Retention Matters

Eastern Illinois University

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To see the slides from the Forum or other retention information, go to our web site at http://castle.eiu.edu/~core

Want to contact us? Send us an email at **core@eiu.edu**

Retention Forum: Report on Dialogue Breakouts

CORE held its bi-annual retention forum on February 12, 2013. This year's theme was "Addressing Shifting Demographics: Fostering Student Success;" CORE co-chairs Kimberlie Moock and Karla Sanders led off the forum with a presentation on the state of retention and graduation rates at EIU.

While our 79% retention rate and 59% graduation rate are above national averages, Eastern has a goal of 85% retention and 70% graduation rates by 2013. It will take all faculty and staff working toward our students' success to reach these ambitious goals.

After the presentation on the state of retention and comparisons with peer institutions and national retention rates, attendees broke out into three different breakout sessions to discuss retention issues related to advising and mentoring, teaching and learning, and the role of student support units.

The faculty group focused on retention strategies for the classroom instructor. They suggested the following ideas to contribute to retention of students at the classroom level:

- Use the Early Alert System to indicate issues to the student early in the semester.

- Break large assignments into smaller chunks so students have more opportunities for grades, are kept accountable throughout the semester, and learn the process for working on a large assignment.
- Use library faculty—especially subject librarians—to assist in planning research assignments, to present to classes, and to guide students to pertinent research resources in your field.
- Educate students on research methods and teach how to think critically by providing assignments that take

CORE Corner

In addition to preparing for the recent forum, CORE continues to work with the Strategic Enrollment Planning (SEP) process in relation to retention issues. We encourage interested constituents to check out its web site at castle.eiu.edu/strategicenrollment where you will find documents and data related to recruitment, retention, and graduation.

In this issue's CORE Corner we will cover some of these key performance indicators, including

retention data.

While Eastern's first to second year retention rate has been 79% for the past four years, CORE examines the rates of cohorts within each class to uncover pockets of attrition.

The data from FA11 to FA12 indicate that first-generation students are very close to this overall percentage at 78% retention. However, minority students were at 76% and students with a zero expected family contribution toward educational expenses

were at 74%.

The percentage of students in the undergraduate population with a zero EFC has risen with the increase in financial issues facing the nation. In 2007, for example, 11% of our students were zero EFC compared to 21% of our students in 2012. This financial burden makes students at-risk of dropping out and may impact future retention and graduation rates. The new commitment to excellence awards going to new

Spotlight On . . . University Foundations: EIU 1111

Nationally, freshman seminar courses are hailed as best practices for student success and retention.

Eastern's freshman seminar course, University Foundations, moved from a one-credit, half-semester course to a 2-credit, full-semester course in Fall 2000. Although this course is an elective for students who come through a standard admission process, it is required for students in the Gateway program.

However, many students who elect to enroll in University Foundations possess risk factors for attrition. In FA12, for example, 52% of UF students were members of ethnic minority groups compared to 34% of all first-time

freshmen (see CORE Corner for minority retention rates). Forty-one percent of FA12 UF students had an ACT composite of 18 or lower and 26% were at a 19 or 20, so 67% of FA12 UF students were below the class average ACT composite of 21. In addition, 50% of UF students ranked in the bottom half of their high school class compared to 38% of non-UF students.

Despite the fact that participants in UF come in with a lower academic profile than students who do not take the course, the retention rates for students who take the course are comparable to or higher than those who do not enroll.

Did you know?

The top three feeder high schools for 2012 freshmen were:

♦ **Charleston HS—69 students**

♦ **Urban Prep-Englewood—62 students**

♦ **Noble Street Charter HS—59 students**

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CORE Corner cont.

students applying for FA13 may contribute to recruitment as well as retention as financial burdens are addressed.

Minority student graduation rates are also below the overall average; Eastern's most current six-year graduation rate is 59% but minority students are at 45% graduating within 6 years. First-generation students have a 56% six-year graduation rate.

In addition to studying retention and

graduation at Eastern, we have also looked at how we compare to our competitors.

The table below compares some of our public 4-year competitors in Illinois with national data. As the chart illustrates, Eastern's graduation and retention rates indicate we are well placed to compete against the other institutions that are also "traditional selective" based on ACT's categories.

ACT Selectivity	National Retention Rate	IL Public Retention	Difference	National Graduation Rate	IL Public Graduation	Difference
Traditional Selective (Top 50%; ACT 18-24)	69.3%	EIU 79%	9.70%	43.90%	EIU 59%	15.10%
Highly Selective (Top 10%; ACT 25-30)	95%	UI-U/C 93%	-2%	86%	UI-U/C 82%	-4%
Selective (Top 25%; ACT 21-26)	81.6%	ISU 85%	3.6%	60.5%	ISU 71%	10.5%
Selective	81.6%	UI-C 79%	-2.6%	60.5%	UI-C 54%	-6.5%
Traditional Selective	69.3%	NIU 71%	1.7%	43.9%	NIU 56%	12.1%
Traditional Selective	69.3%	WIU 71%	1.7%	43.9%	WIU 53%	9.1%
Traditional Selective	69.3%	SIU-C 66%	-3.3%	43.9%	SIU-C 45%	1.1%
Traditional Selective	69.3%	SIU-E 70%	-.7%	43.9%	SIU-E 52%	8.1%

Spotlight On cont . . .

