REPORT ON FIRST-YEAR STUDENT RETENTION

Western Carolina University

First-Year Student Retention Task Group

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INTRODUCTION

Strategies to improve student retention and completion rates are essential to Western Carolina University's mission to "improve individual lives." Improved retention is also an outcome of our core values to promote "excellence in scholarship, teaching, and learning" and to practice "responsible stewardship and organizational effectiveness." Improving student retention is an important part of the first strategic direction in WCU's *2020 Vision* Strategic Plan: "Fulfill the educational needs of our state and region." Of particular relevance is Goal 1.6, in which the institution will "attain a student population that balances the University's commitment to access, its responsibility for student success, and ensures the sustainability of University funding." Successful retention strategies will directly result from Strategic Direction 2, the comprehensive work to "enrich the total student experience." Additionally, the 2017 *Higher Expectations Strategic Plan for the University of North Carolina* calls for all UNC system schools to increase low-income and rural-student enrollment and completion and to improve five-year graduation rates and overall undergraduate degree efficiency. Retention strategies will be critical to WCU's success in meeting the UNC system's performance metrics.

Retention and persistence for first-time, full-time freshmen is a complex mosaic involving decisions that start with the admissions process, continue with student success programs and initiatives, and culminate with the successful and timely completion of a specified degree program. Our students' successful completion depends upon careful planning by collaborative professionals, attention to detail and to predictive analysis, efficient administrative processes, best practices in teaching and programming, effective and responsive student support, and diligent assessment of learning outcomes and success markers.

The First Year Student Retention Task Group was formed in September 2017 to recommend strategic initiatives that will support first-year student retention and persistence. The task group is comprised of faculty members and professional staff from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and

is supported by the ongoing work of the *Retain and Graduate Committee*, co-chaired by Dr. Lowell K. Davis, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Success, and Keith Corzine, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Campus Services.

The strategic recommendations included in this report emerged from an analysis of the following information:

- WCU enrollment and retention data since 2015 (see Appendices 1-3).
- A review of current programs and practices that support the academic success of WCU students (see Appendix 4 for a list of current programs).
- A review of retention plans at other institutions (see Appendix 7).
- A comparison of academic policies, advising services, and additional academic support services at UNC-system schools and peer institutions (see Appendix 7, Table 20).
- A comparison of WCU's retention initiatives against those presented at the 2017 National Symposium on Student Retention (see Appendix 8 for symposium details).

Successful implementation of the recommendations provided in this report is dependent on the University's ability to access and integrate institutional data with efficiency and effectiveness. Jennifer Wick, Vice President of Ruffalo Noel Levitz, recommends that universities have a "clear, integrated vision for retention strategies informed by data," (2015); otherwise, no one has true responsibility for retention, despite many people working on retention strategies across all levels of the campus. With that in mind, this report aims to organize university retention efforts into a framework that includes current and recommended programs and initiatives, the units responsible for those programs, assessment of outcomes, and responsive action plans that will allow the University to capitalize on successful initiatives.

In *Blog for Enrollment and Student Success*, Wick (2015) proposes that campuses identify "retention champions" to lead efforts focused around these seven retention strategies:

- implement early warning systems;
- initiate social connections between freshmen and other students;
- foster interactions/ connections between freshmen and faculty in their major;
- make sure parents are informed about campus resources for students;
- ensure that support services are easy to find and navigate;
- use data to evaluate programs and target retention efforts, and use predictive modeling to understand characteristics that correlate to success and attrition;
- continue sustained data analysis beyond the first year to allow rapid and effective response to challenges faced by upper classmen.

The task group's review of current programs and initiatives revealed that WCU has numerous mechanisms in place to support student retention, including an early warning system and programs specifically designed to foster social connections among students (see Appendix 4 for descriptions). Participation in the National Symposium on Student Retention in November 2017 confirmed that WCU already has in place most of the programs and initiatives that other schools are currently implementing (see Appendix 8 for symposium details).

The overarching conclusion of the First-Year Student Retention Task Group is not that WCU needs to implement additional programs to support student retention, but that the University needs to focus its efforts in three primary areas: 1) enhanced data collection and analysis to illuminate the myriad factors that influence students' decisions to remain at WCU or to leave, 2) improved strategic planning and assessment practices that will allow us to pinpoint those programs and services that make the most impact, and 3) increased communication across university departments to avoid duplication of services and to ensure an adequate allocation of

resources to programs that have proven ability to move the needle on student success and retention.

TARGETED RETENTION INITIATIVES AT WCU: OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPANSION

WCU has implemented a number of programs and initiatives that have the potential to make significant impacts on student persistence and retention. Coupled with the recommendations listed above—improved data collection and analysis, enhanced assessment and tracking mechanisms, and increased transparency and communication of efforts across campus—these initiatives could serve as models for the expansion of retention practices in other areas of the University. The following are brief descriptions of some of the existing retention initiatives at WCU.

Strategic Planning at the Division Level

The Division of Student Success is comprised of eight units [the Advising Center, Registrar, Accessibility Resources, Student Transitions, One Stop, Mathematics Tutoring Center, Mentoring and Persistence to Success, and the Writing and Learning Commons], each with a significant contribution to help ensure WCU students not only succeed, but thrive. The overarching goal for the division "is to provide the support needed to ensure each student reaches his or her academic potential, including identifying the right field of study and completing a degree that will lead to opportunities beyond college" (Division of Student Success, 2016).

The division's *2016-2020 Commitment to Student Success* strategic plan helps to ensure that students have access to a quality college education and to the support and resources they will need to be successful. Student Success departments collaborate across campus to implement documented high-impact educational practices and to implement innovative approaches that address the specific needs of WCU students. Many of the current retention initiatives outlined in Appendix 4 were developed during the division's strategic planning process, and many of the new initiatives emerged from the ongoing evaluation of initiatives that have been in place for some time.

The strategic plan provides a structure for continuous review and improvement, and it serves as an outward-facing record of the division's efforts that promotes transparency, creates opportunities for cross-campus collaborations, and eliminates the unnecessary duplication of services across divisions.

High Impact Practices

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has identified ten "High Impact Practices" (HIPs) that have been found to correlate positively with increased student learning and increased retention (Kuh, 2008; Brownell & Swaner, 2009). Kuh (2008) defines HIPs as activities that (1) require a significant investment of student time and effort, (2) foster faculty-student and student-peer interactions, (3) require significant feedback to students on their work, (4) expose students to diverse people, (5) allow students to integrate information, and (6) promote engagement in real world problems. The ten practices identified by AAC&U as meeting these criteria include first year seminars, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing intensive courses, collaborative assignments, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning, internships, and capstones.

All ten of the HIPs recommended by AAC&U are represented at WCU. Many are institutionalized with funding (undergraduate research); others are tied to specific offices that support their implementation (service learning, global learning, common intellectual experiences, and freshman seminars); and some are embedded in department organizational culture (writing intensive assignments, collaborative assignments, capstones, internships, and undergraduate research). Student responses to the 2015 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) suggest a high level of participation in HIPs among WCU students, with 70 percent of respondents indicating that they have participated in two or more practices. Additionally, students have a common intellectual experience through One Book, and most take freshman seminars as part of the liberal

studies program. Despite these high participation rates, less is known about the efficacy of these practices relative to student retention.

In order to maximize the potential of HIPs to make a significant impact on the persistence and retention of students at WCU, the Retention Task Group recommends better tracking and assessment of existing high impact initiatives; greater selectivity, based on assessment data, to determine which HIPs will be supported; and targeted institutional resources devoted to creating a community of practice among faculty and staff who incorporate HIPs into their work with students.

To improve the overall assessment of HIPs on campus, the University first needs a road map detailing where these practices are being implemented, the units or departments responsible, and the current assessment practices. The goals of existing HIPs should be clearly mapped to institutional learning goals or to specific goals within the program in which they have been implemented. Once effective assessment plans are in place to track the impact of these practices on student learning, the University should ensure that plans for further development and for budgetary allocations are directly linked with assessment results.

HIPs have the potential to make a significant impact on the success and retention of WCU students, but the University must be selective in determining which HIPs to support. Primary criteria that can be used in this decision-making process is the number of students that a proposed HIP can impact. For example, undergraduate research with one-on-one faculty-to-student mentorship has often been funded to the exclusion of other versions of undergraduate research that might touch more students. New models of group-based research learning called CURES (Course-Based Undergraduate Research) could be used to increase the number of students who participate in undergraduate research (Auchincloss, et al., 2014). In addition to being more economical, HIPs that are embedded in classes have the benefit of exposing students to HIPs without students having to seek them out.

The institution also should consider what existing HIPs can be leveraged to improve retention in the freshman year. Freshman seminars are one possibility, as these experiences have been shown to increase persistence and student effort in college (Kuh et al., 2006.) If considered in conjunction with our existing first-year transition courses, these courses have the potential to make a significant impact on student learning in the first year. A redesign of the seminars to include a focus on relevant research into how students learn could eliminate the necessity for the basic "study skills" focus of first-year transition courses, and many topics covered in those courses could be outsourced to online modules. The seminars would thus retain the nature of an academic course, which would be more attractive to faculty who might otherwise teach transition courses, and they would be seen as more challenging and relevant to students.

WCU also has a long history of success with learning communities, and internal and national research suggests that well-structured and purposeful learning communities can have a positive impact on student persistence (Kuh et al., 2006). Like first-year seminars, learning communities can reach large populations of students, and they can be combined with other HIPs to produce even more impactful experiences. Continual assessment and improvement will help to ensure that these practices fulfill the overarching goal to promote student persistence.

Fostering a community of practice around HIPs is vital to the success and sustainability of these practices. A group of WCU faculty, staff, and administrators that attended the AAC&U Summer Institute on HIPs in 2016 and the Teaching and Learning National Institute in 2017 determined that faculty must lead the charge if HIPs are to realize their full potential at WCU (Henderson, Beach, & Finkelstein, 2011). The role of the HIPs faculty community will be to identify learning goals, to formulate assessment processes to verify if goals are being met, and to create a repository of HIPs materials and methods that will lower the barriers for other HIPs adopters. Administrative support is imperative for this community of practice to flourish. Support could come in the form of

professional development, assessment support, and funding for student activities (see Strategic Direction 4 for details regarding administrative support).

Student Engagement and Involvement Programs

Another factor to consider in our attempts to institutionalize HIPs is the impact that these programs can have on historically underrepresented populations. Kuh (2008) reports that students who are underserved by higher education (specifically African American and first-generation students) tend to benefit more from educationally-purposeful activities than other students. The impact is also true for lower-achieving students who attend University (Kuh, G.D., 2008). WCU sponsors a host of programs and initiatives designed to support students who may be academically underprepared or who are in a defined underserved population. Project CARE is committed to African American student retention and is one example of a program that targets underrepresented students at WCU. The Department of Intercultural Affairs designed Project CARE in the early 1990's as a peer mentoring program that takes a proactive approach to address the academic challenges underrepresented students face at predominately white institutions. The program pairs first-year and transfer-student participants with peer leaders who help them adjust to college life academically, culturally, and socially.

Mentoring and Persistence to Success (MAPS) provides comprehensive programs and holistic services designed to connect first generation and independent students with resources, empower them to achieve academic and personal goals, and guide them to graduation from Western Carolina University. Signature programs include: the First Gen Club and The WHEE First Mentor Program, both specific for First-Generation College Students; the Resilient Independent Student Association and Homebase, both of which serve and support students that are former foster youth, former orphans, emancipated youth, homeless youth, as well as other non-traditional students; and the Compass program, which provides additional guidance and support for first

generation, low income, or independent students in addition to any participants in the Academic Success Program.

In addition to targeted programs aimed at historically underrepresented populations, WCU also provides resources, outreach efforts, and professional staff to support student success across the entire student population. Examples of programs and resources available to the entire student body include tutoring, academic advising, welcome programs, residential programming, and counseling services (see Appendix 4 for a complete overview of documented current programs and initiatives).

DATA ANALYTICS AS A ROADMAP FOR RETENTION INITIATIVES

Data: What We Have and What We Need

The University collects a wealth of data related to student persistence and retention, but the data we collect does not always tell the full story of students' decisions to stay or to leave. WCU'S fall 2016 retention rate of 78.9% was based on an enrollment of almost 300 more students than were enrolled in 2015, an increase that most certainly challenged the University's infrastructure and our ability to respond nimbly to the needs of a growing student body. For a comprehensive understanding of the 1.2% drop, it is critical to examine the many variables that potentially contributed to the decline, including class sizes and the ability of student support units to adequately respond to an increased demand for services.

Another area for continued study is the use of high school GPA as a predictor for success in college. High school GPA is a fairly reliable measure of college readiness because it represents a number of aptitudes that students must have to succeed, including math skills, reading and writing skills, social coping skills, academic attitudes, and work habits; however, a more robust assessment of these characteristics would allow the University to more effectively select students who have the skills and attitudes that will contribute to their success at WCU.

Fifth-week grade data is yet another unmined source of information about student persistence. At the conclusion of the 5th-week, students who have received one unsatisfactory grade (U, C-, or lower) are sent an email reminding them of available campus resources. Students with two or more unsatisfactory course grades receive an email requesting a meeting with their professional advisor to discuss their plan for returning to satisfactory standing. The Advising Center tracks the number of these students who attend an advising meeting and those who do not; however, the data does not accurately reflect the substance of these meetings, nor does it capture the outcome of the students' situations at the conclusion of the term and/or academic year. A better tracking mechanism is needed to evaluate the impact of 5th week grades on students and to determine if advising meetings result in a statistical significance in the retention of students.

Institutional reports of courses with high D, F, and W rates provide insight into where our students may need targeted help and intervention. Reguar dissemination of this data to deans and department heads could help to initiate conversations around targeted support for students enrolled in classes that are considered historically difficult. Additionally, professional and faculty advisors could use this information in the advising process to reduce the likelihood of students enrolling in a "killer course combination" in any given semester (see Appendix 1, Table 7 for details on "killer course combinations").

Targeted Interventions Based on Data

GradesFirst 2.0, a web-based tool by the Education Advisory Board (EAB) to coordinate, target, and report on advising, tutoring, and other student success services, allows the University to track students who have not declared a major and students who change majors at any point in their careers (see Appendix 6, Tables 17-18). Students who habitually change majors, who do not declare a major by the end of their first year, or who do not attain success markers set for their declared major would benefit from the creation of an explicit academic/career plan (see Appendix 6, Table 16 for an example of success markers). The academic/career plan need not necessarily include

declaration of major, but it should clearly map students' exploration of majors through the liberal studies program and other extra-curricular activities. These plans would be especially useful for undeclared students, knowing that their retention is three points lower than that of other students (see Appendix 3, Table 15). WCU also should consider a category of "soft declares" that would include students in majors that have limited slots or especially rigorous classes (e.g., Engineering). Career development professionals and advisors could be enlisted to help these students develop academic/career plans and to reinforce the benefits of a liberal arts education.

Courses with historically high rates of D, F, and W grades could benefit from the implementation of a Supplemental Instruction program. Supplemental Instruction (SI) is a peer education model with a 40-year history of increasing student academic engagement and performance in courses across the curriculum. SI focuses on high-risk courses rather than high-risk students and places a trained peer leader in the classroom with students during daily instruction activities. SI Leaders conduct regularly scheduled SI sessions in which students learn and practice skills such as effective note-taking methods, writing techniques essential for the particular course, and successful collaborative study methods. Cooperating faculty make a commitment to work with the SI Program by providing course information necessary for SI preparation, sharing comparative grade reports, and encouraging student participation in the program. Because SI is geared towards an entire class rather than selected "at-risk" students, SI sessions carry less remedial stigma than traditional tutoring programs. Within the UNC System, WCU is one of the few institutions that do not have a fully-funded Supplemental Instruction program. This initiative could impact a broad range of institutional outcomes, including the success of students in high-risk classes, student retention, and the integration of intentional learning strategies that students can transfer to all other coursework (see Appendix 5 for a complete SI Program Proposal).

MAPPING SUCCESS: STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS – INITIATIVES – ACTIONS

> "….retention should not be the ultimate goal of institutional action, though it may be a desirable outcome of institutional efforts. Instead, institutions and students would be better served if a concern for the education of students, their social and intellectual growth, were the guiding principle of institutional action. When that goal is achieved, enhanced student retention will naturally follow" (Tinto, 1993, p. 4).

