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student**success**

SPECIAL FEATURE

Retention 2006: Highlights

This past May, practitioners from across the US, Canada, and Mexico gathered in Las Vegas for the first Annual International Student Retention Conference, or **Retention 2006.**

The 2.5 day event was an unqualified success, with over 30 breakout sessions and high-level plenary sessions throughout the conference.

Keynote speachers included George Kuh of Indiana State University, Raymund Paredes of the Texas Higher Education Board, Watson Scott Swail, President of EPI, and Henry Villanueva of the University of Nevada Las Vegas.

September's ***Student Success*** is a special edition focused on Retention 2006 and the sessions and people who made it a success.

On page 6 we feature "Moving from Research to Practice," which documents the research plenary session featuring Drs. John Lee, Alberto Cabrera, Peter Dietsche, Henry Villanueva, and moderated by Tina Milano. This was one of the highlights of the conference and something that we look forward to again in 2007.

We also provide some othe r highlights of the conference on page 10 plus an extraordinary interview with Henry Villanueva on page 8.

This edition of ***Student Success*** also features the third of a three-part series by Dr. Watson Scott Swail focusing on gaining buy-in on campus for student retention programming and the importance of leadership and total quality management techniques (Page 2).

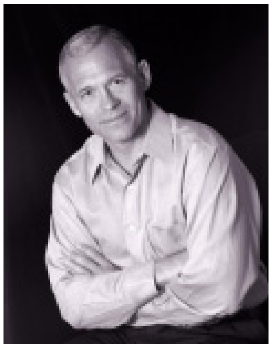
We also want to remind people about our Fall Retention Retreat in Hilton Head, South Carolina this October 5-7. Visit our website for more information. And finally, **Retention 2007** will take place May 22-24, 2007 in beautiful San Antonio, Texas at the Westin Riverwalk Hotel, so mark your calendars now. A Call for Papers will be coming out shortly and registration is already open.

In This Issue...

FEATURE

Part III: The Buy-In Challenge

This is the third of three parts in our Institutional Strategies Series. The first article in our March issue outlined the barriers to student retention, both from the extant literature and also from interviews and surveys we've conducted through our workshops around the US and Canada. The second part focused on programs and strategies that appear to either help OR hinder student retention on campus. In this issue we will discuss the inherent difficulties in getting buy-in on our campuses—all campuses—from faculty, staff, administration, and yes, students.



Dr. Watson Scott Swail

Understanding the challenges facing our campuses with respect to student retention is important, as is understanding the strategies we can use to ameliorate problems. But these two important areas, each forming our Part I and Part II discussions, are largely moot if the campus is either unwilling or unable to make the change necessary to promote growth. Ultimately, instituting (or better, institutionalizing) retention policies and practices on campus is about change management. To be done effectively, change involves all departments on campus, all stakeholders (including administration, faculty, staff, students, boards), and much of the resources (human and fiscal) to make change happen.

The Importance of Leadership

It is a terrible thing to look over your shoulder when you are trying to lead — and find no one there.

~ Franklin D. Roosevelt

Leadership, from above and below, is essential to making change happen. We have found in our work that campuses that are successful in increasing retention and persistence had involved, visionary leadership: presidents and CEOs who made it clear that retention was an institutional priority and that everyone must work collectively toward those goals. Institutions that were less successful often had leadership that gave lip service to retention.

Take a moment and look at your own experience as a litmus test. Think of all the leaders that you've had to deal with during your career. You'll probably agree that there is a learned expectation of faculty and staff that when a new president enters the picture, the institution tends to "wait it out" to see what happens. Leaders often come in with the expectation of change. In many cases, they were hired for that purpose. But faculty and staff have seen this before, and many figure if they just hold tough for 2-3 years, the revolving door of leadership will provide them with yet a newer leader with very different ideas and expectations.

That's why leadership must show commitment—and not just by words—by exhibiting that the retention effort is truly an important concern for the campus. Thus, leadership must move from intangible suggestions toward concrete messages that convince faculty and staff that—at least this time—it's real.

To move forward we must understand the essence of leadership. There are volumes of books dedicated to leadership. Some good, some not so good. I appreciate the way Peter Drucker, the esteemed economist, looks at leadership: "Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things." We look to leadership to lay out the direction for the organization and provide vision and focus for the effort. This is ultimately what allows for buy-in by campus stakeholders. If they can see a vision that makes sense to them, one that is parallel to their goals and expectations as individuals and as a collective unit, they will work toward that goal. Antithetically, if the vision and direction do not exist, nor does the desire to follow, bringing us back to FDR's quote at the start of this section.

As stated, we have found that the greatest success is where we see leadership "lead" with vision. To give you concrete examples, I recall being at an HBCU in Alabama which was having retention challenges. The president established a retention committee and assigned a Director of Student Retention to lead the effort. The Director worked out of the President's office and reported directly to the President. Don't tell me that faculty and staff didn't notice this. They did. Through this strategic decision, the President demonstrated that he meant business, and the staff got it immediately. As a result, retention became a huge issue on this campus, and efforts to improve retention largely succeeded.

In a separate example at another, smaller institution, I met a president who was what I would call a "pull-your-bootstraps-up" leader. I wouldn't go so far

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as to say he was an ineffective leader. He had many leadership skills and qualities. But faculty and staff whom I interviewed balked at some of his claims and expectations. Bottom line: if the vision isn't realistic, people will not follow. In this case, they didn't.

