

HUMBER COLLEGE OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY

F I N A L

R E P O R T

COMMITTEE ON ATTRITION/RETENTION

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I N T R O D U C T I O N :

The original Terms of Reference of the Task Force were to

"investigate and recommend specific practical ways of reducing student attrition that occurs after the students have been admitted and commenced classes at the College".

To avoid any duplication of effort, the Committee was directed to avoid those issues that would be covered in "Front End" processes. With this general mandate, the Committee determined that it should focus on those issues and factors which lead to student attrition that are within the College's sphere of influence. The Committee thus focused only on those factors which the College, through Policy or Procedures, could positively influence.

In order to accomplish our mandate, the Committee began to identify those factors which seemed to be producing attrition within their own Divisions and Clusters. As well, the Committee held an open meeting to which concerned members of the College Committee were asked to submit briefs and recommendations. All the submissions and briefs are available in the office of Betty Campbell (ext.4545, Room D 157).

A FRAMEWORK FOR RETENTION AT HUMBER COLLEGE

RECOMMENDATION 1: A COLLEGE-WIDE RETENTION FRAMEWORK BE ESTABLISHED

Any attempt to deal with the attrition/retention issue at the College must involve the whole College in a co-ordinated strategy which extends from the time the student applies to the College to the time of graduation. The strategy that is developed must be undertaken in concert with other programs and initiatives established at the College to address student problems. In particular, any retention strategy should be developed in conjunction with "front-end" initiatives, the counselling department and the Student Life group to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts and to ensure a systematic, operationally-effective program.

Further, the program must be flexible enough to operate in both a preventative and interventive mode. It is also suggested that while there may be some general systemic concerns that an attrition/retention strategy should address, we must be cognizant of the fact that the specific causes of attrition in particular divisions vary greatly, and that there is a need to address these issues and to implement appropriate strategies at both the college level and the divisional level - and in some cases where warranted, at the program cluster level within some divisions. All these activities must be co-ordinated and developed by individuals working at the appropriate levels (i.e. faculty in the clusters) to ensure that the specific needs are being met and the faculty are vested in the process.

A. College Structure for Retention

- 1) That the Vice President, Instruction be responsible for developing the college objectives for attrition/retention;
- 2) That the Vice President, Instruction be responsible for the co-ordination of retention strategies at the Vice President level;
- 3) That the Vice President, Instruction be responsible for the management and evaluation of Divisional Retention strategies.

B. College Process for Retention

- 1) Develop an attrition/retention information system with the view to creating an "early warning" system to identify potential drop-outs;
- 2) That the Vice President, Instruction, should work with a committee comprised of the divisional retention committees, to implement, coordinate, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of retention policy and activities.

RECOMMENDATION 2: THAT A DIVISIONAL RETENTION FRAMEWORK BE ESTABLISHED

A. Structure of Divisional Retention

- 1) That accountability for Divisional attrition/retention strategies should be with Divisional Deans;
- 2) That the Dean work with a committee of elected faculty to develop, implement, coordinate, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of divisional retention activities.

B. Process for Retention

- 1) That the committee support and facilitate the collection of data necessary for the attrition/retention information system;
- 2) That the committee, utilizing the divisional analysis of attrition/retention variables/factors, develop appropriate retention strategies;
- 3) That the Dean is responsible to ensure the allocation of adequate resources to implement the divisional retention activities;
- 4) The result of the Division's attrition/retention strategies must be a component of the Dean's annual review.

STRATEGIES FOR RETENTION AT HUMBER COLLEGE

RECOMMENDATION 3: TO ADOPT A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS POTENTIAL DROP-OUTS

Suggested Activities:

- 1) Entry level assessment of student needs i.e. literacy, numeracy, study skills and vocational guidance;
- 2) Developing and implementing programs to meet individual student needs i.e. upgrading, special timetables, study skills, tutoring and reduced workloads;
- 3) Ensuring students receive the benefits of retention initiatives;
- 4) Ongoing monitoring of students in these programs.

RECOMMENDATION 4: TO ENSURE THAT EACH INDIVIDUAL STUDENT WILL HAVE THE MAXIMUM
AMOUNT OF INTERACTION WITH THE TEACHING FACULTY

Faculty are the essential grass-roots co-ordinators of the educational experience for students. As a result, institutional strategies should be developed that maximize the interaction between students and faculty in and out of the classroom. First semester access to faculty is most critical in establishing the pattern for helping relationships throughout the student's stay within the Institution. Faculty need the ability to help students define and develop realistic goals, to perceive student needs accurately, and to match student needs with appropriate institutional resources.

Suggested Activities

- 1) Examine the impact of class size;
- 2) Student advising by faculty - the purpose of helping students to function effectively as learners and as individuals; by helping them to understand, prevent or overcome educational problems that may hinder learning. Activities include:
 - . interviewing students to explore and/or develop vocational/educational decision making;
 - . facilitating discussion/dialogue between students, faculty and administration;
 - . assisting administration, faculty and staff in a consultative role in identifying and dealing with student problems.

RECOMMENDATION 5: THAT ANY SUBSEQUENT RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE COLLEGE, DIVISION
OR PROGRAM SHOULD BE STUDENT-FOCUSED TO ENSURE THAT THERE
IS MAXIMUM INTEGRATION FOR THE STUDENT

Students arrive at Humber with a value system and a set of attitudes toward education and employment which may, or may not be applicable to their career at College or the job market. It is important that the College initiates a process of institutional socialization designed to modify the student's value system and attitudes toward education and employment. It should begin with Humber's initial contact with the student and continue throughout the student's tenure at College.

The student is the focal point or core of a network of counter-positions occupied by such other functional, administrative and policy actors - such as teachers, support staff, academic managers and administrators. Each of these actors express certain expectations as to how the student should conduct him/herself. These expectations, in the form of academic standards, commands, directions, suggestions, role models and guidelines, express the values of the Institutional actors, and the student is expected to reflect these values in his/her performance, attitudes and behaviour.

