

The Educational Policy Institute's

student success

November 2007

The Newsletter for Higher Education Professionals

Youngstown State University

EPI's 2007 Retention Award Winner

The First-Year Experience

A Conversation with John Gardner

Deconstructing Student Departure

An Essay by Dr. Peter Dietsch

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THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY INSTITUTE



The **Educational Policy Institute (EPI)** is a non-profit, non-partisan, and non-governmental organization dedicated to policy-based research on educational opportunity for all students. EPI is a collective association of researchers and policy analysts from around the world dedicated to the mission of enhancing our knowledge of critical barriers facing students and families throughout the educational pipeline.

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Opening Shots

The “First-Year Experience” has become a phenomenon in American higher education over the past 15-20 years. John Gardner was instrumental in creating this “movement” from the University of Southern Carolina (the “other” USC). Today, University 101 or first-year experience programs are used in literally hundreds if not thousands of institutions around the world, based largely on the fact that we clearly understand that first-year students, especially residential students, require special support during their first weeks, months, and semesters. In this issue of *Student Success*, we interview John Gardner about the issues regarding the first year and beyond.

EPI Senior Scholar Peter Dietsche, who also holds the William G. Davis Chair in Community College Leadership at the University of Toronto, writes about the issue of student departure from a community college perspective, based on a large-scale study across Canada. The data provides unique insights into the mindset of community colleges students and is equally relevant to two-year colleges and students in the United States.

Tammy A. Russell, an Assistant Professor and Director of Student Support Services at Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania, provides us with a perspective of first-generation students. In this case, the story is about her. Twenty-one years ago, Dr. Russell was a freshman student of that ilk, and her brief story in *Student Success* offers some insight into issues faced by these students on campus.

In May of this year, at EPI’s International Student Retention Conference, or Retention 2007, held in San Antonio, we were pleased to award the 2007 Retention

Award to Youngstown State University in Youngstown, Ohio. Youngstown has shown an impressive ability to provide safety nets and support to students who have the capacity for excellence. In our *Best Practices* section, we learn about some of the strategies behind YSU’s success.

This edition of *Student Success* also features a book review of a simply captivating book titled *Three Cups of Tea*, by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. I conducted this review myself and must say that I was absolutely taken with this story of giving and sacrifice by an American in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Given the current political climate in Pakistan, the book is enormously relevant. I strongly encourage our readers to order this book and gain insight into the lengths that Mr. Mortenson and his colleagues in Pakistan go to change the lives of eastern youth.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind our readers that the Call for Proposals has been released for Retention 2008, the International Conference on Student Retention, scheduled for May 28-30, 2008 in San Diego. Last year over 350 people and 60 sessions provided a participants with a wonderful opportunity to learn and share with others from around the world.

And finally, if you find this issue of *Student Success* useful and interesting, please pass around to your colleagues.

Best regards,

Deconstructing Student Departure: *Lessons From Research on Canadian Community College Students*

Dr. Peter Dietsche



It's time to do things differently. Why? Because, the advent of mass postsecondary education has dramatically changed the face of colleges and universities, especially in terms of the number and types of students who attend. The response to this change by most institutions was to adopt what this author calls a *laissez-faire*, industrial model of educational delivery. Key features of this model are enrolling large numbers of students, offering support services in a passive manner and delivering a largely 'one size fits all' learning environment. Little attention is paid to individual student needs and concerns and when it is, the focus is largely on students' cognitive abilities. A review of the retention and graduation rates for postsecondary institutions suggests this model is not terribly effective.

What should be done differently is best informed by research on student outcomes, particularly at the end of the first year. In the past, attrition studies often used a dichotomous dependent

variable, persist versus leave. We know, however, that students who leave college are of two types; those who are academically successful and drop out and those who fail and drop out. The characteristics of these two groups differ significantly and attempts to identify determinants of departure without separating them are clouded by these differences.

Figure 1 below illustrates an analytical model that more accurately reflects the reality of outcomes in postsecondary institutions. Four outcomes types are possible with this scheme. The successful persisters are those who succeed academically and continue with their studies the next semester. The successful leavers are those who succeed academically but do not return the next semester. The failed persisters are students whose level of performance is marginal and who typically continue their studies on academic probation. Finally, the failed leavers are students whose academic performance is considerably below standard and who leave college. Depending on the institution, both successful and failed leavers

may be equally represented in the drop-out population.

Research based on the above model with Canadian community college students has highlighted key characteristics, both student and institutional, that promote academic success and persistence. For example, when reviewing the correlates of academic success versus failure identified in numerous studies, we consistently find that successful students are more likely to have strong academic skills and behaviors, are clear about their future occupation/goals, have family who support their studies, are confident they can finance their studies and who do not work long hours at a job.

