Strategies for Increasing Enrollment
HED 2289

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Shifting Efficiencies: Expenditure Productivity to Revenue Generation

• This course focuses on the revenue side of the ledger by examining student retention concepts.

• Effective enrollment strategies are shifting from student access to student success efforts in response to an environment of declining enrollments and related fiscal instability.

• This session will describe how the business officer can better evaluate the allocation of resources that support successful student retention strategies.
Why Is Managing Enrollment Important?

- Decline in High School graduates
- Tuition and related student debt is exceeding students ability to pay
- Federal student assistance is declining
- State financial support for colleges has declined
- The excessive time it now takes students to graduate negatively impacts graduation rates, student debt and institutional fiscal stability.
Why Business Managers?

The Business Officer is no longer a “spectator” in the enrollment management process—marketing, recruiting and student retention.

Managers must be leaders who are able to quantify their assessment of institutional effectiveness and understand the importance of locating and funding “high impact” functional areas.

It is through the ability to identify and effectively redirect discretionary funds that fiscal managers are becoming involved in the allocation of resources enrollment management areas—important high impact functional areas.
Declining Enrollments – Excessive Fixed-Cost Commitments

• College programs and buildings have been built around a model that allows 50+% of the students to fail; a model that cannot be sustained when the student feeder (high school) pool is diminishing.

• Colleges are now faced with oversized fixed costs—infracstructures (debt service and operational expenses) and staffing commitments (tenure & union contracts) that tuition increases cannot support.
Takes Too Long, Costs Too Much

• Nationwide, only 50 of more than 580 publicly funded four-year institutions graduate a majority of their full-time students in four years.

• Public universities graduate only 19% of their full-time (traditional) students; including a subset of flagship universities that manages to graduate 36% in four-years. (Lewin, 2014)
Decline in High School Grads

• The United States now has the highest college dropout rate in the industrialized world, and in terms of 25-to-34 year-olds with college degrees, it has fallen from first to twelfth.

• The unprecedented growth that higher education experienced after WWII has been sustained by back-filling the high percentage of freshmen dropouts (1-in-3) with high school graduates.

• The end of the higher education growth was predictable with the last of the baby-boomers’ grand-children (millennials) graduating from high school--by 2012—their babies will not begin arriving at college for another decade.
Tuition and Fees are Reaching Prohibitive Levels.

- During the years 1993 to 2007, the tuition and fees for attending in-state public universities rose an inflation-adjusted 79 percent, while those for private colleges and universities rose 57 percent.

- 1980, annual tuition at public and private four-year institutions were 4 and 17 percent respectively of median family income. Today (2015) they are 9 and 38 percent.

- The National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges report noted that, “Projected out to 2036, tuition would go to 24 percent of the family budget.”
Tuition Spiraling out of Control

• Financing a college education is becoming an unsurmountable challenge for many families.

• Student loans, now totaling $1.5+ trillion, were once an attractive alternative for financing college until the average debt has became a significant financial burden averaging $37,172.

• Research suggests that delaying graduation four more than four years accounts for 70% of student debt because financial aid ends, yet the average time it takes to graduate has increased to 4.7 years. Full-time student community college and four-year college graduation rates are measured in three and six years (150% of normal) time periods.
Federal Aid – Less Support

• Financial aid has not kept pace with the rise in tuition and college living expenses.

• In 1979, the maximum Pell Grant, a federally funded need based tuition and living expenses stipend, covered about three-quarters (75%) of the cost of attending a public four-year college and nearly the entire cost of a community college.

• Today, it covers less than a third of the cost of attending a four-year college and roughly 40 percent of a community college education (Gibson).
State Funding – Less Support

• In public colleges, where three-quarters of undergraduates’ study, the big challenge is that states are getting out of the business of higher education.

• In 1987, states contributed about three-quarters of what higher education spent; now they contribute about half (Selingo).

• Since 2008, states’ per-student spending on higher education has fallen 18 percent nation-wide, according to inflation-adjusted numbers from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
Excess Credits = Delay & Failure

For college students, time kills success.

- Excess time is often the result of too many units taken because of lost transfer credits, changing majors and/or poor degree planning—averaging:
  - 13.5 excess credits for 4-year graduates
  - 20.9 excess credits for 2-year graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College/Degree Type</th>
<th>Standard Credits to Graduate</th>
<th>Average Credits Taken</th>
<th>Standard Years to Graduate</th>
<th>Average Time to Graduate</th>
<th>On-Time Graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community College Certificate</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-yr Associate Arts</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-yr non-Flagship</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>133.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-yr Flagship*</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>134.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(source: Complete College America, 2014)
Causes of Slow Student Progress

Some causes of slow student progress, a Complete College America study ("The Four-Year Myth") stated, are:

• inability to register for required courses;
• credits lost in transfer;
• remediation sequences that do not work;
• too many choices in college catalogs; and
• taking too few degree oriented credits per semester to finish on time.

The additional time needed to graduate has become such a status quo scenario that education policy experts now routinely refer to benchmarks of six years to earn a bachelor’s degree and three years for an associate degree instead of four and two years respectively.
Cost of “Failure”

• According to the National Center for Education Statistics nearly a million students each year fail to continue their higher educational aspirations.

