The four-year graduation rate is also at an all-time high. Recruitment and enrollment statistics have also been setting records.

In addition, the university appears to be achieving its goal of making student success a number one priority across campus. Key college and departmental strategic plans now incorporate student success as a top priority. Also, campus receptivity to task force projects continues to be strong as evidenced by good attendance at special campus events.

Task force accomplishments to date include over 60 enhancements ranging from the consideration of "staff sensitivity to student needs" in performance evaluations to the formation of 11 learning communities to the institution of a freshman convocation and class picture as new traditions.

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1989

## Loyola University of Chicago (IL)

*Learning Enrichment for Academic Progress*

The Learning Enrichment for Academic Progress Program is designed to provide a freshman year experience that will allow “at risk” students to enter Loyola and succeed academically. The LEAP program is a comprehensive academic support program. Students in the program are required to participate in individual sessions, Group Seminar meetings, and the special summer program. Additionally, they must sign a student agreement consenting to regular and consistent participation. The student must adhere to this agreement to maintain membership in the LEAP Program and to continue as a registered Loyola student in good standing.

LEAP begins in the summer prior to the first semester of enrollment. The summer component is four weeks long and is a mandatory part of the program. During the program, students are enrolled in a three semester hour college level course, in which they are graded and earn academic credit towards their degree. No tuition is required for the summer program, but students are responsible for their own books, transportation, and school supplies.

The summer course, entitled Understanding Social Behavior, provides students with an introduction to the content of coursework in Loyola’s Core Curriculum and the reading and writing requirements of college level coursework.

The course surveys Natural Science, Psychology, History, and Theology. One week is spent on each of these subject areas, with a faculty member from each of the disciplines teaching. Each faculty member prepares and presents lecture/discussion sessions along with quizzes, tests, and/or written assignments as a “mini module” representing a content area. During the fall semester students complete a research paper. Upon completion of the paper and the course students receive three hours of college credit.

Beyond the Understanding Social Behavior course, LEAP provides a number of services through the Counseling Center during the academic year to assure the student’s success. Each LEAP participant is given his/her own learning assistance counselor who meets with the student on a regular basis to aid the student in educational assessment, planning, and support. Additionally, each student is assigned to a Loyola faculty advisor. The advisor works closely with the student and the learning assistance counselor.

A weekly Group Seminar of approximately 10 students is conducted to help with goal setting, study skills, career decision-making and to provide personal support. Also available are individual tutoring sessions and individual personal and/or career counseling.

The freshman and sophomore retention rate 90 percent for LEAP students exceeds that of the University as a whole by 7 percent.

## 2013

### Madonna University

*Bridging Lost Gaps*

Madonna University is one of the nation's largest Franciscan universities with a combined undergraduate and graduate student body of 4,500 students. The institution has a strong history of providing successful programs to meet the educational needs of its diverse students. Madonna developed the Bridging Lost Gaps (BLG) initiative in 2011 to increase the recruitment and retention of African American male students from Detroit.

#### **Program Components**

##### **The highly structured program includes:**

- A 10-week, pre-college bridge program for new students with segments focused on introductory college writing, intermediate college algebra, college computer literacy, and time management.
- Guest speakers for the program range from doctors and attorneys to federal agents and business owners.
- On-campus mentorships that match each student with five mentors during the first semester of their freshman year. Students meet with their mentors weekly for the 15-week semester.
- Off-campus mentorships delivered through Real Life 101, a national charitable program which provides a \$5,000 scholarship and laptop computer for each at-risk student in addition to ongoing support services.
- Social and academic engagement outside the classroom ranging from field trips to financial literacy workshops to residence life programs.

- Bridging Lost Gaps students are recruited from high schools within Detroit with the worst graduation rates in the country. They live in a university residence hall, are placed in on-campus work-study positions, and have the opportunity to pursue summer internships. In addition, many participate in on- and off-campus faith-based worship services and programs.

The BLG program was designed to be scalable and has potential for replication by other institutions, especially those located in states with Real Life 101 programs. The initiative is funded primarily through institutional budgets and managed by the BLG Program Director, housed in the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs. A Detroit-based foundation recently approved a two-year grant which will fund program expansion and cover a significant portion of the operational costs. Once the grant concludes, BLG will be fully absorbed into the university's operating budget.

#### **Results**

Prior to the Bridging Lost Gaps program, the fall-to-fall retention rates for African American male students lagged behind the retention rates for the full undergraduate student body. Since the program began in 2011, the current BLG cohorts have achieved a 100 percent retention rate and a higher percentage of these students were named to the Dean's List than non-BLG African American male students. Madonna has received more than 100 applications for the 2013-14 BLG cohort and is projecting an enrollment of 25 new students.



1997

**McDaniel College**

**fka: Western Maryland College (MD)**

*The Goal Planning Program*

As its title suggests, the Goal Planning Program at Western Maryland College, enrollment 1,200, emphasizes strategic goal planning. This innovative program is a systematic yet highly individualized approach to improving the academic performance of students with GPAs below 2.0.

#### **Approach Adapted from Special Education**

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Programs for academic enhancement typically focus on motivational issues, time management and planning, and the development of study skills. While the Goal Planning Program emphasizes all of these elements, its use of assessment, learning and study strategies, individual counseling, and self-advocacy make the program stand out. All of these approaches are typical of effective programs for college students with learning disabilities.

#### **The Semester Assessment**

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Two main components comprise the Goal Planning

Program: a semester assessment and a plan sheet. The semester assessment is an initial advising session that begins with a review of the student's performance in the prior semester. At this session, the advisor assists the student in assessing his or her performance and identifying personal strengths and weaknesses. Discussion then focuses on strategic goal planning – the process of setting realistic, measurable goals and determining a method for achieving them. By the end of the sessions a goal direction has often been defined for the new semester.

#### **The Plan Sheet**

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Ensuing advising sessions continue to focus on assessment while matching learning and study

strategies to each student's learning style. With the advisor's assistance, students continue assessing strengths and weaknesses, set realistic final grade objectives for each class, choose classes (as possible) to match their learning style, develop individualized study strategies, and more.

Anchoring this phase is an individual plan sheet for goal attainment, time management, and continuous monitoring. For example, the ongoing assessment component of the sheet has students listing their courses in a column with the weeks of the semester in rows. Students then monitor their progress by recording every grade received in each class. They also write, in red, all tests and assignments due for each course in the appropriate week blocks. This grid then facilitates follow-up appointments by providing an immediate focus for discussion.

A major purpose of the Goal Planning Program is to assist students in asserting a greater sense of control over their academic work. Throughout the advising process, the program encourages accountability and responsibility, giving students a greater sense of ownership in their academic careers.

#### **Results**

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The mean GPA rose .540 points for students in the program at the end of the spring 1995 semester, compared with the semester preceding. Further, participating students' mean GPA rose .208 points and .387 points, respectively, at the end of the fall 1995 and spring 1996 terms. Many students have endorsed the program, saying they like the idea of being better planned, prepared, and focused.

1998

## Meharry Medical College (TN)

### *Teaching and Learning Resource Center Program*

Established in 1994, the Teaching and Learning Resource Center for students and faculty at Meharry Medical College, Nashville, Tenn., enrollment 880, has led to significant results in student success. This comprehensive academic support program serves the vast majority of enrolled students in medicine, dentistry, and graduate biomedical studies. The Center attributes its success to its philosophy of meeting the total needs of students—and to a successful partnership with faculty for student success.

#### **Services for Students**

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At the heart of the Center's program for students are personal academic development plans based on entering test results. Entering students complete a test focusing on reading, test-taking, learning styles, study skills, and critical thinking skills. Based on the findings of the test, individual students meet with a peer tutor, a skills consultant, a faculty advisor, and the college counselor, as appropriate, to focus on cognitive and non-cognitive performance issues identified, along with their resulting recommendations.

Students are also offered a course in analytical reasoning and critical thinking; assistance with time and stress management; and a Comprehensive Review Program in preparation for licensure exams.

To document the student's achievement, monthly progress reports are signed by the student, the skill consultant, and other team members, then kept on file in the Office of Academic Affairs.

To ensure that students' total needs are met, the Center maintains close working relationships with campus offices of financial aid, housing, admissions and records, college operations, counseling and pastoral services, and offices of student and academic affairs.

#### **Services for Faculty**

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Faculty involvement with the Center is viewed as foundational to the program's success. Importantly, its services for faculty have been well-received.

The Center's support for faculty initially focused on aligning the item content of in-house examinations with the item content of external licensure exams. A review of external examinations revealed that questions were written on the evaluation, problem-solving, and application levels of understanding. In contrast, in-house exams were primarily being written on the basic knowledge level of understanding. Monthly faculty seminars on item writing, along with a peer review process, culminated in a marked increase in item correlation between the two exams.

In addition to support with item writing, faculty are also offered assistance in developing educational models such as Problem and Student Centered Learning, videotaping of lectures for self-analysis, and workshop and seminar opportunities for ongoing development in teaching.

#### **Outcomes**

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For students, the pass rate for first-time takers of the National Board Examinations in the School of Medicine increased from 39 percent in 1994 to 92 percent in 1997. In addition, for the same time period, the pass rate for students taking the National Dental Boards increased from 63.4 percent to 82 percent.

For faculty, the process of working to align the item content of in-house exams and external licensure exams resulted in a .89 correlation between the two exams.

By all indications, the concept of developing a single campus center to coordinate institution wide retention efforts has proven exceptionally effective for Meharry Medical College, its students, staff, and faculty.

1990

**Miami Dade College**

**fka: Miami Dade Community College (FL)**

*Black/Hispanic Student Opportunity Program*

The Black/Hispanic Student Opportunity Program is designed to increase both the number of black and Hispanic students graduating from high school as well as the number of students graduating from college. The program addresses four major issues identified as impeding the educational persistence of black students: inadequate academic preparation to compete at the college level, lack of a unified solid network of positive reinforcement-group expectancies, lack of a long-range career development plan, and inadequate institutional and financial assistance.

This program covers a seven-year period, from the tenth grade to completion. Student selection for the Black/Hispanic Student Opportunity Program is based on the Stanford Achievement Test and the recommendation of an administrator, counselor, teacher or committee.

Student performance is rewarded on annual accumulated grade point averages in designated college preparatory courses. Funds are placed in a bank account, established in the name of each student, within the Miami-Dade Community College Foundation. For high school students, the fund is based on the following system: for each 'C,' \$30; for each 'B,' \$60; for each 'A,' \$90. A student with a 'B' average would earn about \$240, which would be paid by a sponsor and matched by the Mitchell Wolfson Senior Foundation. Once students enroll in Miami-Dade, the rate increases to \$40 for a 'C,' \$80 for a 'B,' and \$120 for an 'A,' paid for by a sponsor and also matched by the Mitchell Wolfson Senior Foundation.

The student must come to Miami-Dade for the first two years in order to have access to the funds. BSOP affords the student access to several support systems. Mentors and parents

play a vital role. Mentors, who are sought from a broad range of black professions, stay with the student for one year and attend workshops and meetings with the student and parents. Parents of students in the BSOP are expected to provide an atmosphere for learning at home, monitor the student's learning process, become involved in the child's school, contribute to the student's education, and serve as an example to the student. Tutors are also available at both the high school and at Miami-Dade to aid the students in their studies.

Through BSOP students also have the opportunity to participate in several additional educational activities: 'Boss-For-A-Day'; Career Days; College Success Strategies Workshops; specialized assessments; workshops on decision-making, leadership and communication skills; test-wiseness skills, appropriate study habits, time management and college readiness.

BSOP also gives the opportunity for students to attend other educational functions such as the National Caucus of Black State Legislators and the Martin Luther King Conference on Non-Violence.

The primary goal of BSOP is to increase the pool of well-prepared black high school graduates; increase the number of black high school students aspiring to college education; and make it financially possible for black high school graduates to earn a college degree. Program success will be measured in terms of successful high school completion (100 percent for the first class, and 98 percent expected for the second class); earning of an associate in arts degree at Miami-Dade (students are in their freshman year), and completion of a bachelor's degree at a college of the student's choice (too early to assess).

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2000

## Miami University (OH)

### Scholastic Enhancement Program

Since it began serving students in 1993, the Scholastic Enhancement Program (SEP) at Miami University has made a substantive difference in the lives of students who come to the campus with learning needs. SEP has increased the retention of students who participate in the program and has been a model for the University community in how to support students more effectively.

#### **Identifying Students at Risk**

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Located in southwestern Ohio and enrolling a student population of almost 16,000 students, Miami University is highly respected and well known for its challenging academic curriculum. The Scholastic Enhancement Program grew out of the work of a presidential task force comprised of a cross-section of faculty and staff. The task force found that a disproportionate number of students who experienced academic difficulty came from certain populations of students.

Based on recommendations from the task force, SEP was established to increase the performance, persistence, and graduation rates of students admitted to Miami through one of **four special admission consideration categories**:

1. Open admission students from the local school district;
2. student athletes;
3. fine arts majors;
4. minority students.

One of the operating assumptions is that these students are potentially at risk academically because of the competitive academic environment of the university and that the risk increases with the additional demand placed specifically on those talented students recruited for athletics and performing arts programs.

#### **Network of Support**

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The motto of SEP is “We meet the students where they are, and go where they take us.” To

assist each student in establishing a network of support, the program features:

- Early contact with faculty, staff, and successful upper-class students;
- peer group activities designed to build social and personal friendships that will serve the student in times of stress;
- initial assessment of skill levels in reading, writing, mathematics, and academic skills to inform staff of the need for participation in student success programs and/or activities;
- Early advising and special course selection accompanied by supplemental instruction and/or tutoring;
- Careful monitoring of student progress including a mid-term evaluation;
- A Focused Learning Community residential option which provides an opportunity for students in targeted majors to live close to one another.

#### **Outcomes**

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An assessment of the program shows a positive correlation between participation in the Scholastic Enhancement Program, persistence, and academic achievement. Specifically, since its inception in 1993, the program has admitted over 850 students and successfully retained an average of 95 percent of these students through the end of their first year. On average, 84 percent of SEP participants are finishing their first year with a GPA of 2.0 or above. Further, 84 percent of all SEP students return to Miami University for their sophomore year. In addition, the persistence rate of the program’s first four classes completing eight consecutive semesters has increased from 52 percent to 70 percent.

1993

**Michigan Department of Education; Office of Minority Equity (MI)***Martin Luther King, Jr. \* Cesar Chavez \* Rosa Parks Initiative*

The goal of the King\*Chavez\*Parks Initiative is to achieve parity in the graduation rates of minority students equal to their share of the state's population. After a decade of steady minority enrollments but declining graduation rates, it became clear to the initiative planners that graduation was the only real measure of success for minority participation. Further, analysis of statewide data and projections revealed a stark message: if African American, Hispanic American and Native American student participation rates were to continue to increase at the rate of the past decade, and all other factors remained the same, it would take at least 50 years to reach parity in the state's public university enrollment, and Michigan would never reach parity in graduation rates.

**Program Specifics**

The Martin Luther King, Jr.\*Cesar Chavez\*Rosa Parks Initiative is a legislative intervention composed partially of the following elements:

- The Select Student Support Services Program provides seed money to participating institutions for retention strategies statewide.
- The Michigan College/University Partnership Program was created to increase the number of minority students who transfer from community colleges into university baccalaureate programs. The first programs were funded in 1989 and within two years programs were demonstrating an impressive increase in the number of transferring

students. Community colleges involved in the program had four times as many students transfer as did those community colleges not involved in the program.

- The Parity Committee fosters institutional and faculty involvement in the retention of minority students. Its goal has been to establish direct outreach to faculty. Forums have been held for the past three years focusing on different topics related to the retention of minority students. A document entitled "45 Ways a College Professor Can Promote Academic Success for All Students" was developed by the committee and has been in high demand.

**Results**

Since the inception of this program in 1987 through 1992, there has been a 35.8 percent increase in the number of bachelor's degrees granted to minorities by Michigan's public and private higher education institutions. From 1991 to 1992, the number of bachelor degrees in engineering awarded to minority students increased from 111 to 163. Because of the aggressive and clear focus given by the Office of Minority Equity, the King\*Chavez\*Parks Initiative has been effective in holding Michigan's higher education system accountable to the goal of achieving parity in graduation rates for minority students. It is a model of what a statewide coordinating body can accomplish.

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2003

## Michigan State University (MI)

### *SUPER Program*

Each summer, a select group of incoming students at Michigan State University begins a yearlong orientation to the university provided through the university's Summer University Program—Excellence Required (SUPER). Originally introduced in 1988, SUPER was re-engineered in 1995 to make it even more effective. The program offers a model for meeting the needs of a carefully targeted cohort.

#### **Support for a Targeted Population**

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Approximately 35 students per year participate in SUPER. Participants are selected from a lower tier of approximately 425 students annually who are eligible for the university's College Admissions Achievement Program (CAAP). CAAP students are first-generation, low-income, and show resilience in meeting and overcoming societal difficulties. Approximately 40 percent are African-American and 36 percent Chicano/Latino. All SUPER participants have just graduated from high school.

The over-arching goal of SUPER is to build resiliency in students so they can compete and succeed at Michigan State. The strength of the program is in the integration of four components:

1. An academic summer program that resembles a "real" college experience, requiring students to complete 11-14 credits of college-level coursework;
2. A structured support plan of required study halls, weekly advising sessions in the summer, and biweekly advising sessions during the fall and spring;
3. Strict prohibition of outside distractions such as TVs, jobs, and overnight guests to familiarize students with the lifestyle changes needed for academic success; and
4. Multiple and diverse forms of social support including, but not limited to: block scheduling to keep the cohort together in classes; group service projects; group

residence hall accommodations; required participation in an interpersonal group led by a university psychologist; life skills workshops; and fall and spring retreats.

SUPER is supported by institutional funds and students selected have their summer tuition, room and board, and books covered in full. In addition, each participant receives a laptop computer. The institutional funds are in the form of recurring allocations from the Office of the Provost and an Initiative Grant from the university that was awarded in recognition of the program's success.

#### **Results**

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Since its re-engineering in 1995, SUPER has become stronger. The average first- to second-year persistence rate for SUPER cohorts from 1995 to 2001 was 84.6 percent. This rate is 5.7 percentage points higher than the comparable 78.9 percent CAAP persistence rate during the same period and comes close to the overall university persistence rate of 86.8 percent from 1995 to 2001.

Student evaluations also indicate that the program is successful. On a recent survey, 80 percent of students reported that SUPER helped improve their time management skills and 85 percent indicated that the program helped improve their study skills. In addition, 98 percent of SUPER participants indicated they would recommend the program to a friend or family member.



2006

## Michigan Technological University (MI)

*ExSEL – Excelling in Science and Engineering Learning*

### Program Type

Targeted Populations—Various

Excelling in Science and Engineering Learning (ExSEL) is a partnership between Michigan Technological University's College of Engineering and Department of Educational Opportunity and the State of Michigan's King-Chávez-Parks Initiative. It is aimed at increasing student success and retention of minority and disadvantaged first-year students enrolled in the College of Engineering. ExSEL's strategy to help ensure the success of student participants combines coursework, peer mentoring, progress mentoring, and personalized services. ExSEL averages 108 participants per year.

### Helping Science and Engineering Students Excel

Michigan Tech recognized that first-year retention rates of minority students differed as much as 9 percent and six-year graduation rates by as much as 20 percent. A second group with a higher attrition rate was the traditional at-risk students who struggle with social and personal issues such as isolation, campus climate, lack of role models, hesitation in seeking academic assistance, and inadequate financial resources. This discrepancy was especially noticed among those enrolled in engineering and science disciplines that account for 82.5 percent of Michigan Tech's enrollment. The ExSEL initiative created multiple programs designed to address specific needs identified among these students and utilized existing programs on campus to eliminate duplicating efforts. Combined, these programs provide the tools, intervention, and support needed to help these students succeed in college.

#### **Some of these programs include:**

- **Peer mentoring.** This program utilizes both volunteer and paid mentors who provide direction, encouragement, and academic support when necessary. Partnerships with student organizations have provided collaborative opportunities and offer the students a chance to develop relationships with upper-class students and learn about various opportunities to get involved on campus.
- **Frameworks for Success.** This is a required course that focuses on the tools necessary for first-year success, including time management, academic skill development, introduction to university life, and campus resources.
- **Web sites.** ExSEL hosts a resource site devoted to program information, links to first-year math practice exams, campus resources, success tips, volunteering information, and other relevant areas. It also hosts a site called "Making Our Mark" that is devoted to success stories from students with diverse backgrounds.

### Results

The program has made a marked difference with both retention and academic performance among participants. ExSEL student retention has increased 16.4 percent since the program's inception while the average fall semester GPA has increased 30 percent compared with a university wide increase of .07 percent. Grades in key courses also increased among ExSEL students with the number earning a C or better in their first attempt at challenging subjects increasing by 60 percent in General Chemistry, 57 percent in precalculus, and 54 percent in Calculus 1. Since the program's inception, 4.1 percent fewer ExSEL students are on academic probation after their first year and 18 percent fewer ExSEL students were academically dismissed after their first year.

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1990

## Middlesex Community College (MA)

### *Freshman Seminar and Course Clusters*

This program consists of two model components, Freshman Seminar and Course Clusters, which involve collaborative efforts among faculty and student services staff.

Freshman Seminar is targeted at those students in large academic programs such as liberal arts, liberal studies and criminal justice. These programs have not only had the highest attrition rate, but have also had the least opportunity for small group involvement. The goal of the course is to encourage group cohesiveness among students and to develop student-faculty connections.

Freshman Seminar meets twice a week for the first two months of the semester and carries one credit. Class size is limited to 25. The course is graded based on attendance, a weekly written journal, and a group project determined by each class. Each aspect of the grading requirement emphasizes involvement.

The course is team taught by two instructors; both instructors attend every class. The teams usually consist of a faculty member and a staff member from student services, or a faculty member and an administrator. The objective of the team teaching is to allow students to be exposed to different teaching styles and different personalities and to provide the opportunity for the class to break into small discussion groups led by each instructor.

The cluster courses are targeted at students in large academic programs. The goals of the cluster are the following: to encourage group cohesiveness among students and faculty, to identify at-risk or marginal students and provide interventions through team work, to provide the opportunity for team-teaching or collaboration when appropriate, and to reinforce the student in related aspects of thinking skills among various disciplines.

The course clusters are actually block schedules of three major courses plus Freshman Seminar (ten credits total). Students who select the cluster package attend classes with the same group of students.

The cluster courses are offered at prime times during the day as an added incentive for students to enroll. Students enrolled in course clusters may select electives beyond the cluster group to have the opportunity to attend classes with non-cluster students.

Four cluster packages are offered in the liberal arts, business and liberal studies programs. Faculty and student services staff who teach in the cluster work together as a team. Before the semester begins, each team meets as a group, selects a leader who organizes future team meetings, and discusses the goals and objectives for the cluster. Once the semester begins, each faculty/staff team meet for one hour weekly to discuss student issues, attendance and interdisciplinary course work.

In addition to these teams, the college counselors recruit and train 12 peer mentors, returning students recommended by faculty. Peer mentors take a one-credit leadership training program. Once trained, mentors provide support to designated cluster students. (Peer mentors also attend the weekly faculty/staff meeting.)

In 1989 the attrition rate for Freshman Seminar students was 13 percent compared to 26 percent for non-Seminar students. Freshman Seminar students also demonstrated higher GPAs. The retention rate for the Liberal Studies cluster (a potentially high-risk group) was 100 percent. The business cluster also exhibited success with an attrition rate of 15 percent for cluster students, while for non-cluster participants the attrition rate was 33 percent.

1992

## Midlands Technical College (SC)

### *Comprehensive Student Retention Program*

Midlands Technical College has developed a remarkably comprehensive retention program that integrates planning, evaluation and college wide resources. Key components include a student tracking system, college wide customer service training for both full-time and student employees, a computer-based intervention and communication system, specific initiatives with targeted at-risk groups, and increased attention to advising, assessment and orientation, to name only a few.

In 1988 Midlands Tech began experiencing enrollment increases of more than 10 percent annually accompanied by only minimal increases in resources. Though their graduates were very successful, they found that over half their new students were being lost to attrition. Moreover, the number of students on academic probation had risen. It was with this background that Midlands developed a comprehensive retention program beginning in 1989.

The retention initiatives at Midlands are designed to impact the success of all students. A student tracking system monitors the progress and retention of specific sub-populations. The information is used to develop and modify student retention initiatives.

Key components of the comprehensive retention program include the following:

- An increasing emphasis on academic advisement through the establishment of centralized advising centers, the use of degree audit software to monitor student

progress, the development of advising manuals, and faculty training in developmental advising.

- Increased orientation activities.
- Identification of student educational plans at college entry for use in advisement and student tracking.
- A broadened definition of student assessment, with assessment linked to orientation and advising, and with monitoring of course placement accuracy.
- A computer-based intervention system used to connect students with academic courses and student support services based on identified needs.
- Specific initiatives with targeted-risk groups. These initiatives include curriculum restructuring and a change in grading systems for the developmental studies courses taken by academically underprepared students. Also, students with undeclared majors are receiving more attention until a major is selected. Cultural diversity/sensitivity sessions are held for college staff in order to focus on the needs of minority students.

In just two years, overall first to second year retention increased by 6.4 percent; retention of the academically under prepared increased 16.9 percent, undeclared majors 11.1 percent, and minority students 9.2 percent.

1995

## Millsaps College (MS)

*A Complete Retention Program*

Millsaps College initiated a comprehensive examination of its student enrollment program and found that although freshmen were supported by an outstanding first-year program and juniors and seniors were cultivated academically and socially by their major department, sophomores felt left out. To reach its retention goals, Millsaps College implemented an integrated retention program that has evolved and led to greater faculty and staff support of students and a more active involvement of students in the exploration of their academic and vocational goals.

### **Retention Begins at Recruitment**

Millsaps' retention program involves all members of the college community, beginning with recruitment and continuing through graduation. Throughout the recruitment process, Millsaps coordinates its admissions efforts with the financial aid office. In this way, the college has been able to make a Millsaps education possible for a more diverse and better academically qualified freshman class. Creative programs have been developed to help transfer students matriculate at Millsaps. Some of these programs include: "Meet Your Major" fairs, the "Careers In..." forums, "Perspectives Program" (a 10-week orientation program for freshmen), and the development of a full internship program locally and nationally. Each of these programs allows students to meet faculty, other students in the department and alumni of Millsaps, and to learn about classes and career options within a major.

### **Real World Experience**

Millsaps' internship program is available to students in their second freshman semester, although most students involved are second-semester sophomores and seniors. The internship program provides students with experience in areas they wish to pursue, and also

provides a service to the corporate, industrial, and nonprofit areas.

### **Strengthening Retention through Advertisement**

Millsaps places special emphasis on advising in its retention program. All advisors at Millsaps are trained through workshops in Developmental Advising Practices. A special Quality Service Committee on Advising defines the responsibilities of advising for the advisor and the advisee. An Academic Guide, which is updated each year, provides current information to advisors regarding the requirements and career implications of each major. The college has also required that all sophomores declare their major at the beginning of the spring semester, so they can make contact with their major department before they leave for summer break.

If a student does wish to withdraw from Millsaps, an extensive exit interview process takes place. This process involves meeting with the director of academic and career development, the advisor, the Business Office and the dean. Often the student has questions or worries that can be allayed at the first meeting, encouraging the student to continue at Millsaps. Students are also given information about how to return to Millsaps. Students are more likely to return knowing that someone cares about them and will help them to re-matriculate.

### **Retention Results**

During the two years that Millsaps' retention program has been in place, the retention rate for returning sophomores has risen 12 percent. The retention rate for returning freshman has risen from 83 percent to 86 percent. This is particularly remarkable considering the class with the 86 percent retention rate is 19 percent larger than the previous class.

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2003

## Mississippi State University (MS)

### Pathfinder Program

First-year students who miss classes at Mississippi State University get noticed—and the attention they receive is helping them stay connected to the university. The attention is orchestrated through the Pathfinder program, an initiative now in its sixth year. The program serves a largely residential population of 2,000 first-year students.

#### Focusing on Class Attendance

The Pathfinder program's focus on class attendance stems from academic performance research by a psychology professor and several of his graduate students.

Among the research findings:

- First-year students who exhibit poor academic performance do not necessarily enter college with poor predictor ratings (ACT, SAT, or high school GPA).
- There is little difference in ACT scores and high school GPAs between first-year students who return for their sophomore year and those who do not.
- The difference in college GPA between continuing and non-continuing first-year students is large.
- Many first-year students who exhibit poor academic performance exhibit this behavior during the first half of their first semester.
- An early, reliable indicator of academic difficulty is class attendance.

When first-year students miss two or more classes during the first six weeks of the semester, the Pathfinder program rolls into high gear. Faculty are encouraged to use voice mail, e-mail, or a Web-based form (<http://www.ssrc.msstate.edu/fresh>) to report the absences. Then Pathfinder staff, often residence hall staff, make brief and positive contact with students to make two essential points: 1) Your instructor is concerned about

your absences, and 2) Talk to your instructor if you are having academic difficulty. Students are also provided with a list of student support services.

The interventions should come as no surprise to the students who are contacted. During orientation, the importance of class attendance is stressed repeatedly to new students and their parents. In addition, at the beginning of the fall semester, the president of the university sends a personalized letter reinforcing the importance of class attendance to the parents of all entering first-year students.

A significant challenge at the outset of the Pathfinder program was convincing department heads and faculty to cooperate in the frequent and early reporting of absences. Project leaders note that faculty probably could not have been convinced to cooperate if a longtime faculty member with a solid teaching and research history had not been in charge of Pathfinder.

#### Results

Evaluations of the Pathfinder program have shown that the total percentage of freshmen with attendance problems has decreased from 24 percent to 11 percent since the program was instituted. This improvement in attendance has likely contributed to a number of related improvements, including: an increase in the mean freshman GPA from 2.52 to 2.67; an increase in first- to second-year retention from 76 percent to 81 percent; and a decline in the percentage of first-year students on academic probation after the first semester from 26 percent to 19 percent.

Additionally, the four-year graduation rate has begun to show a promising increase, rising 3 percentage points for the first interval measured.

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1999

**Missouri Western State University**  
**fka: Missouri Western State College (MO)**

*Access Plus*

It's no surprise that students attending an open-admission institution often arrive underprepared. Yet few institutions with open admissions have tackled the resulting retention challenge with as much gusto as Missouri Western State College (St. Joseph, Missouri; enrollment 5,200). The college's response – Access Plus—is a model example of an innovative and comprehensive program that gets underprepared students “started right” and keeps them on the path to graduation.

**An Open Admission Institution**

Begun in 1995-96, Access Plus grew out of Missouri Western State College's commitment to meeting the diverse needs of its student body and the Missouri workforce. The college's mission of offering open access emanates from its long tradition as an open-admissions school and the lack of a community college in the surrounding area. The open-access mission was reinforced in 1994 when the State of Missouri asked the college to formally declare an open or selective admissions policy.