These findings are not new, but they don't tell us anything about why some successful students persist while others leave college. However, when the profiles of the successful persister and successful leaver are compared, it is possible to identify key factors that trigger departure in spite of academic success. The results of our studies show that at college entry, successful leavers tend to be older students who would prefer to

Figure 1: Outcome Types

Academic Achievement	Registration Status	
	Persist	Leave
Pass	Successful Persister	Successful Leaver
Fail	Failed Persister	Failed Leaver

SOURCE: Dietsche, Peter (2007). *Why Students Leave*. A presentation at the International Conference on Student Retention (Retention 2007), May 22-24, 2007, San Antonio, TX.

be working, are more uncertain about what their career will be after graduation and are concerned about financing their education.

During college the successful leavers interact with faculty and peers to the same extent as the successful persisters, but exhibit less involvement in extracurricular activities. This could be because they work longer hours at a job and spend more time commuting than do the successful persisters and so have less time to spend on campus. Most importantly, they are more concerned about financing their college studies, view their college less positively and are less certain about their occupational future when compared to the successful group.

Anecdotally, we know that student attitudes can change dramatically over time. Using a repeated measures design, it is possible to quantify these changes for each of the four outcome groups over the course of a semester or year. Doing so provides important information regarding the etiology of departure whether the students have been successful or not. Our findings show the successful leavers exhibit dramatic changes in their attitudes and perceptions. Most importantly, they show an increased orientation toward the work world in that they are now more likely to say they would prefer to be working rather than studying. When asked at mid-semester, they are also more likely than the persister group to indicate they intend to leave college and profess less commitment to graduating. Ultimately, they do leave and many, perhaps, don't graduate.

In a similar way, a comparison of the failed persisters and failed leavers can identify key variables associated with students who struggle to do well but continue with their studies. Differences between the two groups are observed in background, characteristics at entry and their college experience. For example, those who are unsuccessful but persist are less likely to be the first in their family to attend a postsecondary institu-

tion and more likely to say they have a disability. The persisters are more likely to be in their first-choice program, are more certain about their occupational future and less concerned about financing their education compared to the failed leavers.

During college, the failed persisters interact more frequently with their peers and are more likely to say they have made new friends at college. They participate in extracurricular activities more frequently than failed leavers, and are second only to the successful persisters in this regard. Other key differences between this persister group and those who fail and leave are fewer hours of paid work, commuting time and childcare which, logically, would leave more time for extracurricular activities and engender greater social integration. While difficulty with college for this group is higher than for the successful students, it is not as great as for the failed leavers. This is borne out by the fact that the overall academic average for this group is higher at the end of term than it is for the failed leavers.

Over the course of the semester both groups exhibit dramatic changes in their attitudes and perceptions. As mentioned, measuring these changes provides important information regarding the etiology of departure whether the students have been successful or not. For example, both the failed persisters and leavers exhibit a similar pattern of attitudinal change (qualitative) but with dramatic differences in magnitude (quantitative). While both groups decline in confidence, perceived value of education, commitment to graduation and commitment to the institution, the magnitude of decline is much greater in the failed leavers compared to the persisters. Ultimately, the failed leavers exhibit the highest level of intention to change program or college, two types of departure decisions.

The profiles described above are a critical first step in the development of retention strategies and every postsecondary institution should possess this detailed

information. The key message for those who manage colleges and universities is that strategies to promote student retention must vary depending on the type of student. While both successful and failed leavers at mid-semester are much less likely to report they "are making progress toward achieving their college goals", each group reaches this point by a different path. Effective retention strategies for a successful leaver have more to do with helping these learners clarify career options and develop a better understanding of the return on their postsecondary investment. Retention strategies for failed leavers will be quite different and have more to do with developing academic skills and motivation. At the end of the day, however, the institution must be able to identify these students individually in order to target the relevant intervention to the appropriate learner. If the institution doesn't identify these students and intervene, there is a better-than-good chance that many will be gone before anyone knows. The implication is that administrators of postsecondary institutions need to proactively assess the cognitive and non-cognitive attributes of their students during the first year of college, not solely as a part of the admissions process. If the goal is to make significant gains in retention and persistence we must do things differently. ■

Peter Dietsche is the William G. Davis Chair in Community College Leadership and Assistant Professor, Higher Education Department of Theory & Policy Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. He is also a Senior Scholar of the Educational Policy Institute.

An Interview with John Gardner



Dr. John Gardner is the co-founder and Executive Director of the Policy Center on the First Year of College and a Senior Fellow of the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. Dr. Gardner has over thirty years of research, teaching, and administrative experience related to the first year experience and is an eminent expert in his field. He was a recent guest on EPILive, and gave some insight on the history of the first year experience and what institutions are doing now to make sure their newest students get the foundation they need to have a successful college experience.

Can you tell us about the history and mission of the Policy Center on the First Year of College?

The policy center is an outgrowth of 30 years of work I did at the University of South Carolina where I founded the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. I decided in 1999 to take early retirement and I was offered the opportunity by a major American foundation to receive a grant to found a new center. The foundation was explicit they wanted us to take the work that my wife and I had done at USC in new directions that would not duplicate the activities of the National Resource Center at USC. The key question the foundation posed to me was "If you had 1-5 years and 1-5 million dollars

and you could do anything you wanted to improve the beginning college experience, what would you do?" It took me a while to answer that question. In the end, my wife, Dr. Betsy Barefoot, and I founded the Policy Center on the First Year Experience to find new ways to compliment our work at USC to improve the beginning college experience. Four other foundations have since given us money to keep the center going and we've been at it for 7 ½ years.

