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Who Should Read

Financial Sustainability Engagement Leader

Attrition Workbook

A How-to Guide for Quantifying Available Savings from Reducing Attrition and Identifying Strategies for Improvement

Financial Sustainability Collaborative

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Financial Sustainability Collaborative

Project Directors

David Attis
Scott Winslow
Carla Hickman

Contributing Consultants

Elizabeth Casey-Rutland
Mark Day

Project Manager

Veronica Smith

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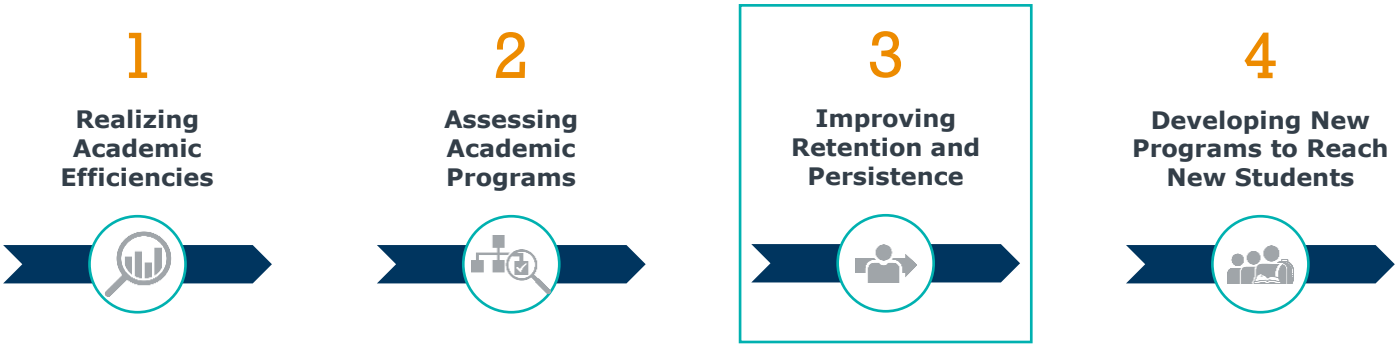
Overview of the Financial Sustainability Collaborative

Additional Context for This Workbook

This workbook is part of a long-term collaboration between EAB and participating institutions of higher education known as the Financial Sustainability Collaborative. This collaboration involves intensive focus on four aspects of academic costs and revenue within higher education: academic inefficiency, academic program assessment, retention and persistence, and new program development. This workbook addresses the available opportunity from improving retention and persistence. Since each student who leaves the institution represents a lost source of revenue, institutions should consider reducing attrition as part of their financial sustainability strategy. As part of participation in the Financial Sustainability Collaborative, EAB provides all participating institutions with a series of workbooks to guide them through identifying the total available opportunity at their institution.

Evaluate Four Key Drivers of Academic Revenues and Costs



These workbooks are not intended to dictate decisions or to make difficult choices about changes to resource allocation for participating institutions. Rather, they are intended to guide a representative from each institution (referred to throughout as the "Implementation Leader") to identify what opportunities exist for their institution and to facilitate conversations about next steps. All final decisions should be made in the context of existing shared governance structures, should include opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback, and should have the support of institutional leaders. The collaborative and workbooks will guide the Implementation Leader to gather and analyze the data necessary to inform conversations and decisions, but this data analysis is meant to support, not replace, a robust decision-making process.

Institutional Roles in the Collaborative

Actively Participate in the Collaborative

Implementation Leader
Often a Chief of Staff, VP Strategy, or AVP/VP

Executive Sponsor
Often the Provost, CBO, or President

Contribute Insights and Recommendations to Decision-Making Process

Stakeholder Contributions
Incorporate input and seek feedback from campus community

Shared Governance
Final decisions made and implemented by leaders working within shared governance structure

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Student Success: The Big Picture

Acknowledging The Breadth of the Topic Before Taking a Narrow Approach

Student success is core to the mission of every college and university. While the basic federal accountability metrics (first year retention, four-year graduation rate, and six-year graduation for a cohort of first-time full-time students) are an important focus, student success encompasses nearly every aspect of student life:

Across the industry, student success has long been a major topic of research. EAB has not only developed a major technology platform that supports millions of students across hundreds of colleges and universities, we have also published dozens of reports and catalogued over 300 best practices.

For the purpose of the Financial Sustainability Collaborative, however, we will be focusing on one narrow aspect of student success– reducing attrition (i.e., those enrolled students who leave without completing a credential). Attrition is a critical driver of enrollment and tuition revenue (and therefore critical to financial sustainability), but it is also the prerequisite for all other aspects of student success. With a few possible exceptions, students who leave your institution without completing a credential will not have the opportunity to experience the other important aspects of student success. Identifying strategies to reduce attrition is therefore a fundamental first step in laying a sound foundation.

Your institution undoubtedly already engages in a broad range of student support activities. Assessing the return on investment for each current activity would be overwhelming. In this workbook, we help you identify what is the next best investment of time and resources at your institution in order to reduce attrition.

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Boosting the Bottom Line by Retaining Students

Sizing the Opportunity and Identifying Solutions

This workbook will guide the Implementation Leader through an analytical exercise to identify the total annual revenue lost from undergraduate student attrition at their institution and evaluate the relative size of six (6) different retention opportunities on your campus.

In addition to sizing the opportunity available, this workbook highlights the experiences of schools that have been successful at retaining students in each of these opportunity areas on their campuses. These profiles provide useful templates and strategies to emulate in striving to reduce attrition. Additionally, these case studies provide useful data analogues when estimating the impact of a certain strategy which is a necessary input to setting goals and estimating the likely financial impact of achieving those goals.

This **Retention Opportunity Analysis** is narrowly focused on the estimated revenue lost from students who leave the institution within a single year and has two distinct components:

1) Calculate the Annual Attrition Rate so the Implementation Leader can create a useful estimate of the lost institutional revenue from the undergraduate students who transfer or simply disappear.

2) Evaluate Your Student Population to determine the relative size, at your institution, of each of the six retention opportunities that we have profiled.

The final piece of this month's work is to sketch out the business and project plan for running any one of these mitigation campaigns. If the institution chooses to move forward with attempts to reduce undergraduate attrition as a result of the collaborative, leadership should work with EAB's Strategic Leaders and student success experts to plan next steps.

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Process to Identify Student Retention Opportunity, Estimate Mitigation Campaigns Impact

Calculate Annual Attrition and Lost Revenue	Evaluate Different Retention Opportunities	Estimate Impact of Mitigation Campaigns	Build Business Plan for Campaign on Campus
Identify the total number of students who leave the institution each year and the amount of revenue lost from year to year due to attrition.	Estimate the size of six different retention opportunities on your campus.	Use EAB's research and practices to help set the parameters and estimate the financial impact of various retention strategies.	Use EAB's case studies to set goals and lay out project plans for implementing mitigation strategies on campus.

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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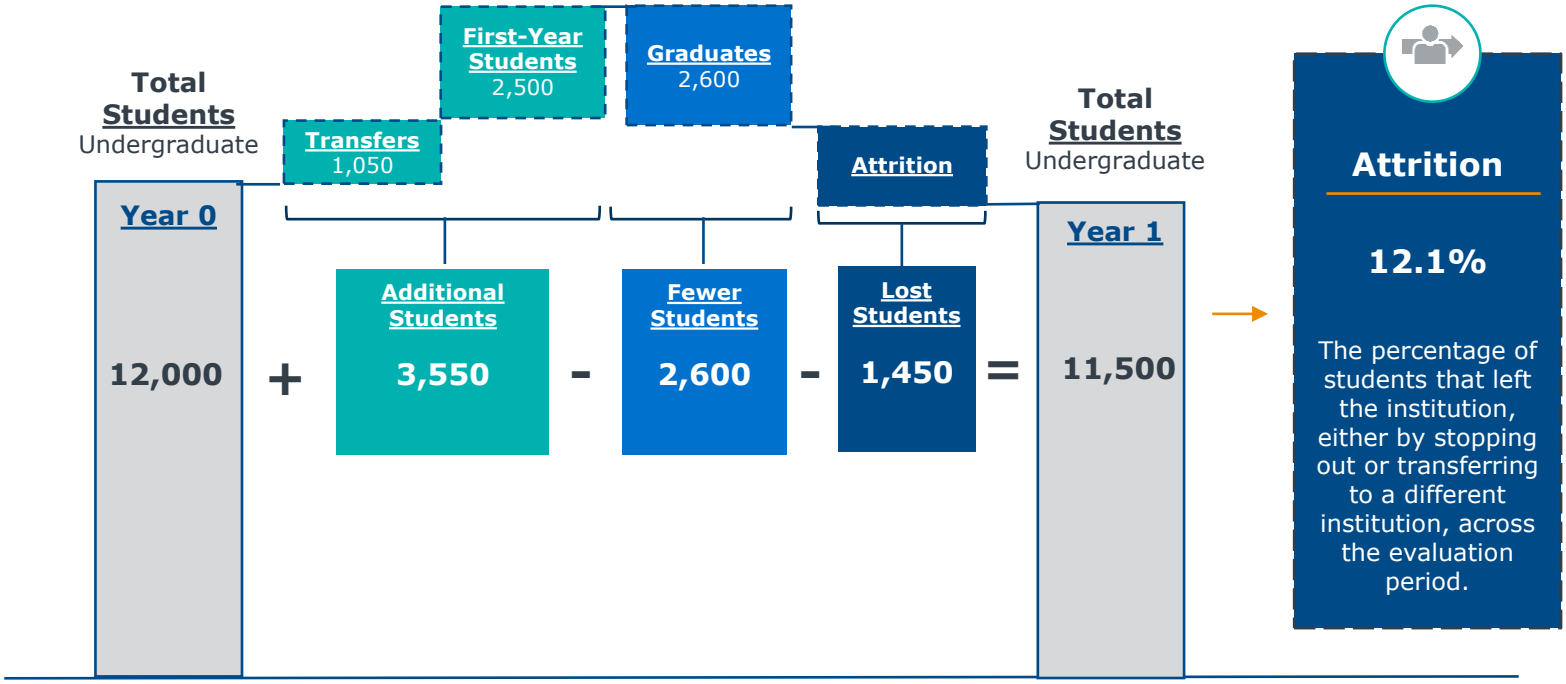
Defining Annual Student Attrition

Identifying Students who Leave the Institution

Throughout this workbook, the term "attrition" will refer to the total number of undergraduate students who leave the institution each year without graduating-the Annual Attrition. Institutions routinely track first-year to second-year retention for first-time, full-time undergraduate students. While this is a useful metric for understanding student trends, it is incomplete because it does not account for the attrition of first-time full-time students who leave the institution after their first year, transfer students, or non-traditional students (e.g., part-time students) that compose a growing proportion of students at many institutions. Understanding the total number of students who leave the institution each year will provide a more comprehensive view of annual student attrition and the revenue lost to student attrition.

Subsequent pages will demonstrate the steps to calculate your institution's annual attrition and the revenue lost due to attrition.

What Exactly is Student Attrition?



Annual Attrition as a Financial Opportunity

As higher education faces a future of decreasing numbers of high school graduates and increased competition for new enrollments, institutions should view reducing attrition as a key component of their financial strategy. Just as every new student represents a new source of revenue, so every student who leaves represents a lost source of revenue.

Retaining students is not just important from a student success perspective, it is also essential to the long-term financial health of every institution. While reducing attrition may require a financial investment, for many institutions the additional revenue from students that remain at the institution will exceed the required investment.

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Preparation and Follow Up

Getting Set Up for Success and Change Implementation

Data Collection and Verification

Identify necessary data points and verify their accuracy.

- The data needed to calculate the revenue lost due to attrition is likely readily available and should prove sufficient for a high-level opportunity assessment.
- Assessing the size of the six different retention opportunities is a less precise exercise but the data collected should prove sufficient for being able to distinguish the larger, from smaller opportunities.

Stakeholder Mapping

Getting support from campus leaders.

- If the institution intends to make changes based on the findings of this portion of the Financial Sustainability Collaborative, communication about the collaborative with student success stakeholders (e.g., advisors, enrollment management) can ease the implementation of eventual changes.

Pressure Testing and Analysis

Understand the institution's top drivers of attrition.

- After calculating the revenue lost to attrition the Implementation Leader should determine if any of the tactics profiled represent a significant opportunity and use the experience of other institutions as a guide when setting goals for the impact of those tactics on total attrition.

Implementation Planning

If acting on findings, revisit goals and communicate with campus leaders.

- Student success leaders will need to be involved in any resulting changes.
- If the institution focuses on unit-level attrition, deans and department chairs will be instrumental in leading any attrition reducing initiatives.

Work with Campus Leaders to Identify Opportunity and Set Goals

Institutional Research

The Institutional Research Office should provide data to calculate attrition at the institution.

Student Success

Work with student success stakeholders to identify drivers of attrition and understand current efforts to reduce attrition. Student success leaders may need to complete a survey to identify the main drivers of attrition.

Academic Leaders

Deans and department chairs should also help by providing unit level perspective and by helping to identify factors that affect students in different academic units differently.

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Stakeholder Engagement

Whom to Work With and In What Capacity

The Implementation Leader may need to collaborate with the following people at the institution to identify the drivers of attrition and understand current efforts to reduce attrition. The people who fall into the "student success stakeholders" category will vary at each institution. Any existing committees or working groups dedicated to student success or reducing attrition could be part of this group, as well as enrollment management, VP for student success or recruitment if applicable, professional advisors, and faculty advisors.

While communicating with each of these people or groups can be helpful in accurately estimating the achievable, available opportunity and in setting the stage to implement any changes that result from this portion of the collaborative, the Implementation Leader should consider the implications of communicating about these efforts. Depending on the campus climate, level of trust among different stakeholders, and other ongoing efforts, a high level of communication may not be constructive, particularly if the institution does not intend to make changes as a result of this portion of the collaborative.

Stakeholder or Group	Role	Timeline
Institutional Research and Finance	Provide data for analyses Help Implementation Leader understand data trends, definitions, and consistency	Collaborate throughout conducting and verifying these analyses as needed
Deans/ Department Chairs	Contribute to building business case If applicable, participate in implementing eventual changes	If applicable, contribute to addressing unit-level attrition and implementing any changes that result from this portion of the collaborative
Student Success Stakeholders	Contribute to building business case Help the Implementation Leader understand current retention efforts	Collaborate closely throughout this portion of the collaborative, particularly if the institution intends to implement any changes to retention strategy
Provost	If changes result from this portion of the collaborative, contribute to setting goals and developing plans to implement those changes	Inform at the beginning of analysis. The provost may be well positioned to contribute to stakeholder communication throughout this exercise
Board, President, and Cabinet	Approve intended changes and plan of implementation	Inform at the beginning of analysis. Seek approval for goals and plans if applicable

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Data Collection and Verification

Checklist for Obtaining and Verifying Retention Opportunity Analysis Data

Data will need to be collected to measure the size and scope of student attrition opportunity on each campus.