Recommendations

Successful implementation of the recommendations presented in this plan depends on a university-wide commitment to outcomes assessment and continuous improvement. WCU is already doing the right things to support student success; however, WCU has not developed a uniform or consistent method to define, measure, and report on the outcomes of these programs. Neccesary to this effort is the ability to readily access data and reports, both predictive and actual, to provide effective and responsive support strategies. Finally, administrative support and budgetary allocations for selected initiatives will be crucial to their success and to the success of our students.

RETENTION GOAL: First-time full-time student retention will stabilize at 80% by 2018.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: Support for Academically Underprepared

Support initiatives and programs for academically underprepared students (expand support for those that exist and develop new support structures as indicated by data).

See Appendix 1, Tables 1 through 9.

1.1 Utilize predictive analytics to identify risk factors and to modify student services and support.

1. Implement a pre-enrollment instrument to identify risk factors.
2. Implement a pre-enrollment interest inventory to aid advisors as they build initial schedules and conduct initial meetings with students.
3. Unpack high school GPA as an indicator of preparedness.
4. Examine and respond to courses with high D, F, W rates.
5. Expand early math readiness assessment.

6. Develop writing readiness assessment.
7. Implement a Supplemental Instruction (SI) program to support students in historically difficult classes (see Appendix 5).
8. Conduct a review of 'killer course combinations' that are barriers to student success and implement strategies to respond accordingly.
9. Review GPA data by course type to identify where students are most challenged.
10. Review recruitment practices to enhance recruitment of students from rural areas and from areas where students are historically retained.
11. Recommend expanded reporting on only the students who are deemed at-risk as a result of fifth-week reporting.

1.2 Provide targeted academic support and intervention for at-risk students.

1. Provide non-credit alternatives for students to sharpen basic mathematical skills.
2. Provide non-credit alternatives for students to sharpen basic writing skills.
3. Consider a category of "soft declares" for students in majors with limited slots or especially rigorous classes.
4. Help students to develop academic/career plans and to utilize interest inventories in the decision-making process.
5. Emphasize liberal studies as a mechanism for students to explore possible majors.
6. Develop an academic coaching program for at-risk students.
7. Investigate continuation of a case management model through the first year for ASP students.
8. Revise transition course content to be academically focused, outsourcing many of the current core elements to online modules.
9. Develop a Career Counseling required pathway for undeclared students with a GPA below 2.5 after their first semester.
10. Have all incoming students read *Make it Stick.*
11. Redesign MAPS First Generation mentorship model to a 2-tier model in which upper-level students mentor new students while being mentored by faculty/staff.
12. Develop outreach plans at the academic department level to mentor students who exhibit signs of leaving.

1.3 Support faculty who teach first-year courses.

1. Increase the number of first-year courses employing teaching strategies designed to support success for first-year students.

2. Provide 'best practices' professional development for faculty who teach first-year courses.
3. Carefully consider instructor qualifications and class size.
4. Encourage all faculty who teach freshmen and sophomores (especially ASP and FYE instructors) to read *Small Teaching*.

1.4 Establish a joint task force that includes WCU and feeder schools (high schools and community colleges) to examine student preparedness for the rigor of university expectations.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2: Underserved Population Degree Efficiency

Increase undergraduate degree efficiency for underserved populations (minority, first-generation, low-income, males, rural).

NOTE: Many initiatives/actions recommended for Strategic Directions 1 and 3 also apply to this student population, pending other factors.

See Appendix 2, Tables 10 through 14.

2.1 Utilize demographic data as predictive analytics to inform student services and support.

1. Investigate impact of geographic demographics on retention.
2. Utilize the data to inform support initiatives/programs and schedule building.

2.2 Develop programs to support students in marginalized and underserved populations.

1. Enhance diversity programs.
2. Engage minority students early in career development.
3. Create targeted publications/websites that are geared to this population.
4. Develop additional family/parent resources.

2.3 Investigate impact of financial strain on student retention and develop mechanisms to reduce strain.

1. Develop systems process for a standardized import of Pell eligibility and first-generation status data.
2. Develop a required online module in financial education that culminates in students developing a long-range financing plan.
3. Allow students the ability to 'work off' debts less than $500 by securing an on-campus job.
4. Obtain funding to support non-work study student employment or develop scholarships for experiential education opportunities.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3: Promote Student Engagement and Involvement

Promote programs and opportunities designed to encourage student engagement and involvement.

See Appendix 3, Table 15.

3.1 Analyze retention through the filter of student life (where they live, level of engagement, etc.)

1. Identify highly engaged students and examine the common threads to their success.

3.2 Utilize existing university initiatives and programs to foster greater student engagement and involvement.

1. Promote DegreePlus as a standard component in first-year transition courses.
2. Promote the campus theme within first year liberal studies courses.

3.3 Enhance professional development programs for students.

1. Require incoming students to develop an academic/career plan. The plan should not force students to declare a major, but it should provide a clear road map of students' exploration of majors through the liberal studies program and other extra-curricular activities.
2. Provide dedicated outreach and support to engage minority students in leadership development.
3. Promote DegreePlus leadership programming.

3.4 Promote the incorporation of High Impact Practices (HIPs) across the university (curricular and co-curricular) and as a means to support retention efforts among underrepresented student populations.

1. Decide which HIPs to support and be sure they are done well.
2. Improve the articulation of HIPs goals and assessment.
3. Identify criteria that will be used to select and support existing HIPs (criteria could include outcomes assessment data, number of students served, or impact on first-year student retention).
4. Foster a community of practice around HIPS that includes administrative support and an appropriate allocation of resources.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4: Campus Involvement and Administrative Support

Involve the campus community in the strategic planning of retention initiatives and implement those initiatives with full administrative support (e.g. resources, marketing, and assessment).

4.1 Promote Administrative Processes in Support of Student Success and Retention.

1. Review existing student surveys to maximize participation and to avoid duplication.
2. Generate and distribute reports with college/school-specific retention data.
3. Present retention and graduation data to each college/school on a yearly basis.
4. Develop contingency plans to deal with enrollment increases.
5. Adapt existing policies and usual practices as warranted to meet growth demands.

4.2 Invest in and support retention efforts with the resources needed.

1. Use assessment data to inform resource allocation.
2. Use data to identify hiring priorities for programs that directly support successful retention initiatives.

4.3 Involve Faculty and Staff.

1. Increase utilization of GradesFirst.
2. Increase the usefulness of reports in GradeFirst so that faculty can monitor student progress in relation to students' engagement with campus resources (WaLC, MTC, CCPD, etc.).
3. Promote communities of practice and support professional development opportunities for faculty and staff who are engaged in strategic retention initiatives.
4. Develop a retention guide to be shared with faculty and staff.

4.4 Develop retention marketing plan.

1. Examine recruitment and marketing plans to ensure we emphasize 'fit' as well as academic readiness.
2. Celebrate student success at all levels and publically.
3. Market NC Promise internally to encourage retention.

4.5 Formalize peer mentoring at the university level.

1. Reintroduce peer mentor course training model for Peer Academic Leaders serving as peer mentors to ASP and Catamount Gap students.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5: Outcomes Assessment

Develop an outcomes assessment plan to monitor progress and guide refinement that is both global and program specific.

5.1 Improve processes related to data collection and dissemination.

1. Increase the dissemination of assessment results.

2. Develop a reporting calendar that allows for timely response.
3. Develop a better process to collect and evaluate clearing house data upon student departure.
4. Design a required exit interview process for students who leave WCU (transfer, withdraw, other, etc.)

5.2 Review curriculum and instruction decisions related to students' academic success.

1. Review curriculum/requirements for LC 101 (probation courses).
2. Review faculty assignments to first-year courses, with the aim to identify the best faculty for first-year students.
3. Redesign first-year courses to integrate best practices in student learning and train faculty in new methodologies.

5.3 Review processes and procedures related to progress reporting.

1. Conduct a thorough review of 5th week grades versus mid-term grades as predictors of persistence and retention.
2. Assess outcomes for students who receive outreach based on 5th week grades.

5.4 Assess outcomes for all retention-focused programs.

1. Develop outcomes and measures for each strategic direction.
2. Monitor progress and evaluate outcomes for strategic initiatives and recommended actions.
3. Review and respond to existing programs as well as new recommendations.

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APPENDIX 1

WCU RETENTION DATA REVIEW: STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

2015----------80.2% Retained Overall			
GPA	Enrolled (%)	Retained (%)	Not Retained (%)
3.5+	1,111 (68.41%)	930 (83.7%)	181 (56.21%)
3-3.49	413 (25.43%)	304 (73.6%)	109 (33.85%)
2.5-2.99	93 (5.73%)	64 (68.8%)	29 (9.01%)
None to report	7 (.43%)	4 (57.1%)	3 (.93%)
Total	1,624	1,302	322

2016----------78.9% Retained Overall			
GPA	Enrolled (%)	Retained (%)	Not Retained (%)
3.5+	1,300 (67.96)	1,089 (83.8)	211 (52.23)
3-3.49	483 (25.25)	339 (70.2)	144 (35.64)
2.5-2.99	122 (6.38)	75 (61.5)	47 (11.63)
<2.5	2 (.1)	0	2 (.5)
None to report	6 (.31)	6 (100)	
Total	1,913	1,509	404

1.1.3: Unpack HS GPA as an indicator of preparedness.

Tables 1 and 2 provide a breakdown of student enrollment by high school GPA comparing the total student population to three subgroups: 1) first generation college students, 2) students in the Academic Success Program (ASP), and 3) students in Catamount Gap. For all groups except ASP, students with an entry GPA of 3.5 or above represent the majority of the student population, followed by students in the 3.00-3.49 GPA range; those with a high school GPA of 2.50-2.99 represent the smallest group of students. In ASP, most students entered with a GPA between 3.00 and 3.49. *There were some individuals who were admitted in 2015 who did not have a high school GPA to report, but they did not participate in ASP or Catamount Gap.*

Table 1 --- 1.1.3

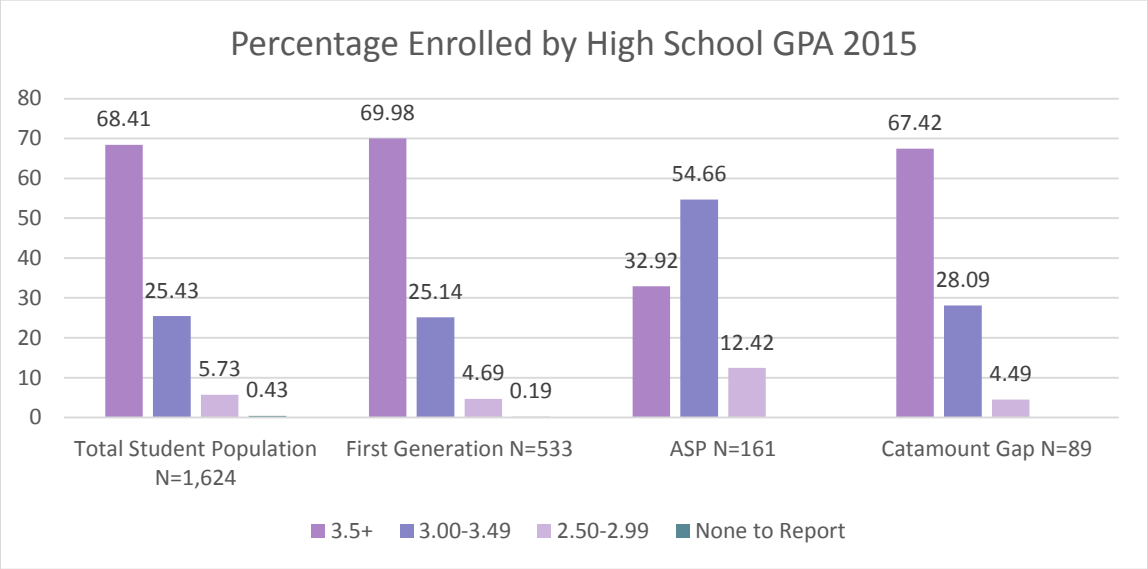
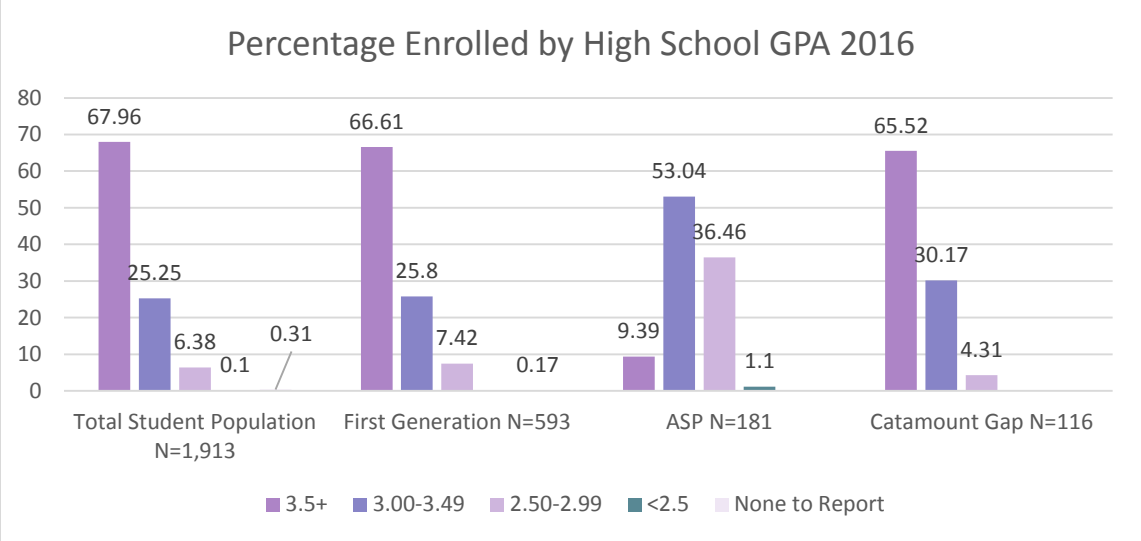


Table 2 --- 1.1.3



Tables 3 and 4 compare the percentage of students from each GPA band who were retained from the Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 cohorts. The numbers represent only the students who were retained and do not include the students who did not continue the next fall.

Table 3 --- 1.1.3
The overall retention rate for the 2015 cohort was 80.2%.

