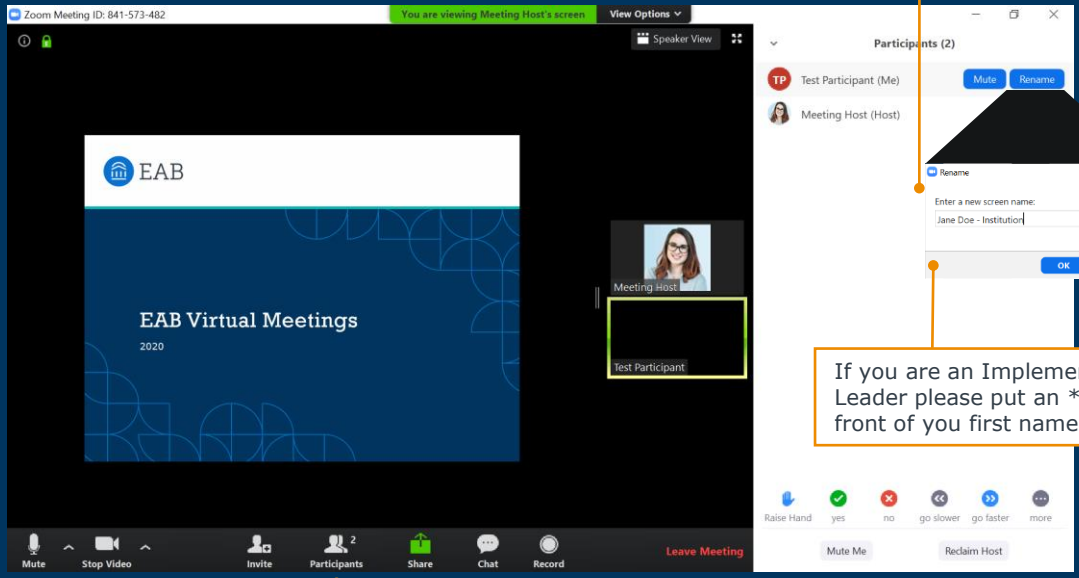
Financial Sustainability Collaborative

Session IV: Reducing Student Attrition

June 15, 2021

Please Update Your Name and Institution



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This Month's Topic: Assessing Academic Programmes

Evaluate Four Key Drivers of Academic Revenues and Costs

1 **Realising Academic Efficiencies**

2 **Assessing Academic Programmes**

3 **Improving Retention and Persistence**

4 **Developing New Programmes to Reach New Students**

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Goals for Today's Session

- Understand Student Attrition and Why It Matters
- Calculate Student Attrition on Your Campus
- Assess the Impact of Various Retention Campaigns on Your Campus
- Determine the Financial Returns From Retention Campaigns
- Introduce the Retention Case Profile Repository

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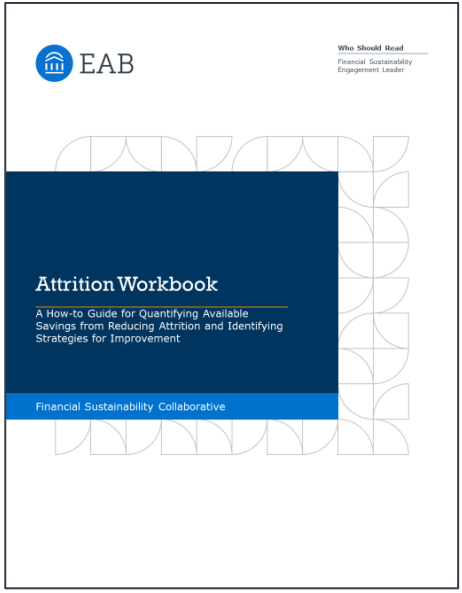
This Month's Workbook



Attrition Workbook

- Rationale for Examining Attrition
- Templates for Calculating Attrition Rate
- Data Requirements
- Unit-level Attrition Guidance
- Retention Campaign Cases – Appendix

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Student Attainment: The Big Picture

Focusing on a Narrow Part of the Overall Terrain

The Student Attainment Landscape

Graduation Rate	Student Experience	First Year Retention
Student Persistence	Career Preparedness	Academics
Financial Impact	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	Student Wellness

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Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Boosting the Bottom Line