• The “Four-Year Myth,” a Bill and Melisa Gates foundation funded study, calculated that graduates taking excess credits cost students $7.7 billion in tuition and the public tax payer another $11.5 billion in support funding—totaling $19.2 billion annually.
Summary--Higher Education Issues Today

• declining high school feeder populations
• traditional (public and private) stakeholders withdrawing or reducing financial support
• tuition and student debt-to-family income ratios cannot be sustained
• higher than inflation operating increases
• fixed operational costs that cannot be sustained with potentially declining enrollments
• excessive non-completer rates that make college an unachievable goal for too many students—providing colleges a dilemma, and possible solution.
Why Finish on Time?
Taking more than two or four-years to get an associate or bachelor degree:
• Reduces the likelihood of students graduating;
• increases (70%) in student debt; and
• creates colleges’ fiscal instability because of;
  – fixed costs created during expansion period;
  – increased competition for fewer available students; and
  – often discounted tuition or inadequate grant funding to support additional tuition increases.
Defining the Cause of Poor Student Retention

Are Students Ready For College?
Schools Are Not Preparing Students for College

A report released by the Iowa City based ACT college entrance exam found that at least 60% of the 2012 high school graduates who took its test are at risk of not succeeding in college.

Percentage of students taking ACT’s tests that are not college-ready:

- English 23%
- Reading 48%
- Math 54%
- Science 69%
Math il-literacy

- Math, a subject that reliably predicts children’s future earnings, continues to be the United States’ weakest area at every income level based on 2015 OECD sponsored international PISA test results.

- Despite the U.S. being one of the world’s biggest per-student spenders, America’s 15-year-olds tested below average in math; ranking 25 out of 34 nations, and scoring better than only two of 12 other developed comparison countries—Italy and Spain.

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
Other Reasons Why Students Don’t Graduate

- Financial: short-fall in funding or unexpected nonacademic expenditures
- Family dynamics (child birth, separation from spouse, health, etc.)
- Social commitments such as military commitments, travel abroad, volunteer work
- Career issues such as relocation or change in work load or schedule
- Conflict between work and studies
- Maturity: Lack of long-term commitment or social issues
- Competing interruptions—students not able to stay academically focused in a relatively unstructured environment
- Takes too long—“pipeline” seems endless with a perceived low return on investment
- Unable to make positive social and academic connections resulting in isolation—home sickness
College Barriers Preventing Student’s Success
Flawed Placement Criteria

• In the analysis published in September, 2016 by the National Center for Education Statistics, when two additional factors to determine academic readiness were considered — grade-point average and level of math taken in high school — it found that:
  – 40 percent of “strongly prepared” students at public two-year colleges; and
  – 13 percent at four-year institutions had taken remedial math.

• These students should have been automatically advanced into the college Algebra courses, indicating that the placement criteria are flawed.
Remedial Courses – Dead-end Strategy

• **Nine out of ten** four-year colleges have been offering remedial courses for at least twenty years to approximately 1.7 million freshmen annually, at an estimated cost of **$3 billion a year**.

• **Thirty-eight percent** of students at four-year colleges and **sixty percent** of community college students are referred to remedial classes before they can enroll in some required college level courses—e.g., algebra and/or English.
Failed Remediation

- Of the full-time four-year college students that take remediation courses, fewer than 25 percent that survive the remediation gauntlet, ultimately complete their degree within six years.
- Only 6 in 10 remedial students in community colleges complete their remedial courses and enroll in the college level class.
- Of those only one-in-ten will graduate within three years (Complete College America).
Lowering Curriculum Expectations to Match Perceived Students’ Abilities

• Another study showed that in addition to current students studying fewer hours than their predecessors, less effort is being rewarded with inflated grades—e.g., 43% of all college grades are A’s today, compared to 31% in 1988 and 15% in 1960. (Rojstaczer and Healy)

• In a study of more than 2,300 undergraduates surveyed by The Collegiate Learning Assessment Foundation (2011) one-half of the students had not taken a course requiring 20 pages of writing during their prior semester, and one-third did not take a course requiring even 40 pages of reading per week (Arum and Roksa).

• In a wider context, many students are just not preparing for lectures at colleges. “About one in four freshmen and one in five seniors said they frequently came to class without completing readings or assignments.” (Lipka)
At tempting to improve Graduation Rates by Dumbing Down College Curriculum

• The National Association of Scholars (NAS) hypothesized that while general education requirements have undergone a gradual loosening over the course of the century, since the mid-1960s they have, to a very large extent, “dissolved.”

• To verify their hypothesis, NAS engaged in a close examination of general education requirements for the Bachelor of Arts degree at the fifty top-ranked schools, as listed in the U.S. News & World Report's, as America's best colleges.
Removing Required Courses From the Curriculum

- The study noted that certain courses and prerequisites that were required in 1964, during the first two years of college, had largely been abandoned by the mid-1990s, including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduation Requirements</th>
<th>1964</th>
<th>1993</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical and/or Biological Science</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis of comprehensive</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of days in the academic year</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why a Decline in Academic Rigor?

The NAS report claimed that the decline in academic rigor since the 60s was caused by:

• “…increased reverence by academics for the idealism and wisdom of students;
• the professoriate’s interest in emphasizing specialized research at the expense of general education; and
• believing that less the rigor, the easier it is to attract and retain students and their tuition checks.”

