

29 Good Practices in Retention: an Exercise

Directions:

Rate each suggestion below on a scale of one to seven to evaluate your institution's current employment of the retention strategy, where

1 represents "This strategy is not used at all"

7 represents "This strategy is used in a complete, effective way"

#	ITEM	RATING
1	Track the retention of cohort groups (e.g. poor preparedness, undecideds, honors students, athletes, commuters, residents, late admits, etc.), and develop targeted programs for those whose retention is low.	
2	Conduct summer orientation programs, where the emphasis is on activities designed to build interpersonal affiliations to peers and bonds to the institution. Design and deliver orientation experiences for special groups of students (e.g., adults, transfers, internationals, athletes, selected majors, commuters, resident students).	
3	Review all promotional materials to ensure that they are creating accurate pre-entry expectations of the institution. Develop well-designed campus visit experiences that realistically portray the institution to prospective students. Determine if recruitment activities are targeting students who are likely to be successful at the institution.	
4	Mandate and administer pre-entry assessment and placement. Offer developmental courses to improve academic skills.	
5	Strengthen and offer a wide array of student extracurricular activities.	
6	Offer summer bridge programs for academically under-prepared students.	
7	Establish excellent academic support services (e.g., learning center, math lab, writing lab), and proactively assist students in using this assistance. Provide peer tutorial services. Provide Supplemental Instruction for "killer courses."	
8	Implement an extended orientation course (e.g., first-year experience course).	
9	Provide a credit life/career-planning course. Purchase a computer guidance system (e.g., DISCOVER, SIGI PLUS) and encourage students to use these in career exploration.	
10	Design high-interest residential living programs and activities. Ensure residential facilities are in good condition.	
11	Provide incentives, recognition, and rewards for faculty/staff involved in retention-related initiatives.	
12	Conduct student satisfaction surveys on a systematic basis. Use them in planning improvements.	
13	Conduct exit interviews to ascertain student reasons for leaving and possibly to resolve issues that are a barriers to returning.	
14	Require that students on academic probation participate in a "success" program.	
15	Conduct special workshops on topics of interest to students (e.g., stress/time management, substance abuse, study skills).	

#	ITEM	RATING
16	Review availability of classes to be sure student needs are being met. Eliminate low demand courses and increase availability of high demand courses.	
17	Participate in plans to improve the physical plant and facilities particularly important to students (e.g., recreation, student center, computer lab).	
18	Identify students who may be dropout-prone by observing "behavioral cues" (e.g., missing classes, failing to apply for financial aid, not pre-registering, or requesting a transcript) as part of a proactive "early-alert" program. Reach out to those students to intervene and assist them. Use telecounseling to contact students experiencing difficulty or planning not to return. Communicate with students who are in good standing who fail to enroll.	
19	Review all policies, procedures, syllabi, and processes to ensure that they are student-centered, learning-oriented, and student-friendly.	
20	Systematically survey/interview all new students within the critical first six weeks.	
21	Establish appropriate student support groups (e.g., international, minority).	
22	Eliminate the "campus runaround." Provide ongoing quality service training for all front-line support staff and supervisors. Design an intake system that includes a seamless orientation, assessment, advising, and registration process.	
23	Encourage students to participate in college work-study program.	
24	Establish an office devoted exclusively to the improvement of the teaching/learning process. Develop an ongoing program to help faculty understand the critical role they play in retention. Eliminate or reduce large lecture classes (or have part of the course be a small discussion section). Assist faculty in learning about and using cooperative and collaborative teaching/learning strategies.	
25	Establish a Retention Committee. Appoint a retention coordinator for the institution. Develop a retention plan that sets goals, establishes strategies to attain the goals, and includes action plans to ensure achievement.	
26	Develop an institutional academic advising plan that includes the components that are associated with successful delivery and organization of advising services. Provide development opportunities for advisors. Design an evaluation program that assesses the effectiveness of the institution's advising program, as well as individual advisor. Develop or purchase a computerized degree audit system. Use this in advising. Involve faculty in academic advising.	
27	Provide an Honors Program to challenge the best students.	
28	Change the attitude in serving students from, "We have the services, but students don't take advantage of them," to "How can we provide structured ways of ensuring that students are supported by the programs we offer?"	
29	Frontload the best instructors and advisors.	