	Data Available	Data Verified
One-Year Attrition Analysis		
Total undergraduate enrollment in a recent Fall term (e.g., Fall 2019)	☐	☐
Total undergraduate enrollment in the subsequent Fall term (e.g., Fall 2020)	☐	☐
Number of new undergraduate enrollments in the subsequent Fall term (e.g., Fall 2020)	☐	☐
Number of undergraduate students who graduated (e.g., in the 2019-2020 academic year)	☐	☐
Number of undergraduate transfers into the institution (e.g., in the 2019-2020 academic year)	☐	☐
Total academic year undergraduate tuition revenue (e.g., in the 2019-2020 academic year)	☐	☐
Total undergraduate fee revenue (housing, dining, activity fees, etc.)	☐	☐
Unit-Level Analysis		
Student IDs of students enrolled in each unit in a past term (e.g., Fall 2016)	☐	☐
Student IDs of students enrolled at the institution in a subsequent term (e.g., Fall 2020)	☐	☐
Student IDs of students who graduated (e.g., Fall 2016-2020)	☐	☐
Opportunity Analysis		
Total number of students that transferred to another higher education institution	☐	☐
Total number of students requesting a formal leave of absence or withdrawal	☐	☐
Total number of students with bursar hold on day of registration	☐	☐
Student grade point average (GPA) to identify academic outlier population	☐	☐
First-year attrition rate (i.e., number of first-year students registered for second semester / number of first-year students at start of first semester; should equal IPEDS submission)	☐	☐
Total number of financially insecure students (e.g., students utilizing a food bank and/ or unable to pay rent/ utilities)	☐	☐

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Calculate Total Attrition and Lost Revenue

Steps to Identify One-Year Attrition Revenue Loss

Follow the steps on this page and the following page to calculate annual attrition and the revenue lost due to attrition. These steps focus on the revenue lost due to student attrition from one year to the next. The one-year attrition loss is a good proxy for the cashflow loss from student attrition – the immediate revenue foregone in the academic term in question.

While it is more precise to measure the lifetime value of retaining a student, it is also more difficult. For example, a student who leaves after their first year represents more lost revenue than a student who leaves one term before they would be expected to graduate but calculating the total revenue lost would require knowing at what point in their academic career each student left, and how many additional terms they would otherwise have remained enrolled for.

For ease of analysis and decision-making, we focus on one-year attrition revenue loss.

Data Needed

	☑	Notes
Total undergraduate enrollment in a recent Fall term (e.g., Fall 2019)	☐	
Total undergraduate enrollment in the subsequent Fall term (e.g., Fall 2020)	☐	
Number of new undergraduate enrollments in the subsequent Fall term (e.g., Fall 2020)	☐	
Number of undergraduate students who graduated (e.g., in the 2019-2020 academic year)	☐	
Number of undergraduate transfers to the institution (e.g., in the 2019-2020 academic year)	☐	
Revenue per undergraduate student per year	☐	

Assumptions and Limitations

- This analysis does not examine the revenue lost due to attrition of graduate students.
- This analysis does not look at the multi-year revenue of retaining a student.

Graduate Programs

These steps and much of this workbook focuses on calculating the opportunity from decreasing undergraduate attrition. Calculating year-to-year attrition for graduate students is more complicated because graduate students are more likely to leave the institution for one or several terms but return to finish their degree in a relatively short time period.

Institutions interested in understanding their opportunity from graduate-level attrition can utilize the Unit-Level Analysis we highlight. This will allow for the examination of attrition in individual programs and comparison of attrition rates across different programs to identify programs that lose an unusually high number of students. If data from multiple years is available, institutions may also be able to estimate what proportion of students who leave a graduate program come back within one to two years, and what proportion likely leave the institution permanently.

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Attrition Analysis

Steps to Identify Lost Revenue

✓	Calculate Total Annual Attrition and Lost Revenue	Notes
☐	**1. Identify Additional Students** Add together the number of new enrollments and new transfer students to identify the number of students who entered the institution between the first and second Fall term in this analysis. This number should provide the total number of students who joined the institution between the first Fall term and the second Fall term in this analysis. *Ensure the Implementation Leader has a clear definition for enrollment to prevent confusion later (e.g., does enrollment include non-degree seeking students?).*	
☐	**2. Add Existing and Additional Students** Add the number calculated in step 1 to the total enrollment in the first Fall term. *If no students graduated or left the institution between the first and second Fall terms in this analysis, this number would represent the total enrollment in the second Fall term.*	
☐	**3. Subtract Graduates** Subtract the number of students who graduated during the analyzed academic year from the number calculated in step 2. *If you maintained a 100% retention rate, the resulting number would equal the number of students enrolled in the second Fall term.*	
☐	**4. Calculate Total Annual Institutional Attrition** Subtract the total enrollment in the second Fall term in this analysis from the number calculated in step 3. The difference equals the total attrition. *Overall enrollment may still be growing, but this will identify the role of attrition.*	
☐	**5. Calculate Total Revenue Lost to Attrition** Multiply the institution's attrition (calculated in step 4) by the revenue per student per year to identify revenue lost due to attrition. *This does not represent the total available opportunity from reducing attrition. Since it is an impractical goal to try to reduce attrition to zero, the available opportunity relates to how many additional students could be retained through various strategies to reduce attrition.*	

Example Formula

Enrollment in the 2nd Fall term – (additional students + existing students in the 1st Fall term) – graduates = attrition

_____ - (_____ + _____) - _____ =_____

Optional: Estimate Multi-Year Lost Revenue

Identify the attrition for students at each point in their academic careers (e.g., X students left after four terms). Multiply that number by the approximate additional number of terms that student would be expected to complete if they remained (e.g., if using the average time to degree to estimate expected additional terms, and if average time to degree is 10 terms, multiply the number of students who left after four terms by six). Multiply this number by the revenue per student per term.

Only practical if the Implementation Leader can identify when in their academic career each student left and can estimate the number of terms the student would otherwise have completed.

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Retention Opportunity Evaluation

Six Strategies to Assess

The following pages outline the steps to estimate the opportunity available from reducing attrition by addressing six components of attrition: re-enrollment campaigns, bursar holds, academic disqualification, social fit, microgrants, and academic transfers. EAB recommends all institutions evaluate the opportunities from these components of attrition because they represent successful retention campaigns at other institutions.

The exercises on the subsequent pages allow the Implementation Leader to estimate the total opportunity from each retention campaign. However, since multiple factors influence students' decisions to leave, these analyses on their own will not identify the total opportunity the institution will actually be able to realize. Refer to the pages following these analyses for guidance on setting appropriate goals for realizing a portion of the available opportunity. Additionally, while these analyses rely on data that most institutions should have available, these simple data points may not completely capture the number of students who could be impacted. For example, institutions can use multiple factors to estimate the total number of financially insecure students (e.g., students who use on-campus food banks, students with high demonstrated financial need) but this may not perfectly reflect the total population of students who face financial barriers to retention.

Upon completing these analyses, the Implementation Leader will be able to identify which component of attrition presents the largest total opportunity for their institution. The Implementation Leader can then use the worksheets provided in this workbook to estimate the cost and return on investment of addressing each component of attrition.

Recapturing Revenue Lost to Attrition

Identify Opportunity and Develop a Plan

Understand the Opportunity Available

Complete the worksheets on the subsequent six pages to estimate the size of each opportunity – the number of students potentially impacted by this sort of retention campaign.

Determine the Best Opportunities

Use the provided plan templates to estimate the costs and potential revenues of each initiative on your campus. Based on the potential financial impact of each strategy choose those that merit further investigation.

Create a Rough Business Plan

Use EAB's case studies of attrition campaigns found at the end of this workbook as a starting point for determining staffing, investments, timeframes for a retention campaign.

Assumptions and limitations

- Estimating the number of additional students who could be retained by implementing selected strategies will rely on case studies from other institutions when available. The Implementation Leader should recognize that different institutions will likely have different experiences with similar attrition reduction strategies, so the institution's experience may not match the estimates provided by the case studies.
- These analysis will hep identify the opportunity available from reducing attrition. They will not precisely calculate the costs of implementing attrition initiatives since those costs will likely vary between institutions and based on the strategies selected.

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Re-Enrollment Campaign Opportunity

Capturing Revenue with a Lost-Student Save Campaign

Description

Former students present a unique opportunity, because they already decided to apply and enroll at your institution. A re-enrollment campaign leverages proactive techniques such as personalized text, email, and phone calls to connect with students who have failed to re-enroll. These tactical campaigns have been shown to produce improvements in overall retention.

Analytical exercise

Determine the size of the opportunity this represents on your campus. What is the size of the addressable revenue loss from students that fail to re-enroll? Of this theoretical opportunity, what is realistically achievable through a re-enrollment campaign?

Data needed

	Notes
☐ Total one-year student attrition, Fall 2019 – Fall 2020	
☐ Total number of students that transferred to another higher education institution	
☐ Total number of students requesting a formal leave of absence or withdrawal	

Analytical steps	Operator	Data
1) Total one-year student attrition (students lost)		
2) Students that transferred to another school	-	
3) Students that requested a formal leave of absence or withdrawal	-	
4) Re-enrollment campaign opportunity (total students)	=	
5) Average revenue per student	X	
6) Re-enrollment campaign opportunity (total revenue)	**=**	

Assumptions and limitations

- This analysis assumes that transfer students and students that request a formal leave of absence are not appropriate targets for reenrollment
- This analysis does not distinguish between different student populations (e.g., Pell recipients, first generation students, different racial and ethnic groups); institutions should consider targeted campaigns directed at specific populations to align reenrollment goals with existing equity initiatives

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Bursar Hold Opportunity

Stemming Revenue Loss by Eliminating Small Financial Obstacles

Description

Students with bursar holds are unable to register for classes—at times, students are unable to pay, while at other times, students are simply unaware of the hold. This means that a nominal amount of money may, in fact, prevent a student from registering on time, derail their progress, and lead to attrition. Eliminating bursar holds under a certain dollar amount (e.g., $500) has been proven to reduce attrition and more than pay for itself at many institutions.

Analytical exercise

Determine the size of the opportunity this represents on your campus. What is the size of the addressable revenue loss from students that have bursar holds? Of this theoretical opportunity, what is realistically achievable by eliminating bursar holds for the portion of students most likely to withdraw?

Data needed

	Notes
☐ Total number of students with a bursar hold on day of registration	
☐ Total number of students	
☐ Total one-year student attrition, Fall 2019 – Fall 2020	

Analytical steps	Operator	Data
1) Total number of students with bursar hold on day of registration		
2) Total number of students	/	
3) Percent of students with bursar hold on day of registration	=	
4) Total one-year student attrition, Fall 2019 – Fall 2020	X	
5) Bursar hold opportunity (total students)	=	
6) Average revenue per student	X	
7) Bursar hold opportunity (total revenue)	**=**	

Assumptions and limitations

- This analysis assumes that the addressable population of students who withdraw due to bursar holds is proportional to the percentage of students with bursar holds in the total student population
- This analysis is agnostic about the specific dollar threshold an institution sets for eliminating bursar holds; the institution must balance size of opportunity and cost when determining whether to pursue this opportunity
- If the Implementation Leader can access data on the number of students who withdrew or left the institution with an unresolved bursar hold, the Implementation Leader could use that number to calculate the bursar hold opportunity

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Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

Academically Disqualified Opportunity

Stemming Revenue Loss by Targeting Student Supports

Description

With targeted supports, some students can improve their grades and get back on track for graduation. Identifying these students early and connecting them with the right resources are crucial to retention. Institutions that regularly comb their data to see which students are struggling and connect these students to advisors, tutors, and other campus resources have driven meaningful retention gains.

Analytical exercise

Determine the size of the opportunity this represents on your campus. What is the size of the addressable revenue loss from students who are academically disqualified? Of this theoretical opportunity, what is realistically achievable by creating additional, targeted outreach and support for students who are struggling academically?

Data needed

		Notes
☐	Total number of students with <1.5 GPA in the first year under analysis who withdraw or leave the institution in the second year under analysis	
☐	Total number of students	
☐	Total one-year student attrition, Fall 2019 – Fall 2020	

Analytical steps	Operator	Data
1) Total number of students with <1.5 GPA in Year 0 who withdraw in Year 1		
2) Academically disqualified opportunity (total students)	=	
3) Average revenue per student	X	
4) Academically disqualified opportunity (total revenue)	**=**	

Assumptions and limitations

- This analysis assumes that students who withdraw with a GPA below 1.5 withdraw primarily because of their low GPA. These students may also have been impacted by other factors (e.g., financial challenges).

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Poor Social Fit Opportunity

Stemming Revenue Loss by Creating a Broader Sense of Belonging

Description

Starting college can be a shock to students for any number of reasons including poor social fit. Students who leave for this reason might otherwise flourish if they could attach to someone or something on campus. Institutions that have invested in first year orientation and other first year experience initiatives, giving incoming students as many opportunities as possible to attach, have seen improvement in their first-year attrition rate.

Analytical exercise

Determine the size of the opportunity this represents on your campus. What is the size of the addressable revenue loss from students who struggle with social fit? Of this theoretical opportunity, what is realistically achievable by identifying and engaging new students who do not feel a deep sense of belonging?

Data needed

		Notes
☐	First-year attrition rate (i.e., number of first year students registered for second semester / number of first year students at start of first semester; should equal IPEDS submission)	
☐	Total one-year student attrition, Fall 2019 – Fall 2020	

Analytical steps	Operator	Data
1) First-year attrition rate		
2) Poor social fit opportunity (total students)	=	
3) Average revenue per student	X	
4) Poor social fit opportunity (total revenue)	**=**	

Assumptions and limitations

- This analysis assumes that students who leave because they struggle with social fit leave between their first- and second- years, not later in their academic careers

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Academic High-Flyer Opportunity

Stemming Revenue Loss by Convincing Gifted Students to Stay

Description

Academically gifted students have options. You want them to see your institution as the best one. Identifying these students and making sure that they feel inspired and incented to stay has been shown to have an impact on retention and ultimately graduation rates. Techniques may include targeted outreach from professors or deans, independent study, scholarships of varying sizes, and special recognition.

Analytical exercise

Determine the size of the opportunity this represents on your campus. What is the size of the addressable revenue loss from students who decide to transfer? Of this theoretical opportunity, what is realistically achievable by identifying and engaging academically gifted students such that they decide to stay?

