Retention Opportunities Analysis

Findings and Recommendations

New Mexico Highlands University
Las Vegas, New Mexico

RUFFALO NOEL LEVITZ SM

Contents

Introduction

Dr. David Trites, senior associate consultant at Ruffalo Noel Levitz, visited New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU) on September 19-20, 2016 for the purpose of providing an external analysis of the college's retention-related strategies and tactics. The consultant wishes to commend NMHU for initiating an analysis on what the college is currently doing and what they might be doing to improve the quality of student life and learning, increase retention and graduation rates, and foster student satisfaction and success.

> **"...activities that serve to generate significant improvements in the organization as a whole ultimately serve to improve student retention."**
>
> Dr. Laurence Smith
> Mobilizing the Campus for Retention
> ACT

Successful retention programs encompass virtually everything an institution does to improve the quality of student life and learning. Quality can be defined as the set of attributes of an educational program or service that consistently exceeds student expectations within specifically-defined, institutional-determined standards and/or criteria of performance. Practically speaking, the evidence of effective programs is clear; namely that the route to successful retention lies in those programs that ensure from the very onset of student contact with the institution, that entering students are integrated with teaching and learning processes of the college, and that students acquire the skills and knowledge needed to become successful learners in that community.

- The ultimate goal of a retention effort is improved educational experiences for students, rather than retention per se.
- Improving the quality of student life and learning needs to be a continuing and important priority for NMHU.
- Some attrition is inevitable and acceptable, and improving retention is a complex task.
- Retention and attrition are multivariate phenomena and are not subject to quick-fix strategies.
- Dropouts are expensive, and improvements in retention rates can add to the annual operating budget.
- Attrition is a problem for which there is a solution; retention is one aspect of an enrollment management program over which an institution can exert considerable influence and control.
- Some attrition is predictable and preventable by focusing special efforts on selected target groups of students.
- Effective retention strategies focus on improving campus programs, services, attitudes, and behaviors, and result in quality educational experiences for all students.
- Educational programs and services cannot compensate for the absence of competent, caring, and conscientious faculty and staff.
- The key to improving the quality of student life and learning (retention) are student-centered policies, procedures, and programs.
- Persistence depends upon the extent to which an individual has been integrated into the academic and nonacademic components of the campus environment.

- Retention is a campuswide responsibility, and institutional change results only from a coordinated and collaborative effort.

The goals for the consultation were as follows.

- Accelerate the development of student success and retention improvements for student enrollment growth by conducting a thorough analysis of existing retention systems, processes, and activities.
- Identify practical recommendations for improving current retention strategies.
- Benchmark current retention programs, systems, and procedures against best practices and standards at similar universities.
- Identify a cohesive, customized framework for achieving retention goals.
- Provide an exit briefing presentation on retention.

The retention consultation progressed in three phases:

1. Pre-visit information and data review;
2. Site visit to conduct individual interviews; and
3. Exit briefing and written report.

Phase One: Project Launch and Pre-Visit Data/Information Compilation Review

The data/information assessment included a review of institutional reports, studies, publications, and materials to facilitate an understanding of current retention strategies and practices. The consultant would like to thank Edward Martinez and Maria Sena for the preparation materials and for the exceptional attention to detail apparent throughout the visit.

Phase Two: Site Visit and Interviews/Focus Groups

During the site visit, the consultant conducted interviews with administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Following is the agenda and participants for the visit.

Agenda and Participants

Following is the agenda and participants list for the retention assessment visit at New Mexico Highlands University.

Day One: Monday, September 19, 2016

Time	Event	Participants	Location
8:00 a.m.	Meet with project leaders to review agenda and project status (joint meeting with additional RNL consultants if feasible)	Listed Below	RAB105
9:30 a.m.	Focus group of academic advisors/counselors or advising team	"	SUB321
10:30 a.m.	Meet with mid-managers (Deans and Chairs)	"	SUB321
12:00 p.m.	Lunch with student focus group (new and/or returning students)	"	SUB321
1:30 p.m.	Meet with front-line staff (admissions, reception, admin assistants)	"	SUB321
2:30 p.m.	Meeting with faculty leaders	"	SUB321
3:30 p.m.	Focus group of student life and activities/club staff	"	SUB321
4:30 p.m.	Consultant departs campus	Dave Trites	

Day Two: Tuesday September 20, 2016

Time	Event	Participants	Location
8:00 a.m.	Meet with project leaders (This could be a joint meeting with senior leaders and additional consultants if feasible)	"	SH130A
9.00 a.m.	Meet with Retention team	"	SUB321
10:30 a.m.	Focus group of remediation/learning readiness, developmental, and learning support staff	"	SUB321
11:30 a.m.	Meet with the registrar, bursar, and financial aid director	"	SUB321
12:30 p.m.	Preparation time for exit presentation	Dave Trites	SUB322
1:30 p.m.	Exit briefing: Share observations and recommendations focused on the identification of strategic, innovative, and cost-effective directions for achieving recruitment and retention goals	Open to all participants	SUB322
2:30 p.m.	After action discussion with project leaders		RAB105
3:00 p.m.	Consultant departs campus	Dave Trites	

Participants

Monday, 9/19/2016 at 9:30 a.m.: Academic Advisors/Counselors

- Brandon Kempner, Associate Professor of English/Director of Undergraduate Studies in English
- Caroline Montoya, Academic Advisor, Coordinator of Training and Career Assessment
- April Kent, Librarian, Head of Public Service Division
- Shannon Saiz, Student Orientation Coordinator/Advisor
- Alex Gadberry, Intervention and Retention Coordinator
- David Esquibel, Coordinator of Accessibility and Testing
- Mary Basler, Facilities Manager/Administrative Associate
- Carol Linder, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic and Professor of Biology
- William Taylor, School of Bus, Media and Tech Dean/Professor of Economics
- Jennifer Lindline, Natural Resources Department Chair/Professor
- Edward Martinez, V.P. of Strategic Enrollment Management
- Benito Pacheco, Director of Academic Support
- Casey Applegate-Aguilar, Coordinator/First-Year Experience Learning (Academic Affairs)
- Emily Williams, Assistant Professor of Special Education

Monday, 9/19/2016 at 10:30 a.m.: Deans and Chairs

- Maureen Romine, Faculty Senate Chair
- Kerry Loewen, Media Arts Department Chair/Associate Professor
- David Sammeth, Chemistry Department Chair/Professor
- Kenneth Stokes, Arts and Sciences Dean
- Thomas Ward, Social and Behavioral Science Department Chair/Professor of Sociology
- Lora Bailey, Education Dean, School of Education
- E. J. Choe, School of Education
- Geri Glover, Associate Professor of Counselling
- Mary Romero, Visiting Professor of Accounting
- Cristina Duran, Social Work Assistant Professor of Social Work (Albuquerque)
- Virginia Vigil Padilla, Center Director (Rio Rancho)

Monday, 9/19/2016 at 1:30 p.m.: Administrative Assistants

- Annette Garcia, Academic Support
- Patricia Lopez, Library
- Andrew Israel, Dean of School of Social Work
- Raul Valdez, Recruitment and Admissions

Monday, 9/19/2016 at 2:30 p.m.: Faculty Leaders

- William Taylor, School of Bus, Media and Tech Dean/Professor of Economics
- Angela Meron, Assistant Professor of Media Arts
- Eric Romero, Assistant Professor in the Dept. of Languages and Culture
- Peter Linder, Professor of History
- Craig Conley, Associate Professor of Forestry

Monday, 9/19/2016 at 3:30 p.m.: Student Life

- Joseph Dominguez, Outdoor Recreation Coordinator
- Kimberly Blea, Dean of Students
- Yvette Wilkes, Housing Director
- Margaret Gonzales, Campus Life Director

Tuesday, 9/20/2016 at 8:00 a.m.: Senior Leadership

- Dr. Sam Minner, President
- Max Baca, Vice President for Finance and Administration
- Dr. Carol Linder, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic and Professor, Biology
- Kimberly Blea, Dean of Students
- Theresa Law, Vice President for Advancement (by phone)

Tuesday, 9/20/2016 at 9:00 a.m.: Retention Team

- Casey Applegate-Aguilar, Coordinator/First Year Experience Learning (Academic Affairs)
- Margaret Gonzales, Campus Life Director
- Yvette Wilkes, Housing Director
- Geraldine Saavedra, Assistant Registrar
- Benito Pacheco, Director of Academic Support
- Alex Gadberry, Intervention and Retention Coordinator
- Iliana Ortiz, Student Recruiter, Graduate Studies
- Buddy Rivera, Interim Director of Institutional Research
- Elizabeth Ratzlaff, ARMAS Center Coordinator
- Kimberly Blea, Dean of Students
- Eileen Sedillo, Financial Aid Director
- Emily Montoya, Associate Director of Financial Aid

Tuesday, 9/20/2016 at 10:30 a.m.: Focus Group for remediation/learning readiness

- Casey Applegate-Aguilar, Coordinator/First Year Experience Learning (Academic Affairs)
- Elizabeth Ratzlaff, ARMAS Center Coordinator
- Michel Raine, Registrar

Tuesday, 9/20/2016 at 11:30 a.m.: Meeting with staff

- Eileen Sedillo, Financial Aid Director
- Michael Raine, Registrar

Tuesday, 9/20/2016 at 1:30 p.m.: Exit Meeting with Campus Community

- Joseph Dominguez, Outdoor Recreation Coordinator (Outdoor Recreation Center)
- Caroline Montoya, Academic Advisor, Coordinator of Training and Career Assessment (Academic Support)
- David Esquibel, Coordinator of Accessibility and Testing (Academic Support)
- Gloria Gadsden, Associate Professor of Criminal Justice (Social and Behavioral Sci.)
- Mary Basler, Facilities Manager/Administrative Associate (Media Arts and Technology)
- Yvette Wilkes, Housing Director (Housing and Student Conduct)
- Angela Vigil-Juarez, Grant Manager (Office of Research and Sponsored Programs)
- Andrew Israel, Dean (Social Work)
- Phillip Escue, Application System Manager (IT Services)
- Lou Ann Romero, Continuing Education Coordinator (Social Work)
- Michael Raine, Registrar (Registrar's Office)
- Shay Bassett, Network Manager (IT Services)
- Maxine Salas, Institutional Effectiveness and Research Associate (Institutional Research)
- Ivy Romero, Institutional Effectiveness and Research Associate (Institutional Research)
- April Kent, Librarian, Head of Public Service Division (Library)
- Ruben Aragon, Director (Library)
- Casey Applegate-Aguilar, Coordinator/First Year Experience Learning (Academic Affairs)
- Buddy Rivera, Director for Farmington Center and Interim Institutional Effectiveness and Research
- Eileen Sedillo, Financial Aid Director (Financial Aid)
- Sean Weaver, University Relations Director (University Relations)

- Denise Montoya, Human Resources Director (Human Resources)
- James Alarid, Interim Director of ORSP (ORSP)
- Kimberly Blea, Dean of Students (Student Affairs)
- Ron Garcia, Director (Career Services)
- Warren Lail, Interim Dean of Graduate Studies (Graduate Studies)
- Brenda Bustamante, Head Cashier (Business Office)
- Reyna Alvizo, Student Accounts Receivable Specialist/Cashier (Business Office)
- Junko McDonald, Accountant II (Business Office)
- Andrea Medina, Accountant (Business Office)
- Gayle Martinez, Restricted Funds Supervisor (Business Office)
- Joaquin Montoya, Anthropology Graduate Student
- Jessica Jaramillo, Director of Recruitment and Undergraduate Admissions (Recruitment and Admissions)
- Monique Esquibel, Internship Coordinator (ARMAS)
- Elizabeth Mohanna, Academic Coach (ARMAS)
- Elizabeth Ratzlaff, ARMAS Center Coordinator (ARMAS)
- Kenneth Litherland, Systems Analyst/Programmer (IT Services)
- Carol Litherland, Instructor American Sign Language (Languages and Culture)

Questions varied by individual or group interviewed, but the purposes may generally be categorized as follows.

