Data to Action: Freshman Retention Project

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Project: Data to Action: Freshman Retention Project

April, 2012

Originally designed to improve the persistence of freshman students and due to the success of the Fall Registration Project, PSU has expanded the original project into a year-long, Freshman Retention Project and incorporated financial awards to assist students in completing their academic plans.

Project Working Group
Mirela Blekic (University Studies), James Ofsink (Financial Aid), Sukhwant Jhaj (University Studies), Dan Fortmiller (Enrollment Management and Student Affairs), Rowanna Carpenter (University Studies), Paloma Harrison (College of Liberal Arts & Sciences), Martha Dyson (College of Liberal Arts & Sciences), Becki Ingersoll (Academic & Career Services), Becky Sanchez (School of Business), Robert Mercer (College of Liberal Arts & Sciences), Amanda Nguyen (Business Affairs), Louise McDonald (Business Affairs).

Project Descriptions
About 10% of freshmen students who are admitted in fall do not transition to winter term and about 15-20% of the students who complete their freshmen year do not return the following fall. In addition, students who have major concerns about financing their education and students who are not sure about their plans (as identified in FRINQ Prior Learning Survey) tend to leave at a higher rate. Similarly, students with HS GPA below 3.0 and conditionally admitted students tend to leave at a higher rate. Finally, about 80% of the students who indicate (in the FRINQ End-of-Year Survey) they are not planning to return the following fall, do not come back. These projects are designed to intervene with students at critical junctions in their educational experience at Portland State University and offer financial awards as needed once academic plans have been created.

Action Items
- **Ongoing:** as students come in for advising, advisers pay attention to and address risk factors and areas of focus.
- **Outreach and intervention at critical points:**
  - Contact students who did not register using information provided in the retention database
    - Fall to winter registration
    - Spring to fall registration
  - Communicate/intervene with students identified as leaving or at risk of leaving.
  - Include financial award as form of intervention:
    - FRINQ Faculty and Freshman Retention Financial Awards
    - Develop financial and academic plans with students who qualify for awards
  - Document intervention and any interaction in the retention database.
  - Check registration status periodically during the critical points of the year.
  - Communicate/intervene with students who have not registered (encourage registration/offer help).

These actions will reduce
- Preponderance of students needing intervention.
- Financial resource availability.
- Institutional capacity.

These actions will achieve
- To identify students who are at risk of not succeeding in their first year and not returning in their second year and to provide intervention helping students to stay at PSU and complete their education.

Goal
- Increased retention and student success.

Key Barriers
- Preponderance of students needing intervention.
- Financial resource availability.
- Institutional capacity.

Please direct questions regarding Freshmen Retention Project to Dr. Mirela Blekic, mirelab@pdx.edu, 503-725-9892.
Recommendations and Decisions
Incorporate and expand Fall Registration Project, include financial award and rename the project into Freshmen Retention Project.

Fall Registration Project:
1. Provide necessary intervention to identified freshmen students who are at risk of not registering for fall term.
2. Coordinate efforts between advisers, the Financial Aid office and the Bursar’s office to facilitate registration of these “at risk” students.

Freshman Retention Project
1. Reach out to and intervene with freshman students during and immediately after the end of their first year at critical points and throughout their first year at PSU.
2. Focus on four areas of intervention including
   a. Conditionally admitted students,
   b. Students with HS GPA below 3.0,
   c. Students with financial concern,
   d. Students unsure about their plans

FRINQ Faculty Financial Award
1. Reduce the impact of financial concern and financial need on freshman student success and retention
2. Faculty members nominate prospective recipients for the FRINQ Faculty Financial Award
3. Students required to submit an academic and financial plan

Freshmen Retention Project Financial Award
1. Use a combination of centralized and decentralized decision making
2. Identify students to receive awards geared towards completing their academic goals
3. Advisers and Bursar’s office staff identify potential students
4. FRPFA committee makes final decisions on which students are selected
5. Educational component must be included (such as in FRINQ Faculty Financial Award)
6. Amounts to be divided between spring and the following fall in order to facilitate second year planning and persistence

Funding Required

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-100,000</td>
<td>Reduce the impact of financial concern and financial need on freshman student success and retention</td>
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</table>

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Timeframe and Metrics
Timeframe: Review performance after fourth week of winter and fall term.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric Name / Description</th>
<th>Formula / Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project reach</td>
<td># of students served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of outreach and intervention on students</td>
<td># of students who are served and retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of financial awards on students</td>
<td># of students who received award and are retained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Images of Retention Database:

**Main Screen:**

![Main Screen Image]

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Survey Responses View:

Please direct questions regarding Freshmen Retention Project to Dr. Mirela Blekic, mirelab@pdx.edu, 503-725-9892.