Overview

Last year’s report to the Faculty Senate called for greater collective attention to issues related to student retention, persistence, and success. The report stated: “Nearly every policy and program at the university has some impact on student success. With a move to performance-based funding, it is imperative for USU to improve its persistence and timely graduation rates.” It suggested that our retention efforts be led by the following five guiding principles:

1. Reasonable – allowing attrition to be acceptable when it is in the best interest of students and/or the institution.
2. Intentional – based on data and adapted to the needs and culture of each college.
3. Coordinated – centralized programs and localized efforts must work together.
4. Supported – leadership and funding is required at the university and college levels.
5. Assessed – programs and initiatives must be reviewed for cost, impact, and benefit.

USU has taken significant steps to implement retention initiatives and programs that meet each of these guidelines. This report will highlight the many new collaborations and retention efforts that have been initiated and/or enhanced during the past year. The report will also include a list of the ongoing programs and efforts with an impact on student retention. In the addendum, I will include USU’s current Retention and Graduation Data as well as some research findings regarding the mindset of incoming USU students.

New Initiatives for the 2016-17 Academic Year

- USU 1010 (Connections) early alert and intervention interviews: all student who receive a C or lower in USU 1010 are invited to meet with the Director of Student Retention to discuss strategies for success as they move forward in their other classes.
- Early Alert Survey: faculty and advisors are invited to complete a survey to notify the Director of Student Retention of students in jeopardy of academic failure. Those students are then invited to meet and discuss strategies for success.
- Aggies 4 Aggies is a pilot mentor program that matches first generation and minority students with peer mentors and staff advocates. It is a four-year program with the mentorship switching to a faculty mentor by the end of the second year.
- College Welcome events during the week of Connections.
- Reverse Processional and Luminary experience as the culmination of Connections week.
- Sophomore Dinner Symposium Series by Residential Life.
- ETE Faculty Workshop on faculty best practices regarding student success and engagement.
- Resilience Workshops through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).
- Inclusion of resilience and persistence themes in workshops offered by the Academic Success Center (ASC).
- Faculty mentor is assigned to every student in the Quinney College of Natural Resources (QCNR).
- QCNR weekly Coffee Social for students, faculty, and staff.
- A focus on “intentional advising” as led by the Director of University Advising.
- Scholarship campaign for Regional Campus students.

Data Collection Efforts for the 2016-17 Academic Year

Report respectfully submitted by Heidi Beck Kesler, Director of Student Retention and Completion, Division of Student Affairs: Utah State University on November 9, 2016.
• Assessment of SOAR and Connections by Drs. Kristina Scharp and Elizabeth Dorrance Hall – see Addendum 2 (funded by a USHE Completion Grant)
• Data collection of students who received an Associates degree and did not enroll further at USU by Launa Julander within University Advising.
• Exit interviews of students completing the Leave of Absence (other than for missionary service) and those who are in good standing but not enrolled by Heidi Kesler, Dr. Matt Sanders, and Dr. Kristina Scharp (funded by a USHE Completion Grant).
• Data collection of Exploratory student retention by Niki Weight within Exploratory Advising.
• Implementation of CIVITAS products: Illume and Inspire.
• Tracking recipients of Access and Diversity scholarships to determine the need for interventions and contracts.
• Data collection for Regional Campus student retention trends (funded by USHE Completion Grant).
• Focus groups of Regional Campus students (funded by USHE Completion Grant).

Retention Funding for 2016-17 Academic Year

• $75,000 USHE Completion Grant awarded to Heidi Kesler, Director of Student Retention and Completion.
• $75,000 USHE Completion Grant awarded to Taylor Adams, Senior Project Coordinator for Regional Campuses ($40,500 earmarked for student scholarships).
• $92,000 awarded in Student Affairs Retention Scholarships.

