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Committee on Retention Efforts (CORE)

Gurkan Akalin
Cindy Boyer
Kelsey Cripe
Mona Davenport
Julie Dietz
Joe Eichman, secretary
Echarial Gaines
Shelley James
Stephen King
Jeanne Lord
Karla Sanders, chair
Jody Stone
Jean Wolski
Dawn Zachow

For 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

Access Granted Program: A Success Story

Access Granted is a recruitment and retention program for students of color who have been admitted as freshmen to Eastern. The program has been in existence since 2006.

Access Granted is collaboration between the Office of Admissions and Minority Affairs. Prospective students come to Eastern for the weekend in February and are given a snapshot of life at EIU for minority students. Fifty to seventy-five students are selected each year for the weekend. Transportation, lodging, and meals are provided at no cost to the students or their families.

Mona Davenport, the Director of Minority Affairs, says, "The program gives an exclusive weekend pass to preview the life of a college student. Incoming students listen to workshops conducted by faculty and professional staff, addressing

leadership and team-building, conflict resolution, and scholarship opportunities."

Students also participate in social activities like bowling and the Step Show to give them the full view of what it is like to come to college at Eastern.

"I loved the fact that I was able to get a one-on-one connection with the students, campus, and faculty. It was my first time living on campus, and I enjoyed every last bit of it. The best part was when we had the chance to go to the Step Show!" said Raven Ramsey, a Spring 2018 Access Granted participant.

Another 2018 participant, Hannah Moore, concurred, and admitted that she was not that interested in attending Eastern despite encouragement from family members who were alumni, "They



Current students who participated in Access Granted pictured with Omar Solomon, Admissions

Access Granted cont.

loved EIU. I, for one, was not too fond of staying in my home state, but after my participation in Access Granted, my mind was changed. . . . I loved the feel on campus as well as the experience that Omar, the admissions counselor, gave me. He made me feel welcomed and he treated myself and other students as if we were real attendees of the institution. The current EIU students that went through Access Granted as well told me about all of the support and love that they received due to being a part of the Access Granted legacy. They also spoke heavily about EIU as a whole and encouraged me to attend. The overall positivity and good vibes that I received during my weekend experience amazed me and is the reason why I am a member of #EIU2022 today.”

Students who participate in this program have higher retention and graduation rates than their counterparts who do not attend Access Granted. According to Davenport, “Our inaugural class showed us that this program is a MUST because we realize that the majority of these students do not have the opportunity to visit out campus prior to enrollment.”

There were 49 students in that first program and 35 were enrolled on census day the next fall (73%). As of Spring 2017, 69% of those students had graduated and 95% stayed in good standing during their tenure at EIU with a 3.3 average gpa.

Eastern’s overall graduation rate for the Fall 2006 cohort was 60% putting these students 9% above the whole class and 20% above the minority graduation rate of 49% for that cohort. The chart below shows the six-year graduation rates for the Access Granted students compared to all EIU students and all minority students for the same entering freshman classes. Students who participate in Access Granted have a higher graduation rate than minority students who do not attend Access Granted,

