NCA Self Study

Criterion 4 Documents

Eastern Illinois University   *Year* 2014

Noel-Levitz Retention Report 2012

David Trites

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Retention Opportunities Analysis

Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois

Noel-Levitz
Analysis prepared by
Dr. David Trites, senior associate consultant
December 14, 2011

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Retention Opportunities Analysis

Eastern Illinois University • Charleston, Illinois

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Introduction

Dr. David Trites, senior associate consultant at Noel-Levitz, visited Eastern Illinois University (EIU) on November 30-December 1, 2011, for the purpose of providing an external analysis of the college's retention-related strategies and tactics. The consultant wishes to commend Eastern Illinois University for initiating an analysis on what the college is currently doing and might be doing to improve the quality of student life and learning, increase retention and completion rates, and foster student satisfaction and success.

> "…activities that serve to generate significant improvements in the organization as a whole ultimately serve to improve student retention."
>
> Dr. Laurence Smith
> Mobilizing the Campus for Retention
> American College Testing Program

Successful retention programs encompass virtually everything an institution does to improve the quality of student life and learning. Quality can be defined as that set of attributes of an educational program or service that consistently exceeds student expectations within specifically defined institutional-determined standards and/or criteria of performance. Practically speaking, the evidence of effective programs is clear, namely that the route to successful retention lies in those programs that ensure from the very onset of student contact with the institution; that entering students are integrated with teaching/learning processes of the college; and that students acquire the skills and knowledge needed to become successful learners in that community.

- The ultimate goal of a retention effort is improved educational experiences for students, rather than retention per se.

- Improving the quality of student life and learning needs to be a continuing and important priority for Eastern Illinois University.

- Academic advising may be the most important of all retention strategies.

- Some attrition is inevitable and acceptable, and improving retention is a complex task.

- Retention and attrition are multi-variant phenomena and are not subject to quick-fix strategies.

- Dropouts are expensive, and improvements in retention rates can add to the annual operating budget.

- Attrition is a problem for which there is a solution; retention is one aspect of an enrollment management program over which an institution can exert considerable influence and control.

- Some attrition is predictable and preventable by focusing special efforts on selected target groups of students.

- Effective retention strategies focus on improving campus programs, services, attitudes, and behaviors, and result in quality educational experiences for all students.

- Educational programs and services cannot compensate for the absence of competent, caring, and conscientious faculty and staff.

- The key to improving the quality of student life and learning (retention) are student-centered policies, procedures, and programs.

- Persistence depends upon the extent to which an individual has been integrated into the academic and non-academic components of the campus environment.

- Retention is a campuswide responsibility, and institutional change results only from a coordinated and collaborative effort.

The goals for the consultation were to:

- Conduct an analysis of Eastern Illinois University's existing retention systems, plans, processes, strategies, and activities.

- Identify practical recommendations for fine-tuning current retention strategies.

- Benchmark current retention programs, systems, and procedures against best practices and national standards at other four-year public universities.

- Help identify a cohesive, customized framework for achieving retention goals at the least possible cost.

- Provide an exit briefing presentation.

The retention consultation progressed in three phases:

1. Pre-visit information and data review;

2. Site visit to conduct individual interviews; and

3. Exit briefing and written report.

Phase One: Project Launch and Pre-visit Data/Information Compilation Review

The data/information assessment included a review of institutional reports, studies, publications, and materials to facilitate an understanding of current retention strategies and practices. The consultant would like to thank Karla Sanders and Kimberlie Moock for the excellent preparation materials and exceptional attention to detail apparent throughout the visit.

Phase Two: Site Visit and Interviews/Focus Groups

During the site visit, the consultant conducted interviews with administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Following is the agenda for the visit:

Agenda

Day One: Wednesday, November 30, 2011

8:15 a.m.	Meet with project leaders (Kimberlie Moock & Karla Sanders) to review agenda and expectations
9:00 a.m.	Focus group of academic advisors
10:00 a.m.	Deans Council and department chairs
11:00 a.m.	Focus group of new students (pizza provided)
12:00 p.m.	Lunch break
12:30 p.m.	Athletics and Recreation Center staff
1:30 p.m.	Focus group of student and academic services leadership
2:45 p.m.	Meet with front-line staff
3:30 p.m.	Focus group of faculty leadership
4:30 p.m.	Focus group of continuing students (pizza provided)
6:00 p.m.	Dinner with CORE co-chairs

Day Two: Thursday, December 1, 2011

8:15 a.m.	Meet with Committee on Retention Efforts (CORE)
9:30 a.m.	Remedial course instructors
10:00 a.m.	Meet with Provost Blair Lord
10:30 a.m.	Consultant prep time for exit presentation
11:30 a.m.	Exit briefing: Share observations and recommendations focused on the identification of strategic, innovative, and cost-effective directions for achieving retention goals; all attendees invited to hear consultant conclusions
12:30 p.m.	Meet with project leadership to review exit observations and recommendations, and next steps
1:00 p.m.	Consultant departs campus

Participants

The following is a list of those who participated in the interviews and focus groups during this consultation.

