RETENTION:  
A Selected Critical Inventory  
of  
Best Practices

“A time-honored approach to improving effectiveness is to learn what high-performing organizations ... do and then to determine which of their practices are replicable in other settings.” (Kuh, 2005)

“It’s my idea, I stole it first” (Ashleigh Brilliant)

“...there is no one magic bullet. Simply finding what appears to be a ‘best practice’ combination of programming and ‘plugging it in’ on campus is unlikely to be sufficient. Success instead means carefully reading the current campus culture, aligning people and programs, and making a collective commitment to be in it for the long haul. And sound presidential leadership is where all this begins.” (AASCU, 2005)

“With all due respect ... one might argue that we already have sufficient research on student success. What is missing ... is the ability to transform the knowledge that we have into practical knowledge” (Tinto, 2006).

“A rising tide of pride and quality will lift all boats.” (with apologies to Sean Lemass and JFK)

Prepared by  
Dr. Jeff Clark  

Fall 2007
HISTORICAL & FOUNDATIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS

1. Retention is itself not the goal, but is the “byproduct” or result of improved educational quality and the upgrading of the student experience (Noel, et al., 1985, p. 456 & p. 448; AASCU, 2005, p. 8) without the sacrificing of standards (Noel, et al., 1985, p. 456).

2. “The question institutions should first ask themselves is not how many students they should seek to retain, but how to best meet the educational responsibility they have assumed in admitting these students” (Tinto, 1985, p. 41).

3. Reduced attrition and increased retention is dependent upon a shift in perspective from an institutional to a student perspective (Noel, et al., 1985, p. 450), i.e., making a shift to putting student needs before institutional convenience (Noel, et al., 1985, p. 452).

4. Institutions send covert messages to students via policies and practices (Saluri, 1985, p. 441).

5. The retention factor considered most important by all types of institutions is “caring attitude of faculty and staff.”
   . . . The quality of the relationship between students and their professors is of critical importance in determining satisfaction with the institution.
   . . . sooner or later the retention issue touches most faculty
   . . . faculty-student interaction both academic and social is related to persistence (Toy, 1985, p.384 & 383).

6. “… faculty commitment may be especially important for … institutions where many students are commuters and faculty contact in the classroom may be the only ‘human face’ of the institution students typically see” (AASCU, 2005, p.11).

7. Successful institutions manifest and communicate pride including “a strongly held sense of institutional mission that recognizes the campus as distinctive or special.”  They see themselves as being in the “talent identification” and “talent development” business (AASCU, 2005, p.9).


9. Student’s admitted to the “people’s universities” tend to constitute student populations that are increasingly challenged by the college experience (AASCU, 2005, p.3).

10. “… the biggest single predictor of an institution’s graduation rate is the preparation level of its students” (AASCU, 2005, p.26).
11. “Pressuring students to stay when it is not in their best interests to do so is not only morally wrong but also counterproductive; it often results in an accelerated attrition rate” ... “Gimmicks to attract and retain students ... simply will not work over any extended period of time” (Noel, 1985, p. 1).


13. Coordination of policies across academic departments, on an institutional level, and across the college and K-12 divide, on a societal level, will help facilitate student success (Redden, 2006).

14. Retention is a campus wide issue covering every aspect of campus life (Noel, et al., p. 448).

15. Retention programs take the initiative in promoting and providing services (Anderson, 1978, p. 43).

16. The purpose of a retention project is to organize an institution for an assault on the attrition rate (Saluri, 1985, p. 430).
20 BEST PRACTICES*


Brackets [ ] indicate percentage of 4-Year Public institutions employing this “Best Practice” (or “Additional Retention Practice”) with quality ranging from excellent to poor.