**Advising Leads the Way**

Missouri Western State College credits the implementation of intrusive freshman advising with much of the success of Access Plus. The components of Access Plus include, but are not limited to:

- An enhanced orientation program;
- A Freshman Year Experience Office offering services such as intrusive advising contacts and advising workshops for freshman advisors;
- A large team of freshman advisors consisting of faculty and staff;
- Freshman Interest Groups, clusters of the same 20-25 students enrolled in two or three courses together with a common theme;

- Introduction to Professional Studies courses;
- Additional faculty for development English and mathematics;
- Expanded academic support, including tutoring and supplemental instruction, through the university's Center for Academic Support; and
- The creation of a Unity Services Office to help address diversity issues on campus.

**A Team Effort**

More than half of faculty and a fourth of the university's staff currently participate in some way in the Access Plus program. In addition, the college has added two advising specialists and one intervention specialist in its Freshman Year Experience Office—the only full-time advisors on campus. Among the responsibilities of the staff in the Freshman Year Experience office are the advising workshops and offering a Major Fair to help students decide on a major. The staff of this office also contact all freshmen with less than a 2.0 GPA at midterms and again at the end of the semester and encourage students who do not pre-register to complete the registration process.

**Results**

The results of Access Plus are impressive. The college has seen retention gains, drops in probations and suspensions, and greater success among students in general and underprepared students in particular. The freshmen-to-sophomore retention rate has increased seven percent, the number of freshmen on probation dropped 13 percent, and the number of suspensions dropped 3.2 percent. In addition, the college saw a one year retention gain of 14.3 percent for underprepared students from fall 1996 to fall 1997.

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1992

## Mohawk College of Applied Arts and Technology (CAN)

*Student Success Campaign/Program*

Mohawk operates more than twenty campuses in Canada, with approximately 14,500 full-time students and 65,000 continuing education registrations. Begun in 1987, the Student Success Program consists of three major areas: institutional research, intervention strategies and evaluation. The intervention strategies represent a rich array of programs and services including advising, orientation, assessment, peer tutoring, curriculum restructuring, and the creation of an Office for Student Success. A unique feature of the program is that most of the initiatives developed from grass roots efforts rather than coming from the top down.

An Office for Student Success was created to help initiate, promote, support and coordinate institutional research and student success strategies across the entire college. The Office for Student Success has its priorities set by the Consultative Team for Student Success. Their sole focus is on the success of students and what is required to support that success.

The Retention Information System (RIS) is a computer database that tracks demographic, withdrawal, and performance data. On the first day of class, each entering student completes a demographic survey. All students who drop out have an exit interview with a counselor and are asked to complete a withdrawal survey. When performance factors are correlated with

demographic variables (i.e., age, sex, attitude, high school background), rich insights are generated into factors that affect student success.

RIS began in the fall of 1987 with a pilot program, and was then expanded in the fall of 1988 to include all postsecondary programs. The more than 250 reports generated by RIS annually are provided to faculty, student service managers, academic deans, vice presidents, and the president.

A host of intervention strategies were developed to support student success. These include academic and social orientation for new and existing students, an early warning system, peer tutoring, learning strategy seminars for the skill deficiencies of first-year students, an Office of Special Needs to facilitate the success of students with special needs, and a student attendance policy in the faculty of Engineering and Health Technology.

The success of the intervention strategies are measured to compare retention in a specific program from semester to semester and from one year to the next. Results of the Mohawk program include significantly reduced attrition, as much as 15-20 percent, in over a dozen academic programs.

2000

**Monmouth University**  
**fka: Monmouth College (NJ)**  
*The College-wide Retention Model*

The Monmouth College Retention Model is imbedded in a college wide faculty development program. The plan has four major elements: exposition of educational goals and outcomes assessment, improvement of pedagogy, revision of the freshman and sophomore year academic experience, and expansion and improvement of student and academic support services. While none of these efforts alone dramatically change students' retention patterns, taken together they create an integrated, learner-centered educational environment which is necessary to improve student satisfaction and persistence at Monmouth College.

**Exposition of Educational Goals and Outcomes Assessment**

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The faculty have engaged in the process of making explicit educational learning goals for all Monmouth College students. The entire college operates under eight learning goals and a clear educational philosophy.

**Improve Pedagogy**

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The majority of the faculty have participated in workshops to improve their teaching and mentoring activities. The faculty is also being made aware of the diversity of the student body and learning to address the different learning styles represented within any class.

**Revision of the Freshman and Sophomore Year Academic Experience**

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Monmouth College has revised the freshman year academic experience for academically superior students, underprepared students and the general population as well. Underprepared students have a maximum class size of 20, and two additional hours per week of class time for

review, practice and discussion. The course material covered is the same as regular sections, but the manner of instruction provides more student/faculty contact hours. Course clusters, with unifying themes, have been added for regularly admitted students.

**Expansion and Improvement of Student and Academic Support Services**

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The advising system, which provides academic, career and personal counseling, involves faculty, professional counselors and peer advisors. A freshman advising system is linked to the Freshman Seminar Course and integrated with Monmouth's Early Warning System (MEWS) which is a computerized, intrusive outreach program for all freshmen.

A variety of student environments have been improved, from University buildings to student organizations. Faculty, administrators and student leaders are part of programs which provide ongoing support for the retention efforts of freshmen. An office of Cross-Cultural Relations and the Office of International Student Affairs are working together to address concerns for minority students.

The College Skills Center administers placement tests and a tutoring program in math, writing and reading. These activities help to individualize the advising and learning process and are critical to student success and retention.

The many retention initiatives resulted in a 94 percent retention rate for the fall to spring semesters in 1989-90. These efforts carried over into the highest freshman-to-sophomore retention rate recorded.

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2000

## Montana State University (MT)

*First Year Initiative (FYI)*

At Montana State University, Bozeman, the Office of Retention works to advance a comprehensive, systematic retention plan addressing the needs of traditional students during their first year.

### **Advising Leads the Way**

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Supported by the Office of Retention, the centerpiece of the university's plan is the First Year Initiative (FYI). This program is designed to front-load fiscal and human resources in an attempt to assist new students when they are most at risk for dropping out.

The program consists of six major components:

1. Comprehensive survey of college readiness and motivation: The College Student Inventory (CSI) of the Retention Management System™ is administered during summer orientation.
2. One-on-one or small group contact: Once the inventory results are finalized, students with high dropout-proneness scores (about 30 percent of the entering class) are invited to individual meetings with retention staff. Students with low scores are directed to meet in small groups with retention office staff and trained faculty volunteers.
3. Peer mentor program (B.O.B. – Becoming Our Best): High-risk students are assigned a peer mentor prior to fall semester. B.O.B.s are trained volunteers, usually sophomores, who contact their “little B.O.B.s” during the summer, meet with them during the first week of school, and thereafter interact a minimum of three times each semester.
4. Intrusive intervention: At mid-semester, first-year students receiving a “D” or an “F” in one or more classes are contacted by retention staff for one-on-one meetings to explore options and/or shore up academic skills. The retention office staff conducts individual sessions on test taking,

academic/study skills, time management, test anxiety, and stress management.

5. Qualitative student satisfaction survey: A random sample of first-year students are invited to participate in a qualitative interview regarding their experiences during their first semester. MSU-Bozeman then incorporates the students' recommendations into the program for the following academic year. Additionally, the survey results are widely circulated to student government leaders, administrators, staff, and faculty to give each constituent a glimpse of first-year students' impressions of the university.
6. The Mid-Year Retention Intervention (MRI) program: Throughout the spring semester, retention staff consult with students who received a 1.99 GPA or below during their first semester. Students receive referrals to other campus agencies as needed.

### **Results**

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In January 1997, a First Year Initiative pilot project was conducted with a random sample of 100 new, incoming first-year students. Results from the pilot project suggested an initial increase in retention rates from freshman to sophomore year of seven percentage points as compared to the control group. These results prompted administrators to broaden the program the entire entering cohort (approximately 2,000 students) during the summer of 1998. Preliminary data suggest an overall increase in retention rates of three percentage points (55 students) for first-time, full-time, degree-seeking freshmen from the 1998 cohort for an estimated one-year savings in tuition dollars of \$121,815.

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1991

## North Carolina A and T University (NC)

### *The Freshman Studies Program*

The Freshman Studies Program at North Carolina A & T University is a unique retention program targeting a wide variety of programs to help students start out right and get a good base at the University. The program focuses on various aspects of the campus community in which freshmen are involved, starting with orientation and advising and continuing with academic monitoring and support services.

Orientation, in an effort to smooth the transition from high school to college, the University expanded orientation. These required orientations better acquaint students with policies and procedures, familiarize them with existing services, and involve the students in activities that will bond them to the University. The summer and fall orientation programs include informative and fun activities such as freshman assemblies, registration and advising sessions to educate students regarding policy and procedures, tours of university academic support services, receptions, hay rides, cookouts, etc. All events focus on either assuring student success or bonding students to the University.

Support Services, to strengthen support services, the University has implemented a Supplemental Instruction (SI) Program and a unique freshman seminar, University Survival. SI provides students with structured tutoring twice a week in high-risk courses such as math and chemistry. The University hires 32 student tutors who attend the classes they tutor and devote two hours per week tutoring.

University Survival provides incoming students with the foundation necessary to ensure their success. Students are given information on skills for success at the University, academic policy and procedure, educational and support centers, declaring a major, and the capacity for an ongoing relationship with an advisor. It also includes a Positive Images Lecture Series which brings nationally known and outstanding graduates of the University to address undecided students for the sake of ensuring their personal development, and a Career Exploration Series which seeks to introduce freshmen to the 35

departments and the 70 majors available at North Carolina A & T.

Advising, to improve advising, the University implemented a two-part program consisting of freshman faculty advising and Peer

Advising Leadership (PAL). Sixty-six specially selected and trained faculty from 35 academic departments commit themselves to advising freshman students throughout the first year and devote a great deal of extra time to incoming students during orientation. The PAL program consists of 96 upper-level students who commit themselves to serve as big brothers/sisters for freshman students. PALs send handwritten letters to their advisees during the summer months and assist faculty members in advising freshmen during Orientation week and the first semester of the freshman year.

Academic Monitoring, to improve academic monitoring for freshmen, faculty are required to submit mid-term grades twice per academic year for all freshmen. These reports are sent to both the permanent and campus residences of each freshman.

Communications, to improve communication lines between freshman students and the university faculty and administration, the Freshman Studies Program regularly communicates with all freshmen through the Freshman Newsletters published twice per academic year and through regularly scheduled communications regarding the location and office hours of their assigned advisors.

Prior to implementing the Freshman Studies Program, North Carolina A & T was experiencing a 33 percent dropout rate. This program has successfully decreased attrition and increased services to incoming freshmen. According to official data, 85.8 percent of the students admitted to the University as first-time, full-time freshmen in 1989 returned to the University in the fall 1990. This is the highest retention rate ever reported by North Carolina A & T University.

1998

## North Lake College (TX)

*Program for Intervening With Students on Academic Probation and Suspension*

High-risk students at North Lake College, Irving, Texas, enrollment 6,200, are being “rescued” from a precarious academic situation by an innovative program known as Intervening With Students on Academic Probation and Suspension. This two-year public institution, part of the Dallas County Community College District, specifically targets students who have been placed on academic probation or who have been suspended academically and are seeking readmission. For such students, the college has designed an adaptable program that is getting results.

### **Overcoming Barriers**

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Historically, North Lake College students who achieved a grade point average that fell below 2.0 in a given semester found themselves in a precarious situation. Some students would make several unsuccessful attempts to raise their grade point averages while continuing to follow their previous behavior. Consequently, students would be placed on scholastic probation or suspension. Research indicated that three of every four of these students did not persist to the following semester.

### **How it Works**

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Beginning in the fall of 1993, students who had been academically suspended and were seeking readmission to the college were required as part of their readmission agreement to enroll in the suspension program. Armed with the data of the success of the suspension program, a similar intervention with beginning probation students was implemented in the fall of 1996.

The program’s requirements include:

- Limiting of hours (maximum: 12),
- Monitoring of academic progress, and
- Enrollment in a student success course taught by a faculty counselor.

The student success course, a human development course, covers study, thinking, and

personal skills; mental and physical health; career planning; and campus resources.

To indicate agreement with the above requirements, each student signs a contract that delineates his or her responsibilities. During the ensuing term, emphasis is placed on the development of a relationship between the faculty counselor and students enrolling in the success course, application of skills discussed in the class, and the monitoring of academic progress. Faculty counselors take an active role, working with students outside of the classroom and serving as mentors as well as advisors.

### **District-level Adjustments**

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Two adjustments were made at the district level that enabled the program’s success. First, academic policies were adjusted to allow for the program requirements. Second, a procedural change was made that enabled the North Lake College staff to identify students who were beginning scholastic probation. Both adjustments have set the stage for other institutions in the district to launch similar initiatives on their campuses.

### **Program Results**

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For a recent cohort, the persistence rate to the next semester for students readmitted following academic suspension rose from its historic rate of 31 percent to approximately 58 percent. In addition, the persistence rate for students on academic probation rose from its historic rate of 25 percent to 50 percent.

Student comments and evaluations indicate that the intervention has improved their ability to study effectively, manage their time, and learn about campus resources.

Clearly, Intervening With Students on Academic Probation and Suspension is making a difference at North Lake College.

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1990

## North Lake College (TX)

### *The Advantage Program*

The Advantage Program focuses on increasing the success of students by increasing faculty commitment, intervening in strategic periods of academic life, providing a person (mentor or peer counselor) who can direct students to the right referral sources for help, and building meaningful relationships and increased interaction with students.

Participation in the Advantage Program is based on one of four means: 1) the North Lake College computerized assessment system; 2) an advisor or counselor referral during registration; 3) self-referral; or 4) faculty referral during the semester. The program consists of faculty/staff mentoring, an orientation course for new-to-college students, and faculty advising for new-to-college students.

The ADVANTAGE Center, a student reception center, is the location for the initial meeting between any prospective North Lake College student and staff. The Center's intent is to admit, orient, assess, advise and enroll students as efficiently and as effectively as possible.

The orientation course is designed to address factors reported by North Lake College faculty as positively related to student success. The curriculum for the orientation course consists of Introduction to the Institution, Development of Study Skills, and Development of Self-Motivation and Personality Traits. The orientation course focuses on successful testing, goal setting, and time management. The course also familiarizes students with the programs of study and services available for their educational success.

The aim of the mentoring program is to establish more effective communication between students and faculty/staff members. The purpose of this relationship is to offer students the opportunity to have a resource person to answer questions,

solve problems, and provide encouragement on a regular basis, if needed. Mentors most often address time management and note taking, managing test anxiety, arrangement for tutoring, degree requirements for North Lake College, transfer requirements, class scheduling, and handling instructor conflicts. Student-mentor contact occurs at least three times during the first semester, but a student may see a mentor as often as needed.

Students are tracked on a regular basis in the areas of enrollment in orientation, referrals to the Center for Independent Study, academic warnings, intervention strategies recommended by mentors, and development of an educational plan.

ADVANTAGE organizes an academic early-alert system to monitor the progress of the high-risk students. At the end of the fourth week of classes, instructors have the opportunity to notify

ADVANTAGE Center staff of any students who are not making satisfactorily progress and who are having difficulty with attendance. Students who are doing satisfactorily in all aspects are sent congratulatory letters encouraging them to continue the good work, while those students who have done poorly on either academics or attendance or both are sent warning letters that encourage them to come in or call the

ADVANTAGE Center to discuss appropriate college survival strategies with the mentors.

In 1988, 179 students were selected to be a part of a pilot mentoring program. After one semester, they were retained at a rate of 25 percent higher than for students not in the program.



1996

## Northern Arizona University (AZ)

### *Native American Academic Retention Program*

The state of Arizona has 21 recognized Native American tribes within its borders. Northern Arizona University is located close to seven reservations, giving NAU a unique opportunity to become a national leader in providing educational opportunities to Native American students. It was with this goal in mind that the Native American Academic Retention Program (NAARP) was created. This comprehensive, student-centered program provides one-on-one advising, assistance and referral to Native American students with an eye towards encouraging and maintaining cultural identity while providing services that help ease the transition to college life.

#### **Responding to Needs**

Although NAU has been able to recruit a large number of Native American students, the retention rate remained consistently low in comparison to the general student population and other ethnic minorities in both persistence and graduation. Tribal leaders as well as University faculty and staff were increasingly concerned over the high dropout rates of Native American students and advocated a retention program geared specifically to Native Americans. Along with the usual difficulties all students face in making the transition from high school to college, Native American students face unique challenges. Most Native American students at NAU are rural, bilingual, bicultural, and first-generation college students.

#### **Goals and Objectives of NAARP**

Having recognized the particular difficulties faced by Native American students, a set of goals and objectives for the program were established around this cultural perspective:

- Provide a comprehensive information and assistance program in the areas of career

development, financial aid and scholarship application, academic and social adjustment.

- Assist in developing self-motivation, responsibility, and perseverance in a way that encourages and maintains the student's cultural identity.
- Make the transition to college life as easy as possible while helping the student become oriented to academic life.
- Provide a seamless web of support services for students, including University offices and tribal resources.
- Develop a relationship with tribal offices, social service agencies, and postsecondary institutions.

Create an informal support services network that allows for easy access to information services and key personnel.

Advocate on students' behalf and serve as a liaison between students and tribal offices.

Develop an advisory committee from the University Advisement Center, Registrar's office, Financial Aid, Residence Life and Learning Assistance Center.

#### **Student, Institutional, and Tribal Benefits**

Student retention rates are rising, and students indicate overwhelmingly that the program helps them adjust to university life. Institutional benefits include: an increase of involvement among students, faculty and staff; an increase in the numbers of students using academic and student support services; and a growing appreciation and understanding among faculty and staff of the complexities of Native American culture in relation to the educational process. Finally, tribes see the economic and social benefits of having a more qualified and skilled work force.

## 2001

### Oakland University (MI)

#### *Oakland University Trustee Academic Success (OUTAS) Program*

A strong commitment to achieving diversity on campus was the impetus for the Oakland University Trustee Academic Success Program. Reporting directly to the president and Board of Trustees, the program has been highly successful at increasing the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of a diverse population of high-achieving students.

A state-supported institution, Oakland University serves students from Oakland County, Michigan, and the surrounding area.

#### **Reaching Culturally Diverse Scholars**

The OUTAS program represents a shift from the traditional approach of serving under-represented students by keeping them tied academically and socially to their racial or ethnic peer group. Instead, the program has created a satisfying, positive learning environment for a racially and culturally diverse critical mass of high-achieving student leaders.

The program targets support services and recruitment and retention initiatives to a diverse population of Caucasian, African-American, Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Latino students. Each year, approximately 30-40 first-year students who have a minimum grade point average of 3.0 and who have demonstrated leadership skills are selected to participate.

#### **Cross-cultural Skills and Development**

Administered by the Office of Equity, the OUTAS program is a cross-divisional, university wide initiative that emerged from the university's 10-year strategic plan.

Elements include:

- Renewable, sliding-scale OUTAS scholarships of \$1,000-\$3,000 per year which include the requirement of working in

close proximity to individuals who are different from the student's usual peer group;

- Classroom and extra-curricular activities designed to develop cross-cultural understanding and communication skills;
- Bi-weekly sessions with a counselor and weekly meetings with an extensively trained peer mentor;
- Participation in a freshman seminar course which includes career counseling and career-related experiences;
- Regular monitoring of academic progress; and
- Faculty mentoring.

#### **Measurable Results**

For six consecutive years, the retention and graduation rates of OUTAS student cohorts have exceeded those of the university's general student population. First-year and annual retention rates of 84 percent for the classes of 1998 and 1999, and 88 percent for the class of 2000, exceed the university's overall first-to-second-year retention rate which has held steady at 74 percent for the last four years.

In addition, the proportion of OUTAS students and under-represented students in general who serve in student leadership positions on campus has increased significantly.

The OUTAS program has attained national recognition, including being voted a National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Noteworthy program in 1999.

1989

## Oberlin College (OH)

*Comprehensive Program to Improve Minority Retention and Motivation toward Graduation*

The Comprehensive Program to Improve Minority Retention and Motivation towards Graduation at Oberlin College was designed to address the under-representation of minorities in humanities, sciences, and mathematics, and to increase the number of minorities who intend to pursue Ph.D.'s and careers in higher education and research.

The science and mathematics aspect of the program was designed to increase the number of minority students graduating with majors in the natural sciences and mathematics. The program builds on existing services for minority students and addresses the cognitive skills needed by first- and second-year science students with tutorials, group study sessions, and academic counseling.

Sophomores who have completed the program serve as mentors for entering students. Peer counselors, also majoring in the natural sciences, are available to students in the program. The project operate in two phases including a summer pre-orientation residential component and an academic year follow-up.

To increase the number of Black, Hispanics, and Native American students in graduate school, the College initiated a program which pairs students with professors, from four colleges, to collaborate with them on research. Each summer of the four year program, students and their faculty mentors from all four colleges gather for a conference to exchange ideas and present their research papers in a professional format.

An undergraduate fellowship program was also designed to increase the number of minority students who choose to enroll in Ph.D. programs in the humanities. Five fellows from the sophomore class are eligible for a comprehensive

program of internships—including research, teaching, and curriculum development—spanning three summers and two full academic years. In addition, part of the fellow's undergraduate loan obligations are forgiven for every year of graduate school completed.

The Program to Recruit Minority Students focuses on recruitment of undergraduate Blacks and women into science and mathematics teaching and research careers. The program consists of peer groups for these students, conferences, and research internships from freshman year onward. The students have the opportunity to participate in research early in their undergraduate years, enroll in graduate science programs, and upon completion of a doctoral degree, teach at one of the institutions. As undergraduates, these students work closely with Black and women mentors chosen from the science faculty of their respective institutions.

Students have been encouraged to form their own career interest organizations. The Black Alumni Committee's mentoring program pairs Black alumni with Black students who share fields of professional interest or live in the same hometowns. Regular forums are held on campus to increase the effective activity of the alumni network with students and to provide professional role models in a broad range of career fields.

Participation in the GTE program exhibit a retention rate exceeding that of the overall minority population of Oberlin College. Before the program was initiated, fewer than 50 percent of the minority students passed introductory math and science courses; after 1 ½ years the pass rate is 84 percent.

1997

## Oklahoma City Community College (OK)

### *First Advisement Program*

Oklahoma City Community College is the second largest community college and the fifth largest college in Oklahoma, with an enrollment of about 9,000 students each semester. In order to give incoming students as much service as possible with the limited resources available, the Office of Advisement and Counseling established the First Advisement Workshops in 1993.

The program serves three primary purposes: 1) to help students become knowledgeable about the process of going to college and become more independent in their ability to enroll in subsequent semesters; 2) to help ensure that the information provided to first-time college students is accurate and consistent; and 3) to assist a maximum number of first-time college students efficiently and quickly.

#### **How it Works**

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Once admitted, a student is referred to the Office of Advisement and Counseling, where he or she meets with a counselor to discuss the student's background and educational goals. The counselor interprets ACT scores (if scores are too low or unavailable, students are assessed using ACT COMPASS), discusses programs and goals, explains minimum competencies, deficiencies, and developmental coursework if necessary, and explains what the First Advisement Workshop is and how it can be helpful. The student then chooses among a list of workshop dates (both day and night sessions are scheduled to meet student needs).

Because students are required to pre-register for the workshop, workshop presenters can put together student files ahead of time that include pertinent information like applications for admission, assessment scores, degree programs, counselor recommendations for classes, and transcripts. These files are used by the students and presenters during the workshop.

The workshop presents an overview of higher education, including topics like credit hours, study time, and course difficulty. Workshop leaders walk students through the process of formal registration, from reading the schedule booklet to filling out the enrollment form. As a final step, students work with

the presenter and choose their courses. They are then released with the necessary documents to complete the registration process. Students also receive a workbook filled with tips and information about registration, academic requirements, and college survival.

The Office of Advisement and Counseling receives no outside funding for the First Advisement Workshop program, instead relying on available resources within the office's budget. Because only six academic counselors work in the office full time, several part-time professional advising staffers serve as workshop presenters.

#### **Achieving Results**

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Although the program initially requires more time and money than does traditional one-to-one advising, the long-term benefits derived from a more competent and capable student soon result in less time and money committed to the retention of each individual student. The program is designed to maximize convenience for new students and teach them to take responsibility for their own academic success. Students who participate in the program are equipped with basic information that substantially improves comprehensive advisement efforts in subsequent semesters.

Since the inception of the First Advisement Workshop in 1993, the number of workshops offered has increased from 22 to between 50 and 60 per year. The number of students served by the workshops has increased from 230 in 1993 to about 900 now. A longitudinal study of a 1995 cohort showed that after one semester, 69 percent of those who attended the workshops were still enrolled, versus only 48 percent of those who did not attend. After two semesters, 44 percent of First Advisement students were still enrolled, compared with 25 percent of students who did not participate in the program.

2005

## Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City (OK)

*Building Connections to Increase Student Retention*

### **Program Type**

Building Connections to Increase Student Retention is a Title III grant program providing an integrated approach to improve at-risk student success and retention through the development of Learning Communities. Academically underprepared students are placed in Learning Communities that link developmental and college-level courses and provide Supplemental Instruction as well as introduce them to the Student Academic Gateway, a Web-based learning and community system providing university wide access to the advisement system.

### **Program to Help At-risk Students Succeed**

OSU–Oklahoma City recognized the need to radically transform the learning environment as the only way to attack the problems of low persistence and high academic failure among their students. They received a Title III grant to implement an innovative program that developed Learning Communities on campus and established a Faculty/Staff Innovation Center that works to integrate technology into instructional strategies and address the needs of underprepared, at-risk students. The Learning Communities provide students with guidance, support and develop a community of learning to more fully engage students in college life and their learning process.

OSU–Oklahoma City began by creating a comprehensive retention plan that proved instrumental in uniting faculty and staff toward a common goal, thus making the new program visible and acknowledged on campus. This prompted the campus to become involved in the development and implementation of the grant objectives, helping to form alliances and bridges with services and programs on campus.

### **Integrated Support**

The grant served as a driving force in establishing a new division of Academic Technology that provides faculty development related to instructional

technology. With the two areas working in concert; there has been a marked increase in the use of technology for instruction, including: more student computers available, new software applications being used, planning and research of new applications, increased multimedia equipment available for instructional use.

Both programs have motivated instructors to improve their knowledge and skill levels pertaining to technologies and other methods of helping at-risk students. Considerable time has been spent within the grant program training and supporting faculty in the effective use of technologies for increased student learning, including extensive training sessions on Media Assisted Instruction and Computer Assisted Instruction, as well as on organizational Web page development for the Student Academic Gateway.

### **Results**

Student success and retention has been positively affected, exceeding program developer's goals, through the interventions developed in the academic and student services components of the Title III program. During the fall 2004 pilot program, 67.49 percent of the Learning Community students received a C or better in their courses, which is 13.07 percent greater than non-Learning Community students. The Learning Communities also had a course completion rate 11.51 percent higher than the non-Learning Community students. The Student Academic Gateway is working by targeting Learning Community students for Educational/Career planning, further ensuring their success on campus and beyond.

The success of the pilot has energized the campus, motivating faculty and staff to take initiatives to offer different combinations of classes, develop online Learning Communities, and continue to improve their methods and knowledge of classroom delivery and innovations.

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1994

## Oral Roberts University (OK)

*Comprehensive Advisement Center*

The Comprehensive Advisement Center at Oral Roberts University is designed to quickly identify incoming freshmen in need of advising, proactively assist them in clarifying their academic goals as early as possible in their college career and help them build a plan to effectively pursue those goals. The program focuses on establishing personal advisement relationships between all freshman students and full-time ORU faculty, on an intentional basis, during the freshman year. Faculty are given three hours of released time for this, and they serve from one to two years as CAC advisors. In this way, over time, all full-time baccalaureate faculty will have served as CAC advisors. The faculty who serve in the CAC then return to their academic departments as far better advisors than they were before.

### **Program Description**

The CAC emphasizes early identification and classification of advisees and seeks to overcome the students' natural reluctance to seek help. All incoming freshmen visit their faculty advisors during the second or third week of their first semester. Students adjusting normally and not considered high-risk see advisors as little as twice during the first semester, while higher-risk students are scheduled as often as once each week. The Center is conveniently located, well equipped and designed to provide an inviting and supportive environment. Faculty advisors who work in the CAC are supported by specially trained student assistants. In the residence halls, they are supported by volunteer upper division Academic Peer Advisors. Orientation Leaders also work in conjunction with the CAC advisor.

Based on initial advising meetings and student profile information, advisors can set schedules and follow-up on problems. Individual advisors are assigned to concentrate on students who have not declared a major, while other advisors are specially focused on students requiring further academic help and study skills development. Any faculty member can initiate

special advisement intervention at any time by officially inviting a student to see his or her advisor. Academic progress reports go to the advisor and the students. Students who encounter academic difficulty are called in to the Advisement Center. The same process is repeated during the second freshman semester. For the second year, the student is transferred to a regular faculty advisor assigned by the student's major department.

### **Successful Academic and Fiscal Outcomes**

Since the fall of 1990, freshman retention at Oral Roberts University has improved substantially. Freshman-to-sophomore attrition rates have been cut from 48 percent to 15 percent for first-time, full-time students. The Fall-to-Spring attrition rate has been reduced to less than 2 percent from a long-standing average of 6 to 8 percent. The University also tracks the fiscal benefits of the CAC program and reports net revenue gains of \$1,960,500 over the first three years of the program. This program demonstrates the potential of a comprehensive, centralized and well-organized advisement effort that is widely supported by faculty and administrators, and carefully monitored to measure its success.

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2013

## Paul Smith's College (NY)

### *Comprehensive Student Support Program*

Paul Smith's College serves a high-risk student body in northern New York. Nearly half are first-generation college students, over 40 percent are Pell eligible, and over half ranked in the bottom 50 percent of their high school class. The Comprehensive Student Support Program resulted from a strategically driven change in focus from a traditional retention model to a holistic student success model.

#### **Program Components**

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The initiative includes multiple proactive and reactive early-alert strategies that allow Paul Smith's College to get the right student to the right service at the right time as follows:

- Created an academic success center by merging the retention office with the academic support center, thereby increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of outreach and intervention efforts.
- Used real-time information and risk indicators based on predictive modeling and the Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory to flag students for early outreach.
- Implemented Starfish Early Alert and Connect to support cross-functional communication and increased timeliness. The technology solution helps overcome information and coordination problems by creating a data and communication hub for instructors, advisors, student support, and administrative offices.
- Adopted an information and communications management plan as simple and intuitive as possible for ease of use and to minimize training needed.

- Implemented change management theory, specifically Kotter's eight steps of leading change, to smooth obstacles and reduce resistance.
- Maintained momentum using well-defined metrics including leading and mid-range key performance indicators.

Most of the resources needed for the program were gained from the re-organization of the support offices. During the first year, the college also invested new resources (approximately \$100,000) to fund the Starfish technology and to hire additional support staff. By the second semester of the program, increase in overall student retention had returned over four times the money invested in increased net student revenue.

#### **Results**

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The new support program was embraced by the entire campus community. During spring 2010, 100 percent of full-time faculty, 91 percent of adjunct faculty, and 70 percent of students logged into Starfish. The percentage of students placed on probation or suspension at the end of the following fall semester declined significantly, dropping from 14.6 percent to 9.1 percent. In fall 2012, Paul Smith's first-year student retention rate rose to over 70 percent, an increase of 10 percentage points. In addition, the sophomore-to-junior retention rate increased nine percent for bachelor's students and eight percent for associate degree students. The student success program has generated over \$3 million in increased net student revenue in only 2.5 years.