Beyond the Ivory Tower

Leadership is not just about those few individuals who hold formal leadership positions. Leadership must come from all parts of a college or university, all departments, and levels. Campus stakeholders truly buy in to a program when they realize that their voices will be heard. The leadership from the top must listen—*and illustrate that they listen*—to those who must follow and provide additional leadership. Success will not come from top-down protocol. But faculty and staff will listen, follow, and assist when the leadership shows that it is willing to let others mold the discussion and direction. As Stephen Covey of the *Seven Success Habits* series says, "An empowered organization is one in which individuals have the knowledge, skill, desire, and opportunity to personally succeed in a way that leads to collective organizational success." Campus leadership must let that evolve over time.

Managing Change

Part of making change on campus is the process of managing change. Although institutions of higher education are somewhat removed from the economic world where Darwinian theory rules, the current postsecondary culture is moving toward a system where there exists higher levels of accountability, increased knowledge of the product by the client (student), and a need to reflect the needs of society and the global economy in rapid turnover. As Peter Drucker suggests, "every organization must be prepared to abandon everything

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it does to survive in the future." Higher education is not immune to this reality.

Students change, economies change, and so do we. It follows that our institutions must evolve to serve an increasingly diverse student body in a rapidly-changing and competitive world. If we are truly in this business because we believe in the power of higher education, then we must be prepared to make the necessary changes to ensure that our product is of utility to students today and tomorrow. Otherwise, we're just well-paid toll-booth attendants.

But managing change is a difficult task, because change as a process is complex. While change is inevitable, human nature likes things that stay mostly the same, or at least similar. We are creatures of habit, and the things we do on a daily basis, repeated hundreds and hundreds of times, become comfortable, perhaps safe.

Managing change on campus, like in any organization, involves caretaking. It involves ensuring that people are heard, participate in a meaningful way, and feel in some control of their future. Any leadership group or individual that walks in with fire and brimstone is unlikely to get much buy in. Leadership by fear isn't a progressive leadership strategy.

A change management strategy must invoke an expectation of involvement and opportunity. Change must be about hope, about a future that is better for students and staff. Change must ultimately be about doing the right thing, and leadership must follow that lead.

Total Quality Management

Management guru and statistician W. Edwards Deming, the man behind total quality management, was steadfast about the importance of data in management and change. In the 1950s, his work with the Japanese helped them become the economic powerhouse of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. It was only at that point that America learned of his work, and, of course, TQM, or total quality management, remains alive and well in industry.

There is much to learn from Deming's work. For this piece, I think it's appropriate to take Deming's Fourteen Points of management and discuss them in terms of campus change and student retention. While these are targeted more for the industrial sector, I believe you will see how the basic tenets of his work are easily translatable to higher education.

1. **Create constancy of purpose for improvement of product and service.** Change managers must provide evidence of the nature of the problem and what is at stake by remaining at the status quo. With no evidence, there is no will to change or evolve. This becomes the purpose behind change and evolution.
2. **Adopt the new philosophy.** The campus must be led to understand the purpose and adopt this philosophy as a foundation for change management. This is the caretaking aspect of leadership. If people don't buy in at this point, realizing the goals of student retention will be difficult at best.
3. **Cease dependence on mass inspection.** I recall a statement by Art Levine and Jana Nidiffer, in their book *Beating the Odds*, in which they suggest that student success comes down to "one arm around one child." If we continue to look at incoming cohorts of students as a unit, we miss the point. We must look at the process of how we deal with all students, individually. It can be done.
4. **End the practice of awarding business on price tag alone.** This sounds like it doesn't belong, but it is essential in retention programming. The best things we do on campus aren't always the cheapest. In terms of student services and other essential services, it can pay off in the long run to provide better, more expensive services if it keeps students engaged. Figure out the budget once you've found what works best for your students.
5. **Improve constantly and forever the system of production and service.** Retention solutions aren't a one-stop, one-time shop. This is a continuous process that requires retooling and re-articulation of the mission on a consistent basis. As Deming says himself, "Management is obligated to continually look for

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ways to reduce waste and improve quality." In our case, we look at waste as the inefficient use of resources.

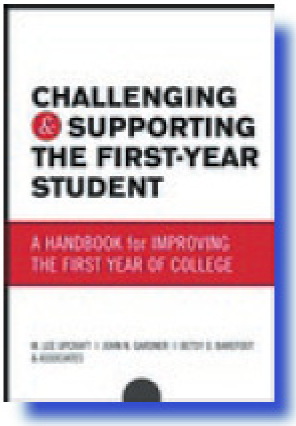
6. **Institute training.** Administrators, faculty, and staff generally only do what their predecessors told them to do, which is inadequate for institutions seeking to change how they do things. Professional development is an important area of support at your campus, but it is often relegated to the back burner. Do it well. Do it right. Make it important.
7. **Institute leadership.** If leadership is such an important issue with regard to change management and retention programming, then institutions must ensure that their leadership possesses the skill necessary to "lead," not "demand." There is a difference. Some argue that leadership is not learned, but leaders are born. Maybe so, but a lot can be learned, for sure.
8. **Drive out fear.** Change usually falters because people are scared of change. Change means less security. But if people are led to believe that a philosophy of change in an organization is the path to excellence, individually and collectively, they can learn to embrace continuous improvement. In supporting change on campus, faculty and staff also must be given the opportunity to fail without repercussions. .
9. **Break down barriers between staff areas.** Higher education is famous for its silos and fortifications between departments and colleges. Even within schools on campus, there are often tangible barriers that break down communications and make teambuilding extraordinarily difficult. In addition, there is often a mentality of competition on campuses. Competition in itself isn't bad, but it is detrimental to the larger cause if it results in teams working against rather than with each other. Retention programming only works when everyone is on board.
10. **Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for the workforce.** Deming never was a fan of simple statements and targets. The focus is on the process.
11. **Eliminate numerical quotas.** Quotas are an end game result and do not take into consideration the process or the quality that goes into the educational experience. When students are treated, supported, and educated well, the numbers take care of themselves. Be mindful of setting arbitrary numbers for people to achieve. Instead of quotas, set up expectations for staff performance and "continuous improvement." Continually ask "how do we do this better?"