However, despite the intended outcome, America’s colleges have improved its graduation rates by only three percent since 1995—from 38% to 41%; changing its #1 ranking internationally to slightly below average.

• Source: “The Dissolution of General Education: 1914—1993,” National Association of Scholars
The Working Student: As reported by the Complete College America’s (Gates funded) 2014 report, “The Four-Year Myth,” working students that attend college on a part-time basis are more likely to drop out than graduate.

- Sixty-two percent of full-time community college students graduate as opposed to twenty-seven percent that take 12 to 24 credits a year.
- Seventy-nine percent of full-time four-year college students graduate as opposed to thirty-seven percent of part-time students that take 12 to 24 credits annually.
Maintaining the Status Quo

• Lack of early at-risk profiling for newly admitted and enrolled students and/or poor proactive intervention practices after students begin.

• Not integrating the faculty into their students’ out-of-classroom educational and social experiences.

• Failure to make the educational programs relevant to career opportunities.

• Failure to analyze and correct practices that are not working—e.g., financial aid budgeting.
Attempts to Improve Graduation Rates Have Been Successful, Such As…
Colleges That Have Improved Graduation Rates

• Georgia State University improved its graduation rates by 20% over a ten-year period after implementing a strong intrusive advising program.

• Florida State University merged degree mapping with intrusive advising to improve graduation rates by 17% since 2004—from 44% to 61%. The African-American (73%) and Hispanic (76%) six-year graduation rates are twice the national (2013) average for non-Asian American minorities.
Colleges That Have Improved Graduation Rates (cont.)

- Arizona State University’s four-year graduation rate has increased nearly 20 percentage points since 2002, with the largest increase starting in 2007, after eAdvisor data tracking system was launched.
- eAdvisor helped to improve its four-year graduation rate for lower-income students from 26 percent to 41 percent—although less than the targeted 50% four-year graduation rate.
In 2013, the University of Texas at Austin after discovering that most students’ debt occurred after four years when federal aid ran out and that students were less likely to graduate when they took more than four years, became proactive in getting their freshmen on track for on-time graduation.

1. Set expectation during orientation that all students will complete 30 credits annually.

2. Eliminated bottlenecks when students couldn’t take required courses that filled up—creating a ‘graduation help desk’ hotline.

3. Mined data to identify the profile of students that needed more social and academic support.
University of Texas Results:

• 59% of 2013 freshmen Pell-eligible students graduating on time, up from 40%.
• The gap in on-time graduation rates between Pell and non-Pell students and first-generation students was cut in half, to eight percent.
The University of Arizona (UA) and Ball State University have been experimenting by tracking freshmen social interactions when they use student cards while participating in campus events.

• By measuring social interaction, it can be determined how many people students tend to hang out with at different activities, and if their hanging out is dropping off week-by-week or getting stronger?

• UA puts the social interaction data into algorithms to predict who is in danger of not making it to their sophomore year with an 85% accuracy rate. It’s intervening when social interaction tracking identifies a problem, not grade monitoring, that makes a difference.
Why Can’t Colleges Improve Graduation Rates?

- Mis-focus on results/outcomes, not analyzing the parts that make up the whole—e.g., Deming and Juran in Japan.
- Not quantifying the existing and desired results to validate what is or is not working resulting in irrational (political) status quo—e.g., placement and remediation.
- Failing to hold individuals accountable—e.g., NYC.
Implementing the C-PAM Model

Institutional Research & Predictive Modeling

• Analyzing system-steps to determine what’s working, or not by using Deming’s and Juran’s quality-control model:
  – Breaking processes into measurable building blocks with targeted objectives; and
  – Quantifying performance against measurable standards—Control-Point Accountability Measurement (C-PAM) model.
• Assigning accountability to individuals.
  – NYC
Quantifying Process Performance & Assigning Accountability

Using reverse engineering, or a “peel-the-onion” approach, a college can determine the root causes of retention related problems not just identify the symptoms—example; oil leak.

• Analyze system-steps to determine what’s working, or not by using Deming’s and Juran’s quality-control concept:
  – Dividing processes into measurable building/sequential blocks (control points) with targeted objectives;
  – Quantifying performance against measurable success indicators

• Assigning accountability for improvement to individuals.
  – Example: NYC
The college self-assessment concepts to improve graduation rates and related fiscal stability are summarized in the following “Control-Point Accountability Measurement” (C-PAM) model.