Academic Advisors

- Monica Zeigler, director, Academic Advising Center (AAC) and Campus Advising Network chair

- Lora Green, AAC advisor

- Jennifer Reed, AAC advisor

- Shawn Schultz, AAC advisor

- Julie Dietz, faculty advisor, Health Studies Dept., CAN member

- Bill Addison, faculty advisor, Psychology Dept., CAN member

- Donna Dawson, professional advisor, School of Technology

- Nancy Crone, professional advisor, Kinesiology and Sports Studies Dept.

- Michael Shirley, faculty advisor, History Dept.

- Yolanda Williams, Gateway advisor

Deans Council and Department Chairs

- Jeff Cross, associate vice president academic affairs

- Mary Herrington-Perry, assistant vice president academic affairs

- John Stimac, dean, Honors College

- Bonnie Irwin, dean, College of Arts and Humanities

- Mayhar Izadi, dean, Lumpkin College of Business and Applied Sciences

- Godson Obia, interim dean, College of Sciences

- Diane Jackman, dean, College of Education and Professional Studies

- Patty Poulter, associate dean, College of Arts and Humanities

- Doug Bower, associate dean, College of Education and Professional Studies

- Jeanne Snyder, associate dean, Lumpkin College of Business and Applied Sciences

- Tina Veale, interim associate dean, College of Sciences

- Robert Augustine, dean, Graduate School

- Audrey Bachelder for Dean Hine, Continuing Education

- Jerry Daniels, chair, Music

- Karen Gaines, chair, Biological Sciences

- Dana Ringette, chair, English

- Kathlene Shank, chair, Special Education

- James Ochwa-Echel, director, Interdisciplinary Center for Global Diversity

- James Tidwell, chair, Journalism

- Jean Wolski, chair, Theatre

- Stephen Canfield, chair, Foreign Languages

- Peter Andrews, chair, Mathematics and Computer Sciences

- Jeff Ashley, chair, Political Science

- Mark Borzi, chair, Communication Studies

- Gary Bulla, assistant chair, Biological Sciences

- Michael Cornebise, chair, Geology/Geography

- Linda Ghent, chair, Economics

- Bill Higelmire, chair, Recreation Administration

- Glenn Hild, chair, Art

- John Mace, chair, Psychology

- Cheryl Noll, chair, School of Business

- Jill Owen, chair, Kinesiology and Sports Studies

- Jim Painter, chair, School of Family and Consumer Sciences

- Gail Richard, chair, Communication Disorders and Sciences

- Dana Ringuette, chair, English

- Richard Roberts, chair, Counseling and Student Development

- Joy Russell, chair, Early Childhood, Elementary, and Middle Level Education

- Dan Sheeran, chair, Chemistry

- Renee Kidd-Marshall, chair, Nursing

- Steve Daniels, chair, Physics

- Craig Eckert, chair, Sociology and Anthropology

- Anita Shelton, chair, History

New Students

- TJ Shanahan

- Kaylee Hare

- Terry Redding

- Nick Zappa

- Tiffany Kelly

- Chase Kaufman

- Alexis Olinger

- Barbara Monroe

Athletics and Recreation Center Staff

- Ken Baker, director, Student Recreation Center

- Kevin Linker, assistant director (Intramurals), Student Recreation Center

- Sara Daugherty, Facilities, Student Recreation Center

- Barbara Burke, director, Athletics

- Mary Wallace, assistant director/senior woman administrator, Athletics

- LaVeasey Carter, assistant director for academic services, Athletics

- Adam Howarth, men's soccer coach, Athletics

- Mike Moncel, men's and women's golf coach, Athletics

- Kate Price, women's volleyball coach, Athletics

Student and Academic Services Leadership

- Linda Coffey, director, Student Accounts and Cashier Office

- Sue Harvey, registrar, Office of the Registrar and Enrollment Management

- Maggie Burkhead, director, TRIO

- Linda Moore, director, Career Services

- Kevin Vicker, interim director, International Students and Scholars

- Kathy Reed, associate vice president, Business Affairs and Information Technology Services

- Kathy Waggoner, director, Disability Services

- Jocelyn Tipton, head of reference services, Booth Library (faculty)

- Jerry Donna, director, Financial Aid

- Mark Hudson, director, University Housing and Dining

Front-line Staff

- Lindsay Partlow, University Housing and Dining

- TBD, Student Accounts and Cashier Office

- Marie Taylor, Health Services

- Janie Steber, Academic Advising

- Julie Walters, Disability Services

- Sue Grounds, Office of the Registrar and Enrollment Management

- Susan Kile, Geology and Geography Department

- Lori Benedict, Financial Aid

- Carlene Schafer, Information Technology Services – Help Desk

Focus Group of Faculty Leadership

- Wesley Allan, Psychology faculty, Council on Graduate Studies

- Patricia Belleville, Art faculty, Council on Teacher Education

- Olaf Hoerschelmann, Communication Studies faculty, Council on Academic Affairs

- Marshall Lassack, Mathematics faculty, chair – Council on Teacher Education

- Andy Methven, Biological Sciences Faculty, chair – Faculty Senate

- Chris Mitchell, Theatre Faculty, chair – Council on Academic Affairs

- Rebecca Throneburg, Communication Disorders and Sciences, chair – Committee on Assessment of Student Learning and Council on Academic Affairs