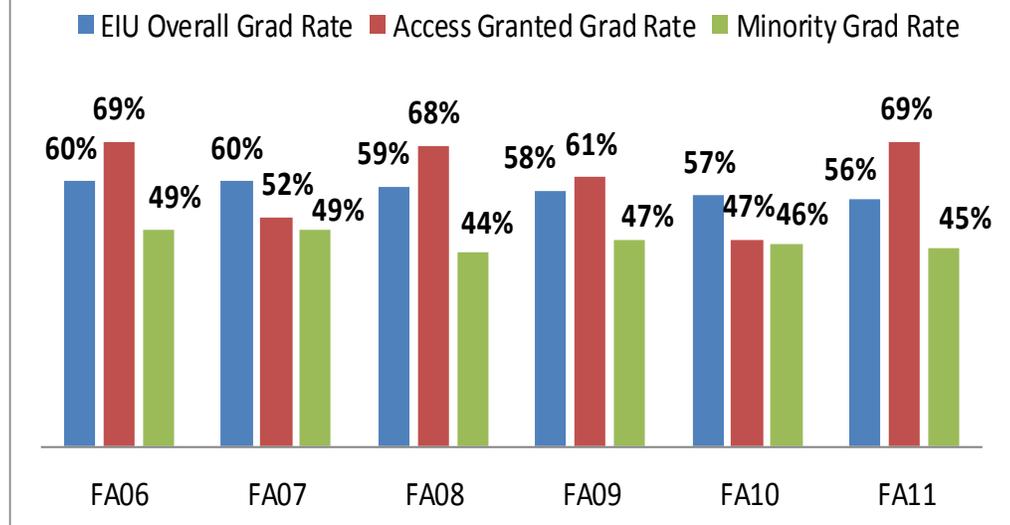
and for four of the six years for which we have data, Access Granted students’ graduation rate exceeds that of the whole University.

Davenport attributes this success to attention and involvement, “We bring these students down, we talk to them one-on-one, we assist them with everything they need to know to enroll (orientation, deferment of the enrollment program, recommend University Foundations, etc.). Once they arrive on campus, we continue to assist with their acclimation process. After the second week, we meet with them every couple of weeks to make sure they are aware of resources. One-on-one is KEY! The majority of these students are first-generation and no one is that familiar with the navigation process. We show them the ropes of how to be a success.”

Students who participate in Access Granted are also invited to help plan and deliver the next Access Granted weekend.

The success of this program can provide a roadmap for other programs seeking to increase their graduation rates. Students appreciate having that one-on-one interaction with faculty, staff, and current students, and they—especially those who are first in their families to attend college—will need to be shown how to navigate college and find resources to help them succeed.

Graduation Rates Comparison



MSAC to Open Lounge for Student Veterans

The Post 9/11 GI Bill (2009) continues to increase the flexibility of eligible students seeking to attend college; thus, there is a need to focus on supporting the transition and retention of this student population.

The National Veteran Education Success Tracker, NVEST, found that student veterans earn degrees at rates better than their civilian counterparts although finding a national percentage is difficult. One study puts it at 72% while another suggests 42%. However, the graduation rate for all students over the age of 24 when they enter college is 39% nationally.

At Eastern, the Military Student Assistance Center (MSAC) is focused on the helping students who are active military or veterans and their families. This unit aids students in finding campus resources and making the transition to college, including navigating financial aid for veterans. The MSAC, located in room 1715 of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Union, will also soon have a student veterans lounge.

The lounge is designed to strengthen social connections among the student veterans and give them a home away from home on Eastern's campus. It is a collaboration involving: The

Office of the President, the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs, the MLK Union, and the MSAC. The lounge will be in 1620 MLK Union.

In compliance with the 8 Keys to Veteran's Success the lounge will provide a designated space for student veterans to congregate. The lounge will have a couch, a board table, chairs, mini-fridge, microwave, coffee pot, and more to allow student veterans to do homework, build connections, and relax during the MLK Union hours of operation.

Advising's Technology Tools Aid in Student Progress

Tinto writes in *Increasing Student Retention* (1987) that academic advising is core to successful institutional retention efforts, and in the 30 years since its publication, many studies have proven this to be true: successful advising is a key component to student satisfaction, success, retention, and graduation. Joe Cuseo asserts that "Academic advising is one of the major academic and social domains of the college experience that affect student decisions about staying or leaving" (retrieved from http://www.uwc.edu/sites/uwc.edu/files/imce-uploads/employees/academic-resources/esfy/_files/academic_advisement_and_student_retention.pdf).

Eastern's mandatory advising model is one of the cogs in our retention process that serves students well. And, our Academic Advising Center is using technology to aid in its work with students to help them on the path to success.