- Gather information about current retention strategies, processes, and programs.
- Elicit perceptions of strengths and weaknesses in an effort to clarify impressions about programs, faculty, administrators, staff, services, facilities, location, and campus environment.
- Begin to identify why students stay, why they leave, and what makes a difference.
- Measure clarity and strength of commitment toward efforts to improve the quality of student life and learning.

Phase Three: Exit Briefing and Written Report

Upon the completion of the site visits, the consultant shared preliminary observations and recommendations at an exit briefing open to all who participated in the focus groups and interviews. The PowerPoint slides used to organize that briefing are included in the appendix to this report.

The Current State of Retention

> **"If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do and how to do it."**
>
> Abraham Lincoln

Retention Benchmarks

The NMHU retention rates, as collected and reported on the National Center for Educational Statistics website (http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/), are below the ACT average for comparable four-year, master's degree-granting, public colleges with open admissions selectivity. NMHU's annual return rate for the fall 2013 cohort is 48 percent for new full-time students while the ACT average is 56.7 percent, and the five-year graduation rate of 13 percent for students who enrolled during fall 2009 compares to the ACT's national average of 18.1 percent for open similar universities. The Chronicle of Higher Education College Completion website ranks NMHU sixth of nine New Mexico four-year public colleges for 150 percent graduation rate.

The most recent annual return rate illustrated in the table below from NMHU's own data reflects a stable rate annual return rate that has increased from 47.99% for the fall 2013 cohort to 52.55% for the fall 2014 cohort. The fall 2015 cohort numbers were anticipated to be near the 52% mark but were not official yet at the time of this visit. Annual return rate is defined as the cohort percentage of full-time, first-time freshmen enrolled at the institution the following fall.

New Mexico Highlands University Entry Term

Rank	Value	Description	Total Number	Number Persisted	Persistence Rate (%)	Lift
1	F2011	Fall 2011	413	227	54.96	1.08
2	F2014	Fall 2014	274	144	52.55	1.03
3	F2013	Fall 2013	346	168	48.55	0.95
4	F2012	Fall 2012	423	203	47.99	0.94
Total			1,456	742	50.96	1.00

The following table contains data from the National Center for Educational Statistics website and provides a comparison of NMHU with three colleges in close proximity. It illustrates that NMHU is achieving results that are slightly below two of these selected institutions and substantially below the UNM main campus. NMHU appears to have an unusually high number of students who transfer out prior to graduation.

	Eastern New Mexico University-Main Campus	New Mexico Highlands University	Northern New Mexico College	University of New Mexico-Main Campus
Retention rates for first-time students[1] who began program in 2014				
Full-time	57%	52%	55%	80%
Part-time	36%	17%	100%	40%
[1] Four-year schools report retention for first-time, bachelor degree-seeking students only.				
Graduation rates for full-time, first-time undergraduates who began program in 2009				
Percentage of entering students counted in calculating graduation rate	34%	39%	55%	72%
Overall graduation rate	33%	18%	19%	48%
Transfer-out rate	2%	48%	28%	-
Bachelor's degree rate, four-year	16%	6%	-	15%
Bachelor's degree rate, five-year	27%	13%	-	39%
Bachelor's degree rate, six-year	32%	18%	-	47%

* NCES website.

The following table illustrates NMHU's retention rates compared to other four-year public colleges in New Mexico as compiled on the Chronicle of Higher Education's College Completion website (http://collegecompletion.chronicle.com/state/#state=nm&sector=public_four).

College	Grad. Rate (6 year)	Grad. Rate (4 year)	Completions per 100 students	Spending per completion	Student aid per recipient	Students with Pell Grants
University of New Mexico	47.6%	14.6%	17.8	$78,547	$6,034	38.5%
New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology	44.2%	18.8%	15.4	$90,507	$6,834	29.5%
New Mexico State University at Las Cruces	43.3%	15.6%	20.0	$53,415	$8,284	43.4%
Eastern New Mexico University	28.6%	12.3%	17.3	$54,807	$5,394	41.0%
Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development	27.3%	0	14.3	$269,880	$8,335	39.4%

College	Grad. Rate (6 year)	Grad. Rate (4 year)	Completions per 100 students	Spending per completion	Student aid per recipient	Students with Pell Grants
New Mexico Highlands University	18.4%	8.6%	20.2	$41,006	$5,181	56.5%
Western New Mexico University	16.8%	12.2%	16.8	$54,044	$2,895	46.7%
Northern New Mexico College	0	0	14.6	$103,887	$4,992	57.7%
Navajo Technical College	N/A	N/A	17.8	$103,829	$5,293	65.7%

Observations

The observations below are among those the consultant made about student life and learning on the campus of NMHU during this visit. It is apparent that improved retention can be a powerful strategy for achieving future enrollment goals, and the college should build off of its success by developing a systematic, intentional, and organized way to manage the quality of student life and learning.

There currently exists the following.

- A recently reconstituted group of senior leaders, including a new president and an interim vice president for enrollment management, who value the essentials of student success and advocate practices that encourage continuous improvement. The consultant commends these leaders for initiating this external analysis, as it is tangible evidence of the administration's support and commitment to improving the quality of student life and learning at NMHU.
- Increased scrutiny by the Higher Learning Commission for a history of inconsistent commitment to the improvement of retention, persistence, and completion rates.
- Numerous retention best practices including 17 learning communities, a required for freshmen I-seminar (FYE), approximately 15 sections of supplemental instructional/embedded tutors, and a required orientation for new students. In fact, nine of the ten most effective retention practices from the recent Ruffalo Noel Levitz "best retention practices" survey were in various stages of deployment at NMHU at the time of this visit.
- An 18-member retention committee who has developed a preliminary retention plan. However, it was not clear that the committee was fully empowered or that their responsibilities were clearly defined.
- A core of exemplary staff and many faculty who appear anxious to seize the opportunity to make improvements and who demonstrate a sincere commitment to increasing the quality of student life and learning experiences. The limited faculty involvement and consensus-building relative to some aspects of the college's retention programming appears to this consultant as a restraining force.
- A passionate group of academic support advisors who are doing their best to provide guidance for students, but appear to be working in a system that is not fully developed to provide optimum support for advising (lacking long-term class schedules or required interactions beyond the first two terms).
- Many faculty advisors who appear to understand how important advising is to NMHU students in spite of the lack of any really meaningful incentives (beyond intrinsic) for faculty to improve their advising practices.

- An appreciation for including the voices of NMHU students, but no comprehensive, actionable process was evident to collect benchmark data and communicate responsiveness to student concerns. The suggestion-box system, reportedly, is seldom used.
- Very stable annual return rates for the most recent cohorts of first-time-in-college (FTIC), degree-seeking students. These rates appear to be improving but remain below the national average for similar public, four-year, open-enrollment institutions.
- A well-designed, post-enrollment early-alert, but the pre-enrollment early-alert system that is part of this RNL/NMHU partnership is in the early stages of deployment. The existing post-enrollment system has excellent potential, but lacked optimum faculty participation during the most recent cycle.
- No honors program for this population of at-risk students. This is the only one of the RNL survey "top ten" most effective practices that is not being deployed at NMHU.
- An understanding and acceptance of the critical role accountability plays in all high-performing organizations, including the shift toward New Mexico's performance-based funding.
- Evidence of an awareness of the importance of focusing retention programming, not only on new freshmen but also on sophomores and transfer students, designed to encourage successful transition toward graduation for these cohorts of students. This realization has not yet been fully translated into effective programming.
- Awareness that many NMHU students who become attrition statistics are leaving in good academic standing, but the quantifications necessary to describe those students have yet to be produced.
- A retention plan that includes several key retention improvement priorities and targets, but no comprehensive action plans, timelines, measurement plans, and budgets developed in support of these priorities were apparent. The data and information used for gap analysis and strategy selection was limited.

Recommendations

> **"Change can either be friend or foe…It is disturbing when it is done to us, exhilarating when it is done by us."**
>
> Rosabeth Moss Kantor

The following recommendations are made based on the results of the meetings, interviews, reports, surveys, and recognized strategies to improve the quality of student life and learning that have the potential of increasing student success at NMHU. They are presented in separate categories but are not in any prioritized order.

Retention Planning

1. NMHU retention leaders should initiate a highly participative and data-informed planning process to strengthen the recently developed retention plan so it targets the "vital few" student success priorities aimed at specific lagging subpopulations of NMHU students.
2. Several data sets have become or will soon become available that should be used to support this planning improvement effort. They include the disaggregated sub-population data from the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Retention Predictor (SRP) model variable diagnostics and the student satisfaction data that is currently being gathered using the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey (SSI) and Adult Student Priority Survey (ASPS).
3. While the recently developed plan is well written and contains important retention improvement priorities, it is understood that it is a "living" document subject to continual updates as information and context change. Among the improvements to be considered are specific sub-population quantified goal statements that, in the aggregate, will total the current plan outcomes, specific strategy steps that will align directly with the targeted sub-populations, additional participation and ownership of the improvement priorities, and detailed action and measurement plans to ensure full deployment.

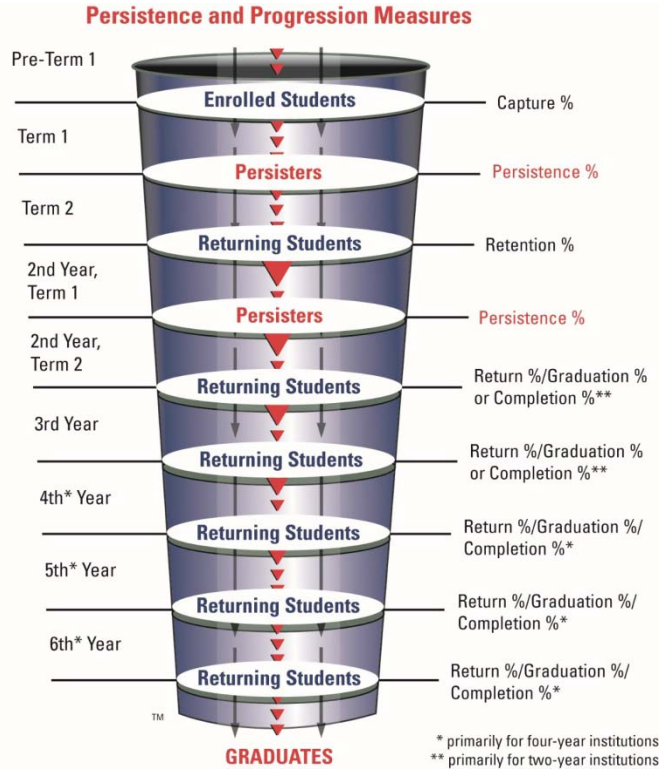
Increasing the participation in retention planning and increasing the data used to inform the process will prioritize, guide, and build support for NMHU retention-related efforts. It will also help institutionalize the most successful of good practices currently in place so the maximum number of students can benefit.