- Andrew White, Mathematics faculty, CAA

- John Willems, School of Business faculty, chair – Council on Graduate Studies

Focus Group of Continuing Students

- Kaci Abolt, entered as freshman, currently a junior

- Camille Williams, entered as a freshman, currently a sophomore

- Sara Lytel, entered as transfer, currently a senior

- Taryn Nohmer, entered as a transfer, currently a junior

- Andrea Yarbough, entered as a freshmen, currently a sophomore

- Alex Cler, entered as freshman, currently a senior

- Caleb Will, entered as a freshmen, currently a junior

- Janea Bonner, entered as a freshmen, currently a senior

- Dana Jarrard, entered as a transfer, currently a senior

- John Nicoline, entered as a transfer, currently a junior

- Aseret Gonzalez, entered as a transfer, currently a senior

Questions varied by individual or group interviewed, but the purposes may generally be categorized as follows:

- Gather information about current retention strategies, processes, and programs.

- Elicit perceptions of strengths and weaknesses in an effort to clarify impressions about programs, faculty, administrators, staff, services, facilities, location, and campus environment.

- Begin to identify why students stay, why they leave, and what makes a difference.

- Measure clarity and strength of commitment toward efforts to improve the quality of student life and learning.

Phase Three: Exit Briefing and Written Report

Upon the completion of the site visits, the consultant shared preliminary observations and recommendations at an exit briefing on each campus. The PowerPoint slides used to organize those briefings are included in the Appendix to this report.

The Current State of Retention

"If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do and how to do it."

Abraham Lincoln

Retention Benchmarks

Eastern Illinois University retention rates have been stable for several years and well above the ACT average for comparable public colleges with traditional admissions selectivity. The following tables document benchmark rates provided by American College Testing (ACT) and the recent retention history at Eastern Illinois University.

EIU has produced exemplary and stable annual return rates for the most recent five years, the most recent three of which have annual return rates of 79 percent for each year. While these rates compare favorably to averages of similar colleges, the president of EIU has set an annual return rate goal of 85 percent by 2013. The consultant believes this will be attainable providing sufficient commitment and resources are made available to support the improvement target.

The most common higher education benchmarks for retention rates, annual return rates, and cohort graduation rates are those defined and compiled by the ACT. Annual return rate is defined as the percentage of full-time, first-time freshmen enrolled at the institution the following fall. The following tables provide benchmark information by degree-granting level and admissions selectivity. EIU compares itself to institutions with traditional admissions selectivity at the Master's degree level.

Definitions: "Annual Return Rate" and "Cohort Graduation Rate"

Annual Return Rate:	The percentage of full-time, first-time freshmen enrolled at the institution the following fall.
Cohort Graduation Rate:	The percentage of full-time, first-time students who are degree seeking that graduate.

Admissions Selectivity	BA	MA	PhD
Highly Selective	87.5		89.5
Selective	81.3	82.9	82.9
Traditional	69.5	71.2	73.6
Liberal	60.3	65.8	62.0
Open	58.8	66.3	75.6

Source: Compiled from ACT Institutional Data File, 2011

Admissions Selectivity	BA	MA	PhD
Highly Selective	77.8		78.7
Selective	60.3	55.4	54.8
Traditional	40.7	37.2	39.6
Liberal		28.1	36.5
Open	12.0	33.6	41.0

Graduation in three years for associate degree; five years for BA/BS
Source: Compiled from ACT Institutional Data File, 2011

First-time, full-time entering class or some other defined cohort	Entered Fall 2010	Entered Fall 2009	Entered Fall 2008	Entered Fall 2007	Entered Fall 2006
Enrollment	1,461	1,649	1,768	1,641	1,766
Average SAT/ACT for the cohort defined above	21	22	22	21	22
First- to second-term persistence rate (census date to census date) for defined cohort	91%	91%	91%	94%	92%
First-year to second-year retention rate for defined cohort	79%	79%	79%	81%	82%
Beyond second-year rate for defined cohort	n/a	70%	69%	71%	71%

First-time, full-time, Certificate/Degree-Seeking or some other defined cohort	2011 (Entered Fa05)	2010 (Entered Fa04)	2009 (Entered Fa03)	2007 (Entered Fa02)	2006 (Entered Fa01)
Enrollment	1,645	1,725	1,892	1,984	1,431
Percent graduated/completed after four years	32%	34%	30%	29%	31%
Percent graduated/completed after six years	59%	62%	58%	56%	60%

Observations

The observations below are among those the consultant made about student life and learning on the campus of Eastern Illinois University during his visit. It is apparent that improved retention can be a powerful strategy for achieving future enrollment goals and the college should build off its success by developing a systematic, intentional, and organized way to manage the quality of student life and learning.