Data needed

	Notes
☐ Total number of transfer students	

Analytical steps	Operator	Data
1) Total number of transfer students		
2) Academic high-flyer opportunity (total students)	=	
3) Average revenue per student	X	
4) Academic high-flyer opportunity (total revenue)	**=**	

Assumptions and limitations

- If the GPA of transfer students is available, the Implementation leader could conduct this analysis looking only at transfer students who left with a GPA above a certain level. For example, to identify high-flyer transfers, the Implementation Leader could look at the opportunity from students who transfer with a GPA above the average or median institutional GPA.

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Microgrant Opportunity

Stemming Revenue Loss by Subsidizing Costs for Financially Insecure Students

Description

Like the general population, some students may not be able to pay basic living expenses, particularly if they are hit with an unexpected one. This financial insecurity can set off a series of cascading events, which may lead to withdrawal. Institutions that make resources available (generally, a few hundred dollars) either through proactive outreach or general awareness campaigns, have seen notable improvements in retention.

Analytical exercise

Determine the size of the opportunity this represents on your campus. What is the size of the addressable revenue loss from students who are unable to pay for basic living expenses? Of this theoretical opportunity, what is realistically achievable by providing microgrants to financially insecure students, so they can stay and focus on their studies?

Data needed

		Notes
☐	Total number of financially insecure students (e.g., students utilizing a food bank and/ or unable to pay rent/ utilities)	
☐	Total number of students	
☐	Total one-year student attrition, Fall 2019 – Fall 2020	

Analytical steps	Operator	Data
1) Total number of financially insecure students		
2) Total number of students	/	
3) Percent of students who are financially insecure	=	
4) Total one-year student attrition, Fall 2019 – Fall 2020	X	
5) Microgrant opportunity (total students)	=	
6) Average revenue per student	X	
7) Microgrant opportunity (total revenue)	**=**	

Assumptions and limitations

- This analysis assumes that the addressable population of students who withdraw for financial reasons is proportional to the percentage of financially insecure students in the total student population

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Strategies to Reduce Attrition

Resources to Address Drivers of Attrition

EAB has a variety of resources, tools, and diagnostics to address different underlying drivers of attrition (e.g., social fit). Some of the resources linked below include case studies of institutions that implemented strategies to address these drivers of attrition, and additional case studies are provided in the appendix. When case studies are available, the Implementation Leader can use them to set a reasonable goal for reducing attrition, and estimate the impact on total attrition and revenue from achieving that goal. The Implementation Leader can use the estimates of the available opportunity from the six profiled components of attrition and the goals for reducing attrition to prioritize which strategies present the biggest opportunity to reduce overall attrition and increase revenue. The goals the Implementation Leader sets as part of this exercise to reduce attrition should not be treated as precise projections of the exact outcome of each strategy.

Implementation Leaders interested in additional student success research should consult the Student Success Playbook, which contains a useful overview of much of EAB's research on student success initiatives. If analyzing attrition reveals significant achievement gaps (e.g., by race, first-generation status, Pell eligibility) consider consulting EAB's resource on barriers to student success to identify leading indicators of the achievement gap across the student lifecycle.

Attrition Driver	Resources
Financial Pressures	• Bursar holds • Emergency grants • Merit aid loss recovery • Student aid renewal
Academic Disqualification or Dissatisfaction	• Early academic alerts • Course repeats • Academic probation and dismissal • Complete the course completion diagnostic and consult EAB's nine tactics for improving course completion • Remedial education • Multi-section course redesign • Borderline admit summer start • Pre-professional macro majors • Experiential education requirements • Experiential major maps • Front loading guided practice with career development • Integrating academic and career development toolkit

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Connecting Drivers of Attrition to Strategies

Resources to Address Drivers of Attrition

Attrition Driver	Resources
Social Fit	• Faculty mentor program • Highlighting positive identity-based messaging for first-generation students • Peer-to-peer support • Rethinking the approach to student involvement • Addressing the parent-student experience divide • Predicting preventable transfer losses • Transcript request monitoring
Next Term Registration	• Multi-term registration • Course wait lists • Empower students to better navigate the college experience • Support evolving advising models • Leverage technology to scale advisement • Intent to register plans • Course and institutional withdrawal • Non-registered students • Withdrawal redirect courses • Preemptive resilience exercise • Senior drop-out re-enrollment outreach

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Goal Setting and Data Availability

Considering how to Approach Goal Setting

With a general sense of how many students might be attributed to each retention opportunity, the Implementation Leader can begin to determine which one might be worth pursuing. In addition to weighing the total number of students and amount of revenue in play, the Implementation Leader should also consider the relative outcomes other institutions have achieved. Though not predictive of another institution's success or failure, these case studies and figures can be instructive—each opportunity will present its own challenges and outcomes may vary.

EAB has studied many institutions which have implemented attrition reduction strategies. Through this research and analysis, EAB has compiled a rough range of outcomes in order to guide the Implementation Leader as they set goals for their own attrition reduction plan. Reenrollment campaigns and bursar hold eliminations have proven to be the most predictable sources of attrition reduction among institutions studied. Median outcomes tend to fall in the low to mid-teens (i.e., when launched, these efforts yield low-single digits returns). For bursar holds/ microgrants, Georgia State has achieved remarkable success by identifying students with holds and proactively eliminating those holds prior to registration for most students and reactively eliminating them for some student. 86% of students receiving bursar hold assistance went on to graduate. If the Implementation Leader is uncertain where to start based on the size of each opportunity, consider starting with a reenrollment campaign or bursar hold elimination.

Other opportunities may yield meaningful returns but perhaps require more effort or money. Identifying students who are struggling may not be difficult but employing the right, targeted set of strategies and incentives to get them back on track or retain them may be harder, particularly if your institution's advising and/ or financial aid functions are not yet mature. Students who struggle with social fit may not be easy to identify or retain without firsthand knowledge and ongoing conversations.

The Implementation Leader must take their own institution's capacities into account when setting goals for attrition reduction. This exercise is certainly more art than science, and the ultimate outcome will depend a great deal on the planning and content of strategies as well as the capacity, caliber, and effort of assigned resources. The Implementation Leader should choose an opportunity and set a goal, which has the greatest likelihood of yielding the greatest impact at their institution. Use the table below to get a sense for what may be achievable.

Rightsizing goals by comparing to other institutions

Retention Strategies – Outcomes	Low	Possible	Stretch
Re-enrollment Campaign	4%	10%	15%
Bursar Hold Elimination Campaign	8%	18%	75%
Academic Disqualification Campaign	4%	18%	33%
Poor Social Fit Campaign	4%	8%	12%
Academic High-flyer Campaign	3%	7%	11%
Microgrant Campaign	8%	18%	75%

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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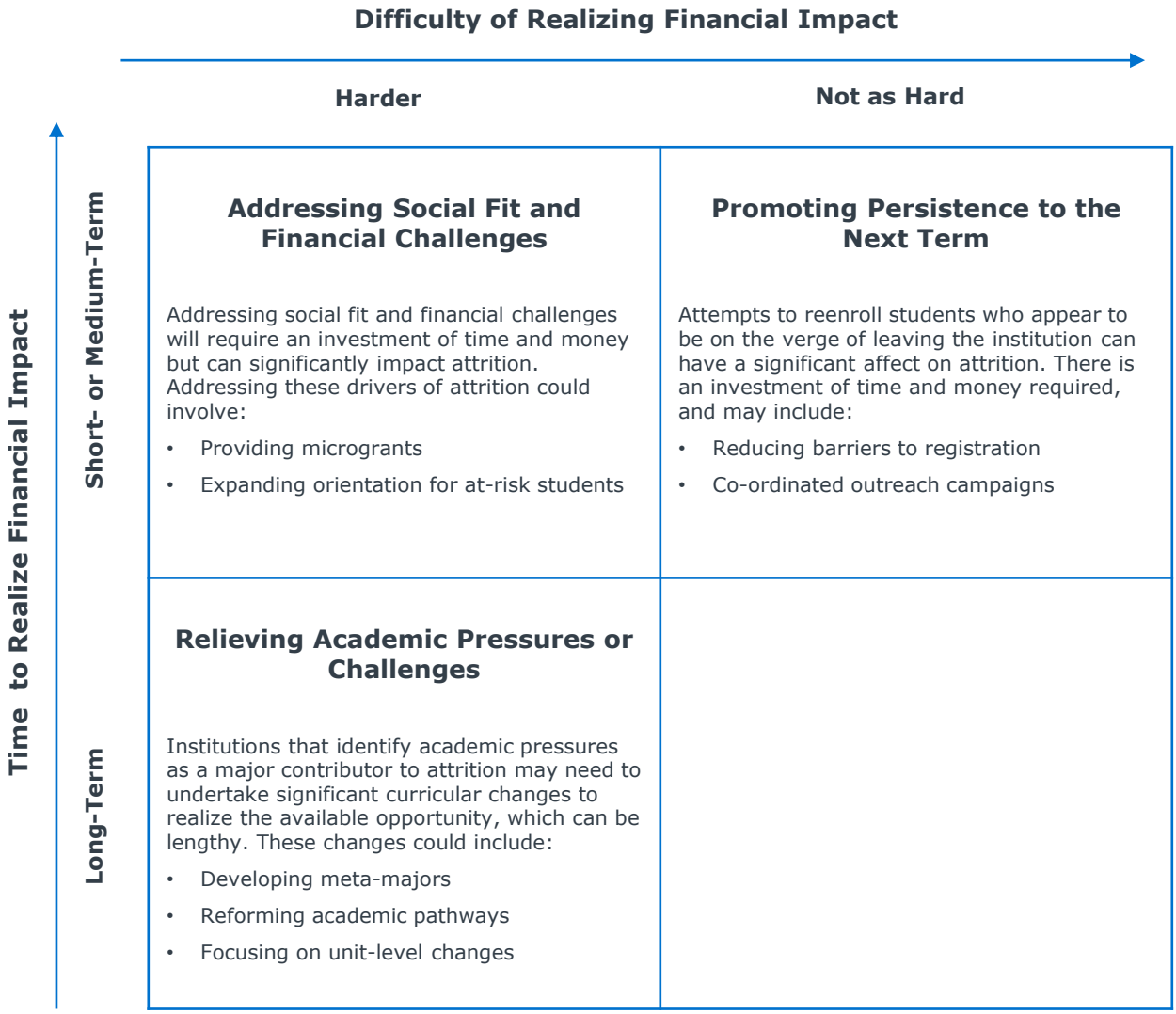
Total Available Opportunity

What is the Total Potential Impact and Likely Level of Difficulty?

Institutions with low attrition rates may have a relatively small opportunity from reducing attrition, while for other institutions, reducing attrition could represent a substantial opportunity. The ease and timeline of realizing the available opportunity will also vary depending on the strategies to reduce attrition institutions choose to pursue or the drivers of attrition they chose to reform.

For any institution participating in the collaborative, the maximum available opportunity from reducing attrition will equal the net revenue per student, times the number of students the institution loses each year. However, the actual amount of that opportunity that each institution can recover will vary enormously. The variability of factors in running retention campaigns means that the expected returns from attrition campaigns will be a useful (but imprecise) estimate of the opportunity.



Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Estimate the Investment Required

Quantifying the Potential Costs of Implementing Each Campaign

Instructions

This worksheet will allow the Implementation Leader to begin quantifying costs that may be incurred in order to capture some portion of the largest retention opportunity. Note that costs may come in the form of concrete new hires or purchases, but most are likely to come from existing personnel/resources.

Estimating your people costs

People generally make up the largest share of costs associated with implementation. Use the space below to identify specific tactics you anticipate employing, how many people may be needed, how many hours per person, and the average cost per hour. Also, note your degree of confidence in each of the line items.

Personnel

Activity Undertaken	FTE	Hours/FTE	Cost/Hour	**Total**	**Confidence Lvl**
					H / M / L
					H / M / L
					H / M / L
					H / M / L
Totals					**H / M / L**

Estimating other costs

Other costs, such as new technology, may be incurred to implement desired tactics. Use the space below to list your tactics from above and any other anticipated costs associated with that tactic. In this case, consider using rough figures, noting as much with a lower degree of confidence.

Technology & Other

Investment Description	Tech	Other[1]	**Total**	**Confidence Lvl**
				H / M / L
				H / M / L
				H / M / L
				H / M / L
Totals				**H / M / L**

Identifying assumptions and other considerations

Use this section to note any assumptions you made while completing the tables above, as well as any other items worthy of consideration as you weigh out the viability of your greatest retention opportunity.

1) Other (e.g., consultants, space, materials)

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Attrition Reduction Plan

Focusing your Institution's Efforts to Have the Greatest Revenue Impact

Instructions

Use this template to begin laying out your approach to attrition reduction. This should be considered a starting point for discussion with key stakeholders on campus, so you can move to more detailed planning and execution.

Identifying your largest opportunity

Select the tactic that presents the greatest opportunity to stem revenue loss at your institution

- ☐ Reenrollment campaign
- ☐ Academic disqualification
- ☐ Academic high-flyers
- ☐ Bursar hold elimination
- ☐ Poor social fit
- ☐ Microgrants

Total Annual Attrition – Retention Opportunity	
Number of students	Revenue loss

Top Mitigation Campaign Opportunity	
Number of students	Revenue loss

Proposing an approach

Describe how you might approach your greatest opportunity at a high level including your rationale

Pitch

Rationale

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Attrition Reduction Plan (cont.)

Focusing your Institution's Efforts to Have the Greatest Revenue Impact

Setting goals and estimating costs

Now that you have a high-level approach, set overall and intermediate goals for your institution, as well as estimate the rough costs of implementing your plan.