Sizing the Opportunity and Identifying Solutions

Identifying Student Retention Opportunity, Impact of Mitigation Campaigns

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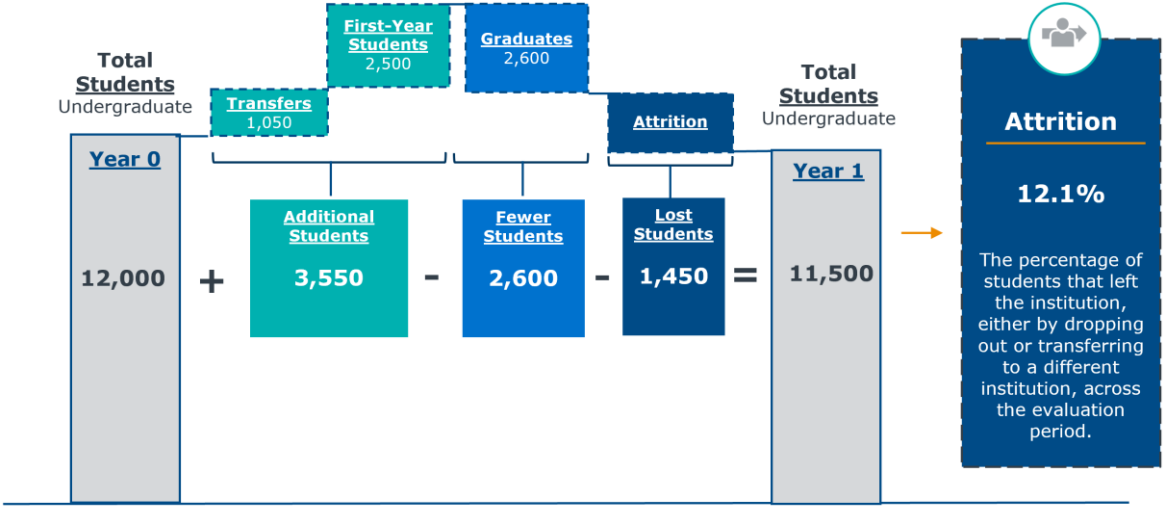
Defining Annual Student Attrition

All the Students Who Leave Each Year

The Simple Maths of Student Attrition

What Exactly is Student Attrition?



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Substantial Sums of Money Just Walking Away

Annual Attrition Provides An Institutional Snapshot of Financial Loss

Annual Attrition: A Financial Opportunity

Retaining students is essential to every institution's long-term financial health. Just as every new student represents a new source of revenue, so every student who leaves represents a lost source of revenue.

Retention should be analysed as a financial investment and any additional revenue from students that remain should be evaluated against the required financial investment to retain those students.

Attrition Loss Analysis

• Total Students	12,000
• Students Lost	1,450
• Attrition Rate: *Yr-over-Yr*	12.1%
• Revenue per Student	$15,000
Attrition (Revenue) Loss:	**$21.8 Million**

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Source: EAB Research

Retention Opportunity Analysis

Preparation and Follow-up

1 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.

3 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.

2 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 attainment stakeholders (e.g., academic advisers and pastoral tutors, enrolment management) can ease the implementation of eventual changes.

4 Implementation Planning

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

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

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Hearing from Your Colleagues

Discussion Questions:

- Do you believe that you have a significant opportunity to improve retention on your campus without dramatically changing the makeup of your student body?
- What's getting in the way of addressing that opportunity?
- How would a focus on reducing attrition shift the student attainment conversation on your campus?

Retention Campaign Opportunity

Assessing the Possible Impact of Various Retention Strategies

Recapturing Revenue Lost to Attrition

Identify Opportunity and Develop a Plan

Understand the Opportunity Available

Complete the opportunity analysis for six different retention campaigns to estimate the number of students on your campus potentially impacted by this sort of retention campaign.

Determine the Best Opportunities

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 library of attrition campaign case profiles as a starting point for determining staffing, investments, timeframes for a retention campaign.

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Why Do Students Leave?

There are Multiple Drivers of Attrition for the Typical Lost Student

The Anatomy of a Lost Student

Academic Challenges: Achieved low grades in last term

Financial/Administrative Obstacles: Bursar hold for re-enrolment due to unpaid parking ticket

Attendance Challenges: Commute to campus consumes 10/hours per week

Socially Disconnected: Not engaged in any university extracurricular activities

Time-Challenged: Working as barista for 30/hours per week

Financially Precarious: Visiting local food pantry regularly

Unsurprisingly – Not Enroled for the Next Term

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Retention Strategies to Evaluate

Effective Student Loss Mitigation Campaigns

- Re-enrolment Campaign
- Academic Disqualification
- Academic High-Flyer
- Bursar Hold Elimination
- Poor Social Fit Campaign
- Microgrant Campaign

Additional Resources

See the Workbook Appendix for profiles of effective retention strategies employed at different HE institutions with detail on campaign structure, staffing, process and outcome.