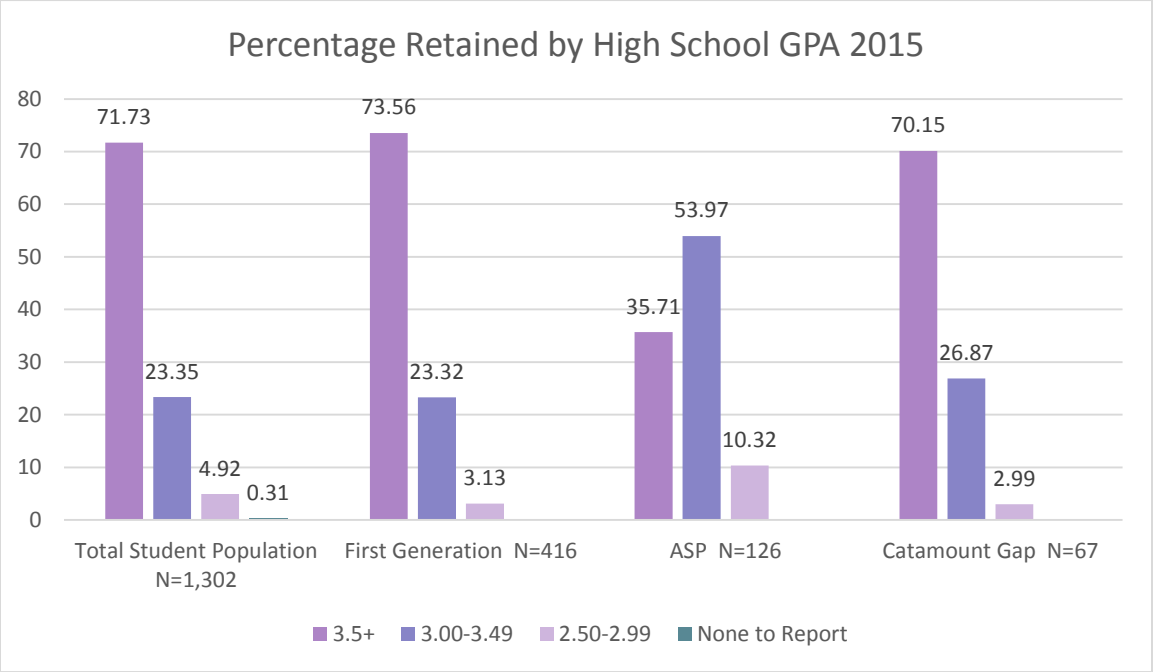
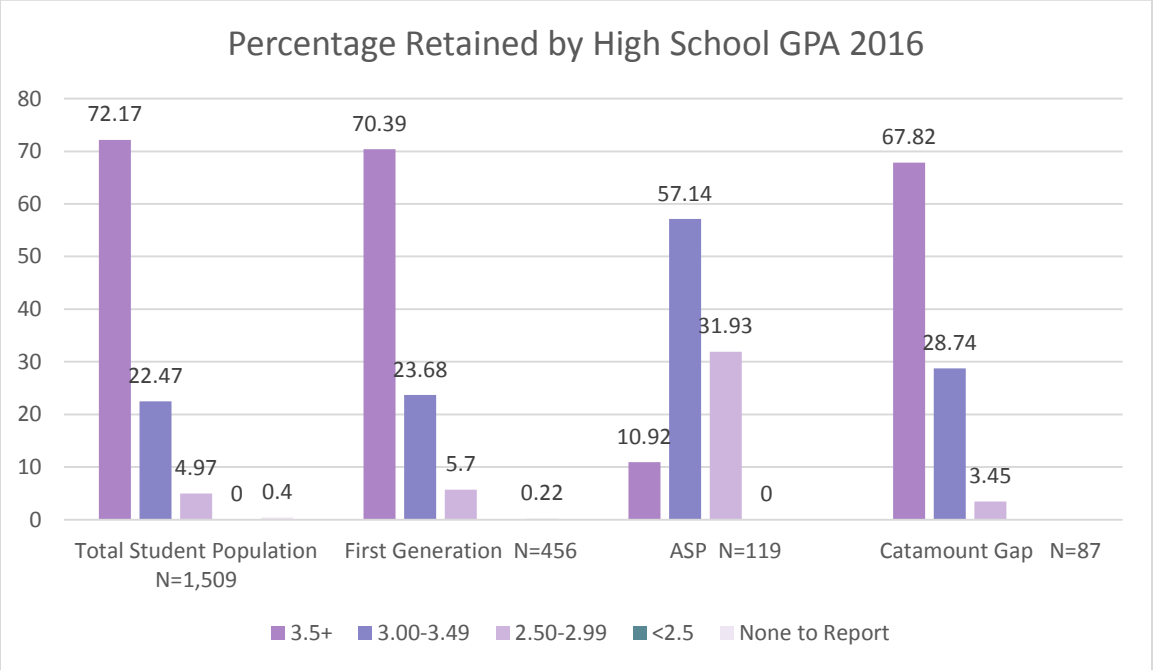


Table 4 --- 1.1.3
The overall retention rate for the 2016 cohort was 78.9%.



Tables 5 and 6 compare the percentage of students from each GPA band who were not retained from the Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 cohorts. The numbers represent only the students who were ***not retained*** and do not include the students who were retained. The percentages are out of the N values that are in each group.

Table 5 --- 1.1.3

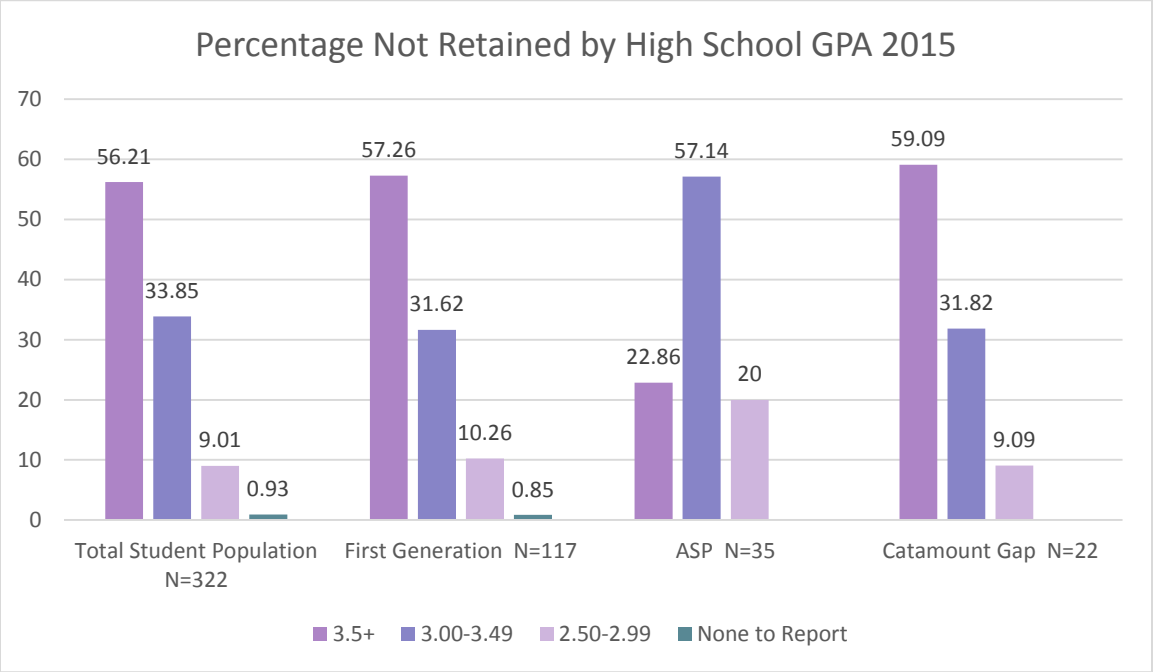
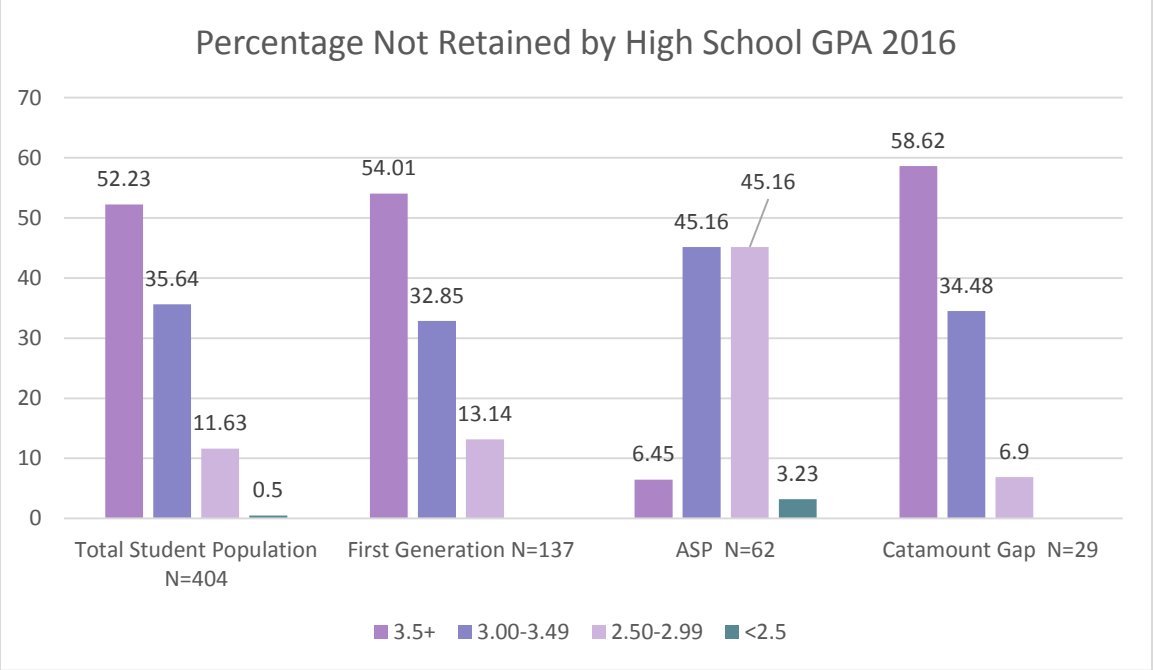


Table 6 --- 1.1.3



1.1.4 Examine and respond to DFW course enrollment to address scheduling / advising opportunities and interventions in advance.

1.1.7 Conduct a review of 'killer course combinations' that are barriers to student success; implement strategies to respond accordingly.

Table 7 --- Killer Course Combinations 1.1.4/1.1.7

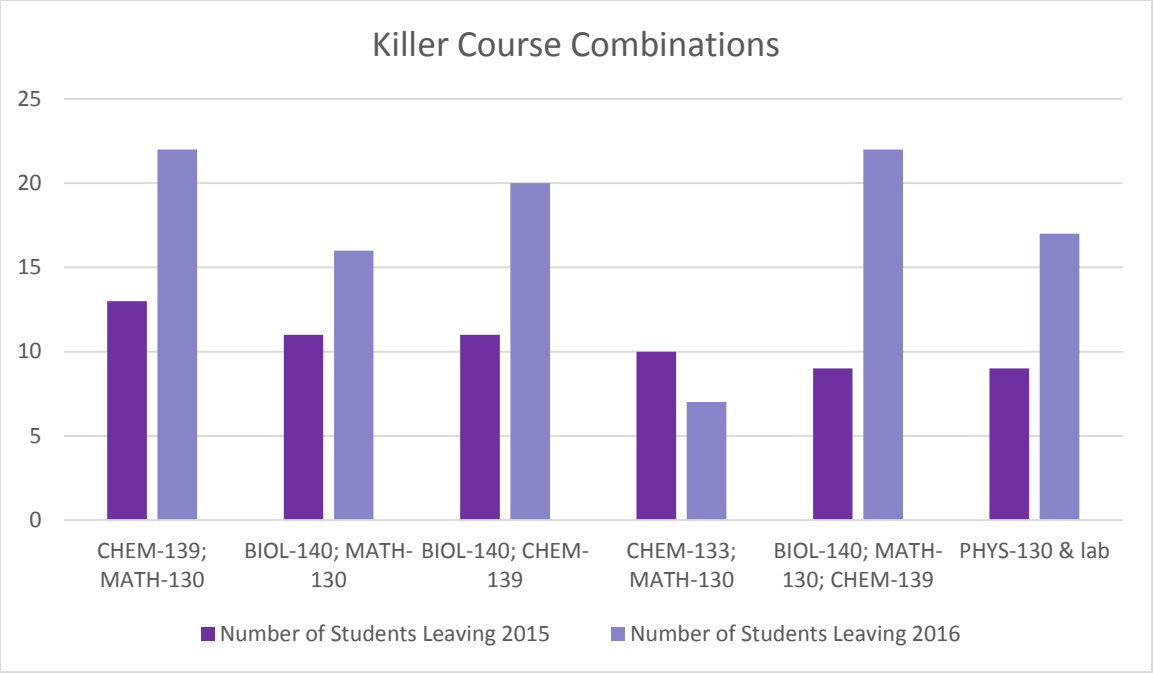


Table 7 compares course combinations known to be especially challenging for some students. Although not every student takes these specific courses or combinations, these courses are among the options students can choose from in order to fulfill liberal studies or degree requirements. The courses listed—CHEM-139, MATH-130, BIOL-140, CHEM-133, and PHYS-130—have been flagged as courses that are particularly difficult. When taken together, these courses have a higher number of students who are not retained when compared to the other class combinations that enroll first-year students.

1.2.6 Develop academic coaching program for at-risk students.

1.3.7 Investigate continuation of a case management model through the full first year for ASP students.

Table 8 --- 1.2.6/1.2.7

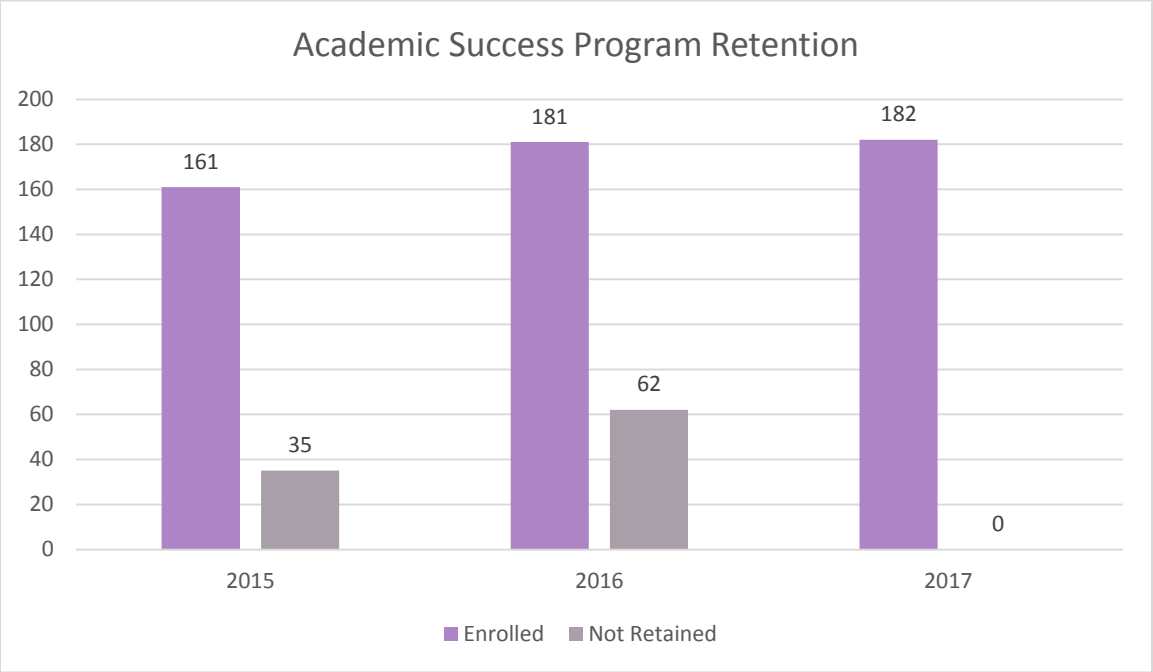


Table 8 compares enrollment and retention for students enrolled in the 2015-2017 Academic Success Program (ASP) cohorts. ASP is a conditional admission program in which students begin with enrollment in summer session. If students successfully complete the summer (overall summer GPA of 2.5 and above and nothing less than a C in any one course), they are allowed to continue in the fall cohort. The goal of this program is to provide opportunities to help these students demonstrate college readiness through an intensive summer program that provides students with the resources that will allow them to succeed. Students are enrolled in 7 credit hours, attend required study hours and optional special programming, are provided with peer mentors, and are supported by a case management structure to address concerns early.

Table 9 --- 1.2.6

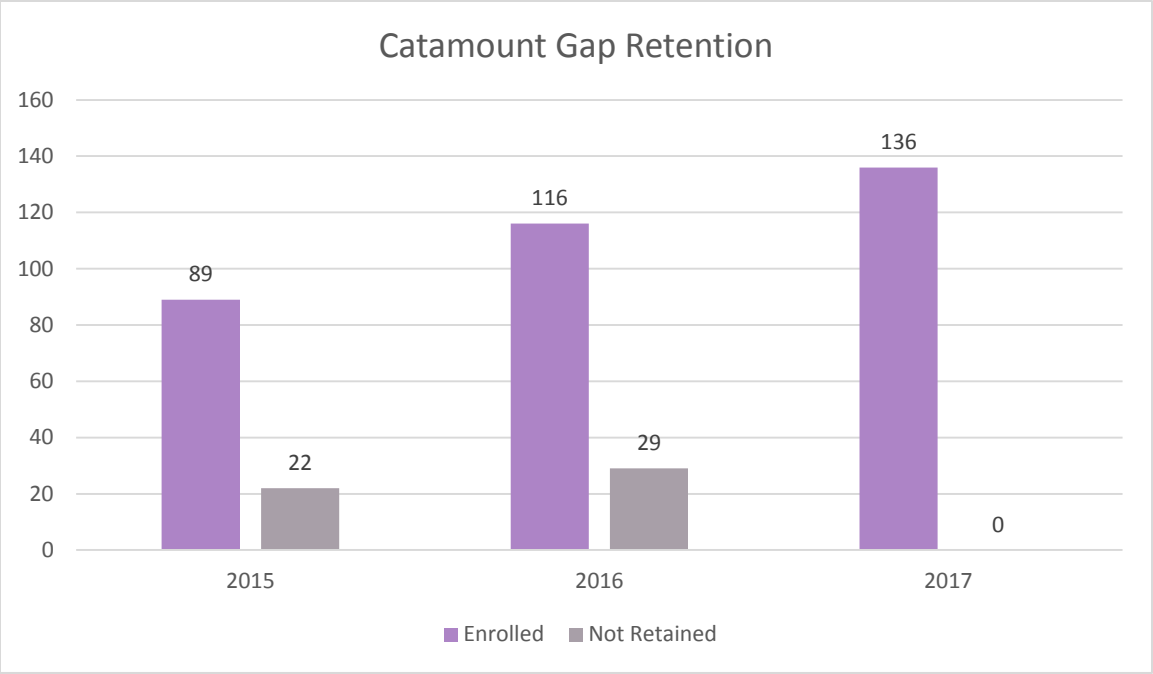


Table 9 compares enrollment and retention for students enrolled in the 2015-2017 Catamount GAP cohorts. Catamount Gap is a summer program in which students have the option to begin with enrollment in summer session. These are students who have been accepted for fall admission and may choose to get an early start for a variety of reasons. They are held to the same academic standing policies as students who start in the fall. The program is similar to ASP in that it is an intensive summer program that provides students with added summer resources such as supplemental instruction. Students are enrolled in 7-8 credit hours, attend required study hours and optional special programming, are provided with peer mentors, and supported by a case management structure to address concerns early.