- Assessing control-point (“C-P”), or outcome effectiveness is a critical part of the model.
- Identifying who is responsible for success indicator’s targeted performance represents the accountability (“A”) part of the model.
- The final key for improving graduation rates includes measuring (“M”) institutional controlled processes that impacts students’ success rates to objectively determine what works and what doesn’t work.
Control-Point Accountability Measurement (C-PAM) Model

To implement the C-PAM model six sequential steps must be followed:

• Step #1 — Identify Control Points – Outcome Indicators;
• Step #2 — Define and Benchmark Success Indicators;
• Step #3 — Strategic Planning and Establish Targets;
• Step #4 — Develop Action Plans to Close Performance;
• Step #5 — Assign Accountability; and
• Step #6 — Monitor, Analyze and Adjust Results.
Examples of Ten High-Impact Retention Activities & Functions

1) Institutional Research: Using Data to Identify At-risk Student and Improve Retention
2) Predictive Modeling: Setting the Stage for Institutional Equilibrium
3) Recruitment and Admissions: Committing to Students’ Success
4) Financial Planning: Preparing Students for a Long-term Commitment
5) Proactive Advising: Preempting Student Failure
6) Curriculum Scheduling: Charting a Course for On-time Graduation
7) Faculty Influence: Supporting a Culture of Academic Success
8) Student Life: Creating a Student Success Environment
9) Nontraditional Students: Integrating “Ghost” Students into the College’s Culture
10) Career Advising: Supporting Post-graduate Objectives
Institutional Research & Predictive Modeling

Institutional Research: What Happened?
Understanding the cause (indicator) for dropping out (control point)—e.g., financial reasons?
• Georgia State University discovered that minor, but to seniors, unsurmountable financial issues that were the main reason they were not graduating—even after three years of college.

Identify a problem and solution (success indicator)
• University established small emergency “retention” grants (averaging $900), primarily to seniors.

Predictive Modeling: What Will/Could Happen If…
Calculate the results by using predictive modeling techniques.
• Result? Senior class on-time graduation increased by 25% and overall grad rates improved 7%.
Exercises

Using the C-PAM model, analyze and recommend a solution(s) for each of the following issues as identified in the next slides.

1. Faculty gate keeping

2. Time management – behavioral issues

3. Financial issues
Faculty Gate Keeping

Scenario:
At the end of the freshmen year, an abnormal number/percentage (40%) of students were dropping out of college. Many have transcripts that reflect Ds and Fs in biology. The faculty refuses to change the department’s curriculum and they maintain that the students are failing because they are not ready for college. Freshmen SAT/ACT scores, high school grades, and positive performance at other colleges suggest otherwise. Go through the six CPAM steps and determine a possible “fix.”
Scenario:
At the end of the first freshman semester, 120 students are already on probation because of poor grades. Most of these students were not attending classes regularly. After the students completed a college behavioral assessment questionnaire and attended required study skills classes, it was determined that the probationary students were easily distracted and didn’t allocate adequate time for their studies. Play got in the way. Go through the six CPAM steps and determine a possible “fix strategy.”
Financial Issues

Scenario:
At the end of the freshman year, 40% of the students that indicated they were not returning to the college for their sophomore year because they were having financial problems. Assuming no additional funds or tuition discounts are available, how can this problem be addressed for next year’s freshmen class? Go through the six CPAM steps and determine a possible “fix strategy.”
Conclusion

The colleges capable of understanding the difference between just providing services and proactive interaction, and are willing to implement changes that creates a more active partnership with their students, will survive and move ahead of the competition.

Question and Thoughts?
For more information about Finish-in-Four strategies check out the web site—finishinfour.com.

and

College Assessment Tool

The following College Assessment Tool describes five progressive levels of a college’s commitment towards improving student success rates. After reviewing the scenarios, select the description that best exemplifies your college of interest. If it is determined that there is a blending of two adjoining styles, split the difference and note the average score. Use the score sheet at the end of the questionnaires to track your college’s propensity for improving its student retention and graduation rates.

Discuss with interested stakeholders how well your college connects institutional research and practices with its retention strategies and if the status quo is acceptable? Consider what can be done to move the college to a more proactive retention style. Ask what a prospective college student would consider important when choosing a college.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Assessment Tool</th>
<th>Institutional Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional College Model [two points]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ We don’t use research to analyze the college’s students or institutional effectiveness. We focus primarily on getting students registered and into class. We take pride in our ability to make the college accessible to all students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ We have the typical array of remedial and tutorial programs at our college. We believe that we are addressing students’ needs, although we have not analyzed what is working or not.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ The acceptance with the status quo is reinforced when we conduct strategic planning sessions. The college rarely uses data metrics to evaluate programs or student success. We believe the intuitive knowledge and experiences of our education leaders is adequate for assessing performance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ We are fine with our college’s programs and student success rates, whatever they are, and don’t plan to change institutional processes or practices.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Darwinism Model [four points]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Our college has an institutional researcher. Any data that we use is provided by different departments and relates to their performance—e.g., number of students serviced, amount of aid distributed, persistence and graduation rates.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ We find that major milestone indicators such as freshmen persistence and graduation rates provide adequate benchmarks for assessing institutional effectiveness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Our college’s programs, implemented to help students, are patterned after best practices introduced at other colleges. We keep abreast of the latest student retention trends by implementing programs that appear to be effective elsewhere. We don’t bother to analyze whether programs work at our college.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ We don’t believe there are any patterns of student behavior or college readiness that merit developing strategic initiatives. There are too many variables that impact students’ decision to stay and graduate.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While it might be beneficial to tailor responses to meet individual student needs, we rely mostly on department driven programs to service the largest possible at-risk population.

We have used data to analyze program effectiveness. While we try to incorporate data metrics into our strategic planning process, we don't typically measure whether action plans and program changes have been effective.

We have a substantial database that is beginning to become helpful in analyzing student performance. However, it is just beginning to be used by other than our research department and therefore has limited applications.

Our college’s average freshmen ACT/SAT scores are considered an important indicator of institutional excellence.