Continuing Initiative for the 2016-17 Academic Year
Following is a list of centralized efforts through the Provost’s Office and Student Affairs with an impact on the persistence and success of USU students:

• Director of Student Retention and Completion
  o Retention Data
    o AWOL (left the University without completing a Leave of Absence) Reports for 2014 Cohort forward: these reports are given to the Colleges so that they can follow up with their students. The report is broken down into two groups: AWOL: GS (in good standing) and AWOL: AA (not in good standing). It likely makes the most sense for the colleges to try to retain students in good standing and to view those who have left with academic action as reasonable attrition.
    o LOA (Leave of Absence) Reports/Analysis for 2014 Cohort forward. This report gives us so much useful information. It allows us to see why students leave and to try to retain students who are leaving for financial reasons or other reasons that could be ameliorated with appropriate support. It also allows us to track those who leave and plan to return, such as missionaries, humanitarian trips, etc.
    o Student Tracker – all Cohorts. This is a service of the National Student Clearinghouse. It allows USU to track students who began at USU but then transferred. We can see where they transferred and whether they are successful.
  o Tableau Visualizations
  o Retention Data by College Delivered to Associate Deans
  o Retention Data by Subpopulations
    • Gender
    • Ethnicity
USU Faculty Senate Report on Retention, Persistence, and Success

2016-17 Academic Year

- Scholarship Categories
- LOA Type
- Collegiate Readiness: Admissions Index, HS GPA, ACT Scores, etc.
  - Retention Scholarships: students are nominated for these by their advisors. The students are then asked to submit an application including a statement of academic aspirations and a budget worksheet. The retention scholarship committee reviews all applications and makes awards based on the criteria set forth.
    - Perkins Scholars (Merit/Sophomore)
    - Watkins Scholars (Needs Based)
    - University Retention Fund (Needs Based)
  - Retention Retreat in the Spring (being changed to Retention Conference in 2016)
  - Retention Working Groups (see above)
  - Retention Coordinating Committee (see above)
  - Retention Faculty Workshops. The Director of Student Retention is available to present to faculty and university leadership regarding the retention vision and goals of the university.
  - Four-Year Degree Maps in the University Catalog. This was an initiative from USHE. The four-year degree maps outline an “ideal” progression for success for each program. The colleges and departments were instrumental in making this happen.
  - Outreach to Students Ordering Transcripts in order to Transfer. Students are contacted and asked to respond to some basic questions about why they plan to transfer. In cases where the intent to transfer is a result of financial problems, students have received retention scholarships and been able to stay at USU.
  - USU’s Co-chair to Complete College America: Utah
  - Parent SOAR: the Director of Student Retention speaks to parents at SOAR to inform them of financial and other benefits of completing a four-year degree. Parents are also encouraged to see the college experience as a four-year experience complete with a four-year financial plan, rather than planning from year to year.
- Admissions
  - Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) Software
  - Ambassadors
  - Scholarships/Waivers: Enrollment Services is looking at the standards and practices for awarding scholarships and waivers. There is some data to suggest that USU loses students after the first year because USU has very few renewable scholarships and yet they can qualify for a transfer scholarship elsewhere.
  - Review of Admissions Index. Enrollment Services is reviewing admission standards in order to only admit students who are truly prepared to succeed at USU.
- Student Orientation and Transition Services
  - SOAR (Student Orientation and Registration)
  - Connections (USU 1010)
  - LOA/Deferment Process
    - Visits to Missionary Prep Classes at LDS Institute
    - Communication Plan for Deferment and LOA
  - Peer Advisors/Weekly Email to Students during the first year.

Report respectfully submitted by Heidi Beck Kesler, Director of Student Retention and Completion, Division of Student Affairs: Utah State University on November 9, 2016.
- **Passport Program**: this is a program that helps students get engaged and learn about a variety of social and academic supports and opportunities across campus.
- **Math Placement Exam**: Enrollment Services and the Math department are reviewing the process for identifying students who must take the MPE. Data shows that students who are not math ready are much less likely to persist and succeed.