At the Center we primarily focus on the use of assessment to gain greater insight to what an entire institution is doing, either intentionally or unintentionally, for its first-year students. When an institution develops greater insights about what it is

doing for its students, it can take those insights and use them to make decisions about what programs or initiatives it wants to continue or modify. The intention is for an institution to use the entire student experience as the unit of analysis instead of individual programs. The institution can come up with a campus wide vision about how it wants to organize the beginning student experience and use that vision as a guide for programming and student services.

How did you get into this field of student retention and success?

I got into it as a result of a student riot. In May of 1970, the students at USC engaged in a massive student demonstration after the US invaded Cambodia. The riot was surprising in that USC students tend to be conservative by nature. To regain control, the government of South Carolina called out the National Guard and tear-gassed the students. The students then went to find the president of USC and barricaded him in his office. They occupied the building for 24 hours in what later became known as the “First Year Experience Movement”.

In response to the students’ actions, the president of USC dedicated his time to changing the culture of the school to ensure that students would not riot in the future. He organized a study, which initially failed to yield concrete results. So, the president redirected the focus of the group to create a way to teach the students to love the university so they would not riot and destroy the campus. This effort became known as a first year seminar called University 101. This was the first major effort USC made to change the attitude of its students.

We conducted an empirical study of students enrolled in University 101 and those who were not enrolled. We found that students who attended this seminar were being retained at higher rates than other students. That was an epiphany and as a result, the president started looking for a small cohort of faculty and



administrators to help him undertake an experiment to change the culture of the university by focusing on the first year experience. I was a member of that early group and through my work with them, I became friends with the president. Two years after joining the group, the president offered me a leadership position to lead the First Year Seminar and I’ve been involved in that kind of work ever since.

Why is the first year so important?

The first year of undergraduate education is important because it is the foundation for a successful college student and experience. This is a time period that is crucial for students. In their first year, they learn the language and culture of their institution. They develop minimally successful study skills. They also develop certain attitudes towards faculty. A student’s attitude towards faculty is an important indicator as to whether or not a student will be retained. Research shows that a higher percentage of students who interact regularly with faculty earn a degree than their peers who do not have regular contact with their professors.

First year students also have to learn to deal with greater degrees of freedom. The self-management issues students must deal with in that beginning year are significant.

Students develop the foundation of their grade point average in their first year of college. If they begin their college career with a low grade point average it is difficult to pull it up. Many students can’t recover from a bad first year of grades.

Students develop behaviors that last beyond the first year and even past college. Those behaviors are either adaptive or non-adaptive. They may drink too much. Or, on the contrary, they may learn to read the New York Times on a daily basis. Colleges need to be aware of the life long behavior patterns that students learn in their first year. Service learning can be a good example of learning a good behavior that connects students with the community and the institution. Studies have shown that students form attitudes towards their institution early on and those attitudes last over time. It is hard to undo a bad attitude formed in the first year of college.

The first year is also the time when most schools experience the highest level of attrition, which translates into a huge loss of revenue for the school.

What does a typical institution do in a First Year Seminar course?

There are five basic types of First Year seminars, which my wife, Dr. Betsy Barefoot, has identified and defined.

The first and most common is the extended orientation course. The primary emphasis of the course is getting students acclimated and used to the culture of the school. It usually carries only one hour of credit. These types of courses represent about 55 percent of first year seminars held at institutions. A downside to these extended orientation courses is that they only count for one credit. Research shows that there is a direct correlation between the number of credit hours associated with a course and the amount of learning that takes place. Students report that they learn more in seminars that have more hours associated with them.

The second type of first year seminar is the academic seminar with common course content. The institution may offer several courses but the classes all have common content. These classes empha-

size reading, writing, and research skills and learning more about the university. They also typically carry about three credits.

Discipline based academic seminars represent the third type for first year course. These seminars tend to be small, share no common content and are based on the professor's discipline. Only faculty teach these types of seminars and they offer students the opportunity to explore one topic in great depth. These topical seminars are an attempt to engage students in a narrow subject and usually carry at least three credit hours.

The fourth type of first year course is the professional seminar. These classes introduce students to a professional major like business, agriculture, or nursing. They offer students a chance to take a course in their intended major in their first term. The courses tend to be an effort on the part of the institution to get students to have contact with faculty in the discipline they are interested in pursuing. Research shows, however, that that this type of course is least highly valued by students. They get the lowest student ratings, perhaps because there may be little discussion and interaction with the professor and are designed as more of a lecture, which is not interesting to students.

The final type of first year seminar is structured to provide remedial developmental to students who arrive at college without the basic study skills they need to succeed in school. Sometimes these seminars do not carry academic credit.

Do you have advice on how to overcome institutional resistance to making needed changes to the way they serve students so that graduation and retention rates improve?

