

IMPROVING FRESHMAN RETENTION

In this report the Retention Committee (ad hoc) responds to President McCrone's goal of achieving a freshman retention rate of 80% by 2003. The Retention Committee was charged by Vice Presidents Butler and Stokes and was comprised of Steve Butler (coordinator), Karen Carlton, Alan Exley, John Filce, Rees Hughes, David Kitchen, Ron Maggiore, Phebe Smith and Rick Vrem. (*Published Spring 2001*)

Charge:

1. The collection and analysis of data relevant to student retention, focusing on the freshman to sophomore years (Retention Study attached);
2. Identification of current programs/interventions that are having a positive impact on student retention; and,
3. Identification and prioritization of new, expanded or revamped programs/interventions that could have *additional* positive impact on student retention.

Assumptions:

1. The committee recognizes the hand-in-glove relation between student recruitment and student retention.
2. Matriculating students must have realistic understanding and expectations concerning HSU, its academic programs, collegiate experience and environment.
3. Freshman retention is a cost-effective means of positively affecting enrollment.
4. The retention rate of HSU freshmen for the last three years has averaged 75%.
5. There are many positive HSU programs and interventions that promote student success and retention.

Recommendations:

The following summarizes the committee's recommendations for achieving improvements in freshman retention. The committee believes that the following recommended programs and interventions would promote student success, improve academic performance, promote efficiency of time-to-degree, improve graduation rates, improve student satisfaction with the HSU collegiate experience, improve freshman retention, and be cost effective.

The recommendations are divided into three (3) concentrations:

1. ***Academic Advising,***
2. ***Learning Support, and***
3. ***Campus Life.***

For implementation purposes, the recommendations are phased over three (3) years starting with Fall of 2001. The predicted outcomes and approximate costs are listed for each recommendation. A summary and potential fiscal impact analysis are included at the report's conclusion.

ACADEMIC ADVISING:

Purpose/Goal

Examine the practice of academic advising and explore ways that academic advising might be improved. Improve the quality of the educational experience and help students graduate in a timely manner. Assist students to participate fully in the HSU experience and improve student retention.

Background

The Committee recognizes the excellent quality of academic advising performed by some faculty and academic departments, both for academic majors and general education.

Conversely, the Committee also recognizes that academic advising is too often inconsistent in its delivery, quality and accuracy. This is especially the case for undeclared academic majors and first year students, both freshmen and transfers.

Recommendations

Fall 2001:

- Form an Academic Advising Committee to look at long range planning for academic advising (start Fall 2001)
- Encourage personnel committees to recognize good academic advising in the RTP process (start with the Academic Senate in Fall 2001)
- Encourage departments to designate faculty to serve as “freshman advisors” and provide training and support for these advisors (Fall 2001)
- Make special use of FERP and Emeritus faculty to improve academic advising, e.g. scholars in the residence halls, “on-site” advising in the “J” or in the Student Center (start Fall 2001)

Spring 2002:

- Ask chairs and faculty to develop model 4 year programs (complete by Spring 2002)
- Update and correct academic requirements in the catalog and websites (complete by Spring 2002)

Fall 2002:

- Institute an Academic Advising Center, similar to the old Academic Information and Referral (AIR) Center including student peer mentors (Fall 2002)
- Provide additional advising support for undeclared students through the reinstated Academic Advising Center (Fall 2001)
- Select a faculty member to serve as the Faculty Advising Coordinator. The Faculty Advising Coordinator will work in the Advising Center, facilitate advising activities with departments and individual faculty members, assist with academic advising workshops, and work with specially designated “freshman advisors.” One way to mitigate the salary cost of the Faculty Advising Coordinator is to include the current duties assigned to our ombudspersons, including the six (6) credits of release time (Fall 2002)

Outcomes/Assessment

1. The changes in academic advising should improve student and faculty satisfaction with advising
 - A. Assessment - Conduct a satisfaction survey of students and faculty with academic advising
2. Installation of an Advising Center should improve advising for undeclared student
 - A. Assessment - Measure the number of undeclared students finding majors and the retention rate for undeclared students
3. Catalog and Web site academic information will be brought into alignment and kept current, and an audit will be performed to assure compliance
4. Four-year degree plans will be in place for academic majors; Deans' offices will assure plans are published and in place
5. The above recommendations should lead to higher overall retention rates, which will be compared on a yearly basis