1. Emphasis on the teaching of undergraduates and undergraduate learning.  [virtually 100%]

2. Academic support program or services available to all students.  [98.5%]

3. Honors program.  [91.2%]

4. Programs designed specifically for first-year students.  [94%]

5. Tracking persistence and progression patterns for all students.  [94%]

6. Early alert and intervention system.  [83.6%]

7. Means to measure student learning outcomes.  [89.6%]

8. Programs specifically for at-risk students.  [86.6%]

9. Systematically and regularly conduct internal and external evaluations of student life programs.  [81.5%]

10. Actively work at developing faculty skills for instruction, advising, and student interaction.  [89.6%]

11. Have established procedures for regularly communicating student satisfaction and importance data throughout the campus.  [88.1%]

12. Provide quality service training for front-line staff, new employees, and student employees.  [88.1%]

13. Research what attracted and convinced students to enroll.  [92.5%]

14. Have established procedures for regularly communicating persistence, retention, and graduation rate data throughout the campus.  [78.8%]

15. Have set measurable goals to improve the retention rate for each semester or year.  [71.6%]

16. Have established procedures for regularly communicating retention strategy assessment data throughout the campus.  [73.1%]
17.** Create or update a retention plan annually.  [66.7%]

18.** Have programs designed specifically for transfer students.  [67.2%]

19.** Have programs designed specifically for adult/non-traditional students.  [54.5%]

20.** Have programs designed specifically for second-year students.  [36.4%]

**According to Noel-Levitz, these are the four least-used best practices**

Additional “Retention Practices”
21. Regularly survey or interview students to determine their satisfaction.  [86.6%]

22. Use the results of satisfaction assessments in the retention planning process.  [70.1%]

23. Interview or survey students who withdraw before they leave and ask them if they can be contacted.  [50.7%]

24. Have programs designed to increase student success in courses with high withdrawal and/or failure rates.  [49.3%]

25. Receive Title III or Title V funding.  [44.4%]
(“The purpose of the [1965 Higher Education Act (HEA); U.S. Department of Education] Title III Strengthening Institutions Program is to provide grants to eligible institutions of higher education to improve their academic programs, institutional management, and fiscal stability in order to increase their self-sufficiency and strengthen their capacity to make a substantial contribution to the higher education resources of the nation.” (34 CFR 607.1)
The 1998 amendments to the HEA established Title V, a separate program for Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs). Grants are awarded to Hispanic-Serving Institutions to assist eligible Hispanic-serving institutions of higher education to expand their capacity to serve Hispanic and low-income students.

26. Use student employment as a retention strategy.  [41.8%]

27. Have a written plan or strategies in place to facilitate faculty/student engagement.  [41.8%]

28. Attempt to gather intended re-entry dates during exit interviews with students who are leaving.  [35.8%]
- Multicultural Learning Communities (Purdue University, 2007)

- UA Scholars Program (University of Alaska, Anchorage, 2003)
  The university's Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) operates the UA Scholars Program for approximately 200 new students annually from throughout Alaska. The program offers an $11,000 scholarship over eight semesters to the top 10 percent of graduates from qualified Alaska high schools. New scholars currently:
  - Receive numerous mail, e-mail, telephone, and face-to-face communications prior to matriculation;
  - Attend a special track in the summer orientation program;
  - Attend a reception hosted by the chancellor;
  - Attend a scholarship briefing designed to communicate expectations for new scholars, incorporated with the chancellor's reception (attendance mandatory);
  - Receive reports of academic progress in the initial weeks of the fall semester;
  - Meet with their instructors to review the academic progress reports in the initial weeks of the semester; and
  - Benefit from having one point of advising contact by an advisor in their major.

HAWK Link (University of Kansas, 2002)
The Office of Multicultural Affairs oversees the HAWK Link program, providing coordination with existing programs and services on campus. By asking existing departments to provide some funding, HAWK Link is able to share the cost thus, operating more effectively using current resources. The HAWK Link goal is simple: to get the right information in the hands of first-year students so they can have the necessary information to be successfully retained at the university. The multicultural affairs staff person works with staff from a variety of campus departments to coordinate the program. While it focuses on students of color, the program is open to any student who wishes to enroll. The program features many components that help students persist through their first year, including a faculty program where two or three students are paired with a faculty member so they may discuss academic and student development issues and a graduation ceremony for students that have successfully completed HAWK Link and are ready to transition to their second year.
“PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS” and “SPECIFIC PRACTICES”*
Graduation Rate Outcomes Study - Student Success in State Colleges and Universities: A Matter of Culture and Leadership.

