



Retention for Rookies

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Today's Session

1. Retention Basics and Best Practices
2. Benchmarks and trends
3. Essentials in student success planning
4. Next steps

Guiding Questions

Planning for Student Success

- What does student success look like at your institution?
- How do you measure student success?
- To what extent are you meeting the goals that you have established to-date?
 - Are these goals appropriate for the specific populations you wish to impact?
- What barriers exist in working toward your goals?
- How do you communicate progress toward and achievement of student success goals?



Retention Basics and Best Practices

Defining Retention

Federal Definitions

- **Retention:** the percentage of students who return *to the same institution* for their second year;
- **Persistence:** the percentage of students who return to college *at any institution* for their second year;
- Institutions that receive federal financial aid are required to report student success data to the U.S. Department of Education via annual surveys (IPEDS)
 - Part of a larger set of information that is also shared with students and families through the College Navigator website

Defining Retention

Performance Indicators

Persistence:
Term-to-term return



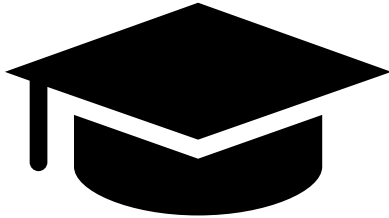
Progression:
Activity that correlates with persistence,
such as course completion and academic
probation rates



