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The Role of Student Services in the Recruitment and Retention of Undergraduate Students at Northern Arizona University's School of Forestry

Katherine Leao¹ and Laura E. DeWald²

In times of declining enrollment, increasing budget constraints, increased FTE scrutiny, and the need for departments to justify their personnel, having a student services coordinator (SSC) might seem like a luxury position that is subject to elimination. Yet, we suggest that a SSC is crucial to forestry programs, and that the benefits far outweigh the costs. An effective SSC can provide personal attention and mentoring which are keys for successful recruitment and retention, therefore, increasing FTEs. These key activities are often neglected without a SSC, because everyone's time is already overcommitted. Our presentation describes the crucial role our SSC plays in the School of Forestry at NAU. We will discuss the benefits of having a SSC to provide individualized attention to prospective students (especially merit scholars), to develop marketing strategies specific for forestry programs, to provide individualized advising, to coordinate summer and permanent job opportunities, and to help students with their resumes and job applications. We will present data to illustrate the benefits of our SSC position that outweigh the FTE cost, and will discuss desired characteristics and qualifications that we think make a SSC effective.

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