When dealing with academic communities the most persuasive tactic is to appeal to the literature and the data. If you are trying to make changes as a member of the student affairs team, you need to educate the key decision makers by exposing them to the current research in the field. Talk to the chief academic affairs officer. You can also encourage faculty and administrator opinion leaders to go to conferences where this type of thing is discussed. The six regional accreditors are very active in improving graduation and retention rates. They all hold conferences with sessions dedicated to these topics.

You also need create buy-in on your own campus. One way to do this is to encourage leaders on your campus to visit other campuses that have initiated successful change. You can use peer institutions that are similar to yours, or, you can look at an aspirational peer. An aspirational peer is an institution you would like to emulate. You can create a partnership with them to exchange ideas, discuss programming, and find out how they got to where they're at. ■



A Story of a First-Gen: 21 Years Later

Tammy A. Russell, Ph.D.



Research documenting the disparities between low-income, first-generation college students and students of color and their majority counterparts with regard to college persistence and graduation rates continue to point to the importance of a rigorous high school curriculum as a primary variable crucial for college academic preparation (Adleman, 1999; Horn & Nunez, 2000; Kaufman, 1991; Trusty, 2002; Trusty & Niles, 2003). Students must enter college with strong high school curricular backgrounds or they may be required to leave the institution sooner than planned.

Research shows that parental education level and socioeconomic status contribute to students' academic track placement (Solorzano, 1992). As an Assistant Professor and Director of Student Support Services (SSS), I have the pleasure of interacting with students who enter college with no more than two years of Algebra and one year of high school Geometry completed, and less than a 1000 combined SAT math/verbal score. I have a lot in common with these students. I, too, was a first-generation college student who, while in high school, stopped at two years of Algebra

and one year of Geometry. No one had a conversation with my parents explaining why it was being suggested that I enroll in an Algebra I course that would take both 9th and 10th grade to complete. The lack of appropriate math education lead to my later problems with exams such as the SAT. Needless to say, the third time at the SAT exam was a charm for me; I cracked above a 900 combined score and was provisionally admitted to the local large institution. After two years as a bachelor's degree-seeking student, I "stopped out."

My story differs little from hundreds of thousands of potential first-generation college students, yet discussions continue regarding the possibilities related to why college retention is still a problem for first-generation students. Students who graduate from high schools with more constrained high school curriculums, meaning almost everyone in the school completes the same math and science classes, including pre-calculus, have a better chance of entering a university academically prepared. Trusty and Niles (2003) found that students who completed more rigorous high school math curricula were more likely to enroll in and graduate from bachelor's degree programs.

Algebra I split over two grades may seem appropriate for students truly struggling in math, but it should not be used as a means to spread students into different math options because the regular one-year Algebra I course is full. Although some 8th grade students may state that they plan to attend a technical college or complete a certification degree upon high school graduation, many of these students complete lower level high school courses, do well academically and, later, enter colleges and universities with the intention of completing a

bachelor's degree. Because of this, completing Algebra I in 8th grade should be the U.S. norm. A constrained high school curriculum could lessen the chances of later disappointment.

Students entering college academically under-prepared for their new environments tend to transfer to other institutions, drop out, or be put out. Research focused on the intensity of the curriculum and how it prepares students for college is limited, even for those students who complete advanced high school course work. Kozol (1991), in his book *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's schools*, exposes the large inequitable budgeting practices of cities with regard to per pupil spending that exist between low-income and high-income school districts. Furthermore, college and university admission practices vary nationally (Cabrera, La Nasa, & Burkum, 2001) and despite acceptance to a bachelor's degree granting institution, graduation cannot be guaranteed.

As an Assistant Professor, in my first semester course reserved for first-year SSS students, I have students read various types of graduate school admissions requirements. Students quickly learn that they are not required to major in a science related degree to become medical doctors, and that they are able to spread out the short list of science and math courses that are required over a four-year period within a major that better matches their academic strengths and true interests. Most importantly, students learn in their first semester on campus that their previous majors of interest may not be academically appropriate or necessary to accomplish their goals.

If students' math placement scores place them 2-3 math levels lower than

Calculus I, for example, this could place them on a 6-7 year graduation plan or hinder students from ever entering their math/science related major. This extended degree plan would be an extreme disadvantage financially for low-income students. Federal loans require students to earn a minimum of 21 credits yearly with a 2.0 GPA and state loan programs require students to earn a minimum of 24 credits with a 2.0 GPA. Many grant/loan programs take family income level into consideration yet, despite low-income students qualifying for loans/grants, their families may still have an "expected contribution," the calculated amount that they are required to pay each semester. Six years for a four-year degree is really unnecessary in a world where more strenuous high school curricula are required, and it could make students leave college with such a high amount of money to repay that they can't afford to own a home, buy a car, or, depending on where they live, even pay rent.

Since many institutions offer various options to students, the goal should be to help individuals select reasonable majors and graduation timelines based on their interests and academic preparation. Many students enter college with preconceived notions regarding what they "have" to major in as undergraduates to reach certain career goals. These students must understand that many graduate degree admissions requirements they believe they must fulfill can be gradually met during the course of their undergraduate studies, and that they have time to do well in a major they truly love while keeping various career options open. Students gifted with artistic talent who wish for a career in medicine, for example, may learn that there are careers for artists in the medical field as well as careers for those with strengths in the sciences, and that a Bachelors of Arts degree can be an appropriate way to spread out math and science graduate school requirements while focusing more heavily on a major that matches their strengths, leaving

various graduate school and career options open.

