2016 REPORT ON STUDENT SUCCESS AND RETENTION
The Texas Tech University Strategic Plan specifically recognizes the significance of student success to the institution. Research-based instruction, academic rigor, personal commitment, and financial resources are important variables to helping students engage, navigate, and make the most of their university experiences at TTU. Undergraduate Education, Student Success & Retention, and the Provost’s Task Force are committed to identifying, promoting, encouraging, and facilitating the implementation of empirically sound and operationally viable methods for maximizing and accelerating students’ success.

As overarching measures that keep with its Tier 1 distinction and AAU aspirations, Texas Tech University has set the goals of achieving a 90 percent first-year retention rate and a 70 percent six-year graduation rate. This annual report highlights many of the ways TTU applied its resources in 2016 to reach these particular goals and to contribute toward many more. Additional details and current developments on efforts that support student success are available online at the following website: www.provost.ttu.edu/success

Juan S. Muñoz
Vice Provost
Undergraduate Education & Student Affairs

Patrick C. Hughes
Associate Vice Provost
Undergraduate Education

Joshua R. Barron
Director
Student Success & Retention
Several years ago TTU invested in student advising and retention programs that serve undergraduate and graduate students. In the measures of increased student retention, persistence, and graduation, we already see several early results of the following investments:

• Provided for the expansion and improvement of a collectively-owned and continually-improving Academic Advising Handbook, a blog for Advisor communications, a repository of research annotations, and a social space; all of these applications were built on and continue to improve using the wiki: a popular and simple technology framework that supports the asynchronous sharing and collective improvement of content.

• Encouraged all college leaders and administrators to proactively engage students at risk in their majors by providing emailed summary reports of at-risk populations. Also extended training and implementation efforts to involve more academic colleges to use our real-time identification/communication tools that include historically-driven predictive modeling, campus early alerts, daily attendance reporting, and graded course assignments.

• A few simple measures strongly encourage campus personnel to continue investing in proactive calls to connect with and guide their students. One of these measures is the number of days between a registration-focused outreach call and the student’s actual registration for the upcoming term. When contacted by a college representative during 2016, 908 (or almost 30%) of the students reached who were intending to return subsequently resolved their holds and completed the registration process within one week’s time.

The Texas Tech University Strategic Plan specifically recognizes the significance of student success to the institution. Research-based instruction, academic rigor, personal commitment, and financial resources are important variables to helping students engage, navigate, and make the most of their university experiences at TTU. Undergraduate Education, Student Success & Retention, and the Provost’s Task Force are committed to identifying, promoting, encouraging, and facilitating the implementation of empirically sound and operationally viable methods for maximizing and accelerating students’ success.

As overarching measures that keep with its Tier 1 distinction and AAU aspirations, Texas Tech University has set the goals of achieving a 90 percent first-year retention rate and a 70 percent six-year graduation rate. This annual report highlights many of the ways TTU applied its resources in 2016 to reach these particular goals and to contribute toward many more. It is our privilege to serve as a resource and catalyst to that end.

Additional details and current developments on efforts that support student success are available online at the following website:

www.provost.ttu.edu/success
STRATEGIC MEASURES OF STUDENT SUCCESS & RETENTION AT TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

One-Year Retention Rate

Two-Year Retention Rate

Four-Year Graduation Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2008 - Fall 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2009 - Fall 2015</th>
<th>Fall 2010 - Fall 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>83.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>72.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2010 - Fall 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2011 - Fall 2015</th>
<th>Fall 2012 - Fall 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One-Year Retention Rate
Two-Year Retention Rate
Four-Year Graduation Rate
Six-Year Graduation Rate
Hispanic Serving Institution Designation

Strategic Plan Goals

Performance

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS
When created in 2014, department chairs and associate deans nominated individuals to be considered for appointment to the Provost’s Task Force on Student Success and Retention. Following the Deans’ review of all nominations, the Provost appointed 30 individuals to this important advisory group.

Building on the successes of the task force’s first iteration, the group scaled back its membership to focus in 2016-2017 on engaging several remaining issues and to investigate the impact of The task force will work to ensure that students reach even higher levels of excellence and success while at Texas Tech.