There currently exists:

- An experienced group of senior leaders who value and understand the essentials of student success and advocate practices that encourage continuous improvement. The consultant commends these leaders for initiating this external analysis as it is tangible evidence of the

administration's support and commitment to improving the quality of student life and learning at Eastern Illinois University.

- A core of exemplary faculty and staff who appear anxious to seize the opportunity to make improvements and who demonstrate a sincere commitment to increasing the quality of student life and learning experiences.

- An advising center model and approach that appears to be working well for freshmen but is less intentional for students as they matriculate to advising in their respective majors.

- A lack of and an uneven use of technology to support and encourage retention and advising.

- Limited faculty discussion and consensus-building relative to some aspects of the college's retention programming.

- A new post-enrollment early-alert system with excellent potential to impact student success but has not yet been fully evaluated. A pre-enrollment early-alert system has not yet been developed or implemented.

- An understanding and acceptance of the critical role accountability plays in all high-performing organizations but with limited institutional research capacity to ensure data-informed approaches.

- No specific initiative was currently in place to provide focused programming for sophomores designed to encourage successful transition toward graduation for this cohort of students.

- Campus life activities are essential to the satisfaction of Eastern Illinois University students because of the context of this unique college experience and the variety of student backgrounds represented at the college.

- Freshmen residential life appeared to be well coordinated and well received by students but unused residential capacity exists.

- Orientation and registration programming events, specifically orientation, advisement, and registration (Debut) and transition to campus (Prowl), represent "best practice" programming and appear to be making a positive contribution to excellent yield rates (accept to enroll) and melt rates (deposit to enroll).

- Special programs/services for special populations appear to be well conceived and effective i.e., Gateway and BOOST.

- University Foundations is an excellent practice currently utilized by about one-third of new EIU freshmen.

- A set of retention priorities and a goal of 85 percent set by the president have been established but no comprehensive plan of targets, key strategies, action plans, timelines, and budget has been developed.

- Professional advising for new students appears to be effective while the decentralized approach of advising in the departments appears to be uneven, less systematic, and more closely associated with registration advising only.

- Student focus groups recognized the value of advising and generally were supportive of additional required advising contacts provided they were seamless and convenient.

- The majority of students who become attrition statistics have left EIU in good academic standing (subject to confirmation with institutional data).

- Applicants are enrolled very late in the cycle which may be contributing to attrition by starting students not fully prepared for a successful academic experience (subject to confirmation by institutional data).

"Change can either be friend or foe…It is disturbing when it is done to us, exhilarating when it is done by us."

Rosabeth Moss Kantor

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the results of the meetings, interviews, reports, surveys, and recognized strategies to improve the quality of student life and learning that have the potential of increasing student success at Eastern Illinois University. They are presented in separate categories but are not presented in any prioritized order.

Retention Planning

1. *Use a highly-participative and data-informed planning process to develop a clearly articulated retention plan that targets the "vital few" student success priorities.*

This approach, will prioritize, guide, and build support for Eastern Illinois University's retention-related efforts. It will also help institutionalize the most successful of good practices currently in place so the maximum number of students can benefit.

Although there is an appreciation for the value of planning and personnel who have extensive experience with plan development, there is no current annual operational plan articulating improvement goals and priority retention strategies. A thoughtful retention planning process helps set meaningful goals, identifies the most important strategies and activities necessary to achieve these goals, and broadens the discussion of student success. There are many benefits that can accrue from the retention planning process. A retention plan:

- Provides systematic assessment of present strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and current retention strategies.

- Results in the establishment of consensual institutional goals and priorities.

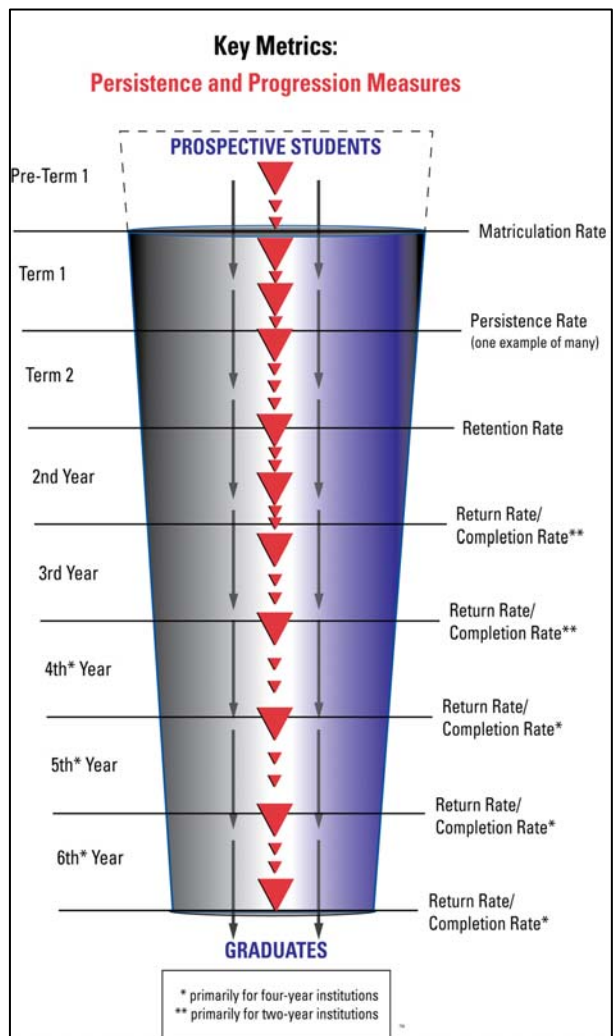- Encourages innovative thinking and problem-solving.

