Undergraduate Retention Initiatives

Honors College

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 Honors College.

Current Structure/Approach
The issue of retention within the Honors College is perhaps less stark then in any other. Generally, the retention and persistence is notably higher in this college than any other. This said, the issue of retention within the Honors college is perhaps less clear than in any other because many Honors-designated students are formally declared in the majors of other colleges. However, the college does report several issues related to retention that they are beginning to address, including:

− understanding that while students may leave the Honors College, they don’t necessarily leave the University
− retention in the Honors College is affected directly by the availability of honor sections
− additional honors sections of courses are needed
− the most common reason offered by students leaving the Honors College that students offer, is the unavailability of curriculum to make appropriate progress toward degree

Initiatives
One of the methods that the college has undertaken to retain students within its unit is, what the Dean referred to as, emphasizing “points of difference.” Planned initiatives include the following:

− given its record enrollment, developing new methods of engagement with students, especially to assess issues impacting them
− involvement of students in longer term projects outside the classroom where their input is valued and impact felt
− educating students on how the GPA is calculated and the ramifications of grade replacement
− strengthening learning communities
− branding the Honors College experience
Support Needed

- Resources to supplement faculty to teach overload honors sections
- Additional staff to support record enrollment
- Renewable scholarships
- Additional staff to support targeted retention