BEST PRACTICES in
Retention

MAC

BEST PRACTICES IN RETENTION

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FOREWORD

In a society that values education and believes that an educated society is what America needs to remain competitive in the global society, a college degree or some form of postsecondary education is a must. Higher education institutions have come under fire for not producing enough college graduates to keep a competitive edge. Mississippi's political and state leaders issue a constant reminder that to continue to attract industry and business to the state Mississippi must have an educated workforce. Hopefully, this report will provide helpful information to assist the state's postsecondary institutions in creating a culture of success for all students. The major goal of this report is to identify factors, strategies, and activities which increase opportunities for student retention and success in postsecondary education. The commitment to the success of all students pursuing postsecondary education in Mississippi will hopefully ignite a retention revolution in our higher education communities.

The wisdom of the administrative leadership of the Mississippi Association of Colleges and Universities served as the catalyst in spearheading this state-wide public postsecondary education institutions' retention study. Without their vision and insight this report would not have been possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Access to postsecondary education has dominated the priorities of higher education administrators for decades. The results of the efforts of postsecondary education over the past few decades have been phenomenal with regard to access. However, the ability of higher education institutions to improve attrition and persistence to degree completion has now moved to the forefront of all higher education stakeholders' agendas. Over 14 million students are enrolling in higher education which is the largest enrollment in America's history. According to Alan Seidman (2006), this increase of higher education enrollment serves to magnify the importance of retention and persistence in higher education. With an increase in enrollment comes the harsh reality that only half of the freshmen students who initiate their studies at a four-year institution leave with a bachelor's degree, and less than that complete an associate's degree. Over one-third of beginning postsecondary students attending a university or college leave without a degree after six years (Seidman, 2006).

Because retention and persistence are similar concepts, Tom Mortenson, editor of *Postsecondary Opportunity* and senior scholar at The Pell Institute provides in *College Student Retention: Formula for Student Success* (2005) definitions for retention and persistence. Mortenson (2005) defines retention as the passing of time to another period of time, as in semester-to-semester, or year-to-year, and persistence as the student's ability to persist toward the end goal, usually a certificate or degree. Typically, in Mississippi retention is measured from fall to fall semesters, and persistence is defined as time the student took to obtain the degree or certificate.

According to retention researchers, there is no simple sociological or psychological model for retention. Retention models and practices should be on-going and flexible. Effective retention models should be living, breathing processes, designed to fit the respective institutional mission and culture. There is no one-size-fits-all model of retention.

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Theories of student retention have been dominated by models of social and academic integration. Vincent Tinto's (1993) research focused on a combination of sociological and psychological criteria. Academic integration, according to Tinto includes experiences students have on a postsecondary campus that support academic development, encourage cognitive development, and enhance a student's academic motivation to pursue academic tasks in meaningful ways. Tinto's model identifies formal and informal academic experiences that serve to shape and refine the student's commitment to completion and to the respective educational institution. Social integration is identified as the experiences that help connect students to the college environment, aid in their psychosocial development and contribute to their overall satisfaction in postsecondary environments. Tinto's (1993) research involving social and academic integration found that informal and formal experiences reinforce the student's commitment to the institution, facilitate development of educational goals, and improve academic performance.

A considerable body of research exists on best practices in student retention. An understanding of appropriate practices for postsecondary education is critical to designing retention strategies that meet the needs of students. There is also a substantial amount of research on withdrawal and first-year student retention. Aspects of these factors include, but are not limited to, academic preparation, academic experiences, institutional and student expectations and commitment, finances, employment, family, and other external pressures. For the purpose of this document, the focal point will be on the individual, social, and organizational factors that influence retention and persistence.

RETENTION SURVEY RESULTS

Over half of the students who leave college do so before the second year (United States Department of education, 2001). The focus of this research will be the initiatives and activities in which Mississippi's public postsecondary

education institutions are engaged which focuses on first to second year retention. This report contains data, based on responses from 19 postsecondary public institutions in Mississippi; eight four-year public universities and 11 two-year public community/junior colleges. This report will include both qualitative and quantitative data. Site visits were conducted at 21 of the 23 public postsecondary education institutions in the state. In addition, with the permission of ACT a survey used by that organization in a 2004 report entitled *What Works in Student Retention.* The survey was e-mailed to the 23 public postsecondary education institutions in Mississippi; 19 institutions responded for a response rate of 83% (100% from the 4-year public and 73% from the 2-year public institutions).

<div align="center">ACT RETENTION SURVEY RESULTS</div>

Section A: Campus Coordination and Retention/Completion Goals

In this section respondents were asked to provide information on the coordination of retention services and the goals (if any) the campus had set for both retention and degree completions.

Coordination of Retention Activities

Of the 19 survey responses, eleven (58 percent) indicated that there was an individual designated to coordinate campus retention activities. A review of the various titles of individuals responsible for coordination of retention efforts resulted in the following.

- At six institutions (55 percent), the terms Director, Coordinator and Associate Vice President were included in the title.
- At five institutions (45 percent), the terms Vice President, Vice Chancellor were included in the title.

Retention and Degree Completion Goals

Of the 19 institutions responding to the survey:

- Seven of the surveyed institutions (35 percent) reported that they had established a retention goal for improvement in the first to second year retention rate.

- The retention goal percentages for improvement of first to second year ranged from 2 percent to 85 percent at the seven institutions that had established retention goals.

- Six institutions reported that they had established a goal for improvement in the five-year degree completion rate.

- The five-year degree completion rate for improvement percentages for the six institutions that established goals ranged from 5 percent to 60 percent.

Section B: Institutional Issues, Characteristics, and Services

In Section B of the Survey, respondents were asked the following question.

To what degree is each of the following institutional issues, characteristics, or services a factor contributing to attrition on your campus? Respondents were asked to rate each of the 24 characteristics according to the following five-response scale.
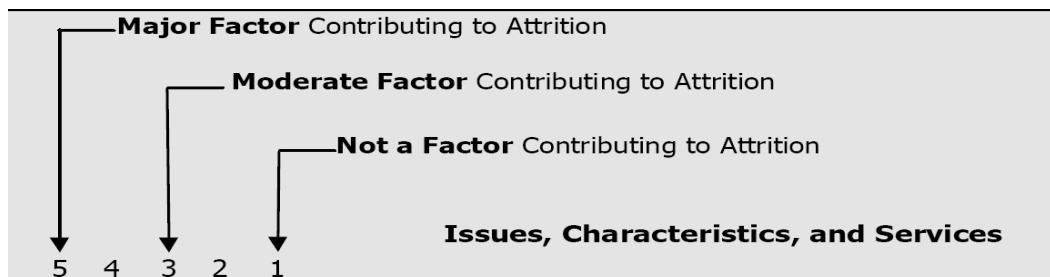
Means for each of the 24 items were calculated by awarding values of 5 (major factor), 4 (between major and moderate factor), 3 (moderate factor), 2 (between moderate and not a factor), 1 (not a factor).