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1990

## Prince George's Community College (MD)

### *Black Student Retention Program*

The Black Student Retention Program provides both peer and mentor support for over 300 black students who are enrolled at Prince George's Community College for the first time. Participating students are encouraged to collaborate in building and maintaining a positive attitude toward academic study. Each participating student is assigned a mentor.

The mentor's responsibilities include monitoring participant academic progress, maintaining a supportive environment conducive to academic success, and initiating referrals to appropriate support service units, such as the Writing Center, Tutoring Center and Counseling Office.

All mentors are drawn from the College's full-time and part-time faculty, staff and administrators. Each of the five deans serve as mentors as do over 80 percent of the total administrative staff. Mentors attend a mentor-training workshop to assist them in developing positive relationships and supportive classroom environments for black students.

Mentors serve many roles for the students, but most importantly they provide direct personal involvement of college staff and convey the strong sense that each and every student is a

valued member of the total college community. They also communicate the wide range of supportive services available to students in the College campus and encourage students to make use of them when they see there is a need.

Among the activities provided through the Black Student Program are the following: workshops focusing on college survival hints; peer tutorial services; an early warning system for those in academic difficulty; mentors, role models and peer assistants to promote the adaptation and integration of black students into the college community; social and cultural activities to increase sensitivity and cross-cultural awareness; career assessment and planning; and personal adjustment counseling.

The program has grown from 34 students and 11 mentors to 348 students and 86 mentors. The spring 1988 to fall 1988 retention rates were 71 percent, 12 percent above the average retention rate for all black students. Participant retention from fall 1989 to spring 1990 rose 83 percent, higher than any student population subset on the campus.

## 2012

### Purdue University (IN)

#### Course Signals

Course Signals is a real-time, very early intervention system providing students with concrete steps toward improvement in classes where they may be in danger of failing. This improves their chances for success, lays a foundation for success in future classes, and ultimately improves retention and graduation rates. The program makes use of analytics and a Purdue-developed predictive algorithm applied to data mined and aggregated from existing, largely untapped institutional sources. The system provides an automated way for instructors to reach out to students in need of help early in the semester, when they have the most opportunity to improve.

#### **Analytics as a tool to improve student success**

Academic data is used in Course Signals by mining Blackboard, Banner, and other course and student information management tools. The idea is to mine the data from the existing academic systems in order to predict student success and enhance student achievement. This data provides information on the student's academic preparation, their engagement in and effort within the course, and their academic performance at a given point in time.

When an instructor runs Course Signals, each student is assigned to a risk group and issued a rating using an easily understood traffic signal metaphor – green for high likelihood of success in a course, yellow for potential problems, and red for risk of failure. The icons give students an immediate, clear, and effective indicator of how they are doing in the class, along with accompanying information on what the rating means and what they may do to maintain or improve their performance. Instructors can use Course Signals to customize and release personalized intervention emails, text messages, phone calls and personal contact by instructors or advisors, informing students of their risk status and directing them to available resources on campus.

#### **The goals for the program are:**

- To provide students, faculty, and advisors with a real-time system that updates throughout the term.
- Develop a system that identifies students based on a range of data – not only taking in data based on their academic preparation, but also informed by each student's current effort including quiz and test scores, use of help centers, and visits to instructor's office hours.
- Develop a system that provides feedback as early as the second week of a semester and goes beyond descriptive statistics to provide actionable intelligence with concrete steps the student can take to improve.
- Provide student feedback that is both frequent and ongoing.

#### **Results**

This project has improved student grades and retention, while also addressing student motivation and satisfaction. Students in classes using Course Signals best practices scored from 4.3 percent to 26.45 percent more A or B grades (depending on the class) than peers in classes not using the system. Also, 17.26 percent fewer students in classes with Course Signals earn D or F grades than those in non-Course Signals classes.

Analysis shows that significant retention rate differences (up to 14.14 percentage points in one year and 23.84 percentage points when looking at four years of retention) occur between students who experienced Course Signals in two or more classes at any point in their academic careers and those who did not. Note that students experiencing Course Signals have a lower average SAT score than their peers, yet their retention rates are significantly higher.

2007

## Purdue University (IN)

### Multicultural Learning Communities

Building on past success of Learning Communities, Purdue University created a Multicultural Learning Communities (MLC) project with assistance from a grant from Lumina Foundation for Education in fall 2003. The MLC effort created several new learning communities that brought additional multicultural topics and issues into the curriculum and co-curriculum. Students from four colleges are offered the opportunity to participate in a college specific MLC, with 20-30 students enrolling from each college each year. The program has a minority participation of 35 to 45 percent and has measurably affected retention for both minority and non-minority participants – the positive retention differences for participants are statistically significant.

#### **Building Success in Higher Education**

Purdue University recognized that minority retention and graduation rates are lower than their Caucasian counterparts. Having seen success with their traditional Learning Communities in increasing retention and graduation rates, the university created the college-specific MLCs with students from the colleges of Consumer and Family Sciences, Engineering, Liberal Arts, and Science. Themes for each of the MLCs were established by faculty teaching in the MLC program and included Marketplace 2050 for the College of Consumer and Family Sciences, Investigating Diversity through Engagement and Service (IDEAS) for the College of Engineering, Coming-of-Age in America for the College of Liberal Arts, and Bonding for the College of Science. Faculty participated in curriculum development seminars to provide them the opportunity to incorporate multicultural content into existing courses, and ensure that the curricula in the MLC courses would be cohesive. Additionally, the faculty members incorporate service learning into MLCs, so that concepts students are learning in class can immediately be applied in the community. Finally, students participating in each MLC live in the same residence hall. This arrangement ensures that conversations and experiences that occur in

class or during a co-curricular program can be shared and explored further within their living spaces.

The goal of the MLC project is to enhance levels of learning and satisfaction and, as a result, increase retention rates for all participants.

#### **The key measurable outcome objectives include:**

- MLC participants will have higher levels of satisfaction with the college learning experience;
- MLC participants will have greater appreciation and respect for different perspectives and cultures;
- MLC participants will exhibit higher levels of academic and social integration in the Purdue community; and
- MLC participants will have higher first-to-second year and cumulative retention rates and, ultimately, graduation rates.

#### **Results**

The program has seen great success. Overall first-to-second year retention for participants is 90.57 percent compared to 84.17 percent for non-participants at Purdue. Minority participant retention is 87.1 percent compared to 78.94 percent for non-participants. Female participants are retained at 90.91 percent compared to 85.91 percent for their non-participant counterparts. Further, MLC participants display better campus integration and have a more positive outlook on the campus diversity climate. According to the Diversity Perceptions Scale used to assess first-year students' diversity perceptions and attitudes, MLC participants, among other things, are more likely to: interact with students from other racial backgrounds; display greater appreciation for and more awareness of multiple values, viewpoints, races, and ethnicities, and feel more comfortable with diversity and the campus' diversity climate.

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1989

## Ramapo College of New Jersey (NJ)

### *Freshman Seminar*

Ramapo College of New Jersey implemented a Freshman Seminar course to directly affect the students entering the college for the first time. Freshman Seminar is a required two-credit course designed to provide incoming students with a rationale for post-secondary education and a sense of the rewards they will reap as a result of completing their education.

Through the course students are helped to understand the structure of academic programs and support services at the college. Students are encouraged to “connect” with the institution by participating in extracurricular activities and organizations. During the classes, they are informed that this type of participation will help them to develop leadership skills, organizational skills, and social skills that will enhance their development and help them to succeed in vocational pursuits after graduation. Students are informed of research that shows that those who get involved are more likely to persist at college.

The section size of the Freshman Seminar classes is limited to 20 students per teacher. This encourages students to “connect” with at least one faculty member at the institution. Classes are active and participatory, an environment in which students and instructor share ideas, activities, and values across a wide spectrum of experiences. Seminar faculty also advise students in their class on an individual level.

The Seminar covers various “studenting” skills including time management, taking notes, and

studying for exams. Students are also helped in their reading, writing, critical thinking, public speaking and research skills through the assignments.

Additionally, students are helped to explore their values and goals through units on personal, vocational, and interpersonal values so that they can make informed decisions about majors, careers, relationships, and life goals. Communications skills are developed that can help in solving problems with peers, instructors, and parents. Students are encouraged to acquire information on substance abuse, values clarification, sexually-transmitted disease, nutrition, and stress reduction so that they will not be forced to drop out of college due to illness preventable personal tragedies.

Instructors for the course, whose participation is voluntary, come from all departments. They attend five, eight-hour training sessions during the summer. Training employs a number of different modes including role playing exercises and units on lessons in pedagogy. Instructors also meet on a weekly basis throughout the fall semester to continue training and curriculum coordination.

In the fall of 1985, before the program was put into place, the first year retention rate was 58 percent. In 1987, after the mandatory program was established, first year retention had climbed to 74 percent, an increase of 16 percent.

## 2014 Rockhurst University (MO)

As one of 28 Jesuit colleges and universities in the U.S., Rockhurst University (Rockhurst) is part of the largest network of independent higher education institutions in the nation. Located in Kansas City's cultural and research district, Rockhurst serves 3,000 students in more than 50 undergraduate and graduate programs. The university has been ranked among the top regional universities in the Midwest by U.S. News and World Report. Additionally, Rockhurst is the only institution in the Kansas City area to have earned the community engagement classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, embodying the university's mission of learning, leadership, and service in the Catholic and Jesuit tradition.

### **Building upon a strong foundation to retain larger cohorts**

Historically, Rockhurst has achieved a respectable first- to second-year retention rate, continuously exceeding the national average among like institutions. In addition to strong retention rates, Rockhurst's freshman cohort has grown to significant, record levels in the past two years. Larger incoming classes posed significant goal and strategy challenges as limited physical and human resources accelerated pressure to maintain this momentum with a modest goal to increase retention to 85 percent.

While a steady increase in average ACT has positively contributed to retention, a more sophisticated set of tools and strategies was necessary for the university to make an impact on the first- to second-year retention rate that had plateaued at 82-83 percent. To propel the university's stagnant retention rate,

Rockhurst implemented a predictive model to identify the statistical likelihood of persistence for each incoming student and the enrollment factors that put them at risk.

By knowing how many risk factors each student has, each student in the incoming class can immediately be flagged and sorted into categories such as "high risk," "moderate risk," "low risk," etc., based on enrolling student characteristics. While many retention risk factors come as no surprise to Rockhurst, the data from the predictive model is sensitized in such a way as to provide compelling evidence of the need for resources to address these barriers to student success.

### **Providing extra attention to students at moderate risk**

With an understanding that some students will leave Rockhurst despite the best intervention efforts, the modeling data indicated the university could have the most impact for change among students who fell into the "moderate risk" category. The university committed to providing outreach to all students who fell below the model's median with extra attention paid to students in the precarious middle ground

who are more likely to be influenced by intervention strategies.

### **Empowering the campus community in the retention effort**

Challenged by the tasks necessary to connect with larger numbers of students, the retention committee looked for creative solutions to employ other members of the campus community. With a large residential population, the student affairs subcommittee engaged resident assistant (RA) staff in the retention effort.

Provided with a list of students on their floors who had predictive model scores below the median, RA staff received training to facilitate purposeful, casual conversations with their identified residents to assess each student's transition between the fourth and sixth weeks of the first semester. Following these interactions, RA staff reported their initial impressions to members of the subcommittee.

Once collected, the subcommittee quantified the qualitative observations using a three-point system (1-no intervention necessary; 2-some concern of retention risk; and 3-significant concern and transition challenges). Students scoring a 2 or above received follow-up outreach from a professional staff member.

As a result of this initiative, intentional outreach and intervention efforts provided resources to students early in the semester before problems developed and empowered RA staff to play an important role in student retention. This structured system for connecting with their residents allowed the RA staff to build healthy mentorship connections with their residents that may not otherwise have been developed.

### **Notable achievements**

Despite the challenges of meeting the needs of growing cohorts of students, Rockhurst has improved retention rates every year for the past three years:

- Exceeded the established goal of 85 percent with a near 86 percent first- to second-year retention rate following the first year of implementation;
- Increased first- to second-year retention to 87.5 percent in the second year;
- Projected to surpass the previous 87.5 percent retention rate in fall 2014 (currently trending at 90 percent); and
- Expected to increase the four-year graduation rate as a result of improvements in first- to second-year retention over the past three years.



1989

**Rowan University**  
**fka: Glassboro State College (NJ)**  
*Academic Advancement Program*

The Glassboro State College Academic Advancement Program is a college wide retention program, which also focuses specific attention on the minority student. Glassboro's program concentrates primarily on reducing freshman attrition by insuring that the entering student receives academic and social support early in the collegiate experience. To accomplish this goal, Glassboro College has initiated a number of programs.

Freshman Orientation is a two-day summer experience for incoming students and their parents, involving both faculty and professional staff. During this time high standards are promoted in workshops and general presentations, and speakers emphasize the importance of academic success.

Students admitted through the Educational Opportunity Fund of the King Scholar Program and the Minority Achievement Program receive an extended introduction to college life and its demands during a seven-week residential experience. Students attend college classes, participate in workshops to sharpen their basic reading, writing and math skills and learn techniques they will need to succeed in college. They become familiar with Glassboro and with the support services available to help them deal with the day-to-day problems that may arise.

Freshman seminar is a one-credit elective course which instills in students the importance of maintaining high academic standards. The course focuses on the enhancement of such life-long skills as listening, speaking, critical observation, and writing as well as on the appreciation for various art forms as a means of human communication. Freshman Seminar also includes a mentoring component, which continues

through spring semester. Mentoring is done intrusively—mentors contact students either in writing or by phone to activate ties established in the first semester.

To enhance cross cultural awareness, special guests are invited to the campus to conduct workshops for faculty and staff. The workshops are designed to sensitize participants and meet specific needs of the minority student.

The Academic Advancement Center was established to work with faculty to identify students who are experiencing academic difficulty and to provide an intensive program of specialized tutorial services, academic advising, and career counseling. Tutoring is available in one-on-one settings and through academic success workshops, computer-assisted instruction, and supplement group instruction.

The provision of an early-warning referral system to help entering students who are experiencing academic difficulty is a central component of the Glassboro retention program. All entering students must take the Astin Inventory, a measure that has identified the so called "high risk" student. Scores are sent to the Office of Academic Advising and to the coordinator of Freshman Seminar. Seminar leaders and faculty assigned as "liaisons" to the Office of Academic Advising monitor the academic progress of the "high risk" student and intervene when there is indication of academic difficulty.

The Academic Advancement Program is a model of integration and teamwork. It has resulted in a return rate of 76.4 percent of the freshmen to the sophomore year, which exceeded the goal of 75.3 percent.

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1992

## Rutgers – The State University of New Jersey (NJ)

*Promoting Persistence and Excellence in the Sciences:  
The Office of Minority Undergraduate Science Programs*

The Office of Minority Undergraduate Science Programs was set up to help potential science majors successfully make the transition from high school to college and to provide academic support, motivation, and encouragement to minority students from entry through graduation. The Office of Minority Undergraduate Science Programs (OMUSP) was established in 1988 to target under-represented minority groups in science and health. The mission is to retain and support primarily African-American and Latino students. Because these professions critically need minority representation, the OMUSP is actively preparing minority students to become physicians and scientists. To this end, three programs have been developed and implemented.

### **Success in Sciences Program (SIS)**

SIS provides small study/tutorial groups in science and math for students from matriculation through graduation. Student attendance, preparedness and participation are recorded each week and group leaders regularly follow up with individual students. The goal is to give disadvantaged students motivational support, counseling and career guidance. Prior to implementation of this program, students had a failure rate from 40 to 60 percent in certain key science and math courses. Now the passing rate is equal to that of all students taking these courses. The SIS program demonstrates that through personalized attention and support students can master key science and math courses and gain confidence for advanced courses.

### **Biomedical Careers Program (BCP)**

The BCP is a summer enrichment program for minorities and economically or educationally disadvantaged students. It is co-sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Eight weeks in length, it is designed to aid students from the post-freshman summer through graduation. A stipend is provided to cover living expenses, and academic credits can be earned. Enrollment averages between 45 and 50 students, with plans for expansion. The BCP staff have tracked students who have participated in the program since 1978. Results show that 90 percent earned their bachelor's degrees. Of these graduates, 54 percent went on to either graduate, medical or dental school.

The BCP has three phases. Students in Phases I and II take pre-medical courses and gain practical experience by working at local hospitals. The coursework includes microbiology, biochemistry and cognitive skills development. Phase III students are assigned to a faculty member and aid in research. In addition, they attend MCAT preparation sessions and participate in seminars.

Other programs include the ACCESS-MED program. The OMUSP has helped to centralize retention programs across college and organizational boundaries. Minority students in the sciences at Rutgers are given the help they need to deal with the rigor of science and mathematics curricula and learn how to navigate a large, complex university. Success is shown by the numbers of students successfully completing their undergraduate coursework and going on to graduate or medical school.

1992

## Saint Xavier College (IL)

*Student Services, Catalyst for a Comprehensive Collegewide Retention Program*

With a population that is 95 percent commuters, 55 percent adult, 72 percent first-generation college and 20 percent minority, Saint Xavier University faces complex retention challenges. The College Success Program features comprehensive academic and personal assessment, including use of the College Student Inventory (CSI), a college success course, a new Learning Assistance Center, and a program in Writing through the Disciplines.

A major reason for the success of the program is that the College set a large number of very specific and focused retention and academic performance goals and objectives for each part of the comprehensive program. In addition, like most successful retention programs, it included significant attention to faculty development.

### **Comprehensive Assessment**

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All newly enrolled students take four assessments in English, mathematics, reading and the College Student Inventory (CSI). Results of the assessments are used to make individualized schedules and to provide the basis for personal and career counseling. Based on demand, new counseling and career counselors have been hired.

### **College Success Course**

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The College Success Course is a six-week course required for new students. Students are directly involved with a faculty member who provides personal attention by meeting at least twice during the semester. The purpose of the first meeting is to discuss the CSI results and develop

an individual plan. The second conference charts progress of the plan. Positive results of the course are shown by retention results which have increased for students who have taken the course. Success has also been demonstrated by the fact that 57 percent of the entering students achieved a GPA of 3.0 or greater as compared to 44 percent in 1989.

### **Learning Assistance**

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The Learning Assistance Center coordinates tutoring in many subjects and offers students the opportunity for computer-aided instruction. Many students are referred to the Center by faculty who actively intervene to prevent students from failing.

### **Experiential Learning**

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Collaboration between faculty and employees have resulted in the placement of students in internships.

The Saint Xavier program has demonstrated that a successful, comprehensive retention program is grounded in the cooperation and involvement of administration, faculty and staff. Taken together, the retention programs have produced impressive results, from improved retention rates to higher course completion rates and higher passing rates. For example, the annual attrition of African American students fell from 22 percent in 1988 to 15 percent in 1990. The Saint Xavier staff understand their economics as well. According to their figures, a 2 percent increase in retention can generate 850 semester hours per year, or \$250,000 in tuition revenue.

2001

## San Diego State University (CA)

### *Faculty/Student Mentoring Program (F/SMP)*

In 1996, San Diego State University expanded an existing mentoring program to effectively increase retention among the institution's under-represented populations and at-risk students.

#### **Diversifying Diversity**

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The original Faculty/Student Mentoring Program (F/ SMP) began in 1987 as an effort to promote the academic success of first-year and community college transfer students. Target populations included African American, Latino, and American Indian students –populations that historically had been underrepresented at the university and had continually reported low retention and student success rates.

Ten years later, program administrators expanded eligibility to include socio-economically, educationally, and environmentally disadvantaged students from any ethnic or racial background. The expansion has allowed the university to serve a wider array of “at-risk” student populations, including first-generation and nontraditional students, returning female students, and students with disabilities.

#### **Students Support Students**

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The Faculty/Student Mentoring Program is a student-to-student mentoring program, offering support and guidance to students from students. Student mentors are supervised by eight faculty mentors, including one from each of the institution's seven colleges. These supervisors recruit and train 80 student mentors who assist 700 freshmen and transfer students in their adjustment to San Diego State.

#### **Goals and Responsibility**

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The expanded program was established to improve upon these six goals:

1. Increase retention rates of students from disadvantaged backgrounds
2. Promote academic excellence

3. Help students develop the knowledge and skills necessary for successful completion of academic goals
4. Develop supportive relationships with other students faculty, and staff
5. Increase knowledge of university resources
6. Develop leadership skills, which will enable protégés to become student mentors

To achieve these goals, the student and faculty mentors have the freedom to develop programs to best suit F/SMP participants. Student mentors are responsible for creating and maintaining a communication flow between themselves and program participants.

#### **Use of Resources**

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Beginning at the start of the 2000-2001 academic year, student assistant salaries, temporary and part-time help, supplies and services, program administration, and part-time statistical support are funded annually by the California State Lottery. Because of the program's success, university officials have encouraged F/SMP administrators to expand and have granted the program additional funds from the university.

#### **Results**

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A program that began as a population-specific retention strategy has evolved into a campus wide standard for student success. In addition, participants in the Faculty/Student Mentoring Program consistently have higher retention than non-participating students and a high level of satisfaction with the program. The achievement in retention is especially noteworthy considering that F/SMP participants enter with the lowest average SAT scores of any group on campus.

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1994

## Sauk Valley Community College (IL)

### *Integrated Student Retention Program*

In 1990, this community college serving six counties in Northwest Illinois submitted a Title III Institutional Strengthening proposal for the development of a comprehensive student retention program to correct the conditions that were contributing to a semester-to-semester attrition loss of 900-1100 students. The college was concerned that it needed to deliver a higher level of quality services to its constituents, many of whom are first-generation, low-income, part-time students.

Entering students had reported in a survey the campus was “efficient but impersonal” or “inefficient and unfriendly.” This was also reflected in their evaluations of primary student services offices. Part-time and nontraditional students were more dissatisfied than traditional-age full-time students.

The retention program focused on developing and implementing four primary components:

- A campuswide “student centered” climate through structured staff development.
- An extended orientation course for new students designed to assist students in their transition into college.
- A comprehensive assessment and placement system for all new, first-time students.
- A student database and tracking system with the capability to conduct retention research on targeted populations.

#### **Program Description**

A comprehensive assessment and placement policy was developed to help counselors and students establish appropriate placement expectations. Previously, part-time students (75 percent of the student population) had not taken placement tests on a consistent basis.

To help students better understand college academic structure, and policies and procedures,

the counseling faculty designed a required six-week, one-credit-hour orientation course. Student research and tracking was extensively upgraded to involve a standardized, comprehensive, integrated database to provide responsive advisement to individual students, identify high-attrition courses, analyze retention trends and study target populations.

To create a more student-centered climate that would support the ambitious retention goals, independent consultants were engaged to audit quality service, efficiency and caring in various offices and staff areas. A campus wide service training program for all faculty and staff was implemented, and customer service orientation programs were presented to both full- and part-time faculty.

An important factor in the success of each element of Sauk Valley’s Integrated Student Retention Program was the formation of the Student Success and Retention Committee. This group, which represented various educational divisions, had significant input on retention and educational programming issues, and monitored and evaluated the program on an ongoing basis.

#### **Overall Results**

A recent survey of new and continuing students indicates significant improvements in Sauk Valley’s student-centered climate and quality of services. Offices that previously rated poorly now receive very favorable ratings. Follow-up institutional quality service audits collaborate the findings of the college’s research and establish new benchmarks for continuing quality service improvements.

Overall gains in retention at Sauk Valley Community College have been significant. From fall of 1987 to spring of 1994, first semester to second semester retention increased from 46 percent to 62 percent for all students. First-time, full-time retention increased from 60 percent to 80 percent. First-time, part-time retention increased from 31 percent to 41 percent.

2014

## Sauk Valley Community College (IL)

### *First-Year Experience (FYE)*

Sauk Valley Community College (SVCC), located between Chicago and the Quad Cities, offers a variety of transfer and career courses, certificates, and degrees. Approximately 41 percent of the 2,800 students are enrolled in Career Technical Education programs.

#### **FYE in 180 Days**

In January 2013, the Sauk Valley administration and faculty agreed to develop a First-Year Experience (FYE) program in order to increase student retention rates. Within 180 days, the program was underway.

The SVCC First-Year Experience program connects students to resources, tools, and the critical individuals on campus that provide valuable everyday support to set them up for success in their first year and beyond. It involves all campus departments working together cooperatively to promote the essential college experience and form lasting bonds with students.

The program consists of two components required of incoming degree-seeking students:

7. An initial orientation session is held 1-2 months before the start of a semester and provides an overview of campus processes, online systems, and faculty expectations. Sessions include financial aid, advising, security, student activities, and career services.
8. The First-Year Experience course (FYE 101) is completed in the student's first semester. The 6-week, one-credit course is led by a variety of instructors with topics ranging from academic planning, college services, and opportunities for involvement to time management, test-taking strategies, and wellness.

There are some students who do not participate in both components of the program including those that has previously earned 16 credit hours and were in good academic standing.

The college is taking a data-focused approach to the program by tracking students' progress. The FYE course is set up in the student management system, enabling the college to track where students are struggling and what assignments reflect their biggest challenges in the college environment.

#### **Results**

In addition to raising sensitivity to retention issues across campus, the program has proven effective, with early results showing significant improvements in student satisfaction, awareness of services and opportunities, and overall retention. FYE students academically outperformed students who had taken the College's prior orientation course in the past (FYE students averaged 2.83 fall GPA compared to 2.71 for the College's prior orientation students). The fall to spring retention for FYE students was also strong at 77.7 percent. SVCC is collecting FYE data and investigating how to use student and FYE data to predict "success" at the college with a focus on identifying at-risk students early in their first semester so that interventions can be implemented.

To create a more student-centered climate that would support the ambitious retention goals, independent consultants were engaged to audit quality service, efficiency and caring in various offices and staff areas. A campus wide service training program for all faculty and staff was implemented, and customer service orientation programs were presented to both full- and part-time faculty.

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1997

## Seton Hall University (NJ)

### *Freshman Studies Program*

Every fall, Seton Hall University (N.J.) welcomes about 950 first-year students to its campus with a unique advising program that helps students immediately begin to clarify academic and career goals, adjust to campus life, and develop a social network. Through the use of faculty mentors, peer advisors, and a College Studies Skills class, Seton Hall's Freshman Studies Program offers a multifaceted and highly personal support program that helps students thrive well beyond their first year.

#### **Reaching Students Before Classes Start**

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The Freshman Studies Program incorporates the academic advising of all first-year students into a comprehensive support structure that begins with orientation. During a two-day session that takes place in June or July, students take placement exams, participate in a computerized career exploration session, and receive instruction in e-mail and Internet access.

In addition to orientation, all first-year students participate in Welcome Week immediately prior to the beginning of fall semester. These five days of community-building exercises and special events aid transition into university culture. During Welcome Week, students also complete the College Student Inventory™ (CSI) of the Noel-Levitz Retention Management System™, which measures individual attitudes and motivations. The week's activities culminate with Freshman Convocation, where students are formally welcomed into the academic community by the president and faculty. Students then meet with their faculty mentors and peer advisors to discuss hopes and fears concerning the upcoming year.

#### **The Importance of Peer Advisors and Faculty Mentors**

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In order to make sure new students establish relationships and a support network early, every first-year student at Seton Hall is paired with a specially selected and trained undergraduate peer advisor as well as a faculty mentor. The

peer advisors and faculty mentors work together to help first-year students adjust to college life and become acquainted with the university, while also providing academic and emotional support.

Faculty mentors are highly trained professional advisors who serve as students' academic advisors and university contacts during the first year. Students meet with mentors at least four times during the first academic year. The first meeting focuses on the results of the CSI, and the second and third meetings take place before pre-registration for the spring and following fall semesters. The fourth meeting centers on the preliminary declaration of a major, whereby a student can then be assigned an advisor from the appropriate academic department.

In addition to advising duties, faculty mentors, and peer advisors teach the College Study Skills course, taken by most first-year students each fall.

The course covers essential transition issues like study skills, time management, wellness, human relations, and substance abuse, and allows individual advising sessions to focus on each student's own concerns. Faculty mentors and peer advisors are also involved in the Freshman Class Council, which coordinates social and volunteer activities for the entire class.

#### **Achieving Results**

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From 1993–1996, the first-to-second year retention rate averaged an outstanding 84 percent. In addition, first-year students now report a much higher rate of satisfaction overall than before the program was implemented. Students are also more involved on and off campus. Ninety-two percent of students are involved in at least one co-curricular activity, up from less than 50 percent when the program began.

2013

## Seward County Community College/Area Technical School (KS)

*“Subiendo el Nivel” – Increasing the Retention Rates of Hispanic Students*

This two-year, residential community college is located in southwest Kansas in Liberal, a city of 23,027 residents, recognized as having the highest percentage of foreign-born residents of any city in the United States. Over 70 percent of the SCCC/ATS students are first-generation students and the vast majority enroll in at least one developmental education course.

### **Six Pillars of Retention**

In 2008, the college recognized the need to improve its retention and completion rates during a strategic planning/quality improvement process. A retention committee was formed in 2009, guided by SCCC/ATS’s.

Six Pillars of Retention:

1. Comprehensive academic advising;
2. Mandatory first-year seminar course;
3. Strong academic support (i.e., assessment, tutoring, disability services);
4. Early-alert and at-risk team intervention systems;
5. Student support services (TRiO); and
6. Opportunities for student engagement.

### **Strategies to Address Barriers to Hispanic Student Success**

As part of the 2009 annual goals, the retention committee utilized early-alert data to begin the process of improving Hispanic graduation rates. The college also created an “At-Risk” Team, encouraging faculty and other staff to e-mail the team any time during the semester with concerns about any students. At-Risk Team members immediately determined a course of intervention early enough to have an impact.

In addition, the retention committee surveyed the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO) to identify barriers to completion, then develop strategies to address the barriers in key areas (financial, academic, advising, and career planning).

Strategies included:

- Promote FASFA Assistance Days;
- Implement English Comp I Essay for scholarship applicants;
- Develop online job postings;
- Develop “Preparing for Transfer” workshop;
- Measure tutor satisfaction and usage;
- Develop an advisor in-take process; and
- Develop a needs analysis for advisor training.

Most of the resources for the strategies were staff and faculty time. The committee elected to work “smarter” by collecting data that was already available and relevant, aligning activities to avoid redundancy, working in small sub-committees instead of large “idea killing” groups, and using data to make adjustments and decision.

### **Results**

SCCC/ATS’s low-tech, common sense approach to continuous improvement has yielded impressive results. The associate-degree-seeking Hispanic graduation rate increased from a baseline of 25.3 percent in 2010 to 41 percent in 2012. The retention rate for Hispanic students within the early-alert system rose from 36 percent in fall 2006 to 55percent in fall 2011. SCCC/ATS has been recognized by Washington Monthly (2010) and by the Aspen Institute (2012) as one of the top community colleges in the nation.

1996

## Shawnee State University (OH)

*The Connection at Shawnee State University*

Located in Appalachia, Shawnee State has a mandate and mission to encourage, support and retain first generation students in degree programs that will enrich their lives, make them more productive citizens and dramatically improve the economic conditions in South Central Ohio. To reach that end, Shawnee State founded the Connection program. Since 1991, the program has served more than 2,000 students. The goal of the program is to address the socioeconomic, educational and career needs of students receiving Aid-for-Dependent-Children public assistance. Students participate in the program for an initial quarter prior to entering their collegiate degree program. Qualifying students work with professional counselors to design a program of services that help the student become better prepared for college life. The program also provides ongoing support services throughout the student's first year.