NOTE: This study examined twelve “successful colleges and universities,” i.e., state schools that were doing a good job or showed substantial improvement in graduating students within 6 years.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

“Intentional” Characteristic
At successful colleges and universities . . .
- Faculty and staff involved in student success programs tend to be carefully selected (faculty participation is often formally recognized in annual reviews or through the promotion and tenure process)
- Student success programming appears to be extremely proactive
- Orientation, freshman seminar, and basic skills testing involving placement tend to be mandatory

“Integrated” Characteristic
At successful colleges and universities . . .
- Student success programs tend to be exceptionally well aligned with each other providing multiple opportunities to communicate with one another and often reporting directly to a high level of administration

“Collaborative” Characteristic
At successful colleges and universities . . .
- A strong spirit of collaboration across unit lines is characteristic
- Many services are team-based, involving membership from both academic departments and student support units (learning communities and faculty/staff in residence halls are two examples)
- Use of committees to oversee integrated services is widespread with members drawn from a wide array of functions

“Academic” Characteristic
At successful colleges and universities . . .
- The classroom and curriculum appear to be integral parts of student success programming; faculty members are directly involved
- The faculty role is not limited to instruction and formal programming, but is visible in regular sincere out-of-class contact with students and in engaging, interactive teaching strategies
- Deliberate curricular features that do not compromise standards and intended to facilitate student progress are prominent including simplifying the structure of course requirements or ensuring that key courses are available
- Consistent with a theme of high expectations, a clear focus on maintaining academic standards helps motivate students and reinforces faculty perceptions that “increased retention” will not come at the expense of learning
- Curricular features include flexible scheduling and alternative ways to earn credit including undergraduate research programs and an emphasis on real-world connections through internships, field placement, and service learning opportunities

**SPECIFIC “GOOD” PRACTICES**

*NOTE:* While the AASCU study focused on campus culture and leadership, the study also saw fit to identify “good” practices.

- First year seminars planned by academic departments

- A full scope of faculty and professional advising ranging from the advisor role limited to curriculum planning and monitoring progress to “full service” counseling

- “Unusual” attention paid to selection, training, evaluation, and reward of advisors (Elizabeth City State University in North Carolina selects advisors “for their personal characteristics”)
  (Louisiana Tech University primarily employs faculty advisors and the evaluation of advisement is a formal part of each faculty member’s review)

- Use of basic skills and placement tests with a requirement to remediate all shortfalls within the first year of study

- Use of “early warning systems” which place identified students into appropriate skills-development or tutoring situations (At the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, advisors receive mid-term grades and intervene for students receiving Ds or Fs)
  (At the University of Northern Iowa, students are identified as “at risk” up front on the basis of entering characteristics. Special services are provided to them and they are tracked through an early warning system.)

- “Academic progress reports” and “degree audit” systems

- At Elizabeth City State University in North Carolina, a single Department of General Studies provides the curriculum and all advisement services for the first two years of enrollment.

- Louisiana Tech University enables students to progress toward their academic goals by offering ten-week quarters that earn semester credit.

- Clemson University in South Carolina recently undertook an initiative to “clean its curricular closet” resulting in “the net effect of flexibility in the general education curriculum.”
- At Murray State University in Kentucky, the University Studies (general education) program requires core courses for all students that include an “intended outcomes” statement explaining to students the value of the skills learned in these courses for future life and study.

**Additional “Specific Practices” - AASCU**

- The visiting team at Montclair State University in New Jersey concluded that, “reaching high standards requires persistence over many years and willingness to continually scan the horizon for best practices that can be adapted, with care, to particular institutional contexts and cultures.” (AASCU, 2005, p. 25).

- At Truman State University in Missouri there is a long tradition of faculty recruitment that emphasizes direct faculty experience with a liberal arts environment. The university looks especially for candidates who attended small liberal arts colleges as undergraduates. Further, the university also provides an extensive new faculty orientation.

  In a similar vein, Montclair State University in New Jersey places a special emphasis on sending the message to potential new hires that they are expected to “become part of a broader family whose mission is student success.” This message is not stated just once; it is the centerpiece of a semester-long orientation program for new faculty.

  At Elizabeth City State University in North Carolina, the institution’s focus on student success is made clear in the faculty interview process and only those who buy into the philosophy of student-centeredness are hired.

  The University of Northern Iowa utilizes retired faculty associated with the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching to mentor and coach new faculty (AASCU, 2005, p. 14 & 15).

- Northwest Missouri State University incorporates the substantial use of student employees. Many front-line positions and many positions usually filled by full-time staff are filled and executed by part-time student employees paid from regular salary funds (AASCU, 2005, p. 13).