Goals

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	OVERALL	Confidence lvl
Number of students					H / M / L
Total revenue					H / M / L

Costs

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	OVERALL	Confidence lvl
FTE	# / $	# / $	# / $	# / $	H / M / L
Technology					H / M / L
Other (e.g., consultants, space, materials)					H / M / L
Total cost					H / M / L

Anticipating risks

Consider the risks you may face while trying to implement your plan and lay out mitigation strategies

Risks	Mitigation

Looking to exemplar institutions

Identify other institutions that have successfully implemented similar tactics to reduce attrition

Name	Approach	Impact

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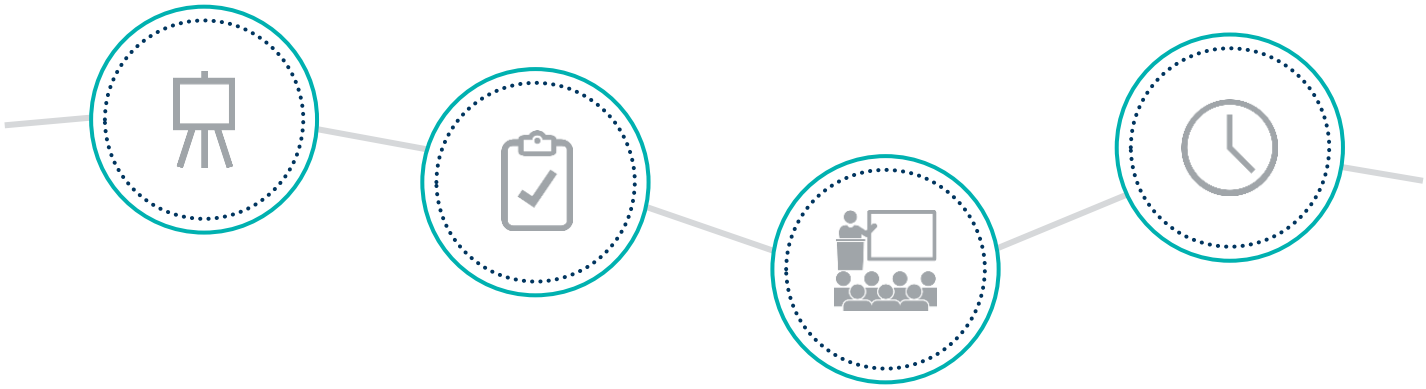
Pressure Test Conclusions and Plan Implementation

Follow-Up Steps



1

Share Findings and Solicit Feedback

Since no single unit is fully responsible for student success, and student success is impacted by actors across the institution, share the findings of this analysis widely to promote broad based support from the campus community if changes are anticipated as a result of this portion of the collaborative. Sharing these results may highlight additional opportunities to improve retention.

2

Contextualize Possible Next Steps

This will look different for each institution depending on the biggest opportunity. If changes are implemented, ensure new efforts work in concert with existing student success initiatives. The goals and estimates set by the Implementation Leader during this portion of the collaborative may need to be revisited. Whether or not they are revised, these goals and estimates should not be taken as exact projections of the reduction in attrition since different institutions may have different experiences even if they use similar strategies.

3

Solicit Support for Goals and Continued Assessment

The Implementation Leader may not be the best person to lead efforts to implement changes on campus, but should support those efforts as necessary. If the institution intends to focus on reducing unit-level attrition, units will need data on their students' attrition rates. Equipping units with the data necessary to reduce attrition can be part of the annual program review process discussed in the program assessment portion of the collaborative.

4

Implement Changes

Since the tactics adopted to address attrition will vary between institutions and since student success is dependent on stakeholders across the institution, the success of any changes will likely rely on a wide range of stakeholders. Regardless of the tactics implemented at any institution, it is critical that those tactics be thoroughly implemented across campus, not simply created and set aside.

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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The Role of Unit-Level Attrition

Sizing the Opportunity and Identifying Solutions

This portion of the workbook will guide the Implementation Leader to identify the attrition rate within academic units (e.g., departments, programs). While the rest of this workbook focuses on institution-level attrition, understanding attrition at the unit-level can also help prioritize attrition reduction efforts. For example, if some units have unusually high attrition rates, institutional leaders can support them in examining degree pathways, DFW rates, and other factors that might contribute to a high attrition rate, or in creating second choice pathways for students who would be better served by a different program. This analysis may reveal that the greatest impact on enrollment and revenue would come from reducing attrition in large programs with below average attrition rates, rather than small programs with above average attrition rates. Additionally, institutions that wish to analyze graduate-level attrition should focus on attrition in individual units or programs. Since graduate students are more likely than undergraduates to stop out for one or more terms, but then to return to finish their degree relatively soon thereafter, examining year to year attrition will not provide a very nuanced or accurate view of graduate student trends. Examining individual graduate programs to determine if any lose an unusually high number of students can reveal opportunities to decrease graduate student attrition.

Work with Campus Leaders to Identify Opportunity and Set Goals

Institutional Research

The Institutional Research Office should provide data needed to calculate unit-level attrition.

Deans and Department Chairs

Deans and department chairs will be instrumental in any efforts to reduce unit-level attrition. Ask them to verify data accuracy and to lead efforts to identify and implement strategies to reduce attrition if applicable.

Student Success Leaders

Efforts to reduce attrition at the unit-level should work in tandem with institution-wide efforts. Coordinate with advisors, student affairs, enrollment management, and other stakeholders if any changes are planned to reduce unit-level attrition.

Enrollments Lost from Attrition in Individual Units

Unit	Total Enrollment	Attrition Rate	Total Students Lost
Unit A Attrition	15	54%	8
Unit B Attrition	300	26%	78
Unit C Attrition	88	50%	44
Unit D Attrition	22	18%	4

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Unit-Level Attrition Analysis Overview

Identifying Lost Revenue

This analysis will allow the Implementation Leader to identify the opportunity available from reducing attrition in academic units. Given the significant role academic units can play in promoting persistence, it may be informative to understand any variations between academic units in attrition, particularly for graduate programs. Units with high attrition may be able to reduce their attrition rate without sacrificing academic rigor or quality of instruction.

Use data from terms separated by several years to get a long-term picture of attrition trends in each unit. If examining attrition for undergraduates, consider if students can declare some majors earlier in their academic careers than others (e.g., sophomores can declare a major in English, but declaring a major in Nursing requires two years of prerequisites) consider conducting this analysis only with data on students at a certain point in their careers (e.g., only analyze attrition of students who have enough credits to declare any major at the institution). Analyzing data on unit-level attrition from the same point in a student's academic career will prevent units with programs that students can declare early from being penalized simply because students have more opportunity to leave after they have declared a major in that unit.

Data Needed

	☑	Notes
Student IDs of students enrolled in each unit in a past term (e.g., Fall 2016)	☐	
Student IDs of students enrolled at the institution in a subsequent term (e.g., Fall 2020)	☐	
Student IDs of students who graduated (e.g., Fall 2016-2020)	☐	
Revenue per student per year	☐	

Assumptions and Limitations

- This analysis will hep identify the revenue lost to unit-level attrition.
- This analysis considers students who are still enrolled at or graduated from the institution to be retained by the institution, even if they moved between units at the institution.
- Consider calculating the attrition rate for different student populations (e.g., Pell recipients, first generation students, different racial and ethnic groups) to identify additional areas of opportunity and align attrition goals with equity initiatives on campus.
- To reduce the influence of minor year-to-year fluctuations, consider completing these calculations several times using different years of data

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Unit-Level Attrition Analysis

Steps to Identify Lost Revenue

✓	Calculate Attrition and Lost Revenue	Notes
☐	**1. Identify Students who Graduated or Are Still Enrolled** For each unit identify how many students who were enrolled in that unit in the first term under analysis are still enrolled in any unit at the institution and how many students have graduated from the institution. Add these numbers together. *It is not necessary to distinguish between students who graduated and students who are still enrolled, what matters is the number of students who neither graduated nor are still enrolled.*	
☐	**2. Calculate Attrition Rate and Number of Students Lost** For each unit, subtract the total number of students who either graduated or are still enrolled at the institution from the total number of students enrolled in that unit in the first term in this analysis. Divide this number by the number of students enrolled in that unit in the first term in this analysis to calculate the percent of students who left without graduating. *The raw number of students who left without graduating will be used to calculate the revenue lost, but understanding the percentage of students who leave each unit without graduating is useful to understand disparities in unit-level attrition.*	
☐	**3. Calculate Revenue Lost** Multiply the number of students in each unit (calculated in step 2) who neither graduated nor are enrolled at the institution by the revenue per student per term and the number of terms per year to calculate the annual revenue lost to attrition. *If the revenue per student varies significantly between units, consider using the unit-specific revenue.*	
☐	**4. Available Opportunity** Multiply the revenue per student by the additional number of students that would be retained in each unit if that unit met the unit-level attrition goal. *See the following page for guidance on determining this goal.*	

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Unit-Level Attrition: Setting Goals

Ways to Approach Setting Attrition Goals

In evaluating the opportunity from reducing unit-level attrition, the Implementation Leader will need to estimate the goal level of attrition in each unit. This goal level of attrition should serve as a tool to allow the Implementation Leader to estimate the available opportunity from reducing unit-level attrition, this goal is not intended to represent a definite plan to ask units to achieve that level of attrition. If the institution chooses to make changes as a result of this portion of the collaborative, this goal may need to be reevaluated. It may be helpful for the Implementation Leader to consult deans and department chairs in setting this goal for unit-level attrition, particularly if the institution intends to enact changes based on these findings. Deans and department chairs should be involved in setting any concrete goals for unit-level attrition if the institution enacts changes to reduce unit-level attrition.

Administrators who seek to enact changes to reduce attrition based on this portion of the collaborative should consider the total impact on institutional attrition of decreased attrition in different units. For example, reducing attrition by five percent in a large unit with average or below average attrition may have a greater total impact on attrition and revenue than halving attrition in a small unit with above average attrition. When considering how to support units in reducing attrition, administrators may wish to prioritize supporting programs with the potential to have the greatest impact on total revenue. Administrators should also consider whether some programs cost more to teach than the revenue they generate. For those programs, efforts to decrease attrition could focus on encouraging students to pursue better-fit programs that are less expensive for the institution to teach. Administrators seeking to reduce attrition or increase graduation, particularly for undergraduates, in units with high attrition should consult EAB's practice on major-specific graduation delays.

Establishing Goals

Set Goals: What is the goal for each **unit's attrition level**?

- Base goal unit-level attrition rates on:
  - The average or median unit-level attrition rate across the institution
  - The overall institutional attrition rate
- Calculate attrition for multiple years and base goal on historical performance

Relevant Resources

EAB's research on student success includes resources to support reduced unit-level attrition. Administrators should consult The Course Completion Playbook and Defining the Faculty Role in Student Success for support in reducing unit-level attrition. Defining the Faculty Role in Student Success includes accountability and incentive strategies to increase engagement by academic units in reducing attrition.

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Additional Considerations: Unit-Level Attrition

Navigating Potential Sources of Pushback

While seeking to reduce attrition may not result in significant pushback, the focus on unit-level attrition and the role units play in retaining students may raise some questions about how units are being assessed. For example, questions may arise if some students are not able to officially enter all units at the same points in their academic careers.

For example, students may be able to declare a major in English relatively soon after matriculating at the institution, but need to fulfill two years of prerequisites and complete an application to officially enter the nursing program. In this case, the unit that houses the English major may have a higher attrition rate due to the students who leave during the period before they would even be eligible for the nursing program. The analysis to identify unit-level attrition would not uncover these discrepancies unless the analysis examines attrition only for students at a certain point in their academic careers.

Policies: Potential Questions and Approaches

- Can students declare any major at the same point in their academic careers? Or do some majors require a certain number of credits before students can officially declare them? Why aren't these policies consistent across the institution?

▶ Examine existing policies around major declaration to uncover any discrepancies between programs. When possible, refrain from directly comparing the attrition rates of programs with very different entry requirements.

Equitably Evaluating Units: Potential Questions and Approaches

- Evaluating units based on their attrition misses the institutional factors that lead to high attrition, over which units have no control (e.g., financial aid availability, student support services). Will units be penalized for that?
- Some units enroll a higher proportion of students from historically underrepresented backgrounds (e.g., first generation, Pell eligible). These students often have higher attrition rates. How will this analysis avoid penalizing units that serve historically underrepresented groups?
- If units are expected to reduce their attrition rates, how will the institution ensure this doesn't come at the expense of lowered academic standards?

▶ Understanding the role units play in attrition should be only one component of examining and attempting to reduce attrition. Frame the examination of unit-level attrition as an effort to make progress toward a shared goal, not to penalize units that perform poorly. A unit with high attrition may face barriers to improving the attrition rate (e.g., serves many students from historically underrepresented groups, guides students to best fit programs). Allow deans and department chairs to provide information to contextualize units' attrition rates if relevant. EAB's resources on unit-level attrition can provide support for efforts to reduce attrition without compromising quality or rigor.

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Attrition Reduction Case Studies

Identifying and Reaching Students at Risk for Attrition

APPENDIX

- End of Term Re-Enrollment Campaigns
- Academic Achievement Outlier Campaigns
- Lost Student Save Campaign
- Microgrants and Bursar Holds
- Curricular Redesign and Meta Majors
- A Pre-Term College Experience Simulation

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Scaling Re-Enrollment Campaigns

MTSU's Coordinated Network of Campaigns Increased Spring Enrollment

Middle Tennessee State University used EAB's Navigate platform to reach students at risk of leaving the University for good. Targeted interventions to re-enroll students who had failed to enroll for the next semester ultimately led to nearly 400 additional undergraduate students in one semester. These kinds of targeted re-enrollment campaigns can support students in getting back on track and uncover low hanging fruit to boost enrollment.

Middle Tennessee State University Re-Enrollment Campaign

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Process Overview

1. After pre-enrollment, Navigate leaders **used Navigate to identify 2,500+ students** that had been recently enrolled but failed to enroll for Spring 2015, and distributed lists to each college's leadership
2. College leaders and advisors **created unique action plans** for how their areas would use work lists and targeted outreach to communicate with unenrolled students
3. Advisors **worked the lists** from early December through early February, using the Navigate platform to tailor interventions to student needs and track advising activity

Sample Re-Enrollment Campaigns:

- ✓ Low and medium risk students with 90+ credits because greatest likelihood to re-enroll
- ✓ Students with easily remediable holds
- ✓ Offering early return program for new freshman that earned less than a 2.0 in the Fall term

How to Sustain Momentum

Choose Low-Hanging Fruit

- Re-enrollment has proven value and immediately measurable results

Enable Tracking

- The IR department created an online Persistence Tracking Calculator to enable real-time tracking

Foster Awareness and Give Kudos

- Navigate leaders sent weekly updates to deans, directors, and advising managers on enrollment initiative progress

▶ **390** Additional undergrad students enrolled in one semester

EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Strategic "Quick Polls"

Recognizing Reenrollment Gains Associated with Timely Interventions at FIU

Florida International University used a quick poll of students who hadn't registered for the upcoming semester to identify 50 students who needed additional support. After following up with the 50 students who needed support, 47 ultimately enrolled for the upcoming semester.

Florida International University's Reenrollment Quick Poll

Quantifying the Value of *Navigate Student* "Quick Polls"

In December 2019, the student success Navigate leadership team deployed a ***"Quick Poll"*** survey via the ***Navigate Student*** mobile app allowing students unregistered for Spring 2020 to respond to the following prompt: "Spring semester is almost here! Let us know why you haven't enrolled for classes and how we can help."