There are scores of additional case profiles on eab.com in the *Student Success Playbook*, which contains a useful overview of much of EAB's research on student attainment initiatives.

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What's Been The Result?

Successful, Anecdotal Outcomes From Exemplar Institutions

Higher Education Student Retention Campaign Outcomes

Opportunity	Low	Med	High
1) Reenrolment campaign	3%	9%	15%
2) Bursar hold elimination	5%	17%	33%
3) Academically disqualified	2%	5%	12%
4) Poor social fit	1%	3%	8%
5) Academic high-flyers	2%	5%	12%
6) Microgrants	6%	20%	50%

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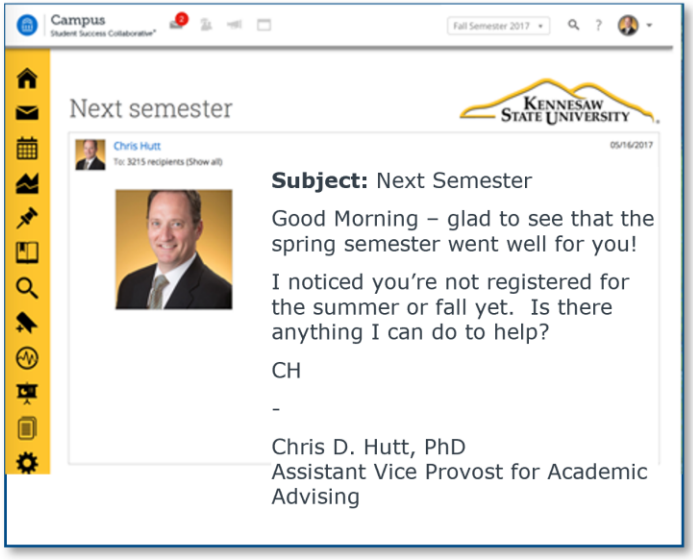
Source: EAB Research and Interviews

A Single Email Can Reduce Attrition

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



Why Students Said They Weren't Registered:

1. Registration Holds
   Response: Hold reform
2. Module Availability
   Response: Add sections (esp. STEM)
3. Incomplete Advising
   Response: Hire more advisers
4. Price Sensitivity
   Response: Low-cost online modules
5. Missed Registration
   Response: Expand registration window
6. 'Personal Issues'
   Response: Promote support services

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

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Targeting Small Amounts for Big Gains

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

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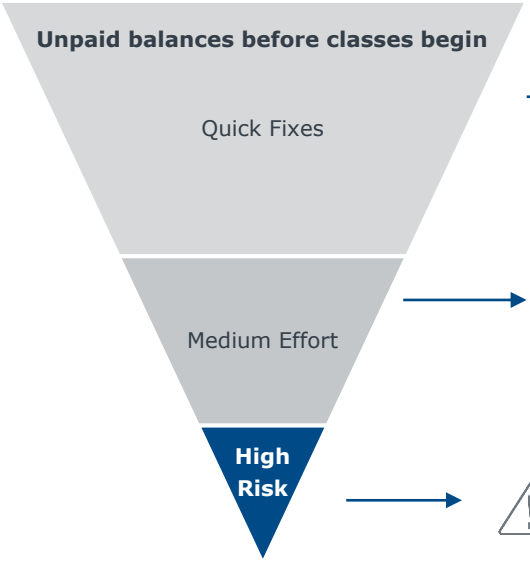
Easy Fixes for Most Unpaid Balances

The Universe of Unpaid Balances

15,000+



Resolution Taxonomy

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, 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

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Source: EAB Research

Addressing Bursar Holds

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'
Attainment	Students free to return if their finances improve	→	Only ~37% of drop-outs ever return on their own (*California*)
Institutional Policy	✖ **Students Must Pay Bills in Full**	→	✔ **Partial-Balance Grant**

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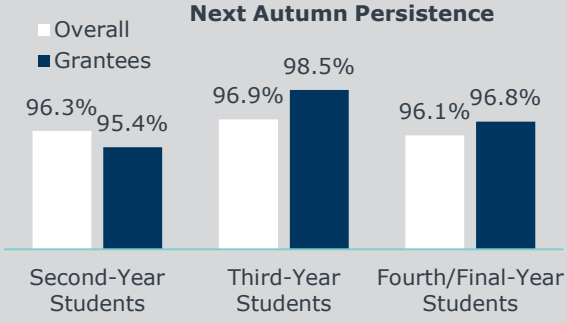
Strategic Microgrants

Considering Equity, Impact, and ROI When Awarding Emergency Grants

XAVIER UNIVERSITY

30% Of students have financial issues ▶ **20%** Cannot pay on their own ▶ **10%** Are prioritised for microgrants

Grantees Retained at Comparable Rates



Who Gets Prioritised (and Why)?