- Clemson University, a South Carolina land-grant institution, identifies 35-40 percent of its student as “legacies.” The fact that these students’ parents also attended the university builds especially strong ties and a sense of an inclusive culture of continuity (AASCU, 2005, p. 13).

- Recognizing that “leadership” – “visibly multi-directional–top down, bottom up, and lateral” – is a shared responsibility occurring at all levels and deeply embedded in the way an organization works, Montclair State University in New Jersey established a “Faculty Think Tank” consisting of twenty faculty members drawn from across the campus to review research on graduation, retention, and student engagement, and to make recommendations for consideration (AASCU, 2005, p. 17 & 20).

- Murray State University in Kentucky prominently placed a large picture of graduation exercises so that it is one of the first images new students see upon entering the admissions office (AASCU, 2005, p. 10).
- Louisiana Tech University has a “brick walk” in the courtyard of the student center made up of named bricks for each individual graduate (AASCU, 2005, p. 10).

- At Elizabeth City State University in North Carolina, the student affairs staff makes sure to send every student a birthday card (AASCU, 2005, p. 13).

- At California State University Stanislaus, the president initiated an annual “feed the students” day during which faculty members cook for students. Stanislaus has also “hired its own” in that many of its staff are first-generation graduates of the institution fostering an inclusive culture of continuity (AASCU, 2005, p. 13-14).

- In a discussion of the “enabling leadership” present at study institutions “blessed by the presence of an unusually effective group of presidents and vice presidents,” Elizabeth City State University in North Carolina asserted that their “president empowers everyone to make decisions and doesn’t take credit for even some things he should (AASCU, 2005, p. 19).
ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES

- Learning Communities (LCs), according to accumulating evidence, offer a particularly effective way of addressing the learning needs of a range of students while also providing a structure for collaboration among faculty and between faculty and student affairs professionals. Research has shown that students in LCs tend to (1) develop personal support via involvement in supportive peer groups, (2) spend more time studying, and (3) become more involved (Seidman, 2005, pp. 328-329).

- Academic policies regarding course withdrawals, i.e., timing within the semester and the number allowed, affect student persistence. Institutions need to ask the question, “What role do policies that limit the number of withdrawal options have on student success?” (Seidman, 2005, pp. 148-149)

- Students with on-campus jobs, which permitted the students to remain in close proximity to faculty and an academic environment, were more likely to persist well beyond the first year (p. 136). Research has shown that students are nearly twice as likely to persist between the second and third years if they receive financial aid (p. 135).

- The greater the institutional integrity perceived by students – defined as congruence between day-to-day actions of faculty, administrators, and staff and the espoused mission and values of the institution – the higher the level of subsequent commitment to the institution (Seidman, 2005, p. 77).

SOURCE: College Student Retention: Formula for Success by A. Seidman (2005)

The Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University identified twenty colleges and universities that were strong-performing in promoting student success. These institutions were labeled as DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practice) institutions.

- DEEP schools believe their location and campus setting are advantages in terms of student learning. DEEP schools make themselves “special” because they are “place conscious.” In a deeply emotional way, the “place” of the institution transcends both the physical setting and location to form an almost palpable “sense of place.” One campus is essentially an arboretum and another goes to great lengths to preserve a sense of history. DEEP schools maximize the educational potential of their natural and physical resources. The physical environment is altered to create open spaces as well as spaces and settings where teaching and learning can flourish (Kuh, 2005, pp. 91- 106).

- The University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) made a conscious decision to emphasize the dignity of work and increase persistence rates by encouraging student employment on campus. Now, more than half of all UMF students (1000) have jobs on campus. Positions are funded by federal work-study, departmental budgets, and the Student Work initiative program (Kuh, 2005, p. 48)
- The University of Kansas (housing 5,500) is one example of DEEP schools that offer on-campus apartments in addition to both dorm and apartment-style residence halls (Kuh, 2005, p. 99).

- DEEP schools utilize Learning Communities (LCs) as a way to reduce the psychological size of large institutions and to create a human scale structure that makes the campus seem smaller than it actually is (Kuh, 2005, pp. 100-107).

- From their initial contacts, prospective students are told by Wabash College in Indiana that a Wabash education is difficult but “worth it.” One Wabash student said that he was attracted by “the camaraderie of going through something tough together” (Kuh, 2005, p. 112).

