

The Role of Academic Advising in Student Retention

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Have you heard this before?

- *When Bernie trailed behind me to my office after class looking crestfallen and slumped into the chair to study with some intensity the laces on his sneakers, I realized that a battle of epic proportion was being waged.*

Story continued

- *Bernie was dropping out of school because he didn't feel connected to the students in his classes.*
- *Perhaps his summer construction job, where he felt most comfortable, was his true calling.*
- *Bernie was shy and thought he couldn't compete with the more vocal students who, he considered, to be smarter.*

Plan

- *Together we devised a strategy of him to hear his own words in the classroom—a simple thing really.*
- *During the next class, he would ask a question about an upcoming assignment—something no one could judge him on.*

Result

- *Bernie found his voice and confidence*
- *He began discussing his knowledge of literature as well as the world of blue collar labor.*
- *He decided to stay and work out a roadmap to a BA in English.*
- *He graduated summa cum laude and then went on to a master's degree.*

Moral of the Story

- *It points to the power of advising, communicating, and mentoring in student success and persistence to graduation. It's about building relationships with our students, locating places where they get distracted, and helping them get reconnected.*

General Consensus

- *Across most studies of college persistence, students' precollege academic performance is a consistent and salient factor of college success.*

Academic and Social Integration

- Vincent Tinto believed that students needed to be integrated into the academic AND social environments of an institution in order to be successful in completing their education.

Social Integration

- The more a student feels socially integrated to their institution, the more commitment they feel.
- Those who consider leaving are those who feel the least satisfied with their social life and/or connection to the university.

Social Integration (continued)

- *In an additional study of 11,000 students at 18 undergraduate institutions, Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, and Gonyea (2007) found that even when controlling for background characteristics and previous performance, freshmen who were engaged in the campus community were significantly more likely to remain in a school.*

Drilling Down

- A study of over 12,000 students from 209 four year institutions found that students from lower socioeconomic statuses spent less time involved in student activities than those from higher socioeconomic statuses.

Nonacademic issues

- Bloom estimated that 25% of a student's college success is based on nonacademic issues.
- *Examples of these factors include such things as students' attitudes; motivation; level of self-confidence in an educational setting, degree to which students are willing to do academic work; degree to which students associate and feel connected with other students, university personnel, and the institution as a whole; and the degree to which a student is willing to seek help.*

Nonacademic Issues (continued)

- Tinto found that even dedicated students who have poor interactions with a college are less likely to persist.

Bottom Line

- The bottom line is that a student's initial dedication to an institution is directly related to their commitment level and their commitment level, obviously, affects the probability of matriculation and graduation.

Other Factors

- A meta-analysis done by Robbins (2004) indicated that, along with motivational goals, being connected socially was significantly related to persistence.

In-depth study

- A 2007 study of over 6,800 student from 23 four year institutions revealed the following:
 - ACT score, HSGPA, Socioeconomic status, and academic discipline correlated highly with first year GPA
 - Students who did poorly their first year were more likely to drop out
 - Commitment to college and social connectedness were also positively correlated with GPA

Students on Probation

- A large public university in the Southwest created a student success course just for students on academic probation
- One credit hour, graded, mandatory, course called, *Success in Science*, was created for full-time freshmen on probation

Students on Probation (continued)

- Course consisted of
 - Student development
 - Test-taking & note taking
 - University policies & procedures
 - Engagement with faculty, advisors, & other campus resources

Students on Probation (continued)

- Course was designed for 15-18 students
- Offered in the first half of the semester immediately following probation
- A total of 254 students registered for the course
- Course was taught by advisors

Student Development

- Take responsibility for actions
- Personal strengths & weaknesses
- Discover motivation and learning styles
- Create relationships with faculty, advisors, and peers
- Time management
- Goal and decision making strategies
- Personality type
- Major exploration

Student Development (continued)

- Student assignments included visiting with professors, advisors, student organizations, and student resources
- Students were then required to give a presentation that discussed each service and the benefits it provided
- Students were also required to purchase a planner which was checked by the instructor

Results

- 49% of students who took the course were off probation by the end of the first year (compared to 9% who did not take the course).
- 60% of students who took the course persisted to their second year (compared to 22% of those who did not take the course)
- 47% of students who took the course persisted to their third year (compared to 9% of those who did not take the course)

Results (continued)

- 40% of students who took the course persisted to their fourth year (compared to 6% of students who did not take the course)
- 25% of students who took the course graduated within 4-5 years (compared to 2% who did not take the course)

UC-Merced

- Any student with a D+ or lower on midterm grades had a block placed on their registration
- Hold is lifted upon participation in a one hour workshop (response rate = 95%)
- Students begin workshop by completing a self assessment (handout)
- This is followed by a “pep talk” from upperclassmen who attended the workshop as freshmen

UC-Merced (continued)

- Students break up into groups and create a daily plan of activities to assist them in remaining enrolled
- Each year, 75% of students who attended the workshop are eligible to enroll the following semester.

Example close to home

- Workshop for students on probation
 - Probation defined
 - Goal setting
 - One commitment
 - How do you spend your day?
 - Calculating GPA
 - Withdrawal
 - Incomplete
 - Note taking
 - Test Prep
 - Multiple choice
 - Essay
 - True/False

What can be done?

- Students with poor educational backgrounds, lack of motivation, or are socially isolated should be receive intervention via a support program
- Successful intervention programs include:
 - Early identification
 - A plan for continuous contacts
 - Discovering the exact issue(s)

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