Table 1
INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS MAKING THE GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO ATTRITION
ALL SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Institutional Issues, Characteristics, and Services (Item Number)	Mean for Factor
Amount of financial aid available to students (6)	3.00
Student employment opportunities (1)	2.90
Attitude of faculty toward students (13)	2.76
Academic support services - learning centers, similar resources (15)	2.76
Residence halls (17)	2.76

Table 2
INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS MAKING THE GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO ATTRITION
FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Institutional Issues, characteristics, and Services (Item Number)	Mean for Factor
Amount of financial aid available to students (6)	3.50
Social environment (21)	3.25
Student employment opportunities (1)	3.00
Attitude of faculty toward students (13)	3.00
Student-institution "fit" (9)	2.88

Table 3
INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS MAKING THE GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO ATTRITION
TWO-YEAR PUBLIC SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Institutional Issues, characteristics, and Services (Item Number)	Mean for Factor
Academic support services – learning centers, similar resources (15)	3.33
Student employee opportunities (1)	3.08
Residence halls (17)	3.00
Amount of financial aid available to students (6)	2.92
Student engagement in classroom – active learning (23)	2.92

Table 4
INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS MAKING THE LEAST CONTRIBUTION TO ATTRITION
ALL SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Institutional Issues, characteristics, and Services (Item Number)	Mean for Factor
Other on-campus housing (18)	1.48
Rules and regulations governing students and faculty (16)	1.71
Intellectual stimulation or challenge (22)	1.86
Quality of teaching (4)	1.90
Career exploration services (11)	2.05

Table 5
INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS MAKING THE LEAST CONTRIBUTION TO ATTRITION
FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Institutional Issues, characteristics, and Services (Item Number)	Mean for Factor
Quality of teaching (4)	1.63
Personal counseling services (10)	1.75
Rules and regulations governing student behavior (16)	1.75
Other on-campus housing (18)	1.88
Personal contact between students and faculty (19)	1.88

Table 6
INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS MAKING THE LEAST CONTRIBUTION TO ATTRITION
TWO-YEAR PUBLIC SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Institutional Issues, characteristics, and Services (Item Number)	Mean for Factor
Other on-campus housing (18)	1.33
Rules and regulations governing student behavior (16)	1.83
Intellectual stimulation or challenge (22)	1.83
The number and variety of courses offered (24)	2.00
Admissions practices/requirements (8)	2.17

Summary Table A
INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES, CHARACTERISTICS, AND SERVICES
ALL SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Survey Question: To what degree is each of the following institutional issues, characteristics, or services a factor contributing to attrition on your campus?

	Mean All Institutions
1. Student employment opportunities	3.05
2. Extracurricular programs	2.30
3. Curriculum issues	2.30
4. Quality of teaching	2.00
5. Academic advising	2.45
6. Amount of financial aid available to students	3.15
7. Financial aid services	2.55
8. Admission practices/requirements	2.35
9. Student-institution "fit"	2.50
10. Personal counseling services	2.30
11. Career counseling services	2.15
12. Student involvement in campus life	2.50
13. Attitude of faculty toward students	2.90
14. Attitude of staff toward students	2.40
15. Academic support services – learning centers, similar resources	2.90
16. Rules and regulations governing student behavior	1.80
17. Residence halls	2.90
18. Other on-campus housing	1.55
19. Personal contact between students and faculty	2.35
20. Cultural environment	2.35
21. Social environment	2.60
22. Intellectual stimulation or challenge	1.95
23. Student engagement in classroom (active learning)	2.70
24. The number and variety of courses offered.	2.15

Section C: Student Characteristics

In Section C of the Survey, respondents were asked the following question.

To what degree does each of the student characteristics below contribute to attrition on your campus? Respondents were asked to rate each of the 20 characteristics according to the following five-response scale.
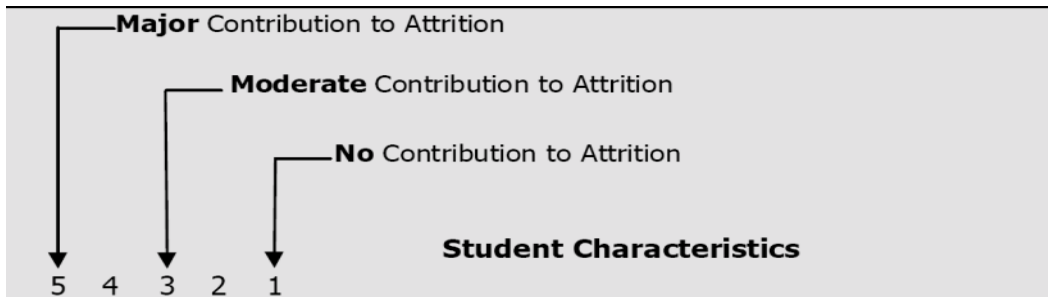
Major Contribution to Attrition

Moderate Contribution to Attrition

No Contribution to Attrition

Student Characteristics

5   4   3   2   1

Table 7
**STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS MAKING THE GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO ATTRITION
ALL SURVEY INSTITUTIONS**

Student Characteristics (Item Number)	Mean Contribution
Inadequate preparation for college-level work (1)	4.52
Poor study habits (19)	4.05
Weak commitment to earning a degree (9)	4.00
Inadequate financial resources (8)	3.86
Lack of educational aspirations and goals (2)	3.81
First-generation to attend college (3)	3.81
Lack of motivation to succeed (10)	3.71

Table 8
**STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS MAKING THE GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO ATTRITION
FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC SURVEY INSTITUTIONS**

Student Characteristics (Item Number)	Mean Contribution
Inadequate preparation for college-level work (1)	4.25
Inadequate financial resources (8)	4.25
Poor study habits (19)	3.88
Weak commitment to earning a degree (9)	3.63
Inadequate personal coping skills (20)	3.63

Table 9
STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS MAKING THE GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO ATTRITION
TWO-YEAR PUBLIC SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Student Characteristics (Item Number)	Mean Contribution
Inadequate preparation for college-level work (1)	4.69
Weak commitment to earning a degree (9)	4.23
Poor study skills	4.15
Lack of educational aspirations and goals (2)	4.08
First-generation to attend college (3)	4.08

Table 10
STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS MAKING THE LEAST CONTRIBUTION TO ATTRITION
ALL SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Student Characteristics (Item Number)	Mean Contribution
Distance from permanent home (18)	1.81
Mental or emotional health problems (12)	2.19
Physical health problems (11)	2.38
Poor social integration - peer group interaction, extracurricular activities (16)	2.38

Table 11
STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS MAKING THE LEAST CONTRIBUTION TO ATTRITION
FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Student Characteristics (Item Number)	Mean Contribution
Mental or emotional health problems (12)	2.13
Distance from permanent home (18)	2.25
Indecision about major (6)	2.38
Indecision about career goal (7)	2.50
Physical health problems (11)	2.50

Table 12
STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS MAKING THE LEAST CONTRIBUTION TO ATTRITION
TWO-YEAR PUBLIC SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Institutional Issues, characteristics, and Services (Item Number)	Mean for Factor
Distance from permanent home (18)	1.54
Mental or emotional health problems (12)	2.23
Poor social integration (peer group interaction, extracurricular activities (16)	2.23
Physical health problems (11)	2.31
Poor academic integration (17)	2.69

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS
ALL SURVEY COLLEGES

SURVEY Question: To what degree do each of the student characteristics below contribute to attrition on your campus?

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS
ALL SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

	Mean All Institutions
1. Inadequate preparation for college-level work	4.50
2. Lack of educational aspirations and goals	3.85
3. First-generation to attend college	3.75
4. Commuting/living off campus	2.90
5. Socio-economic disadvantage	3.45
6. Indecision about major	2.95
7. Indecision about career goal	3.10
8. Inadequate financial resources	3.90
9. Weak commitment to earning a degree	4.05
10. Lack of motivation to succeed	3.80
11. Physical health problems	2.40
12. Mental or emotional health problems	2.15
13. Lack of support from significant others (e.g., spouse, parents, peers)	3.05
14. Too many family demands	3.55
15. Too many job demands	3.35
16. Poor social integration (peer group interaction, extracurricular activities)	2.40
17. Poor academic integration	2.90
18. Distance from permanent home	1.80
19. Poor study skills	4.05
20. Inadequate personal coping skills	3.50

Section D: Retention Practices

In Section D, respondents were given the following instructions.