- Applicants to the University of Michigan receive a CD describing university experiences and opportunities for student-faculty interactions (Kuh, 2005, p.115).

- The University of Kansas has a Traditions Night which includes the passing of a torch from a senior to a representative of the first-year class who is usually a fourth- or fifth generation legacy (Kuh, 2005, p. 120).

- The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) has an “ambitious” number of LCs and places a focus on high-quality tutoring. UTEP systematically assesses the quality of its various University Colleges including obtaining qualitative data to better understand student perspectives. As one example, various groups look at how to help students pay for college (Kuh, 2005, p. 135).

- The chancellor of Fayetteville State University in North Carolina (FSU) wrote a position paper entitled “Linking Retention and Academic Performance: The Freshman Year Initiative” in which he challenged FSU faculty and staff to make student development the focus of everything they do. FSU launched a set of initiatives targeted to its first-year students including University College (Kuh, 2005, pp. 136-137).

- The president of Wofford College in South Carolina issued a challenge at a faculty retreat: “If you had assurance of sufficient time and institutional support to teach the sort of course you’ve always dreamed of, what would you do?” Faculty enthusiastically responded. Some of the major outcomes were interdisciplinary courses which became part of the GE curriculum leading to the formation of learning communities, not as a retention tool, but as a vehicle to involve students more meaningfully in GE (Kuh, 2005, pp. 142-143).

- Professors at the University of Michigan divide large classes into discussion groups and the university provides meeting spaces for study groups. Many DEEP institutions arrange physical space to increase accessibility to faculty and promote student-faculty interaction including locating group study spaces near clusters of faculty offices (Kuh, 2005, p. 195 & p. 209).

- The University of Kansas has a Freshman-Sophomore Advising Center (Kuh, 2005, p. 246).
- The University of the South in Tennessee ("Sewanee") has a Summer Bridge program that focuses on increasing the applicant pool of "high-ability" and "talented minority high school students" (Kuh, 2005, p. 253).

- Almost two-thirds of the incoming class at the Evergreen State College in Washington annually are transfer students. The college adopted a number of transfer-friendly policies including automatic acceptance of all credits for students who have completed an associate degree at a Washington community college, specially designed orientations, and specially designated sections of their University 300 course (Kuh, 2005, p. 255).

- In order to help shrink the physical and psychological size of their campuses, many DEEP schools offer sections of faculty-led First-Year Seminars in classrooms located in residence halls (Kuh, 2005, p. 259).


The following best practices were identified in a study of thirteen colleges and universities that, in the words of the authors, "have achieved excellence in the way they structure and implement the first year."

- Central and essential to the rapid progress in becoming an exemplar of first-year programming by Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) has been the establishment of its University College. University College has the mission to serve as a welcoming and supportive portal of entry for all entering students. University College is home not only to supplemental and developmental education, but also to first-year seminars and the university’s honors program (p. 329 & 330).

- IUPUI publishes a fifty-page Parent’s Handbook that moves from frequently asked questions to detailed descriptions of support programs such as learning communities (p. 331-333).

- Utilizing laptop computers with wireless Internet connections, each IUPUI first-year seminar student is able to work in collaboration with other students and the course instructor in completing schedule planning and registration (p. 333).

- IUPUI offers more than 100 learning communities for entering students. The core is a first-year seminar linked to a discipline course. Each first-year seminar course has been developed by faculty utilizing a standard template. IUPUI also offers second semester communities (p. 338).

- Efforts at IUPUI are grounded in an ongoing search for best practices. When considering new programs or tackling new problems, IUPUI scans the college and university world for examples of institutions that have tackled similar issues with good results (p. 347).
- The University of South Carolina (USC) began its first-year seminar, University 101, in 1972 which gave rise to learning communities and other initiatives. “Perhaps it is a result of these programs and first-year enhancements that students applying to USC are academically stronger than ever before” (p. 351).

- University 101 is open to both first-year and transfer students during their first semester at USC. In addition, USC has now developed University 201, a course for sophomores, second-semester first-year students, and junior-level transfers (p. 355-358).

- Even though it required considerable expense, USC created the University Housing Classroom Project which converted residence hall space to classroom space for first-year seminars (p. 368).