Budget

Spring 2002:

Remodeling costs for Advising Center	\$10,000
Equipment for Portable Advising	\$200
Faculty Advising Coordinator (3 WTUs per semester)	\$5,000
Freshman Advisor Training and Stipends	<u>\$2,500</u>
	\$17,700

Fall 2002:

Peer Advisors for Advising Center	\$25,000
Faculty Advising Coordinator (3 WTUs per semester)	<u>\$5,000</u>
	\$30,000
Total	\$47,700

LEARNING SUPPORT

Learning support is divided into two (2) intervention strategies: *Supplemental Instruction* and *Early Warning* intervention.

1. Supplemental Instruction

Purpose/Goal

Improve retention and enhance academic performance by providing supplementary instruction, including assistance with basic and study skills, in courses where there has been a high demand for tutorial support and those which might be identified as having a high failure or withdrawal rate.

Background

SI has been used as a successful retention tool and its outcomes have been documented nationally since 1973. Research data indicates that despite ethnicity or prior academic achievement, students participating in SI succeed at a higher rate (withdraw at a lower

rate and receive lower percentage of D or F final course grades) than those who do not participate in SI. The goals of SI are to improve student performance, to increase continued enrollment, and to improve learning skills.

SI has been implemented at HSU on a pilot basis during the past two semesters for Biology 104 (89% of SI participants passes vs. 78% of non-participants). The results have been very positive and support the effectiveness of SI in improving student academic performance.

Recommendations

The SI courses are tentatively recommended for 2001-02, in approximate order of priority. Some modifications may be necessary depending on faculty involvement and student interest. If total funding cannot be provided, SI sections can be scheduled for higher priority courses first.

Budget

<u>Course</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Sections Per Semester</u>	<u>Cost per A/Y</u>
Biol 104	3	2	\$2,400
Stats 108 (Elem Stats)	4	4	\$10,200 (\$1,275 per section)
Zool 110	4	2	\$5,100
Chem 105/106	3	1	\$2,294
Chem 107	4	1	\$2,550
Soils 260	4	1	\$2,550
Phil 100 (Logic)	3	3	\$6,882 (\$1,147 per section)
Chem 328 (Brief Organic)	4	1	\$2,550
BA 232 (Bus. Stats)	4	1	\$2,550
BA 250 (Financial Acctg)	4	1	\$2,550
BA 252 (Mgmt. Acctg.)	4	1	\$2,550
Engl 328(Str. Am. Eng)	4	2	\$5,100 (\$1,275 per section)
Ocean 109	4	2	\$5,100 (\$1,275 per section)
Geol 108	3	1	\$2,294

Student Clerical Assistant support \$7.00 X 15 hours X 30 weeks
(Scheduling, data input, follow-up, room reservation) \$3,150

TOTAL COST \$57,820

Less Matching Funds -2,900

TOTAL BUDGET \$54,920

Basis of Calculations for Supplemental Instruction – Supplemental Instruction Assistant Salaries @ \$8.50 per hour, number of hours per week varies with course:

- Class/lab attendance based on consultation with instructors (typically 2-4 hours per week)
- Average of 2 hours prep and 1 hour meeting with instructor/Learning Center staff
- 3- 4 hours (based on course unit value) supplemental instruction sections

Outcomes

We have experienced a highly positive pilot application of Supplemental Instruction with Biology 104 for Spring and Fall, 2000. We would anticipate similar outcomes for SI in other courses.

2. Early Warning Academic Performance Intervention

Goal

Provide a system for early identification of students experiencing academic difficulty and develop a system of appropriate intervention and support.

Background

There are existing procedures for obtaining mid-term evaluations on students who are under various support programs such as EOP and Athletics. This activity requires that instructors provide feedback on all students in the identified group. The Retention Committee recommends that a simple, but more comprehensive early warning system be established.