Listed below is a series of programs, services, and curricular offerings, and interventions that may make a contribution to retention on your campus. First indicate if the feature is or is not offered on your campus. Then, if the feature is offered, indicate the degree to which you think it contributes to retention on your campus. The format for Section D items follows.
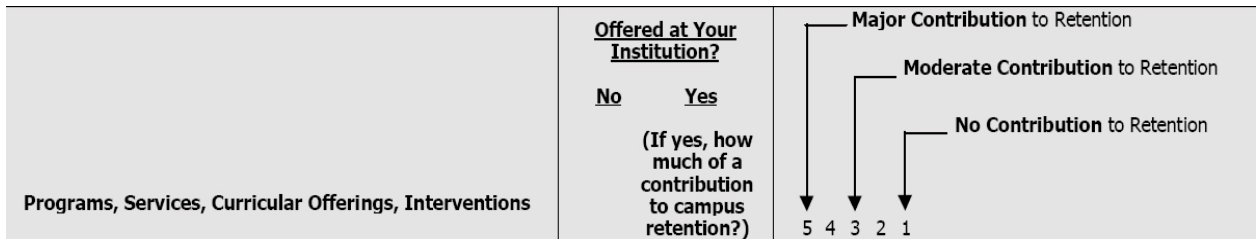
Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions	Offered at Your Institution? No Yes (If yes, how much of a contribution to campus retention?)	Major Contribution to Retention / Moderate Contribution to Retention / No Contribution to Retention 5 4 3 2 1

Table 13
MOST COMMON RETENTION PRACTICES
ALL SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions (Item Number)	Percentage of Campuses Reporting the Practice
Health and wellness course/program (77)	100%
Pre-enrollment orientation (1)	91
Advising interventions with selected student populations (6)	91
Advisor training (7)	91
Application of technology in advising (13)	91
Outcomes assessment (17)	91
Individual career counseling services (28)	91
Remedial/developmental coursework (required) (34)	91
Fraternities/sororities (65)	91
Academic clubs (67)	91
Honor students (75)	82

Table 14
MOST COMMON RETENTION PRACTICES
FOUR YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions (Item Number)	Percentage of Campuses Reporting the Practice
Freshman Seminar/university – credit (5)	100
Classroom assessment (14)	100
Outcomes assessment (17)	100
Mathematics center/lab (37)	100
Writing center/lab (38)	100
Mid-term progress reports (44)	100
Faculty mentoring (50)	100
Instructional use of technology (55)	100
Recreational/intramurals (66)	100
Academic Clubs (67)	100
Cultural activities programs (68)	100

Table 15
MOST COMMON RETENTION PRACTICES
TWO-YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions (Item Number)	Percentage of Campuses Reporting the Practice
Remedial/developmental coursework – required (34)	100
Recreational/intramurals (66)	100
Academic Clubs (67)	100
Health and wellness course/program (77)	100
Pre-enrollment orientation (1)	92
Advisor training (7)	92
Application of technology to advising (13)	92
Course placement testing – mandated (15)	83
Course outcomes assessment (17)	83
Computer-assisted career guidance (29)	83
Instructional use of technology (55)	83
Residence hall programs (64)	83
Honor students (75)	83

Table 16
LEAST COMMON RETENTION PRACTICES
ALL SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions (Item Number)	Percentage of Campuses Reporting the Practice
Freshman Seminar/university 101 – non-credit (4)	5
Degree guarantee program (46)	5
Community member mentoring (52)	10
Commuter students (71)	10
Motivation assessment(s) (20)	14
Reading Center/lab (39)	14
Peer Mentoring (49)	14
Enhanced/modified faculty reward system (58)	14
Freshman interest groups (62)	14
Required on-campus housing for freshmen (80)	14

Table 17
LEAST COMMON RETENTION PRACTICES
FOUR- YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions (Item Number)	Percentage of Campuses Reporting the Practice
Extended freshman orientation – credit (3)	13
Centers that combine advisements and counseling with career planning and placement (11)	13
Learning styles inventory(ies) (19)	13
Job shadowing (30)	13
Degree guarantee program (46)	13
Community member mentoring (52)	13
Commuter students (71)	13
Integration of advising with first-year transition programs (9)	25
Motivation assessment(s) (20)	25
Reading center/lab (39)	25
Peer Mentoring (49)	25

Table 18
LEAST COMMON RETENTION PRACTICES
TWO-YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions (Item Number)	Percentage of Campuses Reporting the Practice
Extended freshman orientation – credit (3)	8
Freshman Seminar/university 101 – non-credit (4)	8
Motivation assessment(s) (20)	8
Reading center/lab (39)	8
Peer Mentoring (49)	8
Community member mentoring (52)	8
Enhanced/modified faculty reward system (58)	8
Parent newsletter (59)	8
Commuter students (71)	8
Gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender students (72)	8
Women (73)	8
Personal coping skills course/program (78)	8

Table 19
PRACTICES WITH THE GREATEST MEAN CONTRIBUTION TO RETENTION
ALL SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions (Item Number)	Mean *Contribution
Advising interventions with selected student populations (6)	3.00
Remedial/developmental coursework – required (34)	2.95
Pre-enrollment orientation (1)	2.90
Academic clubs (67)	2.90
Honor students (75)	2.90
Advisor training (7)	2.71
Recreation/intramurals (66)	2.71
Tutoring program (41)	2.43
Residence hall programs (64)	2.38
Cultural activities program (68)	2.38

* Means were considered when a minimum of 70% of institutions reported the retention practice.

Table 20
**PRACTICES WITH THE GREATEST MEAN CONTRIBUTION TO RETENTION
FOUR-YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS**

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions (Item Number)	Mean Contribution*
Honor students (75)	4.29
Advising interventions with selected student populations (6)	4.17
Pre-enrollment orientation (1)	3.71
Advisor training (7)	3.67
Extended freshman orientation – non-credit (2)	3.43
Time management course/program (76)	3.17
Classroom assessment (14)	3.13
Library orientation, workshop, and/or course (81)	3.00
Application of technology to advising (13)	2.86
Health and wellness course/program (77)	2.83

* Means were considered when a minimum of 70% of institutions reported the retention practice.

Table 21
**PRACTICES WITH THE GREATEST MEAN CONTRIBUTION TO RETENTION
TWO-YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS**

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions (Item Number)	Mean Contribution*
Tutoring program (41)	4.5
Remedial/developmental coursework – required (34)	4.2
Advising interventions with selected student populations (6)	3.8
Center that combines advisement and counseling with career planning and placement (11)	3.6
Advisor manual/handbook (12)	3.6
Pre-enrollment orientation (1)	3.5
Advisor training (7)	3.5
Academic clubs (67)	3.5
Course placement testing –mandated (15)	3.3
Internships (26)	3.3
Study skills course, program, or center (42)	3.3

* Means were considered when a minimum of 70% of institutions reported the retention practice.

Table 22
PRACTICES WITH THE LOWEST MEAN CONTRIBUTION TO RETENTION
ALL SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions (Item Number)	Mean Contribution
Job shadowing (30))	.81
Interest inventory(ies) (22)	1.24
Centers that combine advisement and counseling with career planning and placement (11)	1.57
Individual career counseling services (28)	1.67
Instructional use of technology (55)	1.81
Career development workshops or courses (25)	1.95

* Means were considered when a minimum of 70% of institutions reported the retention practice.

Table 23
PRACTICES WITH THE LOWEST MEAN CONTRIBUTION TO RETENTION
FOUR-YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions (Item Number)	Mean Contribution
Summer bridge program (33)	1.43
Freshman Seminar/university 101 – credit (5)	1.63
Interest inventory(ies) (22)	1.83
Career development workshops or courses (25)	1.86
Individual career counseling services (28)	2.00
Computer-assisted career guidance (29)	2.00

* Means were considered when a minimum of 70% of institutions reported the retention practice.

Table 24
PRACTICES WITH THE LOWEST MEAN CONTRIBUTION TO RETENTION
TWO-YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions (Item Number)	Mean Contribution
Interest inventory(ies) (22)	1.9
Individual career counseling services (28)	2.3
Individual career counseling services (28)	2.5
Outcomes assessment (17)	2.6
Health wellness course/program (77)	2.7

* Means were considered when a minimum of 70% of institutions reported the retention practice.