- Creates awareness of obstacles that may need to be overcome.

- Coordinates and unifies staff effort.

- Ensures more effective use of existing resources and identifies the possible need for additional resources.

- Assigns responsibility and accountability and schedules work.

- Facilitates control and evaluation of activities.

- Communicates and documents efforts and the retention game plan.

- Provides a basis for future planning.

Data and Information

2. *Specific opportunities to provide additional actionable data include an annual disaggregation of subpopulations in order to lend support to the retention improvement process (i.e., Noel-Levitz's Student Retention Predictor (SRP) subpopulation data with variable diagnostics), and implementation of a regular collection of student perception data (i.e., Noel-Levitz's Student Satisfaction Inventory™ (SSI)). Eastern Illinois University may also need to increase institutional research capacity to ensure optimum use of data to inform decision making.*

It will be important for Eastern Illinois University to inform the retention goal-setting process with retention trend data for as many subpopulations as possible. Once the retention planning process has produced agreements on which subpopulations to target for improvement, regular reporting of those should be continued at the following increased intervals:

- Persistence rate day one to census date;

- Persistence rate census date to midterm;

- Persistence rate midterm to end-of-term; and

- Persistence rate end-of-term one to beginning of term two (and so on, until graduation).

Key Metrics:
Persistence and Progression Measures

PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Pre-Term 1 — Matriculation Rate

Term 1 — Persistence Rate (one example of many)

Term 2 — Retention Rate

2nd Year — Return Rate/Completion Rate**

3rd Year — Return Rate/Completion Rate**

4th* Year — Return Rate/Completion Rate*

5th* Year — Return Rate/Completion Rate*

6th* Year — Return Rate/Completion Rate*

GRADUATES

* primarily for four-year institutions
** primarily for two-year institutions

The use of student perception data to ensure students voices are heard in all improvement initiatives can best be accomplished with the use of satisfaction surveys at regularly assigned intervals to be compared both internally at EIU and nationally to similar universities. Noel-Levitz has recently added the Mid-Year Student Assessment™ and the Second-Year Student Assessment™ to complement the College Student Inventory™ (CSI), SSI, and improve student progression which may be helpful in this context.

3. *Eastern Illinois University admissions representatives should track the persistence and retention of the students they recruit and compare outcomes to those recruited by others as a way to provide additional incentive to attract students who are more likely to continue to graduation.*

Such measurement can be expected to influence efforts to attract students who may be marginal in their potential for successful persistence to graduation. This should also contribute to an improved "fit" of recruited students and a connection of appropriate students without restricting access and may provide incentive to improve the accuracy of the information providing during the recruitment process.

Teaching and Learning

"Student-faculty interaction has a stronger relationship to student satisfaction with the college experience than any other involvement variable, or indeed, any other student or institutional characteristic."

Alexander Astin
UCLA

4. *Provide freshmen students with Eastern Illinois University's best teaching faculty.*

Because of the critical importance of "first impressions" efforts to recognize and improve teaching for freshmen should continue to be emphasized.

5. *Increase professional development, linked to the performance review process, for faculty, especially those who teach freshmen, focused on increasing innovation and student engagement with the learning process.*

The development of additional "best practice" sessions for Eastern Illinois University faculty and staff to share their best teaching and advising practices is one effective and immediate way to accelerate innovation and improvement across the campus. The college has many outstanding personnel and numerous extremely effective practices that could and should be adopted by others. This approach has not only the potential to improve the quality of student life and learning but is also very cost effective.

Extended Orientation and Sophomore Programming

6. *Require the Freshmen Year Experience Course (University Foundations) and ensure financial literacy is included for <u>all</u> new students during their first enrollment term. A review of the various FYE curriculums could also ensure they address the unique needs of both traditional-age and transfer students and are relevant to their program choice when known.*

This is one of the currently existing best practices that Eastern Illinois University has used for several years that currently benefits about one-third of new freshmen each cycle. Including more students in this proven program along with a review of the existing curriculum to fit program-specific uniqueness and the addition of such currently relevant topics as "financial literacy" to the core will also improve its relevance and impact on student success.

"The freshman seminar is a proven and effective way of enhancing freshman success. It can be the glue that holds together and solidifies all efforts to enhance freshman academic and personal success. It can provide students with vital information, promote their involvement in campus life, enhance their academic skills, stimulate their intellectual interest, and facilitate relations with peers. It is also a powerful tool for renewing faculty interest in freshman students, classroom innovation, learning techniques, curricular reform, and involvement with students outside the classroom."