In order to create an environment in which a controlled process of institutional socialization may occur, it is imperative that the student reside within an academic cluster small enough for him/her to properly identify with. Students who do not feel comfortable and properly integrated tend to experience alienation, and subsequently perform below their level of ability. In many cases, student attrition is a direct result of institutional alienation which may

be coupled with poor performance.

It is incumbent on the College to develop a philosophy, which is subsequently manifested in policy, that will attempt to address the above-mentioned problems

- i.e.
- * staff orientation sessions on a regular basis
 - * decentralized flat-line management structure
 - * emphasis on faculty responsibility to students
 - * participatory management model (this fits in quite well with a flat-line organizational structure)

Suggested Activities

- 1) That sequencing of courses in a program should be designed to maximize student success in the first year;
- 2) Identify problem courses and develop support systems to maximize success (in peer tutoring).

RECOMMENDATION 6: STRATEGIES SHOULD BE DEVELOPED TO MAXIMIZE STUDENT
INTEGRATION BY PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FRESHMAN AND
SENIOR STUDENTS TO INTERACT ON AN ONGOING BASIS

One suggestion which would allow this to occur would be to ensure that each cluster/program has a 2, or 3, period break during the week which could be used by the students.

Suggested Activities:

- 1) Could facilitate interactions between freshman students;
- 2) Could facilitate interactions between freshman and senior students;
- 3) Could facilitate interactions between students and alumni;
- 4) Student mentoring could also be used as a strategy.

RECOMMENDATION 7: THE COLLEGE SHOULD ESTABLISH A POLICY TO PROVIDE ON-CAMPUS,
PART-TIME JOBS FOR STUDENTS WHENEVER POSSIBLE

The financial problems that students often face stand in the way of their studies. A part-time job is sometimes essential for a student to be able to afford school. However, jobs can be difficult to find, and jobs tend to put a strain on the student's time. By providing as many on-campus, part-time jobs as possible, the College would not only be helping the student financially, but it would also help give the student a sense of affiliation - and thus a sense of belonging to the Institution.

A central site should be established on each campus which would act as a clearing house, posting all the available jobs and making the information available to everyone who would need it (i.e. students and prospective employers).

Suggested Activity

- 1) Where divisions have part-time job requirements, students of that division be hired whenever possible.

RECOMMENDATION 8: COLLEGE SHOULD ENSURE THAT THERE ARE STAFF DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE FOR THE NEW PRIORITIES

For many faculty and administrative staff, the new reality of the College has a direct impact on their current roles within the College. Many have not had necessary training to prepare for their new roles. Staff should be given every opportunity to develop the skills necessary for their new roles.

S U M M A R Y O F S U B M I S S I O N S

(copies available from Betty Campbell, ext. 4545, Room D. 157)

SUBMISSION FINDINGS

1. Retention is a College problem - needs a College response.
2. Recommendations indicate an absence and an inability to diagnose and pinpoint specific problems, be they program, course, subject.
3. No specific strategies targeted to deal with the defined problem.
4. Absence of general leadership and accountability to co-ordinate attrition college-wide.

SUBMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A college-wide retention framework be established.
2. That recommendations of reports be brought to the Committee.
3. Analysis of College programs be developed with appropriate weaknesses, strengths, and priorities to deal with each.
4. Accountability and follow-up systems absolutely necessary.
5. Retention is the single indicator of College quality, ie. they are synonymous. This should be dealt with not by a Committee, but on a college-wide basis as a guiding principle - give students what they come for!
6. Reports tabled should be seen as progress towards an ongoing process to achieve institutional quality.
7. PAC should require a Retention Strategy and monitor it for three to five years.

THE PROBLEM OF FRESHMAN ATTRITION
AT HUMBER COLLEGE

An analysis of the problem of attrition is a necessary prerequisite to the development of retention programs for Humber College. Such an analysis requires a clear definition of the specific problem under study and a detailed understanding of the dropout process. Published research in this area indicates that dropout is a complex behavior which may be exhibited by different students at different points in their academic career, and for different reasons. It is important therefore, to clearly define the type(s) of dropout behavior being examined for intervention. Programs that are effective in promoting retention for one group may not be effective for another.

The research on attrition also indicates that while certain variables may characterize dropouts from many different educational institutions, the nature of the dropout process and the types of students who drop out can be institution specific. That is, the type of student who drops out from a university may be quite different from the type of student who leaves a CAAT, and the factors which promote retention within a residential institution can be quite different from those in a commuter college. It is important to obtain, therefore, specific detailed information on the characteristics of dropouts and the nature of the dropout process at Humber College. Once these data have been gathered, a model of attrition may be formulated and used to guide the development of specific retention programs.

Research on dropout at Humber College, with a focus on freshman attrition, has been in progress for the past two years. The emphasis on freshmen has been chosen for two reasons. First, when little information is available on a phenomenon such as attrition at Humber, a logical starting point is the beginning, the first semester. In addition, since a longitudinal study is the recommended research methodology, setting up such a program automatically provides data on freshman attrition first. As the program progresses data on dropout at later points will also be obtained.

Second, past research on dropout indicates that the highest rates of attrition occur during the first year. For example, one half of the students who will drop out during a four year college career do so in the first year. Another third do so during the second. Thus, by focusing on freshmen we are examining the most "at risk" group. It is clear, as well, that any significant reduction in the dropout rate of this group will also significantly reduce the overall college rate of attrition.

FRESHMAN ATTRITION AT HUMBER COLLEGE

In this section a brief description of the results of research on freshman attrition at Humber College will be described. The findings consist of two major parts, the differences between dropout groups and persisters at entry to the college, and the differences between these groups midway through the first semester. Before considering these data some definitions of the groups being studied are presented.

1. Persisters

Students who complete their first semester with an overall grade average above 60% and who return to the college for a second semester.

2. Successful Dropouts

Students who complete their first semester with an overall grade average above 60%, and who do not return to the college for a second semester.

3. Unsuccessful Dropouts

Students who may or may not complete their first semester, who obtain an overall grade average less than 60%, and who do not return to the college for a second semester.

A. STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS AT ENTRY

The characteristics of the successful and unsuccessful dropout, as compared to students who persist in their studies, are presented below. These differences were noted in students as they began their studies at Humber College.