A thoughtful retention planning process helps set meaningful goals, identifies the most important strategies and activities necessary to achieve these goals, and broadens the discussion of student success. There are many benefits that can accrue from the retention planning process. A retention plan:

- Provides systematic assessment of present strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and current retention strategies;
- Results in the establishment of consensual institutional goals and priorities;
- Encourages innovative thinking and problem-solving;
- Creates awareness of obstacles that may need to be overcome;
- Coordinates and unifies staff effort;
- Ensures more effective use of existing resources and identifies the possible need for additional resources;
- Assigns responsibility and accountability and schedules work;
- Facilitates control and evaluation of activities;
- Communicates and documents efforts and the retention game plan; and
- Provides a basis for future planning.

Data and Information

1. NMHU should use the RNL variable diagnostic data to identify relatively large but lagging subpopulations and set specific quantified improvement goals for these populations. These subpopulation goals, when aggregated, will allow for the overall retention goals to be attained.
2. NMHU personnel were able to provide, in a timely manner, all the data necessary to build the student retention predictor model. This data has been formatted by RNL into variable diagnostic tables that will be used to strengthen the retention plan.
3. NMHU should use the results of the most recent student satisfaction and engagement surveys to identify actionable improvements that respond to the voices of NMHU students.
4. RNL student satisfaction data includes importance as well as satisfaction ratings, allowing NMHU to focus improvement efforts on those areas of concern that are most important to students. Comparing student perceptions to an aspirant group, in addition to more generic national norms, will provide the most useful information.
5. It will be important for NMHU to *communicate real-time retention data to build retention funnel data and track the critical populations selected for their potential as improvement targets and all subpopulations for which intake enrollment funnels will be built*.



6. All other retention rates for populations that are identified in the retention planning process as lagging should be tracked at a minimum, from:
   - Persistence rate day one to census date;
   - Persistence rate census date to midterm;
   - Persistence rate midterm to end-of-term; and
   - Persistence rate end-of-term one to beginning of term two (and so on, until graduation).
7. Additional leading indicators including process and input measures should be identified and tracked once the overall outcome goals and goals for each selected sub-population have been quantified.
8. Leading indicators are useful as they often are predictive of the desired outcomes and allow for earlier strategy adjustment if necessary. These indicators can be thought of formative where outcomes are summative. They may also be input or process indicators and are “upstream” from the outcomes.
9. The student suggestion collection and feedback system should be redesigned and promoted to increase suggestions and the promise of immediate direct feedback for those who are willing to contribute without anonymity.
10. The current system is reportedly underused but still valued by some constituents. An effort to increase utilization and feedback will help identify potential student satisfaction concerns in real time and will allow NMHU personnel to respond more quickly to potential improvement opportunities.

Teaching and Learning

> **"Student-faculty interaction has a stronger relationship to student satisfaction with the college experience than any other involvement variable, or indeed, any other student or institutional characteristic."**
>
> Alexander Astin, UCLA

1. Provide freshmen students with NMHU's best full-time teaching faculty whenever possible and support all new (especially new part-time faculty) with a well-designed "on-boarding" professional development program.

   NMHU employs a substantial number of part-time faculty reported in the public record by the National Center for Educational Statistics as a greater number of part-time than full-time faculty. While many of these part-time faculty at NMHU are continuing faculty and many part-time faculty who teach freshmen are excellent teachers, they are often less knowledgeable and less effective in their efforts to connect students with needed learning support and campus life services.

   Both full-time and adjunct faculty would benefit from an improved on-boarding process. Efforts to recognize and improve full-time and adjunct teaching for freshmen can also be emphasized by linking professional development directly to the performance review process (especially for faculty who teach freshmen).

2. Develop additional supplemental instruction (SI) programming to address success rates in high-fail and gateway courses (i.e., Math 140).

   The use of SI is a best practice that has been producing excellent results at NMHU, especially in STEM-related courses for several years, but there remains opportunity to systematically develop these supportive tutoring strategies for additional high-fail courses. The ARMAS center was cited repeatedly by students, staff, and faculty as a high-impact practice at NMHU.

3. Continue to develop and pilot approaches that can increase successful completion of the developmental courses, and include quantitative measurement of student success, not only in the development classes but also in the related subsequent college-level offerings.

   Additional learning options should be developed and offered to students based on their learning styles and learning readiness. Measurement of the effectiveness of all approaches should include the success rates for students in the subsequent-related, college-level course.

4. Identify opportunities for additional learning communities and implement these for targeted populations of at-risk students.

   The "power of the cohort" was understood by NNHU personnel as evidenced by the exemplary required learning community program currently in place for freshmen; however, it still represents an important opportunity to increase engagement and success for populations in addition to the new first-time freshmen.

5. Develop an honors program to challenge and support the highest-achieving and most creative undergraduate students at NMHU.

   Honors programming is a national best retention practices that is not currently available to NMHU students. This at-risk population is typically very mobile and would be well served by a program structured for students in all majors so the eligible students would complete their honors requirements over the course of their time as an undergraduate. This program could appeal to high-ability incoming freshmen and transfer students and may include a housing option as well.

Orientation, Extended Orientation, and Sophomore Programming

> **"The freshman seminar is a proven and effective way of enhancing freshman success. It can be the glue that holds together and solidifies all efforts to enhance freshman academic and personal success. It can provide students with vital information, promote their involvement in campus life, enhance their academic skills, stimulate their intellectual interest, and facilitate relations with peers. It is also a powerful tool for renewing faculty interest in freshman students, classroom innovation, learning techniques, curricular reform, and involvement with students outside the classroom."**
>
> John Gardner, The Freshmen Year Experience

1. Increase the enrollment of transfer students in the freshmen-year experience (I-Seminar) course during their first enrollment term and develop and design a seminar for sophomore students.

   The current I-Seminar course appears to be well designed and its integration into the learning communities, along with the integration of advisors and peer mentors, represents a high-impact practice. It also represents a practice that mitigates some of the unevenness of the current advising model and can be expected to benefit transfer and sophomore students, provided the curriculum is specifically designed with their needs in mind.

2. Provide additional orientation programming for sophomores to address retention issues specific to these returning cohorts.

   Initiatives that will allow NMHU to decrease sophomore attrition could be as simple as structuring a required sophomore reorientation program. Sophomores often feel neglected when they return and find a new freshmen class receiving the special attention and programming they experienced last year.

3. Accelerate efforts to ensure students "fit" their program choice and perceive NMHU as a first-choice institution where they can continue to graduation.

   NMHU has an exceptionally high number of students who enroll with intentions to transfer prior to graduation. Efforts to design transfer (out) programing that would help students make knowledgeable choices fully aware of their options is likely to increase the number of students who stay at NMHU. Another activity that could contribute to this end would be to include select faculty in an admissions interview process. This can be designed so it does not restrict open access, but instead encourages student reflection, self-selection, and understanding of the requirements for success in their program choice and the options of continuing to graduation. Increasing information relevant for "intending to transfer" students at orientation can be an effective retention strategy. This could include transfer student testimonials from students who left and returned or others who are willing to share their transfer experience. Often, transfer challenges are underestimated and allowing "intending to transfer" students to learn from other student's experiences can help them more realistically evaluate their options.

Communications

1. Develop an approach to communication with students that responds to the way students want to receive their communications from the university.

   Currently, emails often go unread by students who reported feeling overwhelmed by irrelevant messages and who more frequently read text messages or prefer other communication modalities such as Twitter or Facebook. Because NMHU already has a cell phone application (Ellucian Go) that is promoted and downloaded by most freshmen during orientation, it represents one option that could contribute to improved communications if it is complete and continuously updated. At the time of this visit, it appeared that only athletic schedules were included. Text messaging is currently used for alerts but represents the single best way to reach students and has proven to be, on many campuses, the "go-to" method for reaching students with timely information about services and engagement opportunities.

2. A complete review of current publications and promotional messages should be completed to ensure the accuracy and integrity of communication to prospective and current students. Especially relevant would be a review of messages, written and oral, about program requirements and learning rigor required for successful completion.

   Any lack of accurate information about program rigor or expectations is likely to detract from the image NMHU wants to convey to prospective students and can contribute to unnecessary student attrition and a lack of continuation to graduation.

Early Alert

1. The current post-enrollment early-alert system appears to be well designed but requires greater faculty participation and assurance that freshmen courses have meaningful evaluation activities offered regularly during the first weeks.
2. Because there are still reports of some freshmen and sophomore classes that use only mid-term and final evaluations and some who do not report evaluation results to freshmen students in a timely manner, it is likely that students in these classes may be less inclined to access supportive resources before it is too late in the term to recover.
3. NMHU should fully deploy the pre-enrollment early-alert system that is part of the current partnership with Ruffalo Noel Levitz, as it is a compliment to the existing post-enrollment early-alert.

Pre-enrollment early-alerts, like the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Retention Management System Plus™ (RMS Plus), provide for the identification of dropout-prone students who could benefit from institutional intervention before they begin to display behaviors associated with at-risk status.

Both pre- and post-systems represent salient opportunities to improve student success at NMHU and are based upon the following assumptions.

- Most decisions to dropout occur early in a student's interaction with an institution.
- Many dropout-prone students do not voluntarily seek out institutional support services to assist them with problems that may ultimately lead to attrition.
- It is easier to anticipate a problem and intervene than to let the problem evolve and attempt to solve it.
- Many student problems are treatable if identified early.
- Most students respond positively to direct contact in which potential or actual problems are identified and a resource of help is offered.

Advising

> **"I had originally anticipated that most students would want the college to treat them as grown-ups and get out of their way. The surprise is that student after student (70 to 75 percent) said, 'We need advice. We don't know what to do. How do we know which is the right history course to choose? How do we know how much time to spend on studying?'"**
>
> Dr. Richard J. Light
> Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds
> Harvard College

1. Require "mandatory" advisement of all students prior to all registration periods.
2. While freshmen students do receive required advising for their first two terms, extension of that requirement has been perceived as a barrier. There is good reason to believe that NMHU students, like students nationally, would not object to a required advising every term provided their advisors were accessible and knowledgeable. NMHU personnel must have the courage to require experiences that are known to encourage student success, and required advising is one of these.
3. Reduce the number of new first-time students who are admitted, advised, and registered in the last weeks just prior to the beginning of a term.
4. Data collected during the student retention predictor (SRP) modeling process suggest that the last students to enroll at NMHU are also the first to leave. These students often find themselves in classes that are less conductive to freshmen success and may also have exaggerated financial aid, housing, and other obstacles related to late admission.
5. Review the academic advising program to ensure it provides opportunities for relationship-building as a result of a highly structured, intrusive program that is built around "front-end loading and progressive responsibility" for all NMHU students as they matriculate.

