

Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources



Advising Issues & Resources

Advising and Retention

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 - [Campus Wide Retention](#) Planning: The Six-Minute "Read" via the *Clearinghouse*
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Academic Advising and student retention and persistence

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The issue of student retention and persistence has continued to grow in importance throughout the history of higher education in our country. Early studies (Astin, 1977) focused on the characteristics of those students who did not persist and such studies were used as evidence for higher admissions standards or more quality control of recruitment. However, beginning the 1970's the research began to focus on what were the reasons students remained enrolled and how colleges and universities could make changes or develop programs which would increase the retention of their students.

In his research, Alexander Astin (1977,1993) determined that the persistence or retention rate of students is greatly affected by the level and quality of their interactions with peers as well as faculty and staff. Tinto (1987) indicates that the factors in students dropping or "stopping" out include academic difficulty, adjustment problems, lack of clear academic and career goals, uncertainty, lack of commitment, poor integration with the college community, incongruence, and isolation. Consequently, retention can be highly affected by enhancing student interaction with campus personnel. Rendon (1995) indicates in her study that two critical factors in students' decisions to remain enrolled until the attainment of their goals are their successfully making the transition to college aided by initial and extended orientation and advisement programs and making positive connections with college personnel during their first term of enrollment. Noel (1985) stated:

It is the people who come face-to-face with students on a regular basis who provide the positive growth experiences for students that enable them to identify their goals and talents and learn how to put them to use. The caring attitude of college personnel is viewed as the most potent retention force on a campus (p. 17).

"Academic Advising is the only structured activity on the campus in which all students have the opportunity for one-to-one interaction with a concerned representative of the institution" (Habley, 1994). Tinto (1987) indicates that effective retention programs have to come understand, therefore, that academic advising is the very core of successful institutional efforts to educate and retain students. For this reason, academic advising, as described by Wes Habley, should be viewed as the "hub of the wheel" and not just one of the various isolated services provided for students. Academic advisors provide students with the needed connection to the various campus services and supply the essential academic connection between these services and the students. In addition, academic advisors offer students the personal connection to the institution that the research indicates is vital to student retention and student success.

However, successful academic advising programs cannot be solely responsible for retention rates on a campus. As the hub, advising is one piece of the retention puzzle. Retention efforts must focus on all components of the campus and building strong and effective connections between the advising program and the various components of campus. For example, as financial concerns often affect student persistence, it is vital that advisors build strong collaborations with the financial aid departments on campus. Advisors need to be able to understand the policies and procedures that affect students' financial aid as well as have a clear understanding of how to refer effectively those students in financial need.

Since student indecision as to major or career options is a primary factor in student persistence, advising programs should have strong links to the career services on campus as a part of any retention plan. Advising and career services should be, if possible, interrelated so that students see the connection between their academic planning and their career goals. Several institutions, for example Rowan University (<http://www2.rowan.edu/>), have combined advising and career services into one unit where career counselors and academic advisors are cross trained to work with students in both areas.

Residence life is another area where essential collaborations are needed with advising services in order to enhance student retention and persistence. Several institutions, such as the University of Georgia (<http://www.uga.edu/>) and Kansas State University (<http://www.ksu.edu/>), have established advising centers in residence halls to provide students with on-site advising and assistance. This model is extremely valuable in establishing a sense of community where advising is viewed as an essential part of the community.

Last, it should be clearly established that academic advising is the direct link between the academic affairs and student affairs components of a campus that can build a culture of student retention. Several campuses, such as Coastal Georgia Community College (<http://www.cgcc.edu/>), have established committees or advisory boards for advising which represent all constituencies of the campus, including faculty, students, student affairs personnel, and staff. Often these committees report to both the Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs and Student Affairs establishing that campus-wide collaborations, with advising as the central focus, is necessary for establishing effective retention efforts.

In these times of financial cut backs, student retention, persistence, and success will continue to be a major emphasis on our college campuses. Any retention effort must clearly recognize the value of academic advising to the success of students and the necessity that advising become a central part of a collaborative campus-wide focus on the success of our students.

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Read More About It! Annotated Bibliography of retention resources.

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[Retention](#)/Attrition information links within the *Clearinghouse*

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