1. Successful Dropouts

Students who are successful in their program, but nonetheless terminate their studies at the end of the first semester, are similar in their characteristics to those who persist except that they:

-have greater need for vocational guidance

that is they say:

- they need help in selecting a career
- they need help in clarifying their career goals
- they need help in deciding on a career

2. Unsuccessful Dropouts

Those students who are unsuccessful in their studies and leave the college differ significantly in their entry-level characteristics from both the successful dropouts and the persisters. This group comprises those students who have been traditionally viewed as the "high risk" academically underprepared population. Unsuccessful dropouts differ from persisters in that they:

-are less committed to the college

that is:

- they do not consult the college calendar or program brochures prior to entry
- do not attend college "preview days"
- do not attend orientation
- perceive the college less positively in terms of its reputation and services

-are less committed to their education

that is:

- they are less likely to have clear educational goals
- more likely to say that they are at college to take a few courses rather than complete a program
- are less certain that they will complete their program successfully
- more likely to say that they will leave their studies if they receive a job offer

-have a weaker academic background

that is:

- have a lower level of educational attainment than persisters
- studied less frequently in high school
- attended class less frequently in high school

B. STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS AT MID-SEMESTER

Eleven weeks after their registration at Humber College all freshmen were surveyed with a questionnaire designed to measure those characteristics identified via previous attrition research as being critical determinants of student persistence/attrition. The four major variables are educational and institutional commitment, and social and academic integration. These factors, within the context of Tinto's theory of dropout, are considered to have explanatory power. That is, they may be taken as indicators of what caused the student to drop out.

1. Successful Dropouts

As with entry-level measures, few significant differences are observed between the group of students who performed satisfactorily in their programs but dropped out nonetheless, and those who remained at Humber for the second semester. As a group the successful dropouts differed significantly from the persisters in that they:

-are less committed to their education

that is they:

- were less certain that they would complete their program successfully
- were more likely to say that they would not continue in their program
- were more uncertain about why they were attending college
- were uncertain about what they were getting from college
- said that they considered dropping out at least once

-are less academically integrated

that is they:

- skip classes more often than persisters
- are less likely to find their program challenging
- more likely to say that their program is not the one they want
- are less likely to say that they have learned a great deal since enrolling
- are less satisfied with their intellectual growth since registering
- find their academic studies less stimulating.

2. Unsuccessful Dropouts

Like successful dropouts, unsuccessful dropouts differ from persisters on educational commitment and academic integration. In addition, significant differences were also observed in the area of social integration. Specifically, unsuccessful dropouts differ from persisters in that they:

-are less committed to their education

that is they:

- were less certain that they would complete their program successfully
- were more likely to say that they would not continue in their program
- were more uncertain about why they were attending college
- were uncertain about what they were getting from college
- said that they considered dropping out at least once
- said that they considered transferring to another college

-are less academically integrated

that is they:

- skip classes more often than persisters
- studied less frequently
- are more likely to have dropped a course
- are less likely to find their courses stimulating
- are more likely to say that their program is not the one they want
- are less likely to say that they have not learned a great deal since enrolling
- are more likely to find their courses boring, dull and irrelevant
- are less likely to agree that what they were learning was necessary for their future success

-are less socially integrated

that is they:

- are less likely to have made friends with other students
- have found it difficult to meet and make friends
- say other students in their program are unwilling to help them

- say that other students in their program have attitudes and values different from their own
- have had less frequent contact with faculty outside class
- are less likely to say that faculty are generally interested in students

CONCLUSIONS

The research findings clearly indicate that there are significant differences, both at entry and at mid-semester, between the successful dropouts, the unsuccessful dropouts, and the persisters. It would appear that the major factor contributing to the attrition of the successful dropout group is a lack of vocational goals. These students are uncertain about why they are in college, and are unsure about the appropriateness of the program in which they are registered. Over the course of the first semester their commitment to their education decreases from its level at entry most probably because they are uncertain about its outcomes, do not find their program stimulating, and are not satisfied with what they are learning.

Factors related to the attrition of the unsuccessful dropout group are clearly different from those of the successful dropout and are of a greater magnitude. These students enter Humber with a lower level of commitment to their education as well as a lower level of commitment to the college. They have had less contact with the institution prior to entry and perceive it less positively. In addition, they come to the college with a weak academic background. During the first semester they are not integrated into either the academic or social systems of the College. These facts are also reflected, perhaps, in the fact that they perform very poorly in their courses.

It is clear that the development of effective retention programs for these two groups will have to take such differences into account. The most effective strategy would be to create specific programs targeted to the specific needs of each group. Efficiency in the implementation of these interventions would also be increased tremendously if each type of student could be identified at entry to the college, with retention programs then being addressed to each individual student. Such a scenario is potentially feasible within the context of the research methodology developed for the study reported here, since the survey instruments administered to students are capable of discriminating between successful dropouts, unsuccessful dropouts, and those who will persist in their studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HUMBER COLLEGE FRESHMEN: PART III

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FIRST TO SECOND SEMESTER

DROPOUTS AND RETAINEES

by

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Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology

June, 1985

I. INTRODUCTION

Students who drop out of college often suffer personal disappointments, financial setbacks, and a lowering of career goals. There has been an enormous amount of research, albeit mostly in the U.S., on college student attrition and retention. This research has consisted largely of statistical analyses of the differences between dropouts and persisters.

In the past few years, recognition of the imminent decline in the number of college-age students has made it urgent for institutions to understand which students drop out and why, and to find ways to influence them to stay. Thus the concern about attrition has now taken on the dimension of an urgent administrative necessity.

Ramist (1981) reports that based on a representative cross section of U.S. four-year colleges, only 35-40 percent of the entering freshmen graduate in four years from their college of original entry. An additional 30-35 percent graduate in more than four years, or from a different college, or both. The remaining 10-35 percent never receive a degree. A basic question that remains to be answered is whether this phenomenon is due to the characteristics of educational institutions, students who drop out, or both.