RETENTION PRACTICES
ALL SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

	All Survey Institutions	
	% YES Report	Mean
First-Year Programs		
1. Pre-enrollment orientation	91	2.90
2. Extended freshman orientation (non-credit)	9	1.33
3. Extended freshman orientation (credit)	36	0.81
4. Freshman Seminar/university 101 (non-credit)	0	0.00
5. Freshman Seminar/university 101 (credit)	18	0.95
Academic Advising Program		
6. Advising interventions with selected student populations	91	3.00
7. Advisor training	91	2.71
8. Increased advising staff	36	1.48
9. Integration of advising with first-year transition programs	18	0.57
10. Academic advising centers	45	1.52
11. Centers that combine advisement and counseling with career Planning and placement	73	1.57
12. Advisor manual/handbook	73	2.05
13. Application of technology to advising	82	2.24
Assessment Programs		
14 Classroom assessment	64	2.14
15. Course placement testing (mandated)	91	2.19
16. Course placement testing (recommended)	18	1.19
17. Outcomes assessment	91	2.19
18. Diagnostic academic skills test(s)	36	0.90
19. Learning styles inventory(ies)	36	0.43
20. Motivation assessment(s)	9	0.05
21. Values inventory(ies)	18	0.33
22. Interest inventory(ies)	73	1.24
23. Vocational aptitude test(s)	45	1.29
24. Personality test(s)	27	0.62
Career Planning and Placement Programs		
25. Career development workshops or courses	73	1.95
26. Internships	82	2.05
27. Cooperative education	82	2.00
28. Individual career counseling services	91	1.67
29. Computer-assisted career guidance	55	1.76
30. Job shadowing	73	0.81
Learning Assistance/Academic Support/Intervention Programs		
31.Learning communities	18	1.05

22

32. Supplemental instruction	55	1.33
33. Summer bridge program	9	0.71
34. Remedial/developmental coursework (required)	91	2.95
35. Remedial/developmental coursework (mandated)	27	1.38
36. Comprehensive learning assistance center/lab	36	1.48
37. Mathematics center/lab	55	2.10
38. Writing center/lab	36	1.43
39. Reading center/lab	9	0.24
40. Foreign language center/lab	9	0.90
41. Tutoring program	73	2.43
42.Study skills course, program, or center	82	2.05
43. Early warning system	64	1.81
44. Mid-term progress reports	82	2.19
45. Performance contracts for students in academic difficulty	9	0.57
46. Degree guarantee program	0	0.10
47. Organized student study groups	27	0.81
48. Service learning programs	36	0.81
Mentoring Programs		
49. Peer mentoring	9	0.48
50. Faculty mentoring	45	1.52
51. Staff mentoring	18	0.86
52. Community member mentoring	9	0.24
Faculty Development Programs		
53. Teaching techniques	73	2.10
54. Assessing student performance	36	0.00
55. Instructional use of technology	73	1.81
56. Writing across the curriculum	36	1.10
57. Interdisciplinary courses	18	0.95
58. Enhanced/modified faculty reward system	0	0.29
Parent Programs		
59. Parent newsletter	9	0.62
60. Parent orientation	64	2.14
61. Advisory group	27	0.86
Campus Programs		
62. Freshman interest groups	0	0.57
63. Diversity information training	27	0.81
64. Residence hall programs	82	2.38
65. Fraternities/sororities	0	1.10
66. Recreational/intramurals	91	2.71
67. Academic clubs	91	2.90
68. Cultural activities programs	64	1.86
69. Leadership development	64	2.38
Programs for Sub-populations		
70. Adult students	36	0.95

71. Commuter students	0	0.14
72. Gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender students	9	0.43
73. Women	9	0.81
74. Racial/ethnic minorities	45	1.48
75. Honor students	91	2.90
Additional Activities		
76. Time management course/program	36	1.62
77. Health and wellness course/program	100	2.24
78. Personal coping skills course/program	9	0.90
79. Social skills course/program	18	0.57
80. Required on-campus housing for freshmen	0	0.48
81. Library orientation, workshop, and/or course	82	2.24
82. Motivation and goal setting workshop/program	18	0.76

Section E: Program with Greatest Impact on Retention

In this section, respondents were asked to review all 82 retention programs, services, curricular offerings, and interventions and identify the three practices having the greatest impact on student retention. Reported below are the percentage of campus respondents who identified a particular practice among those three choices.

Table 25
**PROGRAMS WITH THE GREATEST IMPACT ON RETENTION
ALL SURVEY INSTITUTIONS**

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions (Item Number)	Percentage of Institutions Reporting the Practice
Pre-enrollment orientation (10	28.5
Course placement – mandated (15)	28.5
Advising interventions with selected student populations (6)	23.8
Remedial/developmental coursework – required (34)	23.8
Academic advising centers (10)	14.2
Freshman Seminar/university 101 – credit (5)	9.5
Supplemental instruction (32)	9.5
Comprehensive learning assistance center/lab (36)	9.5
Mathematics center/lab (37)	9.5

OVERVIEW AND RESULTS

Student retention and degree completion has moved to the forefront of postsecondary education's priority list. This having being said, it was surprising to document that only 55 percent of the responding institutions in the survey have designated an individual to coordinate retention activities. A somewhat heartening statistic in the survey was that 45 percent of the institutions indicated that the individual responsible for retention on their respective campuses held the title of Vice President or Vice Chancellor. Based on the survey responses the apparent lack of a visible individual or team could send conflicting signals to the faculty, staff and students about the priority of retention. Retention is vital to the success of the student as well as the institution.

The four-year institutions and the two-year public institutions showed little commonality in a review of the top five contributors to attrition. Factors identified in the survey for the four-year as making the greatest contribution to attrition were driven by social environment, money, institutional fit , student's living environment and job opportunities. Two-year institutions' survey responses identified academic resources, academic engagement and attitudes of the faculty as factors that made the greatest impact on attrition.

The responding institutions unanimously expressed concerns about retention, but only a few indicated that they had conducted a thorough systematic analysis of the characteristics of their students. Multiple assessment instruments were identified by the 21 institutions visited. The assessment instruments were used to assess academic performance, student opinion and attitudes, and academic preparation. The most commonly used assessment instruments were ACT, COMPASS, ACCUPLACER, National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE), and home-grown surveys.

Advising was a constant on all campuses. The perceived commitment to formal training and professional development of advisors varied. At all institutions, faculty were used in some capacity during the advising process.

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The four-year institutions more often used a combination of faculty advisor and an advising center, whereas, the two-year institutions relied more on solely traditional faculty advising.

Approximately 30 percent of the institutions visited indicated the use of a student engagement survey to assess students at the end of the semester (NSSE and Student Engagement Survey). Remedial/developmental education existed on all campuses, but in an array of disciplines. Mandatory remedial/developmental education appeared to be a major contributor to retention (94.4 percent) according to all respondents of the survey. Mid-term progress reports were utilized by the institutions as an early alert signal. Site visits identified absences as another factor that sparked an early alert system indicating that the student may be in trouble. The early alert system was also in place to respond to low GPA's and faculty referral at all institutions.

An orientation process is conducted by all of the institutions responding to the survey. The information obtained from the site visits indicates a variance in length and delivery mode for orientation. The length of orientation varied from one-half day to a week. On-line orientations were more prevalent at the two-year institutions.

Change does not occur instantly or without adjustment. Fostering the development of short-term and long-term goals to retain students should be fully considered and realistic. Strategies implemented to improve retention may not produce immediate improvement, but will allow the institution the opportunity to assess and manipulate the practices in place to improve the process.

Feasibility is critical to the creation and implementation of short and long-term goals. The development and implementation of retention strategies must be viewed as a constantly changing process involving analysis, implementation, and assessment. Assessments of existing practices drive the vehicle of change. Assessment provides data to support development of new strategies. In order to constantly strive to improve the process, unvarying care

is necessary. Constant assessment of retention strategies will assist the institution in creating realistic modifications to improve the process.

Multiple institutions visited were utilizing various retention strategies, such as Freshman Year Experience, University 101, Freshmen Seminars, and learning communities to improve retention on their campuses. All of the campuses implementing the aforementioned retention strategies indicated the use of some form of assessment at the end of the semester. The campuses did not indicate whether they had established or identified short-or long-term goals for this population of students. Creating goals for institutions should include targeted benchmarks for selected programs and for selected groups of students (ACT, 2004).