APPENDIX 2

WCU RETENTION DATA REVIEW: STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

Table 10 --- 2.3.1

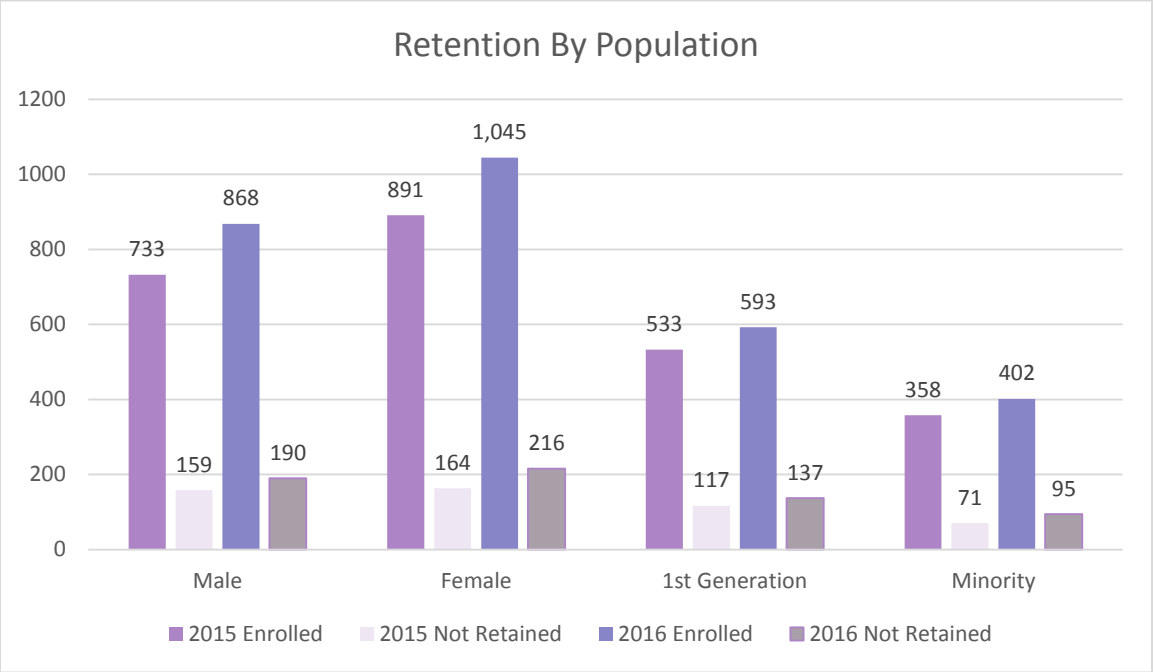


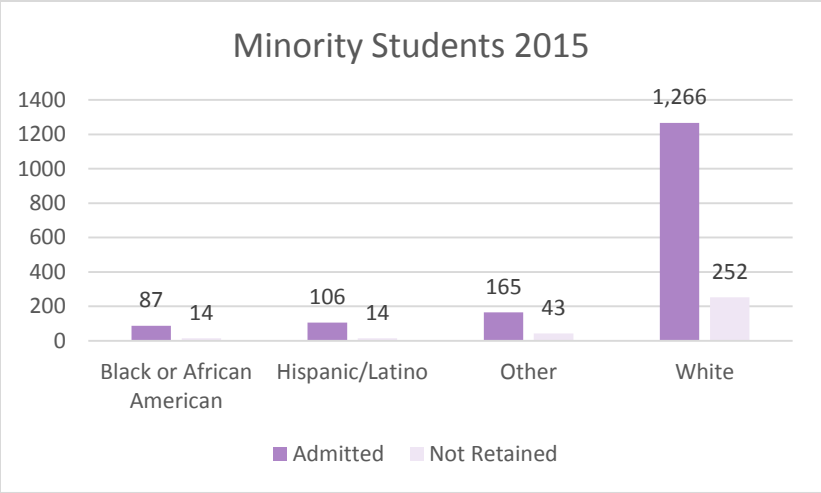
Table 10 compares retention rates for the fall 2015 and fall 2016 cohorts between demographic populations. In each demographic grouping, the first two bars represent the 2015 cohort and the second two bars represent the 2016 cohort.

Percentages not retained:	2015	2016
Male	21.11	21.89
Female	18.40	20.66
First Generation	21.95	23.10
Minority	19.83	23.63

2.2 Develop programs/support dedicated to students in marginalized and underserved populations.

Tables 11 and 12 compare retention rates for minority students that were admitted in 2015 and 2016. The Tableau report only breaks race/ethnicity down into 4 categories: Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, Other, and White. Because of this, some of the information is lost in the "other" category such as the number of students at Western who identify as Native American. This does, however, give a good picture of the difference in retention rates between the Black/African American population and the Hispanic/Latino population.

Table 11 --- 2.2

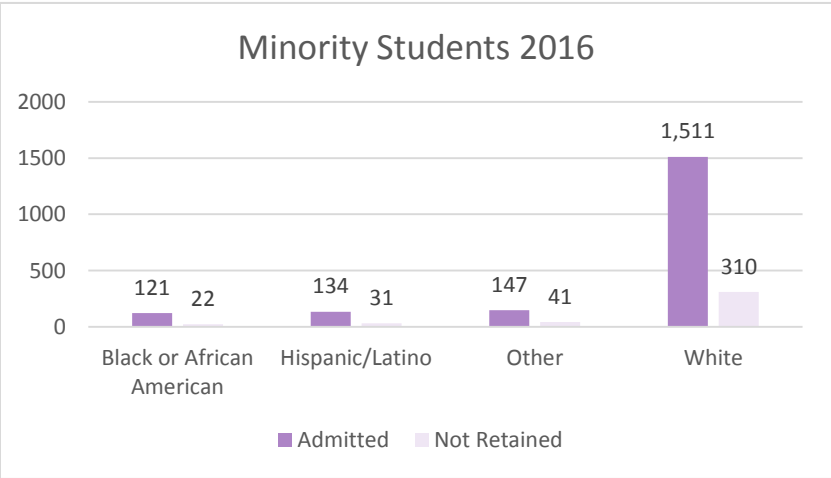


The Black or African American population had higher retention rates (84%) in this school year than the overall population.

The Hispanic/Latino population also had higher retention rates (87%) in this school year than the overall population.

(80.2% overall for 2015).

Table 12 --- 2.2

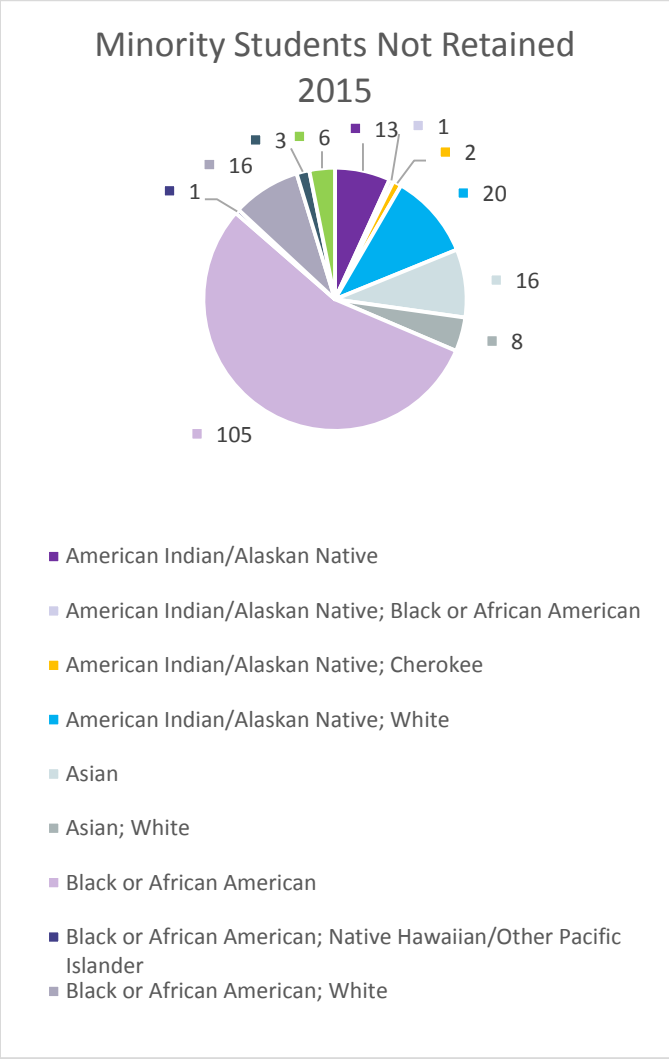


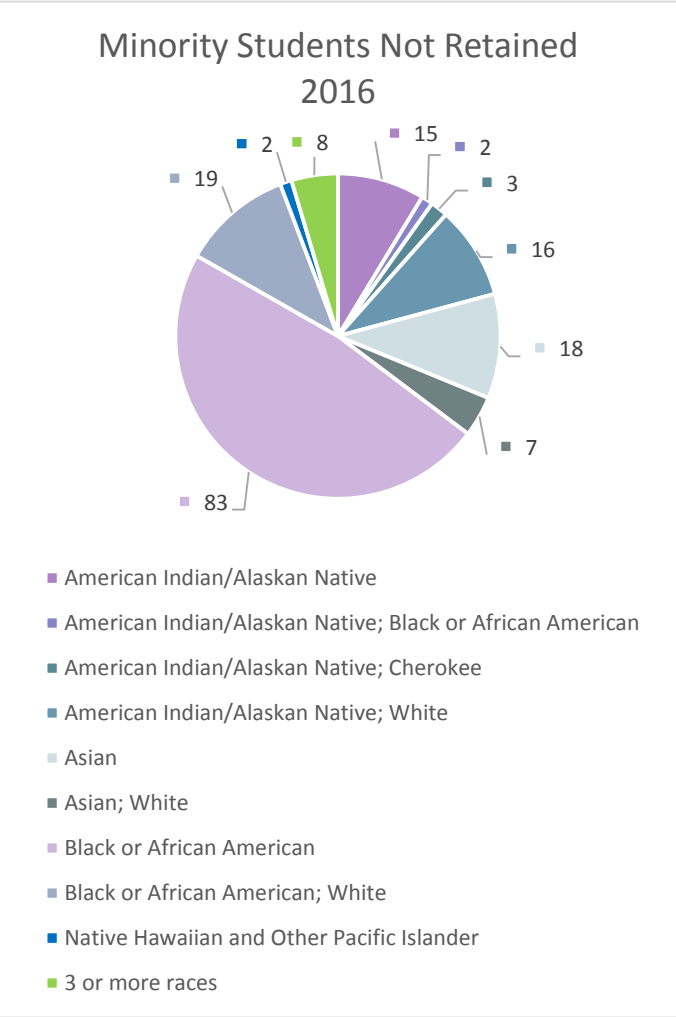
The Black or African American population had higher retention rates (82%) in this school year than the overall population.

The Hispanic/Latino population were retained at a slightly lower level (78.9%) than the overall population,

(78.9 % overall for 2016).

Tables 13 and 14 --- 2.2
Minority Students Not Retained





Tables 13 and 14 provide a more detailed look at the minority students who attend Western Carolina. This data was retrieved from the Banner report, and therefore may have some discrepancies between it and the data gathered from Tableau. The students who identify as only White students were not included in these tables for the purpose of closer examination of only the minority populations that attend Western Carolina University.

APPENDIX 3

WCU RETENTION DATA REVIEW: STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

Table 15 --- 3.3.1

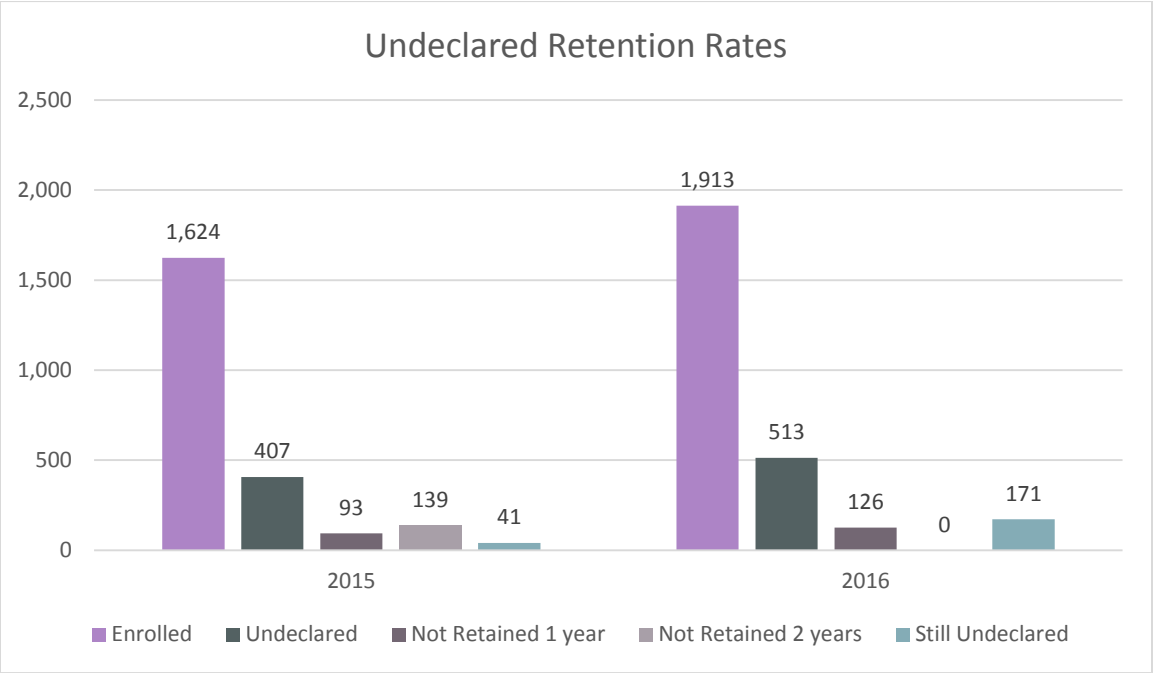


Table 15 compares retention rates for students who have not declared a major. The two groupings compare the numbers between the fall 2015 cohort and the fall 2016 cohort.

- Bar 1: the total number of students who were enrolled that year.
- Bar 2: how many students of the total number who did not declare a major when they enrolled (e.g., in 2015, 1,624 students enrolled and of those 1,624, 407 of the students did not declare a major).
- Bar 3: the number of students who did not declare a major and were not retained to the next year (e.g. in 2015, of the 407 students who did not declare a major, 93 of those students did not enroll the following fall).
- Bar 4: number of students not retained the second year (the progression: 1,624 students were admitted in 2015. Of those 1,624 students, 407 of them did not declare a major. Of the 407 students who did not declare a major, 93 did not enroll in fall 2016 and an additional 46 students dropped out, making the total number of students who were not retained that also did not declare a major 139).
- Bar 5: the number of students who are still attending WCU, but are still undeclared.