The reasons students give for leaving include academic matters; financial difficulties; motivational problems; personal considerations; full-time jobs; the expressed need for new, practical, nonacademic experiences; and the lack of initial plans to obtain a degree. With the exception of the very few students who leave due to circumstances beyond their control, the reasons reflect dissatisfaction with the academic or social life of the institution, as it relates to them. Indeed, the research of Beal and Noel (1980) indicates that a major factor influencing student retention is the degree to which there is a match between the characteristics of the student clientele, in terms of their background, needs, abilities and preferences, and institutional characteristics expressed in terms of the type and quality of services provided.

It could be argued therefore, that a beneficial long-term institutional strategy to encourage retention would be to identify unmet student needs and dissatisfaction with college services and programs. With this information in hand institutional planners and managers would then be able to increase retention by maximizing the "match" between student and institutional characteristics.

The first part of the data requirements defined above has already been accomplished at Humber College with the recently completed freshmen survey providing a detailed analysis of student background, needs, goals and preferences. The goal of the present study is to describe differences that may exist between those students who persist in Humber College programs from the first to second semester and those who drop out during or immediately after the first semester. Such information might shed some light on areas of student need not being met, and could be used to upgrade educational services provided for students thereby promoting retention.

COLLEGE RETENTION CHARACTERISTICS

1. Global Dropout Rate: North Campus

The dropout rate for freshmen at the North campus, from the fall to winter semester is 15.8%.

The dropout rates for divisions, as constituted prior to the recent reorganization, are as follows:

-Applied and Creative Arts:	19.4%
-Business	17.3%
-Health Sciences:	09.0%
-Hospitality:	12.7%
-Technology:	15.5%
-Human Studies:	17.6%

Dropout rates for individual programs, where they are represented by more than 20 students in the sample are:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Dropout Rate(%)</u>
Equine studies	20.5
Fashion modelling	22.0
Food industry technician	16.0
Landscape technician/technol.	30.0
Creative photography	07.7
Film and T.V. production	28.0
Journalism	25.5
Music	22.8
Radio broadcasting	14.3
Ad and graphic design	27.3
Interior Design	15.1
Package design	08.0
Community studies	16.2
Retail floriculture	22.2
Computer information systems	26.7
Computer programming	66.7
Data processing	17.8
Business administration	15.0
General Business	09.3
Marketing	13.0
Retail co-op	21.9
Legal secretary	15.9
Medical secretary	10.6
Word processing	12.7
Ambulance and emergency care	06.0
Early childhood education	03.8
Funeral service education	25.6

Nursing	00.0
Nursing assistant	20.6
Pharmacy assistant	00.0
Culinary management	13.3
Hotel and restaurant management	12.6
Architectural design	16.7
Chem lab technician	05.0
Chem lab technologist	20.0
Electrical Engineering Tech.	13.3
Air conditioning and refrigeration	13.6

IV. CONCLUSION

The results of this study make it possible to describe a profile of the freshman student who is at risk to dropping out during the first semester. Such a student would have the following characteristics.

Background

- a male between the age of 20-24.
- was unemployed prior to entering Humber.
- is a graduate of grade 12.
- has weak study and class attendance habits.
- lives with one parent.

Goals and Needs

- has decided to continue his education because he could not find a job.
- is undecided about career goals.
- finances his education via government financial aid or bank loans.
- requires special help in developing his reading speed, math skills, and career objectives.

College Contact and Perception

- has not obtained information about the college from the calendar or college Preview Days.
- perceives Humber in a less positive light than the student who will

persist in his program to the second semester.

In contrast the freshman student who is likely to persist in Humber College beyond the first semester would have the following characteristics.

Background

- is a female student between the age of 17-24.
- attended high school prior to entering Humber.
- has a partial grade 13 level of education or has graduated from grade 13.
- has strong study and class attendance habits.
- lives with both parents.

Goals and Needs

- is interested in continuing her education in order to become a better educated person.
- is attending Humber with specific goals in mind.
- is continuing her education in part because of parental wishes.
- has parents as a major source of funding for her education.
- is less in need of skills development than the student who is likely to drop out.

College Contact and Perception

- has obtained information about the college from the calendar or College Preview Days.
- has decided to attend Humber because of its academic reputation, the facilities, and the availability of a particular program of study.
- believes that Humber has high-quality programs, that Humber graduates get jobs more easily than those of other colleges, and thinks that the college provides very useful information to new students.

II. OUR VALUES PERTAINING TO STUDENTS

CENTRAL VALUE:

... WE BELIEVE THAT THE COLLEGE EXISTS TO ENABLE STUDENTS TO EARN A COLLEGE EDUCATION.

Value Statement #1

... That students can grow toward their full academic potential as they experience the joys of discovery and participate in the rigors of academic study.

Behaviors consistent with this Value Statement:

A. College Staff:

1. Be serious and enthusiastic about your own discipline.
2. Give students the opportunity to analyze, evaluate, verbalize, synthesize, and apply information they learn.
3. Challenge students with thought provoking material.
4. Encourage advanced students to do outside reading and to discuss the information with you.
5. Tactfully point out fallacies students make in reasoning toward a conclusion.
6. Engage quiet students in class discussions. Let them know that you care what they are thinking.
7. Relate the relevance of course material to real world situations.
8. Be sure that your expectations for students are both high and realistic.
9. Create a positive, supportive atmosphere which helps students to function in a college setting.

B. Students:

1. Seek help and information on your own.
2. Demonstrate a positive attitude toward yourself.
3. Work toward self-growth and self-fulfillment.
4. Learn and apply efficient study skills.
5. Respect other students by maintaining order and decorum.

Value Statement #2

... That students possess personal abilities which can be further refined and developed.

Behaviors consistent with this Value Statement:

A. College Staff:

1. Be friendly and helpful.
2. Exhibit sincere concern for colleagues and students.
3. Respond seriously to each student and treat each one as an individual.
4. View and treat students as adults.
5. Refer students to counseling and support services when a need arises.

B. Students:

1. Treat college staff and other students with courtesy and respect.
2. Eliminate distractions such as children in class and noise in halls.
3. Do not compromise your own standards and values.
4. Seek out and use the varied support services offered by the college.
5. Read and understand college-related material including catalogs, schedules, student handbook. Use the information to gain access to services and resources.
6. Treat college grounds, buildings, equipment, and property with care so that others may enjoy them.