   The current advising system includes talented and passionate advisors but remains a "lighting rod" for dissatisfaction of both NMHU personnel and students. Especially important in redesign will be to encourage the development of meaningful advisor-advisee relationships, which often make the critical difference between student success and failure.

   It will also be necessary to provide improved class scheduling support. Many of the advising criticisms are actually related to the availability of courses, cancelling of needed classes, and/or infrequent offering of specific courses needed for graduation. In addition, students reported the wait-time for a substituted class to be approved for graduation was excessive. The registration deadlines and registration periods also appeared to be less structured that necessary for optimal effectiveness.

   All effective advising delivery models should meet the following criteria:

   - Be accessible and available to students;
   - Be consistent with respect to the quality of advising across the institution;
   - Provide accurate and timely information;
   - Have institutionwide credibility;
   - Be provided by knowledgeable, trained, and evaluated advisors;
   - Promote building an advisor/advisee relationship;
   - Characterized by reasonable advisor loads; and
   - Result in high levels of student satisfaction with their advisor and the advising process.

Wes Habley, who recently retired from ACT, has identified seven delivery models presented in a modified taxonomy in the most recent NACADA advising survey. This revised taxonomy includes the following five advising models.

Organizational Models for Academic Advising

Self-contained model	All advising occurs in a center staffed primarily by professional advisors or counselors; faculty may also advise in the center
Faculty-only model	All advising is done by a faculty member, usually in the student's academic discipline
Shared supplementary model	Professional staff in a center support advisors (usually faculty) by providing resources/training
Shared split model	Faculty provides advising in academic discipline while staff are responsible for a subset of students; e.g., undecided, pre-majors
Total intake model	All incoming students are advised in an advising center; students may be assigned elsewhere later

The current advising system at NMHU does not fit cleanly into this taxonomy, but can be best described as a "total intake," as most students are advised in the academic support services center and assigned to faculty beginning with their third term if they have declared a major. While many campuses like NMHU think of schedule planning first when advising is described, it is more often the relationships that are built around this and other activities that have the greatest potential for improving student success and, ultimately, the college's performance outcomes of persistence, retention, and graduation. Additional advising through a freshman seminar/orientation program such as NMHU's I-Seminar represents a complementary delivery option, which can provide excellent new student developmental advising. In fact, one potential good practice currently in place at NMHU links advising and I-Seminar so new student advisors are assigned to support designated sections of this seminar.

Terry O'Banion proposed a five-step advising model that is generally recognized as the origin of a developmental approach to academic advising. This model recognizes that the advising process involves a set of sequential steps. His model assumes a developmental approach to academic advising that involves more than course selection and scheduling. Rather, these necessary but mechanical activities must be accomplished within a broader context that needs to be discussed and developed by the advisee and the advisor.

The quality of academic advising at NMHU could be greatly enhanced by placing more emphasis on and devoting more time to steps one and two of the O'Banion model. Academic advising definitions should be redefined so that these developmental functions (exploring, integrating, and synthesizing a student's life, career, and academic goals) are central to the process.

Developmental advising is a student-centered approach that integrates the activities of career/life planning and academic advising to assist students to develop a personally relevant educational and career planning experience.

O'Banion Developmental Advising Model

1. Exploration and confirmation of life goals and values.
2. Exploration and confirmation of career goals.
3. Selection of a major or program of study to achieve life, career, and educational goals.
4. Selection of courses in any given term.
5. Scheduling of courses.

Developmental advising should not be confused with personal or psychological counseling; the focus of academic advising remains the student's instructional program and how the program contributes in a coherent manner to career and life goals.

Campus Employment

1. Strengthen and expand campus-based employment opportunities for specific, targeted at-risk populations as a retention strategy and provide required training for all student workers and supervisors. A central point of access for all campus work opportunities should be developed to ensure full and equal access for all students.

   NMHU personnel are making a substantial effort to provide on-campus employment for students. They recognize that campus-based employment programs are not only friendlier to the learning process than most off-campus work assignments, but also provide inherent advising experiences that often contribute to improved satisfaction, retention, and graduation rates. Most students who work on campus interact regularly with their supervisors, who often develop meaningful and long-lasting relationships with their student workers. These college personnel typically are also aware of college/community resources that can help address student's needs as they become evident.

Quality Service

1. Develop and implement an aggressive program of cross-training for front-line workers and others who regularly interface with students.

   One key to developing an effective quality service culture is to reduce barriers between departments and increase the awareness and understanding across departmental and functional lines. Focusing conversation and interaction on "cross-training" that can include specific quality service improvement deliverables represents a practice that will contribute to a shift toward a more student-centered culture that will increasingly promote student success.

2. Provide customer service training for all university service areas that includes ongoing departmental conversations on this topic and a measurement system that will encourage improvements.

   It was apparent that many employees make extra efforts to provide the best possible customer service, but this remains an opportunity to improve understanding and support for developing the optimum context for addressing student needs.

3. Provide more opportunities for cross-disciplinary communication for all campus personnel.

4. A desire on the part of many NMHU personnel, for a more student-centered campus culture was evident in the frequently reported examples of student "runaround," phones going unanswered, and calls not being returned. Interdepartmental empathy and understanding can be expected to increase as the frequency of communication and contact between functional areas increases.

Campus and Residential Life

1. Promote and encourage additional campus and residential life programming.

   The current development of the outdoor recreation center is an example of a much-needed expansion of campus life. NMHU should extend themselves to promote this and other existing activities and continue to engage students to identify other opportunities, especially those that can support campus involvement on weekends.

2. Increase the frequency and transparency of communications about the use of student fees used to promote campus life.

It is common to involve student governments in the allocation of student fees and in the planning of campus events. NMHU should increase student involvement in this process and improve the awareness of this involvement along with increased promotion of the available experiences so students can more fully realize the benefits derived from these experiences supported by student fees.

Closing

In closing, the consultant wishes to commend NNHU for efforts to improve the quality of student life and learning, fostering student success and satisfaction, and improving retention and completion rates. A substantial nucleus of personnel who interacted with this consultant demonstrated a sincere desire to continuously improve the experiences supporting student success. The consultant was also favorably impressed with the recent progress and the number of high-impact practices currently in place. NMHU is well positioned to realize the desired outcomes, but perseverance and tenacity will be essential to sustain this initiative.

In moving from theory to action, the university should avoid the following pitfalls common to retention efforts:

- "Succumbing to a paralysis by analysis" mentality;
- Failing to build campuswide support and commitment for a comprehensive retentive initiative;
- Approaching retention as a flavor-of-the-month initiative, rather than an ongoing, sustained improvement process;
- Ignoring the need for developing comprehensive retention action plans;
- Assuming good strategies will advance on their own merit;
- Engaging in "excessive activity syndrome";
- Not building on successful, current retention-related strategies;
- Not providing sufficient human and fiscal resources to successfully address quality of student life and learning issues and strategies; and
- Giving in to the naysayers.

This written report is an analysis with specific recommendations the consultant believes will contribute to the achievement of NMHU's short- and long-term retention goals. It is important to note that this analysis only begins to understand the complexities and nuances of NMHU's retention programs. The consultant believes he was able to assess the current situation as a preliminary effort in an ongoing process. Any omissions or errors in interpretation are the responsibility of the consultant.

Appendices

Appendix I: Affinity Diagram of Student Improvement Suggestions

The following verbatim written responses were provided and organized by six students (four of which were female, two were male; one first-year, one junior, and four seniors) in response to the question: What should be done to improve student success at NMHU?

Advising

- Course scheduling needs to be improved
- Educate incoming freshmen on how to get advisement (Department and Academic Support)
- Advisors need a better sense of knowing each program of requirements
- Courses needed for graduation are not offered often enough
- Graduation audits are delayed so I did not know if my course substitution would count for several weeks
- My advisor did not line up core with future requirements
- Encourage more students to take art and music classes
- Courses schedules needs to be farther out, at least a year
- Have the classes students need regardless of the semester

Campus Life

- The activities budget needs to be more transparent
- Advertise, communicate, and promote activities better
- Move things “to do” to the weekend
- Provide more campus amenities (third party-sponsored) and events
- Promote off-campus offered services and activities
- Encourage participation in community events
- Larger variety of social activities
- We need better transportation around the community
- More availability of restaurants and transportation

Residence Halls

- Air conditioning and maintenance needs improvement
- Poor and noisy heater in my room
- Need a different design for some students

Food

- Poor selection of food
- Need more variety
- Too expensive
- More places to eat on campus

Communication

- Promote campus employment
- Use text messages to communicate more effectively with us
- Promote ARMAS, as it is great
- Figure out more ways to let us know what is happening
- No one answers or returns calls
- Tuition increase not good or well communicated

Teaching and Learning

- More diversity in classes
- First-year experience should be required for transfer students
- Offer more hands-on experiences
- Increase in rigor and accountability
- The teachers are great but I am used to higher standards

Appendix II: 35 Good Practices in Retention Survey

On September 20, 2016, the NMHU retention team was asked by the consultant to rate each suggestion below on a scale of one to seven to evaluate NMHU's current deployment of retention strategies, where:

- One represents "This strategy is not used at all;" and
- Seven represents "This strategy is used in a complete, effective way."

13 surveys were returned. The mean scores for each item appear below; those at 2.0 or below are highlighted, as they may represent immediate improvement opportunities.