It should also be noted that unrealistic academic cramming for the academically underprepared college student only encourages him or her to "stop out" or "drop out," and summer enrollment may not be an option for many academically underprepared students who are also low-income due to tuition costs per credit for part-time summer enrollment. For these students, catching up in the summer may not be an option. The default academic department advising plan should not be considered suitable for all students, and academic departments could assist students with staying in school by reconsidering how best to schedule courses based on

exams that may not match a student's academic learning strengths. As a faculty adviser I must take into consideration each student's learning style and help my students combine classes related to their learning style strengths while helping students limit the type of classes that may be more difficult for students to comprehend. Psychology and Sociology entry level courses include a lot of reading, memorizing, and potentially large multiple choice exams, which may be a bad combination for some students. In situations where this is true, graduation requirements should be spread out over 4-5 years and students should be encouraged to strive for completing general education requirements their senior year.



individual abilities. General education requirements should not necessarily be considered "easy" despite their 100 level designations, nor should they be forced to fit into the first two years of a student's college experience. In the same way that too many math and science courses at once can be detrimental to students' academic health, so also can too many social and behavioral sciences/humanities courses have a negative affect. Too many social and behavior sciences courses tend to equal too many large lecture classes and this experience leads to too many multiple choice exams,

Not only is increasing the graduation rates of first-generation college students from undergraduate institutions possible, but these students can realistically achieve their career and potential graduate degree goals with a little help as well. Twenty-one years after graduating with low combined SAT scores and a lower high school grade point average I have completed my B.S., M.Ed., and Ph.D., all at the same large research institution from where I previously stopped out. It is always better for students to graduate

(continued on page 16)

Youngstown State University

2007 EPI Student Retention Award Recipient

Youngstown State University's (YSU) Center for Student Progress won EPI's Outstanding Student Retention Program Award this year. The Center for Student Progress (CSP) is an academic support unit formed by the Division of Student Affairs in 1996 to provide a more financially efficient and cohesive method of delivering related services to students. At its inception, the Center combined four independently housed and separately operating units: First-Year Student Services, Adult Learner Services, Multicultural Student Services, and Student Tutorial Services. Since then, with the addition of Orientation, Individual Intervention Services, Supplemental Instruction Services, and Disability Services, the Center is now a one-stop-shop offering collaborative services and consistent intervention procedures. This consolidation has resulted in increased service to and retention of students. During the Center's first year of operation, staff provided 8,904 service hours to 1,859 students. In 2005-2006, with a staff of 15 professionals and 90 student employees (acting as tutors, mentors, note-takers, receptionists, and SI leaders), the Center provided 30,984 hours of intensive contact to 6,090 students. These numbers resulted in a retention rate of 74 percent for full-time students using its services; a 287 percent increase in contact hours and a 305 percent increase in students served since the Center's inception.

The primary mission of the Center for Student Progress is to ensure that students are integrated into the social and academic communities of Youngstown State University, and acquire the skills and knowledge needed to become successful learners in those communities. CSP is available to the more than 13,000 students that attend YSU, and aims to cultivate the skills of new students,

expand the skills of developing students, and enhance the skills of exceptional students. The Center retained 80 percent of all students who used 10 or more services last year, and 77 percent of first-time, full time freshman who visited the Center, compared to only 20 percent of non-participants who were retained.

CSP uses a data collection system developed by YSU in 1998 in order to generate student midterm and progress reports. The system also tracks student usage of services and provides individual student and departmental reports. Each of the 8 separate departments that make up CSP offers their own individual services. For example, Orientation Services offers

ance throughout the entire first year, and provides assistance with goal setting and time management. CSP's other services also provide free tutoring, a summer bridge program, pre-exam review sessions, multicultural student services, adult learning (students 25 years of age or older), and peer-assisted study groups.

This tactic of attacking the problem from all sides is helping CSP to solve the retention puzzle. An average of 190 students per semester refer themselves to the Center proving that CSP's success is well known and accredited campus wide. Faculty can also refer students, and will receive mid-term and final reports updates on the student's progress. Other



Jonelle Beatrice, Associate Executive Director, Student Life/Director Center for Student Progress (front left), and Pat Shively, Associate Director, Center for Student Progress (front right) lead the YSU Center for Student Progress

parent sessions on college transition, promotes knowledge of campus activities and services, facilities interaction with faculty, and staff, and educates students about their rights and responsibilities at YSU. First Year Student Services on the other hand, generates a parent email service and newsletter, employs peer mentors to provide guid-

students are conditionally admitted to the program based on a number of factors including but not limited to; a high school GPA lower than 2.0, or an SAT verbal/math composite of 820 or below. Conditionally admitted students are restricted to an approved list of courses, and may not register for more than 14 semester hours in a single semester. All

CSP students, whether self or faculty referred, must sign a contract that outlines the guidelines and expectations attached to receiving services.