12. **Remove barriers to pride of workmanship.** People like to do well and like to be rewarded and acknowledged when they do. Bring staff into the project and let them shine. More often than not, they will continually surprise you. There is nothing better than employees—at all levels of the university—that like to come to work every day. Remove the poor management conditions that reduce people to numbers.
13. **Institute a vigorous program of education and retraining.** If people are to make retention programming work, they must learn about how the change will happen and what their role is within the larger picture. Take the time to teach them about change and about student retention and how it impacts the institution.
14. **Take action to accomplish the transformation.** Increasing student retention at your campus takes willpower, teamwork, and great ideas. It also takes the knowledge and skill to make that change happen. Do everything in your power to ensure that the road map for change is well designed, with input from all, and destined for success.

If we use Deming's work as a guide, we can carefully orchestrate the change process and how we can best meet our goals. Just following his Fourteen Points doesn't ensure success, however. Deming also talks about pitfalls and diseases within an organization that dooms progress. Use this as you think best fits your institution.

Hopefully this brief discussion provides a keystone to the two previous parts in this series. I remain interested in your comments and experiences related to student retention and institutional progress. Feel free to email me at wswail@educationalpolicy.org.

THE REVIEW



Upcraft, M. Lee., Gardner, John N., Barefoot, Betsy O., & Associates. (2005). *Challenging & Supporting the First-Year Student. A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College.* San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

The term first-year experience—used to describe the policies, strategies, programs, and services designed to facilitate an entering student's successful transition to postsecondary study—is so commonplace today in higher education that it is surprising to realize that it has only been in use for the past twenty-five years. The impetus for the first-year experience movement was the creation of a seminar course by the University of South Carolina in 1972 known as University 101. This program was largely shaped by John Gardner, one of the principal authors of Challenging & Supporting the First-Year Student, who served as its faculty director from 1974 to 1999. In 1982, in response to growing interest in this program, Gardner and his colleagues hosted a national meeting on the freshman seminar at the University of South Carolina. The meeting met with such rousing success that the First Annual Conference on the Freshman Year Experience was staged the following year. Interest in the first-year experience continued to grow at a fever pitch, leading to the establishment of the National Center for The Study of the Freshman Year Experience at the University of South Carolina in 1986 (University of South Carolina, undated) and the publication of the first comprehensive text on the freshman experience, The Freshman Year Experience: Helping Students Survive and Succeed in College (1989), written by Lee Upcraft, John Gardner, and Associates.

The preface of Challenging & Supporting the First-Year Student begins with the question, "Why write another book about the first year of college?," but the book provides ample evidence as to why an update to the earlier The Freshman Year Experience is not only needed but is long overdue. Since 1989, there has been an explosion of first-year experience programs on campuses across North America. As Betsy Barefoot documents in her essay, "Current Institutional Practices in the First College Year," in Challenging & Supporting the First-Year Student, the percentage of American colleges and universities taking some initiative to improve the first-year experience jumped from 37% in 1987 to 82% in 1995 (El Khawas, 1987, 1995, as cited in Barefoot, 2005). This exponential growth in interest has led to increased research and therefore understanding of the first-year experience, enabling the authors of this current publication to suggest principles of good practice for first-year student success in the book's conclusion.

The Freshman Year Experience (1989) paid attention to issues of first-year student diversity, and the current publication follows suit, with chapters on student diversity and campus climate by Jennifer L. Crissman Ishler, Freeman A. Hrabowski III, and W. Terrell Jones. Campuses today are much more diverse than they were in the late 1980s, and Crissman Ishler's discussion in particular is laden with research-based examples of the changing demographic profile of today's first-year students. She cites findings, for instance, that the postsecondary population is aging, with the number of older students growing more rapidly than the number of younger students, that women now represent 56% of students in higher education, and that the number of racial and ethnic groups accessing higher education has grown dramatically during the past twenty-five years. It is interesting to note that the authors opted in this publication to forego the chapters on individual student groups by race, gender, age, and other student characteristics that were part of the structure of the 1989 book, electing instead to infuse issues specific to certain student populations throughout the book. The message, however, remains clear: it is imperative that efforts to assist first-year students in making a successful transition to postsecondary study must be inclusive of all students.

Expanded efforts to assess the effectiveness of first-year programs are evident in the years following the publication of The Freshman Year Experience, and the current book's section on assessing the first college year is one of its most valuable. M. Lee Upcraft, in his chapter, "Assessing the First Year of College," revisits his earlier work with J. L. Crissman (2001) in his description of a comprehensive model for assessing the first year of college. The next chapter, "A Beginner's Guide for Assessing the First College Year," written by Upcraft, Jennifer L. Crissman Ishler, and Randy L. Swing, introduces the reader to the assessment

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process and defines terms such as simple random sampling along the way. The chapter that follows, "Choosing and Using Assessment Instruments," by Swing and Upcraft, discusses the types of quantitative instruments available in the marketplace and offers some recommendations for collecting qualitative data as well.

In addition to the topics discussed above, this book presents chapters on recruitment ("The Enrollment Management Process"), academic services ("Developmental Education," "Learning Communities"), and student support services ("Designing Orientation Programs"), to name only a few. Although large in scale, with over 500 pages, the book is easy to use as a guide for professionals, with logical section divisions and summaries with recommendations for practice at the end of every chapter. Institutional administrators and staff will find this book, filled with practical advice and insights, will make their challenge to improve the retention and success of first-year students a little easier.