Value Statement #3

... That students have the right to enroll in classes appropriate to their ability levels.

Behaviors consistent with this Value Statement:

A. College Staff:

1. Develop programs to meet the needs of all levels of students.
2. Inform students of course prerequisites and requirements.
3. Do not allow weak students to enroll or to remain in classes for which they are obviously not prepared.
4. Be sure that academic standards are not open to compromise.
5. Understand the concepts of learning styles and learning theory.
6. Sanction advising underprepared students into alternative routes and careers.

B. Students:

1. Select only courses you intend to complete and use toward your goal.
2. Be realistic in assessing your own skills and capabilities.
3. Know the course and curriculum requirements.
4. Maintain frequent contact with your advisers.

• Value Statement #4

... That students must be responsible for taking an active role in their own learning to make their educational experiences significant and meaningful.

Behaviors consistent with this Value Statement:

A. College Staff:

1. Be a good role model.
2. Stay current in your field; demonstrate professional competence.
3. Establish course requirements, abide by them, communicate them to students, and apply them uniformly.
4. Refer students to financial aid, career planning and study skills for assistance.

B. Students:

1. Take your classwork seriously.
2. Strive to do your best to meet the challenge of high academic standards.
3. Monitor your own progress carefully.
4. Attend your classes on time; stay the entire period.
5. Be attentive and participate in class.
6. Have the necessary instructional materials, including books, pens, notebooks.

IDEAS IDEAS IDEAS IDEAS IDEAS IDEAS IDEAS IDEAS IDEAS

As a faculty member you have the major responsibility for classroom management and student success. What you do will have a major influence on whether students are successful and persist in your course.

What follows are a number of simple but effective suggestions for increasing student and teacher success. They have been developed by teachers for teachers. Not all of the ideas will be applicable to your situation and your personal style but all of them work.

Use a few of the suggestions to see how they work.

Pay particular attention to those ideas which apply to the first few classes, to attendance issues, and to providing frequent, honest and supportive feedback to each student

FULL CLASSROOMS: 95 PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO GUARANTEE STUDENT AND TEACHER SUCCESS

I. FACULTY/STUDENT INTERACTION

Operational Definition - This category contains elements directly related to the affective domain of student growth brought about by faculty/student interaction. Psyche, ego, individual worth are all intricately bound within this framework.

1. Tell the students by what name and title you prefer to be called (Prof., Dr., Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms., first name).
2. Learn the name of each student as quickly as possible and use the student's name in class. Based upon your own style, student preference, and the classroom atmosphere you want to create:
 - A. Call on students by their first names or nicknames.
 - B. Call on students by using Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.
 - C. Avoid referring to students in condescending terms.
3. Be aware of the differences and similarities between students' classroom mistakes and their personal successes/failures.
4. Be fair and impartial in dealing with students both in and out of class.
5. Be honest about your feelings, opinions, and attitudes toward students and toward your subject matter.
6. Listen intently to student comments and opinions. Use a "lateral thinking technique" (adding to ideas rather than dismissing them) so that students feel their ideas, comments, and opinions are worthwhile. This approach permits you to consider all viewpoints.
7. Don't quarrel with students over a minor point in class; avoid the appearance of rigidity.
8. If a student tells you something in confidence, respect that confidence. Avoid making value judgments (verbally or non-verbally) about these confidences.
9. Lend some of your books (reference) to students and borrow some of theirs in return. You can initiate the process by saying, "I've just read a great book on _____; would anyone like to borrow it?"
10. Give your telephone number to students, your office hours, and the location of your office. Advise students to leave messages with the division secretary if they are unable to contact you.
11. Provide a small note pad on your office door so students can leave messages if you are not in.
12. At first class meeting, pair up the students and have them get acquainted with one another. Switch partners every five (5) minutes. Faculty should participate. Have students introduce one another to the entire class.
13. Have the students establish a "buddy" system for absences, work missed, assignments, tutoring, etc. Exchange telephone numbers; pair them by major or geographical proximity (zip codes).
14. At the end of each class period, ask one student to stay for a minute to chat (compliment him/her on something; tell student you missed him/her if absent, etc.).

15. Instead of returning tests, quizzes, themes in class, ask students to stop by your office to pick them up. This also presents an opportunity to talk informally with students and to determine the location of your office.
16. Call students on the telephone if they are absent. Make an appointment with them to discuss attendance, make-up work, etc. If you cannot contact them by telephone, drop them a short letter or postcard.
17. Get feedback periodically from students on their perceptions of your attitudes toward them, your personal involvement, etc.
18. Socialize with students as your "style" permits by attending their club or social activities, by walking with them between classes, etc.
19. Take a student or a group of students to lunch (dutch treat).
20. Conduct a personal conference with all students sometime during the semester.
21. Provide some means to establish quick, positive reinforcement to students within the first few class periods.
22. Throughout the course, but particularly during the crucial first class sessions:
 - A. Stress a positive "you can handle it" attitude.
 - B. Emphasize your willingness to give individual help with course content. Point out the relevance of your subject matter to the concerns and goals of your students.
 - C. Capitalize on opportunities to praise the abilities and contributions of students whose status in the course is in doubt; well-timed encouragement could mean the difference between retention and attrition.
 - D. Utilize a variety of instructional methods, drawing on appropriate audio-visual aids as much as possible.
 - E. Urge students to talk to you about problems, such as changes in work schedule, before dropping your course. Alternative arrangements can often be made; if arrangements cannot be made, explain proper procedures to withdraw.

II. GENERAL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Operational Definition - This section focuses literally on the day-to-day operations of your classes. The items as a group emphasize planning, orderliness, and general good sense.

