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Six strategies to promote persistence and retention from frontline practitioners

The *2023 Persistence and Retention* report from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center found nearly 76% of the 2.4 million students who started college in fall 2021 returned for their second year. This is up 0.9 percentage points from last year.

Enlisting student success strategies and support services

Institutions that employ retention strategies can positively impact students' academic experience and reduce stop-out. Peer-to-peer connections created on campus can also generate feelings of belonging. Students who have these positive experiences early on in their academic career are more likely to commit to continuing their learning journey.

Here are six strategies Ad Astra's partner institutions are employing to improve persistence results:

1 FOSTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Jason Madden, ITS Senior Analyst at Black Hawk College, emphasized the importance of in-person student engagement and fostering a sense of community through interactive workshops, seminars, and social events on campus. These connections enable students to build relationships with faculty and staff, further contributing to a positive and supportive learning environment.

2 CREATE STUDENT-CENTERED SCHEDULES

Marshall University is one of many institutions working with Ad Astra to create annual or multi-term schedules. William David Biggs, Senior Associate Registrar, promotes the use of proactive academic planning and scheduling. This offers students the ability to view a full-year schedule to plan their academic journey more efficiently and take ownership of their education.

Texas Southern University uses block scheduling to ensure students have focused time on campus. Derrick Manns, Executive Director, highlighted the importance of student engagement as a way to positively influence persistence rates. Community-building activities include on-campus events and clubs that capture students' interest and encourage active participation.

3 COMMUNICATE EARLY AND OFTEN

Cheryl Osberg, Operations Manager at Valencia College, highlighted the value of regular interaction with students. This combined with involved assistance can help address the various hurdles students may face in their academic journey.

Shirley McManus, Dean of Math, Science, & Engineering at Fresno City College, noted the use of several initiatives to ensure student success including early warning messages, a food pantry with free food, and a faculty initiative to reach out directly to students if they are frequently absent.

Obstacles to persistence and retention

Issues with belonging

Systemic barriers

Difficult developmental work

Family obligations

Financial responsibility

Limited network

Transportation insecurity

4 TEAM UP FOR SUCCESS

Lori Trahan, Associate Director of Data and Research at Kennesaw State University, suggested institutions can also form a retention team to address student issues promptly and provide students with the necessary support they need.

Central Piedmont Community College chooses a holistic approach to student progress. Marcus L. Caldwell, Academic Support Specialist, shared that by tracking student progression the institution can not only motivate student persistence and retention but also foster a sense of care and belonging within the academic community.

5 INCORPORATE STUDENT FEEDBACK

Elizabeth McCune, Facilities Coordinator at Lander University, noted that insights shared by students can play a pivotal role in enhancing the overall learning experience. The act of incorporating student feedback allows universities to better adapt their strategies to align with students' needs and preferences.

6 REDUCE BARRIERS TO COMPLETION

Crystal Trevino, Academic Advisor at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, is helping students persist with course sharing. Course sharing allows colleges and universities to collaborate with like-minded schools to increase access to in-demand courses. The ability to connect students to the courses they need when they need them is removing barriers to completion and helping students graduate on time.

Interested in learning more about how you can use the course schedule as a tool to promote student persistence?

Connect with an expert at **aais.com »**

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