**Strategic Intervention [eight points]**

- Data-driven decisions are important at our college. The data base we have developed encompasses all elements of student experiences—e.g., recruitment, admission, academic, financial, social and career preparation and placement. This provides the data to develop definitive parameters that can be used for creating predictive models.

- As a part of our strategic planning process, every conceivable part of our campus’ operations that impacts student success is evaluated through reverse engineering process.

- Accountability for achieving measurable improvement is a part of the annual personnel evaluation process.

- Profiling admitted freshmen using quantifiable at-risk indicators is critical for program planning purposes.

- Our college believes that data mining to predict student needs, monitor student behavior for intervention (in and outside the classroom) and to assess institutional performance is critical to student success.

- By embracing a culture of investigative analysis, there is a continued search for what is working, or not.

**Proactive College [ten points]**

- Our college has embraced data collection and use to a significant degree. While we have an institutional researcher, the users (e.g., department heads) have been educated to develop their own data-driven reports to assess students, faculty and department operational effectiveness.

- An example of using data to monitor student success can be seen when cross-campus classroom attendance is used weekly by...
department heads or advisors to identify students that may need intervention.

☐ The use of data has brought life to the planning and review process. It is not necessary to wait for periodic review of information to assess whether programs are working, and if students are being served.

☐ Critical data points are constantly reviewed to determine if new or better indicators can be utilized to identify and predict student behavior.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Assessment Tool</th>
<th>Predictive Modeling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional College Model [two points]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We do regular strategic planning at our college, but don’t assign responsibility for change or set numeric outcome expectations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Colleges are not manufacturing oriented organizations. Learning is individualized to each student’s needs and is not something that can be measured to assess or predict at-risk behavior.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We don’t know what our student success rate is and therefore don’t talk much about our graduation rate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Our college uses some data to facilitate scheduling of classrooms, faculty, and courses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We don’t focus on our graduation rate and believe college-ready freshmen will always succeed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I don’t remember if we have ever stopped and evaluated our retention, remedial or graduation results using numeric indicators.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Darwinism Model [four points]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Our college believes that it provides the best education among its peer colleges. However, the belief has not been validated by measurable comparisons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students must take responsibility for their success. Trying to interfere with the students’ learning processes by intervening because of statistical indicators is not necessary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We believe that students’ success is important and have established all the requisite student retention programs needed to help students. The effectiveness of these programs is never questioned nor are results measured.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We watch freshmen persistence rates and graduation rates to make certain that we do not fall below other peer colleges rates. When rates drop, we typically blame it on admission’s practices and claim that standards are slipping.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- It’s not that there is an aversion to data, but the professional educators believe that experience and intuitive decision making provides better results than trying to push number driven processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We emphasize equal access to college programs and support but rely on students to seek help when needed.

Use of statistical information tends to focus on macro or organization-wide assessments (e.g., graduation rates, freshmen persistence rates, average SAT scores for freshmen class) and less on evaluating individual student or departmental retention issues.

We don’t do any predictive modeling other than to recognize that annual trends and historical benchmarks of graduation rates informs us that there may be a need to change something.

Early attempts to use data for examining persistence related issues has been successful. However, the fix is usually focused on addressing the result and not for determining the cause—e.g., more financial aid vs. better student budgeting.

If we improve our retention rates, a greater use of data to set recruitment and admissions parameters as well as linking planning and budgeting efforts will be needed. We are initiating but still at the beginning stages of using data to assess institutional effectiveness and plan future initiatives.

Our college’s average freshmen ACT/SAT scores are considered an important indicator of institutional excellence.

**Strategic Intervention [eight points]**

- Numeric targets are published for all to see and updated results are exhibited frequently. Weekly staff and regular public meetings typically include discussions about what is working well, or not, in the organization.
- Data is best used for analyzing the micro parts of the organization as opposed to only the outcome or final product results—e.g., remediation results vs. graduation rates.
- The institutional research team constantly tells us when data identifies a weak operational program and/or multiple students’ behavior that are signaling a retention issue requires institutional intervention.
- Establishing student profiles by analyzing data patterns related to previously unsuccessful students is important for improving retention rates.
data to develop definitive parameters that can be used for creating predictive models.

- We build our recruitment and supporting practices based on data-driven information—looking for students that can be admitted and will succeed given our college’s commitment of resources.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proactive College [ten points]</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Our college is considered a model retention college because statistically validated best practices are operational and monitored.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Target expectations are quantified and progress towards improving retention related control points are communicated to the college’s faculty, staff and students regularly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- When the leadership meets, there is always time set aside to review the latest update on key indicators with discussion on what can be improved.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Using historical information to determine which future students can be salvaged is fundamental for setting recruitment and admissions parameters, creating pre-enrollment programs for admitted students, and implementing advising intervention strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Data mining to monitor students' behavior, creating predictive modeling for early warning and assessment of what is working to help students succeed is a fundamental cornerstone of our college’s retention efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We believe that data is effective for helping faculty and staff to be innovative by providing clues or trail-head indicators for what is happening on campus. Data-driven assessments and initiatives have been accepted because the metrics are used to help set standards, not dictate how standards are to be met.</td>
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## College Assessment Tool
### Recruitment and Admissions

### Traditional College Model [two points]
- Our college has more students than available seats. Overflowing, and perhaps underfunded, recruiting more students is unlikely.
- We are not a selective college and accept all high school graduates or GED completers.
- No recruiting is needed for new students and little or no effort to attract students that will improve student retention is being attempted.
- Our college’s only focus is to handle an overwhelming herd of new students each year. We are funded for seats filled, not for graduating them.
- Many students don’t fit the traditional student profile which makes using metrics to measure student needs or institutional effectiveness difficult.
- We rely on word of mouth, regional reputation, and regular advertising to market our college.
- We have not attempted to sort our applicants or enrolled students into risk profiles.