[Support Needed]

50 *total students indicated they needed support.*

- FIU team deployed outreach post-survey.
- **47** of **50** students are now enrolled for Spring.
- Approximates to **$164,500** tuition & fees.*

"I recently registered."

12 *total students selected this option.*

Students in the [Support Needed] population were asked to specify the "Why?" This allowed students to self-select reasons such as "I don't know if I can afford Spring tuition," "I'm planning to transfer," etcetera – allowing the FIU team to strategically deploy follow-up outreach.

Students Engaged via "Quick Polls" Yield Improved Outcomes

62
Students Engaged via "Quick Poll" Initiative

1st
"Quick Poll" at FIU

$164,500
Additional Tuition & Fees*

EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Targeting Pockets of Risk

VCU's Campaigns Impact Key Micro Metrics on the Path to Persistence

Virginia Commonwealth University used EAB's Navigate platform to provide a range of targeted interventions for 12 at risk student sub populations. VCU has steadily improved its first-year retention rate, but needed a new way to identify and address the less obvious needs of at-risk populations, especially those beyond the first year.

Virginia Commonwealth University's Diverse Campaigns and Outcomes

	Campaign Type	*Population & Intervention*	*Student Outcome*	
1	**Academic Performance Improvement**	Connect Business School students on probation to needed support resources	34%	Percentage of students who raised GPA above 2.0
2	**Major Selection**	Assist high-risk Undeclared students with major planning and declaration	19	Additional students enrolled in Education and Career Planning course
3	**Transfer Persistence**	Facilitate academic planning for low-GPA transfer Biology students	8%	Eight percentage points higher persistence than previous year cohort
4	**Accelerating Degree Completion**	Assist underperforming psychology students with course sequencing	25	Upper-class students enrolled in gatekeeper statistics course
5	**Graduation Application**	Remind qualified seniors to apply for graduation	19%	Increase in graduation candidates compared to spring 2014

Intervention Campaigns Improving Persistence

65+

Additional students enrolled in spring 2015 due to five persistence-focused interventions

$346K

Additional spring 2015 semester tuition and fees revenue

Graduation Application Campaign Boosting Graduation Rates

8%

Percentage point increase in four-year graduation rate for Spring 2016 compared to Spring 2014

3%

Percentage point increase in six-year graduation rate for Spring 2015 compared to Spring 2014

EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Coordinated Stop-Out Efforts

Multiple Stop-Out Campaigns Bring Results

Using EAB's Navigate platform, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee established an advising "SWAT team" as a central forum for sharing ideas, and developed ongoing stop-out campaigns to register students who might otherwise have slipped through the cracks. A total of 123 students returned to campus following EAB campaigns targeting unenrolled students, amounting to over $604,000 in additional revenue.

Centralizing Efforts Across a Decentralized Campus

1

Creation of Advising SWAT Team

UWM developed a SWAT Team to provide a centralized forum for feedback, while the EAB consultant provided support to make it as effective as possible

2

Established Monthly Meetings

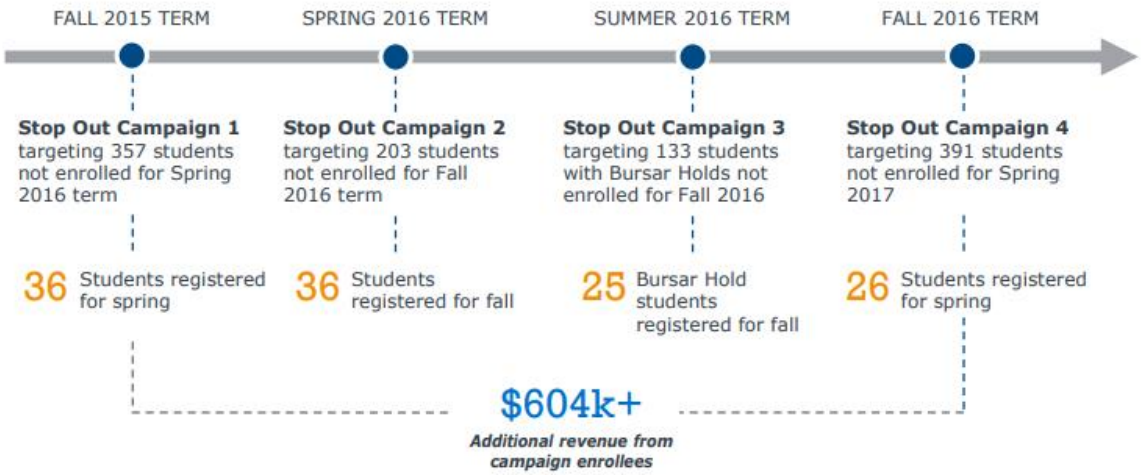
The SWAT team convenes monthly with UWM's EAB consultant to share ideas and Navigate best practices

3

Campaign Development

Institution-wide priorities are regularly assessed to assist in Navigate advising campaign development and execution

Outreach Efforts Result in 123 Students Returning to Campus



Key Navigate Resources Utilized:

- **Infographic** — 61 campaign ideas infographic referenced
- **Toolkit** — UWM specific toolkit detailing objectives and scripting
- **Tracker** — Reported outcomes in customized trackers
- **Consultant** — Strategic support and data analysis

EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Predicting Preventable Transfer Losses

From Stepping Stone to Disciplinary Destination

A significant share of attrition among colleges and universities occurs among students in good academic standing; many of these students are simply transferring to other institutions, rather than dropping or stopping out. While it is in no institution's best interest to prevent all transfer losses, few have made serious efforts to identify and attempt to retain students considering transfer due to a lack of engagement. By surveying new students to gauge their interest in and commitment to the institution, connecting students at risk to transfer with faculty mentors in their area of interest, collecting data from students who leave to enroll elsewhere, and actively monitoring transcript requests, institutions can create a cohesive intervention strategy that helps to mitigate unnecessary attrition. Students who view their first term or even first two years at an institution as a mere stepping stone to a different university are not likely to engage in the small seminar courses and extra-curricular activities that foster a sense of belonging. Faculty are well positioned to convince these students to stay, by showing them programs, courses, and opportunities that match students' long-term ambitions.

37%

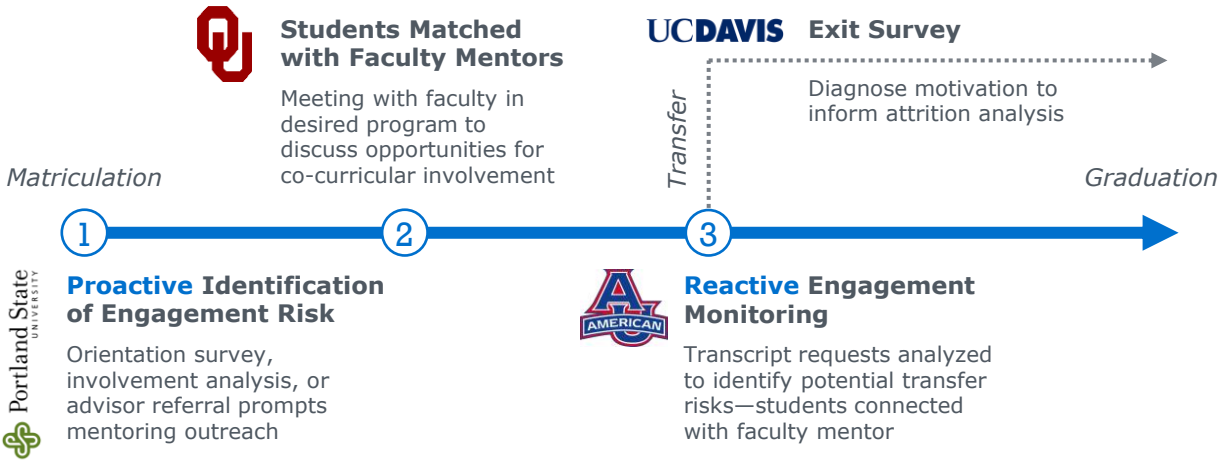
Of all first-time students transfer or enroll at a different institution at least once within 6 years

33%

Attrition that occurs after the 2nd year in good academic standing

40%

Of leavers have estimated GPAs above 3.25



Source: Delta Cost Project "Measuring the Costs of Attrition"; National Clearinghouse Transfer and Mobility Report; EAB interviews and analysis.

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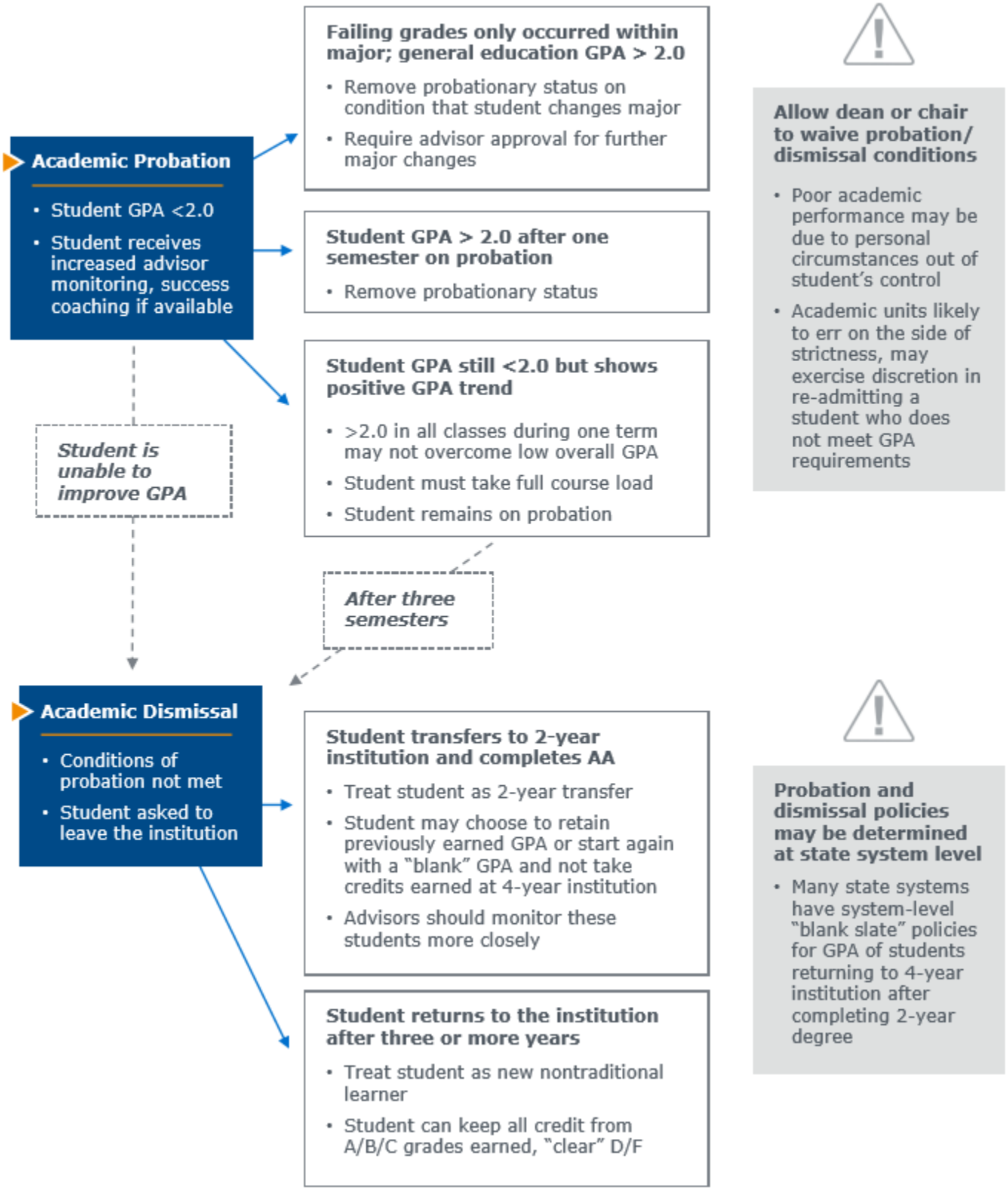
Academic Probation and Dismissal

Probation and Dismissal Process Map and Implementation Guidance



Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

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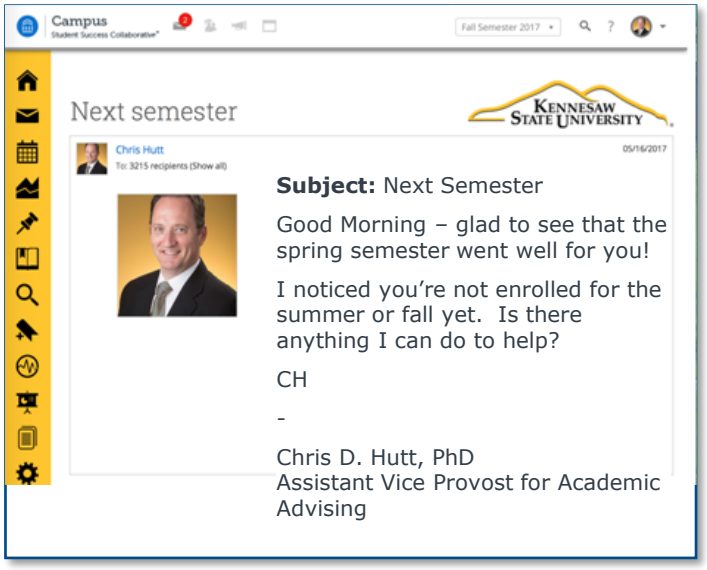
Lost Student Save Campaign

Communicate with Students to Understand Barriers

Chris Hutt, Vice President for Academic Advising at Kennesaw State University, sent an email to students who had achieved a 3.0 GPA or higher in the spring semester but hadn't registered for the summer or fall terms; approximately 4,000 students. The responses highlighted common barriers to registration that impeded persistence. Identifying and resolving common issues that make it more difficult for students to persist represents an opportunity to increase retention. Institutional leaders can reach out to students in danger of leaving to gain a better understanding of the drivers of attrition at their institution. Leaders can then develop tailored solutions to the most common barriers to retention.

The simple 34-word email paid off quickly at Kennesaw State University. The follow up from this email sent in May 2017 resulted in an additional $2 Million is net additional tuition revenue in Fall 2017.