- USC has established a First-Year Scholars Program. Each year, academically superior first-year students (about twenty from in-state and about twenty from out-of-state) are brought to campus. The out-of-state portion of the program was endowed by a gift from an alumnus. Every student has a faculty mentor, not an advisor, with whom he or she meets regularly (p. 370).

- Because English courses reach virtually every first-year student, USC makes a deliberate effort “to create meaningful and effective instruction in these core courses.” In addition, USC assigns its “first team” faculty to University 101. In this and other ways, “virtually every first-year student is touched in a meaningful way by one or more carefully constructed curricular or co-curricular activities” (p. 364, 317 & 376).


- Harvard university has a “Dean of Freshman” (Saluri, 1985, p. 409)

- Duke University has a “Premajor Advising Center” (Saluri, 1985, p. 415).

- South Dakota State University has a “College of General Registration” for undeclared majors, pre-professional students, and nontraditional students (Saluri, 1985, p. 420)

At the University of Nebraska - Lincoln:

- General Studies is an ‘Office of Undergraduate Studies’ Program

- At least one fifth of each entering class of students is still deciding about a college or major. These students enroll in the Division of General Studies, where professional advisers help them choose courses that keep them on the right track for the different majors and colleges they may be considering.

- A communications campaign focusing on aspects of retention and best practices continues throughout the year.
- A Summer Institute for Promising Scholars (SIPS) is offered. Selection Criteria: Membership in an underrepresented racial or ethnic group, the first student from his/her family to attend college, life experiences growing up in an economically disadvantaged condition, life experiences in a culturally diverse neighborhood or community. Students must also demonstrate strong academic potential, leadership and community service experiences in school or the community.

- An Academic Transfer Coordinator is the connection to the University community for services, information and campus resources. Link for information: [http://admissions.unl.edu/transfer/](http://admissions.unl.edu/transfer/)

- Transfer Student Resource Guide (on-line)

- Honor Societies for Transfer Students: These organizations plan activities for new transfer students to help them get acquainted at the university.

*SOURCE:* University of Nebraska - Lincoln, Office of Undergraduate Studies, OUS Newsletter, August 2006
SELECTED EXISTING SAC STATE RETENTION EFFORTS & BEST PRACTICES*
*SOURCE: Department Chairs meeting 11/1/07

SSWD
- Early alert system notifying faculty of SSWD students in their classes
- Suggested that SSWD also alert department chairs

Enrollment Management
- Re-structuring and re-engineering recruitment processes to be more assertive, i.e., “intrusive”
- Plans in place for working with department chairs in reaching out to senior-level students along with other “cross-unit collaborations”
- Plans in place to improve outreach efforts with CCCs
- Telephone calls to potential students

Academic Advising
- Mandatory freshman advising in three parts: orientation; Fall appointment primarily for adjustment; Spring appointment for more long-range planning
- “cross-unit collaboration” with faculty and SSP advisors
- Advising for undeclared students including intervening with those with more than 60 units
- Advising for students on probation
- Advising for students not accepted to campus degree programs, e.g., pre-nursing students, including plans to work with chairs, deans and faculty from such programs

Student Academic Success/EOP
- Admission, counseling and advising for ethnically diverse 1st generation, low income, and other at-risk students including both those regularly admissible and special admits
- Learning communities anchored by freshman seminars, tutoring, and adjunct courses (supplemental instruction)
- Mandatory advising and counseling twice per semester including transition and adjustment issues in the Fall, and a comprehensive GE plan, transition to major departments and career issues in the Spring
- Advising and counseling for students on probation
- Special programs including a residential and commuter Summer Bridge Program with a Parent/Student Orientation, FSMP, Summer Rez and an EOP Grant ($500 per semester)

Student Athlete Resource Center (SARC)
- Comprehensive support program for student athletes with a focus on the “student” side of “student athletes”
- Early alert “Progress Report System”
- “cross-unit collaboration” with faculty and SSP advisors
- “cross-unit collaboration” with academic departments
- “cross-unit collaboration” with Financial Aid, Psychological Services, and other Student Services departments
Undergraduate Business Advising Center (UBAC), College of Business Administration
- Advisors visit community colleges and high schools each Fall
- An Articulation Conference is held with community colleges
- Advising for students is mandatory
- Summer orientations are offered
- A New Student Guidebook has been developed
- A credit evaluator has been hired
- Counseling with students on probation is required
- Upper division students serve as “ambassadors” to other students
- Tutoring is offered for the toughest business courses
- Scholarships are awarded
- Awards are given to outstanding students
- Freshman seminar is offered
- “road maps” are offered

