

**Committee on Retention Efforts (CORE)  
Meeting Minutes  
February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

**I. Call to Order**

The Committee on Retention Efforts (CORE) was called to order on February 12, 2026, at 9 am. in the Witter's Conference Room in the Booth Library.

**Attendees:** Amber Webb, Bobbi Kingery, Dr. Wade Smith, Dr. Ed Treadwell, Amy Odwarka, Dr. John Blue, Jessie Shuemaker, Danny Gourley Fischer, Justin Tierney, Josh Norman, Jeremy Alexander, Dr. Michael Cornebise, Vicki Phillips, Dr. Cassandra Strawser, Crystal Brown, Dr. Chris Mitchell, Dr. Michael Gillespie, Dr. Anne Flaherty

**II. Subcommittee Updates**

• **Panthers Persist**

- The meeting scheduled for Monday, February 9<sup>th</sup> was cancelled.
- Goal is to interview students before spring break.
- Update expected at the next meeting.

• **Advising Models for Retention**

- The first meeting was held on February 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Members were asked to define 'academic advisor.'
  - Only 8 out of 18 responded.
- Reviewed definition of academic advising and NACADA definition.
  - Word cloud generated from advisor definitions highlighted support, guidance, and students as dominant themes.
- Focus on improving 2028 retention and graduation goals.
- Identified communication gaps and need for advisor training.
- Navigate 360 enhancements discussed (e.g., service tags, stop-alerts).
- Next meeting is on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026.

• **Survey of EIU Retention Practice**

- 12 departments responded to retention survey. Three reported programs in development (Special Education, Art & Design, and English).
  - Special Education: Student Ambassador program.

- Art & Design: Foundation course.
    - English: Forum class for first year for students who are majoring in English.
  - English also reported extensive efforts around financial problem-solving and career pathways discussions for majors not pursuing teaching.
    - Outreach to stop-out students was identified as a future priority.
  - Departments expressed concern about limited opportunity for engagements with first year students prior to formal entry into the major and suggested the potential need for a dedicated retention coordinator role for each department.
  - 11 departments expressed interest in further collaborative discussion.
- **Veterans Connection**
    - EIU Connection initiative will consolidate Freshman, Transfer, and Veteran Connections under a unified structure.
    - 3 peer mentors have been selected.
    - Student Veterans RSO was approved by Student Government and has demonstrated strong student leadership.
    - Funds were recovered from a dormant account.
    - The first meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at the VFW.

### **III. Spring Census Numbers**

- Data was provided for graduate and undergraduate students.
- Overall. Fall-to-Spring retention increased by 1.7%.
- Notable increases in PACK students and School of Business and several demographic categories including White students, Black or African American students, and Non-First Gen students.
- Reporting complexities expected next year due to academic realignment.

### **IV. EIYOU Outcomes**

- 238 students enrolled in EIYOU 1111 and 132 completed course evaluations.
  - Over 50% completion and mean scores ranging from 4.1-5.0 on a 5-point scale.
- 70% of students earned A-C grades.
- Only 8 students who earned D/F/NF were not on academic warning/dismissal.

- Assignment revisions are underway based on student feedback.
- Early intervention through Navigate360 and progress reports discussed.

#### **V. SUCCESS Initiative**

- IBHE looking at students' needs are coordinated and any gaps there may be.
- EIU assigned to “Meeting Student Basic Needs’ community of practice.
- Resident expert from UIC, who have accomplished this on their campus, will be guiding the EIU SUCCESS team with work that needs done.
- Started in December of 2025, completion deadline in April 2026
- Financial need identified as a primary barrier.
- Student focus group has been scheduled.
- Findings will be shared with IBHE and will be further discussed at the next CORE meeting.

#### **VI. Math Placement Exam Update**

- Justin Tierney has stepped in as interim Director for New Student & Family Programs.
- University has been utilizing the ALEKS program for Math Placement for the past 2 years.
- 260 students were required to take it, only about 130 students completed the Math Placement.
- Taking MPE also influences readiness for 2000 level Chemistry courses and graduating on time.
- Proposal: Requiring the math placement to be completed at orientation if not completed in advance.

#### **VII. Navigate 360 Update**

- Implementation meeting is ongoing. Target launch date is May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026.
- Initial rollout includes Academic Advising, Academic Support Center, Dean of Students, Career Services, and potentially Financial Aid.
- Features include real time D2L grade pull, alerts, progress reports, case management, and improved cross-communication.
- All incoming Fall 2026 students will be onboarded into the system.

- The Student Success Center website has video demonstrations and other resources for Navigate 360.

#### **VIII. Academic Realignment and Feedback**

- Structural changes will temporarily impact reporting comparisons.
- Request for clearer communication regarding personnel transitions to ensure continuity.

#### **IX. Next Meeting**

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup> at 9 am in the Witter's Conference Room in the Booth Library.

*~Minutes submitted by Brandy Verdin, Recording Secretary*