- **Academic Advising**
  - Awarding of Associate’s Degrees in order to help students gain a taste of success and to encourage them to persist toward success in a four-year degree.
  - Exploratory Advising: the undeclared advising office has been changed to exploratory advising.
  - Appointment Manager allows students greater access to make appointments with advisors.
  - Advisor Assessment: the students asked for an advisor assessment mechanism. The Provost’s Office has led the efforts to bring this about. The assessment tool has been given to the colleges to implement and adjust as makes sense for their unique students and advising structure.

- **Registrar’s Office**
  - Registration Reminders and Assistance
  - DegreeWorks is the university degree audit program. During the past year it has been upgraded. Although the software and program management resides in the Registrar’s Office, it depends heavily on the input and partnership of the individual colleges and departments.
  - 15-to-Finish Campaign placing an emphasis on completing programs in four years by taking 15 credits each fall and spring semesters.
  - Stackable Credits: Roland Squire works with a state-wide group to help students stack credits from two-year programs into four-year programs.
  - Early Intervention Data
    - D, F, W, I Grade Reports
    - Repeat Reports
    - Semester GPA Warning

- **Student Portal**
- **Curriculum & Enrollment Management**
  - Preregistration for Students Enrolled in MATH 0990 and MATH 1010
  - Preregistration for Students Remaining on Wait Lists for ENGL 1010 and ENGL 2010
  - Strategies to Fast-Track QL Completion
  - Continued identification and resolution of bottleneck courses

- **Academic Service Center**
  - Strategies for Academic Success (USU 1730)
  - Math/Stats Tutoring Center
  - Supplemental Instruction
  - Study Skills *Quicks*shops
  - Student Support Services (TRIO)

- **Career Services**
  - Career Exploration Course (USU 1220) and Career Fairs
  - Testing Center
  - Student Employment and Resume and Cover Letter Assistance

- **Financial Aid**
  - Loan and Financial Counseling
- Outreach to provide students and their parents with accurate information about the resources to pay for college.
- Parent SOAR: the Financial Aid office speaks to parents at SOAR to inform them of the financial resources available and to answer questions about FAFSA, loans, etc.

- Student Involvement
  - Student Government
  - Service Learning
  - Clubs & Organizations

- Recreation and Wellness
  - Campus Recreation Programs
  - Student Health and Wellness Center
    - Psychiatric Services
    - Affordable Medical Services

- Counseling and Psychological Services
  - One Time Consultations for Students in Distress
  - Individual & Couples Counseling
  - Group Therapy
  - Psychological Assessment
  - Online Self Care Resources
### Official Retention/Graduation Data (from AAA)

**Addendum 1: UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY RETENTION/GRADUATION REPORT**

Full-Time, First-Time, Degree-Seeking Freshmen Cohorts, 2005-2015

**Notes 1 & 2**

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Initial Cohort</th>
<th>To 2nd Yr.</th>
<th>To 3rd Yr.</th>
<th>To 4th Yr.</th>
<th>Graduated in 4 Yrs.</th>
<th>Contin. To 5th Yr.</th>
<th>Graduated in 5 Yrs.</th>
<th>Contin. To 6th Yr.</th>
<th>Graduated in 6 Yrs.</th>
<th>Contin. To 7th Yr.</th>
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**Table 1. ALL STUDENTS**

**--------------- Retention Rates --------------**

**------------------ Cumulative Graduation and Retention Rates ------------------**

**Notes 1 & 2**

- Graduation and retention rates are calculated from adjusted cohorts. Initial cohorts are adjusted for students who are identified as: 1) deceased or totally disabled; 2) serving in the armed forces; 3) serving with a foreign aid service of the Federal Government; 4) serving on an official church mission.

- **Note 1:** 2005-2010 Initial Cohort included all degree-seeking students at Logan Campus and RCDE who completed a bachelor degree.

- **Note 2:** Starting with 2011, Initial Cohort includes only bachelor level degree-seeking students at Logan Campus, RCDE and USU Eastern who complete a bachelor degree.

Addendum 2: Report of Data Collected at SOAR by Drs. Scharp & Dorrance Hall

Report respectfully submitted by Heidi Beck Kesler, Director of Student Retention and Completion, Division of Student Affairs: Utah State University on November 9, 2016.