1. Underserved Populations (Equity)
2. Smaller Balances (Max Impact)
3. High Likelihood to Graduate (ROI)

'Likelihood to Graduate' Gauged by Many Criteria

- Progress to degree
- Registration status
- *Campus* risk score
- *Campus* notes
- Financial aid eligibility
- Entrance scores
- Date of last payment
- Transcript requests
- Email response rate

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Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Reimagining Pre-University Programmes

Pre-Semester Boot Camp Creates Opportunity to Provide Early Guidance

University of Nevada, Reno

Three Components of NevadaFIT's Success

Module Simulation Boosts First-Term Readiness

- Pre-semester week-long maths intensive module with semester-long corollary
- 8 boot camps operated by individual departments
- University-level, graded assignments and exams with in-depth feedback from academic staff

Peer-Led Cohorts Build Belongingness

- Creation of smaller, six-student cohorts with assigned peer mentors who check-in with students across the first term
- Peer mentors are academic and social role models and help students balance competing priorities

Mentors and Academic Staff Normalise Help-Seeking

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

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

Focus on Early Academic Attainment Increases Student Confidence

> ‘What makes this work is focusing the programme on what it means to be successful in a [university module] and letting students experience that early in their [academic] 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 [university] afterwards…I felt like I could accomplish a lot within my first semester.’

NevadaFIT Participant 2015, Mentor 2016 and 2017

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

Eliminating First-Year Retention Gaps

Improvement Across Nearly All Demographics

NEVADAFIT
Bootcamps for Academic Success

Module Simulations to Boost Readiness

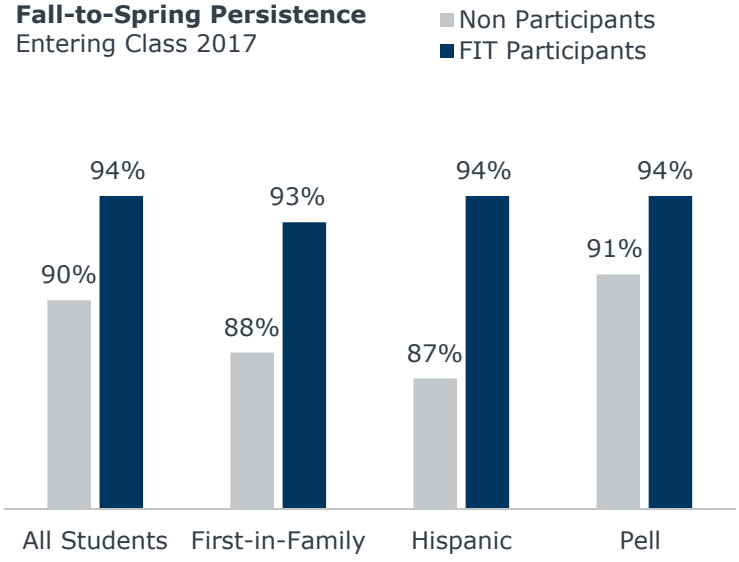
- Week-long, university-level maths intensive

Mentors and Academic Staff to Normalise Help-Seeking

- Daily academic and university navigation skills workshops

Peer-Led Cohorts to Build Belongingness

- Peer mentors are academic and social role models and help students balance competing priorities