### Darwinism Model [four points]
- Our college’s recruitment is relatively easy because of regional/state loyalty, academic reputation, or strong alumni/family feeder population.
- Recruitment and admissions are independent department and while important for marketing and maintaining the college’s reputation (especially among alumni foundation donors), it is not integrated into the academic and student life aspects of our college.
- Recruiters assume that they are doing fine since no negative feedback or suggested recruiting criteria has been offered. Silence is assumed to be success.
- Our marketing image is based on positive factors like a winning athletic program, a fun Greek system, several highly-regarded faculty researchers, and many successful graduates.
Equal Treatment Model [six points]

- Our college has a good student retention program but recruiting staff do not meet regularly with the retention team.
- In recent years, the college has recruited an increasing number of first-generation students, but the college is careful not to label or treat them differently than our traditional freshmen.
- Once our freshmen class is (admitted), we analyze the aggregate needs of the students and try to build a budget that provides equal access to services for all students. We have not considered creating services that target our greatest need students first.
- We use social media to help nudge applicants connect to the college and its programs while they are making a decision to attend our college.
- We minimize the use of ACT/SAT scores to assess student ability to graduate. We use high school grades and class rankings to help determine who is ready to attend our college.

Strategic Intervention [eight points]

- The college annually compares its freshmen persistence rates to its recruitment strategies.
- Recruiters are included as members of the admission/enrollment management team and understand the college’s commitment towards improving graduation rates. They are also included in resource allocation and program review committees.
- The college president signs off on the recruitment strategy that operates under the premise that all students who are admitted will graduate.
- When our feeder high school students complete their college prep algebra and English courses, we immediately administer our college’s placement tests at their schools. If they pass, students are invited to take college algebra in their senior high school year; at their school.
- Information related to financial aid, the need to be academically ready and our proactive advising policies are communicated to prospective students at high school seminars and personalized websites. This helps prospective students understand that on-time graduation has a high priority at the college.
not desired by other colleges. We have funded programs to help them succeed.

- Our college enrolls freshmen that are college ready or we believe are acceptable-risk students—including high-risk students that we believe can succeed at our college. Resources are dedicated to support certain categories of formerly at-risk students. The college will not enroll students that cannot be supported.

- Before expanding our recruitment to focus on first-generation and other typical high-risk students, we determined whether we had the culture and resources to support them. We subsequently expanded the recruitment pool to meet our commitments.

- The definition of at-risk prospects is adjusted annually based on program success in dealing with former students’ difficulties.

- Our college uses technology and face-to-face counseling to communicate with prospective students on an ongoing basis.

- Thanks to effective admission profiling that matches our college’s willingness and ability to facilitate students’ success, our college is above average in persistence and graduation rates and continues to improve the success rates of first-generation students.
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<th>College Assessment Tool</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Planning</td>
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**Traditional College Model [two points]**
- There are more applications for financial aid processing than we have staff available to provide one-on-one advising with students. We focus on two issues. Packaging all financial aid awards for distribution before classes begin and assuring that the college is protected against any potential liabilities.
- We provide cost-of-education counseling information on our website and at recruiting sessions with prospective students and their families.
- We don’t monitor students’ adequate progress related to credits completed each academic year.
- Once a student begins, we do not confirm that full aid funding and graduation will coincide. We believe that is the responsibility of the students.
- It would be correct to state that the financial aid department is more of a processing and regulation compliance center than an advising source for student retention-oriented operation.

**Darwinism Model [four points]**
- Our college develops relationships with local high school students by showing them how to apply for financial aid. We also provide a comprehensive web-site to assist transfer and adult learners as they prepare their FAFSAs (applications) for federal aid.
- Appointments can be made with appropriate financial aid counselors until the registration process begins. These are critical for helping students apply for tuition discounts, student and parent loans, and other work and aid opportunities.
- Late students obtain a tentative Pell Grant determination based on the college’s preliminary assessment of their application. FAFSA must be filed before a Pell Grant award is made.
- The college believes that each student has the responsibility to assess the adequacy of funding, including remaining financial aid each year.
Our college’s approach for providing support is to employ adequate staff to meet the needs of all our students with advance scheduling—before classes begin. Financial aid lines during registration are not an issue.

Adequate progress is monitored for financial aid students and a review of students’ degree plans are conducted at the end of the junior year. Availability of remaining financial aid is not always assessed.

We are accessible, have staff to service students in need, but are not overly proactive in anticipating problems or intervening unless asked to by a student to help.

