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 Rawls College of Business Administration.

Current Structure/Approach

- The college offers a number of student support programs through its undergraduate service center. These include advising first year engagement recommendations
- Academic advisors will work with students to develop and implement an individual student success actions plan.
- Help students have a comprehensive understanding of course requirements, GPA requirements, degree requirements, and prerequisites within each major.
- Engage in evaluation of a student's progress and make referrals as needed. Engage in active listening and ask open-ended questions to assess individual student needs, goals, and abilities. Reinforce self-direction and self-sufficiency
- The staff of the undergraduate service center will attend national trainings and conferences such as NACADA.
Initiatives

− Future retention initiatives that will be piloted in the college include: Rawls Business Leader program; Peer mentoring and mentor program for freshman.
− The college hopes to affect 25% of the freshman class through these new initiatives.
− The college will develop its own residential learning community – RCOBA is the only such unit without an existing learning community.
− Although the trends within the college suggest that it does not lose students due to academics distress, it will further develop new: Communication center, tutoring services, writing services
− Related to course availability and enrollments, the college will reduce the number of students in high challenge courses such as introduction to finance.
− The college will sign high challenge courses to full professors or other highly effective tenure track faculty, as well as reducing the number of students and increasing the number of sections for said courses.
− The college will make a concerted effort to engage students in their second and third year.
− Goal of increasing the retention rate of freshman from 77% to 82% in the college.
− Goal of increasing the retention, persistence and graduation rate of the college by 5% overall

Support Needed

− Additional focus on retention and engagement of students throughout the baccalaureate pipeline.
− Additional training and professional development opportunities for academic advisors.
− Mechanisms for improving the transfer of students within and across colleges to ensure their best fit major and persistence/graduation from the university.