The Center has set a high standard for itself over the years, and has even greater aspirations for the future. According to CSP Director Jonelle Beatrice students that use CSP services five or more times have the most success, "All of our data points to five or more tutorial sessions, SI sessions, meetings with peer mentors, and/or meetings with a CSP professional staff member as having the greatest effect on GPA and retention." CSP service area goals for the future include increasing student participation and persistence in CSP Services by 10 percent, and increasing the use of services by first year

students with disabilities by 25 percent. Other Center goals include increasing learning community students use of CSP Supplemental Instruction by 50%, and increasing the number of first-year resident students who meet with their CSP First-Year Student Services peer mentor five or more times by 10 percent.

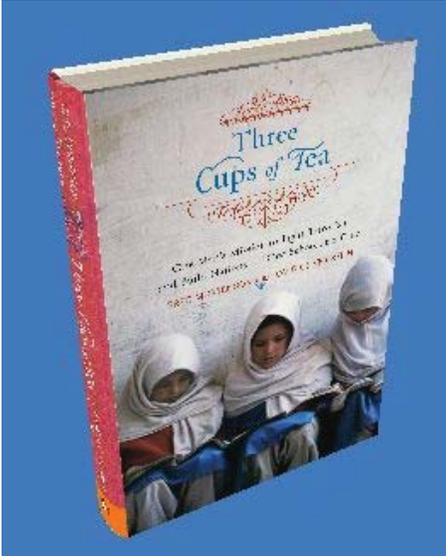
Jonelle credits the Center's success to early connection with students, and being "pleasantly intrusive" in maintaining contact through phone calls, post cards, newsletters and face to face greetings. Beatrice continues on, giving praise to her staff who takes great pains to be respectful of students, while showing them that their success truly does matter. The Center has recently begun new efforts to reach out to students. First-Year Student

Services peer mentors recently developed blogs to communicate throughout the summer with all of the entering first-year students assigned to them. Also, Orientation Services is in the midst of developing an on-line orientation for transfer and reactivated students, as the Center moves forward with plans to host an academic resource fair to alert students of their on-campus options.

Ultimately, the Center for Student Progress success lies in its ability to connect well with students on every level of the multi-tiered retention puzzle. The Center's wide assortment of services combined with individual attention ensures that all students understand how important their successful education is to Youngstown State University. ■



Three Cups of Tea



Mortenson, Greg, and Relin, David Oliver (2005). *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Fight Terrorism and Build Nations...One School at a Time*. New York, NY: Viking Penguin. 338 pages.

EPI Rating (5/5)



It is rare when one reads a book -- especially a non-fiction book -- that moves the reader, while also making the reader feel somewhat inferior to the author. This is that book.

Three Cups of Tea is an autobiographical account, strangely written in the third person, of Greg Mortenson, an American who raised largely in Africa by his missionary parents. The story itself is about Greg's own personal mission to help girls and other youth in Pakistan and Afghanistan between 1993 and present day by building schools. Given the current circumstances in that region, this is an important account of how Mr. Mortenson's actions are probably serving as the US' best line of foreign service.

Mortenson is a climber, much in the same mode as other authors David Breshears, author of , and Jon Krakauer, author of *Into the Wild* and. Mortenson attempted to climb K2, the second highest mountain in the world--and a much tougher climb than Everest. Unfortunately, Mortenson almost died during his summit attempt, and after the rescue by local people, he pledged to come back and build a school for the girls.

The pledge itself came when Mortenson saw boys learning in small facilities high up in the most remote areas of the Pakistan mountain range (think 18,000 ft), but the girls were forced to educate themselves outside, using sticks in the ground as their blackboard. Interesting enough, even when teachers didn't show up for three days or more, the girls would still show up for their class and self-educate themselves.

This book is about Mortenson's pledge and his determination to make it happen, through cultural differences and geographical and logistical nightmares.

The story itself is an interesting account of Mortenson's personal life and development in addition to his actions in the mid-east. The book details his initial meeting with his wife (at an event with Sir Edmund Hilary, no less), the travails of living in a car in Berkeley while trying to raise the \$12,000 needed to build his first school in Korfu, Pakistan, and his brushes with the Taliban.

To date, Mortenson has persevered and befriended Pakistanis and Afghans of all backgrounds (including Taliban), and has built 64 schools, offering girls and boys their first legitimate opportunity to learn.

The title, *Three Cups of Tea*, comes from the Pakistani saying that the first cup of tea one has with the Pakistanis; the second cup; and the third cup.

While this book doesn't relate to higher education, the message is undeniable: some people think of great things, others do them. This is a wonderfully written account of one man's desire to change the world. The rest of us can learn from this story and perhaps make our own pledges to the world beyond our borders.



