

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** M. Duane Nellis, Ph.D.  
President

**FROM:** Lawrence Schovanc, Ph.D.  
Provost

**CC:** Juan S. Muñoz, Ph.D.  
Senior Vice President and Vice Provost

**DATE:** April 28, 2014

**RE:** Campus Retention & Success Plan

### Introduction

Over the course of the Fall semester, members of the Office of the Provost met with campus leaders to discuss the topic of student persistence and success, including the Committee for Academic Advising and Retention, the Deans of the Academic Colleges and others to collaborate on the development of a white paper (Spring 2014) reporting on current and future initiatives necessary to improve undergraduate student retention, persistence and graduation at Texas Tech University. The recommendations and initiatives described below were excerpted from the white paper and are the results of the current retention and persistence investigation, previous institutional studies, earlier strategic plans and findings from former task forces charged with the identification of effective student success models.

The current study is organized to reflect both immediate and long-term strategies and initiatives that will have direct and positive impacts on undergraduate student retention, persistence, and graduation. These recommendations, if incorporated into the Texas Tech University undergraduate retention strategic plan, and sustained, will yield measurable gains in student success—persistence, retention, and graduation rates.

### Immediate Retention and Success:

- Develop a data-informed planning process that clearly articulates a comprehensive retention plan with the goal of increasing 6-year graduate rates to 70% and one-year retention rates 90%. (*The full-length white paper will serve as the foundation of this comprehensive retention plan*)

- An emphasis will be placed on tracking several strategic subpopulations (e.g., undecided students, late-admit students, first generation students, and other student groups considered to be in academic jeopardy)
- Develop a plan that represents an integration of central and decentralized efforts, built around the following formula: *Retention = Early Identification + (Early, Intensive, Continuous) Intervention.*
- Timeline of retention increases, benchmarks and responsible office(s)

OFFICE	STRATEGY	RETENTION INITIATIVE	GOAL 2014 1 year Retention Rate ≥ 80% 6 year graduation ≤ 62%	GOAL 2015 1 year Retention Rate ≥ 82% 6 year graduation ≥ 62% and increasing each year through 2020	GOAL 2020 1 year Retention Rate ≥ 90% 6 year graduation ≥ 70%
Office of the Provost / UESA	Emphasize a data-informed planning process to develop a clearly articulated and comprehensive retention plan.	Develop and support a small unit that will coordinate retention analytics and reporting to administrative units and academic colleges/departments.	Neutral/ some gain in 1 year retention and 6 year graduation rates; direct assessment and invention plan developed; Budget and Staff; Customization of reports; Responsiveness to college needs; Deliverables: College reports to deans and provost (Fall)	2 percent increase in 1 year retention and 6 year graduation rates; On-going assess and intervention; Systematic tracking and evaluation processes routinized.	Steady, yet significant (i.e., 2-3% per year over 6 years) increase in 1 year retention and 6 year graduation rates attaining the goal of 70/90 by 2020
UESA / Academic Colleges	Expand engaged advising programs that include with social events and support, involvement opportunities, academic guidance, and community service, and mentoring for the groups of students who are most academically vulnerable	Utilize Committee on Academic Advising and Retention and the Undergraduate Education Academic Advising Academy to expand professional development and training.	1st and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Academic advisor cohorts completed; training On-going, assessment for best practices; Major change and TechCheck events for midsemester progress for degree review for students (all colleges participating); Continued program development	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Academic advising cohorts completed; Training on-going, assessment for best practices; Major change and TechCheck events for midsemester progress for degree review for students.	All academic advisors completed; New cohorts enrolled as hiring demands and additional levels of expertise and knowledge training implemented; Major change and TechCheck events, midsemester progress for degree review for students.

Office of the Provost / UESA / SOAR / Academic Colleges	Enhance intervention programming for students earning grades of D, F, or who Withdraw/Drop from the course.	Grow Supplemental Instruction services, for courses with historically high DFW rates; Use results produced to advise students appropriately based on prior academic performance.	Reduction in DFW rates among participating courses $\geq 2\%$	Reduction in DFW rates among participating courses $\geq 4\%$	Reduction in DFW rates among participating courses $\geq 10\%$
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## Technology

The use of proven electronic platforms that improve retention, persistence and success will allow the university to begin an unprecedented standardization of advising and retention services. Moreover, by calibrating these services to specific improvement expectations, academic departments and colleges will more effectively evaluate their internal retention efforts, along with campus-wide initiatives, based on objective metrics and goals. Table below

SOFTWARE	IMPLEMENTATION	2014 GOAL	2015 GOAL	2020 GOAL
Platinum Analytics	4-8 months from the time of contract / purchase; Among other advantages, this application will help departments effectively predict demand for core and major courses	Contract for Application; Training	Implemented for core course demand analyses	Full implementation; decrease in earned but degree-inapplicable SCH; increase decrease in time to degree; increase in high-demand course availability
DegreeWorks	Currently in use by select colleges	In use by all colleges (select undergraduate degrees)	In use by all colleges (all undergraduate degrees)	Full implementation (undergraduate and graduate degree programs); decrease in earned but degree-inapplicable SCH; increase decrease in time to degree
MapWorks	Currently in use for FTIC students in their first semester at TTU; License owned by University Housing; Integrated into the RaiderReady curriculum for early alerts and first semester retention; Expand to student classifications and integrate academic advisors and faculty as users	Continue to incorporate in RaiderReady	In use for all undergraduate students through their fourth semester	All undergraduates in MapWorks with all colleges using the application; expect reductions in attrition as a result of interventions informed through MapWorks reporting