1. Conduct a full instructional period on the first day of classes. This activity sets a positive tone for the learning environment you want to set. Engage in some interpersonal activities listed elsewhere or ask the students to submit areas that they would like to learn about during the semester.
2. List and discuss your course objectives on the first day. Let students know how your course can fit their personal/career goals. Discuss some of the fears and apprehensions that both you and the students have. Tell them what they should expect of you and how you will contribute to their learning. Remind them again three or four weeks later.
3. Provide a course outline for each student; include required and optional textbooks, assignments, grading policies, attendance rules, etc.
4. Have students fill out an index card with name, address, telephone number, goals, and other personal information you or they think is important. Ask them to provide a list of the times they are available to meet with you.
5. Tell the students (orally and in writing) what your attendance policy is. Make them aware of your deep concern for attendance and remind them periodically of the policy and the concern.
6. Insist that students contact you or the division secretary if they are going to be absent for more than one class period.
7. Explain clearly student responsibilities for missed classes, exams, late papers, etc.
8. Be flexible when scheduling make-up tests and quizzes; students may have other classes.
9. If you had to miss a class, explain why and what you will do to make up the time and/or materials.
10. If you are absent because of illness or an emergency, telephone your chairperson; ask that the division secretary or a colleague post a note on your classroom door.
11. At the beginning of each class period, announce your topic of the day and your objectives.
12. Distribute an outline of your lecture notes before class starts. This approach assists students in organizing the material you are presenting and impels you to present your material in an orderly manner.

13. Get to class before the students arrive; be the last one to leave. Meet all of your classes as scheduled.
14. Circulate around the class as you talk or ask questions. This movement creates a physical closeness to the students. Avoid standing behind the lectern or sitting behind the desk for the entire period. Do not allow the room design or furniture arrangement to set up artificial barriers between you and the students.
15. Maintain good eye contact with students; this is extremely important both in and out of class.
16. Vary your instructional techniques (lecture, discussion, debate, small groups, films, etc.).
17. Use familiar examples in presenting materials. If you teach rules, principles, definitions, and theorems, explicate these with concrete examples that students can understand.
18. Be prepared to use an alternate approach if the one you've chosen seems to bog down. You should be confident enough with your own material so that student interests and concerns, not lecture notes, determine the format of instruction. Remember one approach may work well with one group, but not with another. Each class generates its own "personality" and leadership.
19. Let students know that the learning resources you use in class (slides, tapes, films) are available to them outside of class. Explain the procedures to secure the material and take them to the location (learning resource center, study skills, etc.).
20. If you require a term paper or research paper, you should take the responsibility of arranging a library orientation. Librarians are happy to cooperate.
21. If the subject matter is appropriate, use a pre-test to determine their knowledge, background, expertise, etc.
22. Devise the first test of the semester to cover a small unit - fewer topics to study, fewer test questions, etc.
23. Be sure your tests cover the most important aspects of the unit and course. Explain your philosophy and purpose of testing.
24. Return tests, quizzes, and papers as soon as possible. Write comments (+ and -) when appropriate. Explain verbally or in writing the errors that students made.
25. Ask students to evaluate your test either at the end of the test or during the next class period.
26. Explain thoroughly (orally and in writing) your grading methods and procedures. Remind students of those procedures when you return tests, themes, research papers, etc.
27. As often as you can and in as many ways as you can, show your concern for the students' progress in the course.
28. Give each student a mid-term grade and indicate what each student must do to improve; a mid-term conference may be needed.
29. Have the counselors visit your classes to foster awareness of counseling and placement services. Also, reading faculty will volunteer to review the SQ4R (survey, question, read, recite, rite, review) method of studying your test.
30. Let students know that you are able and willing to discuss study techniques and habits for your course.
31. Tell students directly when it is appropriate or inappropriate to ask questions in class or during a lecture. If you tell them it's ok to ask a question when you are lecturing, don't be annoyed if they do!
32. Don't be afraid to admit that you don't know all the answers to questions that students raise.
33. Help students feel free to ask questions. When you answer a student's question, be sure he/she understands your answer. Make the student repeat the answer in his/her own words.
34. Provide positive reinforcement whenever possible; give students a respectful answer to any question they might ask.
35. Clarify and have students understand what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior in a classroom. Be consistent in enforcing your rules. Seek administrative assistance if problems persist.
36. Allow students to switch classes if work schedules change or other salient reasons develop. Cooperate with a colleague if he/she makes such a request.
37. Refer untimely withdrawals to counseling for future follow-up.

III. STUDENT INITIATED ACTIVITIES

Operational Definition - This category is based on the premise that peer influence can and does play a substantial role in student success. Age differences, personality differences, and skill differences can be utilized to produce positive results if you can get the students to work cooperatively with one another, rather than competitively.

1. Have students read one another's papers before they turn them in. This activity helps them locate one another's errors before being graded.
2. If the class lends itself to a field trip, have the students plan it and make some or all of the arrangements.
3. Ask students to submit sample test questions (objective or subjective) prior to a test. The class itself can compose a test or quiz based on your objectives.
4. Create opportunities for student leaders to emerge in class. Use these leadership skills to improve student performance.
5. Encourage students to report their experiences if they have used support services such as study skills, counseling, placement, etc.
6. Have students set specific goals for themselves throughout the semester in terms of their learning and what responsibilities they will undertake.
7. Permit and encourage students to bring a friend to class.
8. Encourage study groups (a form of peer tutoring). Emphasize the fact that students are not competing with one another, but that they can learn from one another.
9. Provide students with a list of class names, addresses, and telephone numbers (with permission) to encourage out-of-class contacts.
10. Encourage peer grading of essays, papers, or tests.
11. Invite students to read their papers (or summaries) to the class.
3. Encourage students who had the first semester of a course together to be in the second semester together. Try to schedule the same time slot for the second semester.
4. Throughout the semester have students submit topics that they would like to cover or discuss.
5. Take students on a mini-tour of the learning resources center, reading/study skills area, natural science learning lab, counseling center, etc. If a particular student needs reading/study skills help, don't send him/her. TAKE HIM/HER!
6. Encourage students to attend cultural activities and to participate in extra-curricular activities. Give recognition and/or rewards for meaningful participation.
7. Use your imagination; devise ways to reinforce positively student accomplishments. Try to avoid placing students in embarrassing situations, particularly in class. Be patient with them when they don't understand the material.
8. Use your background, experience, and knowledge to inter-relate your subject matter with other academic disciplines. Show enthusiasm for your subject matter and for your students.
9. Use examples that include the experiences of all age groups in your classes.
10. Create situations in which students can help you (locate information in the library, check out a book for you from the library, look up some reference material, conduct a class research project).
11. Develop library/supplementary reading lists which complement course content. Select books at various reading levels.
12. Use the library reference shelf for some of your old tests and quizzes. Tell the students that you will use some questions from the old tests in their next test.
13. Place study guides and lecture notes in a file in the library and/or study skills center.
14. Engage in periodic (bi-weekly) self-evaluation of each class. What was accomplished? How did student react? Random student evaluations (mini-forms) could also be used.
15. Set up special tutoring sessions and extra classes. Make these activities mandatory, especially for students who are doing poorly.
16. Maintain academic standards; be sure students understand this.