### **The Initial Quarter**

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During the initial quarter, students work with a counselor to design a program to help them adjust to college life academically and socially. These programs assist students in building self-esteem, developing math, English, and computer skills, and isolating career and educational goals. The Connection counseling services arm students with the skills necessary to become independent in their classroom and student life experiences. Students also attend seminars presented by campus staff and community members, meet with key administrators, and attend campus activities and events. All these activities serve to enhance the students' involvement, which leads to greater participation in the classroom as well as student life.

### **Ongoing Services**

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Support services are also provided throughout the student's first year at the University. These services include supportive personal counseling, a textbook loan library, summer scholarships and an educational equipment rental program. After the first year, students can serve in STRIDE, a student organization of Connection alumni that assesses services and suggests improvements. Program alumni also serve as mentors to current freshmen and promote activities and policies which affect the program, reaffirming attitudes and behaviors learned during the first year.

### **Community Involvement**

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Community support is a vital part of Connection. Positive responses to the program from the community provide gateways to employment for graduates who may otherwise face social barriers. The program gives students a chance to identify their own personal goals and objectives, which often include vocational training in addition to services designed to prepare students for college. This leads to a wide base of community support because, after completing this program, students are not only ready to enter the academic world, they are also better prepared for the world of work.

### **Persistence and Academic Achievement**

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Students in the program have a retention rate of 86 percent after the first year, compared with 54 percent for the University as a whole. The average cumulative GPA of the program students is 2.9, which is higher than for the general student population. Although the main objective of Connection is to keep students in school through the freshman year, 202 former participants graduated in 1994, and an additional 199 in 1995.

1995

## Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania (PA)

### *Division of Undeclared Majors*

To enhance retention of undeclared students, who make up 13 percent of the overall 6,000 undergraduate student body, Shippensburg University has developed the Division of Undeclared Majors program. This retention program directly affects students who are undecided about their major area of study and it provides comprehensive support, guidance and information to aid their decisions and help them reach career goals. Unlike the other three undergraduate colleges, the Division of Undeclared Majors, headed by Dean Elnetta Jones, does not grant degrees. The part-time staff, which includes the dean, an assistant dean, a secretary and five graduate assistants, coordinates its programs, services and activities. The division enrolls all students who have not chosen a major and have been identified as “undeclared.” Students must remain in the division for at least one semester and must declare a major by the end of their fourth semester.

#### **Excellence through Advising**

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The Division of Undeclared Majors has a reputation on campus for providing excellent advising services and uses advising to provide the critical link for delivering services to undeclared students. Sixty-five faculty volunteers and seven administrators are oriented through a 25-hour pre-service training program held during the summer before they serve as advisors. Advisors also participate in the advisor training session sponsored by the Commission on Academic Advising held in the spring semester. The division holds an informal, get-acquainted session between advisors and advisees before the beginning of classes and sends advisors an advising guidebook, academic profiles of the students they are advising, and other pertinent information. Advisors are encouraged to maintain records on meetings

with their advisees to use for review and as a continuing check on the advisory relationship.

To supplement the advising services, the division offers a voluntary, noncredit Career Exploration and Planning Seminar. The seminar consists of 10 weekly 50-minute sessions conducted during the first semester of the freshman year, and is designed to increase students' vocational maturity and help them make good career choices.

#### **Clustered Learning Program**

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The Clustered Learning Program provides freshman with a learning community that fosters understanding and knowledge. Cohorts of students enroll in three separate courses linked by common themes, historical periods, issues or problems. Professors create a cooperative learning environment in the classroom that allows questioning and fosters experimentation. Participation in a learning cluster generally reduces students' anxieties, increases their conceptual abilities, and helps them to adapt more successfully to college life.

#### **Early-Alert Warning System**

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During the seventh week of classes, faculty members submit mid-term “D” or “F” grades for undeclared students. Copies of grades are sent to freshmen. The division dean in turn sends a letter to the students and advisors, identifying services and upcoming academic enhancement workshops offered by the Learning Assistance Center.

#### **Results**

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Since the program's inception in 1981, retention of returning freshman has improved and the school's program has been recognized on a national level by the Journal of College Student Development, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), and the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

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2003

## Slippery Rock University (PA)

### *Integrated Learning Community Clusters and Freshman Seminar Program*

Many institutions across the nation have adapted their first-year student retention efforts to include a learning community cluster, a freshman seminar, or both of these initiatives. In its award-winning entry, Slippery Rock University offers a model for integrating and uniting these two efforts into a seamless program. The program appears to be connecting well with first-year students overall as well as with specific first-year student subgroups such as students of color and students in specific majors.

#### **Benefiting from a Synergistic Approach**

The central purpose of the integrated program at Slippery Rock University is to enhance the academic and social integration of students. The fundamental idea is to have a single group of students share in the same schedule of classes, which revolves around the liberal arts or major program area. Now in its third year, the program at Slippery Rock University currently reaches nearly three-fourths of the university's new first-year students (over 1,000 students).

Each learning community cluster includes three courses—a freshman writing course, a liberal studies or major program course, and the freshman seminar, which includes an orientation to campus support services. By participating in these three courses with the same cohort in their first semester, students are able to foster more explicit connections with their peers, with faculty, and with support services staff.

Based on studies of the most successful subsets of participants (see right), recent enhancements to the program include increasing the participation of special admits and students of color and increasing the use of major program courses such as accounting or elementary education courses. In addition, the program is now using residence hall classrooms and living/learning communities in residence halls.

#### **Results**

University documentation shows that the program is getting results in a number of areas.

In the area of social and academic integration, participants are experiencing greater levels of: interaction with peers; interaction with faculty outside of the classroom; academic and intellectual development; and institutional and goal commitment.

Program participants are also completing more credits than non-participants and making greater use of support services.

In the area of retention, first- to second-year persistence for program participants vs. non-participants was 3.4 percentage points higher in fall 2001 and 3.5 percentage points higher in fall 2002. Also, even higher persistence rates were observed among special admits, among students in the clusters offering a major program-related course, and among students from under represented populations.

Acting President Dr. Robert M. Smith has noted an additional important outcome as well. "We know that our recruitment yield is enhanced by offering this program to beginning students. It makes a difference to almost every aspect of our enrollment management strategy."

2008

## South Plains College (TX)

### *Comprehensive Retention Plan*

South Plains College (SPC), a comprehensive public community college serving a 15-county region, was awarded a Title V grant in October 2004. After years of growth, the college needed to develop a comprehensive retention plan from the ground up. The new retention programs brought a steep learning curve for staff involved including getting the academic and student affairs divisions to collaborate for the first time to meet the grant's objectives. The process led to the development of personal relationships between divisions and a united retention focus across the institution.

#### **Uniting the Campus to Improve Retention**

Beginning with face-to-face visits by student affairs with department chairs and other faculty who had strong influence over their departments, the initial step helped bond the two divisions and allowed for the creation of common goals to improve retention. The retention team is comprised of over 20 faculty and staff who oversee the retention objectives. The Comprehensive Retention Plan is comprised of three main initiatives: Academic Advising, Early Alert, and Individualized Success Plans.

**Academic Advising:** The Advisement Management Team, consisting of a faculty representative from each academic department, the Counseling Centers, and the Student Support Services Office, guides the Academic Advising program. SPC practices a proactive approach to advising and places emphasis on advising special populations: academic probation students, suspension students, and students who have not passed the college placement tests. These students are required to meet with an advisor before the semester. Students in the first two groups are required to complete a Student Success Exercise which helps clarify goals to obtaining success. They then develop a plan detailing semester goals. The third group completes a TSI Success Plan that outlines courses needed, a timeline for completion, and additional recommendations made by the advisor.

**Early Alert System:** The Early Alert System promotes student success by identifying students whose behaviors indicate a lack of academic success strategies and academic preparation. Faculty members who recognize students who fail to exhibit successful college skills complete the online Early Alert form. This information is funneled through the Office of Enrollment Management who contacts the student with a description of the Alert and available resources. The Alert is then reported to multiple departments across campus as appropriate to assist the student.

**Individualized Success Plan:** Individualized Success Plans, an online success module, fits within the existing information management system. It is designed to give students a road map of their college career at SPC, beginning with developmental work if necessary and ending with transferable classes.

#### **Results**

SPC has made great strides in improving services to students and in improving student success. Since the Retention Team began its work, fall to spring retention rates for FTIC students increased from 69 percent to 73 percent with fall-to-fall retention rates increasing from 35 percent to 44 percent. The first pilot group that had contact with advisors at least four times during the Fall 2005 semester was retained for Spring 2006 at 84 percent, compared to 46 percent for the control group. For the cohort group on academic probation after Spring 2006, retention to Spring 2007 increased by 11.4 percent. Students completing 12 or more hours doubled from 8.87 percent to 17.73 percent. Further, students achieving a 3.0 or higher GPA doubled from 10.28 percent to 22.34 percent. The Early Alert System, initially implemented in three departments, saw an increase of students receiving a C or better in General Biology by over 27 percent and in Introduction to Chemistry by 7.4 percent. The program has since been expanded to include 76 course sections at all campus locations and online.

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1995

## Southeast Missouri State University (MO)

*The “Secrets to Success” Series*

With approximately 8,000 students in seven colleges and schools, Southeast Missouri State University recognizes the importance of student retention and its link to student success. To develop its overall retention program, the university has developed a “Secret to Success” workshop series and implemented it for students entering in the fall of 1994.

The series began in the fourth week of class and ran for 10 weeks, with Student Affairs professionals presenting a different topic seven times each week. The seminar schedule mimicked the academic environment, offering 50-minute classroom sessions, distributed throughout weekdays and evenings. Seminars addressed motivation, time management, stress reduction, study skills, multicultural awareness, relationship skills, personal budget management, career exploration and goal setting.

### **Creating the “Secrets to Success” Program**

The Success Series was conceived in the spring of 1994 in response to ongoing university efforts to improve student retention and graduation rates. The 10-week, non-credited student success program was developed by a team composed of student development department heads. The team carefully examined retention literature and first-year course textbooks to identify the 10 most important topics affecting first-year success and retention.

Considerable time was spent ascertaining the best order of the topics. Campus research conducted in the fall of 1993 revealed that Southeast’s first-year students tended to address immediate needs (such as study skills) before they dealt with longer term goals such as career planning. These findings were incorporated into the topic-sequencing of the program.

Instructors were then recruited from throughout the Student Affairs division. All instructors for the “Secret to Success” program attended five hours of training presented by the director of the Center for Scholarship in Teaching and Learning. Each presenter pilot-tested his or her program in front of the other series presenters.

### **Getting the “Secret” Out**

The greatest challenge posed by the new noncredit course was generating interest and attendance. Interest was built by offering retention success incentives for attendance. All students who attended five sessions or more were eligible for a drawing of the following awards: \$150 toward 1995 spring semester fees, payment of up to \$50 toward 1995 spring semester textbook fees, and book bags valued at \$40.

Publicity began during summer orientation, when formal invitations were sent to new first-year students asking them to become members of the class of 1998 and to assure this success by attending the Success Series programs. Instructors of developmental courses and “Creative and Critical Thinking” (a general studies course required of all freshmen) were notified of the program and posters were hung around campus.

### **Results of the “Secrets to Success” Program**

Approximately 16 percent of the beginning freshman class participated in the seminars, and another 48 students participated in at least one seminar. First-time freshmen participants in one or more of the seminars had a significantly higher fall 1994 average GPA. Fall-to-spring retention of first-time freshmen participants was 93.2 percent compared with 84.9 percent of nonparticipating first time freshmen.

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2004

## Southeastern Oklahoma State University (OK)

### *Academic Advising and Outreach Center*

Southeastern Oklahoma State University has achieved significant results in freshman integration and retention by establishing the Academic Advising and Outreach Center (AAOC). The AAOC develops and seamlessly integrates a variety of programs that together serve as a new student success infrastructure.

#### **Center Designed as Hub of Services**

A majority of the approximately 4,000 students at SOSU are first-generation college students. Twenty-eight percent are Native American. In 2001, SOSU established and opened the Academic Advising and Outreach Center, designed to be the hub of services for first- to second-year students. The Center is staffed with professional academic advisors who work with freshmen, sophomores, transfer students, and undecided majors to identify academic options and assist in selection of courses that maximize students' opportunities for success.

The new student experience begins with an initial advising session during which each student completes an evaluation to identify individual strengths, needs, and goals before selecting courses.

The center serves students through multiple other activities and programs:

- Distributes The Enrollment Survival Guide booklet as an educational supplement to describe and decode the enrollment process and student life.
- Conducts advisor training for all incoming faculty and a student success workshop for adjunct faculty.
- Serves as a centralized clearinghouse for degree plans and course sequencing.
- Offers a professional academic advisor specializing in Native American student issues.
- Organizes the freshman seminar course.
- Implements an early warning system for all freshmen enrolled in a College Success course.

- Institutes a telecounseling program to give personal, individual assistance to new students at high risk of dropping out.
- Assists the Office of Resident Life in development of the Freshmen in Residence Succeeding Together (FIRST) program, learning communities for new students.
- Provides the Student Athlete Mentor program, with student mentors volunteering to tutor student athletes.
- Hosts three events to recognize, reward, and celebrate first-year success: Freshman Convocation (welcome ceremony), Top Ten Freshmen (awards for academic excellence, leadership, and involvement), and Freshman Recognition (reception for all first-year students with 3.25 GPA or higher).
- Sponsors an honors retreat and co-facilitates the President's Leadership Class retreat.
- Collaborates with local tribal nations to host a leadership retreat for Native American students.

#### **Results**

In fall 2001, the first- to third-semester retention rate of first-time, full-time freshmen was 56 percent. After one year, the retention rate increased 4 percentage points to 60 percent, and after year two, the rate was 63 percent. Other indications of success include an increase in participation in the College Success course from 59 students in fall 2000 to 400 students in fall 2003; students no longer self-advising with 81 percent of incoming freshmen seen in the AAOC and 19 percent advised within the TRIO program or by faculty; and an increase in student satisfaction with advising.

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2011

## Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT)

### Student Retention Program

The SAIT retention initiative employs a broad approach to retention planning focused on 4,000 first-year students and an equal number of second-year students. Program strategies are employed to engage the entire institute in advancing student retention. In addition, the program includes procedures to identify and meet the needs of students, promote student use of support services, and establish quantitative data to measure student retention success. Results include improved semester-to-semester retention rates and first-year to second-year retention rates.

#### **“Commitment to Student Success Program”**

The SAIT student retention program is a campus wide initiative championed by the vice president of academics, the academic chair of student retention, and the SAIT student retention committee. It is intended to create a sense of responsibility and buy-in among campus staff to student success. The goal is to have all employees empowered to help students by identifying their needs and directing the student to the appropriate resources on campus.

#### **The plan contains action items that are focused on:**

- Raising the awareness of student retention among employees;
- Identifying and meeting the needs of students, especially those at risk of dropping out;
- Promoting the support services for students; Providing support resources for faculty and academic chairs; and
- Establishing quantitative data for measuring student retention success.

To accomplish their goals, SAIT established a full-time committee with representation from across campus and hired a full-time leader of student retention. They began the initiative by collecting data on student retention practices from across North America and determining the best strategies for the SAIT environment. From there, the retention committee created a retention plan to drive the initiatives and outline action steps.

Finally, the committee established benchmark student data among the over 60 academic programs, the eight schools, and the institution as a whole. They wrote scripts, extracted data, and achieved a consensus of the accuracy of the data and how best to report it.

#### **Results**

The fall-to-winter retention rates increased by 7.3 percentage points from 87.5 percent in 2007 to 94.8 percent in 2010, exceeding their goal by 2.3 percentage points. The fall-to-fall retention rate increased by 12 percentage points from 65.2 percent in 2007 to 77.2 percent in 2009, exceeding this goal by 7 percentage points. Other results included an increased awareness among students of support services available on campus as well as improving faculty and academic chairs' awareness of effective retention strategies to support and engage students. By increasing SAIT employees' awareness of the role they play in assisting student retention, SAIT has created a student-centered environment reflected in their increased student satisfaction and retention.

2011

## St. Catherine University (MN)

*Multicultural and International Programs and Services (MIPS)*

*Peer Mentor Program*

St. Catherine University's (St. Kate's) Multicultural and International Programs & Services (MIPS) Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) was developed to create a community among students of color and to assist in the academic, emotional, and social success of first-year students of color. This program began seven years ago as the university's population of students of color began to steadily increase. The program is based on a belief that students can significantly influence the lives of their peers. The focus is to help new students navigate the transition and complexity of college life, especially important for first-generation college students who may not benefit from having family members as guides.

### **St. Catherine University's Multicultural and International Programs & Services Peer Mentoring Program**

While the enrollment of multicultural students was increasing, retention had been lagging behind the overall student population. Students of color were feeling isolated, did not know how to navigate the complex systems of college life, and did not know who to turn to when families were not able to be of assistance. Retention of fall-to-fall students of color was around 10 percentage points lower than the entire fall-to-fall cohort.

The goal of the program is to connect first-year students to peer mentors (returning students of color) that guide them to the resources and a support network consisting of faculty, staff, and fellow students. In addition to working with students individually, each peer mentor is a part of a team that works with each other, departments institution wide, and MIPS staff to provide support in shaping an inclusive, multicultural community.

New multicultural and international students (mentees) are invited to apply for this program the summer prior to their matriculation. Peer mentors then choose up to four mentees with whom they will interact individually at least bi-weekly. A unique aspect of this program is the training peer mentors receive. Instead of resource people coming to the

mentors, the mentors go to the resources, ensuring that they are aware of locations and have actually been to the offices and departments. Also, in the training they do not shy away from talking directly about issues of identity, culture, racism, family and community expectations, and the economic disparities that exist for students—especially women of color.

To ensure that both mentors and mentees are responsible for their part in the relationship, both are held to high expectations that are outlined upon entering the program. First-year students also take the College Student Inventory™ to help academic advisors address specific concerns of students.

### **Results**

The MIPS Peer Mentor Program exceeded expectations. Since its inception in 2004, retention rates from the fall to winter semester for both mentees and mentors ranged from 90 to 100 percent. The fall-to-fall retention rates for 2008-09 and 2009-10 of the PMP mentees exceeded that of the overall fall-to-fall cohort. The fall-to-fall retention rate of PMP mentees was 96 percent in 2008-09 compared to an overall fall-to-fall retention rate of 77.8 percent, an 18.2 percentage point difference and a 24.6 percentage point increase from the previous year's PMP mentee retention rate.

A secondary benefit of the peer mentor program has been the increase in student leadership involvement on campus for those students participating in the program. We have seen former PMP mentees and mentors make significant, consistent, institution wide contributions going on to win top leadership awards at St. Kate's. There is also a large number of mentees that subsequently become mentors in their second and third years at St. Kate's. This shows their level of commitment to, appreciation for, and belief in this program. Students acknowledge the significant difference their mentor made for their decision to stay in school, and they want to give back.

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2000

## State University of New York at Albany (NY)

### *Educational Opportunities Program (EOP)*

It can be quite a challenge to find one's niche at a mid-sized university of 16,000 plus undergraduate and graduate students, particularly during that most critical first year of college life. The Educational Opportunities Program at the University at Albany is geared to address just that challenge. By combining intensive interactive programs, early orientation, and continued outreach and academic support, the university has created a national model program.

#### **Origins of EOP**

As a part of a statewide compensatory effort based on 50 campuses, the Education Opportunities Program was created in 1968 to provide the opportunity for a college education for New York State citizens whose academic and economic situation would otherwise make them inadmissible. The structure of the program was intensified in 1985 with a change in program directors. Today, a tenured staff (some working in the program for over 20 years) provides consistent service that has helped to keep students on track toward their goals. This program is jointly funded by institutional funds and a special grant from New York State.

#### **Mandatory Summer Program**

Last year's EOP had an enrollment of nearly 735 undergraduate students. One of the program's key strategies is to reach students before they enter their first semester. The University at Albany, SUNY, has mandated that every incoming EOP freshman enroll in a five-week residential pre-college orientation program.

It is during this intense summer program that incoming EOP freshmen participate in:

- Daily academic-skills-building and developmental classes in reading, writing, mathematics, and study skills that help students make the transition from high school to college;
- Study/tutorial sessions conducted by peer tutors, course instructors, and program administrators;
- Personal growth workshops;
- Sessions of financial aid, counseling, college survival, and academic and classroom success;
- Meetings with key university administrators and staffers;
- Sessions with former EOP students;

- Orientation to the Albany City community;
- A closing ceremony that celebrates the new students' completion of the program and officially welcomes them to the university.

Once the fall semester begins, EOP students benefit from these additional services:

- If needed, continued instruction in writing, mathematics, and study skills;
- An EOP counselor who serves as academic advisor, counselor, and resource person;
- Free peer tutors for any university courses;
- Free study groups in selected freshmen-level courses;
- Multipurpose monthly program newsletters filled with study tips and informational articles;
- Specialized seminars on careers, internships, study abroad, and graduate school opportunities;
- Availability of study skills workshops, writing lab, and computer room;
- Participation in student leadership institute;
- Graduate school tuition fee waiver;
- Peer mentoring program run by EOP students.

#### **Results**

A look at the past five years' statistics shows an increase in the retention of EOP students from one year to the next. Retention figures rose more than 10 percent, from 83.87 percent for the entering class of 1994 to 94.02 percent for the entering class of 1995. The current one-year retention rate is 94.66 percent. In addition, EOP first-semester freshmen have made the Dean's List at a higher rate than have their non-EOP counterparts. Graduation rate for this class of 1994 was 56 percent.

1996

**State University of New York at Buffalo  
fka: Buffalo State College (NY)**

*NIA Mentor Program: Nurturing Initiative and Achievements in Students*

The NIA Mentor Program is a three-tiered program designed to benefit incoming freshmen, upper-class students and high school students. The goal of the program is to develop students who are self-motivated, responsible, committed and enthusiastic about learning.

**“Success in Six” and the Well-made Student**

By the first week of classes, participants in the NIA program are matched with their mentors according to their career interest or major. During the first six weeks of school, freshmen participate in the “Success in Six” program, which encourages students to take part in activities designed to make the critical first six weeks of school as successful as possible. These activities include the development of an individualized academic plan that draws upon the results of the Meyers-Briggs Personality Indicator and the College Student Inventory (CSI). Freshman students are also invited to participate in the first in a series of Well-Made Student workshops. These workshops introduce students to the university’s holistic approach to education, which is based on the principle that self-actualization, balance, stress management and a healthy approach to living are critical factors in academic success. Other program activities continue beyond the first six weeks.

**A Three-tiered Mentoring Approach**

The NIA mentor program creates a support system in which freshmen mentor high school seniors; upper-class students mentor incoming college freshmen; and faculty and staff members mentor to all three.

This three-tiered system offers unique benefits to all of the participants:

1. High school seniors and college freshmen are given the support, skills and information they need to be successful in their first year of college.
2. Upper-class students are given an additional year of contact with faculty mentors. Serving as role models to the freshmen reinforces the positive behaviors and attitudes they were introduced to as freshmen.
3. Faculty and staff become more sensitive to the obstacles students of color face in college life.

By using this three-tiered design, Buffalo State College has been able to create a supportive network of faculty and students, which helps ease the transition to college life for incoming freshmen and encourages perseverance among minority upper-class students.

**Improving GPAs and Retention**

Since 1991, the College has lost between 26 percent and 42 percent of incoming minority students from first year to second year. In contrast, for students enrolled in the NIA program, the attrition rate has been in the range of 3 percent to 11 percent. Students involved with the program also maintain high grade point averages, with half of this year’s freshman participants maintaining a GPA of 3.5 or better. Upper-class peer mentors benefit from the program as well, with the majority maintaining better than a 2.75 cumulative grade point average. The NIA Mentor program produces the desired results of lower attrition and higher achievement by developing a community of participants who nurture and help each other to become better students.



## 2004

**State University of New York at New Paltz (NY)***EOP Freshman Year Experience*

The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) Freshman Year Experience is a proactive, intensive program for underrepresented students at SUNY New Paltz. The program serves 105-135 freshmen per year, selected on financial need and academic eligibility. Eighty percent of the students come from inner-city high schools, 60 percent speak English as a second language or are bilingual, and approximately 98 percent are first-generation college students.

The EOP Freshman Year Experience seeks to make a meaningful connection with each individual student as soon as possible through mentoring and classroom experiences. The program structure supports and increases the student's time on challenging academic tasks. And finally, the program uses a comprehensive monitoring system to keep an eye on student progress and use active outreach techniques to intervene early when necessary.

#### **Using Orientation, Coursework, and Counseling to Promote Success**

SUNY New Paltz has refined the EOP program over the years, making it more intensive and, to promote participation, offering it for college credit. Currently, the program involves:

- A comprehensive Summer Orientation Program, which is a day and a half longer than the regular orientation. This orientation helps the students prepare for the academic and social changes of college.
- A freshman seminar class, "Key Issues in the Education of Under-Represented Students," offered for course credit. The class includes writing assignments and a research paper on a career field. Using EOP advisors to also serve as the seminar instructors creates unique opportunities to further student engagement and growth.
- A Mid-Term Evaluation System, where each freshman's midterm evaluations are reviewed by an EOP advisor.

- All EOP freshmen are required to attend EOP study groups in composition and mathematics. The university monitors the students closely to make sure they comply.
- Access to academic and career advising. Students partake in classes on selecting majors and careers, along with goal setting, and also have active involvement with EOP advisors.
- EOP peer mentors also assist and interact with participants. Ten percent of an EOP student's grade is based on this contact and participation.

#### **Results**

The EOP Freshman Year Seminar program has reaped significant retention benefits for SUNY New Paltz. The EOP cohort first-year retention rate has been above 80 percent since 1995, rising from 85.2 percent that year to 88.8 percent in 2002. The 2002 freshman-to-sophomore retention rate for the cohort was also 5 percent higher than the non-EOP cohort. Furthermore, while EOP students have traditionally needed longer to graduate due to their lower academic preparation, their five-year graduation rate has risen from 27.3 percent for the 1995 cohort to 48.3 percent for the 1998 cohort.

1998

**State University of New York College at Oswego**  
**fka: Oswego State University (NY)**  
*Johnson Hall First-Year Residential Experience Program*

Oswego State University, enrollment 9,000, is a part of the State University of New York system. The university has seen extraordinary retention results in a small pocket of its campus from the recent development of its Johnson Hall First-Year Residential Experience for first-year students.

On a campus where the majority of students live in residence halls, Johnson Hall is a three-story hall that houses approximately 175 students. The hall, which was renovated to include classroom and office space, is served by a team of 16 staff—a live-in, fulltime director, 12 resident peer mentors (a new position on the campus), two faculty mentors, and a graduate assistant. Including the program coordinator, this team includes 10 more staff members than other halls on campus of comparable size.

#### **Program Components**

Increasing academic success and student retention are the ultimate goals of the First-Year Residential Experience. Central to achieving these goals is an impressive line-up of in-hall services and programming. Each year,

- The hall director sponsors six programs within the Wellness programming model focusing on spiritual, physical, intellectual, vocation, emotional, and social development.
- Resident mentors facilitate two additional programs, one “academic,” and one “social.”
- Faculty mentors coordinate four additional faculty-based programs (examples have ranged from discussing internships to facilitating study groups to leading a
- Panel discussion on “The Psychology of Freshmen”).
- Faculty led a one-hour freshman seminar course that is unique to the program; the

course content addresses transitional issues and encourages student involvement and participation in the academic life of the campus.

Also central to the First-Year Residential Experience is a contract students sign that outlines the hall’s expectations for residents. Students agree to attend and actively participate in floor meetings, enroll in the freshman seminar course, participate in learning experiences sponsored by hall staff and faculty, regularly attend hall council, be an active learner inside and outside the classroom, strive to find a healthy balance between academic expectations and social activities, and participate in creating a community living agreement. The latter helps each floor to establish guidelines for behavior and expectations above and beyond specific policies, such as establishing specified quiet hours.

#### **Results**

A return rate of 87.7 percent for Johnson Hall residents in the fall of 1997 compares very favorably with a 71.5 percent return rate for other campus residents. In addition, residents of the hall have earned higher average GPAs, have withdrawn from classes less frequently, and have avoided being disqualified academically from readmission at a greater rate. Remarkable levels of attendance at in-hall programs and events offer still more evidence of the hall’s success. Students attribute the program’s success to a “feeling of family,” support from peer educators, attendance at programs delivered in the building, and the development of special friendships and bonds among the residents.

In addition, the tremendous success of the program is encouraging the development of other academically based retention efforts at the university.

2001

**Stevenson University**  
**fka: Villa Julie College (MD)**  
*Partnerships and Student Success (PASS)*

A one-on-one mentoring program for conditionally admitted freshmen has been successful for Villa Julie College, Stevenson, Maryland. The program has paid for itself many times over in additional tuition revenue.

**Campuswide Efforts**

In fall 1996, Villa Julie College established its mentoring program, Partnerships and Student Success (PASS), based on the philosophy that “students’ persistence at Villa Julie College reflects our involvement and commitment to them.” The target population is generally ranked in the lower 20 percent of a graduating high school class and needs more personalized attention than other enrolling students.

PASS participants learn of their mandatory assignments to the program in their conditional acceptance letters from the college. Participants are invited to an informal summer event hosted by their future mentors from among faculty, staff, and administration. During this initial orientation, students begin to recognize and become familiar with the goals of PASS:

- To create an immediate partnership between student and mentor in which both *share a commitment to a common goal—the student’s success*
- To unify the efforts of faculty and student services in supporting students
- To influence students’ social interaction so they feel connected and inspired to get involved in campus life
- To integrate “at-risk” students, not isolate them

**Effective Support**

To support participants, PASS includes:

- Mandatory weekly sessions between student and mentor
- An easy-to-follow manual for mentors outlining early intervention and the importance of communication in persistence
- Reinforcement of the college’s required Freshman Seminar
- Referral of students to additional assistance resources
- Encouragement from mentors to engage in campus activities and organizations
- Networking of students with faculty, academic advisors, personal counselors, and other student services.

**Results**

Before the program was developed, only 50 percent of conditionally accepted students at Villa Julie College earned final GPAs above 2.0. Freshman-to-sophomore retention rates for these students were near 65 percent. After participating in PASS, more than 70 percent of students earned final GPAs above 2.0, leading to a dramatic decrease in the number of students on academic probation. Freshman-to-sophomore retention rates climbed to nearly 73 percent.

Institutionally, the increase in revenue from higher retention rates more than covers the minimal costs of the program, and 94 percent of mentors volunteer again. According to the PASS coordinator, the program has produced not only a camaraderie among colleagues of various departments, but also has allowed non-faculty employees to “feel the pulse” of the students they serve.

1990

## Suffolk County Community College (NY)

*The Eastern Campus Retention Program*

The goal of the Eastern Campus Retention Program is to increase retention of students by providing them with the skills and support necessary to succeed, focusing on the entire general college population. Suffolk Community College maintains the attitude that first impressions are very important, even in the case of institutions. The impression is not only made through people, but also through literature, brochures, catalogs and other items the prospective student may come in contact with.