The 19 postsecondary education institutions that responded to the survey as well as the 21 postsecondary education institutions visited by Pearl Pennington, Director of Student Affairs and William "Bill" Smith (retired) of the Office of Academic and Student Affairs, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, indicated a massive amount of activity toward improving retention on their respective campuses inclusive of assessment and engagement of their students. All institutions indicated an understanding of the importance of retention and are engaged in attacking the problem with varying formal and informal processes, activities, and strategies.

BEST PRACTICES IN RETENTION - RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations for enhancing student retention include activities and strategies that are currently underway on institutional campuses in some form or fashion. The proposed recommendations are based on research and survey data and some adaptations from helpful sources such as, *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Students: A handbook for improving the first year of college* (2005), *Student Success in College*: *Conditions that matter* (2005), *Priorities* (2003), Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, Number 21: Spring 2003, p.5., Washington, D.C. The work of M. Lee Upcraft, John Gardner, Betsy O. Barefoot and Associates was especially helpful in development of the recommendations.

1. *Formal institutional commitment and investment in student retention*
   - Designate a visible individual and/or department to coordinate a campus-wide planning team.
   - Conduct a systematic analysis of the characteristics of students.
   - Create a campus-wide strategic plan to improve existing practices, processes, and policies to improve retention. Develop a retention blueprint for student success to meet the needs of unique student population.
   - Develop and implement a system-wide policy prioritizing retention.
   - Establish realistic short-term and long-term retention, progression, and completion goals.
   - Develop a strategic framework to inform students, faculty, student support, and administrators about policies and strategies at the institution.
   - Make persistence and degree completion a high priority for institutions by requiring colleges and universities to include data in annual reports to system offices.

2. *Establish formal gatherings of various campus constituency groups. Cultivate an environment that encourages and supports cross-divisional collaboration.*

    - Cultivate a shared responsibility for educational quality and student success between faculty and administrators on the postsecondary campus.
    - Create a culture that supports training and provides professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.
    - Create a culture that encourages idea generation, pilot projects, and experimentation. Accept and encourage innovation as status quo and reward risk takers.
    - Recognize and reward excellence in teaching and student advising.
    - Develop and implement a rewards system for effective programs and practices at both the institutional and system level.
    - Craft effective partnerships between the student, faculty, and student service professionals.

3. *Make retention synonymous with quality and part of the overall institutional culture.*

    - Foster an environment in which faculty and staff understand that retention is a campus-wide responsibility.
    - Build persistence into normal everyday behavior of the postsecondary campus.
    - Change the status quo – Everyone should believe that student failure is not an option; intolerance to failure should be the norm not the exception.
    - Cultivate an intentional focus on student success. Commit substantial existing campus resources, both human and financial.
    - Foster leadership that is multidirectional; top-down, bottom-up, and lateral. (Leadership must be nurtured and developed from within.)

4. *Identify institutional policies and processes to provide both academic and social support inside and outside the classroom.*
   - Develop and implement strategies that impact the student's entire collegiate career. (Do not make first-to-second-year retention strategies the sole focus of the institutional retention planning team's efforts.)
   - Develop policies which view the first year as an important part of the long process of cultural, social, and academic assimilation into the world of postsecondary education.
   - Instill responsibility for student success during the hiring and orientation processes for new faculty and staff.

5. *Evaluation of students should drive assessment, evaluation, and modification of an institution's retention model and strategies.*
   - Develop a systematic approach for evaluating all programs and services.
   - Provide institutional assessment data to the entire campus on a continuous basis.
   - Develop student-driven institutional retention strategies. (Place the focus on what is best for the student.)

6. *Monitor and evaluate constantly to ensure the needs of the student population are being met.*
   - Conduct regular assessments and evaluations of institutional efforts.
   - Allow data to drive decisions relating to retention and student success.
   - Identify factors, both institutional and external, impeding performance and persistence.

7. *Evaluate and assess performance and retention on campus.*
   - Undertake critical, holistic, systematic, and on-going analysis of student experiences at the institutional level.
   - Make assessment an essential component of moving toward and sustaining excellence. (The institutional use of continuous assessment data should serve as documentation for institutional improvement.)

- Facilitate a steady inward gaze. You should be constantly changing to meet the needs of constantly changing students.

8. *Develop a student-centered environment.*

    - Create constant customer service training opportunities for faculty and staff.

    - Provide assistance to students in identifying career goals and interests early to increase commitment.

    - Identify, for the student and the campus, clearly marked pathways to student success.

    - Impress upon students, faculty, and administrators the need to share an unshakable focus on student learning and promote a living mission and a lived educational philosophy.

9. *Provide transition assistance programs and services.*

    - Design orientation sessions to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

    - Offer first-year seminars and workshops on time management, study skills, and career exploration.

    - Require students to address deficiencies upon enrollment. For example, students should take pre-college coursework during the first term of enrollment.

    - Provide support for the first-year, including induction, adjustment, and skill support.

    - Take a realistic view of the capabilities of the institution and of students. Do not over-rate the knowledge and skills of students or the success and effectiveness of institutional practices.

    - Conduct an accurate assessment of students' knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses.

    - Develop early alert models for students to provide "red flags" indicating the need for assistance.

    - Identify at-risk students and develop proactive intervention methods.

- Offer academic support services such as tutoring centers, learning centers, math labs, language labs, etc.
- Provide opportunities for peer tutoring and supplemental instruction for classes that have historically proven to be difficult.

10. *Promote a student-focused approach (systematic and holistic introduction of effective practices).*

- Promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.
- Cultivate an environment that keeps the barriers that affect student success by helping students remain focused on the ultimate goal of degree completion.
- Develop strategies and practices to engage non-traditional students, such as distance learners, commuters and adult learners.
- Provide a strong academic advising process.
- Develop coordinated, uniform, university-wide responses to transition issues.
- Communicate the message that postsecondary institutions must understand the experiences of their own students.
- Use a strategic approach to improving retention and facilitating significant change.
- Break down "silos" by employing organizational learning models.
- Facilitate seamless exchange of information and learning across different areas of the institution.
- Focus on the nexus of student and institutional characteristics.
- Create a first-year experience that is a multiplicity of experiences.

11. *Develop an intellectual culture that students can recognize. The culture should be intellectually challenging, but inclusive, rather than exclusive, to students.*

- Create a culture of positive regard for even the most at-risk students and a belief in the merits of a need for developmental education.
- Value students, demonstrate respect for a realistic acceptance of students, and meet them where they are, while holding them to high levels of performance.
- Strengthen existing academic and student affairs partnerships to deliver educationally purposeful out-of-class activities. The activities should address cognitive and developmental aspects of the student.
- Help students become autonomous learners by promoting flexible learning environments.
- Offer a variety of student-centered, active learning, small group activities within larger classrooms, learning communities, or via technology, etc.

12. *Foster a culture that engages faculty (faculty engagement is critical to the success of any retention strategy).*
- Engage faculty from the point of conception to play a major role in conception on strategies and activities. (The initial implementation of strategies and practices will be sustained if the institution has buy-in from faculty.)
- Ensure dialogue between students and staff, and facilitate inter-student interaction.
- Develop a focus on the structure, organization, and teachers of first-year courses because this is critical to student success.
- Identify and implement pedagogies to meet multiple learning styles of students.
- Foster an environment that promotes active and collaborative learning; enriching educational experiences; a supportive campus environment; student interaction with faculty members; learning communities; service learning, and first-year seminars.

13. *Foster and develop state-level collaborations.*

- Develop and implement a high school feedback report.

- Create college readiness taskforces for entry-level college courses.

- Support the creation of a P-16 council.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

Betsy Barefoot in *Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College* (2005) identifies the following steps for postsecondary educational institutions wanting to improve student retention on higher education campuses. The steps have been modified to exclude participation in the First-Year Experience program but the proposed steps identified below should help the institution with revisiting and developing new strategies to improve student retention.