IV. FACULTY INITIATED ACTIVITIES

Operational Definition - This section presents the greatest challenge to the ability and creativity of each faculty member. You must take the initiative to implement these suggestions, to test them, and to revise others.

1. Utilize small group discussions in class whenever feasible. Identify a goal to be achieved through the discussion.
2. Take the initiative to contact and meet with students who are doing poor work. Be especially cognizant of the "passive" student, one who comes to class, sits quietly, does not participate, but does poorly on tests, quizzes, etc.

17. Look at your record book periodically to determine student progress (inform them) and determine for yourself if you know anything about that student other than his/her grades.
18. At mid-term and at final exam, your last test question should ask if a student is going to remain in college or drop out at the end of the semester. If a potential drop-out is identified, you can advise the student personally or work with a divisional counselor.
19. Work with your divisional counselor to discuss procedures to follow-up absentees, failing students, etc.
20. Utilize the skills of other faculty members as guest lecturers and discussion leaders. Switch classes on occasion.
21. Confer with other faculty members who have the same students in class. Focus on student learning problems, observed behavior, positive responses, etc.
22. Team teach a class with a colleague or switch classes for a period or two. Invite a guest lecturer to class.
23. Invite reading/study skills faculty to your classes to discuss study habits, techniques.
24. Ask the reading faculty to do a "readability study" of the texts you use in your courses.
6. Arrange informal meetings among administrators, faculty and students.
7. Actively support the faculty's class attendance policies.
8. Furnish name tags for all faculty and staff who work at registration or in group advising.
9. Provide free day care/babysitting service during registration.
10. Distribute information to faculty on research pertaining to student successes/failures.
11. Use administrators as advisers for students.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

Operational Definition - This section presents techniques and strategies to insure administrative involvement in the teaching/learning process.

1. Make the campus an attractive place in-which to learn. Be sure that faculty and students share in the responsibility for maintaining a wholesome atmosphere.
2. Encourage administrators to teach classes or to substitute in classes when a faculty member attends a professional meeting.
3. Ask an administrator to participate in a classroom panel discussion or to guest lecture.
4. Hold administrators, division chairpersons, and program coordinators responsible for the quality of instruction provided by part-time faculty. Insist on the same standards that are applied to full-time faculty.
5. Involve top-level administrators in freshman orientation sessions.



THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS ON STUDENT RETENTION

In the summer of 1978, Central Oregon Community College conducted a follow-up study of all full-time, first time freshmen who had enrolled in Fall 1977. The results were startling. Over half the students had ceased to attend sometime during their first year, and many more did not return the following year. Even admitting the many valid reasons why students leave, we thought the attrition rate unacceptable and noted that, pragmatically, we were creating hundreds of "dissatisfied customers" in our voting district each year. The overriding impression was, however, one of sadness, that the cold statistics represented so many human tragedies and lost opportunities. We set out to improve.

Our efforts centered around learning about—or at least rediscovering—the characteristics of many of our students. They are the students John Roueche of the University of Texas has termed "high risk." They unconsciously regard themselves as educational failures on their way to fail once again. That self-fulfilling prophecy is predictable from their behavior; they often come to class without pencil or paper, put off purchasing a text, sit near an exit, do not do initial assignments, become erratic in attendance. One day they simply vanish.

Using The FUD Desk

We decided to focus on attendance first. Attendance, after all, is basic: if students aren't in class, the instructor can't teach them. We came to believe that students who were likely to be in academic difficulty because of absences ought to have a personal contact from the College. The first choice would be a phone call; a distant second choice would be a letter.

The procedures we set up centered on the instructor. Instructors could make the phone calls themselves or could relay the necessary information to "The Follow-up Desk—or FUD desk." The FUD desk was staffed by a faculty member with excellent communication skills. The phone calls were no-nonsense. Though we listened sympathetically to the predictable excuses, the thrust was: "We care about your success. To be successful you must be in class. What barriers are keeping you from returning to class *today*?"

We were pleasantly surprised. Rarely was a student resentful at being phoned. We had expected a lot of "butt out of my life" reactions, but they almost never came. Instead, the usual reactions were first amazement, then appreciation. We found also that the phone calls were not as time-consuming as we feared. One efficiency we learned was to phone between 7:30 and 8:15 in the morning. Students seemed to be home then, and there was a special awakening urgency in getting out of bed and hearing one's instructor's voice on the phone. Further, since students who were absent from one class tended to be absent from all classes, they might hear as many as four or five different instructors' voices. That's impressive!

In a recent spring quarter, instructors and the FUD Desk phoned 200 students—all of them, remember, identified by their instructors as likely to be in academic difficulty because of absences. One hundred sixty-nine returned to classes, and 150 completed the quarter. It's probable that without this phone intervention few would have even returned.

Sometimes it's harder to keep an innovation going and improving than to start it. Believing that the FUD Desk retention effort is important and successful, we are taking steps to perpetuate it. Present faculty are reminded and encouraged through memoranda, readings about high-risk students, and occasional in-service sessions. New faculty encounter the concept first as candidates when the Dean of Instruction interviews them and next in orientation-to-the-College sessions. More important, though, the system tends to be self-perpetuating because of instructors' professional pleasure at seeing students returning to classes and succeeding.