John Gardner
The Freshman Year Experience
Jossey-Bass

7. *Provide additional orientation programming for sophomores to address retention issues specific to these returning cohorts.*

Initiatives that will allow Eastern Illinois University to decrease sophomore attrition could be as simple as the addition of a sophomore reorientation program, and/or designing a first-year experience seminar for sophomores. Noel-Levitz has recently developed a second-year sophomore intervention approach similar to the College Student Inventory that Eastern Illinois University is currently using with freshmen. Improved sophomore programming could be built around this implementation approach.

Accuracy and Integrity of Communications

8. *A complete review of current publications and promotional messages should be completed to ensure the accuracy and integrity of communication to prospective students. Especially relevant would be a review of messages, written and oral, about the Eastern Illinois University experience and the community in which the college is located.*

Any lack of accurate information about programming or services is likely to contribute to unnecessary student attrition or at least a lack of continuation to graduation. It is reasonable to believe this will be especially true for students for metropolitan areas like the south side of Chicago.

9. *Improve the accuracy of the event calendar currently available to students and be certain the e-mail events communication is consistent with calendar listings.*

Some students believed the e-mail list of activities was incomplete and most students reported the event calendar was not always current and did not sync with the e-mail list.

Early Alert

10. *Expand the <u>pre-enrollment early alert</u> (CSI) and build a Student Retention Predictor model designed to identify students who are likely to leave, early in their enrollment while they are still receptive to intervention and be sure the new deployed <u>post-enrollment early-alert system</u> is evaluated to improve effectiveness. Steps to ensure that adequate knowledge of available college and community resources should also be taken to ensure appropriate referrals are made as early as possible in a new student's first term.*

Pre-enrollment early alert provides for the identification of dropout-prone students who could benefit from institutional intervention while post-enrollment approaches help identify students who are already demonstrating behaviors associated with academic, social, and/or personal problems that might be ameliorated by institutional intervention. Pre-enrollment early-alert programs compare student attributes with models of successful students nationally (i.e., Noel-Levitz's Retention Management System™) or to a model of successful students unique to a specific campus (i.e., Noel-Levitz's SRP modeling).

11. *Create an expectation in identified "killer courses" for faculty to provide early feedback of academic progress during the first two weeks to incent students who will need assistance to get it sooner.*

All effective post-enrollment early-alert systems require early feedback and feedback on academic progress is especially important in gateway and high fail rate classes.

Post-enrollment systems should make it easy for faculty and staff to report behaviors characteristic of at-risk students in order to encourage intervention and connections to campus resources. Both systems represent salient opportunities to improve student success at Eastern Illinois University and are based upon the following assumptions:

- Most decisions to dropout occur early in a student's interaction with an institution.

- Many dropout-prone students do not voluntarily seek out institutional support services to assist them with problems that may ultimately lead to attrition.

- It is easier to anticipate a problem and intervene than to let the problem evolve and attempt to solve it.

- Many student problems are treatable if identified early.

- Most students respond positively to direct contact in which potential or actual problems are identified and a resource of help is offered.

Advising

> "I had originally anticipated that most students would want the college to treat them as grown-ups and get out of their way. The surprise is that student after student, (70 to 75 percent) said, We need advice. We don't know what to do. How do we know which is the right history course to choose? How do we know how much time to spend on studying?"
>
> Dr. Richard J. Light
> *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*
> Harvard College

12. *Review the academic advising program to ensure a highly-structured, intrusive program that offers "front-end loading and progressive responsibility" to all students in all majors as they matriculate.*

Specifically take action to be sure that faculty who do not want to advise are given alternative assignments so students are not penalized with poor advising. Also provide a universitywide set of clear advising expectations for all divisions in order to encourage more consistent advice and mentorship from the many talented EIU advisors.

Regardless of the advising approach employed, an effective advising delivery model should meet the following criteria:

- Be accessible and available to students.

- Be consistent with respect to the quality of advising across the institution.

- Provide accurate and timely information.

- Have institutionwide credibility.

- Advising should be provided by knowledgeable, trained, and evaluated advisors.

- Promote building an advisor/advisee relationship.

- Characterized by reasonable advisor loads.

- Be cost effective.

- Result in high levels of student satisfaction with their advisor and the advising process.

Campus Employment

13. Strengthen and expand campus-based employment opportunities for specific targeted at-risk populations as a retention strategy.

Campus-based employment programs are not only friendlier to the learning process than most off-campus work assignments but also provide inherent advising experiences that often contribute to improved satisfaction, retention, and graduation rates. Most students who work on campus interact regularly with their supervisors who often develop meaningful and long-lasting relationships with their student workers. These college personnel typically are also aware of college/community resources that can help address student's needs as they become evident.

Additional Opportunities

14. Review the process for testing accommodations to be sure that a decentralized approach is adequately meeting the need of students who need accommodations.

15. Review the enforcement of enrollment deadlines and the retention rates of those students are accepted near the beginning of each term. Typically public universities find "the last to arrive are the first to leave" thus adversely impacting overall retention rates and individual student success.

16. Consider expanding the best practice of study tables to resident halls to increase utilization and convenience for students.