ScheduleOnce is an online appointment software that allows students to make, change, or cancel an appointment with minimal effort. This software helps the advisor prepare for appointments as well; the dropdown boxes asks students to complete the reason for the appointment, their major, contact infor-

mation, and any additional information they would like to share with their advisor. Shelley James, Interim Director of AAC, notes, "ScheduleOnce has changed the dynamic of advising offices all across campus. The departments that have big caseloads have found it is a very efficient tool and well worth the annual fee" of \$200/advisor.

In addition to this software, Eastern advisors may also use a home-grown Advising Management tool, an online worksheet that automatically pulls in the following information from Banner: student name, E#, major, catalog year, email, phone number, registration date, credits earned and in progress, EWPs completed, advisor name, and email.

The Advising Management Tool allows advisors to include information from the advising session and then save it for later use. Since the tool is on-line, students can always login to see it, so it cannot be lost as a single sheet of paper can be.

The worksheet allows advisors to suggest courses needed for the student's program of study and graduation that are offered the following semester and to provide alternate courses if those fill before the student registers. It also provides a section for com-

Changes to Merit Scholarships

The President's Council gave a subcommittee of Enrollment Work the task of revising the structure of the merit scholarships. Admissions counselors were finding it difficult to explain easily our current structure to prospective students and their families.

The current merit scholarship structure was built on a sliding scale of a student's ACT composite score and high school gpa, and the only way to give students a sense of what they could hope to receive in merit aid was to use the scholarship calculator.

Many of our competitors had much simpler scholarship categories. The committee was asked to make the merit scholarships easier to communicate without spending more money.

The new scholarships require a 20 ACT composite. Then, students whose high school gpa is a 3.0-3.24 will receive \$2000; those whose high school gpa is a 3.25-3.49 will receive \$3000, and those above a 3.5 gpa will receive \$4000. Each scholarship is renewable for 4 years.

Josh Norman, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, notes that this new

model, "Spends at the same rate we have been, makes the scholarships extremely easy to communicate, replaces a current population of less successful students historically with a population that is more successful, is competitive with a majority of competitors for our top end students, and leverages aid to more students than the previous model."

GPA & Retention %		
HS GPA	Retention %	# Students
2.0-2.4	57%	343
2.5-2.59	64%	233
2.6-2.69	69%	275
2.7-2.79	72%	232
2.8-2.89	72%	247
2.9-2.99	73%	237
3.0-3.49	81%	1149
3.5-3.99	87%	688
4.00	95%	132

The previous model awarded merit scholarships to students with a 2.75-3.0 high school gpa if the ACT was above a 21. This group of students had a 51% 6-year graduation rate. The new model offers aid to students with a 20 ACT and a 3.0 high school gpa, and this group historically

(2007-2011 cohorts) had a 67% graduation rate.

When the most recent retention prediction model was run, we discovered that a 3.0 high school gpa or higher was a predictor for retention. The chart below shows our current retention model and the high school gpa associated with the retention percentages. The model used the 2012, 2013, and 2014 freshman cohorts and their retention behaviors; it is the number of students in these years that is given for each gpa in the right hand column of the chart. There were 3548 total students in these three freshman cohorts.

Because of the graduation and retention rates associated with students with these high school grade point averages, the changes to the merit scholarships for the incoming 2019 freshmen may help naturally increase the University graduation and retention rates. These merit scholarships provide \$1.5 million in aid to Eastern students.

Advising Tools cont. from page 3

ments and shows completion of graduation requirements like cultural diversity, foreign language, and the electronic writing portfolio. The alternate pin is preserved for students who want to make changes months after the advising appointment occurs. And, past advising sheets are saved in the history section of the tool, so advisors and students may see comments and courses discussed from previous sessions.

Advisors may print or email the sheet for the student as well. James notes, "not only is this a great tool for the advisor, this worksheet has also helped the students because it is easy to read and they have access to a copy at any time of day or night."

Advisors may check out the tool at www.eiu.edu/apps/advising/login.php. You will need to login with your regular PAWS login and password. For assistance, contact Shelley James in advising.