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

Engaging Academic High-Flyers

High Performing Students Can Be At-Risk As Well

37%

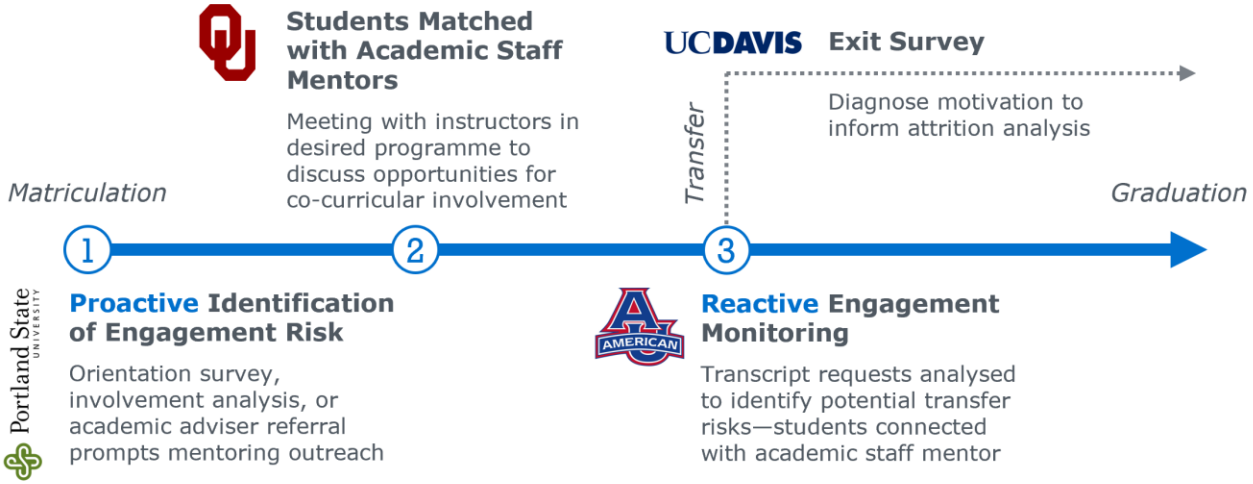
Of all first-time students transfer or enrol at a different institution at least once within 6 years

33%

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

40%

Of leavers have estimated GPAs above 3.25



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Retention Strategy Templates

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 balance may, in fact, prevent a student from registering on time, derail their progress, and lead to attrition. Eliminating bursar holds under a certain amount (e.g., 500 pounds) 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) Per cent 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)	=	

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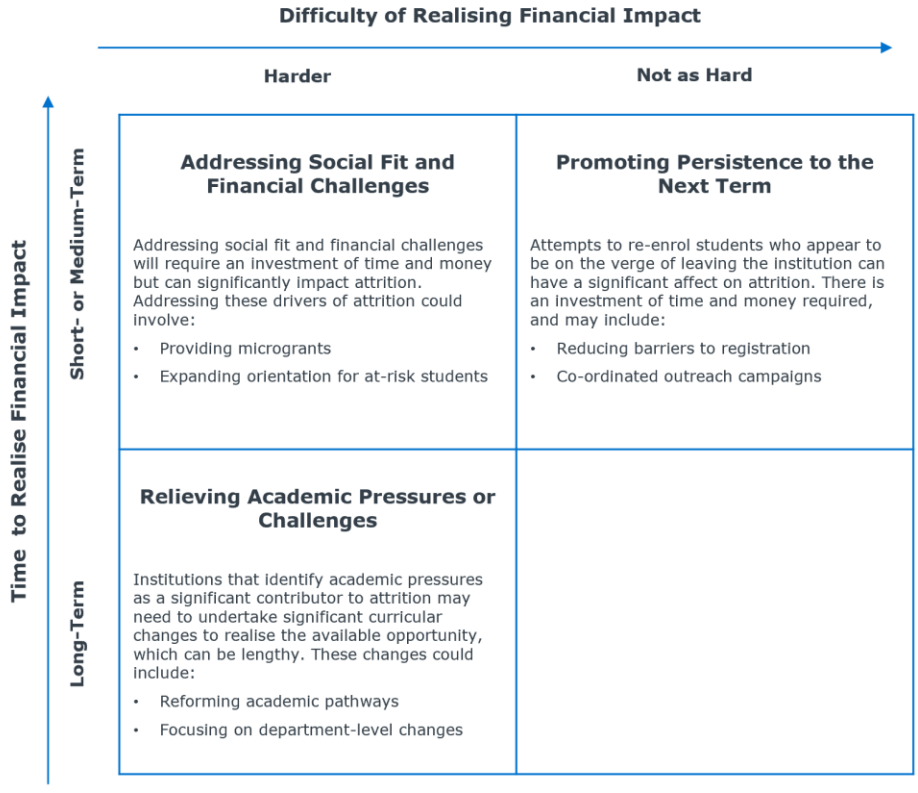
Opportunity Realisation

Time and Difficulty of Realising Financial Impact



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Complete Each Opportunity Analysis