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Moving from Research to Practice:

What Works in Student Retention

The final day of the Retention 2006 conference opened with a plenary panel session moderated by Christina Milano, Executive Director of the National College Access Network. The session topic—Moving from Research to Practice: What Works in Student Retention—was selected by conference organizers to orient attendees to proven practices as shared by some of the field's leading researchers. Following her introduction of the distinguished panelists—Dr. Alberto Cabrera, EPI Senior Scholar and Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Dr. Peter Dietsche, EPI Senior Scholar and Vice-President for Research, Mohawk College; Dr. John B. Lee, President, JBL Associates, Inc.; and Dr. Henry Villanueva, Assistant to the Vice Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher Education—Ms. Milano opened the discussion by asking panelists to share best practices for retaining low-income students in postsecondary institutions.

Dr. Villanueva opened the discussion with a personal anecdote about his own experiences as a low-income student (See *Five Questions* in this edition). He attributed his success at college in part to his participation in a TRIO Educational Opportunity Center cohort in California. For Dr. Villanueva, this program provided him with a safe, supportive community and helped him successfully transition to the world of postsecondary education. This experience has led him to advocate for the use of the advising / counseling / support model to retain low-income students. Dr. Lee supported Dr. Villanueva's viewpoint by arguing for the aggressive use of advising for this population and for the use of outreach programs in K-12 school systems to prepare students early for their college experience. Dr. Cabrera later placed these best practices in a research-based framework, suggesting that preparation for college, planning for college, and intense support from the student's family and community are key to reducing the drop-out rate of students.

Dr. Dietsche's response to the question did not advocate for a particular program strategy, although he acknowledged that there are many examples of effective retention practices and programs on college campuses across North America. Instead, he cautioned the audience not to attempt to replicate exemplary programs on their campus,

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since not all programs and practices transfer to all environments. Instead, he strongly encouraged postsecondary administrators interested in improving student retention to start by closely studying their own unique student population. It is critical, Dr. Dietsche argued, for institutions to use all means possible to know their students, including understanding their issues and barriers and monitoring their progress at college. This knowledge will enable institutions to make wise choices as to the type of program needed on their campus.

Dr. Cabrera acknowledged the importance of looking first at the student, but he also challenged the audience to examine what is happening in their classrooms. For instance, does the classroom experience include active learning? Does faculty offer prompt feedback and respect students' diverse talents and ways of learning? And how does the institution support quality classroom experiences? Is faculty informed, for instance, of entering students' level of preparedness for postsecondary study? Is faculty offered training in teaching and assessment strategies that are proven by research to contribute to student success? It is especially important to consider the classroom experience of low-income students, since these students, who must often work while attending college, do not have adequate free time to attend extracurricular activities, such as orientation or counseling. For these students, it is almost entirely the classroom experience that shapes their college experience. Dr. Lee echoed this perspective, adding that institutions committed to improving student retention must make it a campus-wide issue and bring faculty into the change process as well.

Ms. Milano redirected the panelists to the question of how to increase the rate of transfer from community colleges to 4-year institutions, since many low-income students begin their postsecondary studies at a 2-year institution. For Dr. Lee, the major barrier to increasing transfer rate was a lack of identification and tracking of transfer students in postsecondary institutions. At this time, only proprietary institutions make a considerable effort to track transferring students, as it is a requirement of their accrediting agency. He strongly recommended that institutions use the National Student Clearinghouse to track the movement of students between institutions. Only by understanding who transfers from 2- to 4-year institutions can institutions devise strategies to improve the transfer rate.

When Ms. Milano invited questions from the floor, an audience member asked the panelists to recommend best practices on how to address the gap between high schools and postsecondary institutions. Dr. Lee first responded to the question by recommending that institutions address the issue of vertical integration of curriculum to ease the transition from high school to college learning. For instance, college math faculty could meet with math teachers in local high schools and ensure that they know what is on the placement test. Dr. Villanueva extended this idea to state-level policy, reminding the audience that several states are moving forward with P-16 initiatives that vertically integrate curricula between K-12 systems and higher education. For Dr. Cabrera, intervention programs that provide additional support for at-risk students are still much needed even in this new P-16 environment. He cited GEAR UP, which bring together community organizations, businesses, K-12 school systems, and higher education institutions, as a program model for the field.

Dr. Dietsche acknowledged the challenges of navigating the postsecondary environment for entering students. He cited findings from the Pan-Canadian Survey, which clearly demonstrated that students experience a great deal of anxiety when transitioning from high school to a postsecondary institution. Transition programs such as orientation are key to providing students with the information they need to understand their new environment.

Dr. Villanueva concluded the plenary panel session by underlining the importance of institutional leadership in improving student retention. For him, change always begins at the top and must ultimately involve the entire campus, including staff, administrators, faculty, and other key constituency groups. The institution's senior leadership must lead by example and, through various means including incentives, professional development, and resource allocation, ensure that student retention and success is truly an institution-wide priority.

FIVE QUESTIONS - Dr. Henry E. Villanueva

__Henry Villanueva__ serves as Assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, at University of Nevada - Las Vegas. His work focuses on issues of graduation and retention within the Nevada System of Higher Education. Dr. Villanueva is currently conducting a study of retention practices within the universities, the state college and community colleges in Nevada. In his role with the Nevada System of Higher Education, he serves on the Nevada P-16 Council; The Student and Academic Affairs Committee; the Articulation Board; an is a founding Board of Directors member of the Churchwright Multicultural Center.