17. Promote and communicate with constituencies across the university the existing retention programming and its effectiveness. Use data, student testimonials, and food to encourage participation and improve awareness and faculty and staff participation in student retention efforts.

18. Review the "online catalog only" approach to determine if some printed catalog editions will provide a return sufficient to justify the cost.

19. Provide incentives for faculty in Math and English to provide additional creative learning alternatives to ensure that the high failure rate in some gateway courses provided in these areas do not unnecessarily impede the success of students.

20. Encourage student success whenever possible by requiring student to do what is known to help them be successful. Creating clear expectations (and appropriate requirements) for students to participate in specific proven programs will move EIU into the realm of institutions where student success is not long considered optional.

In closing, the consultant wishes to commend Eastern Illinois University for efforts to improve the quality of student life and learning; fostering student success and satisfaction; and improving

retention and completion rates. In moving from theory to action, the college should avoid the following pitfalls common to retention efforts:

- "Succumbing to a paralysis by analysis" mentality.

- Failing to build campuswide support and commitment for a comprehensive retentive initiative.

- Approaching retention as a flavor of the month initiative rather than an ongoing sustained improvement process.

- Ignoring the need for developing a comprehensive retention action plan.

- Assuming good strategies will advance on their own merit.

- Engaging in "excessive activity syndrome."

- Not building on successful current retention-related strategies.

- Not providing sufficient human and fiscal resources to successfully address quality of student life and learning issues and strategies.

- Not indulging in campus politics, turf issues, personal feelings, and poor implementation of key retention strategies.

- Giving in to the naysayers.

This written report is an analysis with specific recommendations the consultant believes will contribute to the achievement of Eastern Illinois University's short- and long-term retention goals. It is important to note that this analysis only begins to understand the complexities and nuances of Eastern Illinois University's retention programs. The consultant believes he was able to assess the current situation as a preliminary effort in an ongoing process. Any omissions or errors in interpretation are the responsibility of the consultant.

Appendix

Affinity Diagram of Student Improvement Suggestions

The following verbatim written responses were provided and organized by EIU continuing students in response to the question: What should be done to improve student success at EIU?

General Education

- Make community service a graduation requirement

- Provide a "plus" based grading system

- Weighted honors courses

- Format of general education courses refined

- Incentive program for good grades

- Stronger bas of liberal arts

- Make study abroad more financially accessible

- Let general education be more than the required hours

- Require foreign language proficiency test or foreign language class requirement

Student/Teacher

- Take more pride in students

- Find a way to get stronger student/teacher relationships, too many students don't think they can go to their professors for help

- Allow students work with professors with courses

- Foster better faculty student relationships

- Early detection/warning program refined

Required Course Work

- EWP

- Change senior sem procedure

- Push critical thinking in class assignments

- Sr Sem should be reworked...maybe class should be in major discipline and bring in other disciplines

- Pay students in fake money for going to class that can be redeemed at the book store

- Push for essays on tests instead of multiple choice

- Require four hours a week of study stables for freshmen

Mentoring/Tutors

- Have more diversity awareness

- Student mentoring program

- More tutoring readily available to students in all classes and majors

- More mentorship programs that target all populations

- Begin a mentorship program—pair new students with returning students "big brother/sister"

Alcohol Education

- Better alcohol education

- Provide a better alcohol edu program

- Revise alcohol Edu

- Have older students involved in first-year safety meetings

Technology

- Provide each student with the technology they need to succeed specifically a computer and printer in their room

- More use of technology

- Provide updated textbooks not just limit to hardcover to online versions

- Class dynamics having more discussion/seminar vs. lecture

Career Paths

- Options for future schooling after EIU

- Promote deadlines for career services ex: when to have a resume

- Work on degree programs i.e., make them stronger

- Provide students w/checklist for needed requirements for courses

- Connect each student with a career counselor

- Have more mandatory meetings with your advisor

Campus Life

- Make students stay in residence halls for two years before moving off campus

- Require all freshmen to wait until at least second semester to go Greek

- 24 hour library throughout the year

- Dining hall food improvement

- Study tables in lobby of halls

- Requiring students to be involved before going Greek

- Pair Greeks with residence halls

- Offer more scholarships

- Greater school pride

- Transfer students live with transfer students

- Improve transfer student transition

- Spend more time and money improving residence halls

- Advertise events

- More time and money in residence halls

- More programs with alumni to show "life after EIU"

- Make sure students have utilities they need by renting out things such as microwaves or refrigerators if the need them…take some stress off

- Require student involvement in many organizations

- Bring Greek system out of its "bubble" pair sorority/fraternity with res hall

- Provide more weekend activity

- Advertise school events more…so students don't fall into "wrong" events

- Better/more complete info on EIU events...current events e-mail is not complete

- In the residence halls, have more study tables in the lobby...maybe have a math table, science, and such two or three times a week

Affinity Diagram of Dean and Chairs Improvement Suggestions

The following written verbatim suggestions were provided by EIU deans and chairs in response to the question: What should be done to improve the experience for EIU students? They were organized into predetermined categories provided by the consultant.