#	Item	Rating
1	Track the retention of cohort groups (e.g., under-prepared, undecided, honors students, athletes, commuters, residents, late admits), and develop targeted programs for those whose retention is low.	3.00
2	Conduct summer orientation programs, where the emphasis is on activities designed to build interpersonal affiliations to peers and bonds to the institution. Design and deliver orientation experiences for special groups of students (e.g., adults, transfers, internationals, athletes, selected majors, commuters, resident students).	4.23
3	Review all promotional materials to ensure that they are creating accurate pre-entry expectations of the institution. Develop well designed campus visit experiences that realistically portray the institution to prospective students. Determine if recruitment activities are targeting students who are likely to be successful at the institution.	3.00
4	Provide a comprehensive sophomore-year experience that prepares undecided students for their major. For all sophomore students, provide a concrete academic plan to complete the degree in four years.	1.42
5	Offer a wide array of student extracurricular activities.	3.54
6	Have a system in place to identify students who are under-prepared. Provide programs and services for academically under-prepared students.	3.62
7	Establish excellent academic support services (e.g., learning center, math lab, writing lab), and proactively assist students in using this assistance. Provide peer tutorial services and supplemental-like instruction for "killer courses."	5.17
8	Have a comprehensive first-year experience that includes an extended orientation course (i.e., first-year experience course).	4.92
9	Determine strategies that lessen the number of sophomore-status students that leave the institution.	1.62
10	Design high-interest residential living programs and activities. Ensure residential facilities are in good condition.	3.08
11	Empower the retention committee to address all retention-related initiatives regardless of reporting structures.	2.92
12	Conduct student satisfaction surveys on a systematic basis, using results to plan improvements.	2.75
13	Conduct exit interviews to ascertain student reasons for leaving and possibly to resolve issues that are barriers to returning.	2.00
14	Require that students on academic probation participate in a "success" program that includes learning contracts.	2.58
15	Provide online and in-person tutorial support beyond academic support such as stress/time management, substance abuse, and study skills.	3.50
16	Review availability of classes to be sure that student needs are being met. Eliminate low- demand courses and increase availability of high-demand courses.	1.83

#	Item	Rating
17	Employ processes that create specific strategies designed to foster degree completion and career goal obtainment.	2.92
18	Identify students who may be dropout-prone by observing "behavioral cues" (e.g., missing classes, failing to apply for financial aid, not pre-registering, or requesting a transcript) as part of a proactive "early-alert" program. Reach out to those students to intervene and assist them. Use telecounseling to contact students experiencing difficulty or planning not to return. Communicate with students who are in good standing who fail to enroll.	3.17
19	Review all policies, procedures, syllabi, and processes to ensure that they are student-centered, learning-oriented, and outcomes-oriented.	2.45
20	Design financial aid systems that allow families to reapply for aid when financial circumstances have changed and increase scholarship aid allocations to match tuition increases.	4.10
21	Explore strategies that recruit a student back to the institution who has left in good standings.	1.83
22	Lessen the "campus runaround." Provide ongoing quality-service training for all front-line support staff and supervisors. Design an intake system that includes a seamless orientation, assessment, advising, registration, and bill paying process.	2.17
23	Provide a comprehensive training program for students participating in the college work-study program.	1.83
24	Establish an office devoted exclusively to the improvement of the teaching/learning process. Develop an ongoing program to help faculty understand the critical role they play in retention. Eliminate or reduce large lecture classes (or have part of the course be a small discussion section). Assist faculty in learning about and using cooperative and collaborative teaching/learning strategies.	3.08
25	Connect alumni to current students in mentoring program.	1.92
26	Develop an institutional academic advising plan that includes the components that are associated with successful delivery and organization of advising services. Provide development opportunities for advisors. Design an evaluation program that assesses the effectiveness of the institution's advising program, as well as individual advisor. Develop or purchase a computerized degree audit system. Use this in advising. Involve faculty in academic advising.	3.75
27	Provide an honors program to challenge the best students and to structure ease of connections.	2.25
28	Change the attitude in serving students from, "We have the services, but students don't take advantage of them," to "How can we provide proactive ways of ensuring that students are supported by the programs we offer?"	2.54
29	Frontload the best instructors and advisors in the first and second year.	1.67
30	Provide an ongoing internal communications program for students and parents after enrollment.	1.25
31	Integrate technology into daily practice where faculty and staff are actively using web-based tools to engage students.	2.08
32	Provide a majority of coursework past lecture-style courses where students are actively engaged in learning.	2.67
33	Design programs geared towards adult populations.	1.58
34	Provide enhanced and dynamic counseling services.	2.82
35	Host learning communities that foster more explicit, intellectual connections between students, students and faculty, and disciplines of smaller subgroups of students, with a common sense of purpose, leading to an integration of classroom and non-classroom experiences.	5.18

Appendix III: Proposed Agenda for November TBD, 2016

The following are the proposed goals and agenda for the retention planning consultation at NMHU.

- Facilitate a data-informed, highly interactive, and consensus-building annual retention planning summit.
- Create visibility and support to help sustain the initiatives to improve the quality of student life and learning.
- Facilitate discussions and reflection on opportunities to enhance retention of targeted populations.
- Review Student Retention Predictor™ (SRP) variable diagnostics data to determine high-impact targets for retention improvement that may be included in the current NMHU retention plan.
- Use "voices of NMHU students" focus group, Student Satisfaction Inventory™ (SSI), Adult Student Priorities Survey (ASPS) data, and consultant recommendations to inform the selection of the "vital few" priority strategies to be added to the strategic retention plan.

November TBD 2016

Time	Event	Activity Leader(s)
8:30 a.m.	Workshop setup	Dave Trites and project leaders
9:30 a.m.	Retention planning workshop begins with welcome	Senior leader
9:40 a.m.	Workshop introductions, overview, and expectations	Project leaders and Dave Trites
9:55 a.m.	"Introduction to Retention Planning" presentation	Dave Trites
10:20 a.m.	SRP data overview	Dave Trites
10:40 a.m.	Small group discussion on SRP data-informed target selection	Dave Trites
11:00 a.m.	Target population consensus exercise	Dave Trites
12:00 p.m.	Working lunch (force field activity)	Dave Trites
1:00 p.m.	Introduction to strategy selection (National Best Practices Research Summary)	Dave Trites
1:10 p.m.	Current "Best Retention Practices" presentations (approximately three at six minutes per practice)	Participants
1:30 p.m.	Data to include "Voices of Students" overview (SSI/ASPS/ CSI and focus group affinity) and small group analysis	Dave Trites
2:30 p.m.	Break	All participants
2:45 p.m.	SWOT analysis with gallery walk	Dave Trites
3:15 p.m.	Session plus/delta evaluation day one and wrap up	Dave Trites
3:30 p.m.	Day one of planning workshop adjourns	Dave Trites

November TBD, 2016

Time	Event	Activity Leader(s)
8:00 a.m.	Set up	Dave Trites
8:30 a.m.	Reconvene workshop	Dave Trites and project leaders
8:40 a.m.	SWOT prioritization exercise	Dave Trites
9:00 a.m.	Small group strategy selection discussions	Dave Trites
9:30 a.m.	Strategy Selection Consensus Exercise (finalize strategies to impact subpopulation targets)	Dave Trites
10:30 a.m.	Break	
10:45 a.m.	Review targets and strategies to ensure each target has at least one strategy to attain target	Dave Trites
11:00 a.m.	Action plan development and plan deployment approaches to ensure optimum results	Dave Trites
11:15 a.m.	Closing evaluation and planning session conclusion	Dave Trites
11:30 a.m.	Retention planning session ends	
Afternoon	After-action and next steps discussions	Project leaders and Dave Trites

Appendix IV: Proposed Retention Consulting Schedule

Retention Components	NMHU Contact	Proposed Calendar	Comments
SRP 2013 Data Readiness	Edward Martinez	July 6, 2016 Completed	Web meeting to prepare for transfer of data for SRP variable diagnostics and SRP model building.
Retention visit 1: Retention Management System visit focused on the Student Retention Predictor (SRP) model review and intervention planning	Edward Martinez	August 8-9, 2016 Completed	Final review of SRP 2016 predictive model, training workshops and determination of CSI, Data Center, and Student Satisfaction Inventory implementation details. Overview partnership for faculty, staff, and leadership.
Retention visit 2: Visit to identify salient enrollment improvement opportunities to be considered in a systematic program of improvement	Edward Martinez	September 19-20, 2016 Completed	Focus groups and interviews with presentation of retention recommendations on the afternoon of the second day.
Student Satisfaction Inventory	Edward Martinez and Maria Sena	September 20-October 29, 2016	SSI administration details TBD by remote consultation with support of Ruffalo Noel Levitz (Shannon Cook) with on-campus interpretation by Dave Trites.
Retention visit 3: Retention planning retreat using SSI/ASPS data and variable diagnostics from SRP modeling process	Edward Martinez	November TBD, 2016	Information-informed consensus for vital few priorities, targets; retreat format with cross-functional participants.
Retention visit 4: Retention Plan development	Edward Martinez	December TBD, 2016	Plan priorities deployment to develop action steps required to deploy plan priorities and full integration with current NMHU strategic and retention plans.
Retention visit 5: Retention Plan finalization and final action plan deployment with measurement systems and a focus on deployment of consensus retention priorities	Edward Martinez	January TBD, 2017	Finalize retention plan, goals, strategies, action plans, and meet with Executive Council.
Potential additional visits 6-12: Deployment and focus on consensus retention priorities as desired and authorized by NMHU	Edward Martinez	2017-2018	To be determined by progress and priorities.

Appendix V: Retention Opportunities Analysis PowerPoint Exit Presentation Slides

Document attached.

Consultation Exit Presentation

NEW MEXICO HIGHLANDS UNIVERSITY

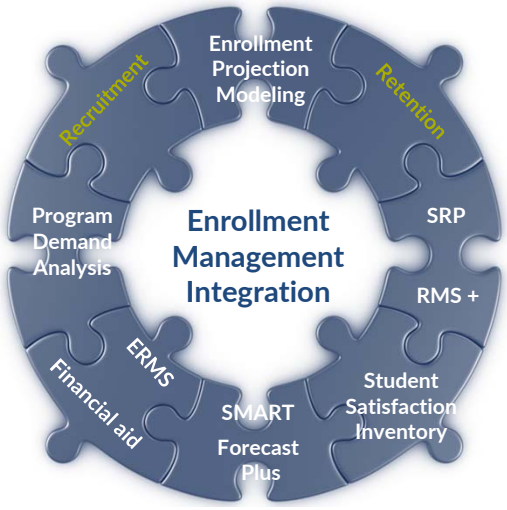
John Plotts
Associate Consultant

David Trites
Senior Associate Consultant

RUFFALO NOEL LEVITZ

September 20, 2016

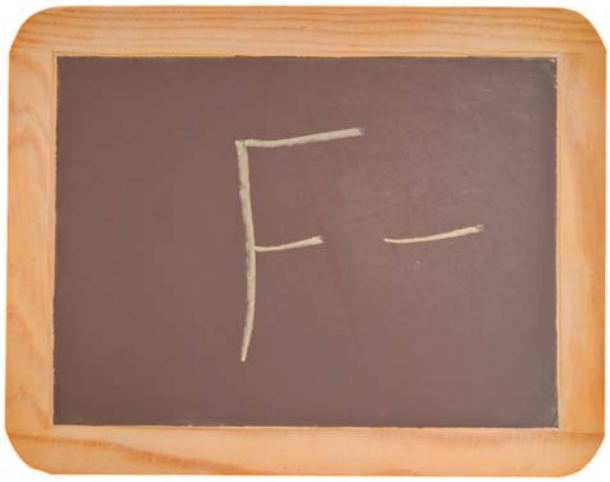
RNL/NMHU Enrollment Management Partnership



1 Common retention myths

Retention means lowering standards

Dropouts are flunkouts



2 Benchmark data

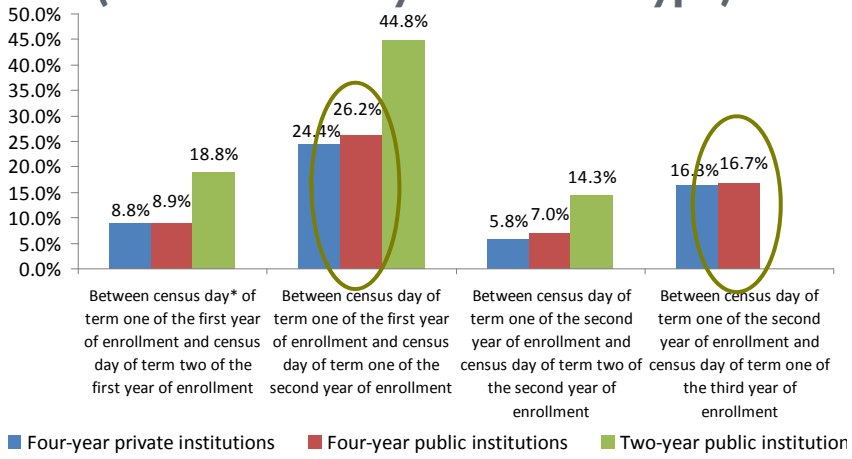
Ruffalo Noel Levitz

Benchmark Data

7

Ruffalo Noel Levitz

When do students leave? (median rates by institution type)



*A census day is the official enrollment census day near the beginning of each term, a set day determined by each college and university.