Q. **You were a high-risk student in high school, but have gone on to earn your doctorate. Who and what can you credit your success to?**

A. My high school experience was not a normal experience. I rarely attended school, sometimes missing as much as three weeks at a time; I did not take any college preparatory courses; I was even encouraged *not* to attend by school officials. Additionally, I indulged in all the unacceptable social behavior. I can remember sitting in the park during a school day as the truant officer drove by and we waved to one another. The next day I gave him a note that I was ill and he gave me an excused absence.

My family structure was very strong and supportive, but my parents had no formal education and my mother did not read or write in any language. They wanted good things for me, yet they did not know what that meant other than not doing farm work. Their view was that if you could get out of the fields and work in town, you were successful. My family provided the necessities of the home, but most of my parent's attention was on my two older brothers who were serving in Southeast Asia during the Viet Nam War. I was pretty much left alone to do as I pleased, and sometimes I made less than perfect choices.

There are two significant people from my early years that influenced me greatly, which led to the development of my social conscience. The first was a Latina of small stature who was a volunteer tutor at the high school I attended. She believed in me and was not about to let me succumb to failure. I recall one day as I was sneaking off campus to join my friends for some fun, she stopped and informed me that I would not be ditching that day. She had to stand on her tip toes to grab my ear and drag me back to class. I respected this lady so much that I would never raise my voice or disagree—I think sometimes for fear of what she would do to me.

The second person was a recovering heroin addict who, through a series of projects, helped me understand that people who came from poor disenfranchised backgrounds, and were minorities, were destined for poverty and failure. This person stopped me one day and said "Congratulations! You have become exactly what the system has expected from you: A bright young Chicano who is not doing s— with his life." He went on to show me that Latinos were overrepresented in jails and in the welfare line, but were grossly underrepresented in the Gifted and Talented Education programs. He then said, "You have to ask the question: 'Are we (Latinos) inherently criminal, lazy, and stupid? Or is it by design?'" Those words sparked fire in me because I realized that I was being victimized and did not even know it. At the same time, a social revolution was taking place throughout the country; a movement supporting Latinos known as the Chicano Movement came into existence, and it the was the vehicle for me to further my thinking and educational aspirations.

During college it was key professors and staff that demonstrated a strong desire to further my intellectual ability that supported my success. I did not read or write well when I first started college and was required to take Introduction to Bone Head and Bone Head English before composition. I was so embarrassed by this that I took an English major's writing course every semester until finishing my BA. One professor in the community college saw my potential and he worked with me after our evening class every week to reinforce my confidence and further my skill. I was especially thrilled at the university I attended and found Latino professors who saw themselves as my mentors and worked to support me and others like me.

I would say the reason for my success is grounded in the people who have cared for and nurtured me throughout my academic career. If not for them, I am not sure that I would have followed this path.

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Q. Do you think current programs, such as GEAR UP and TRIO, are doing a good job of getting kids that typically wouldn't go to college through the pipeline? Are there better ways?

A. As a teenager, I was a participant in a program called the Community Action Program. It was community-based and its purpose was to expose youth to educational opportunities. The first campus I went to was UCBerkley, where I quickly became sure I should attend. Much to my dismay, I found that I did not have the skills to compete for that university, but I saw other campuses that I loved and those experiences paved the way to higher education.

TRIO and GEAR UP are very fine programs that provide great opportunities for a small number of youth to consider furthering their education. The TRIO programs serve somewhere between 150-200 students per program. When you think of all the needs that, for example, Las Vegas, Nevada youth need, it is a mere drop in the bucket. I think the same thing is true for GEAR UP in that it serves a very small population, and there is no certainty that the systemic change proposed will be adopted or sustained by public schools.

I think the biggest challenge is that federal programs become the mainstay of institutional efforts in addressing underserved and at-risk youth. College campuses and school districts alike defer efforts to serve this population to the federally funded sources, thereby relinquishing their (institutions) respective responsibilities of having institutional dollars invested in serving at-risk youth. When asked about what is taking place for underserved and at-risk students at UNLV, former President Harter would cite GEAR UP and TRIO, but did not identify institutional efforts to address this population.

Public institutions have a responsibility to develop and implement institutional systems and services that support all students regardless of their economic or educational opportunity. There is the need to sustain a strong collaboration between all educational entities that supports practices that will give youth choices and access to education.

Q. This past May at the RETENTION 2006 conference, you spoke about how the Nevada System of Higher Education plans to collaborate with each of its colleges to address the retention and graduation rates of all students. Can you highlight some of the System's strategies?

A. Nevada is facing some challenges in retaining and graduating students. Through Jim Rogers' leadership and recent change in administrations, there is strong momentum to have the community colleges, universities and the state college to work together. Some initiatives that have come forward are:

- Common course numbering for all institutions
- Students needing to complete an AA, AS or AB to transfer to the university
- Increasing the admission standards for universities
- Working with the public school systems to increase the pipeline
- Investigating a student information system that will facilitate data management

Q. What are some of the gaps that exist in the educational system that affect matriculation and graduation?

A. During the many years of studying this question, I have found that the greatest challenge is determining whose responsibility it is to close the gap be-

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tween matriculation and graduation. During my campus visits I regularly ask "If I walked on campus today, who would be in charge of retention?" What follows is typically silence and then I get one of two answers: "it is everybody business" or "if is Student Affairs' job." Rarely do I find that a senior administrator has been assigned to work campus wide on retention and graduation issues. It is assumed that it that students will decide to stay through various student services and activities and the worthy intentions of faculty. We know that these efforts are meritorious, but without a structured approach it will be very difficult to measure cause and effect.

Some of the specific gaps that I have encountered include a lack of an institutional commitment, planning on how to increase retention, implementation of successful academic programs that focus on retention, lack of implementation of services beyond the traditional types, lack of incentive to increase retention for faculty and staff, and the lack of having a senior academic administrator assume responsibility for institutions efforts.