Editor's note: I recently had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Mortenson at Old Dominion University. There is currently a ground-swell action to nominate him for a Nobel Peace Prize in the future, and it is hard to think of an individual who epitomizes an honorary more than Mr. Mortenson. I encourage readers of Student Success to read this book, and consider donating to Mortenson's non-profit organization, the Central Asia Institute. Visit www.ikat.org for further information about Mortenson's mission and also their "Pennies for Peace" project. WSS

A National Capitol Summit on Latino Students and Educational Opportunity

On October 11, 2007, the Educational Policy Institute, in partnership with the University of Maryland, College Park, hosted a National Capitol Summit on Latino Students and Educational Opportunity at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, in Washington, DC. The event featured well known researchers, practitioners, and policymakers from around the US.

The event was opened by EPI President Watson Scott Swail and the Dean of the College of Education at the University of Maryland, College Park, Donna Wiseman. Diane Auer Jones, assistant secretary of postsecondary education, US Department of Education, was the initial speaker, and spoke of the importance of several federal programs, including Upward Bound, GEAR UP, and Pell Grants to increase postsecondary participation of Latino youth. She then called for the assistance of the academic and educational communities in evaluating which programs are truly working for students.



EPI's Watson Scott Swail with US Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL) at the National Capitol Summit.

Dr. Wiseman introduced House Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL), who recently proposed House legislative bill (HB) 1079, better known as the Dream Act. The Dream Act proposes allowing undocumented students to receive provisional legal status and in-state tuition and fees in exchange for service in the US military or acceptance to college. Upon completing two years of military service or two-years of good standing in college, this group of young people would become eligible for official green cards. According to Diaz-Balart, our current system of education largely ignores the thousands of undocumented students who have been educated in the US system, but are unable to access postsecondary education due to various restrictions. To date, the Dream Act has been largely ignored by Congress due to its perceived connection to hot button issues immigration and amnesty.

Richard Fry of the Pew Hispanic Center and Kurt Burkum of the National Council for Community and Educational Partnerships (NCCPEP) provided a data overview of the challenges facing Latino students. In particular, Dr. Fry noted that high school dropout rates for Latinos have declined steadily since 1980, but that the academic course-taking rigor of Latino students compared to other students is still severely lacking. Mr. Burkum focused on the programs sponsored by the NCCPEP, and the preparedness of Latino students for a national job market that requires higher and higher levels of education as time goes on.

The second major session of the day was a panel focused on strategies for change in public schools. Daniel Domenech of McGraw Hill, and a former superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools



Diane Auer Jones, assistant secretary of postsecondary education at the US Department of Education, opened the National Capitol Summit.

in Virginia, discussed economic reasons that the American education system can't afford to neglect any of its children, and discussed the programs he implemented to engage and retain at risk students while working with the Fairfax County Public schools. Ron Blackburn of ASPIRA spoke of his organization's community-based and student-lead programs design to assist Latino students and their families in successfully navigating the K-12 and postsecondary educational systems. Joel Gomez of The George Washington University spoke about his experiences as a teacher, consultant, and college administrator. He discussed the fact that all humans, regardless of circumstances, are born problem-solvers, and that education is therefore not simply about face-value content. Education, according to Dr. Gomez, is about school climate and bonding, as well as interdisciplinary learning, and therefore life circumstances are less important than they are made to be by others.

The Congressional Luncheon paid tribute to Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter, with the 2007 Champion of Hispanic Suc-



Dan Domenech, Senior Vice President of McGraw Hill and former Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, makes a point at the National Capitol Summit. Estela Bensimon of the University of Southern California talks about the importance of understanding the characteristics of teachers and institution

cess in Higher Education by EPI and UM, College Park. Tom Weible of the University of Maryland provided introductions of the lunch keynote presentations by Margot Tyler of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Antonio Flores the the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU).

The first session of the afternoon provided a data overview of access to post-secondary education by Alberto Cabrera of the University of Maryland, College Park, and Linda Serra Hagedorn of the University of Florida. Dr. Cabrera's used national datasets to illustrate the factors that make a difference in the academic achievement of Latino students in high school and college. Dr. Hagedorn looked at the importance of community colleges in educating Latino youth, and provided data and analysis from a large-scale study she led in California.

The final session of the day featured Uni-

versity of Southern California researcher Estela Bensimon and University of Maryland visiting scholar Victoria-María MacDonald. Dr. Bensimon spoke about the characteristics of teachers and institutions, rather than the characteristics of students, that cause them to not be able to cause "equitable outcomes" for Latino students in education. Dr. MacDonald discussed both Latino students and African American students and their similar struggles within the educational system.

A special feature of the Summit was the participation of approximately a half-dozen HACU scholars. These are graduate students who are Latino PhD Candidates. In a day where many speakers spoke of challenges and discrepancies between Latinos and other groups in education, this was a positive moment to recognize those who are successfully navigating American education.

Many of the papers and presentations

from Summit are available at the EPI website under "past events," or visit www.educationalpolicy.org/events/NCS/071011/schedule.html for direct access.

Clockwise from bottom left: HACU Scholars with HACU President Antonio Flores; Summit attendees listening in on the conversation; University of Maryland, College Park College of Education professor and EPI Senior Scholar Alberto Cabrera.



EPI EVENTS

National Capitol Summit: STEM Education & Global Competitiveness

Spring 2008 (TBA), Washington, D.C.