At the onset of the student's integration into campus life, the focus is on orientation, freshman seminar classes, training and workshops for faculty and other key personnel who have initial contact with new students, and Universal testing.

Orientation for all students is carried out by the director of student activities, dean of students and the Office of Instruction. Training sessions are scheduled each semester for faculty and personnel. Emphasis is placed on training for the freshman seminar course. Topics cover the basic tools needed for student success. Topics directly related to a student's academic performance include time management, note taking, reading, testing and resources. This one-credit course is required for graduation for all full-time day students.

Academic advising is available for all students, full- or part-time. An advisor is assigned to each matriculated student at the time of registration. The counseling office is open day and evenings; advisors, career counselors and learning disability specialists are valuable resources available to students.

The college skills center is open daily for use by all students. Students enrolled in developmental courses have scheduled hours in the skills center. In addition these students are encouraged to use the skill center on a regular basis, not just when having difficulty. Tutoring is available to all students through the college skills center.

Suffolk County Community College has also implemented an early notification system which identifies potential student problems early in the semester. This encourages faculty to evaluate students and intervene before it is too late.

Course prerequisites have been entered into the computer which accommodates prerequisite blocks. These computer blocks prevent students from enrolling in courses that they are not prepared for, again maximizing their chances of success. These prerequisites are periodically reviewed and constantly under revision.

Since 1986, Coop/internships have been offered in academic and career areas; these provide students with "hands on" experience in the area they are pursuing. These programs benefit the students academically and professionally, as well as financially.

Lyceum studies is a thematic lecture program offered on the Eastern campus for student enrichment and personal interest. The purpose of this course is to award one unit of academic credit to students who attend various Lyceum events during the semester and demonstrate that they have gained knowledge about the thematic topics.

From 1985 to 1988, the program increased fall to spring from 72 percent to 90 percent, which is when the highest number of students were dropping out.

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1993

## Suffolk University (MA)

### *Retention Management Program*

Suffolk University is a four-year private institution located in the heart of downtown Boston. Few institutions ever achieve the level of comprehensive retention management developed by Suffolk. Like the best-retaining institutions, Suffolk emphasizes graduating rather than simply admitting students. The University also recognizes that retention must actively be managed by some group or individual empowered to act. Suffolk makes use of both approaches through a dean of enrollment and retention management as well as a Retention Management Committee.

#### **Program Description**

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Retention efforts begin prior to enrollment and continue through several semesters, with a particular focus on the first year. Pre-enrollment activities include a free summer enrichment program. After students enroll, Suffolk is very active on a number of fronts in promoting retention and student success, advising and orientation, tutoring and other academic support, early warning, financial aid and telemarketing, to name only a few.

The success of Suffolk's retention program relies heavily on advising. Special faculty advisors are assigned to work specifically with high risk cohorts of students, such as open or undeclared majors. Learning Center personnel meet with students in high-risk courses to explain the available counseling and tutorial services. Intervention techniques, including an early warning system, have been established. Adult and nontraditional students meet with adult learner counselors to determine how their needs can be met. Students needing assistance are

monitored continually by the Retention Management Committee to ensure that they stay in school.

The dean of enrollment and retention management communicates monthly via a mailing to all students. In addition, those students on academic probation are sent letters of encouragement by the dean, and conversely those students who are removed from the probation list receive letters of congratulations. Telemarketing is used extensively to promote retention. Throughout the first semester, new students are contacted by staff and upper-class students. Continuing students are contacted during the summer between the second and third semesters, and even former students are contacted periodically. A financial aid advisor is assigned to assist all new freshmen and transfer students with questions. Special attention is given to adult students. The role of financial aid in attrition is continually evaluated, and the number of students who leave for financial reasons is reported to the president. Students who for academic reasons must take a reduced course load are given a "voucher" to take one free course in the summer.

#### **Results**

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Because of its comprehensive program, Suffolk has a strong record in the retention of diverse groups: freshmen, transfers, international students, high-risk students and graduate students. Perhaps more importantly, 75 percent of freshmen and 86 percent of transfers indicate they would choose Suffolk again. Recently, the University was selected to be part of a special PBS broadcast on successful retention programs.

1993

## Syracuse University (NY)

### *Student Academic Improvement Program (SAIP)*

The Student Academic Improvement Program addresses the problem of first- and second-year students who are unable to academically handle the freedom and responsibility of college. SAIP is designed to improve student retention and to create a more student-centered environment. Students participate in a structured academic support program beginning with an intensive experience during the summer session and continuing, as necessary, through the academic year. SAIP was piloted as a summer program in 1992 with 36 students from the College of Arts and Sciences.

#### **Program Description**

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SAIP students enroll in one or two lower-level credit courses and a College Learning Strategies course. Students are also required to take part in weekly meetings with an academic advisor, regularly scheduled counseling sessions, and a supervised residential program with graduate students as mentors. The summer also includes a collaborative learning component consisting of group study sessions, departmental clinics, and faculty mentoring and tutoring.

Students are invited to participate in the program if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Semester or cumulative GPA of less than 2.0, semester of academic deficiency or limited progress;
- academic suspension at the end of the first or second year; or
- readmission following suspension.

After an intake interview is conducted, if it is determined that a student would benefit from the program, the student must sign an academic contract committing to the program requirements. Like most successful retention

programs, SAIP is continually evaluated and improved. The steering committee which initiated the program has been expanded and now serves as an advisory council. Associate deans from each of the colleges, along with the University's vice president for undergraduate studies, meet regularly to discuss the operation of the program, talk over problems and share techniques for dealing with students in academic difficulty.

#### **Results**

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Outcomes at the end of the summer pilot program were better than expected. Of the 36 participants, 18 had been suspended at the end of their first year. As a result of their summer performance, all but two were eligible to register for the fall term. Fifteen students had changed status from suspended to one term trial. Twelve students improved status from one term trial to good standing. Seventy-seven percent of the students achieved a GPA better than 2.0, and 33 percent of that group achieved a GPA of better than 3.0. However, many of the students successful in the summer were not able to maintain this progress during the fall semester with the absence of the structured support. In order to provide more long-term benefits, Syracuse plans to extend the 1993 summer SAIP through the 1993-1994 academic year. Projections of the impact of SAIP on the recovery of institutional tuition revenue indicate that by serving 150-200 new students each year and positively affecting the retention rate of these students, the potential tuition recovery to the University over the next five years exceeds 7 million dollars.



## 2011

### Temple University (PA)

### The Russell Conwell Center (RCC)

*Summer Bridge Program: An Academic Immersion  
& Retention Intervention Program*

The Russell Conwell Center (RCC) at Temple University is a comprehensive retention center for academically at-risk, underprepared students. To prepare these students for the rigors of college, build their academic skills, and transform them from high school graduates to pending University Scholars, the students are required to complete a six-week, summer immersion Summer Bridge Immersion Program. The program is comprised of three critical components: completion of courses in math, English, and Academic Seminar (more rigorous versions of the credit-bearing university course counterparts); an academic seminar, modeled after university courses; connectivity to the RCC community, academic advisor, counselor, and program services; and university acclimation and adjustment.

#### **Summer Bridge Program: An Academic Immersion & Retention Intervention**

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The Summer Bridge Program annually serves 250-300 students. Each student completes several phases to help them build academic skills and ease the transition to college culture and expectations.

#### **The key phases are:**

- *Spring Outreach to Admitted Students* – Students are contacted throughout the spring by RCC staff and RCC Student Ambassadors. Students complete online assignments, attend the RCC Reception at the Temple University open house for accepted students, attend a Pre-Bridge orientation session, and chat with RCC bloggers to begin the college transition process.
- *Placement Testing and Assessment* – Students complete the Temple University placement test to determine their skill/course levels in math and English, as well as several other assessments including the College Student Inventory™, LASSI, RCC Math Diagnostic, and a career assessment. They then develop an Educational Learning and Action Plan that guides their service plan and usage.
- *Course Instruction* – Three levels of math and two levels of English are offered to meet varied skill

levels, while the academic seminar provides time-tested academic strategies. Each course is taught for 60 minutes with a 30-minute recitation and review.

- *Tutorial Support* – Each class has a classroom assistant/tutor that tutors during the recitation, breaks, and after class, as well as leads the recitations and review sessions. As tutors teach the students within the class, they are attuned to each student's learning style and skill level. Students are also assigned to study groups, many of which continue into the academic year, to facilitate their learning process and styles.
- *Advising and Counseling* – RCC staff register students for their academic-year courses based on the major and skills demonstrated during the Summer Bridge, as well as counsel students on co-curricular engagement, social/life skills, and their career plan and career trajectory program.
- *Community Building/Interest Groups* – Weekly sporting events, board games, and student interest meetings build community, relieve stress, and connect students with program staff and one another.

#### **Results**

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Students who complete the Summer Bridge Program express increased confidence in their ability to succeed in college and in their preparedness for their courses. Examination of their pre-/post-test scores on the University Placement Test revealed that more than 65 percent of the RCC students received improved post-test scores sufficient to place them into a higher-level English class, math class, or both. Finally, student retention rates of Summer Bridge Program students increased dramatically. Fall 2010 to spring 2011 retention was 95 percent. Fall-to-fall retention rates for 2008 and 2009 for the RCC students was 88 percent and 94 percent respectively, compared to 82 percent and 80 percent for their non-RCC peers. Student, self-reported, end-of-summer satisfaction results also reveals very positive outcomes.

2003

## Texas A&M University (TX)

### *Century Scholars Program*

Students from high schools that are under-represented at Texas A&M University compete annually to be selected as Century Scholars, a joint recruitment and retention program administered by the university's Office of Honors Programs and Academic Scholarships. The program participants—consistently referred to as “scholars” to reflect high expectations—are being retained at Texas A&M at a rate significantly higher than their peers.

#### **Blending Scholarships with Support**

Currently, 41 high schools are participating in the Century Scholars program. They are located in the Dallas, Fort Worth, or Houston areas. The participating high schools have been under-represented at the university in years past and have agreed to be designated Century Scholar schools. The university has targeted these schools in fulfillment of Vision 2020, its commitment to reflect the demographic distribution of the state and provide leadership development opportunities for students. In this model, approximately 60 students are selected each year from the participating high schools to receive a \$20,000 scholarship and designation as a Century Scholar Ambassador. The students also receive a \$1,000 study-abroad stipend, guaranteed on-campus housing, and free tutoring while agreeing to the following participation requirements:

- Attend monthly Century Scholars meetings for ongoing leadership training and advisement;
- Sign in weekly at the Scholarship Office to receive updated information about campus resources and monthly meetings and to interact with office staff;
- Fulfill the role of ambassador for the university, including attending ambassador

training and assisting with student recruitment activities such as making presentations at their former high schools; and

- Meet weekly with an upper-level peer mentor throughout the first year.

The Century Scholars program has evolved over time and includes many additional components in the area of recruitment. The latter are aimed at increasing enrollments and improving the size and quality of the pool of potential scholars from the participating high schools.

#### **Results**

Since its inception in 1999, the Century Scholars program has enjoyed a cumulative 94 percent retention rate across all four years of participants. Only seven of 107 scholars have left the program. This compares to the university's overall retention rate of 88 percent in fall 2001. Additionally, in the area of recruitment, the program has helped generate an increasingly competitive pool and a higher number of applicants.

Century Scholars are also demonstrating higher levels of achievement academically. The percentage of students in “scholarship good standing” (above 2.75 cumulative GPA) has steadily increased, as has the percentage of students in “university good standing” (above 2.0 cumulative GPA).

“We are proud of our students' level of achievement,” notes Dr. David Prior, the university's executive vice president and provost. “The Century Scholars program provides a sense of family and belonging that is vital to their success.”

1989

## Texas A&M University (TX)

*Multicultural Services Center*

The Multicultural Services Center at Texas A & M University was established to retain Black, Hispanic, and other minority students. The Center and its staff offer the ethnic minority student academic and personal counseling, pre-professional career expectations, scholarship information, roommate referral services and education enrichment projects as well as opportunities for student involvement.

The Center provides information concerning registration, tutors, academic counselors, and professors—information which otherwise might not be obtainable without a lot of “red tape.” All of this enables students to make better decisions concerning classes, credit hours, and course requirements. Financial assistance is offered through minority scholarship resource books. Scholarship application and related information are maintained in files available for student use.

The Center also supports the I CARE Retention Program which is a support and academic survival program designed for minority students who are entering college for the first time. The program assists students academically, socially, and personally through counseling and close monitoring of each participant’s progress. Students are divided into teams of five to seven and are closely monitored by an upper-class student who provides moral and academic support. I CARE also sponsors workshops twice a month in areas such as academic survival, career planning, and human relations.

The Center serves as a liaison for companies which are interested in recruiting minorities. Recruitment efforts are enhanced by the Center’s sponsorship of receptions for interviewers, as well as provision of office space for interviewing. The Center also acts as a liaison for INROADS, a minority student internship

employment program, and its counterparts in the Houston and Dallas/FT. Worth areas. This program recruits college students for summer internships positions with companies in their respective areas and provides job skills and individual development training for participants. Minority Freshman Orientation focuses on minority concerns as well as on freshman concerns. The main thrust of the program is preservation of the student’s cultural identity and the promoting of self-esteem. Staff members of the Center host seminars on a range of topics relating to ethnic minorities, including video presentations and panel discussions on racial sensitivity.

Racial Awareness Pilot Program (RAPP) is an outreach program that seeks to educate Texas A & M students about ethnic diversity by exposing students to different cultures, and providing safe, secure environment in which questions can be posed and learning can take place. The Center encourages the participation of Anglo student, faculty, and staff in their conference outreach programs.

The University Awareness for cultural Togetherness (U. ACT) was formed to meet a set of interrelated goals: to develop a conference for students leaders focusing on respect for diversity; to expand the Racial Awareness Pilot Program and Cultural Retreat; to further examine campus literature and messages in conveys about Texas A & M’s diverse student body; and to develop and implement Bryan/College Station community service program to further educate the community.

As a result of the Center’s efforts, Texas A & M has the highest minority retention rate—88 percent--of any public institution in Texas.

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1992

**Texas A&M University Kingsville**  
**fka: Texas A and I University (TX)**

*Leadership Ladder Program*

Texas A & I is one of seven universities in the mainland U.S. with an Hispanic student population of 50 percent or higher. In a highly innovative move to promote student achievement and retention, Texas A & I University created a separate academic college for all freshmen, called College I. As part of the retention efforts for the new College, staff developed the Leadership Ladder Program.

The Leadership Ladder Program takes “role model students” and uses them to assist in the development of all freshmen through mentoring and peer counseling. This program provides freshmen with peer guidance and “cross-generational” support from students who have successfully completed certain levels of college work. The retention effort is two-fold. First, it provides peer and academic support for all new freshmen. Second, it recognizes successful role-model students and encourages them to graduate.

LLP student leaders participate in applied leadership experiences 12 to 19 hours per week for which they receive a stipend. They are responsible for the activities planned for the freshmen. In addition, the LLP is either responsible for or plays a major role in several program activities:

**“Hoggie Days” Orientation and Pre-Registration Program**

Freshmen are required to attend one of the special two-day orientation and preregistration

programs called “Hoggie Days.” During “Hoggie Days,” LLP students provide peer academic advising to students who are undecided about a major course of study. In 1991, over 800 students and 400 parents attended.

**Academic Rescue Program (ARP)**

The ARP is an early academic warning and intervention process involving faculty and freshmen. Faculty members identify students in their class who are having difficulty and refer them to the ARP. The LLP assumes responsibility for contacting the potentially at-risk student. LLP leaders provide peer consultation, connect students with academic support programs and provide a follow-up for the faculty. Students on academic probation are contacted by the LLP students and encouraged to get back on track. In 1991, over 750 students participated in the Academic Rescue Program, and 70 percent had successful outcomes such as grade improvement, personal tutoring or a course dropped without failing.

Other LLP activities include sponsoring the South Texas Leadership Conference and the College I Newsletter. Beginning with just a modest grant (\$10,000 per year), the LLP has developed into a major part of the College I program. LLP students have doubled the amount of personal attention given to new freshmen. Over 1,000 new freshmen participated in individual advisement conferences. In addition, freshman retention has improved.

1991

**The College of New Jersey  
fka: Trenton State College (NJ)**

*“Expectations”, An Orientation Program for New Students*

The Orientation process at Trenton State College is woven around the general theme of students becoming active participants in a community of learners. It provides entering students with important information and direction enabling them to plan their academic careers. This three-phase process starts in June and continues through the first semester.

**June Advisement Week**

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June Advisement Week is the first major orientation event for incoming students. The main goal is to involve students in the College soon after they accept their offer of admission. During this week, students meet with faculty members to complete their first semester class schedules and attend the Student Experience Workshop which provides opportunities for students to interact socially with their peers and with upper-class students. At the same time, families attend the Parent Workshop, designed to provide information related to their questions and concerns.

One of the major events of June Advisement Week is the presidents' address to students and their parents, an address which emphasizes the expectations the College holds for its students and the expectations the students should have for the College. Students are also introduced to the importance that Trenton State places on cultural diversity.

The Summer Readings are given to students during June Advisement Week. These include essays from both the president and academic vice president and an assigned book. The Readings serve a multifaceted purpose, with the main goal to expose students to the scholarship and dialogue characteristic of what they can expect at Trenton State. Discussion questions relating to personal identity, resolving conflicts

with authority, and adjusting personal values to those of the community are also provided within the Readings. These are discussed in small groups with faculty or administrators during Welcome Week.

**Welcome Week**

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Welcome Week offers opportunities for new students to interact with each other, upper-class students, and members of the faculty and staff. Students also attend departmental orientation meetings with faculty to learn “the lay of the land” and discuss departmental expectations. The highlight of Welcome Week is Convocation, a formal ceremony including new students into the Trenton State College community and stressing the College's values of service, excellence, diversity and community.

**College Seminar**

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College Seminar, a course taken during the first 10 weeks of the fall semester, provides students with the appropriate information and direction to ease their transition to college and enhance their success and retention. Through this course, students are made aware of institutional processes and their roles and responsibilities as active participants in a successful college career. Students are grouped according to their academic majors, and are encouraged to develop a relationship with peers and a faculty/staff advisor whom they feel comfortable approaching for assistance. During this course, Open Option majors (undecided) receive specialized assistance in selecting a major.

As a result of these concerted efforts, Trenton State College boasts an impressive first to second year retention rate of 91.3 percent in 1988, and a third year retention rate of 81.7 percent. Similarly, in 1989 the first to second year retention rate was 92 percent!

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2003

**The College of New Jersey**  
**fka: Trenton State College (NJ)**  
*Minority Mentoring Program*

Students of color on a predominately white campus sometimes feel lonely and isolated, especially when they first arrive. To help its students of color adjust to college life, the College of New Jersey developed the Minority Mentoring Program. The program has demonstrated remarkable success over time—including a 51 percentage point jump in first- to second-year retention.

**Support for Students of Color**

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In this model, returning upper-level students play an important role in helping first-year students feel at home even before classes begin. Upper-level students of color:

- Contact first-year students during the summer to help students begin to get acclimated.
- Lead “Focus Group” meetings each week or twice a week throughout the first semester. In these meetings, groups of 8-10 first-year students gather for social activities or to study.
- Provide one-on-one peer mentoring on a weekly or biweekly basis. In these contacts, mentors assist mentees with getting questions answered about classes or the registration process, and with getting to know other people and organizations on campus.
- Lead a cluster of seven committees composed of first-year and upper-level students of color. The committees focus on projects ranging from community service to creating a newsletter.
- Provide tutoring and organize study sessions for a variety of majors such as biology and English.
- Help plan a Minority Mentoring Conference during the first month of the school year.

College personnel supplement the above support in many ways, including organizing, training, and supporting upper-level students in their various roles; carefully monitoring the progress of each student in the program; ensuring that first-year students get connected with any available campus resources they need; and providing information in areas such as scholarship and study-abroad opportunities. Also, during their second year, students are mentored by faculty or staff members who work specifically at defining career goals, counseling, and assisting students in establishing important networks on and off campus.

Students benefit from taking leadership roles in the program throughout their four years. These leaders at times are able to participate in various leadership conferences and workshops nationwide.

**Results**

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In 1986, before the College of New Jersey developed the Minority Mentoring Program, first- to second-year retention for African-American and Hispanic scholars and general admission students stood at 40 percent. Today, an impressive 91 percent of these students return for their second year.

Comparisons with state averages also show the strength of the program. The most recent State of New Jersey statistics available show that first- to second-year retention for African-American and Hispanic students stood at 78 percent, 13 percentage points below the College of New Jersey’s rate.

Higher graduation rates and faster college completion rates have also been demonstrated. From 1995-2001, the graduation rate for students in the Minority Mentoring Program was 77 percent at an average of 4.41 years. This compares to the statewide graduation rate average for African-American and Hispanic students of 29-30 percent at an average of 5.05 years.



2011

## The Community College of Baltimore County School of Health Professions (SHP)

*Maximizing Student Success*

The Community College of Baltimore County's (CCBC) School of Health Professions (SHP) employs a three pronged, mutually-reinforcing approach to student achievement, retention, and attainment. Operating as an open enrollment institution with 70,000 students, 24 percent of students Pell-eligible, 69 percent testing into developmental courses, and nearly half being students of color, CCBC is an Achieving the Dream institution that selected these initiatives from grant-funded pilots that demonstrated the most potential to bring to scale. The pre-entry study and life skills Tools for Success workshops, Supplemental Instruction, and Early Alert Tutoring provide a solid foundation for student success in the School of Health Professions.

### **School of Health Professions Maximizing Student Success**

CCBC's School of Health Professions (SHP) implemented the Maximizing Student Success program by taking the best of the retention activities it employed and packaging them into a comprehensive approach. The project's impact derives from its capacity to yield compensatory outcomes, raising the odds of the most at-risk students to successfully complete the program. The SHP initiative also stands out in the degree of student involvement in program design, delivery, evaluation, management, and training.

#### **The specific initiatives include:**

- Tools is a workshop series providing guided practice in strategic reading, note taking, study groups, test preparation, and test taking. In addition to the academic component, Tools also zeros in on building life skills focused on self-efficacy, a positive mindset, and maintaining a school/family/work/self-care balance. Tools helps students adapt quickly to the unfamiliar aspect of a clinical program when classes begin.
- Supplemental Instruction (SI) is a weekly out-of-class study session facilitated by a high-

performing student who has already completed the course. The student SI Leader attends the class again and facilitates a structured group study session covering the prior week's most difficult content. The sessions integrate a variety of study approaches with the chosen content, thereby providing guided practice in the evidence-based learning methods using relevant content. Students benefit twice by reorganizing and applying the material to gain mastery over specific content, while they are also learning generic study approaches applicable to tackling new material.

- Early Alert Tutoring provides additional support to the small group needing individual attention due to exam or prior course failures. Early Alert Tutoring supports a rapid and systematic response to exam failures by providing immediate and specific guidance to enable students to refine, redirect, or redouble their effort. While Tools and SI are marketed to all students and conducted in large groups, tutoring resources are reserved for students whose exam scores indicate the need for more individualized attention.

### **Results**

Students who failed the first exam in their first course but who were able to rebound and pass the course increased significantly after implementation. Before this initiative, a student's first exam score was considered so predictive that very low scorers were termed unrecoverable. Between fall 2006 and spring 2008, a student failing the first exam had only a 10 to 33 percent chance of passing the course. After the intervention, between 41 and 64 percent of the students with a poor start rebounded to pass the course; further, the ability to compensate after a poor start produced gains in course passage and graduation rates by as much as 31 percent and 14 percent respectively.

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1993

## The Pennsylvania State University (PA)

### *Comprehensive Studies Program*

The Comprehensive Studies Program admits into the University low-income students who normally would not be admitted because of their low predictions for academic success. Developed over several years, the program is a broadly based set of complementary retention programs that provide a range of support services for students, beginning with the Freshman Summer Transition Program and continuing until graduation. Services provided through the CSP include assessment and diagnosis, instruction in basic skills, counseling, academic advising, supplemental instruction and tutoring, cultural and social activities, career exploration, Sophomore Transition Program, mentoring, and assistance in securing admission and financial assistance for enrollment in graduate and professional programs. Highlights include the following:

#### **Academic Year Component**

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Instructional services are provided to develop students' basic skills in English, mathematics, reading and listening/study skills. Accurate course placement is determined through a series of assessments and diagnostic tests. Group and individual counseling services are provided. Tutorial services are provided through the four support centers of the Learning Assistance Center.

#### **Summer Institute for Academic Achievement**

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Entering its fourth year, this six-week intervention program provides students an early start for adjusting to university life and for sharpening their academic skills in a more relaxed setting. To determine the academic and personal needs of each student, all SIAA participants are required to complete a needs assessment conducted by the academic coordinator.

#### **Student Needs Assessment**

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All standardized and diagnostic test results, along with diagnoses from faculty and appropriate offices, are compiled and included in the student needs assessment. This information provides the basis for an Individualized Plan of Action which is prepared for each SIAA student. In order to provide updated services to the student, a needs assessment is also conducted at the beginning of each semester.

#### **Tutorial Services**

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SIAA provides individualized and group tutorial assistance, including Supplemental Instruction and peer study groups. The tutorial offices are open seven days a week.

#### **Results**

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The program enrolls about 350 eligible students annually. Like other first-rate retention programs, the Comprehensive Studies Program achieves its goals by means of a large number of very specific objectives, such as the following: "By the end of their freshman year, 80 percent or more of students who complete Speech Communications 126, Listening and Learning Skills, will receive a grade of B or better." For the entering class of 1990, 93 percent of SIAA students persisted to the second year, compared to 91 percent of regularly admitted students. After two years, 80 percent of SIAA students persisted to the third year, compared to 88 percent of regularly admitted white students and 69 percent of regularly admitted African-American students.

1989

**The University of Virginia's College at Wise**  
**fka: Clinch Valley College (VA)**  
*Academic Advising Program*

The purpose of the Advising Intervention Project at Clinch Valley College is to improve the delivery of academic advising to all students, especially freshman and sophomores. The Program features specific intrusive advising strategies, a comprehensive campus wide student/faculty network, assessment procedures, and assessment data which shows in measurable terms the impact of the program.

The Program began as a freshman advising program. Twelve of the most distinguished faculty members were selected to serve as freshman advisors. These faculty were trained during the summer to assist the students with bonding, familiarity with college resources, and study/survival skills. By the next year the program was expanded to target not only freshman but also honor students, sophomores, underprepared students, the majors, and nontraditional students.

The success of the Advising Intervention Program relies to a large extent on the faculty involvement. All faculty advisors are provided with accurate and timely information about policies, procedures, and processes which affect the advising relationship. This information disseminated through the advising center.

An advising handbook has been developed which includes statements on policy, descriptions of campus resources and procedures, information on advising skills and techniques, specific

information on academic requirements, and samples of documents used in the advising process.

Advisors are provided with relevant advisee information before the meeting with the student. This information includes placement test information, College Student Inventory, SAT or ACT scores, and other data that has been collected and deemed relevant to assisting the student as best as possible.

Faculty advisors with specialties in various areas (such as counseling, physical fitness, etc.) are identified during the advisors' training session. Students are referred to these faculty members as needed.

The best advisors on campus were selected to be a part of the pilot program. Advisors were given the recognition they needed, and empowered with the administrations full support, when any hint of burnout appeared, the advising center became proactive and reactive. For instance, faculty bordering on burnout were provided to assist them during the semester and throughout the year.

After one year of implementation retention improved by 10 percent. The retention rate of all freshmen from the fall to spring semesters rose from 85 percent to 92 percent and the return rate from spring to sophomore year rose from 62 percent to 72 percent.

1994

**UMDNJ – Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (NJ)***Biomedical Careers Program*

The Biomedical Careers Program is an eight-week summer academic enrichment program for minority and/or economically/educationally disadvantaged undergraduates interested in the health care professions or biomedical research. This continually evolving initiative aims not only to improve retention and graduation of already enrolled minority/disadvantaged students, but also to fill the pipeline of premedical students from populations currently under-represented in medicine, other health professions and the biomedical sciences.

The program was begun in 1978 through the joint efforts of faculty members at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey - Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. The program is sponsored by faculty and administration at these two institutions and by the New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund.

From its inception, the BCP was designed as a science enrichment program rather than as a remedial/tutorial program in basic pre-professional courses. Faculty seek to engage students in the excitement of science by actively involving students in laboratory experimentation. They also work closely with students to enhance written and verbal skills to enhance the learning process.

**Program Description**

The BCP offers three different curricula designed to meet the needs of students at all undergraduate levels. Retention goals for Phases I and II of the program are to provide academic enrichment and nonacademic support to enable higher percentages of participants to continue as academically competitive science students. For Phase III students who are within a year of graduation, the goal is to assist them in gaining

admission to medical schools or other health professions schools or to graduate science programs. Each phase offers academic courses and laboratory activities appropriate for the student's academic level which are complemented by career-related counseling support. The academic component consists of science lecture courses, major laboratory experiences and communication skill-building activities. The counseling components involve biomedical careers conferences, field trips, hospital work and research/clinical seminars as appropriate to the student's academic level. The BCP currently serves approximately 60 students each summer in all phases.

**Outcomes**

Of 289 students enrolled in the BCP summer enrichment program during 1978-1992, 262 (90.7 percent) graduated from college and another 3.8 percent were expected to graduate. BCP students identified as at-risk early in their academic career have successfully gained admission to graduate and/or professional schools. More than 50 percent of participants who have graduated from college were accepted to medical, osteopathic medical, dental, podiatric or chiropractic schools, or to graduate programs in clinical psychology, public health or the biomedical sciences. Eighty-four percent of these students entered medical school.

Students participating in BCP have also done well at the graduate and professional schools they attended. Of the 54 BCP students who matriculated at U.S. medical, osteopathic medical or dental schools between 1978 and 1989, 83 percent have graduated and another 11 percent are currently enrolled. It is anticipated that 93-94 percent of these matriculants will successfully complete health professions educations.

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1994

## University of Alabama at Birmingham (AL)

*Alabama Alliance for Minority Participation*

The University of Alabama at Birmingham serves as the lead institution for the Alabama Alliance for Minority Participation. Participating organizations include the National Science Foundation, eight historically black colleges and universities, two majority universities, and five national and international businesses. The alliance focuses its efforts on increasing the number of minorities receiving bachelor's degrees in science, engineering and mathematics in Alabama and portions of Mississippi.

Other participating colleges and universities include Alabama A&M University, Alabama State University, Miles College, Oakwood College, Talladega College, Tougaloo College, Tuskegee University and the University of Alabama in Huntsville. When the program began in 1991, the major barriers to retention and graduation were determined to be financial problems and academic preparation.

### **Specific Goals and Objectives**

The goals of the program are 1) to provide interventions in the college environment and academic programs that will retain and increase enrollment of minority students in science, engineering and mathematics, and 2) to double the number of minority students receiving bachelor's degrees in these disciplines.

### **AMP Components**

- AMP Scholars is a group of high-achieving minority students forming a core of successful role models at each alliance institution. These students lead study groups and serve in AMP Drop-In Centers.
- Summer Research Internship Programs involve students in research activities, mentoring and science career seminars.
- Student Summer Conferences bring students from alliance institutions together to present Summer Internship projects, share

experiences and meet graduate students, minority scientists and other role models.