Simple Outreach Generates 1,100+ Responses, Suggests Systemic Changes



Why Students Said They Weren't Registered:

1. Registration Holds
   Response: Hold reform
2. Course Availability
   Response: Add sections (esp. STEM)
3. Incomplete Advising
   Response: Hire more advisors
4. Price Sensitivity
   Response: Low-cost online GenEd
5. Missed Registration
   Response: Expand reg. window
6. "Personal Issues"
   Response: Promote support services

+3.4% Returning students Fall 2017 ▸ **$2M** Additional net tuition Fall 2017

Chronicle of Higher Education: Breaking Down Barriers to Retaining Students; EAB Interviews and Analysis

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Bursar Hold Forgiveness

Unpaid Balance Awards Increase Revenue, Completions with Few Downsides

Bursar holds are a common practice used to ensure that students stay on top of accumulating bills from student accounts, parking tickets, and student conduct, among others. Yet oftentimes, these holds block students from registering for courses, catalyzing a series of events that increase attrition rates and decrease the odds that the university will ever collect the missing revenue. Many institutions who complete an audit of their bursar hold practices are surprised to learn the vast number of hold types that can prevent registration and the number of students who are affected.

Georgia State University

72%

Of students have some amount of unmet need

Panther Retention Grants

1. **Small balance forgiveness**
   Typical grants are $1,000 or less
2. **No application**
   Staff identify candidates, deposit awards in accounts
3. **Priority for seniors**
   Focus on getting students completed
4. **Extra support**
   Grantees agree to financial literacy counseling

Retention Grants Increase Completions While Paying for Themselves

$1,000
Typical amount of grant

▶

3x-6x
Tuition revenue return on investment

▶

86.5%
Of recipients eventually graduate

Universities can do more to prevent student attrition triggered by bursar holds, yet a surprising number of universities do little to inform students of financial hurdles prior to registration. Since it is typically parents and families, not students, who monitor bursar statements, students are frequently unaware of an unpaid balance until the moment they are blocked from registering.

Georgia State University successfully implemented a targeted grant program to retain students in danger of leaving due to unpaid bursar holds.

Source: Georgia State University, Complete College Georgia Report, 2018 EAB interviews and analysis.

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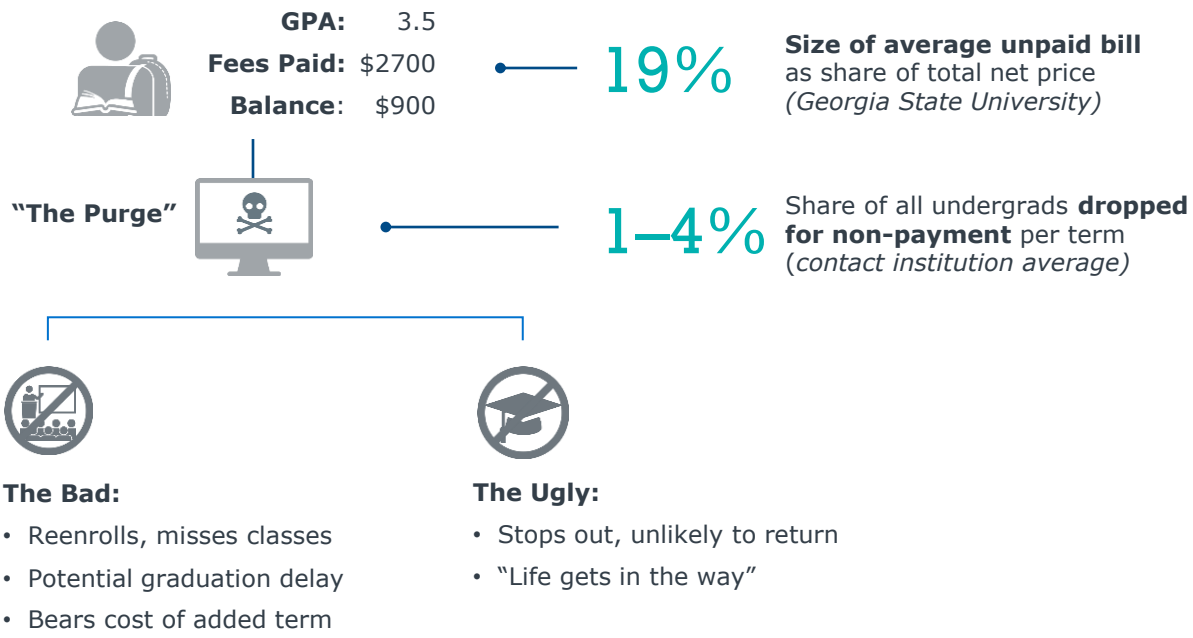
So Many Lost for So Little

Students Who Stop Out Because of Unpaid Bills Often Do Not Return

Unpaid balances and their administrative consequence, bursar holds, are a constant problem. Even with targeted interventions for continuing students, some will inevitably fall behind on paying their bills. Although unpaid balances receive little attention in the student success literature, a small but notable share of students stops out every term because of an unpaid bill. This phenomenon is especially troubling given that students can often pay most of the bill. For example, an analysis from Georgia State University found that students can typically pay more than 80% of their balance. Yet, unable to pay the last 20%, these students would often forgo registration for the next semester.

The Standard Story of Non-Payment

Typical Student, Preregistration



Despite the small size of their bills, high-performing at-risk students are blocked from course registration or face the annual "purge" of their course schedules following the payment deadline. At best, purged students are able to pay their balance and reenroll in the same semester they left. However, these students will often find that the courses they need are already full, delaying on-time completion and prolonging financial burdens should additional semesters be required. All too often, students purged for unpaid balances simply never return. In one study of California stop-outs, only 37% of students who left school intending to return ever did so.

Source: Terriquez, Gurantz, and Gomez, "California's College Stopouts: The Significance of Financial Barriers to Continuous College Enrollment," UC/ACCORD *Pathways to Postsecondary Success* Policy Reports, No. 7 (July 2013); EAB interviews and analysis.

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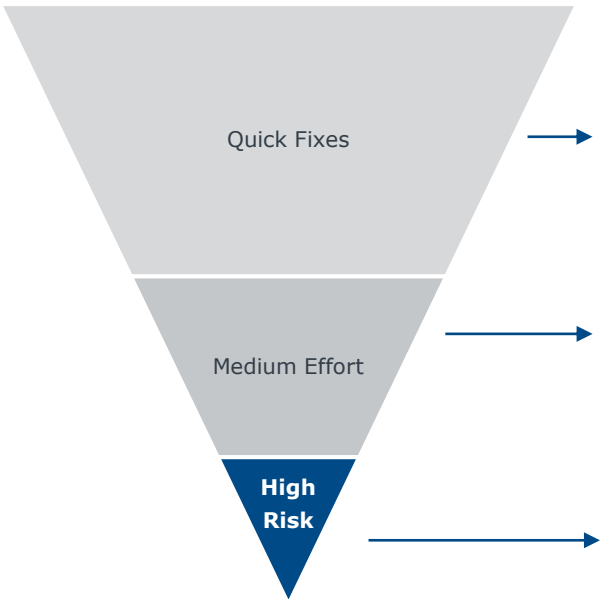
Easy Fixes for Most Unpaid Balances

Students with Significant Outstanding Need Constitute Small Portion of Holds

Administrators at Georgia State University analyzed unpaid balances and found that more than 15,000 students had bursar holds. In many of these cases, the existence of an unpaid balance is not, in itself, an indication of financial crisis. Most balances result from procrastination on the student's part or simple unawareness of payment deadlines and are resolved easily. Other balances may have more complicated causes, such as a student waiting for a payment by a family member or another third party. These students need consultations with financial aid professionals but ultimately will be able to pay their bill.

15,000+
unpaid balances before classes begin

The Universe of Unpaid Balances



Easy Wins (Most Students)

- Student waited until last minute to pay, unaware of balance
- Resolves immediately with reminder

Close Calls

- Student unaware of balance, has complex problem
- Resolves with parental or professional guidance

Attrition Risks (Fewest Students)

- Insufficient resources to resolve balance
- Student aware of hold, difficult to contact
- Resolves with grant covering part of balance

Administrators can resolve most balances with outreach and counseling. This leaves only those students who are aware of their bill but are unable to pay it. The most effective solution is to strategically forgive or "grant away" part of the student's bill. This allows the student to remain in school and on track to graduate while the university still receives most of what is owed. Nonetheless, balance forgiveness is controversial at many institutions and even illegal in some states. Although the student success and financial case for balance forgiveness is strong, the strategy faces significant political opposition.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

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Forgiving Balances Without Breaking the Bank

Targeted Partial-Balance Grants Ensure Financial Viability of Aid Programs

Opposition to balance forgiveness often stems from the belief that forgiveness is a net cost to the university. In fact, students can typically pay part of their bill but end up paying nothing if forced to stop out. To ensure that balance forgiveness generates net revenue for the institution, many grant programs cap balance forgiveness at $2,500.

A more substantive concern is that forgiving balances will encourage students to amass unpaid bills. However, administrators can use student financial data to pinpoint which balances are attributable to genuine financial problems and restrict the number of grants to a single student.

Clarifying Common Misconceptions About Balance Grants

	The conventional wisdom:		Insight from EAB research:
Revenue Implications	• Students will end up attending for free • Waiving balances means lost revenue	→	• Students with balances often can pay most of their bill • Any revenue better than no revenue
Perverse Incentives	Waiving balances will lead to huge increase in handouts	→	Targeted selection process decreases chance of "double dip"
Student Outcomes	Students free to return if their finances improve	→	Only ~37% of stop-outs ever return on their own (*California*)
Institutional Policy	✖ **Students Must Pay Bills in Full**	→	✔ **Partial-Balance Grant**

In lieu of balance grants, many institutions have an emergency grant or loan program that offers a one-time transfer to needy students. However, most of these programs require students to apply, deterring the most vulnerable; are deliberately hidden to avoid overuse, resulting in under-leveraged funds; and are reactive rather than preemptive, such that funds are disbursed too late, potentially prolonging acute financial hardship. Rather than relying on this emergency fund system, administrators can create a targeted balance grant that minimizes overuse or exploitation while maximizing the number of students helped.

Source: Terriquez, Gurantz, and Gomez, "California's College Stopouts: The Significance of Financial Barriers to Continuous College Enrollment," UC/ACCORD *Pathways to Postsecondary Success* Policy Reports, No. 7 (July 2013); EAB interviews and analysis.

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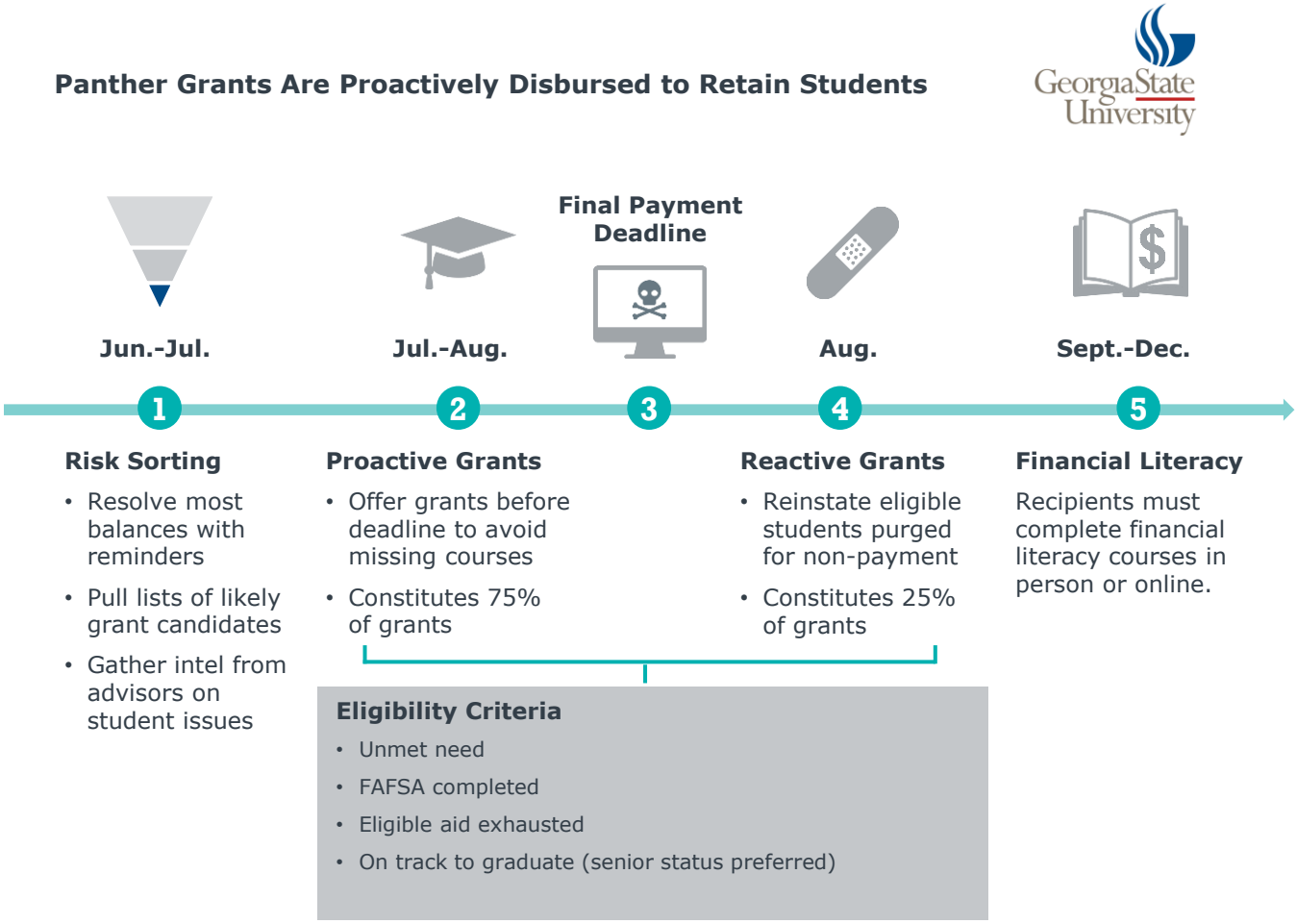
Giving Grants When Students Need Them Most

Maximize Retention Impact of Balance Forgiveness via Proactive Targeting

Georgia State University's (GSU's) Panther Retention Grants proactively target grants to academically able students likely to be purged for an unpaid balance. The financial aid office identifies financially at-risk students with balances, works with academic advisors to collect background on the students' exact problems, and resolves their balances before the purge deadline.



The core of the Panther Grant program is the selection process. Students must satisfy the criteria listed above, which ensure that administrators focus on outstanding balances from students with legitimate financial concerns. To ensure awards go to the students most in need, the financial aid office consults with academic advisors to identify students who appear to face the most hardship. Financial aid staff pull the relevant financial data and work with academic affairs to ensure grant candidates have completed the academic requirements appropriate to their level and major.