- **Identify a campus-wide taskforce to focus on retention.**

- **Conduct a major self-study of the current retention strategies and policies using a campus-wide taskforce**

- **Set institutional goals and expectations**

- **Identify processes and policies to accomplish goals and meet expectations**

- **Prepare a formal retention report to share with students, faculty, administrators, community and the system office.**

- **Cultivate the environment so that the retention process is flexible. Encourage and provide a venue for sharing of ideas across the campus.**

SAMPLE OF BASIC INITIAL QUESTIONS FOR RETENTION TASK FORCE

The perplexing dilemma of student retention in postsecondary education has yet to be solved. The following questions identified by W. S. Swail (2006, January), in a publication by The Educational Policy Institute titled *Student Success* may serve as a jumping off point for a retention taskforce. The retention process should be flexible, so an institution should feel free to expand, modify, or delete the following questions to fit the needs of the particular institution (Swail, 2006). The process to improve student retention must be embraced and adopted by administrators, faculty, and staff of the institution in order to be productive.

1. **Does the campus as a whole understand the very complex issue of student retention and persistence?**

2. **Do you understand why students leave?**

3. **Do you know what the institution is already doing to ameliorate the issues?**

4. **Do you know how effective these programs or strategies are?**

5. **Do you know what programs and strategies may be worth considering?**

6. **Do you have evidence that there exists significant support on campus to do something about this issue? Do you understand the institutional change process?**

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INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES, CHARACTERISTICS, AND SERVICES
FOUR-YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Survey Question: To what degree is each of the following institutional issues, characteristics, or services a factor contributing to attrition on your campus?

	Mean
1. Student employment opportunities	3.00
2. Extracurricular programs	2.38
3. Curriculum issues	2.25
4. Quality of teaching	1.63
5. Academic advising	2.63
6. Amount of financial aid available to students	3.50
7. Financial aid services	2.25
8. Admission practices/requirements	2.63
9. Student-institution "fit"	2.88
10. Personal counseling services	1.75
11. Career counseling services	2.00
12. Student involvement in campus life	2.63
13. Attitude of faculty toward students	3.00
14. Attitude of staff toward students	2.38
15. Academic support services – learning centers, similar resources	2.25
16. Rules and regulations governing student behavior	1.75
17. Residence halls	2.75
18. Other on-campus housing	1.88
19. Personal contact between students and faculty	1.88
20. Cultural environment	2.50
21. Social environment	3.25
22. Intellectual stimulation or challenge	2.13
23. Student engagement in classroom (active learning)	2.38
24. The number and variety of courses offered.	2.38

Appendix 2
Table A
INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES, CHARACTERISTICS, AND SERVICES
TWO-YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

Survey Question: To what degree is each of the following institutional issues, characteristics, or services a factor contributing to attrition on your campus?

	Mean
1. Student employment opportunities	3.36
2. Extracurricular programs	2.45
3. Curriculum issues	2.55
4. Quality of teaching	2.45
5. Academic advising	2.55
6. Amount of financial aid available to students	3.18
7. Financial aid services	3.00
8. Admission practices/requirements	2.36
9. Student-institution "fit"	2.45
10. Personal counseling services	2.91
11. Career counseling services	2.45
12. Student involvement in campus life	2.64
13. Attitude of faculty toward students	3.09
14. Attitude of staff toward students	2.64
15. Academic support services – learning centers, similar resources	3.64
16. Rules and regulations governing student behavior	2.00
17. Residence halls	3.27
18. Other on-campus housing	1.45
19. Personal contact between students and faculty	2.91
20. Cultural environment	2.45
21. Social environment	2.36
22. Intellectual stimulation or challenge	2.00
23. Student engagement in classroom (active learning)	3.18
24. The number and variety of courses offered.	2.18

Appendix 3
Table B
STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS
FOUR-YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

SURVEY Question: To what degree do each of the student characteristics below contribute to attrition on your campus?

	Mean
1. Inadequate preparation for college-level work	4.25
2. Lack of educational aspirations and goals	3.38
3. First-generation to attend college	3.38
4. Commuting/living off campus	2.63
5. Socio-economic disadvantage	2.88
6. Indecision about major	2.38
7. Indecision about career goal	2.50
8. Inadequate financial resources	4.25
9. Weak commitment to earning a degree	3.63
10. Lack of motivation to succeed	3.38
11. Physical health problems	2.50
12. Mental or emotional health problems	2.13
13. Lack of support from significant others (e.g., spouse, parents, peers)	2.75
14. Too many family demands	3.25
15. Too many job demands	3.00
16. Poor social integration (peer group interaction, extracurricular activities)	2.63
17. Poor academic integration	3.13
18. Distance from permanent home	2.25
19. Poor study skills	3.88
20. Inadequate personal coping skills	3.63

Appendix 4
Table B
STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS
TWO-YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

SURVEY Question: To what degree do each of the student characteristics below contribute to attrition on your campus?

	Mean
1. Inadequate preparation for college-level work	4.69
2. Lack of educational aspirations and goals	4.08
3. First-generation to attend college	4.08
4. Commuting/living off campus	3.00
5. Socio-economic disadvantage	3.77
6. Indecision about major	3.23
7. Indecision about career goal	3.23
8. Inadequate financial resources	3.62
9. Weak commitment to earning a degree	4.23
10. Lack of motivation to succeed	3.92
11. Physical health problems	2.31
12. Mental or emotional health problems	2.23
13. Lack of support from significant others (e.g., spouse, parents, peers)	3.23
14. Too many family demands	3.69
15. Too many job demands	3.62
16. Poor social integration (peer group interaction, extracurricular activities)	2.23
17. Poor academic integration	2.69
18. Distance from permanent home	1.54
19. Poor study skills	4.15
20. Inadequate personal coping skills	3.31

Appendix 5
RETENTION PRACTICES
FOUR-YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

	Survey Institutions	
	% Report	Mean
First-Year Programs		
1. Pre-enrollment orientation	88	3.71
2. Extended freshman orientation (non-credit)	88	3.43
3. Extended freshman orientation (credit)	13	4.00
4. Freshman Seminar/university 101 (non-credit)	0	.
5. Freshman Seminar/university 101 (credit)	100	1.63
Academic Advising Program		
6. Advising interventions with selected student populations	75	4.17
7. Advisor training	75	3.67
8. Increased advising staff	50	3.75
9. Integration of advising with first-year transition programs	25	3.00
10. Academic advising centers	63	3.80
11. Centers that combine advisement and counseling with career Planning and placement	13	4.00
12. Advisor manual/handbook	50	3.50
13. Application of technology to advising	88	2.86
Assessment Programs		
14 Classroom assessment	100	3.13
15. Course placement testing (mandated)	50	3.25
16. Course placement testing (recommended)	63	2.60
17. Outcomes assessment	100	2.50
18. Diagnostic academic skills test(s)	38	2.67
19. Learning styles inventory(ies)	13	3.00
20. Motivation assessment(s)	25	0.00
21. Values inventory(ies)	38	1.33
22. Interest inventory(ies)	75	1.83
23. Vocational aptitude test(s)	63	2.20
24. Personality test(s)	38	2.00
Career Planning and Placement Programs		
25. Career development workshops or courses	88	1.86
26. Internships	88	2.43
27. Cooperative education	50	3.75
28. Individual career counseling services	88	2.00
29. Computer-assisted career guidance	75	2.00
30. Job shadowing	13	2.00
Learning Assistance/Academic Support/Intervention Programs		
31.Learning communities	63	3.20