Its charge reads as follows:

The Provost’s Task Force on Student Success & Retention exists to improve communications on current retention and success initiatives, recommending strategies that will increase participation in and utilization of these efforts. Accordingly, it is expected that the task force will make recommendations on optimization of policies, procedures, technologies, and practices impacting student retention, persistence, and success.
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP:
2016 SYMPOSIUM FOR STUDENT SUCCESS & RETENTION

Texas Tech University invested beneficially in wide-spread culture change by hosting the Texas Commissioner for Higher Education, two nationally known experts in Student Success, and 141 faculty and staff participants representing nine different schools at the inaugural Regional Symposium for Student Success & Retention. Twenty-six concurrent sessions, three plenary sessions, and several meals later, the crowd dispersed to take home a newfound energy, camaraderie, and a more developed collegiate network. These assets are likely to energize the innovative, data-driven ideas that were discussed throughout the proceedings.

PURPOSE

On February 29-March 1, representatives of our leadership, faculty, enrollment, academic affairs, and student affairs teams joined together in Lubbock to engage the challenging topic of student success, and to hear from their peers around the region. Our facilitators and presenters helped us consider our own opportunities as we discuss the challenges and the variety of current innovative approaches happening in their respective domains and institutions. This inaugural gathering was the 2016 Regional Symposium for Student Success & Retention.

Institutions from across the state were invited to send individual leaders, or to bring teams of participants. Several accepted this wholly, bringing diverse teams, with members ranging from senior executives to data analysts to front-line faculty, advisors.

PRESENTERS

We were pleased to host Dr. Raymund Paredes, Commissioner of Higher Education for the State of Texas, Dr. Mark Milliron, Co-Founder and Chief Learning Officer of Civitas Learning, and Dr. Ed Venit, Senior Director for EAB Student Success Collaborative, who brought their remarks on these issues and opportunities in three keynote addresses.

Though we could not guarantee innovation, we may still have catalyzed it by strategically facilitating intentional hierarchical disruption ... for the potential benefit of our participating institutions and their stakeholders. Grateful for the time and intellectual contributions of all participants, Student Success & Retention also expresses its sincere appreciation to the sponsors and exhibitors whose creativity and commitments made the inaugural gathering possible.

2017 SAVE THE DATE:
SEPTEMBER 15 - 16
CAMPUS RE-ENROLLMENT INITIATIVE
SUMMER 2016 TO FALL 2016

Total Contacts: 6,470
- Called: Bad Number 983
- Called: No Answer 1,050
- Called: Voice Mail 2,462
- Grad Records Out-of-Date: 75
- Person: Met or Email 323
- Person: Other Representative by Phone 194
- Person: Student Conversation by Phone 1,383

No Call No Enrollment: 1703
- Attrition: Dropping Out: 176
- Attrition: Transferring: 808
- Attrition: Unsure: 273
- Completion: Graduating: 28
- Completion: Professional School: 410
- Persisting: Changing Majors: 182
- Persisting: Holds: 608
- Persisting: Needs Advisor: 45
- Persisting: Needs Appointment: 323
- Persisting: Procrastinating: 1,631
- Persisting: Registration Help: 19
- Persisting: Studying Abroad: 40
- Persisting: Time Off: 147
- Persisting: Waiting for Grades: 19
- Suspended: 105

Students Responding: 4,814

OBSERVATIONS
- Incorrect or missing contact information and limits on callers’ availability to participate resulted in many potential returners who were not engaged in any personal way.
- A portion of the outreach efforts of the outreach efforts did not result in students’ enrollment. However, data were collected indicating students’ reasons for not returning to Tech.
- Late summer calls and text messages significantly increased enrollment in Fall 2016.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Students’ current cell phone numbers should be recorded by advisors (or gathered via a periodic automated prompt in Raiderlink) and returned to update Banner for use in other important institution-student communications.
- Colleges’ callers should make every effort to complete a first round of communication before Summer I begins. For example, colleges can begin examining enrollment patterns during early registration and contacting students who have not yet registered for classes.
- Summer calls to students on First Academic Suspension after the spring term might support increased rates of return. Re-enrollment policies and time lines differ between colleges and do not currently lend themselves to encouraging students’ return to Texas Tech University.
- Supplemental calling services provided by the Office of the Provost have been generally well-received by the colleges. This service should continue to supplement the colleges’ calls, especially during particularly busy periods of the advising season.
- Enrollments of the TTU Colleges would likely benefit from having their own full-time advising personnel invested in completing this outreach effort each term.
CAMPUS PROGRESS INITIATIVE

ADVISORS FACILITATE PROGRESS TOWARD DEGREE: 30=4 COMMUNICATIONS

The research is clear, 30 semester credit hours completed in any combination over the course of an academic calendar year results in significantly higher retention, graduation, and a sizable financial benefit for students and their families. In spring of 2016, SSR surveyed all TTU academic advisors and several student leadership groups. The subsequent analysis was equally clear, students frequently enroll in fewer semester credit hours then they are capable of completing successfully. Moreover, when asked, students often cite a variety of reasons for making these decisions.