GSU awards most grants before the payment deadline in August so students do not lose time to degree, but about 25% of the funds are disbursed after the purge.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

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Outsize Impact from Well-Designed Grant Programs

Panther Grants Secure Thousands of New Completions and Millions in Revenue

The Panther Grant program has seen enormous success, growing to 3,700 grants in 2013–14 from 41 in 2011. Grants have saved millions of dollars in tuition revenue, including the portion a student can pay from his or her current bill, as well as future tuition. Most students do not require additional awards and graduate within two semesters, reflecting GSU's effective targeting mechanism and its focus on seniors.

Key Principles of a Successful Grant Program

1

Collaborate with Academic Affairs Offices

- Academics, financial aid cooperate on selection, ensuring students are needy and on track to completion
- Leverages academic advisors' student knowledge

2

Prioritize Eligible Seniors

- Ensures highest impact in degree completion-per-grant terms
- Limits chance recipients will need another grant

3

Forgo Student Applications

- Allows grants to follow institutional priorities, such as maximizing completions
- Limits chance students can game the system

Increased Revenue and Completions, Little Evidence of Double-Dipping

Georgia State University

$3M	70%	20%
Net tuition revenue preserved since 2011	of students graduate within two semesters	Require additional awards

Georgia State identified three principles for effective balance forgiveness programs. First, collaboration with academic affairs offices to collect additional information on potential grant candidates ensures the neediest students receive aid. Second, prioritizing eligible seniors who are on track to graduate maximizes the chance that each grant will generate a completion while minimizing the chance of a second award. Institutions should align awarding criteria with institutional goals, such as maximizing completions, lifetime revenue, diversity, or other priorities. Finally, Georgia State provides grants directly to students rather than asking students to apply, so that administrators can prioritize students with the most need.

EAB interviews and analysis.

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Financial Barriers: Targeted Outreach and Support

Personalized Outreach Leads to Personalized Advising

Georgia Piedmont Technical College used EAB's Navigate platform to identify and intervene with key populations at risk of attrition due to bursar holds. Customized outreach and intervention to support students with bursar holds enabled students to resolve barriers to enrollment and continue with their education. Supporting students in resolving bursar holds that present a barrier to registration can improve retention and support timely degree completion.

Georgia Piedmont Technical College's Bursar Hold Reform

1 **Identify Students**

Partner with Bursar to identify students on the verge of being purged from Fall 2019 classes due to financial noncompliance

2 **Personalized Outreach**

Student Services utilized texting to make final outreach to 723 students. 412 avoided purge and finished Fall 2019

3 **Custom Intervention**

Students in the purge list often had financial aid issues that were commonly resolved by taking more courses the next semester

4 **Effective Results**

248 of those 723 student are back this Spring 2020 and grew their average credit load a full credit, well above college average

GEORGIA PIEDMONT TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Key Outcomes

- ✓ **Utilizing key resources with IR and Bursar's office in new ways**, reducing campus silos and proving value in unique ways
- ✓ **Ease of use allowed staff to engage from multiple locations and formats,** allowing them to add personal approach that was student friendly and effective
- ✓ **Students experience seamless support** from one appointment to the next due to accessibility of centralized notes and reports

EAB interviews and analysis.

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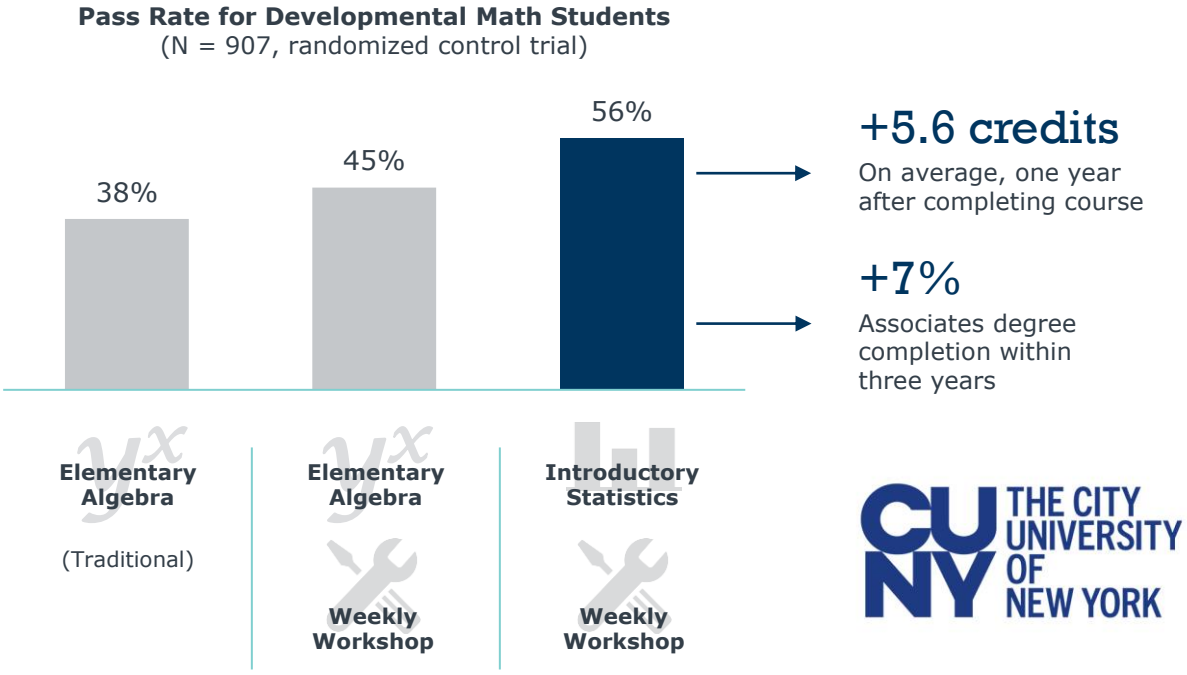
Academic Disqualification: Developmental Pathways

Replacing Algebra with Statistics Dramatically Improves Outcomes

Corequisite education is seen as a mechanism to support academically underprepared students without creating a vicious cycle of required but not-for-credit developmental education courses. Under this model, students who have been assessed as not yet ready for introductory math courses receive extra help while they take a college-level course instead of taking a prerequisite, noncredit developmental course in mathematics, reading or writing. Research coming out of the CUNY system demonstrates that such a model improves completion rates in introductory algebra.



The study included a third option as well: introductory statistics. Researchers conducted a randomized control trial by placing 907 community college students into one of three courses: traditional remedial elementary algebra; the same course accompanied by a weekly workshop; or introductory college-level statistics with a weekly workshop. The two-hour weekly workshops were taught by undergraduate students and covered topics that students often found difficult in each course. Results indicate that students enrolled in courses with corequisite education passed their courses at higher rates – this was especially true for students in the introductory statistics course. Moreover, almost 50% more of the introductory statistics students graduated in comparison to students placed in traditional math remediation.

Source: Alexandra W. Logue, "The Extensive Evidence of Co-Requisite Remediation's Effectiveness" *Inside Higher Ed,* July 17, 2018; EAB interviews and analysis

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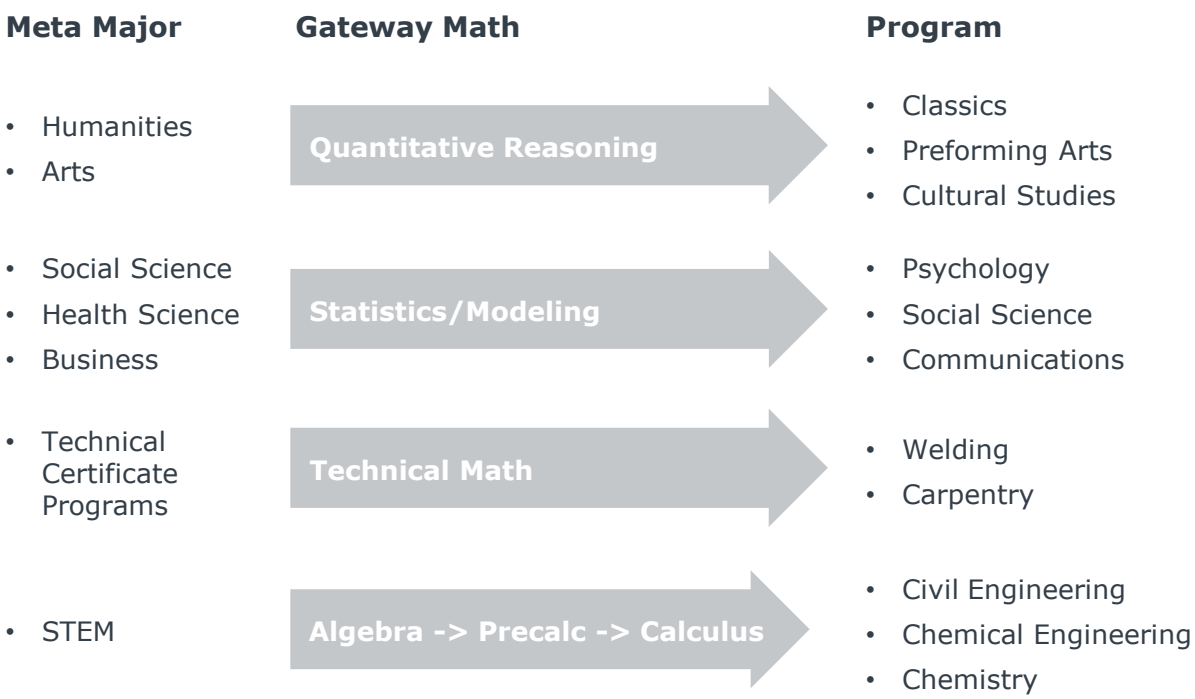
Math Requirements Aligned to Majors

Most Students Won't Need Calculus, So Why Do We Make Them Take It?

The success of statistics students at CUNY demonstrates the importance of developing intentional institutional math pathways. Such course sequencing encourage students to complete introductory, college-level courses that aligns with their intended program of study. On most college campuses students are guided into College Algebra which is inappropriate for non-STEM students. A more student-aligned pathway would create different gateway math courses while guiding students into the appropriate course based on their academic and professional interests



For example, for most students hoping to major in the humanities and arts a quantitative reasoning[1] course is more useful given its broad applicability. Similarly, for most social science and business students' courses in statistics and modeling would help prepare students for their future coursework and careers. In fact, the traditional algebra to calculus pathway would only remain useful for students intending to major in STEM courses such as chemistry and engineering.

1) As defined by the Association of American Colleges & Universities, quantitative reasoning is the application of basic mathematics skills to the analysis and interpretation of real-world quantitative information in the context of a discipline or interdisciplinary problem to draw conclusions that are relevant to students in their daily life.

Source: Complete College America, Math Pathways; EAB interviews and analysis.

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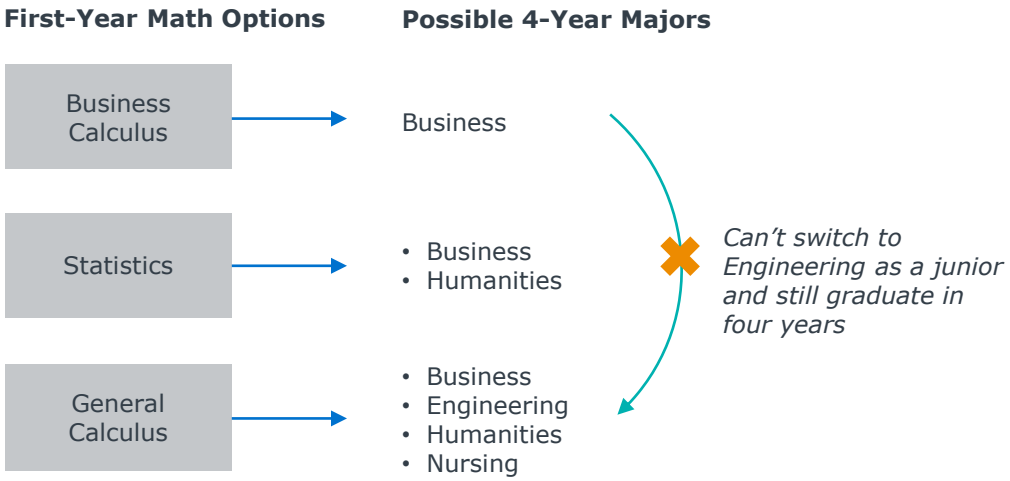
A Failure to Articulate: Meta Majors

Students Can't Assess "Versatility" of Early Courses

In addition to choosing a major, students also face the difficult task of selecting courses from a long and complex list of options. Typically, students choose courses by glancing at the requirements for their majors—major choices that many first- and second-year students are still uncertain about. At most institutions, the overlap in requirements between majors is limited, and when students change majors, their initial course selections may lead to delayed graduation.



Reducing Consequences of Exploration or Bad Choice

The curriculum can be difficult to navigate, and the advisors' role is to be realistic about where a student's choices can lead to. We talk to students early on **and enroll them into classes that work for larger groups of majors.**"

—Amy Treboni
Director of University Exploration The Ohio State University

For example, students often have numerous options to fulfill a first-year mathematics requirement. While general education requirements specify only mathematics, a student's major may limit their mathematics options. A business major might select a business calculus class, as opposed to a statistics class or a general calculus class. But if that business major switches to engineering after taking the time to explore, he or she now has to delay progress by a semester or more in order to take a general calculus class, depending on course availability.

Given advisors' limited time to discuss individual course choices, most institutions need a scalable way to automatically path students into courses that will maximize their major choices later on.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

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More Converts by the Day

Four-Year Institutions Embracing Meta-Majors

Meta-majors, or lower-division tracks grouping together majors based on shared requirements, are one way that institutions across North America have tried to address the challenges of major exploration. The idea behind meta-majors is that rather than a specific major, students can choose a broad theme, such that their initial course selection is applicable across multiple individual majors that pertain to that theme.

Meta-Majors in Brief

- A lower-division track based on common major requirements
- Early adopters: Florida State, Arizona State, CUNY Lehman
- 2012: Recommended by Complete College America in "Guided Pathways to Success"
- 2013: Florida state legislature adopts meta-majors for all of its community colleges

Now Launching Meta-Majors:

- The Ohio State University
- **Trinity Washington University**
- University of Texas-San Antonio
- Rhode Island College
- And more…

Trinity Washington's Six Meta-Majors

1 Business

- Business Administration

2 Education

- Early Childhood Education
- Elementary Education
- Education

3 Health Sci.

- Exercise Science
- Occupational Therapy
- Nursing

4 STEM

- Biochemistry
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Mathematics
- Forensic Science

5 Social Sciences

- Criminal Justice
- Human Relations
- International Affairs
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Economics
- Woman's Studies

6 Humanities

- Communications
- English
- History
- Art History
- Fine Arts
- Language & Cultural Studies
- Philosophy
- Religious Studies & Theology

Meta-majors were developed at **Florida State University** in the 1970's and have more recently been adopted by Complete College America as "Guided Pathways to Success". Popular at community colleges, where many students are exploring related majors in preparation to transfer to four-year institutions, meta-majors are now in place at all two-year institutions in the state of Florida.