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32. Supplemental instruction	38	2.67
33. Summer bridge program	88	1.43
34. Remedial/developmental coursework (required)	88	2.86
35. Remedial/developmental coursework (mandated)	75	2.00
36. Comprehensive learning assistance center/lab	63	1.60
37. Mathematics center/lab	100	2.38
38. Writing center/lab	100	2.13
39. Reading center/lab	25	1.50
40. Foreign language center/lab	88	2.00
41. Tutoring program	88	2.14
42.Study skills course, program, or center	75	2.17
43. Early warning system	63	2.20
44. Mid-term progress reports	100	2.13
45. Performance contracts for students in academic difficulty	50	2.50
46. Degree guarantee program	13	2.00
47. Organized student study groups	38	2.33
48. Service learning programs	50	1.50
Mentoring Programs		
49. Peer mentoring	25	3.00
50. Faculty mentoring	100	2.38
51. Staff mentoring	63	2.20
52. Community member mentoring	13	1.00
Faculty Development Programs		
53. Teaching techniques	88	3.00
54. Assessing student performance	0	.
55. Instructional use of technology	100	2.88
56. Writing across the curriculum	75	2.67
57. Interdisciplinary courses	63	3.00
58. Enhanced/modified faculty reward system	25	3.00
Parent Programs		
59. Parent newsletter	38	3.33
60. Parent orientation	88	3.29
61. Advisory group	38	3.33
Campus Programs		
62. Freshman interest groups	38	4.00
63. Diversity information training	50	3.00
64. Residence hall programs	88	3.14
65. Fraternities/sororities	88	3.29
66. Recreational/intramurals	100	3.25
67. Academic clubs	100	3.25
68. Cultural activities programs	100	2.25
69. Leadership development	88	3.57
Programs for Sub-populations		
70. Adult students	38	3.00

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71. Commuter students	13	3.00
72. Gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender students	38	3.00
73. Women	50	3.00
74. Racial/ethnic minorities	63	3.40
75. Honor students	88	4.29
Additional Activities		
76. Time management course/program	75	3.17
77. Health and wellness course/program	75	2.83
78. Personal coping skills course/program	50	3.50
79. Social skills course/program	25	2.50
80. Required on-campus housing for freshmen	38	3.33
81. Library orientation, workshop, and/or course	75	3.00
82. Motivation and goal setting workshop/program	38	3.33

RETENTION PRACTICES
TWO-YEAR SURVEY INSTITUTIONS

	Survey Institutions	
	% YES Report	Mean
First-Year Programs		
1. Pre-enrollment orientation	91	3.50
2. Extended freshman orientation (non-credit)	9	4.00
3. Extended freshman orientation (credit)	36	3.25
4. Freshman Seminar/university 101 (non-credit)	0	.
5. Freshman Seminar/university 101 (credit)	18	3.50
Academic Advising Program		
6. Advising interventions with selected student populations	91	3.8
7. Advisor training	91	3.5
8. Increased advising staff	36	4.0
9. Integration of advising with first-year transition programs	18	3.0
10. Academic advising centers	45	2.6
11. Centers that combine advisement and counseling with career Planning and placement	73	3.6
12. Advisor manual/handbook	73	3.6
13. Application of technology to advising	82	3.0
Assessment Programs		
14 Classroom assessment	64	2.9
15. Course placement testing (mandated)	91	3.3
16. Course placement testing (recommended)	18	6.0
17. Outcomes assessment	91	2.6
18. Diagnostic academic skills test(s)	36	2.8
19. Learning styles inventory(ies)	36	1.5
20. Motivation assessment(s)	9	.
21. Values inventory(ies)	18	1.5
22. Interest inventory(ies)	73	1.9
23. Vocational aptitude test(s)	45	3.2
24. Personality test(s)	27	2.3
Career Planning and Placement Programs		
25. Career development workshops or courses	91	2.8
26. Internships	73	3.3
27. Cooperative education	82	3.0
28. Individual career counseling services	82	2.3
29. Computer-assisted career guidance	91	2.5
30. Job shadowing	55	2.5
Learning Assistance/Academic Support/Intervention Programs		
31.Learning communities	18	3.0

32. Supplemental instruction	55	3.3
33. Summer bridge program	9	5.0
34. Remedial/developmental coursework (required)	91	4.2
35. Remedial/developmental coursework (mandated)	27	5.7
36. Comprehensive learning assistance center/lab	36	5.8
37. Mathematics center/lab	55	4.2
38. Writing center/lab	36	3.3
39. Reading center/lab	9	2.0
40. Foreign language center/lab	9	5.0
41. Tutoring program	73	4.5
42.Study skills course, program, or center	82	3.3
43. Early warning system	64	3.9
44. Mid-term progress reports	82	3.2
45. Performance contracts for students in academic difficulty	9	2.0
46. Degree guarantee program	0	.
47. Organized student study groups	27	3.3
48. Service learning programs	36	2.8
Mentoring Programs		
49. Peer mentoring	9	4.0
50. Faculty mentoring	45	2.6
51. Staff mentoring	18	3.5
52. Community member mentoring	9	4.0
Faculty Development Programs		
53. Teaching techniques	73	2.9
54. Assessing student performance	36	.
55. Instructional use of technology	73	1.9
56. Writing across the curriculum	36	1.8
57. Interdisciplinary courses	18	2.5
58. Enhanced/modified faculty reward system	0	.
Parent Programs		
59. Parent newsletter	9	3.0
60. Parent orientation	64	3.1
61. Advisory group	27	2.7
Campus Programs		
62. Freshman interest groups	0	.
63. Diversity information training	27	1.7
64. Residence hall programs	82	3.1
65. Fraternities/sororities	0	.
66. Recreational/intramurals	91	3.1
67. Academic clubs	91	3.5
68. Cultural activities programs	64	3.0
69. Leadership development	64	3.6
Programs for Sub-populations		
70. Adult students	36	2.8

71. Commuter students	0	.
72. Gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender students	9	0.0
73. Women	9	5.0
74. Racial/ethnic minorities	45	2.8
75. Honor students	91	3.1
Additional Activities		
76. Time management course/program	36	3.8
77. Health and wellness course/program	100	2.7
78. Personal coping skills course/program	9	5.0
79. Social skills course/program	18	3.5
80. Required on-campus housing for freshmen	0	.
81. Library orientation, workshop, and/or course	82	3.2
82. Motivation and goal setting workshop/program	18	3.0

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Appendix 7

WHAT WORKS IN STUDENT RETENTION
Spring 2004

SECTION A

1. Is there an individual designated to coordinate retention activities on your campus?

   Yes ☐ (Go to item 2.)

   No ☐ (Skip to item 3.)

2. What is this individual's title?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Have you established a goal for the **retention of students** from the **first to second year**?

   Yes ☐ (Go to item 4.)

   No ☐ (Skip to item 6.)

4. Based on your current **first to second year** retention rate, what percentage increase have you established as your **retention goal**?

   _____ %

5. In how many years do you intend to reach this **retention goal**?

   _____ # of year(s)

6. Have you established a goal for **student degree completion** at your institution?

   Yes ☐ (Go to item 7.)

   No ☐ (Skip to Section B.)

7. Assuming a 6-year timeframe for 4-year institutions and a 3-year timeframe for 2-year institutions, what percentage increase have you established as your **student degree completion goal**?

   _____ %
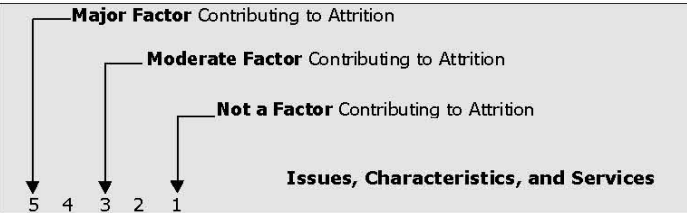
8. In how many years do you intend to reach this **student degree completion goal**?

   _____ # of year(s)

SECTION B: INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES, CHARACTERISTICS, AND SERVICES

To what degree is each of the following **institutional** issues, characteristics, or services a factor **contributing to attrition** on your campus?