APPENDIX 4

REVIEW of CURRENT WCU RETENTION INITIATIVES

Sponsoring Department	Initiative-Program
UNIVERSITY-LEVEL OR MULTIPLE DEPARTMENT	
	Week of Welcome: a full week of campus activities and events designed to make students feel welcome; get students involved early and promote peer interaction.
	Issue Alert: Designed to assist students who are experiencing academic and other difficulties; provides a convenient means for faculty/staff to make referrals.
	Re-Calibrate your Compass: a mid-term event designed to remind students of available resources that can support a successful completion of the semester.
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS UNITS	
Office of the Provost	
	Learning Communities: a set of linked courses that place students with similar interests together in 2-3 courses and foster integrated learning environments.
	High Impact Practices: 10 practices defined by AAC&U that promote higher levels of student engagement and deep learning; encourage student involvement.
	First-year seminars (liberal studies): new students experience intellectual life at the university level; encourage exploration of new ideas, examine a range of academic topics, and challenge students to set high goals.
Student Success	
	New Student Convocation (with Student Transitions): marks the official welcome of new students to the university.
	Summer Session: provides students the opportunity to get ahead in their academic pathway or to focus on courses that have proven a challenge..
	Telling our Stories: an awareness event for students in underserved populations who are willing to do so to share their personal stories of challenge and resilience.
Accessibility Resources	
	Coordinated services for students with disabilities: accommodations are designed to level the playing field for those students and to ensure access.
Advising Center	
	Advising Day: one day each semester no classes meet providing students a dedicated day to meet with their advisors to schedule classes and discuss their progress toward degree completion.
	Individual Student Advising appointments: Professional advisors meet with students for initial meetings; Fifth week grades; registration for undeclared students and students with recently changed majors; and in response to risk indicators.
	5th Week Grade Intervention: Advisors reach out to 'at-risk' students based on 5th week grades submitted to share resource options and to schedule a visit as warranted.
	LC 101 Probation Course: provides support and guidance to students placed on Academic Warning; designed to connect students with resources and to counsel them through the process of returning to Good Standing.

	Grades First 2.0: a web-based tool created and maintained by the Education Advisory Board (EAB) to coordinate, target, and report on advising, tutoring, and other student success services.
	Whee Register: collaboration with Residential Living; Academic Advisors participate one-on-one with students who need assistance in the residence hall environment.
	Academic Appeals: a formal appeal process for students that find themselves on Academic Suspension or Academic Dismissal.
	Pre-registration enrollment model: allows for student choice and ownership in their onboarding experience; admitted students select critical components of their educational journey such as: major and course options.
	Nonregistered Student Outreach: Each semester after all current students have had the opportunity to register, we pull a list of all non-registered, active students and contact them to offer assistance toward degree completion.
	Change of Academic Plan Survey Student Outreach (to those who completed the survey): The survey allows students to express why they may not be returning, and if they wish to return, their reason for stopping out for a period of time.
	Statement of Academic Intent (SAI): a readmissions process for students in poor academic standing (or…not in good academic standing) who broke enrollment
	Finish Line program *(not for FTFTF*): The aim of Finish Line, in conjunction with the Part-Way Home initiative through the UNC-system, is to assist students in returning to the university and finishing their first bachelor's degree.
Career & Professional Development	
	Peer Career Mentors: Student mentors are paid and able to work on campus in a meaningful way. Student participants receive resume writing and cover letter writing advice from students who are trained to review these documents.
	Degree Plus: Campus-wide program that promotes involvement in extra-curricular activities that teach students transferable skills in professionalism, leadership, teamwork, and cultural responsiveness.
	Workshop Series: Workshops are designed to educate students on a variety of career preparation topics including; job searching, interviewing, networking, personal finances, customer service, and professionalism.
	Catamount Career and Networking Day: A career fair event that introduces students to a variety of employers who are recruiting Western Carolina University students and graduates.
	Student Employment Program: Offers students employment through campus departments. Students will learn various workplace skills and etiquette as well as reflect upon their own personal values and skill sets that they bring to the positions.
	Etiquette Dinners/Receptions: students are introduced to proper professional behavior and etiquette in a reception or dinner setting; students practice skills with mentors from on- and off-campus.
Math Tutoring Center	
	Supplemental Instruction (SI) for Summer Learning Communities: Peer-led group study sessions in which students work collaboratively to compare and clarify lecture notes, review assignments, and discuss key course concepts.
	Drop-in Tutoring: The MTC is open 56 hours per week and serves students on a drop-in basis for all 100 and 200 level math courses
	MATH 170 Review: weekly group review sessions for enrolled students

Mentoring and Persistence to Success	
Targeted programming and support: first-generation, low-income, independent (former foster, orphan, emancipated, homeless)	***Compass:*** targeted advising model specific to the population. ▪ Combination of appreciative and intrusive advising models. ▪ Academic and social coaching. ▪ Students required to meet with assigned MAPS advisor at least five times per semester.
	Coaching: Friday Walk-in academic and social coaching
	Academic Progress reporting: 5th, 8th, and 11th week
	Learning contract courses: population specific & led by MAPS advisors
	Founders Program: regular coaching sessions for qualifying students, coordinated by the Office of Financial Aid
	First Generation Faculty and Staff Mentoring Program: pairs new first generation or independent students with a mentor for the student's first year.
	Resilient Independent Student Association (RISA): community of support for former foster, orphan, emancipated, and homeless students. Programming focused on topics of particular concern to the population
	Monthly eNewsletters: separate communications to parents and students include important dates, tips for parents in supporting their student, highlight one campus support office, and one student spotlight
	Online Support: "How-to-WCU" for students page with answers to common questions. Also, a Family page with information useful to parents
Summer Early Start Option for FY Students in Catamount GAP & ASP	Living learning community model during summer
	Intensive programming in partnership with Residential Living, CCPD, and ICA during the summer
	Case Management: partnership with Residential Living to provide interventions for students struggling academically or socially
Academic Success Program (ASP): a conditional admission for academically underprepared FY students	Reference Summer Early Start for additional initiatives and programs that support this student population in addition to the following list.
	Peer mentorship program for first full year at WCU
	5th, 8th, and 11th week progress reporting
	Learning contract courses led by MAPS advisors.
	USI 131: Thriving in College: 1 credit course required in fall semester. Continued academic skill development and experiential learning curriculum in partnership with DegreePlus
	Mandatory weekly study hours in Hunter Library
	Requirement for some students to enroll in Compass
Catamount Gap: summer early start option for FY students	Reference Summer Early Start for additional initiatives and programs that support this student population in addition to the following list.
	Peer mentorship program in summer, option for continuation through full year
	Catamount Gap Abroad: cohort provided with all support elements in a study abroad framework.
One Stop Student Support Desk	
	Direct walk-in service center for students: support and ready-answers or referrals to a range of student questions, needs, and services.
	Staff support special programs: examples include, Advising Day, Summer School, mentoring first generation students, Re-Calibrate, student organizations, etc.

Service Learning	
	Ripple Effect Learning Community: An intensive program that aligns students' interests in community engagement, service, and social entrepreneurship with various High Impact Practices .
	Lily Community Engagement Award Program: a measuring, monitoring, tracking, and gamifying tool for all CSL co-curricular programming (direct impact engagement, awareness/advocacy engagement, and philanthropy/fundraising).
	Alternative Break Program (weekend(s), fall, & spring): co-curricular programs are organized to inform students' personal growth: psychosocial and identity development; increase awareness of community challenges; critical reflection.
	FYE Day of Service: introduce WCU students to the western North Carolina region and community; introduce students to service at WCU.
	SLC Designations (100 & 200 level courses): courses seek to engage students in a balance of academic content, community-based experience, and critical reflection done at a duration and intensity commensurate to the course being facilitated.
	Conference on Undergraduate Regional Engagement (CURE): This program helps prepare students for engaged work in the community and helps them solidify an identity as a WCU honors student.
Student Transitions	
	New Student Convocation (with Student Success): marks the official welcome of new students to the university.
	Targeted outreach: guidance and support specifically available to new students as they learn to navigate available resources and support networks
	FYE Transition Courses: introduce the academic, procedural, and social elements of the university; help new students make a seamless and holistic transition to their new home and to college-level expectations.
	WHEE Call U Campaign: phone call campaign to new students during the 4th week of the semester by WCU faculty, staff, administrators; status check and to address concerns or questions early.
	Military student transition course: introduce the academic, procedural, and social elements of the university; provide a social and support network for military students.
	One Book Common Reading Program: engage first-year students in a common intellectual experience (a HIP) that promotes critical thinking and interdisciplinary conversation across the campus community.
Writing & Learning Commons	
	Course Tutoring: collaborative, small-group sessions focused on review of content in a specific course
	Writing Fellows: trained peer tutors who address undergraduate writing needs by providing focused support in classes where faculty have requested assistance with student writing.
	Writing Tutoring: one-on-one assistance for students at any level and at any point in the writing process. Writing tutors also are available to conduct in-class writing workshops by request.
	Academic Skills Consultants: provide one-on-one sessions and in-class workshops designed to help students with time management, test preparation, note-taking, and reading skills.

	Supplemental Instruction (SI) for Summer Learning Communities: Peer-led group study sessions in which students work collaboratively to compare and clarify lecture notes, review textbook readings, and discuss key course concepts.
	International Student Consultants: writing tutors who facilitate one-on-one or small group sessions with International and ESL students, with emphasis on developing conversational skills, understanding the American university system and faculty expectations, and familiarizing students with available resources.
ACADEMIC COLLEGES	
STUDENT AFFAIRS UNITS	
Campus Recreation and Wellness	
	Intramural Sports: A variety of sport offerings that help connect students through social interaction and play
	Club Sports: Registered student organizations that are started and led by students that are aimed at competing in their sport(s) of choice, Club sports provide leadership opportunities and connect students through a team environment
	Outdoor Programs (Base Camp Cullowhee): A variety of program offerings, mainly based in the outdoors, that focus on challenge by choice principles and teaching good outdoor ethics
	First Ascent: A wilderness orientation program targeting incoming students that allows students to make early connections to other students, eases the transition to college, and challenges students to learn and experience new things
	Wellness Programs: A variety of program offerings targeting the seven dimensions of wellness that help connect students to campus resources and teach students self-care and awareness
Counseling and Psychological Services	
	Individual and Group Counseling: Services are provided by licensed mental health clinicians to students to assist them in managing symptoms which may be affecting their academics and/or social relationships.
Intercultural Affairs	
	Project CARE: a peer mentoring program targeting underrepresented students; pairs first year and new transfer student participants with student leaders who serve as peer counselors to help new students adjust to college life.
Student Involvement and Leadership	
	WHEE Lead Conference: This annual one-day conference is an educational opportunity for campus leaders to explore issues that they face every day and investigate possible solutions
	Cat Camp Leadership Exploration: incoming freshmen participate in a 5 day/4 night retreat geared towards college transition; students meet new friends, build leadership skills, participate in exciting and challenging activities, and have fun.
	Disney Leadership Experience: annual fall break program in which students strengthen their leadership styles assisted by facilitators at the Walt Disney World Resort, in Orlando, Florida.

	Freshman Leadership Initiative: a prestigious living/learning community that prepares first year students for campus life and campus leadership opportunities, all while serving as a home away-from-home during your transition into college.
	OrgSync/ Student Organizations: An online community where students can find themselves building their co-curricular transcripts as well as find a list of over 170+ Recognized Student Clubs and Organizations to get involved with.
	LEAD Living Learning Communities (LLC's): students are organized into cohorts and co-located; connects a college transition course with residential programming.
	Franklin Covey 7 Habits Training: interactive, high-energy sessions from trained experts in Franklin Covey's curriculum; students will take away tools and tips for being empowered both in the workplace as well as in life.
	International Leadership Experience Trip: provides students the ability to understand and apply a global perspective to leadership with an extensive history and background on the selected country.
Residential Living	
	PEAKS: a residential first year experience program that offers residential programming.
	Living Learning Communities: students are organized into cohorts and co-located; connects a college transition course with residential programming.
	Whee Register (Advising Center partnership): a program held in two first year student residence halls where professional advisors come and help first year students register for classes.
	Human Development Retreat: a weekend trip each semester for 26 nominated students. Students (not already involved) explore their leadership potential and learn ways they can become involved on campus.
	Programming by RA's: resident assistants plan and host program events that cover a variety of topic areas (community building, coping skills, alcohol and drug education, engagement on campus, etc.)
	Student Satisfaction Initiative (SSI): One on one check-in meetings between residents and their RS's that occur three times throughout the year; ask how residents are doing overall, classes, declared a major, looked into internships, etc.
	Case Management - three professional staff work with students to help connect them to campus resources; will meet one on one with students who are having difficulty at the institution to connect them with appropriate campus resources.
	3.0 Club: enrolls all new first year residential students with an unweighted entry GPA below a 3.0 who receive monthly newsletters with tips and resources; those earning a 3.0 first semester are invited to a dinner to celebrate their achievement.

APPENDIX 5

SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION PROPOSAL

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is a peer education model with a 40-year history of increasing student academic engagement in courses across the curriculum. SI focuses on high-risk courses rather than high-risk students and places an SI Leader, a trained peer leader, in the classroom with students during daily instruction activities. SI Leaders also conduct regularly scheduled SI sessions in which students learn and practice skills such as effective note-taking methods, writing techniques essential for the particular course, and successful collaborative study methods. Cooperating faculty make a commitment to work with the SI Program by providing course information necessary for SI preparation, sharing comparative grade reports, and encouraging student participation in the program. Because SI is geared towards an entire class rather than selected "struggling" students, SI sessions carry less remedial stigma than many traditional tutoring programs. The International Center for Supplemental Instruction at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, collects national data documenting the success of the program in institutions where it has been implemented (https://info.umkc.edu/si/).

Within the UNC System, WCU is one of few institutions that do not have a fully-funded Supplemental Instruction program. WCU's Writing and Learning Commons (WaLC) and Mathematics Tutoring Center (MTC) collaborate regularly with faculty to identify prospective tutors, to provide course-specific tutoring services, and to promote tutoring services to students; however, they are limited in the depth of collaborative work they can do with faculty in support of individual courses. Because SI places peer leaders in the classroom and also requires faculty commitment and support, SI will increase faculty collaboration, engage academically at-risk students within the context of their courses, and make collaborative learning and peer-based assistance an integral component of the classroom environment.

Improved academic engagement and success is both cost saving and intellectually rewarding for students. Academically successful students participate in the life of the university and attain their degrees in a shorter period of time. Engaged, intentional students are also better prepared to function in the workforce after graduation. Successful graduates will secure better-paying jobs in shorter periods of time, perform more effectively within these jobs, and promote the status of the university in the academic and professional communities.

BUDGET SUMMARY

PERSONNEL	
Associate Director (serving both the Writing and Learning Commons and Mathematics Tutoring Center)	$ 48,000
Benefits	$ 9,756
Student Wages per Year for 20 SI groups	$ 68,000
PURCHASED SERVICES	$ 2,000
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	$ 7,500
OTHER EXPENSES (travel for professional development)	$ 6,000
TOTAL	$141,256

APPENDIX 6

PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS PLATFORMS

GradesFirst allows for predictive analytics to be used on an individual student basis, focusing on data such as missed success markers, or courses in specific sequences that must be taken to ensure timely degree progression and completion (see Table 16). GradesFirst can also analyze major changes and provide the historical data and predictive outcome of a student completing a particular major, including major changes (see Tables 17 and 18). Within the majors themselves, GradesFirst can provide a predictive course rank to indicate how critical it is for a student to be successful in a particular course in order to complete the major, which can influence advising and ensure the student is completing the appropriate coursework and/or is completing the appropriate major (see Table 19).

GradesFirst is also rolling out a new Predictive Analytics platform that is currently being tested at a few sites and is on the horizon for our future use. This new platform will be called the Population Health Dashboard and is a very similar model to Tableau. It allows the user to drill down to individual students, examine historical data, and provide a predicative risk for individual students. The four categories of population health analytics are: 1) Historical Analytics (Institutional reports); 2) Predicative Analytics (Risk of students currently); 3) Activity Analytics; and 4) Population Health Analytics.

Table 16: GradesFirst Success Markers by Course Sequence

GradesFirst allows for predictive analytics to be used on an individual student basis, focusing on basic items such as missed success markers.