Training in Appropriate Teaching Processes

A second retention effort has centered around emphasizing appropriate teaching processes during the first several class sessions. For students who have poor self-concepts and who may be setting themselves up to fail, an early classroom success is critical. We remind ourselves of such common-sense techniques as consciously teaching information on skills which can be learned readily and creating a classroom atmosphere in which there is no such thing as a stupid question. We also try to incorporate techniques which make good sense, but which are not always obvious, e.g., learning students' names, using testing procedures which test often and in smaller chunks, and facilitating the formation of study and support groups.

A third retention effort is to infuse all of the above into the consciousness of our part-time instructors. To do this, we invite them particularly to use the FUD Desk. Predictably, a higher proportion of part-time faculty use the FUD Desk than make their own phone calls. Also, all new part-time faculty must attend an orientation session (during the first weeks of class) which concentrates on teaching techniques. Periodic in-service sessions at the departmental/divisional level continue the reinforcement.

Using Academic Warning to Trigger Academic Advising

A fourth, very recent effort is a redesigned probation policy. Now called "academic warning," the policy identifies students with low GPA's and/or completion rates and assigns them to a special academic advisor, who is a full-time faculty member having received special training to fulfill that role. Whether or not this new effort increases retention is not known at present, but its value as a vehicle for expressing College concern and help makes it worthwhile regardless.

Implementing Flexible Reassignment

Finally, thanks to prescient curriculum designers of years ago, we have in place an extremely important retention device: the ability to move students from one level to another in freshman English and math classes. We can do this even in the middle of terms. Thus, students who have been misadvised (or who misadvised themselves) or otherwise inaccurately placed can quickly move to their appropriate skill levels in writing and in lower-level math classes.

In Summary

Though questioning of the worth of retention efforts is rare, a couple of dangers do exist. Especially in an era of declining FTE's, when emphasizing the importance of retention, care must be taken so that faculty do not feel compelled to retain everybody. There are, after all, students whom we should not retain; and in those cases, we try to ease the leaving by making it a conscious, good choice on the part of the student, not just another failure in a long string of failures. Trying to retain some students to keep up the FTE count invites frustrated teachers and lower quality teaching, as well as a deterioration of standards. Conversely, care should be taken to ensure that retention efforts are not misinterpreted as mollycoddling or spoon-feeding. Instead, we should hold high expectations (people tend to live up to expectations) for our students and work hard to help them meet them.

Like a hospital's reputation, a community college's rests partly not on how it treats well persons, but on how well it serves those who need it most.

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Suane D. Roueche, Editor
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The ACT National Center
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Organizing the Campus for Retention



The American College Testing Program

ADVICE TO THOSE BEGINNING A RETENTION EFFORT^a
(in percentages)

	Two Year Public	Two Year Private	Four Year Public	Four Year Private	Total
N	22	7	13	20	62
Seek Faculty Support	27	14	54	35	34
Organize Effort/Plan/ Establish Goals/Follow through	36	29	46	15	31
Seek Staff/Administra- tion Support	14		46	20	21
Appoint Coordinator/ Establish Committee	41	14	15		19
Commit Funds/Staff	14		38	15	18
Start Sooner	14			25	13
Seek Campuswide Commitment			31	10	10
Seek Student Support	9		15	10	10
Give Rewards to Faculty Participants	14	14	8		8
Develop Good PR			23	10	8
Collect Data	9		15		6
Improve Admissions/ Recruitment	4	14	8	5	6
Use Developmental Courses/Workshops	9			5	5
Move Slowly	4		15		5
Coordinate Effort through Academic Affairs	4		8		3
Other	14	29	46	45	32

^aMultiple Responses Possible; Percentages will not total 100%

ELEMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS OF
CAMPUS RETENTION EFFORT^a
(in percentages)

	Two Year Public	Two Year Private	Four Year Public	Four Year Private	Total
N	25	10	18	12	65
Interest in Advising Counselling	36	70	44	42	45
Administration Support	40	40	39	17	35
Faculty Involvement	40	40	39		32
Responsibility Assigned, Effort Organized	36		28	8	23
Developmental Workshops/Courses	24		11	58	23
Campuswide Interest/ Meetings/Follow through	4	40	6	42	17
Individual Attention for students	20	20		33	17
Interest in Data	12		17	33	15
Placement Testing/ Warning System	24	10			11
Student Involvement	4	30	6	8	9
Human/Financial Resources Committed	4			42	9
Good PR			28		8
Retention Workshop	4		6		3
Other	8		28	83	26

^aMultiple Responses Possible: Percentages will not total 100%

CHANGES RESULTING FROM CAMPUS RETENTION EFFORT^a
(in percentages)

Cont.

	To Year Public	Two Year Private	Four Year Public	Four Year Private	Total
N	71	28	61	72	232
Revised Probation Policy	20	18	6	10	13
Added Developmental Programs	8		10	6	7
Revised Student Aid Policy	3	7	3	10	6
Revised Hiring, Pro- motion, Tenure Criteria	1	11		6	3
Other	13		11	6	9

^aMultiple Responses Possible: Percentages will not total 100%

CHANGES RESULTING FROM CAMPUS RETENTION EFFORT
(in percentages)

	Two Year Public	Two Year Private	Four Year Public	Four Year Private	Total
N	71	28	61	72	232
No Change or No Response	17	21	30	10	18
Revised Advising System	70	50	54	78	66
Early Alert System	41	57	34	67	49
Assessed Student Opinions	45	57	41	57	49
Freshman Advising Program	34	46	48	61	47
Retention Data System or Study	37	43	43	61	46
Revised Withdrawal/ Re-entry Procedures	32	18	23	38	30
Conducted Self-Study	35	21	15	35	28
Shortened Registration Procedures	31	32	16	22	24
Assessed Faculty/ Staff/Administration Opinions	35	18	13	25	24
Special Staff Training for Employees	25	18	15	19	20
Reviewed Mission	21	21	13	18	18
Student Evaluation of Teaching	17	28	11	21	18
Revised Curriculum	15	18	11	25	18
Encouraged Faculty/ Student Contact	17	14	11	24	17
Instructional Development	22	7	8	14	14

