Undergraduate Retention Initiatives

College of Architecture

Office of the Provost

Texas Tech University

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Introduction

Successful retention programs encompass virtually everything an institution does to improve the quality of student life and learning. Quality can be defined as that 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/learning processes of the college; and that students acquire the skills and knowledge needed to become successful learners in that community.

To better understand each college’s approaches to supporting student success, the Provost issued a request for the inventory of college-based retention and success initiatives. In conjunction with the larger institution-wide report, this extract reports only the information submitted provided by the College of Architecture.

Current Structure/Approach

− The college has already begun to work on the specific issue of retention. The leadership of the college is aware that within its field, retention is critical. The college recognizes that enrollments in their units are dropping, partially related to the consequence of national market opportunities. Careers in architecture have plateaued and in some parts of the country declined.
− The college recognizes the very high demanding curriculum imposed on it students.
− The college currently enjoys a 70% graduation rate within 3.5 years. Additionally, the college requires students to study abroad every summer. Retention and persistence is related to a highly demanding curriculum and “soft market.”

Initiatives

− Current initiatives within the college include dedicated staff, such as Patty Perkins.
− The use of advising fees have been very important in the college and used to support the following retention activities: training of academic advisors, support for academic advisor retention, marketing campaign to specifically encourage undergraduates in the major to persist to complete graduate degrees within the college, and student initiated dialogs
− “Burger Burns” social programs and events that bring faculty, staff, and students together to build a college culture of reciprocal support.

Support Needed

− Additional professional development training for its academic advisor
− Availability of predictive analytics to assist in their centralized, and eventually department specific, retention activities.