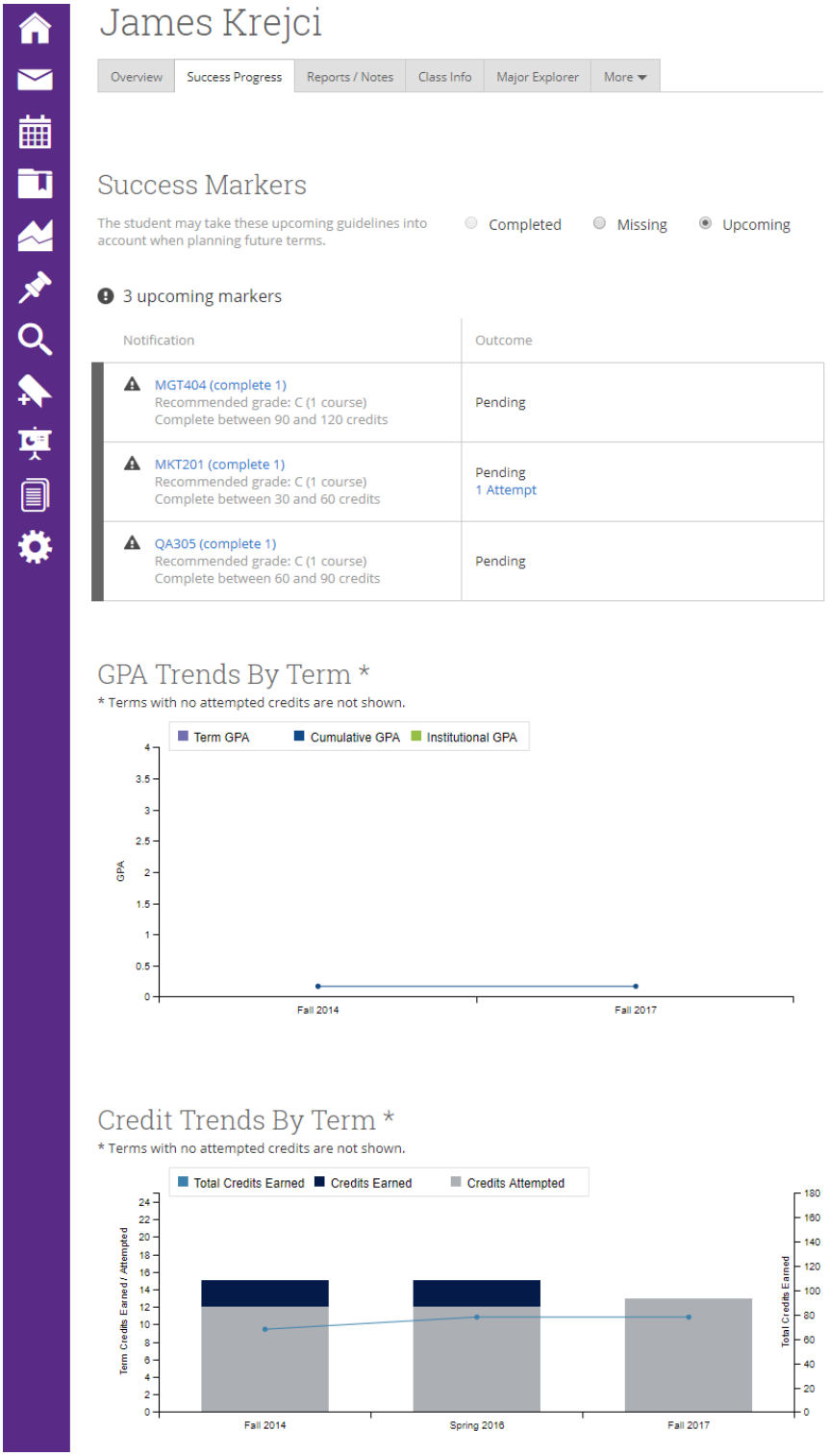
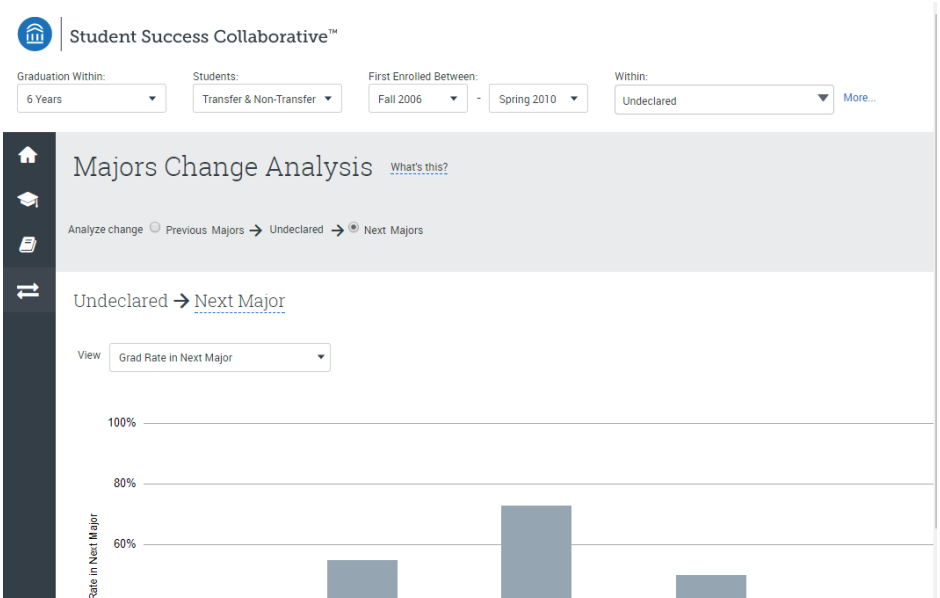


Table 17: GradesFirst Major Change Analysis View 1

GradesFirst can also analyze major changes and provide the historical data and predictive outcome of a student completing a particular major, including major changes.



Undeclared → Next Major

Students who graduated in Next Major

* Denotes students who graduated in Undeclared

** Denotes students who graduated from this institution

Next Major	# of Changes	GPA at Change	# Years at Change	Grad Rate	Time to Degree, Overall (# Years)	Time to Degree, After Change (# Years)
No Next (Stayed In)	595	1.94	0.55	* 0%	* NA	* NA
Pre-Business (College of Business)	110	2.72	0.74	0%	NA	NA
Criminal Justice	73	2.86	0.73	54.79%	3.57	2.83
Elementary Education	65	3.11	0.73	36.92%	3.73	3.07
Communication	59	3.11	1.21	72.88%	3.68	2.57

Table 18: GradesFirst Major Change Analysis View 2

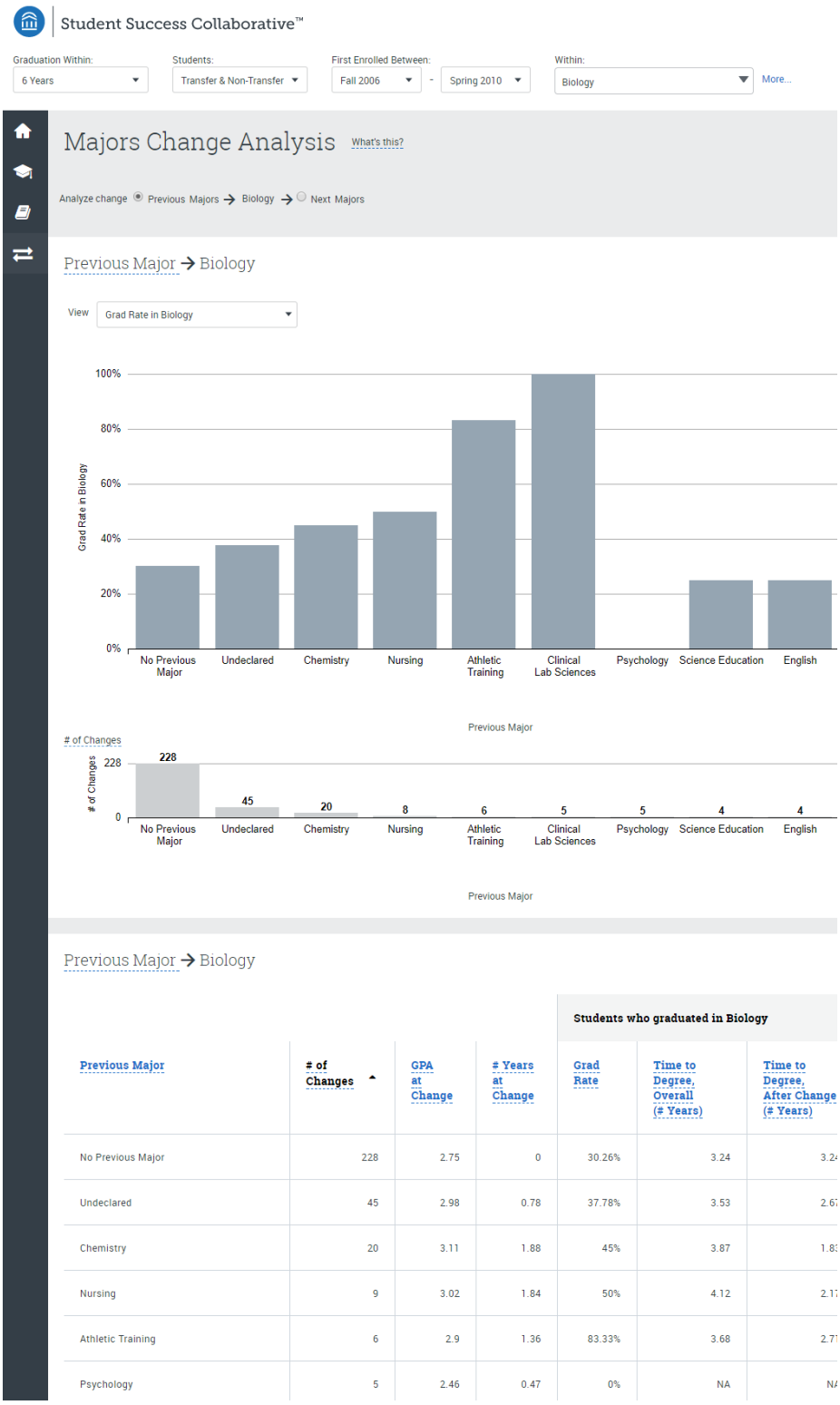
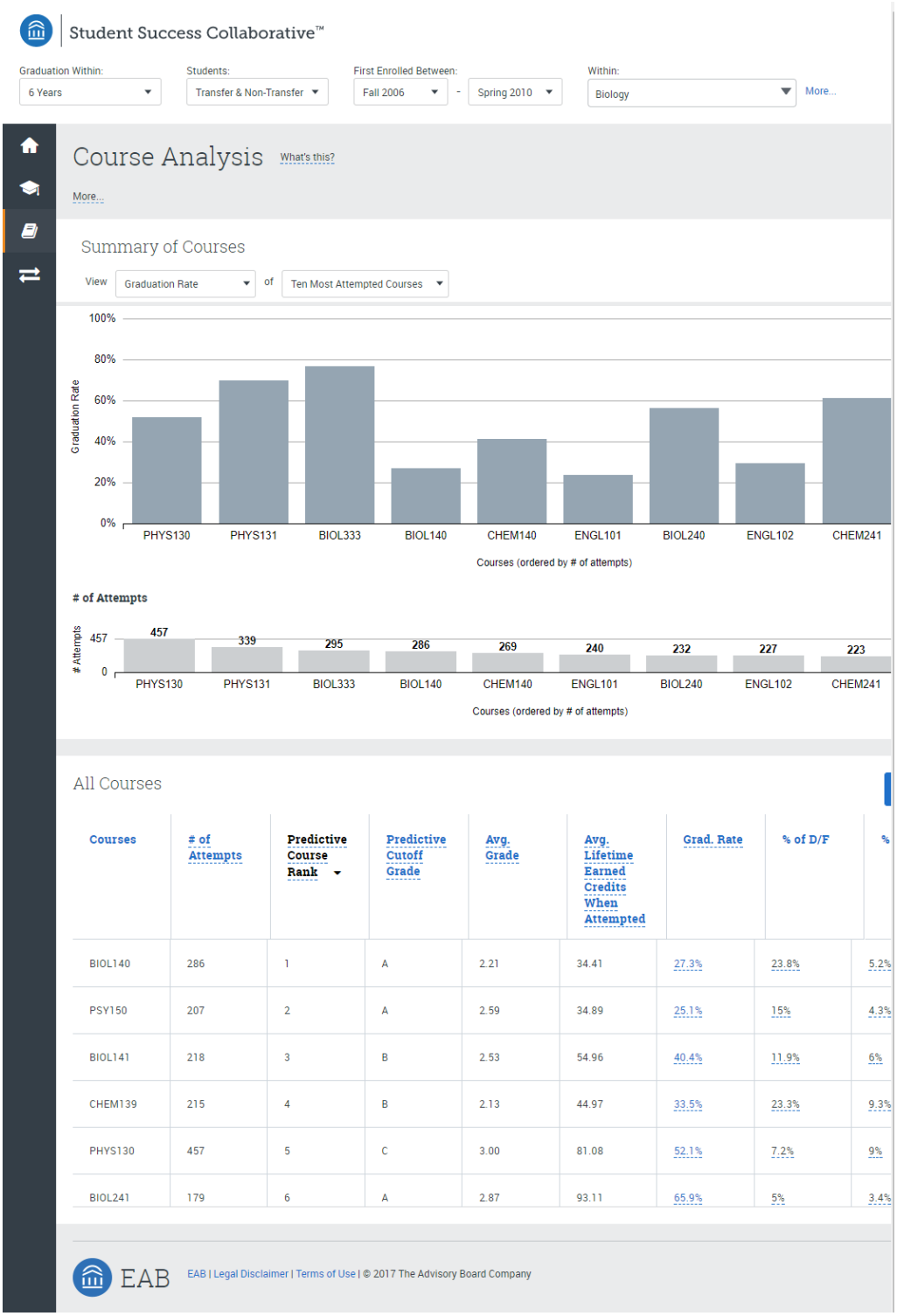


Table 19: GradesFirst Predictive Rank Course Analysis

GradesFirst can provide a predictive course rank (within majors) of how critical it is for a student to be successful in a particular course in order to complete the major.



APPENDIX 7

INSTITUTIONAL COMPARISON REVIEW

Institutional Strategic Plan References

- Cleveland State University
  http://csuw3.csuohio.edu/enrollmentservices/vp/presentations/Retention_Plan-8_7_2012.pdf

- Retention Program Elements from on Point College List
  http://www.educationalpolicy.org/events/R10/Presentation%20Slides/Ginny%20Donohue.pdf

- University of Missouri-Kansas City
  https://www.umkc.edu/provost/student-retention/

- New Mexico State University
  http://nmsua.edu/files/uploads/Student-Retention-Plan09-14.pdf

- University of Arizona
  http://nca2010.arizona.edu/documents/Archive/Institutional%20Overview/Strategic_Retention_MP.pdf

Institutional Comparison of Academic Policies and Procedures

(See Table 20 for additional details).

Policies and practices regarding requirements of admission, academic standing, academic forgiveness, academic advising, and tutoring at WCU were compared with the other senior institutions in the NC System, as well as other sister institutions from other regions. The institutions outside of NC that were compared to WCU were Murray State, Fresno State University, Sam Houston State University, and Radford University (one of WCU's aspirational institutions). The majority of the policies regarding minimum requirements for admission (High School GPA, SAT scores, and ACT scores) were universal across the NC system, but our sister institutions outside of NC have varying requirements (based on their website). The posted admission requirements are a minimum and schools often go above and beyond the minimum requirements when selecting

students for admission. Higher standards in admission criteria can lead to student persistence at an institution to degree obtainment.

Once admitted, all institutions have a process for students to be assigned an academic advisor. Students who are undecided are assigned to a professional advisor in an advising center. Schools within the NC system and the observed sister institutions require undecided students to select a major before completing 45 hours, some of the observed institution's required declaration of major at the end of the sophomore year (60 hours). The method of advising at the institutions observed ranged from professional advisors within individual departments or by faculty. Regardless of the method of advising, connection with students leads to registration and registration leads to needing tutoring for obtaining course content and persisting through course completion. Institutional tutoring services are provided to students for course comprehension and degree progression. All institutions that were observed had free tutoring or designated tutoring centers available for students to gain support.

As students are enrolled and begin completing classes, the focus then turns to academic standing. WCU mirrors guidelines set in place by UNC General Administration regarding the completion percentage and needed GPA to be in good standing. Based on General Administration's Fostering Undergraduate Student Success policy, WCU has an appeal process for a student to return to the institution, if they are in poor academic standing and have a break in continuous enrollment. The Fostering Undergraduate Student Success Policy is system-wide, and NC institutions require the same levels of GPA and completion ratio across the state. WCU's sister institutions also have policies in place regarding academic standing, but those often only focus on GPA and not completion rate.