## College Strategies

The academic colleges generally provide retention services and activities to their students and support current and the development of new undergraduate retention efforts. Colleges have already begun to work on the specific issue of retention. Through the development of a coherent and deliberate overall retention blueprint for each college. These efforts include, but are not limited to the following:

OFFICE	STRATEGY	RETENTION INITIATIVE	GOAL 2014 1 year Retention Rate ≥ 80% 6 year graduation ≤ 62%	GOAL 2015 1 year Retention Rate ≥ 82% 6 year graduation ≥ 62% and increasing each year through 2020	GOAL 2020 1 year Retention Rate ≥ 90% 6 year graduation ≥ 70%
Colleges / Office of Retention Analytics	Develop a retention initiatives for colleges	Associate increases in new enrollments and retention of current students both in the colleges and at the university with RCM-related revenue return to colleges.	Convene Associate Dean's retention task force on a monthly basis to discuss incentives and present these and other plans to the Provost for consideration	Implement approved college incentives; award incentives	Colleges' retention plans reflects university improvements
Colleges / Office of Retention Analytics	Incorporate retention expectations as part of deans' annual performance review	Develop a college-specific retention report card similar to IR enrollment reporting provided up to and including the 20 <sup>th</sup> class day each terms and entire throughout semester.	Task force design report card	Distribution of report cards twice per semester to Provost and Deans; College responses for intervention based on data to Provost	Increase in both college and university retention and graduation rates; by department, major, and subpopulations.
Colleges / CAAR	Align various college and university advising structures for consistency in student experiences across colleges and majors	Implement CAAR strategic plan elements for consistent academic advising across degree programs	Initial assessment of college/degree/university expectations for academic advising outcomes	Distribution of report cards twice per semester to Provost and Deans; College responses for intervention based on data to Provost	Increase in both college and university retention and graduation rates; by department, major, and subpopulations

### Long-term recommendations:

- Develop a Raider-Ready curriculum beginning with Freshman Seminar to transfer student phase through students; senior year that culminates with a senior IS Seminar that focuses on “college to career” transitions.
- Extend the Raider Ready Program with a curricular offering designed to support sophomore success.
- Promote advising as a valued profession and provide enhanced advisor training and professional development to support ongoing improvement of advising programs and personnel. Institutional training and professional development of academic advisors will be an integral part of our student retention strategies.
- Further develop the involvement of the associate academic deans council on retention. Continue to work through CAAR to ensure relevance of persistence and retention initiatives.
- Develop an early alert warning and intervention system for students at risk (this could be the product offered through EAB)
- Expand offerings of summer academic bridge programs.
- Develop strategic financial aid/scholarship support for retentive purposes.

### Assessment

The ability to effectively implement and assess the efficacy of the university’s retention plan will be imperative. While several existing units exist on campus have the capacity and expertise to provide critical success data, a new approach to the aggregation and dissemination of this data will prove exceedingly valuable as Texas Tech moves toward a more data-driven approach to improving retention, persistence and graduations. Through a nimble and nuanced combinations of existing data sources such as IR and IT and those which may be newly acquired, i.e. EAB Success Collaborative, Texas Tech for the first time will be positioned to set explicit benchmarks for student success by department, major, college and sub-populations in a standardized manner that it has not previously experienced.

TTU Units	IMPLEMENTATION	2014 GOAL	2015 GOAL	2020 GOAL
Institutional Research	Identify pertinent retention, persistence, and success data	Have newly defined retention metrics by Fall 2014	Implemented benchmarks, and “retention success” report cards	GOAL 2020 1 year Retention Rate $\geq$ 90% 6 year graduation $\geq$ 70%
Information Technology	Develop new predictive reports and analytics for retention, persistence, and success data	New retention data disaggregated by strategic categories		GOAL 2020 1 year Retention Rate $\geq$ 90% 6 year graduation $\geq$ 70%
Office of Retention Analytics	Develop semester and annual reporting instruments for retention, persistence,	Initial retention and success snapshot/profile for campus		GOAL 2020 1 year Retention Rate $\geq$ 90% 6 year graduation $\geq$

	and success data	dissemination		70%
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## Conclusion

The current focus on student persistence, retention, and graduation is a natural extension of the university's commitment to codify an academic culture renowned for its focus on success of students. The recommendations of the current white paper on retention and persistence at Texas Tech, will inform the university's overall undergraduate retention plan, identify concrete improvement metrics, responsible offices and staff, and ensure that improvements to student success in the form of persistence, retention, and graduation are realized within an aggressive timeline.