I believe all campuses want to showcase the success of their graduates and want to be distinguished by number that stay through graduation and become loyal alumni. But the change in demographics of students, campuses can no longer rely on the traditional approach that students come with all the necessary skills to immerse themselves in study without challenge. Institutions need to be more in-tune with who their students are, what needs they have and adjust to accommodate the enrolled population.

Q. You've just gone back to UNLV from a position at the state level. What's on your plate back at the institutional level?

A. I am assigned to the Provost's Office and serve on selected projects. One is dealing with student satisfaction of the campus experience disaggregated by ethnic group; a second is examining the success of students admitted under special admission status; and the third is expanding the retention discussion throughout the campus, with a focus on faculty. These, along with teaching keep me busy. I am also conducting a research piece on recent Latino graduates and their perception of their experience at UNLV. I hope to have that done by November.

Retention 2006 Conference Highlights

New York State's HEOP: A Model for Academic Success

Stephie Mukherjee and Biswa Bhowmick, Fordham UniversityStephie Mukherjee and Biswa Bhowmick, Fordham University

Ms. Mukherjee and Mr. Bhowmick began their presentation by outlining the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), which is funded through a grant from the New York State Education Department and hosted by private colleges and universities in the State of New York. The goal of HEOP is to provide supplementary academic support services and financial aid to students who are admitted to these institutions from academically and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. HEOP has been an integral part of Fordham University since its inception in 1969. Ms. Mukherjee and Mr. Bhowmick provided participants with an overview of this program at Fordham University and the model for the delivery of its academic support services that has enabled the

program to maintain a high retention rate (average 85%) over recent years.

"One key aspect of the program," explained Mukherjee, "is that new freshmen are required to attend a six-week Summer Program prior to starting their freshman year." The Summer Program is designed to give the new students a realistic expectation for their college goals. The advisement structure, as well as the college skills seminars, are aimed towards this purpose. During the academic year, all program students are encouraged to use the academic support services such as academic advising, academic skills enhancement and tutorial services.

The model of the academic support services of the program draws on the premise of continuous improvement using the assessment framework found in the paradigm of Total Quality Management (TQM) with the goal of being proactive at all times. The program places an emphasis on student needs and ease of access, as well as a quick response time. Mukherjee and Bhowmick also spoke about the importance of ensuring that the different components of the program were brought together in harmony for the effective delivery of the

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program's supplementary academic support services.

Setting the Cornerstones: Institutional Commitment to Student Engagement

Elizabeth Freelandt and Sonia Del Missier, Cambrian College of Applied Arts and TechnologyDr. Elizabeth Freelandt and Sonia Del Missier, Cambrian College of Applied Arts and Technology

Ms. Freedlandt Ms. Del Missier shared how Cambrian College addressed student retention and engagement on an institutional level through its innovative strategic planning process. The presentation provided an overview of how a strategic plan became a living document with built-in accountability at all levels of the organization. Cambrian College's model of cooperation and collaboration has resulted in improved and enhanced inter-institutional communication, redefined cross-divisional cooperation, strategic allocation of resources, staff commitment at all levels, and improved student engagement and support. The presenters attributed the program's success to three central themes that guide the college's strategic retention activities: "Getting students engaged", "Keeping students engaged through building community" and "Keeping graduates connected."

Strategic Enrollment Management in the European Context: An Ongoing Study in Portugal

Dr. James S. Taylor and Dr. Maria de Lourdes Machado, Center for Research on Higher Education Policy, Portugal James S. Taylor, Center for Research on Higher Education Policy, Portugal

Drs. Taylor and Machado's presented their findings from ongoing research on Portugal's first attempt at introducing enrollment management. Preliminary results show that meeting student needs has become complex because students are far different from previous students. Today's student wants convenience, a standardized curriculum and good value. They are customers for which higher education institutions (HEIs) must compete. In Europe, these changes are exacerbated and the European Welfare State is realizing it cannot provide a free education to everyone. The massification and marketization of higher education has created a new competitive environment. Taylor and Machado suggested that institutions need to understand their clientele, what they want, what they expect, and how they view what they get. Unfortunately, the presenters reported that these challenges have not received the systematic attention they have enjoyed in the U.S.

Who Pursues Postsecondary Education, Who Leaves and Why

Mr. Patrick Bussière, Human Resources and Social Development Canada Mr. Patrick Bussière,Human Resources and Social Development Canada

During his presentation, Mr. Bussiere examined some of the factors related to entry to college or university in Canada as well as factors related to leaving postsecondary education prior to completion. Using data from the Canadian longitudinal Youth in Transition Survey, Bussiere summarized the early postsecondary experiences of youth who were 18 to 20 years old in December 1999 and compared factors related to both entry and persistence in college and university. He found that parental educational attainment, the value placed by parents on education after high school and level of engagement in high school all affected participations and persistence. Of students who dropped out of school, most cited a lack of program fit as the reason they left their institution. From his findings, Bussiere was also able to create a profile of students who had dropped out of postsecondary studies but returned to school by December 2001.

A Qualitative Meta Analysis of Latina/o Student Success

Dr. Raymond V. Padilla, University of Texas San Antonio

Dr. Padilla informed participants about the results of a qualitative meta analysis of Latina/o student success in higher education. He also presented a model of research on Latina/o student success in higher education based on a review of almost 100 studies on the subject that were published mostly during the past ten years. The results show that Latina/o student educational success or failure throughout the educational system (including postsecondary education) is shaped by how the individual student navigates the macro, meso, and micro contexts of education in the United States. The macro context reflects demographic, immigration, and community issues. The meso context provides includes educational institutions that comprise the segmented educational system of the U.S. (K-16 and beyond), access to (or denial of) educational opportunities within that institutional structure, and the various regulators (such as tests, resources, and interventions) that tend to enhance or depress access and success in education. In addition to the macro and meso contexts Padilla discussed the two micro contexts that immediately impact the educational success or failure of Latina/o students: the family and institutional climate.