All compared institutions have an appeal process in place for students who were suspended based on their academic standing. Students often create an academic deficit so deep they are not able to overcome prior GPA and completion ratio to complete a degree. WCU and other NC senior

institutions offer a stop-out (academic forgiveness) policy as a result of UNCGA's FUSS Policy. The stop-out time frame does vary across NC institutions from 3 semesters to 5 academic years; WCU allows students to return under this policy after two years (4 semesters, not including summer). WCU views two years as an acceptable separation for students to mature and return and still allow those students to participate in the undergraduate course catalog when they were previously enrolled. The compared sister institutions also had a stop out policy; these schools required their students to sit out for much longer than two years. Compared institutions were two years (Murray State), four years (Radford University), five years, but will only remove two semesters of classes (Fresno State University), and finally ten years (Sam Houston State University). Academic forgiveness policies that require students not to be enrolled in classes for these lengths of time increase the likelihood of students returning and completing a degree.

Based on these comparison points, WCU offers services and policies to ensure our students receive the needed academic support. WCU meets or exceeds in these areas when compared to other institutions within the NC system and selected sister institutions.

Table 20 --- Institutional comparison of academic policies and procedures

A comparison of academic policies and procedures among WCU and her 15 sister institutions in the UNC system, as well as a limitied review of peer institions was conducted.

SUMMARY REVIEW	
Academic Standing Policy	WCU mirrors guidelines set in place by General Administration regarded the completion ration and needed GPA to be in good standing.
Appeal (Y/N)	Each institution listed a process and web-link to the policy specific details
Process to Return	Based on General Administration's Fostering Undergraduate Student Success policy, WCU has an appeal process for a student to return to WCU after a break of enrollment and are in poor academic standing.
Committee (Y/N – who?)	Each institution's committee makeup varied with some using a college-based system, others with full university representation, and others managed by enrollment services-based departments.
GPA Requirement SAT/ACT Requirement	Minimum GPA of 2.5 is required for students system-wide. The Average new FTFTF WCU has a weighted GPA of 3.83 High school GPA, comparison to other UNC institutions is not available due to limited availability of admissions data.
SAT/ACT Requirement	These varied per institution. 2.0 to 2.5 was the most common baseline.
Stop Out/Forgiveness Policy	WCU and other NC senior institutions offer a stop out (academic forgiveness) policy as a result of UNCGA's FUSS policy. The stop-out time frame does vary across NC institutions from 3 semesters to 5 academic years; WCU allows students to return under this policy after 2 years (4 semesters not including summer). 2 years viewed as an acceptable separation for students to mature and return/ still allow them to participate in the undergraduate course catalog when they were previously enrolled.
Tutoring	Like other UNC institutions, WCU offers tutoring services to undergraduate studies. Tutoring at UNC institution is free-of-charge as a result of student fees.
Advising	Like other schools in the UNC system, undecided students are advised by professional advisors or in a designated office within the institution. Declared students at WCU are advised by faculty members; this is a common occurrence at other institutions within the UNC system as well.
Undeclared Timeline to Declare a Major	The number of hours varied, with 45 being the most common
Who Advises Undeclared Students	Like other schools in the UNC system, undecided students are advised by professional advisors or in a designated office within the institution. Declared students at WCU are advised by faculty members; a common occurrence at other institutions within the UNC system.

Institutions included in the review.

The full review including institution-specific notes for each of the eleven points of review can be accessed in full as an excel file embedded in the digital version of the report.

UNC System Schools

- Appalachian State University
- East Carolina University
- Elizabeth City State University
- Fayetteville State University
- North Carolina A&T State University
- North Carolina Central University
- North Carolina State University
- UNC Asheville
- UNC-Chapel Hill
- UNC Charlotte
- UNC Greensboro
- UNC Pembroke
- UNC Wilmington
- UNC School of the Arts

Peer Institutions

- Murray State
- Fresno State University
- Sam Houston State University
- Radford University - Aspirational

APPENDIX 8

THE 2017 NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON STUDENT RETENTION

The National Symposium on Student Retention (NSSR) offers a complete educational experience. The intimate environment enhances the potential for networking. The focus on content encourages collaboration among colleagues from diverse fields and institutions. A six-member team from Western Carolina University attended in 2017 with the specific charge to bring home additional ideas that might inform recommendations in this report.

- Sibley Bryan: Transfer Student Advisor, The Advising Center
- Annaleise Camacho: Assistant Director for Academic Initiatives in Residential Living
- Lowell K. Davis: Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Success
- Brian Gorman: Director, Mentoring and Persistence to Success
- Glenda Hensley: Director, Office of Student Transitions
- Dwayne Tutt: Associate Director, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning

The WCU team interacted directly with 28 different institutions, of the 230 represented. Within debrief conversations, team members concurred that WCU is already actively engaged in the initiatives and programs aimed to support retention goals that other institutions shared. In other words, what the team did not discover was any major gaps in terms of programs or initiatives to help move the needle on retention. What the team did discover was a reinforcement of many initial assumptions and hypotheses. In essence the team agreed on three major points with regard to peer alignment. First, WCU does not necessarily need to invent or re-invent programs, but should focus efforts to enhance or improve programs already in place. Second, the need for institutional-level data management and access was an issue discussed and shared by many. Third, the imperative for a more rigorous approach to outcomes assessment with programs and initiatives is critical to the institution's ability to meet and sustain retention goals, as well as ensure programs and initiatives are meeting students' needs more broadly. Following is a summary of institutional interactions, session abstracts, and session notes.

NSSR List of 28 institutions with whom the WCU team directly interacted:

Baltimore City Community College

Trenholm State Community College

American International College

Cardinal Stritch University

Curry College

Delaware Valley University

Grinnell College

Northeastern University

Bowling Green State University

California State University, Northridge

Colorado State University- Global Campus

Indiana University-Bloomington

Mississippi University for Women

Oregon Institute of Technology

Pennsylvania State University- Fayette-Eberly Campus

Purdue University

University of Alabama

University of Arkansas

University of Houston Downtown

University of North Alabama

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

University of North Carolina at Pembroke

University of Oklahoma

University of South Carolina

University of Tennessee

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Virginia Commonwealth University

Washburn University

NSSR Attended Session Abstracts

Metacognition: The Key to Increasing Retention and Graduation Rates for all Students!
Louisiana State University

21st Century students come to college with widely varying academic skills and motivation levels. Although all students who are admitted have the ability to succeed, many students do not have effective learning strategies and resort to memorizing information just before tests. They then lose confidence in their ability after they fail their first round of exams. This is especially true of many underprepared students who were less likely to have been enrolled in a challenging academic environment before they get to college. This interactive talk will present findings from cognitive science and wellness research that can be used to engage all areas of an institution in improving student success. The session will present specific strategies that have resulted in significant increases in student learning in undergraduate, graduate, and professional school environments. We will focus on ways to teach students simple, yet powerful learning strategies to ensure success in their courses, their careers and in life.

Mandatory Supplemental Instruction in Mathematics: Evaluating the First Five Years of a Program to Promote Student Success in Calculus and Developmental Mathematics
Delaware Valley University

Introductory mathematics courses can pose significant challenges for freshmen and often become barriers to student success and persistence in science and science-related majors. Supplemental Instruction (SI), a model of peer-facilitated, collaborative learning introduced at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, has a well-documented history of improving academic success in courses like these, but it also has an important limitation: participation is voluntary. By leaving the decision to participate to the discretion of students who may not always be the best judges of their own academic needs, SI fails to reach many students who could benefit from it, and as a result, limits its impact on student retention. In an effort to overcome this limitation and promote student success in mathematics, Delaware Valley University initiated a program of Mandatory SI in Calculus in the fall of 2012. Building on the initial success of this program, mandatory SI was expanded in 2013 to include a developmental mathematics course, Fundamentals of Algebra. This paper describes the process of implementing Mandatory SI in Calculus and Developmental Mathematics and evaluates the program's effectiveness in the first five years of its implementation.

Mentoring Through Texting at Oregon Tech:
Facilitating Student Connections Through a Convenient and Engaging Platform
Oregon Institute of Technology

The Owl2Owl Mentoring through Texting initiative was designed to provide personalized support to first-time students by fostering student-to-student connections while increasing persistence, retention, and ultimately graduations rates. Owl2Owl utilizes experienced students as mentors for incoming new students (participants) to increase campus resource awareness, facilitate interpersonal connections, and promote student investment in the university. Registration records of students invited to join Owl2Owl indicate that 75% of participants continue to the following fall term, compared to 66% of our non-participant control group. Retention rates rise the longer

participants persist in Owl2Owl; for three terms 90% of participants retain from one academic year to the next. Throughout the evolution of the Owl2Owl program, improvements were necessary and included, but were not limited to, imposing student-to-peer ratio limits, modifying technology used for texting, removing single-term opt-out options, and increasing marketing strategies. After the first year and half, Owl2Owl partnered with the Oregon Tech Psychology Department creating a peer mentorship class to teach mentor success strategies; this improved the quality of mentor-to-participant interactions and reduced operational costs. Since its inception, Owl2Owl has increased participant persistence and retention as well as yielded a positive return on investment. The success of Owl2Owl indicates that technology based mentorship programs are a low cost, scalable, and effective solution to low persistence and retention rates.

Minority Male Mentoring: A Multi-Tiered Model for College Success

California State University, Northridge

Minority male college students continue to face overwhelming obstacles to pursuing their academic aspirations due to a mix of psychosocial, environmental, and systemic factors. In 2016-17, the California State University, Northridge (CSUN) Male Minority Mentoring (M3) program launched a multi-tiered intervention model to address barriers and facilitators to college success. In the first year, we conducted intensive outreach and recruitment activities to involve this hard-to-engage population. Activities included one-on-one peer and faculty mentoring, focus groups, basketball clinics, online PTSD screening, and time-limited weekly resilience and coping groups. Preliminary results and lessons learned will be discussed.

Retention and Student Success: A Study of First-Time, Full-Time, First-Generation Students

University of North Carolina-Pembroke

According to 2015 U.S. News & World Report, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke ranked as the most diverse institution in the South. At UNC Pembroke, many first-generation students have faced unique challenges in retention and graduation. The purpose of this study was to find out what factors were significantly associated with first-generation students regarding their first-year retention and six-year graduation. A total of 3,151 first-time, full-time freshmen from cohort Fall 2008 to Fall 2010 were selected as the population; among them 1,393 (44.2%) were identified as first-generation students. The results indicated that academic performance related factors including high school GPA, fall term GPA, and difference between attempted and earned credit hours in first term had a significantly positive impact on both first-year retention and six-year graduation. In addition, non-performance related factors, such as students coming from rural areas in North Carolina were also positively associated with both first-year retention and six-year graduation. The factor of low family income had a negative impact on first-year retention and six-year graduation.

A Family Affair: Translating the Student Experience Across Student and Academic Affairs

Baltimore City Community College

One unfortunate casualty of campus “silo wars” is the missed opportunity to share values across academic and student affairs and in so doing to create a unified student experience at each “touch point” and learning opportunity. Currently the Vice President of Student Affairs, I have spent 30+

years in academic affairs, as a faculty member and administrator. In this round table, we will engage deeply in questions about learning in and out of the classroom so that we can discover our shared intentions for student learning across the curriculum and co-curriculum. For example, how do student development and faculty identify and seize on a teachable moment? What do front-line admissions and financial aid staff need to know about student learning? What discrete success skills, like literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, and information management, matter in both the curriculum and co-curriculum? How can both kinds of learning activities be mutually reinforcing? How do we explain attrition at the level of the course, of the degree program, and of the institutional effectiveness analysts? What are different perspectives of the ethics of retention? In the end, the goal is shaping campus-wide planning and collaboration to expand our understanding of student learning and development.

Collaboration as the Primary Resource: Retention Initiatives on a Shoe String
University of Arkansas

A primary concern among those of us interested in student success and retention is the limited amount of resources at our disposal, especially in light of the growing number of students we are to serve. One underutilized resource lies in the power of collaboration. Working together across units can often overcome resource limitations. Within the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Arkansas we have initiated a variety of strategic collaborative student success efforts involving faculty, advisors, administrators, and students. We have further collaborated with other units on campus such as our graduation and retention office, student affairs division, enrollment services, other academic colleges, information technology staff, and data analytics personnel. During this discussion we hope to collaborate with the participants to share examples and generate new ideas that could be used at our campuses to facilitate cooperation and overcome dwindling resources. We hope for a diverse group of people representing a myriad of institutional types because we believe that we can learn a great deal from each other.

Encouraging Faculty to Invest in Retention
Campus Labs

No matter how sophisticated retention efforts might be on a campus or how technologically advanced early alert systems and triggers may be, without the buy-in of faculty members—who see students on a daily basis and track performance more directly than any other member of a campus community—they are all for naught. The level of buy-in likely differs as much amongst members of any one campus as it does across institutions. In this roundtable, we will discuss 1) challenges campuses face with assuring faculty buy-in; 2) strategies for involving faculty in retention efforts—including those that go beyond classroom walls and academics; 3) techniques for working with faculty to understand how they can contribute to retention efforts and the importance of retention to a campus; 4) examples of successful faculty buy-in; 5) ways administrators can encourage faculty involvement in retention efforts, including beyond the academic setting; and 6) understanding faculty members' perspective and overcoming resistance.

Integrating Advising to Improve Retention, Persistence, and Graduation
University of Alabama

Following a period of 12-15 years of exponential student enrollment growth, the importance of increasing retention, persistence, and graduation rates became a top priority for The University of Alabama. This led to the creation of the Capstone Center for Student Success (CCSS), a centralized advising unit, in an effort to integrate campus-wide advising. During this roundtable discussion, attendees will first learn about different strategies utilized by the CCSS team including, but not limited to pre-campus outreach, intentional team-building, and social media curriculum in advising various student populations and the growing pains of building a centralized advising 'one-stop shop'. Then, participants will share and exchange ideas about their own institutional advising practices, challenges, and wins as they progress along in their own personal 'process'.

Leavers, Stayers & Contemplators: Understanding the Drivers of Success for Low-Income Students

University of Tennessee

At the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (UT), nearly 30% of undergraduate students qualify for Pell grants. In 2010, UT adopted a strategic plan that committed to improving graduation outcomes. While UT raised six-year rates by nearly 10 points over five years, Pell-eligible students trailed university averages. These students were often invisible because they spanned race, ethnicity, and gender categories. Students were also reluctant to voice challenges. To better understand this population, UT conducted a "stayers study" to supplement a previous "leavers study" which surveyed students who were not retained to understand drivers for attrition. The stayers study focused on what keeps students at UT—particularly those who considered leaving but decided to stay—to identify success drivers and student perceptions of programs. Research engaged 700+ seniors in a survey that allowed comparison of Pell and non-Pell students. The research helped UT to understand the story of students with financial need, including challenges and success attributes. This paper reviews stayer study results related to Pell students. It also addresses how the stayers study, paired with existing data, allowed UT to target coordinated action among advising, enrollment management, and student life.

Positive Group Work Experiences are Predictive of College Student Persistence: A Prospective Study

Northeastern University---University of Southern Maine---Boston University

California University of Management and Sciences

Student persistence rates are a key gauge of the success of an educational institution. College student persistence is determined by the social and academic competence markers students face. Over the last decade, collaborative small group work has been increasingly implemented within higher education as a high-quality pedagogical tool and used extensively across academic disciplines. In line with this research, the authors investigated whether students' positive group work experiences have an impact on their intention to persist in their academic program. A sample of 232 students (mean age = 22.79, SD = 2.12) was recruited. These students worked in small mixed-genders groups with three to four other students over the course of a semester. The intention to persistence was measured at the beginning of the semester, and again at the end of the semester, approximately five months later. Student group work experiences were measured using the Positive Group Work Experiences Inventory. After controlling for gender, age, and baseline intention to persist, both perceived inclusion and perceived respect predicted a higher intention to

persist. Implications: fostering positive group work experiences could be an effective tool to improve the student intention to persist.

Retention Is Up 10-Percentage Points: The Secrets to Success . . . Without Money

Washburn University

Washburn University, a publically funded open admissions university in Topeka, Kansas, exhibits how a commitment to good data analytics and evidence-based student success practices can improve retention without a significant financial investment. With less than a $100,000 investment, first-time, full-time retention increased 10-percentage points in just five years. The authors discuss calculated risks, grounded in research and data analytics, taken to re-allocate portions of a university's undergraduate libraries budget to create a student success unit and develop new initiatives to improve retention and on-time graduation. This essay highlights three initiatives that aided in this retention success story: the creation of the Center for Student Success and Retention (CSSR), linking first-year student success initiatives to the University Student Learning Outcome (USLO) of Information Literacy and Technology, and a strong partnership with Institutional Research. These three elements formed the backbone of a replicable model that allowed Washburn University to focus its resources in ways that maximized their impact on student success.