Strategic Intervention [eight points]

- Every student, with their family, completes an enrollment-to-graduation budget under the direct supervision of a qualified staff assistant, whether financial aid is provided or not. We monitor and cross reference the student budget plan as well as the degree plan at least annually.
- Our college understands that budget and degree planning is critical for late arrivals and mandate a counseling session within the first ten days after classes begin.
- We direct our limited resources to address the anticipated financial needs of our salvageable high-risk students. Ongoing financial monitoring is provided, and freshmen college survival lectures/classes are mandatory.
- Since our last-minute enrollees are often unable to secure federal financial aid during the frantic registration process, we created a no-interest short-term loan program that is repaid when Pell grants are awarded.
- Our foundation provides bridge grants to last semester students when needed.

Proactive College [ten points]

- Our fundamental philosophy is to verify that each student can obtain a degree without being surprised or stopped because of funding issues. This requires one-on-one counseling before classes begin and continues until graduation.
- When our college signs off on a student’s budget plan, strategic plans are established to confirm all potential financial contingencies are identified and backup plans are agreed upon.
- Our foundation financial aid office guarantees that resources will be available to cover expenses until graduation.
If a student experiences a change in program or an unexpected financial emergency, an assigned mentor is available to work through the problem with the student and family members.

Our college considers a student’s inability to graduate from college, especially for financial reasons, to be an institutional failing. We believe that the cost of failure is an unnecessary expense to the student and college.
## College Assessment Tool
### Proactive Advising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional College Model [two points]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Our college is providing many standard functions services and programs (e.g., financial aid, counseling, tutorial assistance, job center) to help students succeed, but do not consider ourselves to be intrusive advisors. We rely on students to ask us for help when they need it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ We do not profile at-risk students, but we do use college placement testing to identify students that need to take remedial courses.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ The ‘Center’ offers a voluntary non-credit first-year survival program. Few students participate.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ We have a large commuter (non-resident) population, that don’t stick around after classes are over, which makes on-campus program assistance difficult.</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ We are experts at getting classes on the schedule that students need to graduate, but don’t have the staff or resources to monitor each student to determine when a student is in academic trouble.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ We care about our students, but we don’t have the time, staff or resources to take care of them. We have a good reputation for making it possible to access our college’s programs, but not necessarily for getting to graduate on time.</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Darwinism Model [four points]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Our college is a strong advocate of, ‘build it and they will come,’ advising. Programs for students needing assistance are available if they ask for help. We believe that taking charge is an important part of the college maturing process. Our students are ready for the real world.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Our counselors/advisors prefer to focus on helping students select a major, transfer to another college, or qualify for graduate school. They rarely deal with student’s personal issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ There is not enough staff to be proactive when students exhibit pre-dropout behavior. Everyone is willing to help, but there is not an organized effort to intervene early when student exhibit behavior...</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
We don’t consider our college dropouts to be failures, they are just not ready for college. Maybe, again, later.

### Equal Treatment Model [six points]
- We know that we can’t afford expensive programs, but we do sort our highest risk, typically low-income, first-generation college students into supportive programs.
- Our freshmen are assigned to advisors who manage caseloads of between 750 to 1,000 students. Advisors rely on faculty referrals, attendance information and mid-term grades to identify students that may need assistance. It usually takes a semester/term before an at-risk student is identified and assisted.
- We put our greatest effort into monitoring and working with freshmen. If we can get freshmen successfully transitioned into college classes and eventually into declaring a degree major so faculty advisors can actively interact with their students, we believe we can keep them until graduation.
- We do better at identifying and helping new at-risk students than finding and supporting students that are having trouble after they begin classes.

### Strategic Intervention [eight points]
- We pride ourselves on the strong database we use to analyze former students who have succeeded or failed. Accumulated data over time has been helpful in determining what institutional barriers need to be removed to help students graduate.
- We work in a faculty/advisor team approach towards proactively identifying and working with incoming freshmen and monitoring student behaviors that might indicate proactive intervention is needed. While our primary efforts are focused on freshmen, we continue to research the factors that cause upper class students to drop out so that we can better respond to their needs.
- Freshmen attendance is input and monitored daily. Faculty enter exception (absent) attendance by using a phone app. Poor attendance is one of the first retention warning signals.
- We target our efforts at high return-on-investment students which is made possible by using the data to anticipate, identify and quickly respond to when students’ performance and progress are struggling. Our average response time after identifying that a student is in trouble is about five days.

### Proactive College [ten points]
- We know what our students are doing! We achieve success with limited resources by using the swipe card method to determine if
students are attending classes, eating regularly at the dining facilities, completing lab projects, spending time in the library, working on campus or attending college social events.

- An advisor and faculty mentor guide students until they graduate. A culture of faculty-student partnering often results in life-long relationships between faculty and their mentees.
- The college encourages collaborating with first-generation student’s families. This has been very successful for freshmen that have left their homes for the first time.
- If we were to choose a theme for our college, it would be that we specialize in collaborating with each student until they graduate. We have never let lack of resources or real-life distractions interfere with this primary objective.
- The college always looks for new ideas that will help us continue to improve our retention and graduation rates. We can always change if you can tell us why and show us how.
## College Assessment Tool
### Curriculum Scheduling and Degree Plan Monitoring

### Traditional College Model [two points]
- 95% of our students register online using the college’s degree requirements and course catalog as a guide. The degree requirements are difficult to understand especially for new students who are not familiar with terms and definitions.
- Because of the mix of full and part-time students, we are not able to use a block or cohort registration system.
- While counselors are available to help, students must monitor their own academic progress.
- Registration is not a controlling point in student retention efforts. Registration is a processing function—getting students into classes and allocating resources to meet their needs.
- We try to keep our popular, and often required classes open to accommodate all students. We believe that giving the advanced students priority in registration helps them get the classes they need. Unfortunately, first-come-first serve doesn’t always work.