Recommendation

Provide a simple mechanism for instructors to indicate which students (by class section) are showing signs of academic difficulty. This would be done according to some schedule so that reporting and intervention processes could be triggered at a known time each term.

Fall 2001:

The Banner system already has the capability for mid-term grading. While valid grades must be entered, the system does not require that all students be graded. An easy-to-use indicator grade such as NC could be entered for just those students who are having difficulty. These “grades” would be used to drive the following processes:

- 1) Notations of student academic difficulty would be tallied for each student.
- 2) Depending upon the student affiliations, the following notifications could take place:
 - a. Advisor
 - b. Support program to which student may belong (EOP, Athletics, etc.)
 - c. Learning Center
 - d. Notification (via e-mail) to the student?
- 3) As a timeline for phased-in implementation, highest intervention priority could be given to freshmen, first-time transfers, and those with more than one problem class.

Information to provide in reports on each student in difficulty:

Student name and SSN (for other lookup needs)

List of all current classes, with indicator on those where difficulty has been noted.

Reports could be provided electronically or in print as needed.

Budget/Resources

Some planning time and involvement of staff from OEM would be required to set up appropriate grade-collection and report-generation processes. To some extent this would be offset by cost-savings (time and paper) from current midsemester report generation, distribution, and review processes, which could be eliminated.

Learning Center staff is prepared to provide intervention for new freshmen not affiliated with a support program as a pilot in Fall 2001. At this time, we believe the intervention can be provided without an increase in Learning Center staff, although funds for some student assistant salaries might be required.

Outcome

The expected outcome would be better academic performance (fewer students on probation) and improved retention rates. The probation intervention process implemented two years ago has demonstrated that timely intervention can reduce probation rates and help keep students in school. It is anticipated that an early warning process will reduce probation and attrition even further.

CAMPUS LIFE

Goal

Improve student academic performance and co-curricular learning through social integration of new freshmen, creating connections to the University.

Background

Committee members conducted a cursory examination of campus life on seven similarly situated institutions: Sonoma State University, California State University – Chico, Fort Lewis College, Eastern Washington University, Central Washington University, University of Southern Utah, and Southern Oregon University. It was our perception that in most areas of campus life we equaled or exceeded what was available on these other campuses.

Recommendations

Fall 2001:

1. The University is currently reviewing a proposal to expand and enhance student recreation through the use of student fees to remodel the Field House. The Committee is very supportive of enhanced opportunity for student recreation. A number of the campuses we examined have substantially better general recreational facilities or are making efforts to do so. The quantity and quality of current recreational space is inadequate. The competition between open recreation, intercollegiate, club, and intramurals for indoor recreational space is intense, especially during those months of inclement weather

2. Each year CenterArts and the Associated Students should organize/sponsor 3-4 popular concerts or comedy events targeted towards student attendance utilizing John Van Duzer or the East Gym. In addition, we need to support the efforts of the Associated Students Lecture Series to bring major speakers to campus. We would further recommend that, to the extent possible, these events be scheduled during the first few weeks of the Fall Semester, Homecoming, the Week of Dialogue, or the first five weeks of the Spring Semester. Nothing would be more powerful than beginning each academic year with an outstanding speaker and a popular band or comedian. Cost: For the most part this initiative will break even. Major speakers, however, will require subsidy (about \$5,000 each if combined with other sources).
3. There needs to be a more effective campus calendar of events and renewed efforts to promote major campus events (e.g., activities calendar in the *Lumberjack*, campus electronic display). Athletic events need to be better connected to campus life and partnered with other campus events. A first step would be to have Athletic Department participation with the Activities Coordinating Board.

Although there once was a calendar module incorporated into the campus web site, it is no longer supported. It is possible that with a concerted effort to maintain and promote, students would begin to utilize such a web-based resource for their events and activities information. Cost: On-going support for a student assistant to regularly update and promote a calendar (5 hours/week) on the HSU web site would cost about \$1,000 annually, with limited Summer Semester coverage.