Retention:
Fall-to-fall return

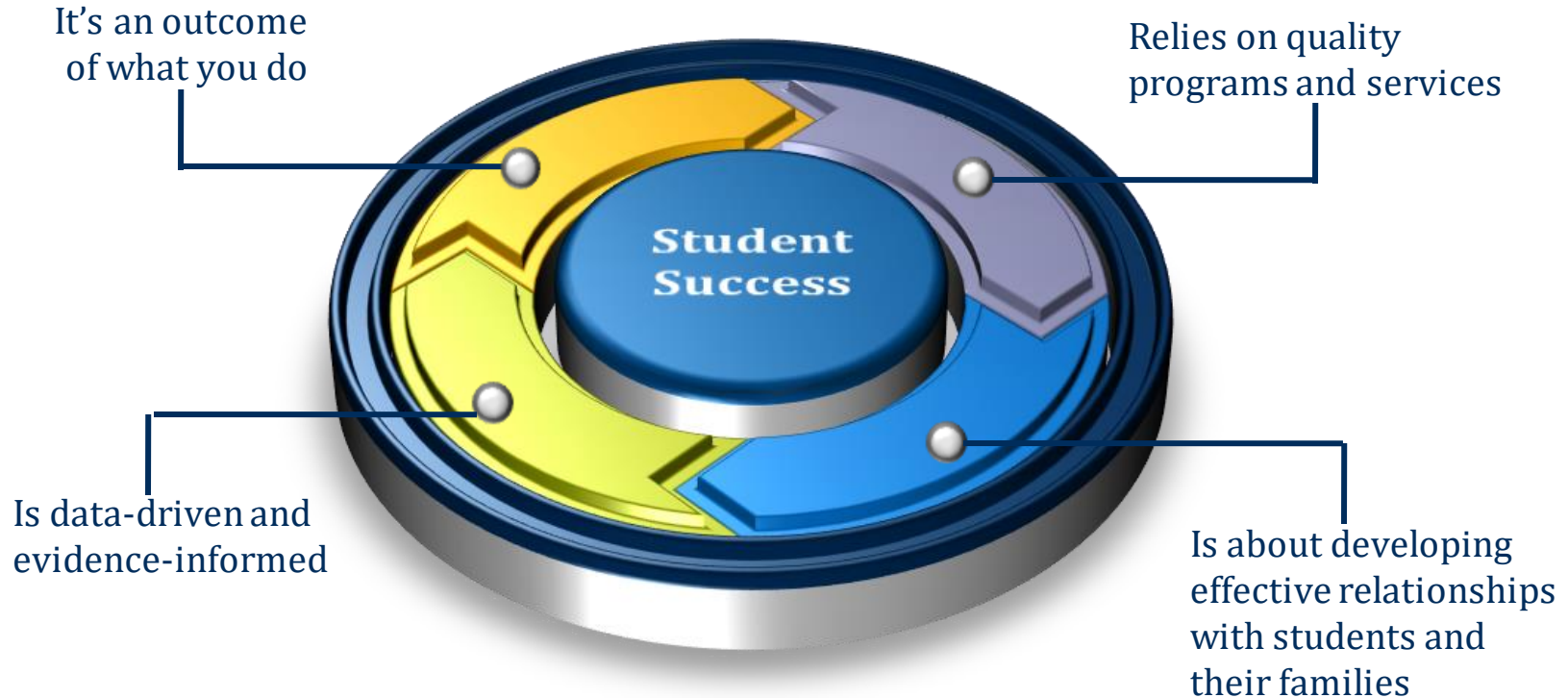


Completion/Graduation

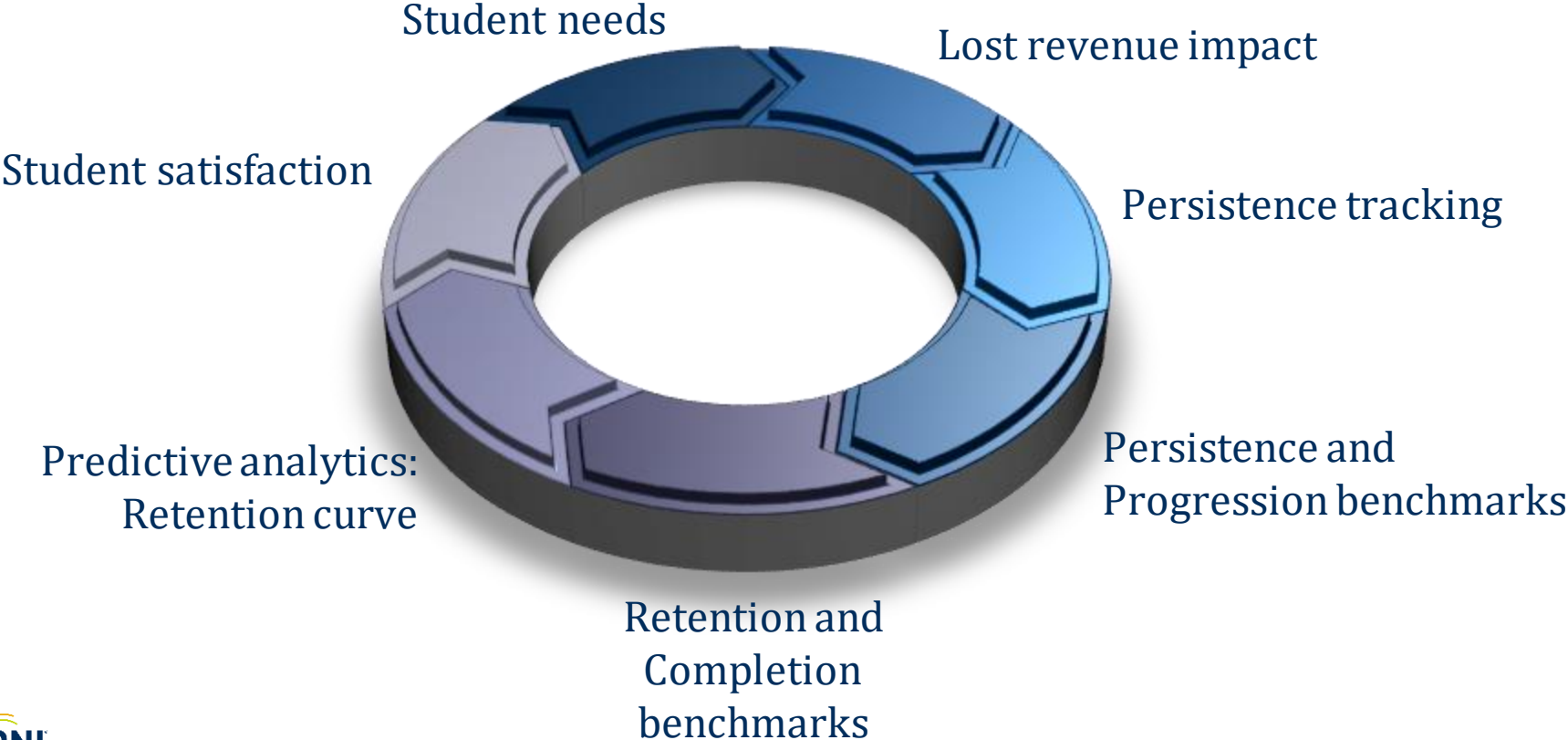


Retention is one part of Student Success

So much more than a metric!