Estimate the Investments Needed to Implement Each Campaign

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

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

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Putting the Pieces Together

Leveraging a Student Attainment Management System to Run Campaigns

Scheduling & Recording Appointments

- **Allow for students to schedule appointments** ahead of time or drop in for support with subject- or module-based options
- **Coordinate group** appointments for advising, supplemental instructions, academic coaching, & more
- **Allow Advisers to set their own availability or coordinate it centrally** through an Advising Coordinator
- **Allow Appointment Requests** to track students who are interested in services or times not currently offered

Managing Student Populations

- **Create Watch Lists** for students who are on academic probation or close to it in the Murky Middle
- **Run one targeted campaign for students in need of support**
  E.g., Students with certain grades, exam results, or enrolled in other key modules
- **Use Appointment Campaigns** to allow sign ups for large group workshops or trainings (e.g., Study Skills, Preparing for Finals)

Coordinating Care with Alerts & Case Management

- **Establish an Alert Reason for students** 'In Need of Advising or Academic Support'
- **Use automatic e-mail notifications** to provide instructions to students with alerts on how to receive support or schedule appointments
- **Uses Cases to receive referrals** for students in need of support to coordinate follow up

Reporting & Analytics

- **Examine populations served:**
  What students are accessing services? What students are not being served but should be?
- **Track attainment of students who receive services:**
  What is the impact on student grades, DFW rates, retention?
- **Assess Usage of Services:**
  What services are most frequently utilised? When?
  Where are there gaps?

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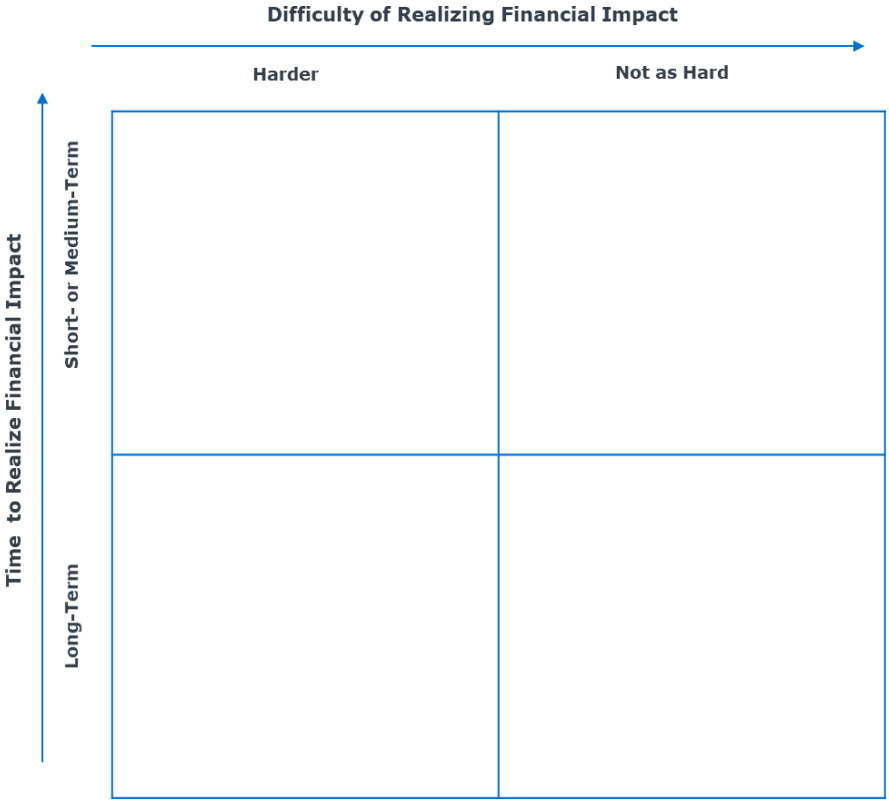
Hearing from Your Colleagues

Discussion Questions:

- With your institution's resources and target student population(s) in mind, where would you place recommended retention strategies on a 2x2 matrix of time and difficulty to realize impact?
- What is your rationale for suggesting certain placements? Do strategies in the upper righthand quadrant correspond with strategies you have or will implement first?

Estimating time and difficulty to realize impact



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Before Our Next Session (July 14)

Review the workbook

If you have questions:
- Submit them on the survey at the end of this session
- Come to office hours
- Send them to Veronica Smith (**vsmith@eab.com**)

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In Our Last Five Minutes…

Please complete the survey that we just sent out. It will provide us with valuable feedback on how to improve future sessions and give you an opportunity to submit more detailed questions for follow up

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