4. The University should support a number of department-based activities following Convocation, Friday, August 24, 2001. We believe that better student and faculty connections accentuate the human scale of the campus and create a culture of involvement. The challenge is to attract students to participate. Cost: Food costs are difficult for departments and individual faculty (e.g., to host students) to pay from State funds. \$1,500 in money for food costs could stretch a long way.
5. Expansion of the Freshmen Interest Group (FIG) program. The current FIG offerings will accommodate a maximum of 313 freshmen for Fall, 2001. The Committee recommends that the capacity be expanded gradually until a majority of all freshmen participate in a FIG. Cost: Given the current model that includes a seminar with each FIG, each 100-student expansion costs roughly \$6,000.

Spring 2002:

6. Develop promotional material that highlights all that there is to do in the Arcata area. Prospective students appear to have an image of Arcata and HSU as lacking the amenities of a large urban area. While we certainly are unable to rival San Francisco or Los Angeles, there are a surprising variety of opportunities. We can redouble our efforts to include images to counter that perception in University promotional material. It may make sense to prepare a specific promotional piece to address this question. Cost: New costs would be incurred if a new brochure were prepared (estimated at \$1,500).

Budget

One-time: Brochure	\$ 1,500
Fall 2001:	
Department-based activities	\$ 1,500
Web-based calendar maintenance	\$ 1,000
Major-speakers (5k X 2)	<u>\$10,000</u>
Fall 2002:	
Additional FIG sections (1.5k X 4)	\$ 6,000

Outcomes

1. The effects of the Freshman Interest Groups (FIG) on retention were measured for the Fall of 2000. The results, which are not for a full year, are positive, the retention of FIGs participants was 93.4% versus 89.9% for non-FIG freshmen. The retention rate of freshman participants in FIGs will continue to be monitored and compared to non-participants.
2. A freshman survey was developed and distributed in the Spring of 2001. This survey records student involvement and satisfaction with the HSU experience. The survey will be duplicated annually and results compared to measure any cause-and-effect relation between activities and involvement and satisfaction.

SUMMARY and CONCLUSIONS:

The committee's review and analysis of retention efforts on this campus and others causes the committee to recommend the above strategies as the most effective means of improving freshman retention to the 80 percentile by 2003.

To summarize, the committee recommends:

- Revamping the current academic advising system for freshmen and undeclared academic majors, including development of an Advising Center;
- Installing two (2) new learning intervention support mechanisms, i.e., Supplemental Instruction and Early Warning system to assist students with their academic performance; and
- Augmentation of specific campus-life programs to improve student involvement with the University creating connections and improving student satisfaction, and thus, retention.

The approximate cost of the recommended programs/interventions for Fall 2001 is \$68,920; for Spring 2002 is \$17,700; and for Fall 2002 is \$36,000. Please see the chart on the next page that details the number of students retained and the revenue they generate. It is estimated that the results or outcomes of these intervention programs will net 50 greater retained students in the first year, 95 the second, 137 the third, 170 the fourth, and 202 the fifth. The associated margin from tuition revenue generated by these

additional retained students is \$300,000 the first year, \$570,000 the second, \$822,000 the third, \$1,020,000 the fourth and \$1,212,000 the fifth year.

Clearly, the recommended retention strategies are a cost effective investment in student success and more than pay for themselves in the first year and generate revenue as the retained students move towards graduation.

The Committee recommends immediate implementation of these strategies for freshmen and initiation of a similar ad hoc committee and retention strategies for transfer students.

	Number of Retained FTF	Number of Retained Transfers	Retained 2nd Yr FTF	Retained 2nd Yr Transfers	Retained 3rd Yr FTF	Retained 3rd YR Transfers	Retained 4th Yr FTF	Retained 5th Yr FTF	Total Additional Retained Students	Approximate Margin Revenue Generated by Additional Retained Students
Year 1	40	10							50	\$300,000.00
Year 2	40	10	36	9					95	\$570,000.00
Year 3	40	10	36	9	34	8			137	\$822,000.00
Year 4	40	10	36	9	34	8	33		170	\$1,020,000.00
Year 5	40	10	36	9	34	8	33	32	202	\$1,212,000.00