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Under-represented Populations, Two-Year Colleges, and the Academic Pipeline: Lessons Learned from Black Male College Graduates
Dr. Rhonda Wilkins, Georgia Perimeter College

In her presentation, Dr. Wilkins talked about the findings of a qualitative case study that addressed the decline in Black male participation in higher education by examining six Black men who completed college programs and the various factors that either helped or hindered their academic progression towards the degree. The study revealed the men, instead of progressing through a coordinated academic pipeline, primarily had to navigate through complicated, misaligned and often "clogged" channels. Further, because Black males typically face many external hurdles to postsecondary attainment, they required personal, family, community, and institutional forces to *push* them through the academic pipeline. Wilkins provided suggestions and recommendations are for high schools, two and four-year postsecondary institutions, as well as teacher education programs.

Finish What you Started: Getting Students In and Out of College Through Collaboration
E. Morralee Holzapfel, NCAN, Jennifer Blatz, OCAN and Dr. Matt Kinkley, James A. Rhoades State College E. Morralee Holzapfel, NCAN, Jennifer Blatz, OCAN and Dr. Matt Kinkley, James A. Rhoades State College

Ms. Holzapfel, Ms. Blatz, and Dr. Kinkley discussed how the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) addressed the issue of retention of underrepresented students at postsecondary institutions through a variety of unique initiatives. OCAN, an urban access program (I KNOW I CAN) and a regional education collaborative (West Central Ohio College Success Partnership) have partnered with higher education institutions to launch retention efforts resulting in immediate impact on the retention rates of first-year students and those beyond. In 2005, OCAN sponsored the Ohio College Access and Success Conference to explore strategies for helping Ohioans access and succeed in postsecondary education. The organization also awarded five planning grants to institutions to support college access programs and retention program development. Through partnerships with state agencies such as the Ohio Board of Regents to aid its college access organizations in expanding their missions and ensuring that students access and persist towards a postsecondary degree.

Deal or No Deal: Helping Students Avoid Financial Pitfalls and Stay in College
Matthew Short and Kristin Boyer, Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation

Mr. Short and Ms. Boyer reviewed research on student credit and debt usage, students' perception of debts, credit, and spending, and student outcomes related to credit and debt. The two presenters also discussed strategies for keeping students out of debilitating financial situations with a focus on four steps to financial success: keeping records, planning, taking inventory, and setting goals. Their presentation included concrete examples of ways to help students take inventory of their current financial resources and create a viable for budgeting their money.

Using Longitudinal Data to Improve Student Persistence
Dr. John B. Lee, JBL Associates

During his presentation, Dr. Lee talked about the importance of using longitudinal data to improve institutional quality, increase revenue, and respond to accountability requirements. According to Dr. Lee, longitudinal data helps keep the issue of student persistence visible in the institution, provides a way to evaluate interventions, and can help close equity gaps. He pointed out that most institutions already have the resources and data available to conduct a longitudinal study. Dr. Lee warned, however, that simply collecting the data and studying it was not enough. Institutions need to take action and create plans for improvement that include input from campus leaders.

Financial Aid, Persistence, and Degree Attainment Among College Students from Foster Care
Ken Redd and Ryan Davis, NASFAA

Mr. Ken Redd and Mr. Ryan Davis presented findings from a recent study that examined the demographic characteristics, college attendance status, financial aid distribution, and student persistence rates among undergraduates who entered college after spending time in foster care. Barriers to postsecondary education for these students include a lack of parental support, substance abuse, mental and physical health issues, lack of financial resources, and lack of sufficient academic preparation. However, though foster youth only represents 1 percent of all undergraduates, they attend the same types of institutions, receive financial aid from federal and state sources at higher rates, and are just as likely to enroll full-time as their peers. Unfortunately, foster children are not as likely to persist toward a degree as their peers. Mr. Davis outlined ways institutions could target students from foster care in order to encourage their enrollment and persistence in postsecondary education.

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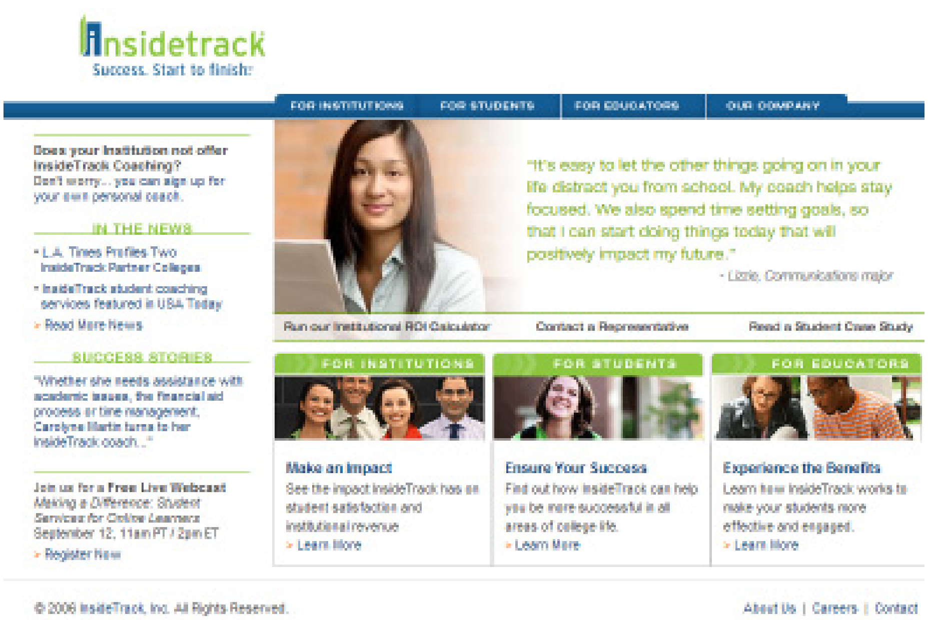
BEST PRACTICE