The Educational Policy Institute and the University of Maryland College Park invite educators and policymakers to a National Capitol Summit on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education and global competitiveness. The purpose of the Summit is to bring focus and recognition of the important issues related to the issues that impact our society and the expansion of educational opportunity for the nation. Stay tuned for further information.



May 28-30, 2008, San Diego Sheraton Hotel and Marina, San Diego, CA

Retention 2008 will bring together the top researchers, policy makers, and professionals involved in student retention today. Attendees will have the chance to interact with peers struggling with similar retention issues and gain insight on best practices and programs that work. To register, visit the EPI website.

EPI Live

EPI Live is the Educational Policy Institute's new web-based news and information show on educational issues. Each week, EPI hosts guests from K-12 and postsecondary education to discuss important issues that impact classrooms and colleges.

Moderated by EPI President Dr. Watson Scott Swail, EPI Live provides a forum for the discussion of these issues using cutting-edge webinar software. Participants log on from wherever they have high-speed internet access and dial in on the phones for audio.

Recent EPI Live shows include:

"Latino Youth and Educational Opportunity," with Dr. Richard Fry of the Pew Hispanic Center and Dr. Alberto Cabrera of the University of Maryland, College Park.

Participating in EPI Live is free but requires registration in advance of the session. Visit www.educationalpolicy.org for more information. If you have suggestions for future EPI Live programs, please email us at info@educationalpolicy.org.

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(continued from page 10)

from a bachelor's degree program that fits their academic preparation than for students to never graduate. Options that students never considered may become available later. ■

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EPI REPORTS

The IT Education Bubble: An Analysis of University Students Statistics 2002-2005

Conducted with the support of The Australian Council of Deans of Science, this publication looks at who is studying information technology in Australia, where they are studying it, and how they are studying IT, using data from the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

An Annotated Bibliography of Latino Educational Research

This publication lists 59 recent research studies on a variety of Latino educational issues. The bibliography was compiled in partnership with the College of Education, University of Maryland, College Park.

Commentary 2006

Each week, the Educational Policy Institute releases *The Week in Review*, a newsy review of educational issues. In addition, EPI's President and Vice President offer a commentary on timely issues. This publication includes the commentaries from 2006.

Mining Labour Market Transition Project

The Mining Industry Human Resources Council (MiHR) contracted the Educational Policy Institute to examine labour market transition options, documented key stakeholder talent management strategies dealing with individuals from declining industries and identified transition opportunities for the mining industry. The report is part of the Council's overall workforce strategy to increase workforce management awareness in the mining sector.

The End of Need-Based Student Financial Aid in Canada?

The Educational Policy Institute released a report outlining changes in the Canadian student financial assistance system over the past 15 years. "The End of Need-Based Student Financial Aid in Canada?" – commissioned by the Canadian Association of Student Finan-

cial Aid Administrators - examines the most recent net tuition prices, explores recent student aid policy decisions in each jurisdiction, identifies what target groups (if any) are identified to receive aid and catalogues what students actually benefit.

Sustaining Science: University Science in the Twenty-First Century

A report, entitled *Sustaining Science: University Science in the Twenty-First Century*, commissioned by the Australian Council of Deans of Science and written by the Educational Policy Institute's Australian chief Ian Dobson was released this week.

POLICY PERSPECTIVES. After Michigan, What? Next Steps for Affirmative Action

This edition of *Policy Perspectives* features commentary from Dr. John Brooks Slaughter, the president of the National Action Council on Minorities in Engineering (NACME), and former Director of the National Science Foundation. Dr. Slaughter looks back at a historical look at affirmative action and posits what may be to come.

OTHER REPORTS

2007 Annual State of College Admission Report

NACAC
NACAC's 2007 Annual State of College Admission Report provides analysis of the combined results from the Admission Trends Survey and the Counseling Trends Survey. (www.nacacnet.org)

Education at a Glance 2007

OECD
The 2007 edition of *Education at a Glance* enables countries to see themselves in the light of other countries' performance. It provides a rich, comparable and up-to-date array of indicators on the performance of education systems. (www.oecd.org)

Demography is not Destiny

The Pell Institute

This study examines the institutional characteristics, practices, and policies that might account for differences in retention and graduation rates among large public colleges and universities that serve high numbers of low-income students. (www.pellinstitute.org)

Persistence and Attainment of 2003-04 Beginning Postsecondary Students: After Three Years

This NCES report provides a brief description of the persistence and degree attainment of a nationally representative sample of students who began postsecondary education for the first time in the 2003-04 academic year. (www.nces.ed.gov)

The School Readiness and Academic Achievement in Reading and Mathematics of Young Hispanic Children in the United States

National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics

This policy brief presents data on the reading and mathematics readiness of Hispanic children at the start of kindergarten and their reading and math achievement at the end of the fifth grade. It is widely recognized that, relative to non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanics have much lower academic achievement, on average, over the K-12 years. Most reports describe achievement patterns for Hispanics as a whole, despite the diversity of the Hispanic population. In contrast, this policy brief presents school readiness and achievement information not only for Hispanic children as a whole, but also for several segments of Hispanic youngsters. (www.ecehispanic.org)



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