- Institution Mentoring Programs involve AMP Scholars and faculty mentors in academic guidance activities.
- Drop-In Centers at each institution are designed to assist students through group study sessions. They are staffed by faculty and students and equipped with computers and appropriate software.
- Faculty Conferences bring science and engineering faculty from alliance institutions together to discuss and make recommendations regarding retention, curriculum reform and student progress in the science "gatekeeping" courses. Notable speakers are invited to give a national perspective.

### **Retention Results**

A retention study of the AMP program conducted by the University of Oklahoma compared retention rates at the eight alliance institutions with those of selective and highly selective institutions from the Southern University Group (SUG).

Graduation rates within six years for black students at AMP institutions were 31.6 percent compared to 27.7 percent at selective SUG institutions. Within AMP institutions, the first to second year retention rate for black students who were first-time freshmen in science, engineering and mathematics was 68.4 percent higher than the overall retention rate for all Black students.

Participating AMP institutions envision continuing the alliance beyond the five-year duration of NSF funding, and will continue to seek scholarship funds from the business community to support the project.

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2003

## University of Alaska Anchorage (AK)

### UA Scholars Program

Like most successful retention programs, the program at the University of Alaska Anchorage has been developed with continuous improvements over time. Now, after four years, the university's program—University of Alaska Scholars (UA Scholars)—is currently demonstrating its strongest-ever results.

#### **A Gradually Unfolding Program**

The university's Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) operates the UA Scholars program for approximately 200 new students annually from throughout Alaska. The program offers an \$11,000 scholarship over eight semesters to the top 10 percent of graduates from qualified Alaska high schools. The selected scholars are from urban areas as well as remote rural areas where the graduating class may consist of only one student. The diversity of UA Scholars is much higher than the university's student population as a whole.

Many program components have gradually been added over time. New scholars currently:

- Receive numerous mail, e-mail, telephone,
- and face-to-face communications prior to matriculation;
- Attend a special track in the summer orientation program;
- Attend a reception hosted by the chancellor;
- Attend a scholarship briefing designed to communicate expectations for new scholars, incorporated with the chancellor's reception (attendance mandatory);
- Receive reports of academic progress in the initial weeks of the fall semester;
- Meet with their instructors to review the academic progress reports in the initial weeks of the semester; and

- Benefit from having one point of advising contact by an advisor in their major.

Tracking and continuous improvement have been constants in the program's development. For example, the university initially called for academic progress reports to be issued by mid-semester. Research showed that this was too late to have the intended effect. Thus the university began requesting the reports starting with week two of the semester through week six of the semester.

The scholarship briefing with required attendance is another example of a recent, successful change to the program. At the inception of the program, attendance at the orientation and reception was roughly 50 percent and neither event required attendance. Now, attendance at these events is 98 percent.

#### **Results**

Soon after the UA Scholar program began in 1999, the university set a five-year goal to increase scholars' persistence to the second term by 4 percent and scholars' retention to the second year by 3 percent. Both goals have already been met. First- to second-term persistence has risen from 88 percent to 91 percent and first- to second-year retention has risen from 71 percent to 74 percent.

When compared to the university's overall retention rate, the program also shines. For fall 2002, the 74 percent retention rate for program participants was 10 percentage points higher than the university's overall rate of 64 percent. In addition, for spring 2003, the program's 91 percent first- to second-term persistence rate was 6 percentage points higher than the university's overall rate of 85 percent.

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1997

## University of California, Los Angeles (CA)

### Academic Advancement Program

At UCLA, more than 7,100 underrepresented, first-generation, and low-income students participate in an empowering vision each year through the Academic Advancement Program (AAP). The vision asserts that all AAP students have earned their right to be at UCLA, are capable of excelling academically, and are intellectually capable of graduating and then pursuing graduate and professional study. The AAP vision has spawned innovations in programming and, most importantly, has resulted in steadily increasing graduation rates for AAP students.

#### **8 Components for Student Success**

The components of the UCLA program encourage students to excel and become self-reliant.

Here are a few highlights.

1. *Spring conferences for prospective students and their families.* Held every April and May, these on-campus conferences provide an early introduction to campus resources and the components of the AAP program.
2. *Six-week summer academic bridge programs for freshmen and transfers.* In these programs, AAP students live on campus and enroll in two university courses that meet requirements for graduation. Students get an early exposure to the academic rigor of UCLA while being surrounded with close personal attention from teaching assistants and tutors. As a result, students begin to feel comfortable with UCLA and its expectations. Tuition, housing, and boarding expenses are covered if the student's expected family contribution is less than \$2,000.
3. *Professional and peer counseling.* Nine full-time professional counselors and 24 trained, upper-division peer counselors comprise a special AAP Counseling Unit that has responsibility for AAP students until they graduate.
4. *Peer tutoring in more than 450 courses.* Successful upper-division AAP students tutor to achieve academic excellence, not remediation, by getting students to develop their reading, writing, quantitative reasoning,

and analytical and critical thinking. Students assume responsibility for the learning that occurs. Collaborative learning groups are established among tutees.

5. *Mentoring for graduate school.* UCLA graduate students from the population AAP serves inspire AAP students to consider graduate study and a career in academe. Services include, but are not limited to, counseling, faculty roundtable discussions, workshops, seminars, and a letters-of-recommendation mailing service.
6. *A select program for 200 first-generation, low-income freshmen.* This comprehensive, federally-funded program called PLUS, Program Leading to Undergraduate Success, provides intensive personalized services including counseling, peer counseling, tutoring, workshops, and social and cultural programs.
7. *Scholarships.* Thirty-nine scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,500 are awarded each year to recognize the academic achievements of AAP students.
8. *Computer lab.* A special computer lab for AAP students offers access to computers and computer literacy workshops.

#### **Strong Results**

Graduation rates climbed 11 percentage points to 68 percent for the freshman AAP cohort of 1990, up from 57 percent for the freshman AAP cohort of 1984. Even more impressive, the four-year graduation rate of the community college AAP transfer cohort of 1990 reached its highest point ever at over 72 percent, an increase of 14 percentage points over the graduation rate of the AAP transfer cohort of 1984.

The university also reports that AAP students as a whole are receiving more scholastic awards, participating in ever-greater numbers in honors programs, in faculty research projects, receiving higher grades, and going on to graduate and professional schools at the highest levels in the program's history.

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2003

## University of California, San Diego (CA)

### *Oasis Summer Bridge Program*

For more than 25 years, the University of California, San Diego has been focusing extra attention on a small group of first-year students who are less likely to persist than their peers. The OASIS Summer Bridge Program, begun in 1978, successfully serves 150 of the approximately 4,000 freshmen annually who attend the university.

#### **Support for Disadvantaged Groups**

Students from “educationally disadvantaged” high schools, defined as high schools with high poverty rates among their students and low rates of matriculation to postsecondary education, are the focus of the Summer Bridge Program. Typically 80-90 percent of these students are from under-represented ethnicities such as Chicano or African-American. Participants have been shown to be more likely than their peers to be low income and first-generation, and to have significantly lower SAT scores.

The Summer Bridge Program is run by the learning center within the university’s Office of Academic Support and Instructional Services.

The program sets high expectations and provides subsequent high levels of challenge and support by asking participants to:

- Enroll in two, four-unit summer courses, one aimed at increasing students’ understanding of the role of higher education and the other focused on math and science enrichment activities;
- Live for four weeks in a highly structured, intensive residential environment under the leadership of trained peer advisors/resident assistants. The peer advisors provide individual and group counseling and assist with introducing students to critical campus resources such as the student health center and psychological and counseling services;
- Sign a contract to utilize OASIS support services throughout their first year;

- Meet regularly throughout their first year with an academic transition counselor, the same peer advisor who served as their residential assistant;
- Attend regularly scheduled OASIS workshops and/or individual conferences throughout their first year in math, science, writing, and study skills.

The Summer Bridge Program is a cooperative effort involving a wide range of campus resources from academic to business to student services. Participants pay nothing to participate. The program is funded entirely through institutional, general funds.

#### **Results**

Despite the many factors that put them at risk, participants in the Summer Bridge Program persist and achieve at rates as high as or higher than their campus counterparts. A study of the 2001 freshman cohort revealed a first- to second-year retention rate of 96 percent, 4 percentage points above the 92 percent rate of non-participants. In addition, the same study found participants’ average GPA was higher than that of non-participants and fewer participants than non-participants were experiencing academic difficulty (GPA below 2.0).

Higher graduation rates have also been documented. For freshmen who participated in the program in 1995, 81 percent graduated within five years compared to 78 percent of non-participating freshmen.

Student evaluations, too, have shown the strength of the program. On a recent evaluation, an impressive 100 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the program aided their transition to the university.

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2000

## University of Central Arkansas (AR)

*Academic Advising Center: An Advising Model That Improves Student Retention*

Virtually every retention study in the past two decades has linked academic advising to student persistence. At the University of Central Arkansas (UCA), a unique centralized advising program for first-year students has improved retention significantly.

UCA is a comprehensive, co-educational public university located in central Arkansas. Approximately 9,000 students are enrolled in 120 under-graduate and 32 graduate pro-grams leading to 15 degrees.

### **Centralized Advising for All Freshmen**

The Academic Advising Center is a collaborative effort between the university's six academic colleges and the Division of Undergraduate Studies. While other institutions have centralized advising for freshmen with undeclared majors, UCA has centralized advising for all freshmen. Serving these students is a specially trained team of both professional and faculty advisors whose participation in the Advising Center is avidly supported by their college deans.

Practicing intrusive, developmental advising, the center serves students through several programs:

**Freshman Advising:** New freshmen are assigned to an academic advisor from within the Center based upon their major. Students are invited to meet with their advisor within the first week of fall semester. Throughout the semester, advisors maintain contact with students via telephone, e-mail, and personal advising sessions. Advising transcends scheduling classes and advisors communicate their interest in each advisee as they recognize students' birthdays and academic achievements and attend ballgames, initiations, and other events.

**Intensive Advising:** At-risk students meet three times with their advisor in sessions designed to give attention to time management, study strategies, and other academic success skills.

**Academic Interventions:** Students are contacted immediately when advisors are notified of at-risk behaviors and attitudes. Reporting faculty receive a report of the outcome of the contact.

**Mid-Term Progress Conferences:** The Advising Center has added a statement to mid-term grade reports notifying students whose GPA is below 2.00 to see their advisor immediately. Intervention strategies are implemented, and students receive the attention and assistance they need to avoid academic probation and/or suspension.

**Additional Services:** The Academic Advising Center sponsors eight Academic Success Workshops and publishes *The Advisor*, a newsletter designed to update students on institutional deadlines and policies. Individualized advising programs are also in place for special populations such as scholarship students, student athletes, undeclared majors, and students living in residential colleges.

### **Strong Results**

When the Academic Advising Center opened in 1996, the freshman-to-sophomore-year retention rate was 65.4 percent. The next year, it was 70.3 percent. Institutional research indicates an estimated revenue savings in the first year of \$43,821. Moreover, this trend has continued, and year-to-year retention averages have never dropped to pre-Academic Advising Center levels. Additionally, the freshman withdrawal rate within the most recently studied semester (fall 1999) was only 2.7 percent (down from approximately 4 percent in past fall semesters).

As one parent remarked, "A student who fails at UCA has to be determined to fail. They can't fail otherwise!"

2006

## University of Central Florida (FL)

### *Pegasus Success Program*

#### **Program Type**

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##### Comprehensive Retention Programs

The Pegasus Success Program (PSP) is a University of Central Florida (UCF) collaborative learning community that focuses on an integrated curriculum, interdisciplinary courses, and social interaction to provide a strong academic and personal development foundation to inspire students to achieve their full potential. PSP is targeted at students who fall just below the regular admission standards but show the potential to succeed with initial guidance. The program runs for six weeks prior to the start of fall semester. Fall admittance to UCF is contingent on success in summer courses taken in conjunction with the program.

#### **Pegasus Shows the Way for Students**

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In an effort to increase retention and academic success of marginally prepared students, PSP provides a structured environment for students to learn how to succeed in college. Through a combination of such things as academic advising, peer mentoring, and supplemental instruction, students are immersed into college in a controlled and guided environment. This environment provides these students with the support and guidance needed to learn how to be successful and assists with the transition to college.

The structured six-week summer program requires students to attend each scheduled event and strongly encourages them to live in on-campus housing during the program. On average, 150 students have participated each year since its inception in 1995. Upon arrival, students attend an orientation to the program where they are introduced to the schedule and concepts of the six weeks.

#### **The program includes:**

- Two pre-selected classes that ensure all PSP students get the foundation needed for future college success;
- Comprehensive weekly academic support programs (tutoring, supplemental instruction, workshops);
- Weekly meetings (both face-to-face and via e-mail) with their academic advisor coordinated

with specific assignments on such topics as goal setting and time management;

- Peer mentors;
- Learning communities including specific residence hall space;
- Freshman Seminar classes;
- A welcome program, closing ceremony, and parent/ student orientation;
- Cultural and social programming;
- Personal growth activities;
- “AcademiKit” to enhance academic skills.

PSP also utilizes the programs and services of multiple departments, including: Office of Student Involvement, Writing Center, Housing and Residence Life, Student Wellness, Police Department, Library, Diversity Initiatives, Counseling, University Testing Center, Career Services, and Consumer Credit Counseling. By using existing programs, the students are introduced to available services on campus and the entire campus is involved in the success of these students.

#### **Results**

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Overall, PSP students enter UCF with lower SAT scores (lower predictors of success), but typically earn the same or higher GPAs and have approximately the same retention rates as regularly admitted students. Since 2000, the retention rate for the PSP has consistently been 97 percent with an average freshman-to-sophomore retention rate hovering around 80 percent. Further, the 1999 PSP students have a 62 percent six-year graduation rate and 2000 students have a 59 percent five-year graduation rate.

This program provides a positive structure for reaching out to students who are underprepared for college, providing them the tools necessary to complete their college degree. Through the 10 years the program has operated, it has consistently demonstrated success.

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2007

**University of Central Missouri**  
**fka: Central Missouri State University (MO)**  
*Suspension Waiver Program*

The University of Central Missouri (UCM) created a highly intrusive, closely monitored plan for high potential students who have been previously suspended because of low grades. The Suspension Waiver Program (SWP) identifies students who, according to most student predictor profiles, should have been able to succeed at UCM and allows them to continue their academic progress as long as they meet certain criteria and agree to intrusive academic assistance. Between spring of 2005 and fall of 2006, a total of 95 students participated in the program with 79 of those students remaining at the university.

**Setting the Groundwork for Success**

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The Suspension Waiver Program takes students who have been academically suspended and gives them a chance to succeed in college. Once a student is identified as meeting the requirements and agrees to participate in the program, they sign a contract of commitment.

This program requires the student will abide by certain stipulations and provides several interventions and academic strategies, including:

- Attend all classes;
- Maintain a minimum of 2.0 GPA for the semester;
- Meet weekly with the program coordinator;
- Attend other meetings with academic advisors and faculty as required;
- Free tutoring in any subject area;
- Grade checks;
- Intensive academic advising and career advising;
- Counseling;
- Faculty consultations; and

- Access to educational development skills classes.

To drive home the seriousness of the program, failure to attend classes or the weekly meeting with the program director can result in immediate suspension from the institution. The program is organized around academic milestones throughout the semester. Students work with the program coordinator in weekly meetings and clarify personal and program goals. Students must track all important dates and deadlines in a student planner which allows the program director to keep track of individual assignments and initiate frank discussions about upcoming tests, projects, etc. Faculty feedback is solicited and tutors are assigned as needed. This invasive structure helps students learn strong study habits and time management skills, as well as requires them to make a commitment to their own academic success and be accountable for choices that impede that success. It also affords students the opportunity to request assistance with other non-academic problems, thus alleviating minor problems before they grow in complexity and negative impact on the student's academic focus.

**Results**

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The primary purpose of the program is to raise retention and graduation rates of at-risk students. It has proven to be a success. The fall-to-fall retention rate of the 95 students who participated in the program between spring 2005 and fall 2006 is 83.16 percent, 12.76 percent higher than university wide retention for all students in that time frame. Three of the students have already graduated from UCM and an additional 16 are on track to graduate in 2007. Fifty-eight of these students have continued involvement in the program for more than one semester. The average semester GPA for these high risk students was 2.23 while participating in the program, with students achieving an average increase of 0.26 in their cumulative GPA while in the program.

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1991

**University of Central Missouri**  
**fka: Central Missouri State University (MO)**  
*Suspension Waiver Program*

Central Missouri State University is joining the increasing number of institutions developing retention programs for probationary and suspension students. The Suspension Waiver Program at CMSU is a highly intrusive, closely monitored plan for students who have been suspended because of low grades. These students, according to most student predictor profiles, should have been able to succeed at Central Missouri State.

The assistant vice-president of student affairs administers the program. Probationary students are invited to participate based on their ACT scores, high school rank, college grade point average, and types of courses taken. Students, and their parents, meet personally with the assistant vice-president of student affairs to ascertain whether they will accept all of the Suspension Waiver Program requirements. At the end of the interview a contract of commitment is agreed upon and signed.

The program includes a number of intrusive methods to help the student succeed academically, including:

- Monitored class attendance
- Grade checks
- Special tutoring
- Faculty advising
- Peer group studying
- Education development skills classes

- A weekly, personal conference with the assistant vice-president of student affairs.

Although it is difficult to coordinate all of these activities and monitor the students' progress in each, the time and effort become well worth it as the students display their capability of succeeding academically. One of the most difficult parts is setting up weekly meetings with the director of the program. This weekly interview is also the most important part of the program. Students need the friendly concern as well as the firm (sometimes severe) admonishment they receive when they fail to fulfill their part of the agreement by not attending class and/or doing assignments.

Once students get their cumulative grade point average above 2.0, they are no longer required to remain in the program. However, many students still want to maintain contact with the assistant vice-president on a weekly basis to continue receiving both the academic and emotional support they had been receiving.

The Suspension Waiver Program's ultimate goal is to get students off academic probation and eventually graduate. The program started with 31 students who had been suspended at the end of the fall semester in 1989. At the end of the next semester 28 of the students in the program received a grade point average of 2.0 or better. Only three of the students fell below this standard and were dismissed from the University. In the years since, the program has continued to show similar success.



2015

## University of Central Oklahoma (OK)

### Operation Degree Completion

The University of Central Oklahoma (Central) is the oldest public institution of higher education in Oklahoma and over the past 125 years has emerged as a top metropolitan bachelor's and master's degree-granting institution with six colleges and over 100 degree options of the highest caliber.

#### Operation Degree Completion

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Operation Degree Completion (ODC) is a two-step program designed to help students and former students become alumni. Glenda Todd, an academic advisor at Central, started Operation Degree Completion in 2009 as a way to help former students who were very close to graduating but were unable to finish their degree.

The first step involves tracking students who have left the campus even after completing almost all requirements to graduate. "What if we could take an advisor out of the advising loop and have him/her focus solely on tracking these students and guiding them to their degree?" Central saw great potential and dedicated an advisor to that purpose. In some instances, the student just needed to change majors to a more general degree. In others, they needed one more class that they could take online or from the school they now live by, and in yet others, the student simply did not apply for graduation. Whatever the unique situation, Central saw an opportunity and empowered the advisor to support student degree completion.

The second step of ODC is very simple and reflects the quickly spreading trend of reverse transfers. Program staff at Central review records to see who could potentially complete their associate degree if Central were to transfer their credit back to the students' originating community colleges. The list is generated by looking for any transfer student with at least 15 hours from a partner community college and with 60 or more hours overall (those who are potentially eligible for an associate degree). Central provides unofficial transcripts to the community college for each potentially eligible student. The community college advisor then runs a degree check for each potentially eligible student. When degree requirements are completed, the advisor contacts the student regarding his/her new degree. In the event of a transcript hold at either institution, the degree can be posted, but the diploma is withheld until holds are removed.

#### Goals and Objectives

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Specifically, Central's goal has been to increase the number of associate and bachelor's degree recipients in Oklahoma by 2,292 degrees from 2012 to 2015 (2,031 associate degrees, 261 bachelor's degrees).

**Objective 1,** ODC Step 1: Expand Operation Degree Completion outreach efforts at Central to assist 261 "almost grads" over three years in achieving their bachelor's degrees.

**Objective 2,** ODC Step 1: Implement the existing Central Operation Degree Completion model at each partner community college in fall 2012 to facilitate degree completion among 1,569 stopped-out community college students over three years.

**Objective 3,** ODC Step 2: Enhance a formalized reverse transfer process with partner community colleges designed to confer degrees on a goal of 462 eligible students over three years.

#### Results

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The results of Operation Degree Completion, to date, have exceeded Central's expectations. Through two years, three-year bachelor's degree attainment goals have been surpassed with 270 students awarded. Partnerships have multiplied from three local community colleges to having partnerships and programs throughout the state of Oklahoma. Central has presented the model for replication on several regional and national scales and was invited to Washington, D.C. to review their efforts as a reverse transfer best practice in maintaining FERPA guidelines by the U.S. Department of Education. As a surprise bonus, Central has generated an additional 10,651 credit hours since the program's inception, due to students returning for their last class or two to complete their degree. This represents \$1,705,160 in additional tuition revenue. They have been recognized by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as a 2013 Advising Challenge Award Recipient, a Southern Association of College and University Business Officers (SACUBO) best practice, and have been published about through The College Board and Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly.

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1991

## University of Georgia (GA)

*Division of Developmental Studies*

The Division of Developmental Studies at the University of Georgia admits students who narrowly miss regular admission to the University and provides them with an academic environment that will maximize learning and help them develop effective study strategies necessary for continued academic success. The curricula in English, mathematics and reading enhance students' academic competencies and enable them to successfully complete the University's rigorous academic program. The counseling curriculum focuses on reducing or eliminating affective barriers to achievement.

### **English**

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The overall purpose of the English Program is to teach writing and critical thinking competence that will empower students in their personal, academic, professional and public lives by teaching students to write fluently, correctly and effectively. Various class methods are used (peer review, word processing instruction and practice, and both classroom and writing center instruction) to help students develop their writing skills; they are taught to use details, show rather than tell the action, develop organized structure, achieve purpose, and incorporate logical thinking and support.

### **Mathematics**

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In the Mathematics Program, students' skills are developed to help them succeed in their entry-level mathematics courses and other courses requiring elementary mathematics reasoning. This course focuses on a) developing the thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills of students, b) promoting the ability to make analytical transfers, and c) developing the students' mathematical work and study habits.

### **Reading**

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The Reading Program focuses on strengthening the reading proficiency of students and teaching them strategies for success in their other courses. The course covers comprehension,

reading speed and flexibility, strategies for textbook reading and studying, concentration techniques, note-taking and test-taking strategies, vocabulary, and techniques for mastering discipline-area terms and concepts.

### **Counseling**

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The Counseling Program promotes development of psychological, social and vocational life skills that facilitate success and achievement in a college setting. The program provides group and individual counseling and a course entitled "Strategies for Academic Success" which gives instruction on self-awareness, goal setting, determining priorities, anxiety management, academic planning, using campus resources and effective time management. Counselors also serve as students' academic advisors while they are enrolled in the Developmental Studies Division.

Students are placed in the appropriate section of each course based on their SAT scores, high school grade point average, Collegiate Placement Exam scores, and other placement measures. Students exit the Division of Developmental Studies when they achieve the exiting criteria for each program area within four attempts. If a student does not achieve the exit criteria within four attempts, (s) he is dismissed from the University and counselors assist them in developing alternative educational or occupational plans.

The Division of Developmental Studies has been very successful in giving at-risk students a chance to succeed at the university level. Between 85 percent and 90 percent of the students who matriculate in the Division of Developmental Studies fulfill the requirements to enroll in regular coursework and over 46 percent of these students graduate from the University of Georgia. This rate is 5 percent higher than a comparable size group of the lowest ranking freshmen.

1992

## University of Hawaii Community Colleges (HI)

### *Native Hawaiian Vocational Education Project*

Although native Hawaiians make up 21 percent of the state population, they have the highest high school dropout rate, and are very under-represented in postsecondary education and in skilled, technical and professional occupations. Begun in 1987, the Native Hawaiian Vocational Education Project was designed to increase the enrollment, retention and graduation of native Hawaiian students on all campuses of the University of Hawaii Community Colleges.

The project specifically addresses the issue of under-enrollment, low persistence and low completion rate of native Hawaiian students. Through an extensive analysis of the native Hawaiian student situation, seven features were identified as barriers: financial problems, personal problems, inadequate child care, absence of community networking, poor self-image, institutional inadequacies, and insufficient student assessment and monitoring. The NHEP was designed to implement necessary institutional changes to increase native Hawaiian student success.

Each University of Hawaii Community College (UHCC) campus has a specialist in student counseling and retention. Project activities are tailored to the particular strengths and needs of that campus. Native Hawaiian Student Retention Task Forces help in retention programs on all campuses.

Student support services focus on creating a hospitable environment for native Hawaiian students. Orientations help students gain comfort with the academic surroundings. Support groups are organized around the Hawaiian concept of ho-oponopono (making right).

Early intervention systems are in place to assist students experiencing academic difficulties, and staff are sensitized to native Hawaiians issues through programs developed by the NHEP. Standard approaches to retention are also utilized, such as academic assessment of students' preparedness, peer and career counseling, workshops addressing study skills, time management, examination preparation, and the use of support groups.

The University of Hawaii instituted a Summer Bridge program on four campuses. Over the past three years more than 200 native Hawaiian students have been recruited for these programs, and the subsequent enrollment and persistence throughout the following academic year has been over 80 percent, a substantial increase over the 50 percent baseline persistence rate for the UHCC overall.

An additional feature of the UHCC approach is the use of a longitudinal Student Tracking System, which follows each enrolled student on 130 data elements for up to 16 semesters. The system provides semester-by-semester analysis of attrition and retention and examines the effects of major programs, special interventions, or other significant factors. Most importantly, progress through the institution may now routinely be studied longitudinally.

Through a variety of programs, enrollment of native Hawaiian students increased over 25 percent in three years, and graduation rates increased by 31 percent. In addition, retention rates have increased more than 30 percent on several campuses. The NHEP was featured in a AACJC National Teleconference on Minority Student Success.

1990

## University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (IL)

*Office of Minority Student Affairs*

The Office of Minority Student Affairs, created in fall 1987, is responsible for providing leadership in developing, implementing and coordinating student support services and activities designed to assist the personal development, academic achievement and retention of the more than 2500 undergraduates whom the office services. Students receive guidance and counseling support in areas relevant to their persistence and success on the campus.

The Office of Minority Student Affairs monitors students' academic progress and makes appropriate referrals to other campus units. The OMSA supports various programs giving aid to minorities including the following: the Educational Opportunities Program, the President's Award Program, the Student Support Services Program, Upward Bound, the Educational Opportunities Affiliates Program, and the College of Liberal Arts and Science's Transition Program.

All President's Award, EOP and SSS freshmen, as well as most upperclassmen on probation are monitored and advised by retention counselors. These counselors are graduate assistants who are specifically trained by OMSA professional staff to assist students in their personal and academic adjustment to the University. The retention counselors meet with the monitored students on a regular schedule as prescribed by OMSA professional staff.

The retention counselor provides the first line of services to most freshmen. Approximately 75 percent of these services are academically related. These include assisting students in setting academic objectives, in time management

as well as career-related matters, and in making course-related referrals to academic support services. Retention counselors document their contacts with students via biweekly, midsemester and final reports.

Resources available to students include academic, financial and career counseling; a summer orientation program, which prepares students to utilize campus and community resources; subject specific tutoring and supplemental instruction in high-risk beginning courses; and individualized study skills instruction. Student participation in academic support service is documented, computerized and shared with OMSA staff and college liaison deans who use information to proactively assist students. Reports are cumulative within each semester and are distributed biweekly.

OMSA also performs outreach services, such as spring semester information sessions that are held in Chicago on Saturday mornings and are designed to answer newly admitted students' and their parents' questions regarding financial aid, placement testing, adjustment to college, campus employment, student organizations, leadership opportunities and other matters. OMSA students are assessed in study preparation and career interest in order to make counseling sessions more relevant. Students also have access to OMSA's minicomputer laboratory which offers training in word processing and other software. During the past ten years, 95 percent of freshmen served by the OMSA office have been academically eligible to return for their sophomore year. There has been a noticeable increase of 13 percent in graduation rates for black and Hispanic students.

## 2002

### University of Kansas (KS)

*Hawk Link*

The HAWK Link program at the University of Kansas originated out of concern over the attrition rates for students of color. The first-to-second year retention rate was nearly 12 percent lower for students of color than non-minority students. In 1998, the university established HAWK Link as an orientation program for students of color, growing it into a comprehensive and successful retention effort.

#### **Using Existing Resources to Improve Retention**

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The Office of Multicultural Affairs oversees the HAWK Link program, providing coordination with existing programs and services on campus. By asking existing departments to provide some funding, HAWK Link is able to share the cost thus, operating more effectively using current resources.

The HAWK Link goal is simple: to get the right information in the hands of first-year students so they can have the necessary information to be successfully retained at the university. The multicultural affairs staff person works with staff from a variety of campus departments to coordinate the program. While it focuses on students of color, the program is open to any student who wishes to enroll.

The program features many components that help students persist through their first year, including:

- A presentation about HAWK Link during recruitment visits to campus;
- A number of orientation sessions, including campus wide “HAWK Week” activities;
- Financial aid presentations for students of color, educating them about financing college;
- Several tutor and mentoring programs;
- Monthly academic success programs covering key topics such as advising and

career services, mandatory for all HAWK Link participants;

- A faculty program where two or three students are paired with a faculty member so they may discuss academic and student development issues; and
- A graduation ceremony for students that have successfully completed HAWK Link and are ready to transition to their second year.

By linking students with various departmental programs and services, HAWK Link brings greater focus to the first-year experience. From the recruitment process to mentoring and faculty programs to the HAWK Link graduation, the program enhances students’ opportunities for both academic and personal success.

#### **Results**

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In 1999, 36 students enrolled in HAWK Link. The following fall, 78 percent of those students returned, compared to 70 percent of students of color not in the program and 80 percent for the campus overall. The following year the program had even greater success: 78 participants with a first-year retention rate of 83 percent, higher than the 72 percent for students of color and higher than the campus rate of 79 percent. The program continues to gain in popularity with 114 students enrolled in 2001. Of the 114 students who participated in the program, numbers show a retention rate of 86 percent from fall 2001 to fall 2002. The university attributes much of the success to the campus wide commitment departments and staff have made to retaining students of color.

1991

## University of Louisville (KY)

*Center for Academic Achievement, “Thriving and Surviving”*

In 1984 the University of Louisville established the Center for Academic Achievement to improve the retention rate of minority students. This comprehensive office identifies, studies and enhances the factors contributing to high retention rates among minority students and provides the support services necessary to encourage their success. The Center consists of a wide range of programs to assist students in all aspects of their college careers.

The Supplemental Instruction Program assigns instruction leaders to conduct weekly discussion sessions for large introductory courses which tend to have high failure rates. These sessions focus on course content mastery while increasing students' competence in reading, reasoning and study skills.