Meta-majors are also gaining popularity at four-year institutions, both public and private. **Trinity Washington University** is one example of a small, private undergraduate institution that has adopted meta-majors. Its meta-majors, listed above, represent a typical organization scheme.

Sources: Trinity Washington University, "Majors and Meta-Majors": http://www.trinitydc.edu/first-year/meta-majors/; EAB interviews and analysis.

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Three Strikes Against Meta-Majors

Narrow Impact and Lack of Support Limit Traditional Meta-Majors

Despite meta-majors' growing footprint in the four-year landscape, many students, administrators, and faculty still have mixed feelings about meta-majors. Those students interested in applying directly to a major may view meta-majors as a barrier to their major choice in the admissions process. Major choice is already a fraught and confusing decision for students to make, and meta-majors may only further complicate that decision.

Turns Off Students in Admissions Process

- New vocabulary doesn't match major or course preferences
- Perceived as restriction of choice

Policies Prevent Scale

- Limited to undeclared students
- Optional: students advised on course choices, but no mandate

Burdensome to Faculty

- No time or incentive to streamline curricula
- "We're not a community college"

Other institutions are reluctant to scale meta-majors beyond a small group of students, instead using them to serve as a holding pen for undeclared or exploratory students. They guide discussions with first-year advisors or first-year experience course instructors, but if sample schedules or academic plans even exist for meta-majors, they are "opt-in," allowing students to ignore them.

One potential way to guide students toward meta-major paths would be to reshape the curriculum around meta-majors, as Florida has done in its two-year institutions. However, faculty at four-year institutions lack the time and incentive to redesign curricula, and are often hesitant to model curricula, after community colleges.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

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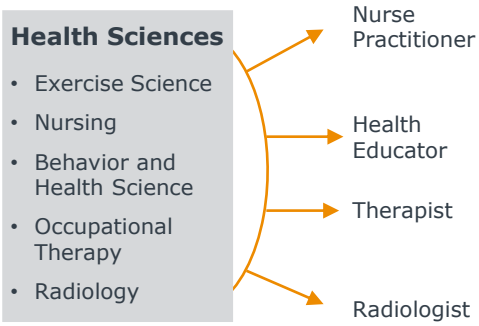
Fixing the Bugs in Meta-Majors 1.0

Restrict Course Choice Early to Increase Major and Career Choices Later

Georgia State University's unique vision for meta-majors addresses some of their typical pitfalls. Rather than confusing applicants with the new vocabulary of meta-majors, Georgia State asks students to simply apply to a major or as undeclared. Meta-majors are introduced at first-year orientation. Moreover, meta-majors are mandatory for all students. Until required major declaration at 45 credits, Georgia State pre-sets students' schedules based on their meta-major (students still select electives). By being prescriptive at the outset, Georgia State preserves major optionality for students later on.

Advisors: Introduce as Career Exploration Guide

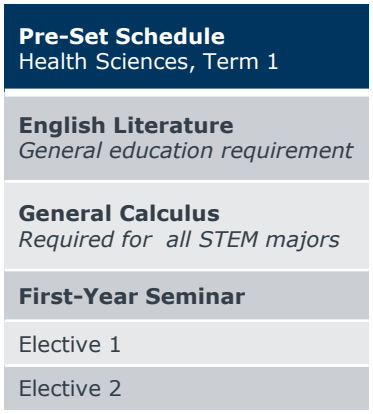
- Students can select major upon application
- Introduced to meta-majors at first-year orientation



Students attend sessions on job opportunities related to majors in meta-major

Registrar: Mandate Pre-Set Schedules for First Year

- Mandatory for all students, not just undeclared
- Class selection ensures timely academic progress



Required major declaration by 45 credits

Georgia State University: A Light Lift for Faculty

- ✔ Academic advisors design clusters
- ✔ No change to curricular requirements

Results

30%

Reduction in major changes since implementation

Administrators tasked academic advisors with developing meta-majors based on shared requirements and career paths among existing major offerings, requiring no change to the curriculum. To ensure faculty buy-in, advisors gave faculty the chance to review the proposed meta-major clusters (though Georgia State reports that no faculty members rejected or challenged a proposal).

As a result, Georgia State students made 30% fewer major changes, suggesting that meta-majors led them to a best-fit option. Advisors also spend less time focusing on course registration because of the pre-set schedules. This allows more time for advisors to focus on guiding students towards good elective choices as well as to have in-depth discussions with students about their long-term academic and career plans.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

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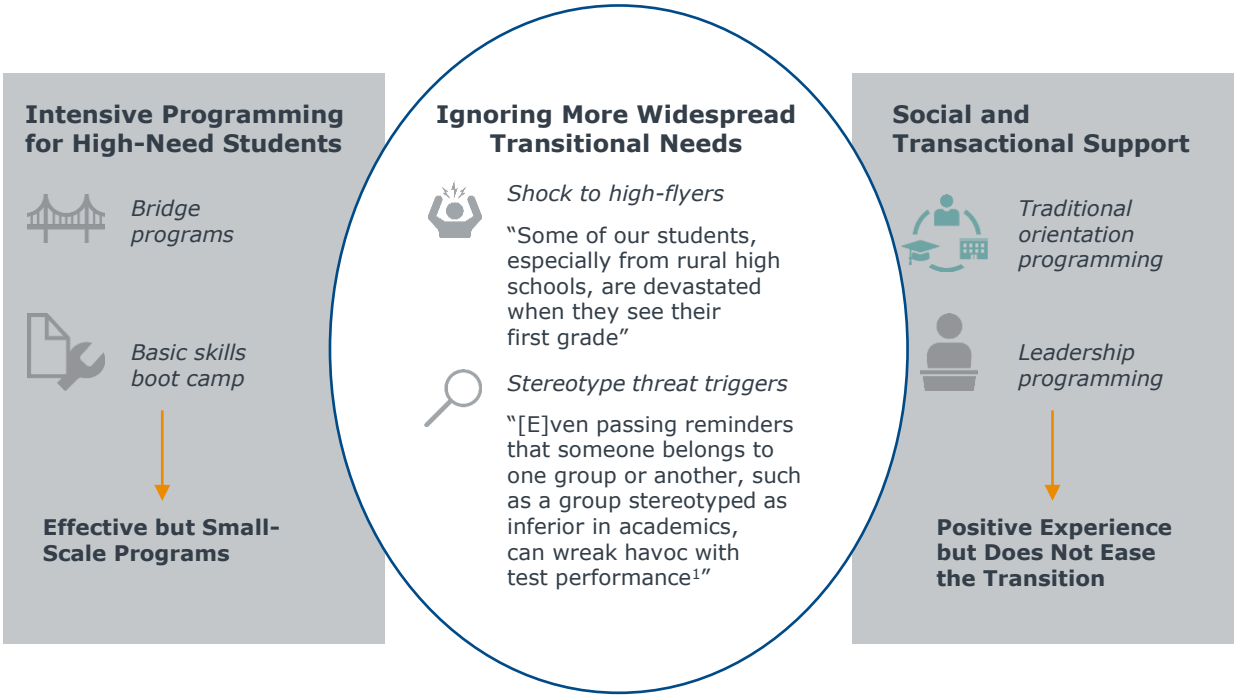
Poor Social Fit: Less Visible Contributors to Stop-Out

Orientation and Bridge Programs Narrowly Focus on Social, Remedial Needs

A common way to ease the transition to college and ensure students are academically and emotionally prepared is through bridge programs, boot camps, and orientation activities. While these pre-college programs can have a positive impact on student success they do come with certain limitations. Intensive programming that focuses on specific student populations effectively support targeted students, but their size limit their scalability and reach. Conversely, large-scale orientation programs may touch every student on campus, but they do not provide the necessary transition support.



Moreover, the emphasis on more traditional pre-college programming overlooks students who may still benefit from a confidence boost before walking into their first college course. Even high-performing students struggle as they transition to college and may not be prepared for some of the rigors of college-level coursework. This can be especially true for students from underrepresented groups because they must also contend with stereotypes and expectations placed on them by their peers and instructors. To address these issues, some institutions are scaling transitional support services to include all incoming students.

1) American Psychological Association citing Claude Steele, Joshua Aronson, and Steven Spencer

Source: "Stereotype Threat Widens Achievement Gap", *American Psychological Association,* July 15, 2006; EAB interviews and analysis.

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A Bridge Program Reimagined

Pre-Semester Boot Camp Creates Early Struggle and Recovery Opportunity

The University of Nevada, Reno does this through its Freshman Intensive Transition or NevadaFIT program which was created in 2014 to simulate the academic experience for students and prepare them for the rigors of college-level work. During NevadaFIT, students take a weeklong course based on their math placement scores with a full-time faculty member, and they also receive co-curricular support from a peer mentor.

Three Components of NevadaFIT's Success

Course Simulations -> Boost Readiness

- Pre-semester, for-credit course with semester-long corollary
- Week-long math intensive
- College-level, graded assignments and exams with in-depth faculty feedback

Peer-Led Cohorts -> Build Belongingness

- Peer mentors lead cohorts of six students through the first term
- Peer mentors are academic and social role models and help students balance competing priorities

University of Nevada, Reno

Mentors and Faculty -> Normalize Help-Seeking

- Daily academic and college navigation skills workshops
- Early introduction to available resources

NEVADAFIT
Bootcamps for Academic Success

The experience occurs during the week immediately preceding the start of the fall term. The course and the faculty member typically match a course that the student will take in their first term. By taking a credit-bearing pass/fail course with a full-time faculty member, students learn how to overcome challenges in college-level work while still in a low-stakes environment. A key component of this learning process is the peer mentor's role in helping students find and take advantage of resources such as tutoring, career services, and academic advising. The peer mentors help to make the services more accessible and build a stronger sense of help-seeking behavior among incoming students who may be shy about seeking support.

Source: University of Nevada, Reno, NevadaFIT Summary, Spring 2018; EAB interviews and analysis.

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Create Opportunities for Early Academic Wins

Students Looking To Fail, Build Confidence, and Succeed

Program organizers believe that the success of the program doesn't lie in an improvement in content knowledge but in creating an opportunity for students to learn how to "do" college in a low-stakes environment. By completing college-level coursework, receiving faculty feedback on their performance, and learning about available academic and social resources students are better prepared to begin their college career.

> "What makes this work is focusing the program on what it means to be successful in a college class and letting students experience that early in their college career."
>
> **Kevin Carman, Executive Vice President and Provost**
> UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO

> "The most surprising part of NevadaFIT was how much more confident I felt about college afterwards…I felt like I could accomplish a lot within my first semester."
>
> **NevadaFIT Participant 2015, Mentor 2016 and 2017**
> UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO

NevadaFIT also helps build belonging as students assigned to the same mentor and study group are enrolled together in one or more classes in the fall semester. The continuation of this pre-college cohort helps create stability as students begin the term. Not only do participants report higher levels of confidence in their academic ability after completing the program but many often apply to become a mentor the following year. This creates a steady recruitment pool for program directors and allows students to build on their experiences through an experiential learning and leadership opportunity.

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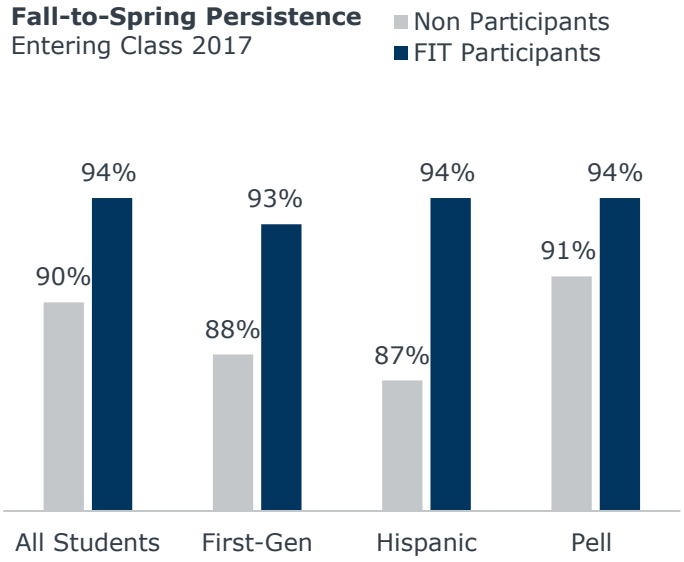
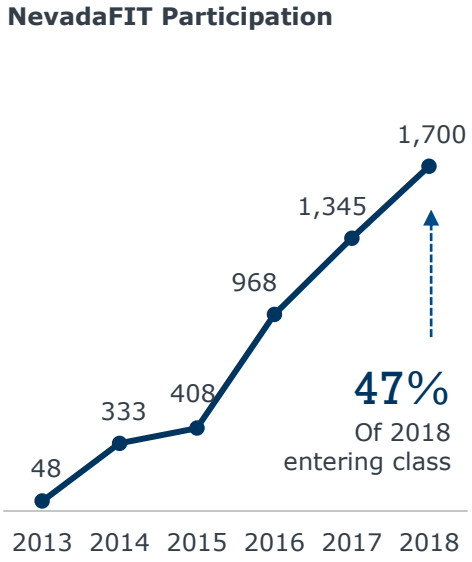
Acceleration of First Challenges Closes Gaps

Persistence Rates Rise for Multiple Student Groups after NevadaFIT

NevadaFIT has expanded from a small program in the biology department in 2014 to serving almost 1,700 new students each year. Approximately 37% of participants are first-generation students, 46% are underrepresented minority students, and 30% receive Pell grants. Nearly all these student groups have benefited, though demographic disparities remain in fall-to-spring persistence. For example, first-generation participants still persist at the lowest rates, but their persistence has improved since the program began.





Students can access financial aid for the program to cover the cost of housing, course fees and books. In 2017 almost 30% of all participants received financial support to cover the cost of taking part in the program. The institution also provides faculty with a small stipend for their work outside of the regular academic year. The program's impact on retention and the subsequent revenue growth helps fund these. In its current iteration the program is optional for students but in the coming years, the University of Nevada, Reno will expand the program to include all incoming students.

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