Combining the results of our survey with national best practices and available scholarship on the topic, SSR partnered with TTU Marketing & Communications to develop a job aid that might prompt and guide important conversations about progress-toward-degree between advisors and their students. The PDF guide was submitted to the academic colleges for distribution to their respective advising and support teams, further investing in a culture of consistent and continual communications students are hearing on the matter. Certainly 15 credit-hour semesters are not the right decision for every student, but excellent professionals working through a vetted process may help accelerate the progress of those for whom a full course load is appropriate.
DOCUMENTED COMMUNICATIONS AND MEETINGS BY AUDIENCE/PARTICIPANTS

THE BREAKDOWN OF "SSR OTHER: 588*"

- STUDENT: 105,560
- FAMILY MEMBERS: 2,470
- SSR OTHER: 588*

- DESANS: 89
- DEPARTMENT CHAIRS: 53
- TASK FORCE LEADERS: 68
- TRAINING SESSIONS: 23
- ACADEMIC ADVISORS: 181
- ADVISING LEADERS: 90
- ASSOCIATE DEANS: 84
Visual Schedule Builder

served 7,461 unique users in the month of August alone, generating 51.63 million total schedules. Conservative estimates put overall schedule creation time-savings at 415 days during this one month, indicating the application’s usefulness in supporting students in organizing their academic plans for coming terms. New updates this year included easy viewing of department-provided, section-specific text that was useful in helping students select more appropriate sections, and navigate restrictions, etc. The update also improved accessibility for persons with disabilities, and introduced new conflict resolution features and administrative analytics.

SSR improved and provided support for Strive.TTU.edu, a freely available online appointment system that allows students 24-7 access to schedule future appointments with participating support personnel, instructional faculty, academic advisors, and college administrators.

- Strive.TTU.edu is a campus-wide technology system that connects students, faculty, and staff members to better coordinate support efforts for all undergraduate and graduate students. In the last half of the 2016 school year, the system was used to schedule and document over 20K academic advising appointments, logged almost 86K individual email messages, and delivered more than 23K SMS/text messages to current students from engaged campus personnel.

- The Strive.TTU.edu system supported 102 Academic Advisors/Faculty Members and 67 Tutors in conducting 35,998 in-person interactions with 13,337 unique students.

- Faculty and instructors responded to 2,470 different progress report requests, providing input for support personnel to more quickly identify and intervene with students who were reported as being at risk in one or more of their courses.

51 MILLION SCHEDULES AT VSB

Strive.TTU.edu

SSR improved and provided support for Strive.TTU.edu, a freely available online appointment system that allows students 24-7 access to schedule future appointments with participating support personnel, instructional faculty, academic advisors, and college administrators.

http://ssc.ttu.edu
http://appointments.ttu.edu

http://appointments.ttu.edu

http://ssc.ttu.edu

From here, it's possible.

Texas Tech University

Strive.TTU.edu

51 MILLION SCHEDULES AT VSB

Visual Schedule Builder

served 7,461 unique users in the month of August alone, generating 51.63 million total schedules. Conservative estimates put overall schedule creation time-savings at 415 days during this one month, indicating the application’s usefulness in supporting students in organizing their academic plans for coming terms. New updates this year included easy viewing of department-provided, section-specific text that was useful in helping students select more appropriate sections, and navigate restrictions, etc. The update also improved accessibility for persons with disabilities, and introduced new conflict resolution features and administrative analytics.

schedulebuilder.ttu.edu
INNOVATIONS AND EXPERIMENTS:
ARTS & SCIENCES INNOVATION GRANT UPDATE

The first involved hiring two new advisors who specifically engage the A&S students who are on academic probation or suspension. These advisors are located in the Dean’s Office in Holden Hall and are readily available to support their assigned population and any other A&S students experiencing difficulty. Dr. Stefanie Borst holds this as a success; many students reported appreciating their interactions with the A&S Student Success Advisors. Each year, approximately 300 students are invited, encouraged, and (sometimes) required to meet periodically with these advisors.