Directed Academic Study Hours (D.A.S.H.) helps students through high-risk courses by providing content-oriented tutoring and study skills assistance on a drop-in basis. Students can attend small group tutorials and receive individual tutoring. D.A.S.H. is provided for math, English, physics, chemistry, foreign languages, accounting, and Basic and Pascal Programming.

Each student meets four times a semester with an assigned faculty mentor. Faculty mentors use an intrusive approach to assist students with course selection, exam preparation, career counseling and development of study skills. Peer Advising Leaders (PALs) are students with similar experiences, aspirations and pressures. PALs work with faculty mentors by assisting in their student outreach efforts, aiding students in their adjustment to college and networking with students regarding University services. PALs also serve as role models for students, act as a resource and function as conduits for student suggestions and program feedback.

Supplemental Motivational Aid offsets the difference between financial need and financial award and establishes an incentive for academic

work and involvement in the University. Work Incentive Program - for students whose financial need is greater than their financial award. Students pursue University departmental jobs consistent with their interests, skills and schedule. Tuition Remission Scholarship - Students earning a 3.0 grade point average in any subsequent semester may be eligible to receive a tuition grant equivalent to the cost of in-state tuition and fees.

Operation High Potential, for Woodford Porter Scholars, provides academic advising and scholarships. All Scholars are required to use the academic support services, extended study hours and mentoring when on “academic probation.” The Center attempts to address academic, personal and social concerns of minority scholars at predominantly white institutions. Prior to arriving on campus, matriculating Porter Scholars are matched with upper-class Scholars and Faculty Mentors to facilitate their transition to college.

The Exit Interview Project surveys students contemplating withdrawal. This project attempts to prevent students from leaving prematurely and works to assist and advise students of their alternatives.

Health Career Opportunities Program enhances opportunities for minority and disadvantaged students to enter and graduate from Allied Health programs or to successfully complete dental or medical school by providing Supplemental Instruction to help improve their academic skills.

At the end of six years the Center has successfully served minority students matriculating at the University of Louisville. Program participants' GPA's have risen from 2.1 to 2.4 and the retention rate has consistently surpassed the University's overall undergraduate retention rate. The Center's overall retention rate for six years stands at 77 percent while the University's black undergraduate retention rate for five years is 59.8 percent.



1998

## University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (TX)

### *Freshman Retention Program*

In just three years, the University of Mary Hardin- Baylor, Belton, Texas, enrollment 2,265, has achieved significant results in student retention. The cornerstone of this private university's retention program is effective academic advising and assistance, supported by collaborative teamwork involving all university personnel.

The Freshman Retention Program's four components (below) are facilitated by three professional staff members, four academic support counselors, and 14 tutors who work in partnership with freshmen and continually monitor and evaluate their educational goals and life values.

#### **1. Early Summer Advising, Orientation, and Registration**

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All new students and parents are invited to attend a one-day, on-campus event designed as a "day in college." A large-group presentation first provides an overview of student life, academic programs, and campus resources. Students and parents then meet with faculty, staff, advisors, and other freshmen; tour campus facilities; get questions answered one on one; and receive an approved class schedule. Importantly, students begin to form relationships that make them feel at home and welcome when returning for fall classes.

If a student is unable to attend the summer session, a telephone advising appointment takes care of advising and registration and leaves them with the clear sense that they are now bonafide freshmen.

#### **2. Enhanced Ongoing Advising and Relationships**

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The three professional staff members who do the advising in the summer Crusader Connection program or via the telephone advising program also teach 15 sections of the freshman orientation course, Success in Academics. In

addition, these three individuals serve as the advisor for the students in their course sections, enabling a constant weekly connection that builds trust and makes advisors readily available. Additional drop-in visits and advising appointments are also welcomed and planned.

#### **3. Freshman Seminar**

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Because national studies have shown that too many high school students are not properly prepared for college, the Success in Academics orientation course is required for all freshmen. This one-hour course equips students with strategies for assuring full, active participation in the process of making a successful transition to the university. Topics covered include time management, study skills, goal setting, academic skills, and personal growth. On the first day of class, each student completes the College Student Inventory of the Noel-Levitz Retention Management System™ to assist advisors in assessing skill levels and areas of need, and with assigning students as needed to academic tutors and mentors.

#### **4. Academic Tutors and Mentors**

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A team of carefully selected and trained upper-level students serves as academic tutors and academic mentors for freshman. A manual of helpful hints and strategies guides their work, along with meetings with the program director for training and reporting. The tutors are available on request from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursdays and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays.

#### **Results**

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Retention has improved steadily from a rate of 65 percent in the fall of 1993 to 79.9 percent in '94-'95 to 82.4 percent in '95-'96 to 83.4 percent in '96-'97. The university reports that faculty and staff are very supportive of the program.

1996

## University of Miami (FL)

*The Miami Commitment*

Since the fall of 1990, the Miami Commitment has offered students a unique employment program related to the students' individual career goals. The program commits to employers a student work force that is responsible, mature and interested in learning on the job. It commits to students a four year employment experience that enhances their future professional careers.

The name of the program, Miami Commitment, was carefully selected to identify the three-way partnership among students, supervisors and the administration, as well as to communicate the concept of a "guaranteed" four-year employment experience. Students are invited to participate in the program according to specific enrollment markets. Students that present a recruitment and/or retention challenge to the University are offered an opportunity to participate in the program as an added incentive to attend and stay at the University.

### **The Miami Match**

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Students who are invited to join the program provide information about career goals, skills they have and skills they hope to learn on the job. Students are then matched with employers who have jobs to offer that require the students' particular skills and can provide appropriate on-the-job training and mentoring. While most students are employed on the University campus, some of the career tracks offered lead students to off-campus internship opportunities.

### **A Value-Added Education**

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Students are offered employment and on-the-job training in conjunction with support services designed to develop career goals and help students learn to balance school, work and social pressures.

These services are in four phases:

1. **Beginning Phase:** Orientation and Adjustment. Students learn time, energy, and resource management in academic, employment and personal commitments.
2. **Intermediate Phase:** Exploration and Affirmation of Career Goals. Students explore how their interests and aptitudes relate to their academic and career choices. Those who are more confident about their major and career decisions can participate in activities which relate academics with career goals.
3. **Advanced Phase:** Commitment to Career Action. Students prepare to move from career planning into action by focusing on resume writing and interviewing skills.
4. **Final Phase:** Commitment to the Future. Students and support services focus on making the transition to careers or postgraduate studies.

### **Committing to Persistence, Preparing for Life**

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The program is designed to enhance the student's academic experience while contributing to the development of skills related to the student's career goals, thereby creating a bond for students with the University and improving persistence. As students play more important roles in departments, they feel connected to the University and tend to take ownership, not only as students, but as employees. In turn, supervisors get involved in the student's academic program in order to insure the student will remain working in their departments. Since the program began, participants have been retained from first to second year at an average rate of 83 percent compared with 79 percent for the general student population.

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2001

## University of Minnesota (MN)

### General College

Students who apply to the University of Minnesota but who do not meet regular admissions requirements have a unique option for their first years of college. That option is General College, an entire college dedicated to developmental education.

#### **Developmental Education**

Each fall, General College admits approximately 875 new first-year students. This year the average ACT score for students in the General College was 20; the average high school class rank was 46th. Students generally stay in the college for 1 to 2-1/2 years, after which they are eligible to transfer into a degree program within the university.

The General College has a long-standing reputation for serving bypassed student populations, and its resources are designed to do just that. The college provides students with an abundance of general education opportunities; most of the college's instructors are developmental education specialists; and a comprehensive student services office offers a variety of support programs, as well as extensive counseling, advising, community outreach programs, and student advocacy outlets.

Course options are tailored to the target population too. Included are courses in areas such as the physical and biological sciences, statistics, art, literature, history, sociology, psychology, basic writing, ESL, and mathematics. The courses meet various degree requirements, and common development skills are embedded in course content rather than offered as separate classes.

General College strives to retain students and enhance opportunities for their success through dedication to these primary goals:

- Promote multiculturalism
- Foster skill development
- Expect excellence in teaching

- Provide academic support
- Enhance student development
- Encourage civic engagement
- Conduct research to guide teaching

#### **Results**

A recent study showed that a cohort of General College students who transferred into the College of Liberal Arts achieved a higher five-year graduation rate than students who attended the College of Liberal Arts directly from high school. Graduation and retention rates for General College students have held steady for many years. Seventy-six percent of General College students in fall 1999 remained enrolled in fall 2000. Their mean GPA was nearly 2.7.

Named as one of the nation's five "Best Practices in Developmental Education" by the American Productivity and Quality Center, General College has also received the John Champaign Memorial Award for Outstanding Developmental Education Program by the National Association for Developmental Educators. In addition, many facets of the General College program have received national recognition, including the college's advisor performance review system and course Web sites.

1990

## University of Minnesota – Duluth (MN)

*College of Science and Engineering Retention Program*

The College of Science and Engineering Retention Program at the University of Minnesota-Duluth focuses on increasing retention of students by improving their undergraduate experience to maximize student success. Specifically the University of Minnesota-Duluth targets high-ability students for recruitment and for improving advisement and placement.

The College consists of nine highly technical departments. Courses in these technical fields tend to be rigorous, so in order to obtain a good “institutional fit” between student and programs, the College has begun to aggressively recruit high-ability students. Students who score in the top 20 percent of their PSAT and ACT tests and who indicate UMD as one of their choices are sent a personalized letter outlining the College’s programs and special opportunities for high-ability students. The College also stresses undergraduate research opportunities and offers a strong Honors program.

A second set of efforts focuses on the redesign of orientation. The new orientation program, now in its fourth year, focuses on the student, with academic purpose and frequent contact with faculty being the primary initial priorities. Orientation contains three major components: academic orientation, Welcome Week, and orientation seminars. During Welcome Week, freshmen are welcomed by their home departments and have an opportunity to meet their regular advisor as well as students currently enrolled in the department. Orientation seminars are voluntary small group gatherings which are designed to introduce ideas and values frequently and to increase retention by maintaining contact with freshmen through their first quarter and beyond.

As part of the effort to orient students positively, not only during the few days before classes start,

but also during the crucial first year, Freshman Connections has been introduced. This is a computer-supported individualized, telephone contact model consisting of two peer telephone contacts with every new freshman.

To improve advising at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, three steps were taken: 1) to provide faculty with extensive information on each of their advisees; 2) to provide them with clear, precise information on all collegiate majors and pre-professional programs; and 3) to train them in the use of this new information. As a result of new tools and training, all faculty advisors are now able to advise any incoming freshman, regardless of the advisee’s intended major. A two-hour training session is held in each of the departments to acquaint faculty members with details of advising and to familiarize them with the advising tools.

An innovative Computerized Retention Tracking System has been developed to provide advisors with a Student Academic Profile, a profile which enables advisors to influence student retention directly. The advisors are provided with an inventory of the student’s academic preparation and the student’s self-reported needs and interests. These data, in conjunction with individualized discussion with each advisee, provide indicators of realistic academic expectations for students.

As a result of the program, dismissals from the College dropped from 7 percent in 1985-86 to 4 percent in 1988-89. The percentage of students on academic probation has been cut in half, down from 16 percent in 1985-86 to 8 percent in 1988-89. Retention has also increased: UM-Duluth’s total enrollment grew more than 3 percent in the last year, with the College’s enrollment growth accounting for 60 percent of the total growth.

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1990

## University of Missouri at Kansas City (MO)

### *Supplemental Instruction Program*

Developed by the University of Missouri at Kansas City, Supplemental Instruction is an academic assistance program that increases student performance and retention. The Supplemental Instruction program targets traditionally difficult academic courses—those that have a 30 percent or higher rate of D or F grades and withdrawals—and provides regularly scheduled, out-of-class, peer facilitated sessions.

Supplemental Instruction does not identify high-risk students, but rather identifies high risk classes. With this approach those courses deemed high-risk offer additional assistance. Student participation in small group SI sessions is voluntary.

Assistance begins the first week of the term. During the first class session, the SI leader describes SI and surveys the class in order to establish a schedule for SI that will be convenient for the majority of students who indicate interest. From these surveys the SI leader schedules three 50-minute SI sessions per week. SI sessions occur in classrooms near the course classroom instead of in a learning center and are open to all students in the course on a voluntary basis. SI leaders are students who have previously completed this or a comparable course.

Supplemental Instruction sessions are composed of students of varying abilities and no effort is made to segregate students on the basis of academic ability. Since SI is introduced on the first day of classes and is open to all students in the class, SI is not viewed as remedial.

The SI leaders are the key people in the program. They are presented as “students of the subject.” As such, they present an appropriate model of thinking, organization, and mastery of the

discipline. All SI leaders take part in an intensive two-day training session before the beginning of the academic term. This training covers such topics as how students learn, theories of student development, instructional strategies aimed at strengthening student academic performance, and data collection and management details. The SI leaders also meet as a group with the SI Supervisor at least three times during the term for follow-up and problem-solving sessions.

SI leaders attend all class sessions, take notes, read all assigned material, and conduct three 50-minute SI sessions each week. The SI session integrates “how-to-learn” and “what-to-learn.” Students discover appropriate application of study strategies, e.g., note taking, graphic organization, questioning techniques, vocabulary acquisition and test preparation, as they review content material. Students have the opportunity to become actively involved in the course material as the SI leaders use the text, supplementary readings, and lecture notes as the vehicle for learning how to study.

The SI supervisor, an on-site professional staff person, implements and supervises the SI program. This person is responsible for identifying the targeted courses, gaining faculty support, selecting and training SI leaders, monitoring the quality of the SI session, and evaluating the program.

Supplemental Instruction students have consistently higher grade point averages over non-SI participants. Also, apparent differences include higher retention rates and fewer withdrawals and failures for SI students than non-SI students. Over 300 colleges and universities have implemented SI.

2000

## University of Monterrey (MEX)

### *Student Success Program*

Efforts to advance the academic and social integration of first-year students at the University of Monterrey have resulted in an increased retention rate, improved academic performance, and a reduction in course failure rates.

#### **Integrating First-year Students**

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Located in Monterrey in northeast Mexico, the University of Monterrey serves 9,500 students in secondary, undergraduate, and graduate programs. In 1998, the university undertook an extensive series of new initiatives, called the Student Success Program, to help students develop their sense of belonging, involvement, and commitment to the university. Designed primarily for first-year students, the program has also supported more advanced students who participate on a voluntary basis.

Among the program's goals are a reduction of the freshman dropout rate, improvement of student academic performance, and greater clarity among students concerning their life and career plans.

Components of the Student Success Program include, but are not limited to:

- Activities to integrate new students into university life: one-day orientation program offering working sessions with advisors and fellow students as well as information on extra-curricular activities plus a one-semester seminar introducing details of majors, policies, and career planning;
- Early identification of students who are at greatest risk of dropping out, using the College Student Inventory of the Retention Management System™ from Noel-Levitz plus careful monitoring of freshman academic performance;
- Optional Smart Learning Strategies workshops covering study habits and skills, held during the first two months of the semester;

- Faculty workshops on teaching methods for freshman courses;
- Cooperative learning methods woven into the classroom experience, creating links among students and faculty;
- Systematic academic advisement that takes into consideration each student's individual learning style, academic preparation, and level of personal motivation; and
- Mentoring services to support students in their life and career planning and orient them to the university's resources.

#### **Results**

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Since the Student Success Program was implemented, the freshman to sophomore retention rate increased from 89 percent in 1997 to 93 percent in 1999. Student academic achievement also improved dramatically, with grade point averages for all undergraduate students reaching an average of 8.54 on a scale of 10 in fall 1999, up from 7.80 in 1997. The percentage of failed courses also dropped from a high of 17.2 percent in 1997 to 4.8 percent in 1999.

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1991

## University of Nebraska at Omaha (NE)

### *Goodrich Scholarship Program*

The overall intent of the Goodrich Scholarship Program is to provide a college education for individuals who otherwise could not afford it, while offering a broad and meaningful experience in general education. The program has a three-pronged approach providing financial aid in the form of tuition and fees toward a bachelor's degree, a specialized curriculum emphasizing the humanities and the social sciences, and a comprehensive student services program including academic support and counseling.

The Goodrich Scholarship is based on the premise that low income students will succeed academically if exposed from the start of their college careers to vigorous intellectual stimulation, complemented by support services that enable them to have confidence in themselves and in their ability to succeed.

Admission to the program is based on the application data, financial needs, personal interview, references and other estimates of motivation and potential success. All applicants must be residents of Nebraska and citizens or legal non-citizens of the United States and must be eligible for admission to the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

The Goodrich Scholarship Program helps students of various social and ethnic backgrounds gain self-reliance as they successfully complete a degree program within the University and plan for a productive career upon graduation. Students are assisted by a pool of multicultural professionals who are willing to interact on both a personal and academic level with students. This contact is achieved by the faculty combining the role of instructor and counselor. Faculty also provide tutorial sessions in an environment where students may assess their academic skills.

Goodrich Scholars are required to take a broad range of courses to remain eligible for the Scholarship. These include English composition, autobiography, humanities, social science and critical Reasoning. These classes all focus on either strengthening the students' academic and writing skills or providing them with a broader base in cultural and multicultural perspectives. The entire Goodrich Program focuses on helping students to succeed, from a program that emphasizes development of academic skills, through a seminar leading into deeper exploration of the topics introduced in their courses from the freshman and sophomore years.

The Goodrich Program further recognizes the need of students to feel comfortable in working in a new environment. In this regard, reinforcement aimed at academic success is advanced through the Writing Lab and Study Skills Center and the Student Service Offices. This aspect of the program includes academic advising, personal counseling, tutoring, study skills, and communication labs for all new students. Each student has a Goodrich advisor to assist her/him with problem solving and planning.

It is estimated that Goodrich Scholarship students are retained and graduate at about the same rate as students in the larger university, even though they are selected as a high risk group. Those students who entered the program in fall of 1989 are retained at an 84.1 percent rate, fall of 1988 at 55.8 percent, and those from 1987 at 63.3 percent. The ultimate measure of the success of the Goodrich Scholarship Program is the rate of graduation. Over the last 10 years, Goodrich Scholarship recipients have a graduation rate of about 46 percent.

1999

## University of New Orleans (LA)

### *New Vision Program*

For students who are truly struggling to survive in college, the University of New Orleans (enrollment 15,833) is transforming academic fortunes and brightening career outlooks. Through the New Vision program, such students are persisting to graduation and helping the university advance its retention and revenues.

#### **A Focus on Struggling Students**

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Students who are eligible for the New Vision program have gone from academic warning status to probation and have still failed to meet academic requirements. Under the university's previous policy, first scholastic drop, such students would lose their eligibility to attend classes and their eligibility for Title IV aid for at least the semester of their return.

In lieu of carrying out the drop, the university designed New Vision, a success-oriented contractual agreement that allows students to immediately continue their studies at the university, provided they take the actions specified in the contract.

#### **Three Interventions that are Working**

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Under the New Vision program, students agree to the three interventions outlined below.

1. Negotiate new schedules with staff. Students meet with advising staff to create a balanced schedule that takes into consideration the student's academic ability, hours of employment, mental and physical readiness, career goals, and home responsibilities. Based on this information, students could be limited to as few as six credit hours, with no students in the program exceeding 13 hours total. In addition, students may not be allowed to take certain courses and, on rare occasions, may be denied admission into a program.
2. Enroll in an Academic Orientation Seminar. Offered for no credit, this weekly 50-minute seminar rehearses good student habits and reviews past frustrations. Key to the seminar's success is the degree of student readiness; students in the seminar are often ready to reflect on their prior experience and learn from it. Students complete complete self-evaluative exercises

that help with effective study habits, time-management techniques, classroom etiquette, test-taking, choosing the right major, and ways to develop and enhance desirable personal skills.

3. Spend at least four hours per month in the library or the Learning Resource Center. The four hours a month or one hour a week must be devoted purely to academic pursuits. This may include rewriting class notes, reading a chapter, strategizing how to approach an instructor, seeking tutorial assistance, or developing skills of good studentship.

#### **Financial Flexibility Helps, too**

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The New Vision program also extends some financial flexibility to participants, allowing students who no longer meet academic requirements to continue to secure Title IV aid and to participate in a fee deferment plan. The special New Vision appeals process takes into account the students' contractual agreement to the conditions listed above and, usually, enables students to continue to receive Title IV aid. In addition, New Vision students with good payment histories who do not receive Title IV aid may pay half of their tuition up front while splitting the balance into later payments.

#### **Results**

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The program has been getting dramatic results in retention and academic performance. Of the six cohorts tracked to date, an average of 75 percent of program participants have remained eligible for classes by achieving a 2.0 or higher GPA. Once students have experienced two successful New Vision semesters, they go back to regular student status and, usually, on to graduation. In addition, the program's retention success has produced substantial revenue gains that far more than pay the costs of the extra staffing the program requires.

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2004

## University of North Carolina at Greensboro (NC)

*Strategies for Academic Success*

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro has refined a motivation/empowerment-based model for working with probationary students, giving 350 to 400 students each year an opportunity to succeed. The university serves approximately 11,000 undergraduates, with 21 percent adult students. A majority of the students are first generation to attend college.

### **Program Attendance is Mandatory for Probationary Students**

At UNCG, students are required to participate in an eight-week academic success program if they are placed on academic probation after their first semester. The program includes a noncredit course called Strategies for Academic Success. Four key topic areas provide the theoretical framework for the program and include: personal responsibility, positive affirmations, goal setting/life planning, and self-management.

In addition, group interaction with other students and individual interaction with the instructor are important to the success of the model. Students interact in a small group setting (a maximum of ten students in each section) where reflection and self-disclosure occur regularly and students have a supportive environment in which they can easily relate to others in similar academic situations. Students sign an academic contract the first day of the program, which includes information about the academic good standing policy, the requirements of the course, and the steps to calculate their GPA. Recent additions to the program include a tardy policy and two individual meetings with the instructor.

A primary goal of the Strategies for Academic Success program is for students to gain valuable personal insight and be able to take responsibility, manage their behaviors, believe in themselves through the use of positive affirmations, and set goals accordingly. The secondary goal is for students on academic probation to meet the academic standing policy for UNCG.

### **Results**

**Retention rates:** The number of students in the program eligible to return to UNCG increased from 40 percent during 1999-2000 to 58 percent during 2002-03.

**Students' hope and optimism levels:** At the beginning of the course, the students on academic probation had much lower hope and optimism levels compared to a control group. Their hope and optimism levels increased during the course and were sustained eight weeks after the course. (Questionnaires used—The Revised Life Orientation Test and The Adult Trait Hope Scale.)

**Reasons for academic difficulty:** A survey measuring reasons for academic difficulty indicates that the program has a strong impact. The survey was given to students before and after the course. Nine of the ten subscales decreased from the beginning of the program to the end of the program (for example, the mean of the subscale time management decreased from 8.3 to 7.4, indicating that more students agreed that they had good time management skills after the program).

2009

## University of North Carolina at Greensboro (NC)

### *The Student Success Contract Program*

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) created the Student Success Contract Program to assist students returning from academic suspension or dismissal in their transition back to the university. Such students are required to participate in the program during their first semester of re-enrollment to help foster academic and personal success for the remainder of their collegiate career. Students who do not maintain the contract's parameters have their courses cancelled and are placed on immediate academic dismissal, which prohibits their eligibility for re-admission for one academic year.

#### **Starting Off on the Right Path**

In 2006, Student Academic Services (SAS) recognized that students returning from academic suspension or dismissal were lacking the support networks necessary for making positive steps toward improving their academic performance. Returning dismissed students were asked to voluntarily commit to the pilot of the Student Success Contract Program, which emphasized strategies associated with Appreciative Advising, a solutions-focused, strengths-based advising model. Of the 18 re-admitted students, 12 agreed to participate, and at the end of the fall semester, 92 percent of those participants had the grades and GPAs needed to move on to the second semester. Comparatively, only 33 percent of the six students who chose not to participate performed well enough to enroll in the second semester.

With such positive results from the pilot program, UNCG made the Student Success Contract Program a university requirement for formally suspended or dismissed students returning to campus.

The program aims to increase the academic success of formally suspended and dismissed students through:

- Mentor relationships with SAS advisors;
- The creation of individualized academic success plans based by on students' strengths and goals, and guided by academic mentors;
- Information on academic policies;
- Access to UNCG support services; and
- Relationships with professors outside the classroom.

The program encourages students to take an honest look at their academic history, personal strengths, and goals for their future, and from those, develop a plan that fosters success. The setup of the program assures that students receive the professional guidance they need while becoming knowledgeable on university policies, thus helping to bridge the gap between academic performance and goal attainment. Most importantly, the program has ensured that returning suspended or dismissed students start their re-entrance to university life on the right path for success.

1991

## University of Texas – Pan American (TX)

*Learning Assistance Center*

The University of Texas - Pan American has a high non-traditional student population with all the recognized characteristics of high risk students, first generation attempting college (84 percent), low income (70 percent), educationally disadvantaged (ACT Composite 13.0), and members of a minority (82 percent are Hispanic). In 1970 the University committed itself to providing equal educational opportunity, with the goal of raising the academic standards and increasing student retention while maintaining open admissions. The Learning Assistance Center (LAC) was established to take on this challenge to provide all students an equal opportunity to succeed in college.

The Learning Assistance Center concentrates its services on freshmen and sophomores, beginning with academic advisement at Orientation. Conducting academic advisement during orientation assures that students are placed in developmental courses, learning laboratories, and individual and small group tutoring sessions that will challenge them academically and provide them with the base to succeed in future courses at the University. Students can also attend three individual advisement sessions familiarizing them with college “jargon” and services, referral to other support services, and course planning for subsequent semesters.

The Learning Assistance Center also supports the Counseling/Advisement Component (C/AC) which monitors the students’ progress throughout their first year at the University. Beyond monitoring, the C/AC provides students with the opportunity to develop educational goals, explore career opportunities and options, and participate in a developmental counseling program which functions to enhance personal/social growth.

To enhance classroom activities, students are given individualized assistance in reading, writing

and mathematics/pre-college algebra. Realizing that even if progress is made in overcoming basic skills deficiencies and developmental courses are passed, the University realizes that students still need continuing support in college-level English and in math courses required for their degree plan. Additionally, tutoring is available in biology, chemistry, political science, history, Spanish and physics (all general education requirements). Students can also go to the Computer Assisted Instruction Lab for tutorial help.

These programs have been the base of the Learning Assistance Center, and over the last 10 years the Center’s umbrella has spread to include programs in Veterans Affairs, handicapped services, developmental education, the Texas Southmost College experiment, and Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Basic Skills training. Almost 7000 unduplicated students annually benefit from the assistance the Learning Center provides. This is almost 50 percent of the students at the University of Texas - Pan American.

The Learning Assistance Center at the University of Texas - Pan American has experienced wide-ranged success from recruitment to retention and graduation. As a result of increased recruitment efforts the institution has experienced a growth of 26.8 percent in its freshman class. All UTPA students are required to maintain a 2.00 grade point average. Even with this requirement, data shows that for the entering fall 1984 class, 67 percent of LAC participants were retained in satisfactory standing after their first year and 85 percent after their second year. Comparatively, non-participants were retained in satisfactory standings at 53 percent and 65 percent, respectively. Within the last four years these rates have increased to an average of 73 percent and 86 percent for Learning Assistance Center participants!

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1999

## University of Texas at Austin (TX)

### Gateway Program

For the past four years, a group of freshmen have been identified as students who would benefit from extra support delivered through the Gateway program at the University of Texas at Austin (48,000 students). The program is made possible through a wide collaboration among numerous campus departments. Its aim is to raise student retention and graduation rates.

#### **Extra Support for At-risk Students**

Gateway is designed for freshmen who are regularly admitted but who have additional challenges such as: being a first-generation, college-bound student; having lower SAT/ACT scores than the freshmen average of 1200; coming from a rural area high school; or being a student-athlete. Frequently such students become overwhelmed and unable to adjust to the challenges in the new environment. Gateway was implemented to help remedy this problem.

The Gateway program is offered to students after they are officially accepted by the university. Participation is limited to those who have achieved a solid academic record in high school and who are strongly motivated to meet the new demands of college, as demonstrated by references from high school teachers. The goal of the program is to equip students with the tools to succeed in college and in careers.

#### **Two Years that Help Produce Graduates**

Gateway is a two-year program that currently serves groups of approximately 100 incoming freshmen and is scheduled for expansion. The program begins with a special Gateway session for students and parents held during the regular summer orientation program. The program concludes at the end of the sophomore year. Core program elements include, but are not limited to:

- Small classes taught by selected faculty
- Separate advising offered by selected advisors;
- One-on-one meetings with Gateway coordinator;
- Weekly meetings with peer advisors who are previous program participants;

- A Leadership Retreat the weekend before classes begin, so students can meet the Gateway staff and receive an introduction to the university;
- An early-alert questionnaire on the first day of classes to identify and prioritize each individual student's support needs;
- A required educational psychology class during the first semester, Transition to Adulthood, focusing on meeting the demands of college life, both academic and non-academic, and the psychosocial development of students;
- Free tutoring, writing workshops, and supplemental instruction; and
- Monthly group activities such as attending a theatrical performance, an ice-cream social, or a scholarship-internship fair.

#### **Extensive Collaboration**

Gateway staff and faculty meet monthly to discuss and evaluate student progress. In addition, at least seven areas within the university contribute to the program's success, including: academic advisors from various deans' offices within the university; the Learning Skills Center; the Career Center; New Student Services; the Counseling and Mental Health Center; and the Student Financial Services Office.

#### **Results**

Lower student dismissal rates and higher student GPAs mark the significant success of the Gateway Program. For example, for the 1997-98 academic year, the university dismissed 4.4 percent of freshmen overall but zero students from the Gateway program. Also, for fall 1998, Gateway students outperformed their peers by earning a 3.2 average GPA versus a 2.82 average GPA for freshmen overall. Due to the program's success, the university has committed funds to expand the program to reach additional targeted populations.

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1994

## University of Texas at Austin (TX)

*Preview*

The Preview Program is designed for African-American and Mexican-American/Hispanic freshmen who are regularly admitted to the University of Texas at Austin. Its goal is to provide an academically, culturally and socially supportive environment which contributes to the success of its participants. At UT African-Americans make up 3.8 percent of the student body and Mexican-Americans, Latinos and Hispanics comprise 12.3 percent. Because of the relatively small numbers of ethnic minority students, the University realizes the importance of support programs to foster these students' academic excellence.

The Preview program has its roots in a 1985 UT College of Engineering effort which involved 25 students in its pilot program. Today, Preview serves 120 students in a variety of academic areas. The program's main objective is to retain its participants and to improve their probability of graduation.

### **Program Description**

Preview is a seven-week, summer "head start" program which provides an introduction to life and learning at the university, and an opportunity to provide a more nurturing transition than is possible in the fall semester when 48,000 other students are present. Students regularly admitted for the fall semester are invited to attend, and the university pays their tuition, fees, room and board. Selection is based upon ACT/SAT composite scores, high school academic performance, extracurricular activities and letters of recommendation.

Students enroll in six hours of regular courses for the summer. These courses may include English, mathematics, anthropology, biology, physics, sociology, philosophy, economics or educational psychology. Several of these courses have a supplemental instruction component which allows in-depth discussion and an emphasis on study skills. Weekly workshops are presented on student skills improvement. Peer Advisors, who are upper-division students and former Preview participants, are assigned to individual Preview students for weekly meetings. Cultural and social events are arranged to enhance the transition to university life. The Preview program coordinator meets weekly with small groups of participants and students are seen individually to discuss their College Student Inventory results.