Data is Critical to Inform our Work



Student Success Relationship Management Model™: Four-Year School



Student Success Relationship Management Model™: Two-Year School

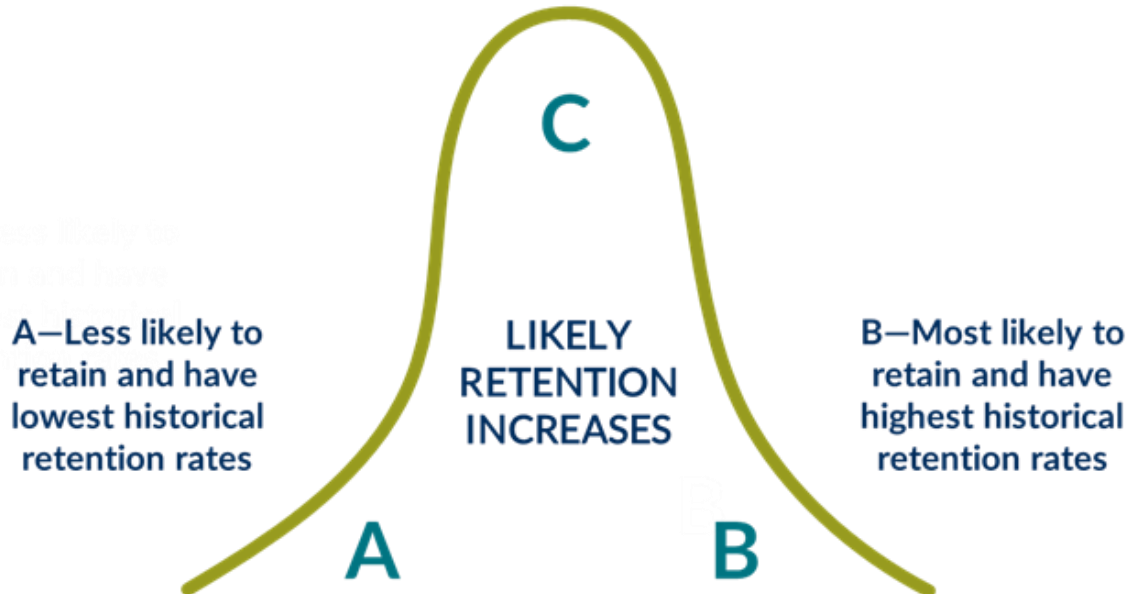


Predictive Analytics and Retention/Attrition Curve

Focused Strategies on Focused Targets

ATTRITION CURVES

C—What some have called the “Murky Middle”





Benchmarks and Trends

Today's College Students

Demographics, Trends, and Challenges

- Enrollment has declined for nearly a decade, across all sectors;
- Changing demographics present a new picture of current students;
- FAFSA filing rate decreased by 9% in 2021, prompting concern particularly for first-generation, high-need, and underrepresented minority students;
- College completion rates were flat in 2021 (compared to prior year);

And...

- Students are entering or transferring to our campuses having faced significant academic, psychosocial, and financial challenges in a global pandemic.



Entering Students Top Priorities: Fall 2021

Connections, Completion, and Careers

TOP 10 PRIORITIES FOR INCOMING FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS	2020	2019
Meet new friends	75%	73%
Help selecting an educational plan to get a good job	70%	69%
Talk about qualifications needed for certain occupations	67%	69%
Find out more about clubs and organizations	66%	57%
Receive help to improve student habits	65%	69%
Receive instruction on how to take college exams	65%	68%
Talk with someone about getting a scholarship	63%	67%
Talk with someone about salaries and future occupations	57%	60%
Meet an experienced student to seek advice	55%	56%
Talk about advantages/ disadvantages of various careers	53%	55%

DESIRE TO FINISH COLLEGE	ASIAN	HISPANIC	NATIVE	BLACK	WHITE	OVERALL
I am strongly dedicated to finishing college.	95%	95%	94%	95%	95%	95%



Student Success Strategies: 4-Year Private

2021 Poll: Gaps exist in effectiveness between on-campus and online settings.

FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS				
STRATEGY/TACTIC	USING	Strategy is very effective or effective. (only out of those institutions using the strategy)		
		ONLINE	TRADITIONAL/ ON CAMPUS	HYBRID
Academic support (e.g., learning center, math lab, tutoring)	100%	81%	99%	92%
Mandatory first-year experience or orientation course	87%	86%	98%	87%
Faculty advising, one-on-one	84%	87%	99%	86%
Student success coaching (internal)	83%	87%	97%	93%
Giving students practical work experiences in their intended major (e.g., internships, volunteer work, experiential learning, service learning)	83%	80%	99%	87%
Providing each student with an academic plan/roadmap of courses	81%	89%	93%	86%
Individualized academic recovery plan for students on probation or suspension	80%	76%	93%	88%