College of Engineering & Computer Science
- A career fair is offered each year
- A freshman class is mandatory
- Have set a goal of 70% retention (up from 40-50%)
- ACE program is utilized
- A new program of “peer coaches” is being offered
- A new civil engineering seminar is being offered

Additional Existing Sac State Retention Efforts & Best Practices
- Freshman Seminar
- Learning Communities
- Multicultural Center
- Learning Skills Center (LSC) [Developmental Education]
- Adjunct courses [Supplemental Instruction - SI]
- Student Service Center [one building housing many student services]
- Center for California Studies [taking advantage of proximity to the state capital]
- Center for Teaching and Learning [faculty development]
- Honors Program
- PASAR [program designed for adult/non-traditional students]
- Pre-professional advising (identified in catalog)
- Business Educational Equity Program
- College of Education Educational Equity Program
- Health and Human Services Educational Equity Program
- College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP)
- Faculty Student Mentor Program (FSMP)
- Graduate Diversity Program
- Service Learning
- Cooper-Woodson College Enhancement Program
- MESA Engineering/Computer Science Program (MEP)
- Science Educational Equity Program (SEE)
**PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE & RECOMMENDATIONS**


**Principles**
- First-year student success is most likely when institutions hold students to high standards of academic performance and personal conduct (p. 516)

- A delicate balance of both challenge and support is necessary to foster first-year student success (p. 516)

- The foundation of first-year student success is an institutional commitment (p. 515)

- Failure to get faculty involved in first-year student success will seriously undermine institutional efforts to promote that success (p. 517)

- Ultimately, first-year students themselves must assume responsibility for their own success (p. 517)

**Recommendations/Good Practice**
- Include a strong commitment to promoting first-year student success in the institution’s mission statement (p. 517)

- Develop a strong commitment of the administrative leadership (p. 518)

- Engage deans and department heads (p. 518)

- Create a permanent advisory board for matters pertaining to first-year student success (p. 518)

- Place faculty at the center of initiatives designed to promote first-year student success, and reward them for their efforts in ways consistent with the institution’s promotion and tenure policies (p. 518)

- Provide professional development opportunities (p. 518)

- First-years seminars must have academic integrity, include significant academic content, and be commensurate with the norm of academic credibility (p. 519)

- Create Supplemental Instruction programs that assist first-year students in courses that are challenging to them (p. 519)

- Focus first-year students on library services and teach them to be information literate (p. 519)

- Develop alcohol and other drug educational and prevention initiatives (p. 520)

- Develop learning communities (p. 521)
- Make assessment an essential part of promoting first-year student success (p. 521)

- Develop school-college partnerships that are designed to involve secondary schools in first-year success efforts (p. 521)

- Look beyond the first year of college to subsequent transitions. Do not abandon sophomores (p. 522)
Selected FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS


NOTE: These findings and recommendations were part of the conclusion of a study of thirteen colleges and universities in the United States that, in the words of the authors, “have achieved excellence in the way they structure and implement the first year.”

- Institutions that achieve first-year excellence place a high priority on the first year (p. 381).
- Leadership, operating on multiple levels, is essential to the achievement of excellence (p. 382).
- Excellence flourishes in a culture that encourages idea generation, pilot projects, and experimentation (p. 383).
- Of the campuses that achieve first-year excellence, a common characteristic is clarity of institutional identity and mission and concomitant respect for students (p. 386).
- Excellence in the first year relies on the direct involvement of an institution’s faculty (p. 387).
- First-year excellence necessitates both creative acquisition and judicious use of financial resources (p. 389).
- A central component of excellence is a steady outward gaze----the willingness to learn from and share with others (p. 390).
- Excellence rests on an intentional first-year curriculum and on supportive curricular structures (p. 391).
- Excellence thrives in an environment where divisional walls are down (p. 392).
- “... enumerate the components of your own institutions first year” ... and “conduct a major self-study of the first year as a single unit of analysis using a campus wide task force” (p. 394).
REFERENCES