Campus Life
- Provide relevant engaging experiences outside the classroom

- Encourage involvement in student organizations

- Steer them toward getting involved with research or other creative activities with professors

- Assign a mentor to every new student

- Teach students how to reduce stress and increase attention via contemplative activities (such as meditation)

- No classes scheduled before 9 a.m.

- Require freshmen seminar for everyone—transfer take first semester here

- Require students to disconnect from technology for at least one hour (one waking hour) each day

- Defer Greek rush to spring (no fall rushing of Frats/Soros's)

- Better coordinated and publicized events year-round for students

- Significant contact and interactions with their professors, both in and out of the major

- Improve facilities

- Build a modern science building and model existing science building

Advising

- Optimize advising

- Good or excellent advising

- Competent advisement in the department

- Provide more intentional guidance to prepare for highly valued learning experiences such as undergraduate research and study abroad

- Fuse 9th Street Advising (Freshmen Advising) with the departments

- Review academic advising processes

- Improve student experience advising; reorganize difference levels of transfer students from four year vs. community college

- More options regarding flexible majors

- Provide better advising to freshman about all options (major/minor/integrative learning/study abroad)

- Make explicit well-defined programs of study that enable students to accurately gauge time to graduation

- Recognize the different needs of the traditional freshmen from transfer—junior level students

- Help students focus on what they would like to do for a career and then involve them in high impact experiences

- Strong/significant contact with their major departments

Responsiveness to Diverse Populations

- More diverse student population (recruit them)

- Provide academic supports appropriate for the success of an increasingly diverse student population

Registration

- Increase $ amount that results in a hold on registering

- Open up more online classes

Concern for Individuals

- Provide students with more one-on-one opportunity to work with a faculty mentor

- Treat them like adults instead of behaving like helicopter parents "hovering" to "catch them" whenever they screw up; screwing up is part of life…that is a valuable educational lesson

- Learning Communities through first semester of soph year

- Student mentoring for freshmen

Safety

- Maintain access while enhancing safety and security

Campus Services

- Expand opportunities for students to gain EIU credit as they study elsewhere

- More services available via distance technology (students can access 24/7)

Recruitment and Financial Aid

- Provide more scholarships and funding for students to use

- Provide additional scholarships/awards for a wider range of students

- Make financial aid easier for students to understand

- Offer more financial incentives for student scholarship, leadership, and service

- Offer more scholarships and awards

- Provide greater scholarship aid for study abroad

- Increase tuition in line with other schools

- Have a system in place to really attract strong students—recruitment more aggressive

- Develop integrated financial aid packages that will enable students to feel they will stay enrolled continuously to graduation

- Additional recruitment scholarships

- Find off campus jobs

- Pursue grants that would develop hands-on learning

Campus Climate

- Create a welcoming campus climate

- Enhance coordination of formal and informal curriculum

- Provide a more intentional, integrated learning experience

- Make personal and intellectual development meaningful and fun

- Improve PRIDE in 'Panther' activities…attendance

- Improved facilities for academic instruction and research

- Improvements to campus infrastructure (better labs, newer classrooms)

- More emphasis on intellectual events—readings, speakers, etc.

- Better restaurants, shopping, and entertainment

Instructional Effectiveness

- More full-time tenure track faculty

- Each sophomore takes a block of two courses that are fully integrated, but from two different academic areas

- Have all, or at least most, courses be four semester hours

- Provide a framework/model/seminar on how to be a successful college student for all incoming freshmen

- Create focus (emphasis) on academics

- Greater emphasis on the importance (value) of hard work/study

- Cohesive educational experience in liberal arts and in major field

- Increase faculty-student research opportunities

- Increase opportunities for interdisciplinary/collaborative learning

- Provide more funding for scholarships

- Provide structured instruction on academic success skills and strategies as part of social events for new students

- Keep classes small

- Encourage intellectual thought among the faculty

- More one-on-one time working with faculty

- Increases research and internship experiences

- Study abroad that is a reasonable cost

- Develop opportunities for students to develop creative individualized majors

- Encourage student travel (support) to professional conferences

- Require all students to study at least 10 hours a week

- Market the 'personal experience' better—that students receive at EIU

- Provide out-of-class experiences that support the course content

- Challenge students to live up to their potential and not take the easiest path

- Create a culture of excellence (academic)

- Expect more critical thought and provide more challenging experiences

- Provide greater general access to electronic media

- Expand teaching methodologies—from traditional "face-to-face classroom" to "online learning"

- Place hiring and retention of best possible faculty as highest priority

- Continue to encourage integrative learning

- Maintain small class size for access to professors

- Create experiences that synthesize knowledge at every level of education

- Involve more undergraduates in faculty-mentored research

- More instruction in writing

- More discussion (critical thinking) in classes

- Short workshop courses to enhance overall curriculum in major

- EIU can improve the experience for freshmen by increasing flexible curriculum delivery

- The single most important experience for undergraduates is a mentoring research experience with faculty

- Keep classroom size to a reasonable number

- Give the students better facilities (e.g., labs and equipment)

Retention Opportunities Analysis PowerPoint Exit Presentation Slides

Document attached.