Currently the response rate to follow-up surveys is low; Dr. Borst and team are exploring other means to provide a more reliable formal evaluation of the program’s effectiveness. Still, from the responses received and anecdotal information provided by students, families, and staff members, the effort is clearly a green light investment.

Dr. Borst hopes to add additional success advisors to the team. New additions will help improve quality in each interaction while growing the number of students who benefit from coaching.

The second initiative implemented was in the Mathematics Department at Texas Tech University. In high fail courses such as Calculus, the College of Arts and Sciences hired special tutors who hold course-specific tutoring sessions every night. This support has helped many students as evidenced by improved scores for many participants. The second part of this program was to implement a flipped classroom style, which is not widely used at Texas Tech. Dr. Borst indicated that Teaching Assistants were encouraged to implement this new teaching method, and received bonuses for doing so. Early results are positive, and Borst plans on using these incentives again with additional measurements, to confirm and build on the high success rates experienced to date.

BY THOMAS KAY, 2019 HISTORY & THEATRE DOUBLE MAJOR

The College of Arts and Sciences has over 9,000 students, making it the single largest college at Texas Tech University. Until 18 months ago, this college did not have a centralized advising team to help with student retention. When the College of Arts and Sciences received the Provost’s Matching Grant for Innovation in Student Success, it immediately implemented two initiatives.
The College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources is committed to leading in teaching, research, and service. CASNR has over 2,000 students and enjoys growth that is fueled, in part, by annual increases in its retention rate. The college successfully applied for the first set of Provost’s Grants for Innovation in Student Success and Retention two years ago. The college was pleased to be awarded an initial grant and is proud to have received a subsequent award for the implementation- and reinvention-oriented funds offered in the second year of the program. The College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources is dedicated to use these awards as it invests in a two-pronged approach toward leadership in success, retention, and professional development.

Using the grant, the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources wanted to continue the CASNR Advising Academy. CASNR is the only Texas Tech college that has faculty advising. This type of advising is beneficial to students, because faculty involvement beyond the classroom helps provide a more robust student learning experience.

The CASNR Advising Academy is helpful to advisors because it serves as a deliberate investment in thinking about and collaboratively creating new approaches to assisting students. When they meet with students, advisors feel more confident in each conversation, from course selection to academic policies to career planning.

The CASNR Advising Academy has four sessions. The first session is about student resources; it provides advisors with a thorough understanding of the available student resources including Student Counseling, the Learning Center, and student Disability Services, among many others. The second session focuses on technology tools, e.g., DegreeWorks, Students of Concern, and Strive. The third details the CASNR-specific advising process. The fourth session features a first-hand student-focused advising appointment experience.

The second part of the grant was used to fund students’ participation at the Agricultural Future of America Conference. The College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources sent 14 students to the conference, providing them with a great co-curricular support. Students reported the following benefits: opportunities for networking, training in contacting potential employers, exploration of future jobs and current internships, and sessions for working through bigger-picture career planning exercises. The college received a great deal of positive feedback about this program.

CASNR wants to continue improving its student experience by regularly offering and expanding its advising academy. In assessing the program, 100% of the faculty who attended training would recommend it to a colleague.

In conjunction with these grant-related efforts, CASNR recently hired a new Retention Specialist who is placing a heavy emphasis on advising improvements, identification of students’ personal issues, early alert case management, and data-driven proactive interventions with various student groups.

By Irinia Y. Fernandez
2018 University Studies
During the fall of 2016, five new members of the Student Success & Retention team began our duties as Peer Success Coaches for TTU students. Our team’s first goal is to continuously investigate and implement new methods that will further advance students’ progress toward achieving a degree. Close behind this goal is the second: use existing data to proactively engage struggling students very early-on in their challenges, offering them encouragement, tools, and connections that will support a faster return to academic health.

We pursue the outcome of increasing student retention rates one student at a time, through various calling campaigns, outreach projects, and website management aimed at facilitating measurable progress throughout the institution. For example, as our first challenge, the 5-student team developed calling campaign scripts to reach out to specific student populations at designated periods throughout the fall semester.
WHAT WE’VE LEARNED

Throughout our first semester in this new role, many lessons were learned. Initially, our one-to-one interactions were tentative; many times we sounded robotic and impersonal. After a few calls, the process became more familiar and insecurities faded away. This led to much better connections with our students. We also became extremely efficient in guiding students toward the available resource, particularly thanks to campaigns that were highly sensitive to time constraints. These included the IS 1101 Pilot and the Midterm Calling Campaign.