Student Success Strategies: 4-Year Public

2021 Poll: Gaps exist in effectiveness between on-campus and online settings.

FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS				
STRATEGY/TACTIC	USING	Strategy is very effective or effective. (only out of those institutions using the strategy)		
		ONLINE	TRADITIONAL/ ON CAMPUS	HYBRID
Advising specifically for students approaching graduation to ensure they are on track	100%	100%	100%	100%
Academic support (e.g., learning center, math lab, tutoring)	98%	84%	100%	94%
Congratulating, alerting, and nudging system (early alert system)	98%	98%	92%	94%
Advising by professional staff, one-on-one	93%	93%	100%	93%
Providing each student with an academic plan/roadmap of courses	93%	93%	100%	94%
Use of social media to engage students post enrollment	89%	89%	81%	85%
Providing guided pathways with fewer course options to keep students moving to graduation	88%	88%	89%	77%
Student success coaching (internal)	85%	82%	98%	93%
Providing career services during students' second year to help students see the connection between coursework and careers	83%	83%	90%	80%
Providing career services during students' first year to help students see the connection between coursework and careers	82%	82%	93%	80%



Student Success Strategies: 2-Year Public

2021 Poll: Gaps exist in effectiveness between on-campus and online settings

TWO-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS				
STRATEGY/TACTIC	USING	Strategy is very effective or effective. (only out of those institutions using the strategy)		
		ONLINE	TRADITIONAL/ ON CAMPUS	HYBRID
Academic support (e.g., learning center, math lab, tutoring)	100%	85%	98%	97%
Advising by professional staff, one-on-one	94%	94%	94%	94%
Required developmental education courses	85%	81%	97%	90%
Congratulating, alerting, and nudging system (early alert system)	83%	83%	83%	83%
Providing each student with an academic plan/roadmap of courses	83%	83%	83%	83%
Co-requisite courses designed to accelerate the developmental completion pathway	79%	78%	97%	93%
Student success coaching (internal)	78%	81%	97%	97%
Individualized academic recovery plan for students on probation or suspension	72%	74%	83%	77%
Mandatory first-year experience or orientation course	72%	89%	91%	89%
Student life program supporting student success	71%	60%	87%	77%



Student Success Strategies

New or Expanded as a result of COVID-19

STRATEGY	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE	FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC	TWO-YEAR PUBLIC
Virtual student life programs and activities	69%	81%	60%
Virtual career services programs	67%	75%	68%
Virtual faculty advising	43%	44%	35%
HyFlex courses	33%	44%	43%
Asynchronous tutoring	33%	40%	35%
Virtual group advising	19%	33%	35%





Essentials in Student Success Planning

Guiding Principles for Effective Retention Efforts

Build your strategies on a foundation of student success.

Be intrusive and intentional

Integrate with other programs

Gather and integrate student feedback

Provide quality classroom engagement

Ensure student-centeredness

Empower students to develop relationships

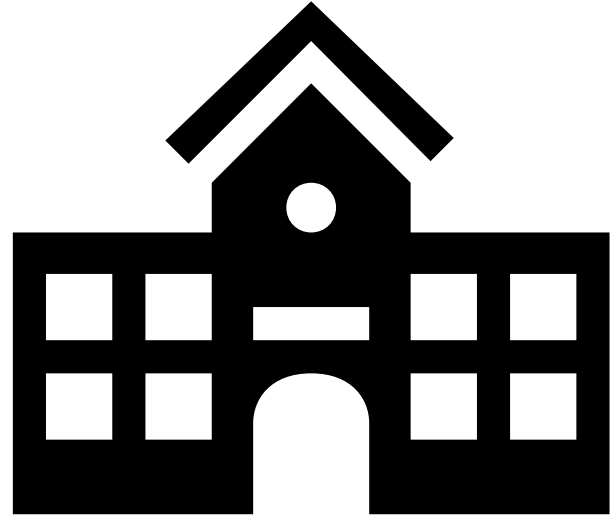
Situating Retention Efforts

Align with institutional priorities and planning.



Steps for Retention Planning

1. Conduct a retention situation analysis including data collection and analysis.
2. Set goals.
3. Formulate strategies (enabling objectives).
4. Develop action plans.



Adopt a First-fourth Semester Planning Paradigm

Focusing on student relationships and engagement.

- Provide early identification.
- Provide a tool for advisors to enhance communication and relationship-building.
- Provide individual and aggregate data for developing and targeting customized communications.
- Continue to take the “pulse” of your students.

Retention Situation Analysis

Taking a Systematic Approach

Reviewing the institutional mission statement that describes the basic reason for the existence of the organization.

Reviewing the institutional strategic plan: The strategic plan and mission statement need to be consistent with each other.

