Five ways to increase **academic staff efficacy** in student success

How academics can support institutional efforts to improve retention and completion

Academic staff play a critical role in shaping the student experience but are surprisingly under-leveraged as allies in student success strategy. Here are five key ways that academic units and individual instructors can help students successfully navigate their academic careers.

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1 Address Curricular Barriers to Completion

Decisions about curricula are often made within departmental silos, underestimating or even ignoring their institution-wide impact on student success. *How can we equip academic units to enact progression-based curricular reforms?*

Recommendations

▶ **Arm Units with Data**
On-demand enrolment analytics help academic staff assess the consequences of proposed curricular changes.

▶ **Create Role-Based Working Groups**
Subcommittees with specific tasks make better use of academic staff time (and expertise) than large task forces.

▶ **Skip the "Pilot" Phase**
Curricular reforms are most effective when treated as full-scale, managed projects, rather than one-off experiments.

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2 Reconsider Academic Advising Models

Helping students register for classes is only the beginning—personal tutors are expected to counsel struggling students regularly. *How can academics prepare for these broader expectations? When should academics delegate some of the burdens of support to professional advisors?*

Recommendations

▶ **Outline and Differentiate Roles**
Academic staff time is best spent on mentoring and academic consultation, not on transactional or administrative activities.

▶ **Leverage Academic Staff in Advisor Trainings**
Regularly involve instructors in training professional academic advisors to build mutual trust and collaboration.

▶ **Consider Each Unit's Unique Staffing Needs**
Moving from department-based advising to a centralised professional advising model requires an investment in distributed administrative support.

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3 Enhance the Learning Experience

It's clear that great lecturers have an outsized impact on students' success at university and in their careers. *How can we encourage more academic staff to innovate in the classroom?*

Recommendations

▶ **Harness Grassroots Activity**
It should be easy for innovative instructors to apply for course redesign grants and generate scalable pedagogical models.

▶ **Reduce the Risk of Adoption**
Targeted support and recognition alleviate the pedagogical, technological, and social concerns of instructors.

▶ **Focus on Critical Courses**
Courses with high failure rates should be prioritised to maximise the impact of funded reforms on student success.
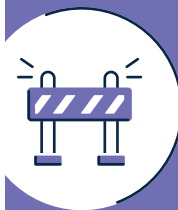
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4 Flag Signs of Student Risk

By tracking student attendance, performance, and engagement in class, academic staff can help inform your early intervention strategy. *How can we build greater awareness and utilisation of early warning systems?*

Recommendations

▶ **Make It Simple**
Early warning systems should be easy for academic staff to use, with a single referral point for academic and behavioral concerns.

▶ **Make It Flexible**
Academic staff should be able to determine the time period and performance threshold for early academic assessments, within reasonable boundaries.

▶ **Communicate the Impact**
Messages about the importance of early alerts in helping to connect students with critical support services should come from senior academic leaders.

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5 Mentor Rising-Risk Student Groups

Talented, high-achieving students seek out mentorship opportunities on their own, but many don't establish connections with academic staff until it's too late. *How can we engage more students in meaningful interactions with instructor mentors?*

Recommendations

▶ **Monitor Transcript Requests**
Students may reconsider transfer to another institution after connecting with academic staff in their field of interest.

▶ **Conduct Exit Surveys**
Information gathered from stop-outs and transfers can help to guide your intervention and engagement strategies.

▶ **Target Less-Engaged Students**
Academic staff mentoring efforts should be focused on students who aren't already in personal tutoring or academic advising.

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