We also learned that there is a lot of outreach that could still be done across the landscape of students’ experiences on the campus. We learned the value of making important referrals to expert TTU personnel; before the October 31st drop date, our calls helped engage students and successfully connect them with their advisors and counselors in the Financial Aid Office. We heard time and again how appreciative students were to be assisted in this way. We learned that there are many interesting reasons students drop classes, and that they’re not always thinking, “Hey, I should talk to someone before making a big decision like this.”

We learned that the Strive system is not perfect and, though powerful and friendly, still many adjustments are needed for it to achieve its full potential. We learned the value of up-to-date contact information because we found many students with out-of-date records. This made it very difficult to have the widest possible reach because we spent so many hours just trying to track these folks down. Surprisingly, we also learned that there are still many advisors are not using the Strive system, which required us to invest even more energy in hunting phone numbers. Thankfully, we were able to use a number of other methods to get students connected with their advisors and other helpful campus resources. Overall, the peer success coaches now know where to find the most helpful information, and are working to ensure students have the correct contact information provided to the university.

WHAT WE LIKED ABOUT PEER SUCCESS COACHING

Peer success coaching created unique opportunities to engage, facilitate, and connect students to useful campus resources. Scripts were written with the intention of being flexible, personable, and engaging, yet highly-focused on directing students away from us to directly engage campus resources by the end of each call.

Every calling campaign challenged our interpersonal skills, in many cases we were required to adapt our methods of engagement to be more appealing for each person called. Our collaborative efforts would not have been so successful without the help of our mentor, Joshua Barron. For each of the founding team members, it was personally rewarding to serve as a catalyst of student success.

WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED IN THE UPCOMING SEMESTERS?

Months ahead, we are eager to build a more formal schedule for the entire team. We believe this type of coordination will increase our own efficiencies, require more deliberate partnerships, and ensure that everyone is operating from the same page. In upcoming semesters, a more scheduled and structured “game plan” will be beneficial to our campaigns. With our calendars fully scheduled prior to each term, we will be better equipped to maximize every moment at work.

Additionally, although students of high risk are a more urgent target, this team feels that students who are successful should also be contacted. We know that a student’s grades don’t necessarily tell the whole story, and we are committed to help the entire body of students, if possible.
Are there incentives for academic advisors that might help catalyze full-load enrollment where it is appropriate for students? Certainly it is not always true to say that all students should be enrolled in more hours. If we were to incentivize advisors based on their students’ full-load enrollment would we foster an incorrect assumption that the university only sees its students as a number on its state report card?

What would be the correct metric to use? Ideas abound: percentage of students fully enrolled, those enrolled in courses required for their degrees, percentage retained within the major, percentage retained at TTU, percentage in good standing, etc.

What is the best way to measure the success of students who begin at Texas Tech never intending to persist in a major, or those who intend only to complete foundational coursework before transferring over to the Nursing School at TTUHSC?

In assessing student readiness and stability, and for improving communications, how should we calculate changes of major?

What day and time should we fix the values for the calculation process?

Despite the high quality and integrity of our advising personnel, would new financial incentives for university personnel also present these team members with unnecessary and unfair ethical dilemmas?

How might we build scenarios that lend themselves toward the desired outcomes while simultaneously avoiding those that require personnel to repeatedly face potentially compromising situations?

IDEAS, QUESTIONS, AND POSSIBILITIES

Through multiple meetings with success-oriented constituents across campus, many strong opinions, research-worthy questions, and interesting ideas were surfaced. The list on the following page summarizes selected ideas generated during these meetings.

Academic units universally appear to be in need of more funding to supplement existing budgets that provide for an adequate number of front-line academic (faculty and staff) advisors.

When examining measures of student success and program outcomes involving student success, how should we measure students who want to be enrolled in more credit hours, but for whom there are no available scheduled classes falling within the students’ required/recommended course sequencing requirements?

Second Annual Regional Symposium on Student Success & Retention: September 15-16, 2017; McKenzie-Merket Alumni Center.

Design and distribute best-practice college timelines for using predictive analytics.

Design and distribute departmental timelines for proactive outreach.

