Mission Statement
The mission of USU’s Office of Student Retention & Completion is to provide campus leadership, reliable data, and student-focused programs that will provide students with the tools to thrive academically, socially, and personally while at USU.

Website
thrive.usu.edu

Assessment Measures
a. The Office of Student Retention & Completion measures success using official university retention and graduation rates as calculated by the Office of Analysis, Assessment and Accreditation. These rates exclusively represent full-time, first-time, Bachelor’s degree-seeking cohorts. Retention and completion rates will be measured by these cohorts, whereas persistence rates will be measured using all undergraduates.

b. Definition of terms:
• Persistence – The rate at which students persist in enrollment from one semester to the next full semester (Fall to Spring and Spring to Fall).
• Retention – The rate at which the university retains students from year to year.
• Completion/Graduation – The rate at which students earn a Bachelor’s level degree (measured at 4th, 5th, and 6th years).
• Cohort – A population of students identified in fall semester at the census date (3rd week) as being first-time, full-time, Bachelor’s degree-seeking students. Once the cohort is identified, it is a fixed population tracked for retention and completion purposes annually through the sixth year.
• First-time – Students in their first term (excluding Concurrent Enrollment).
• Full-time – Students enrolled in 12 or more credits.
• Bachelor’s Degree-seeking – Students who are matriculated in a Bachelor’s level program, an academic discipline which requires completion of a minimum of 120 semester credit hours, University Studies requirements, and a chosen major.

Intended Benchmarks
1. Short-term (Ongoing): Impact of specific interventions to the percentage of lift on persistence to the next term.
3. Long-term (4-6 years): Increase graduation rates and decrease time to graduation.
Retention Initiatives for the 2017-18 Academic Year

Following is a list of new and ongoing Student Affairs retention efforts with an impact on the persistence, retention, and graduation of USU students. New initiatives are bolded.

- Director of Student Retention and Completion
  - **First Scholars** is a new curriculum-based mentor program that matches first generation and minority students with peer mentors. Students selected to participate in the First Scholars Program must enroll in and complete: USU 1010 (F), USU 1160 (F), USU 2160 (S). The curriculum is based on leadership development.
  - **Thrive Website and Media Library** is a new website designed to shepherd and encourage students through each year of their undergraduate experience at USU. The focus is on four areas of persistence: academic, social, personal, and financial. Each of these four areas includes benchmarks and resources for freshmen through senior years. The Media Library contains several videos of current students and alumni speaking about their own persistence at USU. (thrive.usu.edu)
  - **Social Media Outreach** including FaceBook, Twitter, and Instagram are being used as tools to share messages of persistence and hope to USU students.
  - **Mentor Meals** is a program that provides mentors with the option to check out a meal plan card to take a student (or students) to lunch or dinner. Meal cards have been purchased through a USHE grant to provide mentors the means to facilitate meaningful discussions over a shared meal. Currently the First Scholars program and Engineering Mentors program are utilizing these meal cards.
  - **Nudge Campaigns** and training in writing and developing nudge campaigns are coordinated out of the Office of Student Retention & Completion. These campaigns focus on succinct, relevant, timely, actionable communications to students. They are then measured in the lift in persistence the campaign creates for the target population.
  - **Civitas Illume** is used to identify at risk populations and the primary risk factors contributing to low persistence.
  - **Retention Awards** were initiated in 2017. Two $500 awards will be presented annually. The 2017 awards were presented to Dr. Kristina Scharp (Retention Researcher of the Year) and Professor Tonya Triplett (Retention Faculty of the Year). The 2018 awards will be presented to a faculty and an advisor. A nomination is sought from each college through the Associate Deans.
  - **Retention Data**
    - **AWOL (student who left the University without completing a Leave of Absence) Reports for 2013-16 cohorts.**
    - **LOA (Leave of Absence) Reports/Analysis for 2013-16 cohorts.**
    - **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.
    - **Tableau Visualizations**
    - **ARGOS reports.**
Support and Facilitation of College Retention Efforts:

- College Welcome events during the week of Connections.
- Faculty mentor is assigned to every student in the Quinney College of Natural Resources (QCNR).
- QCNR weekly Coffee Social for students, faculty, and staff.
- Faculty mentors are assigned to specific at-risk students in CHaSS.
- USU-UB has initiated a faculty mentor program for the 2017-18 year.

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)

ETE Faculty Workshop on faculty best practices regarding student success and engagement. The January 2018 workshop will be focused on faculty mentoring.

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.

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.

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 Orientation: the Director of Student Retention speaks to parents at orientation 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

- **Aggie Orientation** is a new 5-module online orientation process that delivers on-time information to students from the point of admission, through enrollment, and into their first semester at USU.
- USU 1010: University Connections.
- Reverse Processional and Luminary experience as the culmination of Connections week.
- LOA/Deferment Process
  - Visits to Missionary Prep Classes at LDS Institute
  - Communication Plan for Deferment and LOA
- 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.

Registrar’s Office

- **Registration Nudge** is sent out to notify students of their specific scheduled time to register.
- Registration Reminders and Assistance
- DegreeWorks is the university degree audit program.
- 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

- **Registration Hold Button** so students know when they have a registration hold.
- **Registration Notification Button** so students know the date and time they are eligible to register.

Curriculum & Enrollment Management

- Continued identification and resolution of bottleneck courses

Academic Service Center

- Strategies for Academic Success (USU 1730)
- Math/Stats Tutoring Center
- Supplemental Instruction
- Study Skills Quicksops
- Student Support Services (TRIO)
- Inclusion of resilience and persistence themes in workshops offered by the Academic Success Center (ASC).

Career Services

- **Aggie Handshake** is USU’s new student employment system.

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Report submitted by Heidi Beck Kesler, Director of Student Retention & Completion, Division of Student Affairs: Utah State University on November 6, 2017.
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.

- 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
  - Resilience Workshops through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

- Residential Life
  - Sophomore Dinner Symposium Series.
### Addendum 1: Official Retention/Graduation Data (from AAA)

**UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**RETENTION/GRADUATION REPORT**  
Full-Time, First-Time, Bachelor's Degree-Seeking Cohorts, 2006-2016

**Notes 1 & 2**

**Table 1. ALL STUDENTS**

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<th>Initial Cohort</th>
<th>Retention Rates</th>
<th>Cumulative Graduation and Retention Rates</th>
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<td>To 2nd Yr.</td>
<td>To 3rd Yr.</td>
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<tr>
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**Note 1:** 2006-2010 Initial Cohort included all degree-seeking students at Logan Campus and RDCE. Graduation rates calculated for those who completed a bachelor degree.

**Note 2:** Starting with 2011, Initial Cohort includes only bachelor level degree-seeking students at Logan Campus, RDCE and USU Eastern. Graduation rates calculated for those who completed a bachelor degree.

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 Fed. Govt.; 4) serving on an official church mission.

**2017-2018 Academic Year**

Report submitted by Heidi Beck Kesler, Director of Student Retention & Completion, Division of Student Affairs: Utah State University on November 6, 2017.