- **Major Factor** Contributing to Attrition
- **Moderate Factor** Contributing to Attrition
- **Not a Factor** Contributing to Attrition

5 4 3 2 1	Issues, Characteristics, and Services	5 4 3 2 1	Issues, Characteristics, and Services
☐☐☐☐☐	1. student employment opportunities	☐☐☐☐☐	13. attitude of faculty toward students
☐☐☐☐☐	2. extracurricular programs	☐☐☐☐☐	14. attitude of staff toward students
☐☐☐☐☐	3. curriculum issues	☐☐☐☐☐	15. academic support services (learning centers, similar resources)
☐☐☐☐☐	4. quality of teaching	☐☐☐☐☐	16. rules and regulations governing student behavior
☐☐☐☐☐	5. academic advising	☐☐☐☐☐	17. residence halls
☐☐☐☐☐	6. amount of financial aid available to students	☐☐☐☐☐	18. other on-campus housing
☐☐☐☐☐	7. financial aid services	☐☐☐☐☐	19. personal contact between students and faculty
☐☐☐☐☐	8. admissions practices/requirements	☐☐☐☐☐	20. cultural environment
☐☐☐☐☐	9. student-institution "fit"	☐☐☐☐☐	21. social environment
☐☐☐☐☐	10. personal counseling services	☐☐☐☐☐	22. intellectual stimulation or challenge
☐☐☐☐☐	11. career exploration services	☐☐☐☐☐	23. student engagement in classroom (active learning)
☐☐☐☐☐	12. student involvement in campus life	☐☐☐☐☐	24. the number and variety of courses offered

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Best Practices in Retention
September 2008

SECTION C: STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

To what degree do each of the **student characteristics** below **contribute to attrition** on your campus?

	Student Characteristics		Student Characteristics
Major Contribution to Attrition → 5		Major Contribution to Attrition → 5	
Moderate Contribution to Attrition → 3		Moderate Contribution to Attrition → 3	
No Contribution to Attrition → 1		No Contribution to Attrition → 1	

5 4 3 2 1	Student Characteristics	5 4 3 2 1	Student Characteristics
☐☐☐☐☐	1. inadequate preparation for college-level work	☐☐☐☐☐	11. physical health problems
☐☐☐☐☐	2. lack of educational aspirations and goals	☐☐☐☐☐	12. mental or emotional health problems
☐☐☐☐☐	3. first-generation to attend college	☐☐☐☐☐	13. lack of support from significant others (e.g., spouse, parents, peers)
☐☐☐☐☐	4. commuting/living off-campus	☐☐☐☐☐	14. too many family demands
☐☐☐☐☐	5. socio-economic disadvantage	☐☐☐☐☐	15. too many job demands
☐☐☐☐☐	6. indecision about major	☐☐☐☐☐	16. poor social integration (peer group interaction, extracurricular activities)
☐☐☐☐☐	7. indecision about career goal	☐☐☐☐☐	17. poor academic integration
☐☐☐☐☐	8. inadequate financial resources	☐☐☐☐☐	18. distance from permanent home
☐☐☐☐☐	9. weak commitment to earning a degree	☐☐☐☐☐	19. poor study skills
☐☐☐☐☐	10. lack of motivation to succeed	☐☐☐☐☐	20. inadequate personal coping skills

SECTION D: ON-CAMPUS PRACTICES

Listed below is a series of programs, services, curricular offerings, and interventions that **may make a contribution to retention on your campus**. First indicate if the feature is or is not offered on your campus. Then, if a feature is offered, indicate the degree to which you think it contributes to retention on your campus.

Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions	Offered at Your Institution? No	Offered at Your Institution? Yes (If yes, how much of a contribution to campus retention?)	5 4 3 2 1
First-Year Programs			
1. pre-enrollment orientation	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
2. extended freshman orientation (non-credit)	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
3. extended freshman orientation (credit)	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
4. freshman seminar/university 101 (non-credit)	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
5. freshman seminar/university 101 (credit)	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
Academic Advising Programs			
6. advising interventions with selected student populations	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
7. advisor training	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
8. increased advising staff	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
9. integration of advising with first-year transition programs	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
10. academic advising centers	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
11. centers that combine advisement and counseling with career planning and placement	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
12. advisor manual/handbook	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
13. application of technology to advising	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
Assessment Programs			
14. classroom assessment	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
15. course placement testing (mandated)	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
16. course placement testing (recommended)	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
17. outcomes assessment	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
18. diagnostic academic skills test(s)	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐
19. learning styles inventory(ies)	☐	☐	→ ☐☐☐☐☐

Offered at Your Institution? — Major Contribution to Retention → 5; Moderate Contribution to Retention → 3; No Contribution to Retention → 1

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Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions	Offered at Your Institution?						
	No	Yes (If yes, how much of a contribution to campus retention?)	5	4	3	2	1

Major Contribution to Retention — 5
Moderate Contribution to Retention — 3
No Contribution to Retention — 1

Assessment Programs (continued)

	No	Yes	5	4	3	2	1
20. motivation assessment(s)	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. values inventory(ies)	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. interest inventory(ies)	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. vocational aptitude test(s)	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. personality test(s)	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Career Planning and Placement Programs

	No	Yes	5	4	3	2	1
25. career development workshops or courses	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. internships	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. cooperative education	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. individual career counseling services	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. computer-assisted career guidance	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. job shadowing	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Learning Assistance/Academic Support/Intervention Programs

	No	Yes	5	4	3	2	1
31. learning communities	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32. supplemental instruction	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33. summer bridge program	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34. remedial/developmental coursework (required)	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35. remedial/developmental coursework (recommended)	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36. comprehensive learning assistance center/lab	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37. mathematics center/lab	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38. writing center/lab	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39. reading center/lab	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40. foreign language center/lab	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41. tutoring program	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
42. study skills course, program, or center	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
43. early warning system	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
44. mid-term progress reports	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
45. performance contracts for students in academic difficulty	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
46. degree guarantee program	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
47. organized student study groups	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
48. service learning program	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Mentoring Programs

	No	Yes	5	4	3	2	1
49. peer mentoring	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
50. faculty mentoring	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
51. staff mentoring	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
52. community member mentoring	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Faculty Development Programs

	No	Yes	5	4	3	2	1
53. teaching techniques	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
54. assessing student performance							
55. instructional use of technology	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
56. writing across the curriculum	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
57. interdisciplinary courses	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
58. enhanced/modified faculty reward system	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Parent Programs

	No	Yes	5	4	3	2	1
59. parent newsletter	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
60. parent orientation	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
61. advisory group	☐	☐ →	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Programs, Services, Curricular Offerings, Interventions	Offered at Your Institution? No	Offered at Your Institution? Yes (If yes, how much of a contribution to campus retention?)	5	4	3	2	1

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Offered at Your Institution? No   Yes (If yes, how much of a contribution to campus retention?)

— Major Contribution to Retention
— Moderate Contribution to Retention
— No Contribution to Retention

5 4 3 2 1

Campus Programs

#	Item	No	Yes	5	4	3	2	1
62.	freshman interest groups (FIGS)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
63.	diversity information/training	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
64.	residence hall programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
65.	fraternities/sororities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
66.	recreation/intramurals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
67.	academic clubs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
68.	cultural activities program	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
69.	leadership development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Programs for Sub-populations

#	Item	No	Yes	5	4	3	2	1
70.	adult students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
71.	commuter students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
72.	gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
73.	women	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
74.	racial/ethnic minorities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
75.	honor students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Additional Activities

#	Item	No	Yes	5	4	3	2	1
76.	time management course/program	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
77.	health and wellness course/program	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
78.	personal coping skills course/program	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
79.	social skills course/program	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
80.	required on-campus housing for freshmen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
81.	library orientation, workshop, and/or course	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
82.	motivation and goal setting workshop/program	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other Programs/Offerings — Please specify.

83. _____ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
84. _____ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

SECTION E:

From the preceding 84 items (Section D, beginning on page 2), write the **item number and text** for the 1-3 items that have the **greatest impact** on retention on your campus.

Item # _____ Text _____
Item # _____ Text _____
Item # _____ Text _____

SECTION F:

Indicate if any of the ACT programs listed below are used on your campus to enhance your retention efforts?

☐ ACT Assessment   ☐ ASSET
☐ COMPASS/ESL   ☐ CAAP
☐ DISCOVER   ☐ Evaluation Survey/Services (ESS)

SECTION G:

Please provide the following information.

Name _____
Job Title _____
Mailing Address _____
_____
_____
Phone _____
Email _____

We will prepare a monograph reporting results of this survey and highlighting exemplary retention programs. Would you agree to a brief followup survey or phone call should we identify your retention program as one that we may include/reference in this publication?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Thank you!

Please return your completed survey in the enclosed envelope. (ACT, Inc., 65; 500 ACT Drive; Iowa City, IA 52243)

Best Practices in Retention
September 2008

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