### **Preview Outcomes**

Since its inception, a total of 645 students have participated in the Preview program. Of these, 12 percent have been academically dismissed as compared to traditional dismissal rates of 19 percent for UT African-American students and 14 percent for Mexican-American/Latino/Hispanic students. Graduation rates of Preview participants have substantially improved compared to graduation rates of ethnic minority students collectively. For example, the four-year graduation rate for Preview students entering in 1988 was 43 percent compared to 17.4 percent for Mexican-American/Latino/Hispanic students and 14 percent for African-American students overall.

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1998

**University of Texas at San Antonio (TX)***Risk Point Intervention Program*

The Risk Point Intervention Program, as its title suggests, is designed to provide interventional academic support to first-year, first-time freshmen. Through this program, The University of Texas at San Antonio, enrollment 17,500, has been able to advance student life and learning and see measurable retention results. The program extends help in formats appropriate to students' risk levels, gently at first, and then as the risk increases, more insistently.

**The 4 Risk Points**

Appropriate interventions are carried out at the following observable risk points:

1. Entry to College
2. Mid-Term Progress Reports
3. First Academic Probation
4. Re-entry

**Core Program Elements**

Each component of the Risk Point Intervention Program directly addresses a risk point identified above. The first risk point, risk upon entry to college, is addressed by two programs—the Academic Development Program and a program called Checkpoint.

The Academic Development Program (ADP) is an intensive, five-week, summer bridge program for freshmen admitted on a provisional basis. Students develop basic skills while building study skills and taking an academic class. In the ensuing fall and spring terms, participants are required to enroll in academic support activities such as tutoring or supplemental instruction. They also receive advising and counseling from the ADP coordinator.

The Checkpoint program assists entering freshmen admitted on academic probation. Students self-diagnose their personal note taking and textbook reading skills, then meet individually with academic counselors to discuss applications in their courses.

The second risk point, mid-term progress reports, is addressed by Mid-term Conferences. Academic counselors meet with freshmen who received D's or F's on their mid-term reports to review performance and work out solutions, including use of campus support services, time management strategies, and study skills.

The third risk point, first academic probation, is addressed by "Phoenix." This workshop is for students who entered in good standing but who earned a GPA below 2.0. At the Phoenix workshop, students develop a structured recovery plan and address attitudinal elements such as effectively dealing with setbacks.

The fourth risk point, re-entry, is addressed by readmission support, a program for specially readmitted students. This structured program of support is mandated as a condition for readmission and is monitored by academic counselors.

**Centralized Coordination of Services**

The components of the Risk Point Intervention Program are coordinated by a single campus center, the Tomás Rivera Center for Student Success. This allows students to receive academic advising and learning assistance in a single location. Within the center, learning assistance personnel are cross-trained as academic advisors, and advisors are utilized in the delivery of academic support.

**Results and Outcomes**

The 1997-98 academic year was the program's first year of being completely operationalized, but already retention results have been clearly demonstrated. The historic rate of freshmen placed on academic probation fell from between 36 percent and 40 percent to 31 percent at the end of the fall of 1997. In addition, the individual components of the Risk Point Intervention Program have each produced highly positive outcomes statistically documented by the university.

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1990

## University of Virginia (VA)

*The University of Virginia Retention Program*

The primary goal of The University of Virginia Retention Program is to increase the retention of black students. To accomplish this, the president and provost established a new position, the associate provost for student academic support. The responsibility of the person holding this position is to identify problems and to harness resources. The associate provost also acts as an ombudsman when all other possibilities have been exhausted.

### University of Virginia Transition Program

Candidates with reading, writing or mathematical problems are accepted to the undergraduate program contingent upon participation in and successful completion of an intensive six-week developmental summer program. Courses are taught by faculty and foster individualized attention. Special workshops on study skills and career planning round out the academic program. Faculty members evaluate students' academic performance. This information is used to gauge academic progress and to place students in the proper courses. Ninety-five percent of those who participated in the Summer Program (1989) are still enrolled.

### Early Warning System and Trouble Shooting

The Early Warning System has been established to alert teaching faculty in key courses to students in trouble and encourage faculty to notify the associate provost of students having difficulties during the first three weeks. Faculty complete forms listing students who appear to be in trouble. The associate provost contacts students to inform them of the services and strongly encourages students to use tutorial services.

### University Tutorial Program

The University Tutorial Program offers tutorial support to any first- or second-year student who needs help. Students either sign up for a structured group or attend scheduled evening tutorials. Tutors may schedule additional hours for students who need individualized attention. Workshops on study skills and technical and special writing problems are conducted during the year. Tutorials are offered by graduate students specializing in specific areas of study. Tutors complete weekly reports on each student. Administrators follow up with faculty on the progress of students.

### Graduate Recruiting and Fellowship Programs

The associate provost's office has worked in conjunction with the Graduate Office in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate Office in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences to recruit black and other minority students, provide fellowships through generous corporate contributions, and retain students through graduation.

Of the African-American students who entered the University in the fall of 1984, 78 percent had graduated by the spring of 1989, a rate more than twice the national average. After four years of annual recruiting, engineering increased its black enrollment from 7 in 1986-87 to 51 in 1989-90. The Law School, through similar aggressive recruiting, has increased its black enrollment from 27 to 121 during the same period.

## 2005

### Utah State University (UT)

*Transformational U: A systematic institutionwide approach to student success and retention*

#### **Program Type**

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Through an administrative reorganization, Utah State University (USU) adopted a systematic, multi-faceted institution wide approach to student success and retention that emphasized enrollment management and targeted recruitment of students. The program enabled USU to raise expectations and standards of excellence throughout its units and build partnerships between academic affairs and student services.

#### **Institution wide Retention Strategies**

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A strategic, coordinated campus undergraduate enrollment plan was developed to direct the implementation of multiple initiatives. Intentional and active student recruitment underlies the efforts, helping students navigate the college choice process to find the right fit. Student success is addressed by proactive tracking, advising, exit interviewing, and recruiting back dropouts and stop outs. A new advising center is targeting undeclared students as well as the large portion of high-risk high achievers that were leaving.

USU redesigned their Freshman Seminar, adding peer mentors to each section and instigated a weekly e-mail to let students know what is happening on campus. Course clusters and priority registration was also created to help students get into the right classes in their major.

The program centers on a variety of retention initiatives that were implemented simultaneously. They include:

- Identification of leavers. The University administered a telephone survey to identify students they were losing and enable them to develop a data-driven strategy for retention.
- Proactive tracking and advising. This included developing a system for leave-of-absence or withdrawal to address the needs of the numerous military students leaving on

active duty and Latter Day Saint students who leave on two-year missions. They also created the Matriculation Advisor position to ensure that students are informed of their exit options and tracked once they leave the campus.

- Follow-up practices. After a certain date, students are sent e-mail reminders that it is time to register for classes. Those students with a 3.5 GPA or higher not registered are phoned for an exit interview to inquire about their plans. Focus groups are conducted with both first-year and transfer students to garner information about their experiences and how to improve campus, and retention scholarships are awarded to students who apply with a semester-by-semester plan for completing their degree.
- Honors initiatives. The best scholarship was changed to a research fellowship that pairs students with faculty mentors and has them begin research in their freshman year. Qualifying students are enrolled in a new gateway course to give them a sample of Honors courses during their first term, before the Honors classes are offered.

#### **Results**

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Since the implementation of Transformational U, retention rates moved from 66 percent to 75 percent in three years (two years ahead of their goal). Retention of high-ability students increased from 80 percent to 96 percent and in the last two years USU has enrolled the best prepared freshman class of their history. Student athlete retention received recognition as being in the top 10 most improved in the nation and USA Today recognized USU for being in the top 10 nationally with an athlete graduation rate of 81 percent.

1990

## Valencia Community College (FL)

*The MORE at Valencia Program*

The Mentors and Orientation Reinforce Education (MORE) Program at Valencia Community College consists of **two components**:

1. The Student Success course serving more than 500 students, and
2. The Faculty Mentor Program for high-risk students. Over half of the entering freshmen require placement in one or more college preparatory (remedial) courses. Beyond this barrier, many students have a tenuous connection with the College, living away from their families and being unsure of majors and careers. Through the Student Success Course, the MORE Program attempts to meet these needs by giving the student cognitive knowledge of how to be an effective college student. Through the mentor program the MORE Program attempts to provide students with the support to apply that knowledge.

### **The Student Success Program**

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The Student Success Program is an extended orientation course designed to help the student become a more self-directed, effective learner, confident in using the resources of the institution. The Student Success Program is directed by a faculty coordinator with professors from many disciplines in the college teaching the course.

All professors attend training sessions where they learn techniques from each other that involve students in their own learning. The faculty coordinator distributes a newsletter to Student Success course teachers that presents information about the course and the College, as well as ideas from their peers that have proven effective.

Enrollment in the program is voluntary. Students register for the three-hour course along with their other courses.

### **The Mentor Program**

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In this program, high-risk students are assigned to seasoned faculty members who serve as friends and guides. The grant supporting this program funds one overload or released time class equivalent for each mentor to receive training in mentoring techniques, computer use, and learning styles, abilities and strategies. Training includes workshops in Reality Therapy, interpreting and using various learning style instruments, using college resources, interview techniques, retention-related student activities and other topics.

The program is carried out by the mentor coordinator, who interviews mentors to gain perceptions of students' needs, program requirements and resources. The coordinator prepares a Mentor Manual, which is periodically updated in light of what mentors have reported. In addition to training, the mentor coordinator oversees assignment of students to mentors, coordinates progress reports of professors to mentors, coordinates certain assignments from the Student Success courses involving the students' mentors, maintains a data base tracking students in the program, and meets other needs of mentors.

The Student Success course and the Mentor Program are supplemented by a variety of other retention initiatives such as telephone registration, an early warning system, faculty training in learning strategies, and institutional research. The retention rate of students participating in both the student success course and mentoring is 27 percent higher than for all entering students.

1998

## Vincennes University (IN)

### STEP Program

Students with learning disabilities are being retained at far greater rates than their counterparts on campuses nationally and at significantly higher rates than their campus peers at Vincennes University, Vincennes, Ind., enrollment 8,800. This two-year university's success is the result of the Student Transition Into Educational Programs (STEP), a comprehensive academic support program for students with a diagnosed learning disability and/or attention deficit disorder.

#### **For Students with Learning Disabilities**

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The success of the STEP program at Vincennes University suggests there is a window of opportunity for students with learning disabilities when they decide to go to college. University officials report that, upon going to college, the independent atmosphere and academic responsibilities necessitate that such students face the reality of their learning problems, deal with them, self-advocate, and start utilizing their talents rather than dwell on their disabilities. With a comprehensive support system in place, students can overcome their learning obstacles and experience success, an accomplishment that is extremely rewarding for both students and staff.

#### **How it Works**

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Begun in the fall of 1991, the STEP program provides classroom instruction, advising, mentoring, tutoring, and monitored study. The classroom instruction—a four-semester sequence of “Coping in College” classes—is judged to be cost-effective because it is conducive to student learning, interaction, and peer support while avoiding an over-dependence on costly one-on-one tutoring. Classes are team taught in a workshop/seminar format and meet once weekly in the evening. The curriculum emphasizes active thinking, independent learning, student accountability, and the acquisition of proven-effective learning strategies. Each course

section's instructor also serves as the advisor for students in that section. Components of the program draw from many existing services and programs already established within the university.

Intense support and interaction are at the heart of the program's success. In addition to support from the instructor/advisors, participants meet weekly with professional tutors, study at least two hours weekly in the university's Academic Skills Center, and become part of a cohesive peer support group, made possible by the careful sequencing of the Coping in College classes which allows students to travel through the program with the same classmates, whether they begin in the fall or in the spring.

#### **Retention as High as 80 Percent**

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Reaching as high as 80 percent, the retention rate for STEP participants has consistently been more than double the retention rate of the Vincennes University student population overall. In addition, the STEP participants' retention rate far surpasses the national average for students with learning disabilities, traditionally a high-risk group. Student evaluations indicate that without the STEP program, they may not have been able to continue their studies. In addition to the STEP faculty, instruction, and assistance, students mention tutorial services, academic advising, and peer support as being key to their success. Evaluations and feedback also indicate that students have improved their decision-making skills, self-knowledge/assessment, confidence, basic skills competencies, ability to learn, competencies in content/career-related classes, ability to choose appropriate careers, and ability to follow through on the requirements needed to achieve their goals.



2008

## Virginia Commonwealth University (VA)

### *Discovery Program for Undeclared Students*

Recognizing the need for improvement and acting on the conviction that advising can impact retention, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) developed a proactive advising program for undeclared students. This program, the Discovery Program, is housed in the University College and offers specialized advising for students who are undecided about their programs of study and have not yet declared a major. The Discovery advisors help undeclared students consider educational options and make appropriate choices based on personal interests, skills and abilities, values, and professional goals. They also help students navigate through University procedures and policies while monitoring their academic success.

#### **Enhancing academic success**

After several years of collecting data about the impact of advising on student engagement and success, undeclared students were found to struggle academically and persist at lower rates. This was alarming to VCU, Virginia's largest university, considering nearly one-quarter of first-year students, slightly more than 10 percent of all undergraduates, were designated as undeclared majors. In response, VCU has implemented a series of changes to the advising program for undeclared students to address their lower rates of satisfaction, success, and persistence. These changes began with the creation of the University College (UC) which assumed all advising for first-year students, including the Discovery Program for Undeclared Students. It also provides a central home for the core curriculum and campus wide academic support services. The new unit is comprised of 30 full-time advisors with five dedicated advisors for the Discovery Program, decreasing each advisor's caseload to 150-175 first year students.

Program highlights:

- A student's first contact with the Discovery program occurs during summer orientation when students and parents learn about the advising expectations for the first year and receive contact information for the assigned advisor.
- Throughout the academic year, Discovery advisors maintain regular contact with their advisees by sending announcements through e-mail, Blackboard, and Facebook.

- Discovery advisors meet every first-year student three times in the fall and twice in the spring, with the first advising appointment within the first six weeks.
- In the fall, the advisors assess how each student is adjusting to college and provide any assistance in adjusting to college, understanding policies, anxiety with being undeclared, and curriculum overview. At midterm, advisors address academic performance and provide concrete solutions to any problems.
- In the spring, through a combination of individual meetings, workshops, and classes, advisors move the advisees through a deliberate decision-making process and develop individual action plans.
- Advisors are also responsible for teaching UNIV 101: Introduction to the University, UNIV 102: MINDSET for Academic Success (tailored to students on academic warning or probation), and UNIV 102: Education and Career Planning.

#### **Results**

By creating small advising caseloads, offering extensive and on-going training programs in career advising, and using concrete advising strategies, VCU created a successful, proactive advising program for undeclared students. Over the past four years, the number of undeclared students rose from 791 to 850, but the first-year retention for this cohort increased from 74.8 percent to 82 percent. The rate of undeclared students who met with an advisor a minimum of four times in the first year rose from 32 percent to 61 percent while those expressing the highest level of satisfaction with advising rose from 58 percent to 77 percent. Finally, the rate of undeclared students in good standing at the end of the first year rose from 70 percent to 75 percent.

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1990

## Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VA)

Virginia Tech Academic Success Program, V-TASP

The Virginia Tech Academic Success Program (V-TASP) is a comprehensive university retention program designed to increase the freshman retention rate and to facilitate faculty participation in student retention.

V-TASP students are identified as early as possible in the spring before their initial entry into Virginia Tech, and contacted by mail. These students are offered an opportunity to participate in the Summer Transition Program, an intensive academic, tutorial and counseling program held on the campus during the second summer term.

### Assessment of Student Characteristics

The initial V-TASP events occur during the week of the fall freshman orientation. One is a social gathering where the new black freshmen have an opportunity to meet other black students who have been successful in the Virginia Tech environment, and to meet the faculty members and administrators whom they may seek out during the coming year.

The other event is a general meeting which all new V-TASP students attend. At this time, they are introduced to the director of V-TASP and the V-TASP advisors, and are told about the various V-TASP services. They also participate in Assessment Testing, which currently consists of a mathematics placement test and a questionnaire about previous school experiences and family background. Scores from the mathematics placement test are used to help freshmen select the appropriate mathematics courses.

### The Three-Tier Advising System

V-TASP has a three-pronged advising system:

1. *Special advisors* - faculty and administrators who volunteer to work with the black students and high-risk white students;
2. *V-TASP advisors* - graduate students hired to assist the special advisors; and
3. *Peer group leaders* - undergraduate student volunteers who help students learn about the University environment and serve as mentors.

All V-TASP students are contacted by their V-TASP advisors at least four times during the term. Students also have an open invitation to visit their advisors any time to discuss anything they wish.

A fall orientation workshop is conducted for all V-TASP advisors to allow them to become acquainted with each other and with the various academic support programs that are available at Virginia Tech. Subsequently, V-TASP advisors hold monthly meetings to identify problems and concerns and to discuss ways in which V-TASP services may be improved.

### Training in Academic Learning Skills

The primary source for training in learning skills is the College Success Strategies course. The course helps students develop a systematic study routine and enhance study skills, computer skills, problem solving, and reasoning skills. Students who do not participate in the College Success Strategies class are offered access to study skills class conducted by the Counseling Services.

As a result of the program, the retention rate for black students increased from 73 percent in 1982 to 83 percent in 1988.

1996

**Walla Walla University**  
**fka: Walla Walla College (WA)**  
*Institutionwide Retention Efforts*

Beginning with the 1994-95 academic year, Walla Walla College has made an institution wide effort to improve the delivery of academic programs and services to all students. Using information from the Student Satisfaction Inventory, the college systematically reviewed the institution department by department to identify strengths and also to identify problem areas to be addressed.

The key to the success of their efforts lies in empowering individuals and departments to act. Individuals are encouraged to identify issues, to be proactive and respond to them immediately, then continually to evaluate the results to make sure the solutions are effective. This approach creates ownership of retention, provides better solutions and eliminates the resentment that often comes with externally imposed solutions.

**Identifying Problems, Developing Solutions**

In winter 1995, the College established an ad hoc committee that met two hours weekly for two quarters to write a retention plan. This plan includes institutional philosophy, rationale, goals, objectives, activities, implementation deadline and a monitoring system for achieving success. Besides assessing this plan on a quarterly basis, the total quality management group meets monthly to review the mission statement, visioning plans and the success of individual programs. Reports are made to the academic senate on a quarterly basis and to the board of trustees annually. Walla Walla College's retention plan includes over 20 objectives and 70 activities to meet these objectives. Better services are now provided for students with disabilities, minority students and academically challenged students. A peer mentoring program has been implemented along with a career development program to help freshmen make better career and educational choices. Other

programs that have come out of the individual initiative of the faculty and staff include: a monthly potluck for students given by faculty, increased services for international and minority students, and community improvement projects.

**Spiritual Life and Service Learning**

As a denominational institution, the College has looked closely at how well it achieves its goals of promoting community and service. In fall 1995, a two-day in-service gave administrators and faculty an opportunity to discuss ways to integrate faith development into classroom study and campus life. These discussions gave rise to assembly programs, monthly discussion groups and the Spiritual Life Committee. The College also offers a service learning program which each year sends students and faculty to an underdeveloped country to work on major projects such as building health clinics or water systems. The program also encourages students to volunteer at schools, hospitals or social service agencies. Service learning has created a sense of community and responsibility, which tends to make students feel connected to the college and increases student retention while changing attitudes and offering students a positive experience.

**Improvements in Retention and College Home**

Over a short period of time, Walla Walla College has aggressively moved to address retention issues and to improve the delivery of academic and student services throughout the entire institution. Besides qualitative improvements in student life and institutional culture, the student retention rate from fall to spring quarter increased from 12 percentage points from 1994 to 1995.

1989

## West Chester University (PA)

### *Intrusive Advising Program for 1st and 2nd Year Students*

The Intrusive Advising Program for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Students West Chester University is a centralized advising system for both declared and undeclared majors.

Four faculty were selected to be freshman advisors. These faculty were given half-time release from teaching duties for the length of the project and were trained in strategies and techniques for advising and mentoring. They also attended a week-long faculty development workshop focusing on the adjustment faced by freshmen, affective and cognitive teaching techniques, small group and collaborative learning, learning style, and study skills. The workshop also prepared them for teaching the freshmen seminar course required for all freshmen.

The Summer Orientation Program is initiated with a letter of welcome to each freshman student prior to the orientation session. During the session, course scheduling takes place and parents meet separately with advisors to discuss the role they can play in helping the students. Advisors also meet again with parents at the President's reception to set the expectation that someone is there to help them and their sons and daughters.

Following the orientation period, advisors phone all students assigned to them who did not attend orientation, and speak again to all those who did attend to remind them to schedule a first appointment upon arriving on campus in September.

During the academic year, advisors send an initial letter and phone students to remind them of their first scheduled appointment. Throughout the semester advisors maintain contact with students in various manners, including sending birthday cards, pre-scheduling advising meetings, initiating contacts based on the student's need, maintaining weekly contact with students in the Freshman Seminar, and making follow-up phone calls.

Also available to students are large group pre-scheduling workshops to help students focus on how to use academic advising to the fullest, how to schedule for Spring classes, and how to begin exploring career choices. Small groups and individual "self-assessments" focus on evaluation students in the areas of personal, social and emotional growth, and in a variety of academic skills.

During the spring semester, veteran advisors work with department faculty (selected as liaisons to the freshman advising group) to transfer sophomore students to department upper division advisors. Letters introducing each student are sent to the department along with the new advisor in order to begin the transition.

Advisors maintain contact with students who have withdrawn, and in some cases have been instrumental in helping them return to school in subsequent semesters.

After the first year of the program, the freshman retention rate increased almost 11 percent. Sophomore to junior retention also increased almost 11 percent.

1991

**West Virginia State University**  
**fka: West Virginia State College (WV)**  
*Retention Activities Newsletter*

It takes good communication to make retention a unifying force and an institution wide priority. At West Virginia State College, the Retention Activities Newsletter was initially established to promote the success/retention of minority students within the residence halls. It was later expanded to include the success/retention activities for all students thus providing a campus wide perspective and support.

The objectives of the newsletter are:

- Raise the campus consciousness concerning retention issues;
- Provide information on the latest retention research to the campus community;
- Promote retention activities involvement on campus by faculty, staff, students and administrators; and
- Provide a means to recognize exemplary activities that promote retention of students as a strategic campus wide activity.

Since the majority of the resident students are either minority, first generation Appalachian students and/or academically underprepared students, the Retention Activities Newsletter gives special emphasis to programs and activities aimed at the retention of these populations. The role of all offices on campus involved in the retention of students is publicized, so that students are aware of the resources available to them.

As a result of the Retention Activities Newsletter, a number of innovative approaches have been implemented to break the destructive barriers that cause many students to forego attending college, attend college without adequate goals or preparation, or attend without adequate guidance. The newsletter emphasizes increasing campus consciousness regarding student success/retention. For example, the WVSC Mentor program has over 116 students with 35-40 faculty, staff and administrators serving as mentors. The Leadership Development Program has also successfully provided faculty, staff and graduates to serve as

role models for student success. These programs, along with many others, have been promoted through the Retention Activities Newsletter as a means of increasing student involvement and the success/retention rate.

The Retention Activities Newsletter also introduces strategies to enhance student leadership development. The West Virginia State College Student Government Association sponsored the first statewide leadership conference, a direct by-product of the strategic plan to provide leadership experiences for WVSC students. In addition, 16 Leadership Development Activities have been conducted on the campus since the Newsletter introduced the concept.

Also widely read is "Focus on Retention and Salutes," a featured column in the newsletter which honors those persons or offices on the WVSC campus who continually strive to make West Virginia State College a staying environment. The column aides in recognizing outstanding offices/individuals and provides another effective means to get information to the campus community.

The Retention Activities Newsletter has grown from a circulation of 500 to approximately 4000 (including 400 colleges and universities throughout the country). Statistical evidence shows that the Retention Activities Newsletter effectively articulates the campus wide concern for the success/retention of students in general and minority students in particular. A recent study in the 1989-90 WVSC, FactBook indicates a positive trend in residence hall retention. Fall semester 1988 had a residence hall population of 296 students. By fall of 1990 there were 335 students in the residence halls, a 28 percent increase! Further evidence indicates that of the 335 students entering the residence halls in fall 1990, 53 percent were returning students, an increase of 22 percent from the fall of 1989.

2007

## West Virginia University (WV)

*Adventure WV*

The Adventure WV program is an outdoor orientation for first-year students at West Virginia University. This semester-long alternative to the traditional University 101 course pairs incoming students with faculty and staff to complete a weeklong summer experience including rock climbing, hiking, backpacking, whitewater rafting, and nightly discussions. This intensive introduction is followed with activities throughout the fall semester to reinforce and build on lessons learned. The primary focus of this program is to steer students in a direction for a successful college career and life.

### Preparing Students for Life at WVU

Adventure WV was largely conceptualized and developed by a Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Resources graduate student who researched existing orientation programs and developed the Adventure WV model. Though first offered in the summer of 2002, the program had full administration buy-in and its first enrollees in the summer of 2003. Created as an alternative to the traditional University 101 orientation, the program is primarily tailored to meet the needs of new freshmen at WVU. According to the program mission statement, one of the most important goals of Adventure WV is to improve student retention rates at the university by helping “to orient and transition new students for life at WVU.”

Through close student, faculty, and staff interaction in a non-traditional environment, students are placed in situations where it is necessary to develop positive relationships with peers and there is opportunity for individual growth. The program also teaches students valuable life-skills that help them deal effectively with new or difficult situations they will face on a daily basis as a new college student. The students are also required to participate in community service projects to further develop leadership and teamwork skills.

This program is comprised of a number of specific goals and objectives including:

- Create a fun and exciting environment that fosters new friendships as well as individual growth;
- Develop a positive connection with WVU students, faculty, staff, and the university community;
- Ease the transition to college life;
- Offer opportunities for leadership, teamwork, and community service with other incoming freshmen;
- Enhance interpersonal skills such as trust, communication, acceptance, and social interaction;
- Encourage improvement of participant self-awareness, decision making skills, initiative, and self-confidence; and
- Develop wilderness skills and awareness of outdoor recreational opportunities at WVU.

### Results

In an Educational Benchmarking study designed to rate the effectiveness of first-year seminar, Adventure WV scored in the top 5 of 49 institutions with similar programs on 8 of 14 areas measured. These included first place in overall course effectiveness and improving knowledge of wellness and second in both satisfaction with the university and improving connections with peers. Results are also positive on student exit surveys with perceptions about drug and alcohol use associated with the university. Of those who completed the survey, 96.3 percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed that they could find activities to do on weekends that do not involve alcohol.

Data collected by the university from 2004 and 2005 show that the Adventure WV has had a positive impact on retention rates for participants. The general retention rate of WVU students was 81 percent after their first year, with Adventure WV participants being retained at 90 percent.

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2014

## Western Illinois University

### *Building Connections*

Western Illinois University (WIU) is a comprehensive, regional public university of approximately 10,000 undergraduate and 1,000 graduate students. WIU offers 67 academic majors, 250 student organizations, and NCAA Division I athletics. In the past decade, WIU faced significant enrollment challenges including a declining retention rate, fewer high school graduates, changing student demographics, and increased competition. This past year the University celebrated a 7.1 percent increase in fall-to-spring freshman retention, thanks in part to initiatives like the Building Connections program.

#### **Program Components**

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Incorporating transparency and evidence-based decision-making, the Building Connections program began with several presentations to the campus community, including faculty senate, advising council, student services leadership team, and the president's cabinet about the need for a retention initiative. In total there were 20 different presentations made to various campus constituents.

Program implementation started in fall 2011 as a pilot program with randomly selected freshmen living in the same residence hall. With the success of the pilot initiative, the program was expanded in fall 2012 to include all new freshmen, and by fall 2013 the program became a requirement of a freshmen seminar course.

The Building Connections program incorporates volunteer mentors to assist new students in their transition into university life. Each academic year, approximately 200 faculty and staff volunteers are matched with 5 to 10 incoming freshmen. Each freshman takes the College Student Inventory™ (CSI) then meets with their mentor to review the CSI results and discuss individualized strategies for success. Mentors follow up with

students throughout the semester including after first semester mid-term grades are posted and again before finals.

Among the goals of the Building Connections program: increase freshman fall-to-spring retention, increase the participation rate of freshmen who meet with a mentor within the first six weeks of class, maintain a comprehensive list of campus academic and social support services, and provide training to mentors prior to the start of each academic term.

The program role and scope is focused on transition into the university and is defined to not overlap with academic advisors or health care professionals.

#### **Results**

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For fall 2013, the second year of the program in an expanded format, the participation rate in mentor meetings increased from 65.9 to 79.6 percent. Despite a smaller entering class of almost 100 students, 150 more students met with a mentor.

1989

## Wichita State University (KS)

### *Institutional Retention Program*

The focus of Wichita State University's retention efforts are students most likely to drop out of the institution. Retention efforts focus on the interrelated components of service and instruction.

#### **Service**

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A paraprofessional staff program was started to replace retiring full-time staff. These part-time, well-trained staff were called upon to assist during peak time such as preregistration and registration, as well as to assist during more standard student traffic times. This paraprofessional staff is made up of upper-division undergraduates, graduate students, and retired faculty, all of whom participate in extensive on-the-job training and in service programs throughout the year.

The Educational Planning Worksheet, which students complete and take to their advising meeting, was developed to assist students in planning. During the advising session the advisor can focus upon academic, personal, and career issues which influence the student's educational planning and decision making. It also allows the advisor to develop a particular recommended plan of action with the student to enhance educational planning and certifies by signature that the advisor has met with the student, reviewed all appropriate records, and recommended selection of any of the listed courses.

Because of the nature of the student population, WSU is dedicated to providing a family orientation program. This represents a holistic approach to student support and includes all family members, not just the parents of entering students. Family members are encouraged to participate in a free program highlighting academic advising and support services, life on campus, financial aid and scholarships, and career planning and placement

services. In addition, get acquainted activities and informal discussions with faculty and staff are integrated throughout the evening program.

To assist new student success and persistence, all entering first-year students are required to participate in a two-day orientation program which focuses on academic issues in the transition to the university environment. Prior to beginning work with orientation, student orientation leaders and faculty advisors participate in an intensive 80 hour training program.

The Minority Student Mentoring Program was initiated to assist minority students in making the transition to the University. Although University support systems are in place, these students often fail to use them because of their initial perception of the University and their feelings that any admission of difficulty adjusting to the environment will be misinterpreted as a weakness. With assistance from other minority students (mentors) who can relate to their unique characteristics and who themselves have experienced similar feelings, entering minority students can benefit from a relationship with a successful role model and receive a level of nurturing through a formalized program important for student success and persistence.

#### **Instruction**

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Wichita State University offers a number of courses relevant to the experience of students considered high risk. These courses include: Personal Planning and Assessment Seminar, Skills Enhancement Institute for College Students, Personal and Academic Success Seminar, Adult Seminar, Parent of College Students, Topics in Career Exploration, and Reading and Studying Skills.

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**RUFFALO**<sup>SM</sup>  
NOEL LEVITZ