Benchmark Research Study Conducted Fall 2010—Mid-Year Retention Indicators Report

8

Retention rates from ACT

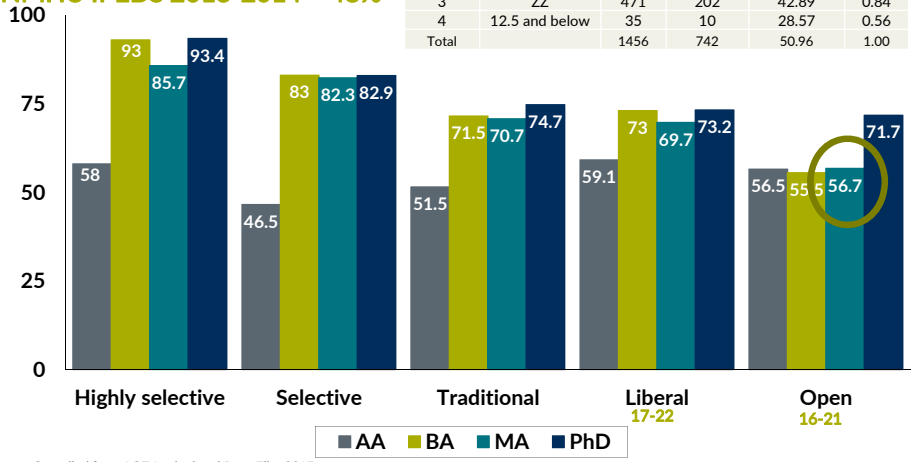
Ruffalo Noel Levitz

First- to second-year retention rates for public institutions

NMHU IPEDS 2013-2014 = 48%

New Mexico Highlands University
ACT Composite Score (Optimal Binning)

Rank	Value	Total Number	Number Persisted	Persistence Rate (%)	Lift
1	Higher than 18.5	371	231	62.26	1.22
2	12.5 to 18.5	579	299	51.64	1.01
3	ZZ	471	202	42.89	0.84
4	12.5 and below	35	10	28.57	0.56
Total		1456	742	50.96	1.00



Source: Compiled from ACT Institutional Data File, 2015.

10

Ruffalo Noel Levitz

NMHU Quantitative retention history: Cohort Model Year(s): Fall 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014
Cohort defined as:
First-Year, full-time, undergraduate, degree-seeking students.

New Mexico Highlands University

Entry Term

Rank	Value	Description	Total Number	Number Persisted	Persistence Rate (%)	Lift
1	F2011	Fall 2011	413	227	54.96	1.08
2	F2014	Fall 2014	274	144	52.55	1.03
3	F2013	Fall 2013	346	168	48.55	0.95
4	F2012	Fall 2012	423	203	47.99	0.94
Total			**1456**	**742**	**50.96**	**1.00**

11

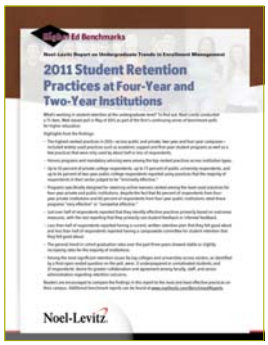
3 Best practices

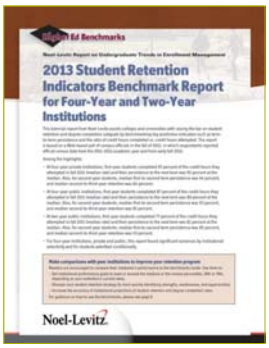
Ruffalo Noel Levitz

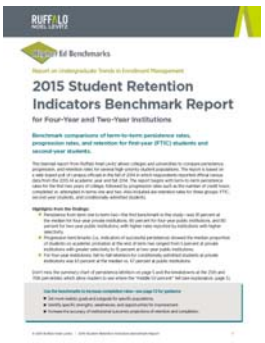
Noel-Levitz Student Retention Practices

www.noellevitz.com/papers-research-higher-education/

https://www.noellevitz.com/papers-research-higher-education/2015/2015-student-retention-indicators-benchmark-report







13

Ruffalo Noel Levitz

Top 10 most effective strategies and tactics for student retention and college completion, by institution type

Below are the 10 survey items, by sector, that respondents in this study most frequently rated "very effective" among 48 practices for student retention and college completion. Note that this year the top 10 list includes programs designed for particular populations of students. For rankings of all 48 practices, please see the Appendix.

Rankings by effectiveness*	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions
1	Giving students practical work experiences in their intended major (e.g., internships, volunteer work, experiential learning, service learning)	Honors programs for academically advanced students	Academic support (e.g., learning center, math lab, tutoring)
2	**Required on-campus housing for first-year students**	Academic support (e.g., learning center, math lab, tutoring)	Tutoring
3	Academic support (e.g., learning center, math lab, tutoring)	Giving students practical work experiences in their intended major (e.g., internships, volunteer work, experiential learning, service learning)	**Providing guided pathways with fewer course options to keep students moving to graduation**
4	**Honors programs for academically advanced students**	Advising by professional staff, one-on-one	Programs designed specifically for first-year students (e.g., orientation for first-year students, a first-year experience program)
5	Programs designed specifically for first-year students (e.g., orientation for first-year students, a first-year experience program)	**Supplemental instruction**	**Honors programs for academically advanced students**
6	Tutoring	Programs designed specifically for first-year students (e.g., orientation for first-year students, a first-year experience program)	Giving students practical work experiences in their intended major (e.g., internships, volunteer work, experiential learning, service learning)
7	**Programs for first-generation students**	**Mandatory first-year experience or orientation course**	**Programs for first-generation students**
8	Mandatory first-year experience or orientation course	Training residence hall staff to recognize at-risk students	**Mandatory advising by professional staff, one-on-one**
9	**Advising by professional staff, one-on-one**	**Providing each student with an academic plan/roadmap of courses**	Advising by professional staff, one-on-one
10	**Student success coaching (internal)**	**Mandatory advising by professional staff, one-on-one**	**Using on-campus student employment as a strategy to engage/retain students**

 | 2015 Student Retention and College Completion Practices Benchmark Report

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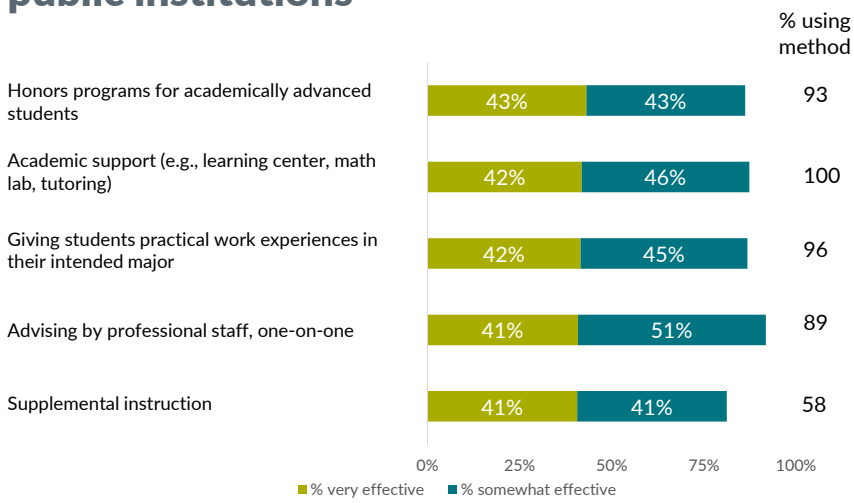
Top 10 most effective practices at four-year public institutions



2015 Student Retention and College Completion Practices Report for Four-Year and Two-Year Institutions

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Top 10 most effective practices at four-year public institutions, continued

2015 Student Retention and College Completion Practices Report for Four-Year and Two-Year Institutions

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Top-ranked practices in student retention across sectors

- Academic support programs and services
- Programs targeted to first-year students
- Mandatory advising, one-on-one and face-to-face
- Honors programs for advanced students

4 Recommendations

Retention planning

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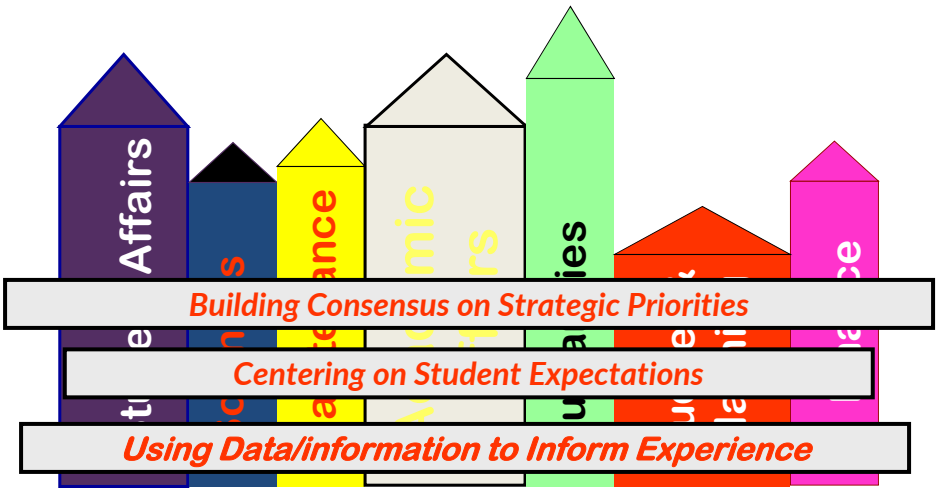
Retention Planning



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Variable Diagnostic Tables

New Mexico Highlands University
High School GPA (Optimal Binning)

Rank	Value	Total Number	Number Persisted	Persistence Rate (%)	Lift
1	Higher than 2.935	700	434	62.00	1.22
2	ZZ	57	26	45.61	0.90
3	2.935 and below	699	282	40.34	0.79
Total		1456	742	50.96	1.00