Inside Track

Today's higher education institutions face a persistent battle: one in four college students fails to make it past the first year, and only 56% will graduate within six years, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Meanwhile, state and federal governments, accreditation boards, and education agencies call for higher retention and graduation rates, and place increasing pressure on institutions already financially strapped from lost revenue and escalating marketing and recruiting costs. The challenge remains to uncover the complex causes of high attrition, and address these factors while maintaining high academic standards.



Many schools use retention management programs to diagnose issues or identify students at risk; however, these programs do not significantly increase retention rates. They also don't go deep enough into the individual needs and challenges of the most fundamental element in the retention equation: the students themselves.

InsideTrack, founded in 1999 by Alan Tripp and Kai Drekmeier, takes a different approach. Taking its cues from the business world, this program uses executive-style coaching to increase student motivation and effectiveness, with the notion that most people achieve better results when they are managed well. "Students are like most professionals," says Steve Maxwell, InsideTrack's Vice President of Professional Development. "They perform significantly better when they are provided with structure, feedback, encouragement, and regular contact with someone whose purpose is to support the student in achieving success."

The InsideTrack method prepares students for more than just academic success. Coaches work with students to proactively identify opportunities for development in eight focus areas. These areas, which explore issues from personal finances to physical and emotional health, allow students to take a holistic view of their own performance, and gain a more balanced perspective in every aspect of their lives. "We recognized," Maxwell says, "that although students get help from a lot of different departments for various single issues, they rarely get support related to their whole experience: basic administrative issues, their classes, and also their lives outside of school. We really saw the need for supporting the students by looking at the school through their eyes, and not the eyes of one department."

One of the most innovative aspects of InsideTrack's approach is its commitment to working with every student, regardless of his level of "risk." According to this model, all students, at every level of experience and ability, benefit from the support and guidance of a coach. Many traditional-aged college students are navigating the adult world for the first time, and work with their coaches to develop important time management, study, and assertiveness skills to assist them in this process and help them not only to get the most out of their college experience, but to prepare them for the professional world beyond. Often, coaching provides them with their first taste of true autonomy.

Students at the other end of the spectrum find value in coaching as well. Tarah Howard, a coach for Chapman University College, cites her experiences with one of her graduate students as an example: "One of my students has been a professional in her field for over 25 years, and is already a very effective individual. But she values having an

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external party to talk to every week. Discussing what is happening in her life is what motivates her and pushes her to the next level. She enjoys having someone on the other end of the phone, listening to her thoughts and ideas, without passing judgment. She says that without the coaching, she feels she would have ideas trapped in her head without an escape route."

Variety and flexibility in the application of coaching techniques is part of what makes InsideTrack so unique: there is no blanket approach. By creating close, trusting relationships with their students and evaluating their needs during weekly meetings, coaches tailor their sessions to every individual, providing support and development around the issues that are most relevant and useful for each student.

And the results speak for themselves. Since its founding, Inside Track has increased total enrollment and tuition revenue by 10 to 15 percent in its partner colleges, while consistently reducing attrition rates by more than 30 percent. In addition, coached students had higher GPAs and earned 10-15 percent more credits than their un-coached counterparts.

The effects of coaching go far beyond the bottom line. Gary Brahm, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Chapman University, notes the less-quantifiable impact of coaching in a recent article: "We found that coached students demonstrated a higher and more effective use of campus programs and services; had more productive interactions with faculty and staff; and were better prepared for classes and more likely to meet deadlines and follow campus procedures and policies." Coaching encourages students to be accountable for getting the most out of their college experience by bringing more to the table themselves.

InsideTrack's success can also be measured by the reactions of the students who go through the program. "InsideTrack has helped make the transition from high school go much easier for me than for my friends who don't have a coach," says Ben, a communications major. "My coach helped me to get up to speed and acquainted with my school quickly, so that I could do as well as I possibly could."

Lizzie, also majoring in communications, agrees: "It's easy to let the other things going on in your life distract you from school. My coach helps me cope and stay focused. We also spend time setting goals, so that I can start doing things today that will positively impact my future."

Ultimately, what makes the difference is the opportunity for personal development that InsideTrack provides. "There is increasing evidence from the business world, from the sports world, and from leadership development programs, that individual coaching is one of the most effective and emerging technologies for significantly changing behavior," Maxwell says.

"That is basically what we do."

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Latino Students and the Pathways to College

Dr. Alberto Cabrera, University of Maryland - College Park

Dr. Cabrera presented data from an Educational Policy Institute study supported by the Lumina Foundation which tracked students from 8th grade through postsecondary education and into the workforce. The study found that Latino students enrolled in postsecondary institutions at a much lower rate than their white counterparts. To improve the enrollment rates, Dr. Cabrera suggested that the process needs to begin in middle school by creating the aspiration to go to college, so that by high school, the student is prepared to start a college preparatory curriculum. Once the student enrolls in a post secondary institution, Dr. Cabrera suggested that students needed academic support, and good financial aid packages. He emphasized the need for holistic, sustained intervention strategies that involved multiple members of the community.