The average retention rate for students who elect to enroll in University Foundations is 82% compared to 79% for those students who do not enroll in the course (this represents an average over 12 fall semesters).

University Foundations is designed to aid in students' transition from high school to college. Cindy Boyer, long-time UF instructor, explains the value of the course, "EIU 1111 has proven to be an extremely valuable course offering for it provides the information and tools necessary for a freshman student to make a successful transition to the university. Students learn how to think critically, work effectively in groups, become familiar with all campus resources and procedures and how to study effectively at the college level."

University Foundations seeks to help students understand classroom norms and faculty expectations as well as articulate their own values and priorities related to college and their future careers. Each of the four undergraduate learning goals—speak effectively, think critically, write effectively, and become a responsible global citizen—are part of the course.

Students complete a global citizenship project that is often an opportunity to introduce students to service learning. In FA12, 552 students completed over 2,100 hours on their projects, which included grooming and walking animals at the animal shelter, tutoring in after school programs, visiting with nursing home residents, sending letters and packages to our troops, and participating in Relay for Life, Red Week, and Special Olympics. Students complete reflections on these experiences and some commit to returning to these activities throughout their time at EIU.

UF offers small class sizes with approachable instructors to encourage discussion and create community in the class to facilitate student success.

Retention Forum cont.

students through that process and critique those steps.
• Refer students to support services like tutors in your department, the Writing Center, Reading Center, Student Success Center, and Career Services because encouragement from faculty can help prompt students to take advantage of these services.

The participants in the advising and mentoring breakout discussed these ideas to help students find major and career connections:
• Encourage students to pursue job shadowing and externship experiences to test out major and potential career options.
• Connect areas of interest to majors for undecided students.
• Introduce undecided students to the occupational handbook and encourage dialogues with departments to aid in major decision.
• Call students who have not registered from the unregistered list provided by CORE.
• Advisors should develop a personal connection with advisees and learn about their interests.
• Contact advisees through email or a newsletter with information about campus services, important dates, and other important information.

This group also discussed ways in which to assure that transfer students stay at EIU and graduate:
• Connect advisors to community college advisors before students are ready to transfer to ensure students are on track.
• Improve articulation agreements and increase conversations with community colleges on making smooth transitions for students.

The breakout group on retention strategies for support staff and service units discussed the following ideas:
• Help students to make good academic progress through regular monitoring of the degree audit.
• Aid students in balancing study time, work time, and fun time to assure enough studying is completed and students experience less stress over time constraints.
• Increase student employment opportunities on campus to foster more connections and provide income to financially strapped students.
• Educate students about college expectations, including rigor, and how to meet that challenge. Many students do not come to college with the tools to be good studiers or time managers.
• Require students to live on campus for two years rather than one since studies show greater gpa and better retention for those who reside on campus.
• Help students with scholarship applications.
• Educate first-generation parents on how to be supportive for their first-generation students.

CORE hopes that the forum was merely the beginning of discussions on campus related to student success and retention. Core encourages individuals, departments, and units to discuss ways to answer student questions, help them make connections, and be productive learners and University citizens.

The slides from the power point presentation are available on the CORE web site.

Booth Library can Contribute to Student Success—With Your Help!

In the faculty breakout session at the retention forum, library faculty member Jocelyn Tipton spoke about ways the library can work with faculty to encourage student success. Faculty members present were interested in her comments, so CORE asked Jocelyn to share information in this issue of the newsletter.

Booth Library provides a number of services to students and faculty that contribute to retention and develop life-long skills fostering student success.

The number of K-12 schools with libraries and sufficient resources to do research has declined steadily. As a result, students often come to college without the background on how to use a library and its collections or how to do research. Students may feel overwhelmed by the amount of books, journals, and databases available to them.

The reference librarians at Booth help introduce the library and teach the skills necessary for the students to successfully complete research assignments and find information they need. Students are encouraged to ask a librarian for help.

The librarians often work with the students to select appropriate topics, explain the different types of sources available, how to search in databases to find scholarly articles, and why and how to correctly cite the sources used.

To ensure that the students receive the library help at the point of need, librarians are available in person, over the phone, and via email 98 hours a week during the academic year. To assist students who need research help after the library closes, a 24/7 online chat reference service is available. The library faculty also partner with teaching faculty to improve the

students' skills needed to complete specific course assignments thereby improving the quality of the research being submitted for grades. Faculty can bring their classes to the library for an instruction session. During these one-time classes, the librarians demonstrate the specific resources needed to complete the assignment and work with the students to create a research strategy. For larger classes the librarians are able to offer the same session in the classroom.

Librarians are also working with faculty to develop course assignments that break-down the research process into smaller components and reinforce the research skills. For more complex research, subject librarians are available for individual consultation with the students.

Did you know?

Eastern's Top Majors for Transfer Students in 2012:

1. **Bachelor's in General Studies**
2. **Elementary Education**
3. **Kinesiology & Sports Studies**
4. **Psychology**
5. **Biological Sciences**

Eastern's Top Majors for New Freshmen in 2012:

1. **Biological Sciences**
2. **Kinesiology & Sports Studies**
3. **Elementary Education**
4. **Psychology**
5. **Special Education**
6. **Pre-Business**