Assessing driving forces and inhibiting factors.

Compiling and reviewing historical enrollment and retention data, both overall and by specific program.

Reviewing appropriate demographic trends and environmental data.

Results from student surveys.

Conducting a program-by-program analysis and establishing a desired enrollment state and retention needs.

Developing a list of retention planning assumptions.

Reviewing project and consultant recommendations.

Clarifying definitions and nomenclature that may be used in the planning process.

Set SMART goals

Specific | Measurable | Attainable | Realistic | Time-Based

Examples:

- Goal: Achieve a four-year cohort graduation rate of 42 percent for first-time, full-time students entering the institution in fall 2022.
- Goal: Increase the first-year retention rate of underrepresented students, who begin fall 2022 by three percent.
- Goal: Increase the first-year retention rate of fall 2022 students, who enroll fewer than 90 days prior to the beginning of their first term by three percent.

Formulate Strategies to Achieve Goals

And assign specific individuals/groups to each one!

- Remember the 80/20 rule: 80 percent of the results generally are derived from 20 percent of the effort. ***The challenge is to know which 20 percent to focus on to produce results.***
- Do students experience problems with the process/system?
- Is the process important to ongoing institutional effectiveness and quality?
- Can the college control the improvement of the process?
- Will students benefit or care about the improvement?
- Is the college willing and able to dedicate the appropriate financial and human resources to improve the process?

Develop Action Plans

Keeping in mind the SMART concept.

What exactly are you going to do?

- Specific description of the activity that is generally quantifiable and measurable

When will it be completed?

- Timetables that clearly show key dates and deadlines

Who will be responsible?

- Clear assignments of responsibility for performing important tasks

How much will it cost?

- Budget information showing the cost of implementation

How will you know whether it has been accomplished?

- The methods of assessment, evaluation, or control that will be used to monitor progress, or measure success or failure of the actions

Avoid Excessive Activity Syndrome

Activity-Oriented	Results-Oriented
Redefining problems/issues	Recommending specific actions to address problems/issues
Failing to set priorities	Establishing top priorities
Focusing on trivial and non-critical problems/issues	Selecting the problems/issues that are the most important and that make the biggest difference
Working to improve too many procedures simultaneously	Working to improve a small number of critical processes
Over-analyzing and disputing the data	Using the data to develop plans



Next Steps...

...and a few ideas for
effective practice.

Back to our guiding questions...

Planning for Student Success

- What does student success look like at your institution today?
 - How closely does this align with your vision for student success over the next three years?
- What barriers exist to improving student success on your campus? How do you know?
- How will you measure student success? Do you have the tools you need?
- Are current goals appropriate for the specific populations you wish to impact?
- How will you communicate progress to the campus community?

Effective Practices for Retention and Success

- Review current recruitment and marketing plans.
 - Does your campus recruitment include a strong value proposition to reinforce the value of enrolling and earning a degree at your school?
 - Cost and financial aid communicated in engaging formats to students and their families
 - Leveraging career outcomes and stories from recent graduates
- Address students' need for connection in and out of the classroom.
 - Assess the current environment for making connections in-person and online
 - Do your faculty have the knowledge, skills, and resources to foster greater connection in the post-pandemic classroom?
- Provide remediation for gaps that may exist in students' academic preparation as a result of the pandemic.
 - Enhance the focus on study skills in the first semester through first-year seminars, extended orientations, and as part of key gateway courses
 - Collaborate with academic departments to apply skills to daily activities and to support learning outcomes

Effective Practices for Retention and Success

- Assess your adult student population needs
 - Tailor outreach and support that aligns with your adult students—in multiple formats
- Recognize the impact of the pandemic on your students' learning and campus experiences
 - Second and third-year students did not have the same orientation and FYE opportunities in Fall 2020/2021 and may need to be re-oriented for academic and interpersonal success
- Provide remediation for gaps that may exist in students' academic preparation as a result of the pandemic
 - Enhance the focus on study skills in the first semester through first-year seminars, extended orientations, and as part of key gateway courses
 - Collaborate with academic departments to apply skills to daily activities and to support learning outcomes

For more insights on college student success...

www.ruffalonl.com/papers-research



2021 Effective Practices
for Student Success,
Retention, and
Completion Report



2021 University
Family Survey
A survey of 36,000 parents
of current college students



2021 National
First-Year Students
and Their Motivation to
Complete College Report

A study of the challenges and opportunities for completing
a college degree, based on an analysis of more than
85,000 first-year college students



And our hot-off-the-press *RNL 2022 Student Success and Retention Benchmarks*

Thank you!

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