New Mexico Highlands University
Flag First Generation

Rank	Value	Description	Total Number	Number Persisted	Persistence Rate (%)	Lift
1	N	Not first generation	684	352	51.46	1.01
2	Y	First Generation status	610	309	50.66	0.99
3	ZZ	Missing Values	162	81	50.00	0.98
Total			1456	742	50.96	1.00

Rank	Variable	Label	Logistic Regression	T-Test	Chi-Square	Strength
1	XOPT_R091	High School GPA (Optimal Binning)	0.608	0.0000	0.0000	Strong
2	R091	High School GPA	0.622	0.0000	0.0000	
3	XR062	Academic Major	0.612	0.0000	0.0000	
4	XR015	Primary County Code	0.603	0.0000	0.0000	
5	XOPT_R173	Total Gift Funds (Optimal Binning)	0.593	0.0000	0.0000	
6	R534	Standing	0.601	0.0000	0.0000	
7	R173	Total Gift Funds	0.597	0.0000	0.0000	
8	XOPT_R534	Standing (Optimal Binning)	0.592	0.0000	0.0000	
9	XR014	Primary Zip Code	0.586	0.0000	0.0000	
10	XR263	City	0.582	0.0000	0.0000	
11	XR086	High School CEEB Code	0.575	0.0000	0.0000	
12	XR237	ACT Code	0.580	0.0000	0.0000	
13	XOPT_R158	Total FA Package (Optimal Binning)	0.572	0.0000	0.0000	
14	XOPT_R176	Financial Aid Gap (Optimal Binning)	0.576	0.0000	0.0000	
15	R158	Total FA Package	0.585	0.0000	0.0000	
16	XR720	Persistnce Cluster Code	0.578	0.0000	0.0000	
17	XOPT_R101	ACT English Score (Optimal Binning)	0.565	0.0000	0.0000	
18	XR063	Department or Program Area	0.566	0.0000	0.0000	
19	XR524	Major Admit	0.573	0.0000	0.0001	
20	XOPT_R103	ACT Reading Score (Optimal Binning)	0.571	0.0000	0.0000	
21	XOPT_R156	Percent of Need Met (Optimal Binning)	0.554	0.0000	0.0000	
22	XOPT_R102	ACT Math Score (Optimal Binning)	0.571	0.0004	0.0000	
23	XR460	Household Income Level	0.565	0.0000	0.0005	
24	R106	ACT Composite Score	0.555	0.0002	0.0000	
25	F100	Official ACT Scores Flag	0.551	0.0000	0.0000	
26	R156	Percent of Need Met	0.574	0.0043	0.0000	
27	XR721	Persistnce Life Stage Group	0.558	0.0000	0.0038	
28	XR033	Student Ethnicity	0.551	0.0001	0.0021	
29	XR515	Race	0.551	0.0001	0.0021	
30	XR531	Date Packaged	0.544	0.0002	0.0005	
31	XOPT_R104	ACT Science Score (Optimal Binning)	0.559	0.0217	0.0000	
32	R104	ACT Science Score	0.546	0.0030	0.0000	
33	R101	ACT English Score	0.560	0.0001	0.0471	
34	XOPT_R234	Days in Admit (Optimal Binning)	0.532	0.0002	0.0001	
35	R176	Financial Aid Gap	0.560	0.0032	0.0020	
36	XOPT_R461	Avg. Household Income (Optimal Binning)	0.544	0.0004	0.0016	
37	XOPT_R262	Student Age (Optimal Binning)	0.533	0.0008	0.0006	
38	XOPT_R541	Parent Income (Optimal Binning)	0.538	0.0011	0.0033	Weaker
39	R262	Student Age	0.531	0.0024	0.0020	
40	F313	Independent Status Flag	0.530	0.0002	0.0056	
41	XOPT_R233	Days as Applicant (Optimal Binning)	0.532	0.0040	0.0054	
42	XR013	Primary State of Student	0.532	0.0010	0.0448	
43	XR527	Flag Athlete	0.532	0.0047	0.0048	
44	R461	Avg. Household Income	0.545	0.0245	0.0194	
45	XR514	Flag Hispanic Ethnicity	0.532	0.0100	0.0099	
46	R230	Distance from Campus	0.571	0.2353	0.0000	
47	XOPT_R106	ACT Composite Score (Optimal Binning)	0.542	0.0000	0.1696	
48	XOPT_R261	Years since HS Graduation (Optimal Binning)	0.522	0.0000	0.0053	
49	R261	Years since HS Graduation	0.523	0.0019	0.0111	
50	R102	ACT Math Score	0.536	0.0034	0.1676	
51	XR024	Entry Term	0.532	0.0223	0.1152	
52	XOPT_R312	Student Total Income (Optimal Binning)	0.516	0.0017	0.0874	
53	XR211	Campus User-defined variable 1	0.526	0.0098	0.0948	
54	R234	Days as Admit	0.528	0.0331	0.2116	
55	XR525	Department Admit	0.525	0.0231	0.2686	
56	R175	Total Loan Funds	0.520	0.0365	0.2034	
57	R103	ACT Reading Score	0.512	0.9180	0.0029	
58	R312	Student Total Income	0.513	0.0110	0.3849	

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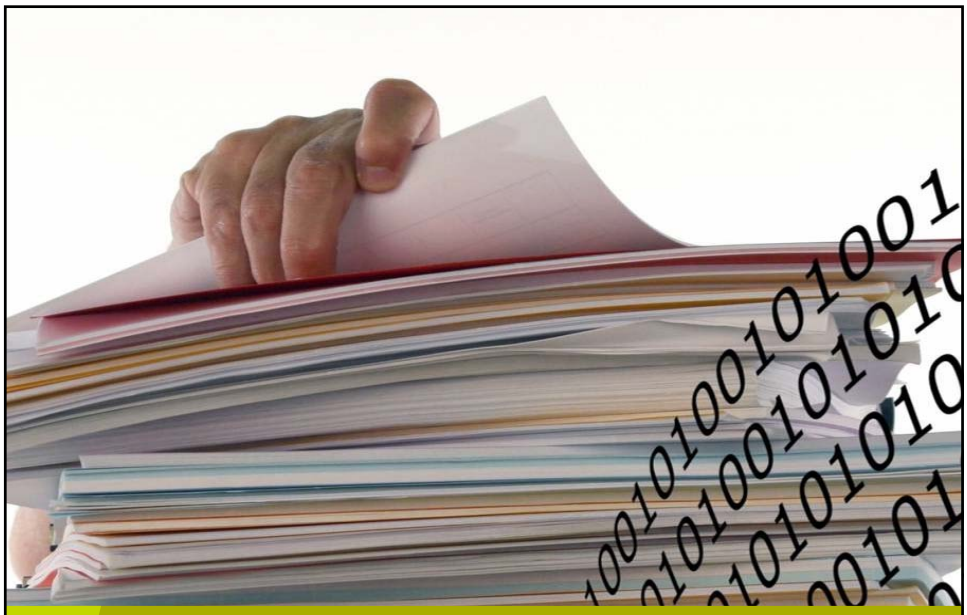

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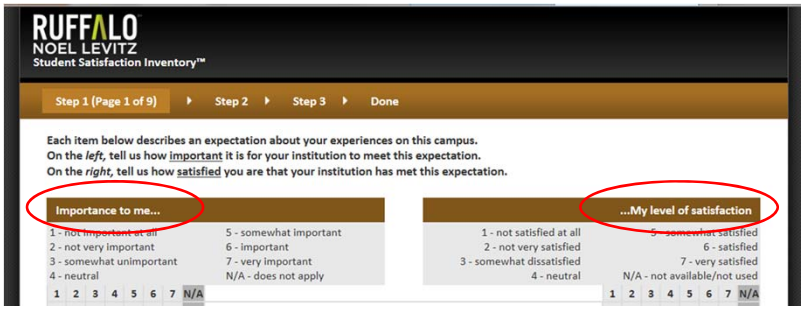
The RNL surveys capture both an importance score and a satisfaction score



The combination allows you to review your satisfaction results within the context of what is most important to your students.

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Captures three scores for prioritizing

Importance

Satisfaction

Importance

Satisfaction

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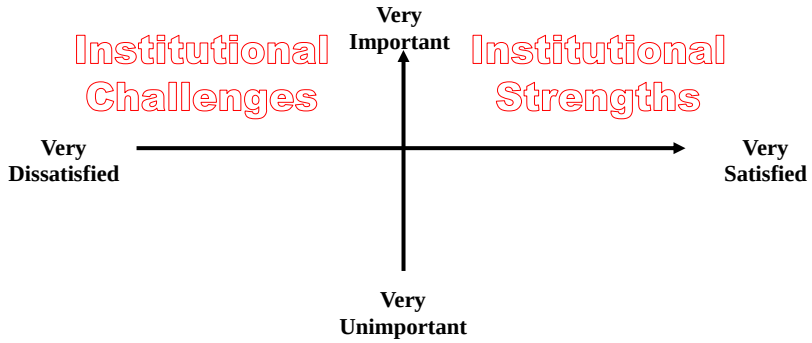

Strengths and challenges

It is helpful to compare to national trends in student satisfaction and importance

Early alert

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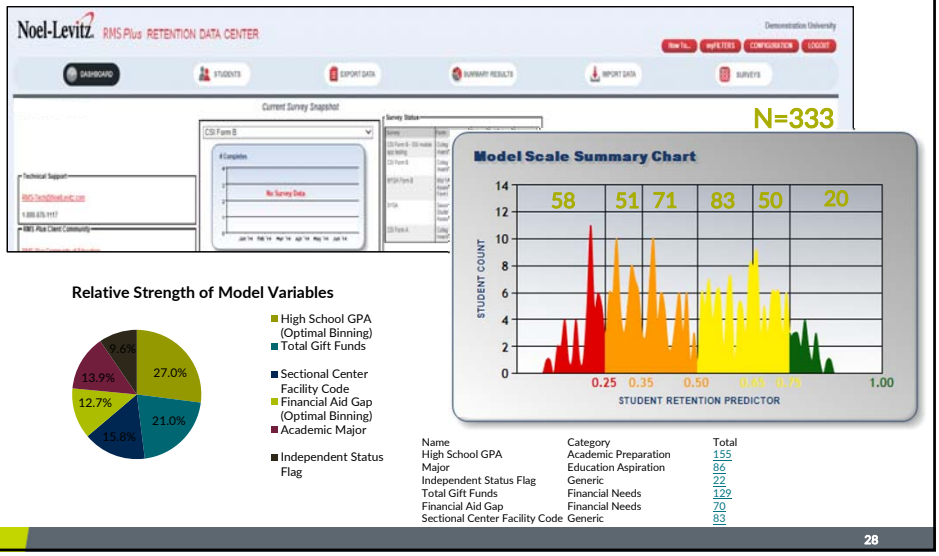
Retention Management System *Plus*

Retention Data Center



Name	Category	Total
High School GPA	Academic Preparation	155
Major	Education Aspiration	86
Independent Status Flag	Generic	22
Total Gift Funds	Financial Needs	129
Financial Aid Gap	Financial Needs	70
Sectional Center Facility Code	Generic	83

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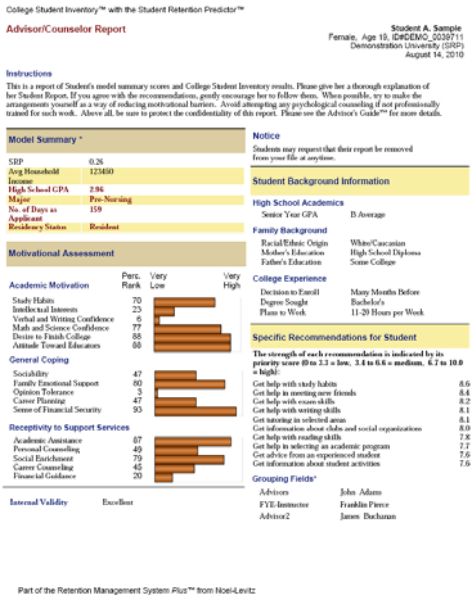
College Student Inventory Reports

A summary of each student's responses to the CSI and the Student Retention Predictor scores



College Student Inventory™ with the Student Retention Predictor™

Advisor/Counselor Report

Student A. Sample
Female, Age 19, ID#DEMO_0039711
Demonstration University (SRP)
August 14, 2010

Instructions

This is a report of Student's model summary scores and College Student Inventory results. Please give her a thorough explanation of her Student Report. If you agree with the recommendations, gently encourage her to follow them. When possible, try to make the arrangements yourself as a way of reducing motivational barriers. Avoid attempting any psychological counseling if not professionally trained for such work. Above all, be sure to protect the confidentiality of this report. Please see the Advisor's Guide™ for more details.