Develop additional opportunities for involving faculty, particularly regarding their opportunity to submit early alerts and share attendance information on-line via Strive.TTU.edu.

Begin additional outreach campaigns using SSR’s Peer Success Coaches using lessons learned from first semester’s implementation.

Identify, engage, and deploy a network of ‘first responders’ for early alert case management, communication, and collaboration across academic units.

Institution-wide adoption of Strive.TTU.edu (EAB-SSC Campus).

Task Force Phase III
As funding allows, here are some creative ideas for investing in student success & retention

One

Continue the process of calling for, selecting, and awarding matching funds a third year of Innovation Grants.

Invest financially in reconstituting and expanding the institution-wide Advising Academy, including paying for participants to travel to relevant advising conferences on the condition they return and present what they learned during their travels.

Begin issuing a series of monthly student support awards to faculty and staff members that come with one month of unusual incentives, e.g., Paid Presidential Parking Privileges (or Chancellor’s Choice, if you prefer) for the recipients.

Place a call for proposals to the colleges issuing a maximum of $10,000 per year (for two years maximum) in research grants for projects that support the outcome of publishable, discipline-specific research on student success and retention across the institution. These presenters would agree to present their plans in year one and their findings in years two through four at the Symposium for Student Success & Retention, and commit to submit for scholarly publication.

Partner with the Graduate School and all colleges to centrally-fund one required, coordinated, student success-oriented GA training involving all new GAs in every academic unit to participate in this two-day event held each May or August.

Partner with Housing and Residence Life to centrally-fund 8 hours of additional training for all CAs that involves their interaction with representatives from every academic unit, a visit to every academic building, role playing through a variety of academically-oriented challenge situations, computer training for using our early alert system, and a meal/game show event in the Tech Club with the institution’s senior leadership, success-oriented Associate Deans from every college, and Advising Leadership from each college.

Fund two appointees from the President’s/Provost’s Office to attend the NACADA annual conference each year, where they attend the conference and meet daily with the TTU contingent, in addition to hosting a TTU-sponsored reception for academic advisors from the state of Texas. Years ago the Texas schools partnered to do this, each contributing up to $1,000 toward the event, but leaders changed and it fell by the wayside. On what better national stage might we promote Texas Tech as a great place, recruiting excellent academic advisors to come and join a healthy and continually-improving team?

Fund NACADA memberships for all faculty members and academic advisors for one year; host departmental journal review sessions (complete with a meal) in conjunction with one standard faculty meeting for every academic department.

Procure a student-centered mobile technology platform to facilitate success-timeline communications and improved student accountability. By defining and communicating about particular milestones for various success paths, the solution would curate personalized advice, nudge students, and clarify action steps for students from all backgrounds, enrolled in all levels and academic areas of the university.

Expand peer success coaching team or formally partner with an outsourcer to provide targeted populations with extensive academic coaching services.

Two

Three

Four

Five

Six

Seven

Eight

Nine

Ten
Characteristics of successful early alert systems (EAS), and how they compare with current approaches at TTU:

EASE OF USE

- Effective EAS are easy to use for both instructors and support staff, and those personnel are responsible for utilizing them. When possible, they are integrated into related systems and structures, such as E-Learning systems or other advising or CRM software programs.

- At TTU the current system is easy to use but not fully utilized. Only this year did we achieve the ability for the Banner system to interface with Strive.TTU.edu for early work and midterm grades. We also encourage first-work grades, but do not seek instructor participation in reporting assignment grades, nor automated Blackboard grade integration for Strive.TTU.edu.

CLARITY AND CONSISTENCY OF CRITERIA

- Effective EAS have clear and consistent criteria for various categories from which instructors and staff can choose to flag students. These are normally finite in number (with an option for "other") and can include multiple selections.

- At TTU we use traditional letter grades for early work and midterm grades, and offer little guidance on what we mean by not attending. Strive.TTU.edu (and its progress reports features) can provide this, but much instruction and organizational buy-in needs to take place for widespread participation by faculty.

CLARITY AND CONSISTENCY OF INTERVENTION PROCESSES

- Effective EAS have clearly defined plans for interventions with students, and these are consistent across campus (e.g., a student flagged for poor early work grades in the College of Business is treated largely the same as a student flagged for poor early work grades in the College of Arts and Sciences). The rule of thumb in effective EAS is “respond to the student, not the problem.”