Retention and Recruitment: Using a Predictive Analytic Model to Build and Implement a Strategic Graduation and Retention Action Plan

University of Oklahoma

Increasing student retention and graduation rates is a top priority in higher education. Early identification of at risk students for intervention programs or redirection into other degree paths improves retention and graduation rates. Likewise, given the increasing teacher shortage, identifying strong candidates for Teacher Certification programs and graduating prepared future teachers is crucial. The use of predictive analytics provides a promising method in the quest to increase student success at universities and colleges. Our current predictive analytic model utilizes a machine learning algorithm, extreme gradient boosted machine, to identify strong candidates for Teacher Certification programs as well as predicting graduation and program completion. The prediction model, built on historical data, is being applied as a retention and recruitment tool. A strategic graduation and retention action plan, based on the model, is in use by academic advisors and college administrators with current students identified by the model as at-risk for not graduating. This paper covers the current model and features, application and analysis with active students, the strategic graduation and retention action plan and its implementation and use by academic advisors and college administrators to assist at-risk students, and future directions.

Transfer Preregistration: Building a Path for a Successful Transition

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Transfer students create a unique challenge for institutions during the orientation and enrollment process. Although transfer students make up approximately 30% of our incoming class enrollment at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC), they were experiencing a more difficult transition than our first-time college students. Transfer students were not able to get into the courses they needed to become full-time students or make timely progression to graduation.

Students were frustrated with the multitude of closed classes, course waitlists, and course registration errors during orientation registration. This critical issue peaked during the summer of 2015 when over 100 students completed an orientation session without registering for any credit hours. UTC resolved to take a proactive step in solving this roadblock for future transfers. Having successfully preregistered first-time freshmen for five years, the decision was made to expand the process to transfer students. Revisions had to be made to accommodate the unique needs of transfer students, and a significant amount of time was devoted to encourage faculty and staff buy-in to the process. This presentation will explain the development of the transfer preregistration process, the results from our pilot year, and provide an update on our current process.

Understanding Student Motivations to Inform Practice:
Adopting a Multi-Methods Approach to Complex Questions

Grinnell College

Institutional decision making is typically informed by quantitative data. However, the factors that promote student success are many and varied, and have complex relationships that may not be understood quantitatively or be meaningfully quantifiable. While student behaviors may be measurable, the motivations underlying their actions are often inaccessible via quantitative data. This paper describes one approach taken by Grinnell College to understand student success holistically. Researchers noticed students dramatically improving their recent term GPA compared to their cumulative GPA, but were unable to determine the causes of this improvement from the quantitative data. In-depth qualitative interviews, lasting approximately an hour, uncovered the complex factors contributing to students' improved academic performance, as well as the barriers they had previously experienced. Barriers that became facilitators of academic success included class choices, faculty, study behaviors and attitudes, and help seeking. Other barriers included adjustment to the Grinnell environment and suboptimal mental health. Use of resources, self-care, organization, extra-curricular activities, and friendships acted as facilitators. The paper closes with a brief review of how the greater understanding of student motivations underlying their behaviors are being used by faculty and staff in various roles at Grinnell College to inform practice, program development, and decision making.

Wrangling Data, Technology, and Managing the Unexpected in Support of Student Success:
The Ongoing Process at Bowling Green State University 2011-2017

Bowling Green State University

This tutorial paper outlines Bowling Green State University's (BGSU) ongoing efforts to create and maintain a creative and iterative reconsideration how we use student data in light of emerging technology, new uses of existing technology, and changing organizational structures and priorities; all in support of student success. BGSU began this process in 2011-12 by creating our first Access database, a cross departmental effort to capture from various key offices and people across campus what we know about our incoming students and creating a central repository for this information. As our organizational structure and strategic goals evolved, we placed this document on SharePoint to open new avenues of information sharing and collaboration. As we became more sophisticated, made mistakes, and stumbled, our questions changed and our approach evolved. Session participants will consider BGSU's efforts from 2011-17, and then be offered the structured

opportunity to consider their own institutions' parallel efforts. Participants will take away from this session ideas and examples of how they may leverage technology, people, and data in support of student success.

Academic Probation Support: Engaging Large Numbers Online

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

In 2014, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro was required by the UNC Board of Governors to update the institution's Academic Standing Policy. These changes expanded the requirements for Academic Good Standing to include both a GPA and academic progress component. The new criteria significantly increased the number of undergraduate students who fell on Academic Probation. Between 2013-2014 school year and the 2014-2015 school year students on academic probation rose 67% in Fall and 43% in Spring. The increase necessitated a transition from the current lecture-style course required for students on probation to an online, self-guided format. After two years of continued curriculum development, the course enrolls 600-900 students each semester. Students, on average, complete the course at 80-90% pass rate and are retained at a higher rate than the previous in-class format. This paper will outline the changes in course enrollment and completion, and students' retention at the University. It will also examine the pedagogical strategies most effective in the large online probation course to support students' academic success and emotional resiliency. These include personalizing course content, providing immediate feedback, and structuring support outreach.

On-Time and Debt-Free:
A Data-Driven Holistic Coaching Model for Low-Income Student Success at Purdue

Purdue University

Purdue University has narrowed the graduation gap for low-income Indiana 21st Century Scholars eligible to enroll in an access and support program called Purdue Promise. The program combines full financial need assistance with four years of student success coaching. Purdue Promise is designed to graduate students on-time and debt-free, and assist students in strengthening self-efficacy, self-advocacy, help-seeking skills, and grit. Cohort-based programming designed on best practices did not lead to increased retention and graduation rates from 2009 to 2012. However, the implementation of an individualized coaching program in 2013 has contributed to increasing the program's four-year graduation rate from 37.4% for the 2009 cohort to 53.7% for the 2012 cohort. The fall 2013 cohort is the first in program history to receive coaching all four years and is projected to exceed the University's four-year graduation rate (currently 55.9%) at Census in September 2017.

College Retention Examined Through a Case Study of Student Reflections About Student First-Year College Programs and Campus Resources

University of Colorado Colorado Springs

This poster presents a qualitative study focused on exploring students' reflections on their first-year experiences at a public university campus. The application of the case study methodology examines influence on student retention into their sophomore year of college and provides insight into the components, such as the students' personal qualities and resources along with their

perceptions of the effectiveness of the university's orientation programs and other retention efforts. Interviews were conducted with traditional sophomores defined as those students who attend college directly from high school and return the fall after their first year of full-time university studies. The sociological framework of resiliency was applied to identify personal attributes, expose various campus systems' capacities to impact student resiliency, and to investigate gaps in student resources. The emerging themes of connectedness to other students, professors, and to the university as well as certain campus programs are mostly valued. Results showed that parents and key mentors involved in their lives before attending college had a lasting influence. Also from the data analysis, an interesting additional subtheme emerged regarding commuter students and their struggles with connectedness.

Engagement, Retention and First-Generation Students

Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) has a very diverse student population. Currently, one-third of the students in VCU's first year class are first-generation college students. In light of what we have learned from our first two cohorts of the Summer Scholars program and from current research in the field, the Summer Scholars Advisory Board has recommended several initiatives and programs that will engage second-year students. In addition to targeting the students who participated in the Summer Scholars Program, we will broaden our engagement efforts to support all first-generation students and student-athletes. First-generation students bring an enormous amount of capital with them when they arrive on campus. It is our goal to empower these students and work with them to build community. Programs and initiatives that highlight our first-generation students will be designed to not only promote engagement but also help retention. This poster will highlight programs such as educational programming, community outreach, and learning support.

Every Six Students:

Generating a Plan, Gathering Buy-In, and Creating a Campus Culture Around Student Success

Curry College

As part of the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan, Curry College identified student success as a top priority and set goals of 80% retention and 55% graduation rate by the end of the plan in 2017. At the beginning of this process, the retention rate was 69% and the six-year graduation rate was 43%. The College launched a cross-area Retention Committee tasked with the development and execution of a plan to increase the retention and graduation rates at the College. The work of the committee began with the idea that every six students equaled a 1% gain in retention. They developed initiatives that were designed to improve processes at the College, raise the success rates for all students, as well as improve the experiences of students in targeted populations that were not retaining and graduating at the College. This poster highlights the tools used by the committee to analyze data, develop and assess projects, and to gather campus buy-in through interdepartmental work teams and regular reporting on the plan. Additionally, the presentation will highlight initiatives to date that allowed for increases in the retention rate to 71% and in five-year graduation rate to 51%.

Knowing Your Students Before They Arrive:
An Empirical Approach to Understanding Academic Success Among Minority Students
University of Houston-Downtown

Declining student persistence in higher education is a growing issue facing colleges across the U.S. However, due to the gap in college completion rates between minority students and their peers, identifying factors related to persistence among underserved students is of particular importance. Given the relative lack of studies that include minority students, generalizing research findings based on studies of predominately white, middle-income students to other populations can be detrimental to our understanding of persistence among culturally diverse students. To avoid prior biases, this study utilized a person-oriented analytic approach, known as Latent Profile Analysis (LPA), to examine whether qualitatively distinct student profiles could be determined from pre-college academic indicators, such as SAT scores and high school GPA. Findings based on a sample of full-time, First Time in College (FTIC) students (n = 3,540) indicated that a three-group model best fit the student data across four cohorts. The three empirically derived student profiles were differentially related to academic factors (such as first semester probation status and whether students dropped to part-time status) and behavioral factors (such as math and verbal confidence as captured by the College Student Inventory). Findings also indicated that women were over-represented in the most at-risk group.

The Stars in the Constellation: Results From the 2017 National Survey of the First-Year Experience
University of South Carolina

The first year of undergraduate study has received attention because it is the period with the largest leaks in the educational pipeline both in the United States and around the world. In the US, nearly a quarter of full-time and more than half of part-time students drop out after their first year (NCES, 2016). To respond to this crisis, stakeholders in higher education have developed numerous initiatives and educational experiences under the heading of 'the first-year experience.' As Koch and Gardner (2006) explained, "The first-year experience is not a single program or initiative, but rather an intentional combination of academic and cocurricular efforts within and across postsecondary institutions" (p. 2). This presentation aims to provide an up-to-date overview of institutional attention to the first year of college nationwide, based on responses to the 2017 National Survey of The First-Year Experience conducted by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. The poster will focus on presenting recent evidence that describes an overall picture of the most common programs and initiatives institutions are using in the first year as well as findings about assessment, characteristics and features, and the students being reached by selected first-year programs.

Top 10 in the Last 10
University of Arkansas

The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville has grown tremendously (46%) from 18,648 students in Fall 2007 compared to 27,194 students in Fall 2016. During this same time period, the first-year retention rate remained fairly constant around 82% but the six-year graduation rates have risen from 58.0% in 2007 compared to 64.5% in 2016. These improvements in graduation rates can be attributed to many things; however, we feel that the Top Ten Reasons stem from the following: 1.)

campus leadership; 2.) creating a culture of collaboration focused on student success; 3.) faculty initiatives; 4.) data driven decision making; 5.) academic support; 6.) professional advising center; 7.) student affairs; 8.) honors college; 9.) enrollment services; and 10.) new buildings. Our poster highlights some of the key elements of these ten areas. Although we are happy that our six-year graduation rates have risen the past years, we are committed to continuing the upward trend as well as hope to assist even more students to graduate within four or five years.

Using Data to Build a Proactive and Systematic Academic Success Program

New Jersey City University

New Jersey City University is designing a proactive and systematic academic success program. Throughout the implementation phases of its design and various other student success initiatives, the question remains: How do we put our students in the best position to succeed? The expectation is that successful implementation will help decrease the amount of time to earned degree, as well as increase the number of students in good standing with federal and state financial aid requirements. This poster presents data-driven methodologies and evaluation of targeted intervention strategies that can be used to improve retention and graduation rates of students. It focuses more specifically on the types and frequency of intervention that academic advisors have with students and whether those interactions are predictive of student outcomes.

WTF: Is the FYS Course a Waste of Money?

Fayette--The Eberly Campus

Scholars such as Vincent Tinto remind us that even with 50-plus years of work amassed on student persistence, “substantial gains have been hard to come by” (2006, p. 2). While we know much about how institutional settings and psychological, social, and economic factors impact students, many campuses still struggle with issues of retention. Our small, rural, largely two-year campus, for example, has experienced a roughly 40 percent decline in enrollment. While first-year retention has remained in the mid 70-percent range for the past six years, the campus implemented a first-year seminar to improve retention. Faculty worked together to develop the curriculum, keeping in mind studies suggesting first-year engagement is critical to persistence (Tinto, 2001; Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005; Terenzini, Reason, 2005; Tessema, Ready, & Yu, 2012). Yet results suggest the FYS course (and its significant financial and human investment) has had no statistical impact on persistence. Preliminary results will be drawn from 2015-17. Assessments of course content, cohort scheduling, and course delivery methods will be used to articulate what types of engagement appear most useful for rural, commuter campuses split between two- and four-year students.

Serving the Underserved: The Impact of a Learning Community on Historically Underrepresented Populations in Higher Education

Cardinal Stritch University

In 2013, the Leadership, Development, Reflection, and Service (LDRS) Initiative learning community was created to increase retention of low-income students, students of color, and first-generation students at a small liberal arts college in the Midwest. Initial results were promising. While retention of students from these historically underrepresented populations at the University was 64% in 2012, retention at the beginning of the fall semester of 2015 for students who

participated in the program was 73%. Given the dramatic increase in retention, a phenomenological study was completed in fall of 2015 to determine participants' perceived impact of the components of the program on retention. The study found that the essential component of the program was relationships students were able to build with peers, staff, and faculty, and that each element of the program was impactful in providing opportunity to develop these relationships. Since this study, the program has supported two more classes of incoming freshmen and witnessed its first graduates. Four-year graduation rates for the students in the program are 8% higher than previous rates of students from these populations, and 25% higher than previous five-year graduation rates for the same population.

Student Retention: Strategies for Keeping the Doors OPEN

University of North Alabama

A scholarship program designed to enhance opportunities for retaining undergraduate nursing students from disadvantaged backgrounds and to diversify the professional nursing workforce was implemented in a college of nursing. The program, entitled Project OPEN (Opportunities for Entry into Nursing), was funded by a $2.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Health Resources and Services Administration during 2012-2016. Project OPEN aimed to increase the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of disadvantaged students, including underrepresented minorities. The overall goal of the program was to retain and graduate 68 nursing students; however, 78 students graduated. This goal was exceeded through implementing a multifaceted strategy, focused on evaluating and eliminating intrapersonal, interpersonal, and system-level barriers, while strengthening supports across these three areas. The Project OPEN scholarship program holds students accountable for their learning, while offering the resources needed for academic and personal success. Through this enrichment program, students were provided with academic, social, and financial support, thus facilitating retention. Students emerged from the program with decreased student loan debt, passage of the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX), and employment as a professional nurse.

APPENDIX 9

RETENTION STRATEGIC PLAN TEMPLATE

Once the recommendations included in this report have been vetted and prioritized, a template similar to the one presented below can be used to track progress and assess outcomes.

Strategic Direction 1: Support initiatives and programs for academically underprepared students (expand support for those that exist and develop new support structures as indicated by data).				
Initiatives	**Actions**	**Existing Yes-no**	**Responsible Office**	**Timeline**
1.1 Utilize predictive analytics to identify risk factors and to modify student services and support.				
	1. Implement a pre-enrollment instrument to identify risk factors.			
	2. Implement a pre-enrollment interest inventory to aid advisors as they build initial schedules and conduct initial meetings with students.			
	3. Unpack HS GPA as an indicator of preparedness.			
	4. Examine and respond to courses with high D, F, W rates			
	5. Expand early math readiness assessment.			
	6. Develop writing readiness assessment.			
	7. Implement a Supplemental Instruction (SI) program to support students in historically difficult classes (see Appendix 5).			
	8. Conduct a review of 'killer course combinations' that are barriers to student success and implement strategies to respond accordingly.			
	9. Review GPA data by course type to identify where students are most challenged.			
	10. Review recruitment practices to enhance recruitment of students from rural areas and from areas where students are historically retained.			
	11. Recommend expanded reporting on only the students who are deemed at-risk as a result of fifth-week reporting.			
1.2 Provide targeted advanced academic support and intervention for at risk students				
	1. Provide non-credit alternatives for students to sharpen basic mathematical skills.			
	Continue accordingly through each direction, initiative, and action.			