Model Summary *

SRP	0.26
Avg Household Income	123450
High School GPA	2.96
Major	Pre-Nursing
No. of Days as Applicant	159
Residency Status	Resident

Motivational Assessment

	Perc. Rank	Very Low	Very High
Academic Motivation			
Study Habits	70		
Intellectual Interests	23		
Verbal and Writing Confidence	6		
Math and Science Confidence	77		
Desire to Finish College	88		
Attitude Toward Educators	88		
General Coping			
Sociability	47		
Family Emotional Support	80		
Opinion Tolerance	3		
Career Planning	47		
Sense of Financial Security	93		
Receptivity to Support Services			
Academic Assistance	67		
Personal Counseling	49		
Social Enrichment	79		
Career Counseling	45		
Financial Guidance	20		

Internal Validity: Excellent

Notice

Students may request that their report be removed from your file at anytime.

Student Background Information

High School Academics
Senior Year GPA: B Average

Family Background
Racial/Ethnic Origin: White/Caucasian
Mother's Education: High School Diploma
Father's Education: Some College

College Experience
Decision to Enroll: Many Months Before
Degree Sought: Bachelor's
Plans to Work: 11-20 Hours per Week

Specific Recommendations for Student

The strength of each recommendation is indicated by its priority score (0 to 2.3 = low, 2.4 to 6.6 = medium, 6.7 to 10.0 = high):

Get help with study habits	8.6
Get help in meeting new friends	8.4
Get help with exam skills	8.2
Get help with writing skills	8.1
Get tutoring in selected areas	8.1
Get information about clubs and social organizations	8.0
Get help with reading skills	7.8
Get help in selecting an academic program	7.7
Get advice from an experienced student	7.6
Get information about student activities	7.6

Grouping Fields*
Advisors: John Adams
FYE Instructor: Franklin Pierce
Advisor2: James Buchanan

Part of the Retention Management System Plus™ from Noel-Levitz

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Advising

Academic advising may be the single most important retention strategy

Campus employment

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NMHU Freshmen who completed the College Student Inventory

	N	%	
0 (I have no plans to work)	70	21.5	
1 to 10 hours per week	41	12.6	
11 to 20 hours per week	75	23.1	
21 to 30 hours per week	18	5.5	13.5%
31 to 40 hours per week	10	3.1	
over 40 hours per week	1	0.3	

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Students intending to transfer

Late Admits

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Late Admits

New Mexico Highlands University

No. of Days as Admit (Optimal Binning)

Rank	Value	Total Number	Number Persisted	Persistence Rate (%)	Lift
1	Higher than 34.5	1288	680	52.80	1.04
2	34.5 and below	157	58	36.94	0.72
3	ZZ	11	4	36.36	0.71
Total		**1456**	**742**	**50.96**	**1.00**

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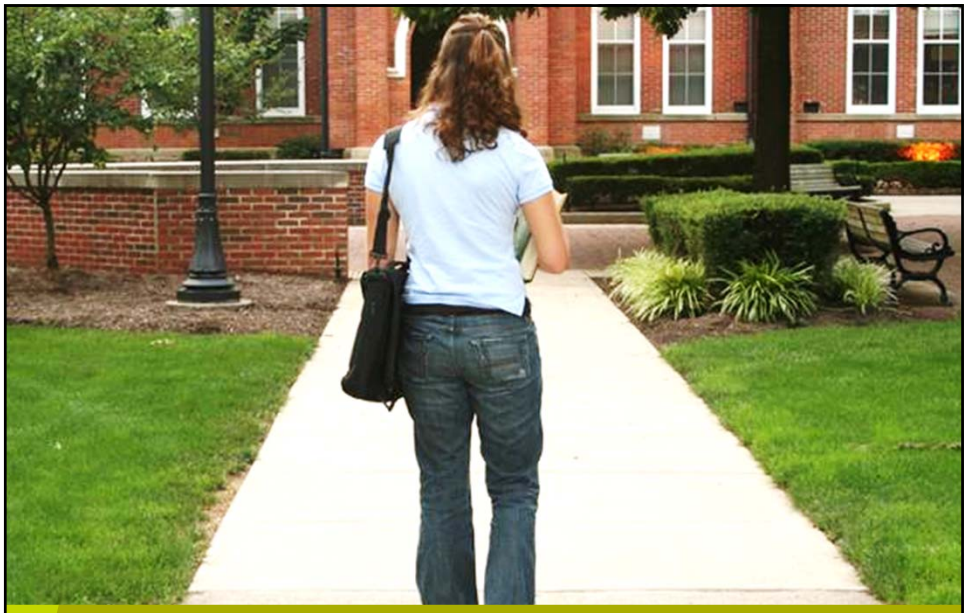
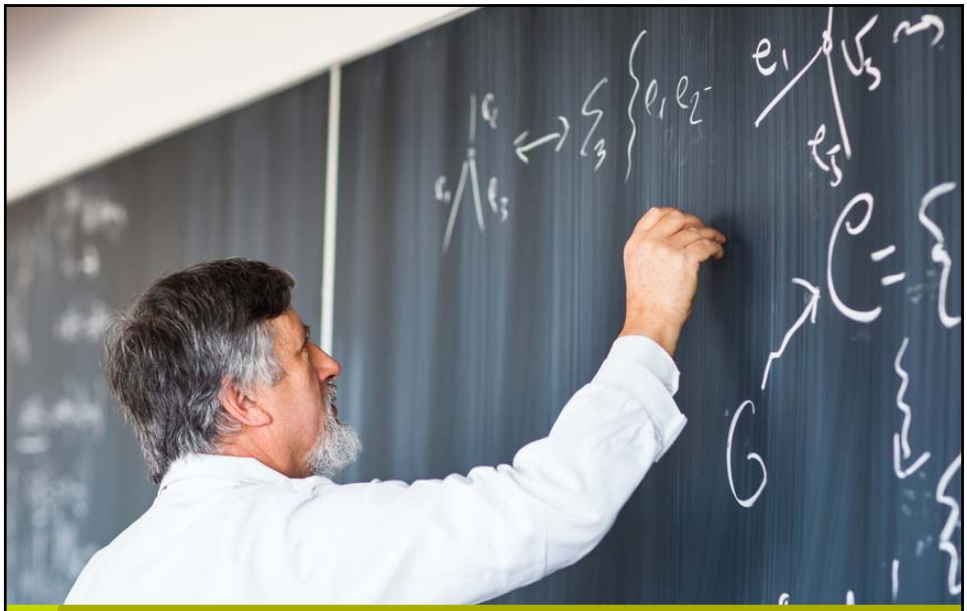


Sophomore programming

Academic support

Get help with exam skills	6.92
Get help with study habits	6.72
Get help in selecting an academic program	6.71
Discuss the qualifications for occupations	6.64
Get help with basic math skills	6.36
Get help with writing skills	6.29
Discuss job market for college graduates	6.27
Get help in obtaining a scholarship	6.25
Get tutoring in selected areas	6.24
Get help in selecting an occupation	6.11
Get help in meeting new friends	6.02
Get help in finding a summer job	6.00
Get information about clubs and social organizations	5.97
Discuss advantages/disadvantages of occupations	5.97
Get help in finding a part-time job	5.92
Get help with reading skills	5.90
Get advice from an experienced student	5.82
Get information about student activities	5.75
Discuss attitude toward school with counselor	5.45
Discuss personal relationships and social life with counselor	5.15
Discuss an unwanted habit with counselor	5.11
Discuss unhappy feelings with counselor	5.09

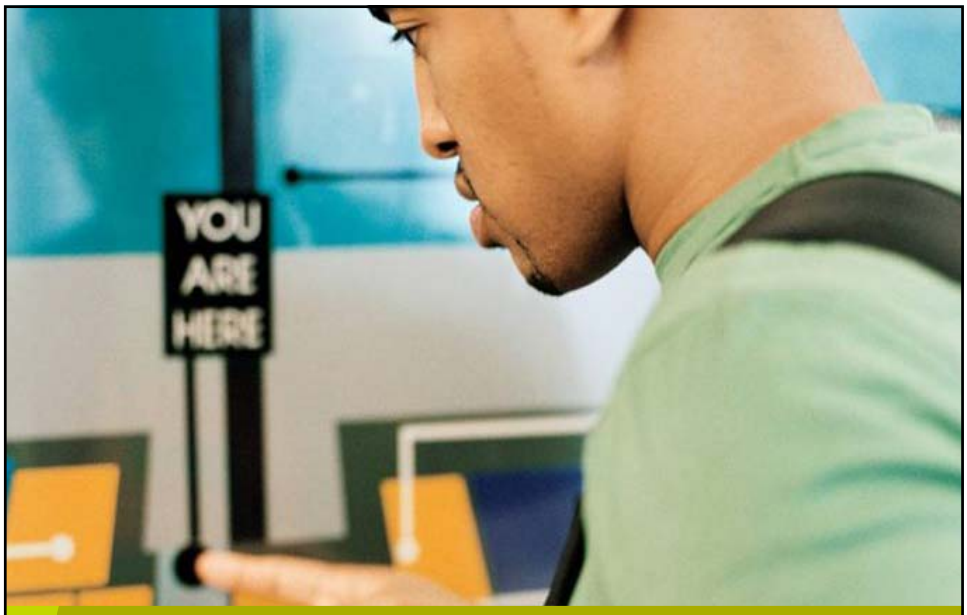
Residence/Campus life



Teaching and learning

Technology

Quality service



Orientation/extended orientation

Communication

Questions and discussion