- At TTU the protocols for interventions are sporadic and inconsistent. Some units have specific protocols for reaching out to students flagged by various early alerts, but most do not. Even in cases where there is a protocol in place, such as emailing students reported for having low midterm grades, there is no evidence that students are reading, let alone responding to, those messages. One size need not fit all, but coordinating and making consistent our first responder processes has potential to substantially improve institutional efforts.
FORMAL SYSTEMS FOR FOLLOW-UP AND FEEDBACK

- Effective EAS do not simply “intervene” with students; they follow up, document, and provide feedback to those who flagged the student. This requires a high level of coordination and communication across diverse units, and is often most effective at smaller institutions.

- Strive.TTU.edu exists to handle this. Currently, however, TTU’s follow-up and feedback mechanisms are even more sporadic and inconsistent. Most instructors report not receiving any follow-up about students they flag in TTU’s EAS, and most are also unaware of the basic process of how flagging a student is supposed to trigger a response elsewhere on campus. Providing an effective feedback loop to reporters and responders is a challenge, but has been shown to increase participation and buy-in to EAS.

EARLIER INTERVENTIONS

- Effective EAS recognize that the most effective interventions come early in the semester, placing an emphasis not just on academic performance but on academic and social engagement as well, particularly in the first three weeks of the semester. Many effective EAS also begin prioritizing and intervening with students before the semester begins, through orientation and early term programming.

- At TTU administrators do discuss the importance place of early work, and various engagement programs exist, but there is no coordinated or consistent messaging across the academic units.

PRIORITIZING TARGET POPULATIONS

- Effective EAS recognize the need to prioritize the students who are most at-risk and who are likely to benefit most from interventions. Many institutions focus on particular students who are more likely to be at-risk based on factors like high school GPA or those who miss more than one course in the first two weeks of the semester; others focus on courses with high D/F/W (drop/fail/withdraw) rates, but all successful EAS prioritize.

- At TTU, we have consistently emphasized reporting early work and utilizing midterm grades for freshmen and special populations of students in all sections, with less than 100% involvement by faculty and in lieu of focusing on specific populations or specific courses. Again, there are many ways to prioritize reporting and intervention, but to be effective, we will need to prioritize in some form.

WORKLOAD, RESPONSIBILITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Effective EAS have a designated person who is responsible for coordinating campus-wide early alert efforts. At smaller colleges and universities this is often a registrar, associate registrar, or a member of the institutional research team. At larger campuses, the position is often a direct report to an Associate Provost for Student Success or similar position. Some campuses also have Early Alert “teams” or committees whose job it is to coordinate activities for the entire campus.

- At TTU, as is typical of our larger approach to retention, Student Success & Retention now “owns” early alert through Strive.TTU.edu. The SSR Section Coordinator is tasked with managing alerts, but to address challenges with coordination, communication, and accountability the first responder team must be fully engaged in and committed to 100% case resolution for their assigned students. At a large campus such as ours, doing early alert well is a large task that demands defined relationships between dedicated persons to effectively organize outreach and follow-up efforts.

RESULTS-DRIVEN RESOURCE ALLOCATION

- Effective EAS are supported with resources based on their ability to demonstrate results in the areas of retention and student success. Given the resources necessary to sustain programs that combine effective interventions with consistent communication, coordination, and follow-up, tying them to results encourages stakeholders to be timely and effective while documenting and assessing their efforts. Effective EAS programs are able to demonstrate the budgetary impact they make by retaining and graduating students who go on to become alumni and donors.

- At TTU, we are only beginning to have data that allows for an analysis of alert effectiveness. We will be focusing more on evaluating effective forms of reporting and follow-up and investing in areas that can demonstrate an impact on student success, retention, and graduation rates.
STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS

Muhammad Solichin
2016 Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering
Peer Success Coach for Student Success & Retention

Samantha Herrera
2017 Bachelor of Science in Advertising
Peer Success Coach for Student Success & Retention

Thomas Kay
2019 Bachelor of Arts in History & Theatre
Peer Success Coach for Student Success & Retention

Yari Fernandez
2017 Bachelor of Science in University Studies
Peer Success Coach for Student Success & Retention

Dania Al-Barghuthi
2015 Bachelor of Arts in Spanish
2016 Bachelor of Science in Advertising
2017 Graduate Certificate in Business
Graduate Assistant for Student Success & Retention

Texas Tech University
Division of Undergraduate Education
& Student Affairs
Office of the Provost