### Darwinism Model [four points]
- Course catalogues provide the necessary guidance for students. While advising assistance is available most students seem to get along OK without it.
- It is hard to know if students take too many courses because most (part-time and full-time) don’t graduate on time anyway. The reasons are too numerous or confusing to list or try to resolve.
- Some students are unable to obtain classes because they are not offered every semester or fill quickly. It often takes longer to graduate but the practice seems to be normal—so, we don’t worry.
- Our registration processes are mostly student driven. We create college class schedules (courses, classrooms and faculty) using historical and aggregate enrollment information.
- We believe that to succeed in college, like the real world, you must hustle to make it happen. You snooze, you lose.
Our college is more reactive than proactive when scheduling problems occur. The reality is that we are one semester out of sync when a student self-creates a poor class schedule.

- We provide class scheduling guidance through degree planning seminars and computerized exception audits.
- Each student’s progress on their degree plan is reviewed at the end of their junior year to confirm whether they will graduate on time.
- Freshmen and sophomores can take general education courses or declare a major. Most who declare a major before their junior year change their minds at least once.
- Students don’t seem to mind taking more time to graduate—it’s accepted as normal.

**Strategic Intervention [eight points]**

- In addition to our computerized degree planning system, and an automated credit audit system that blocks students from taking classes outside the prescribed degree plan, advisors pre-review proposed class schedules via the computer and sign-off on all students’ class schedules before classes begin.
- Even students that change majors have little trouble graduating on time because freshmen and sophomores are required to take the general education curriculum. Students explore different options through the elective process without losing credits when their upper division studies begin.
- We provide a very structured schedule for students, grouping students with their peers—cohort driven—even for part-time students.
- We track our students and know when a student is not progressing academically. It is important to determine why there is a problem so that we can intervene.

**Proactive College [ten points]**

- Our college strongly believes that cohort registration, especially for freshmen, creates the best environment for helping students take the correct courses.
- Our automated degree audit system combined with department mentors and department advisors helps maintain credit audit oversight until students graduate.
additional lab time, but not segregating them from other students or the college curriculum.

- We require freshmen and sophomores to complete their general education courses before they declare a major.
- If a student does not graduate within 120 credits, and a change in major has not occurred, the college picks up the excess tuition costs.
## College Assessment Tool

### Faculty Connections

#### Traditional College Model [two points]
- A large percentage of our classes are taught by part-time/adjunct faculty or teacher assistants who do not have office hours and typically arrive just before class begins.
- Full-time faculty, at least those that schedule office hours, are available for quick meetings. However, there is usually a line outside their office, and it is difficult to get time to talk and still make the next class.
- Our faculty are great, but because of union contract provisions they are not allowed to spend time outside the classroom with students unless they are compensated.
- I feel sorry for our freshmen that build a class schedule without knowing which faculty are best. It takes them time to discover how to avoid faculty gatekeeping pitfalls.
- We don’t monitor grade distribution or ask faculty to meet with students other than office hours. We focus on providing classes, not social networks.

#### Darwinism Model [four points]
- Our faculty are highly regarded in their fields, but do not teach lower-division classes. Grad students and adjunct (part-time faculty) teach our freshmen/sophomore classes.
- To avoid tough instructors, the smart students quickly join a fraternity/sorority and get the inside scoop on which instructors and classes are the best. The ‘Houses’ also have copies of previous tests.
- Students don’t get much opportunity to meet the real faculty, unless they seek out a specific project or college internship.
- When campus events have an academic orientation the faculty usually make a presentation to a large audience, not very personal.
- Students come here for our reputation, not with an expectation that they will get to know the faculty or leave with a warm fuzzy feeling with anyone other than roommates.
While we know that some faculty are better teachers than others, we have not attempted to improve weak teachers by strengthening their skills. The students seem to know who the better faculty are, and we allow over registration into those classes.

Some students have been successful in getting to know faculty socially. Usually that occurs after a student picks a major and the declared department organizes meet-and-greet events.

All students can get to know faculty and support staff by joining and participating in campus clubs and special support groups where faculty sponsors mentor/coach students.

Faculty sponsored research internships are reserved for upper level and graduate students.

**Strategic Intervention [eight points]**

- Faculty exhibiting outstanding retention results are recognized at the annual graduation ceremony. Our faculty love their mentoring relationships with students.
- Freshmen, full-time and part-time, are clustered into faculty mentored community learning groups—no exceptions permitted. Before our students graduate, they are encouraged to participate in at least one high-impact project.
- Faculty are evaluated primarily on their teaching skills when achieving tenure.
- Full-time faculty are expected to mentor at least one freshman class a year and participate in at least two group social events with them during each term.
- Students consider the faculty-student culture to be inclusive, informal and highly supportive. It is not unusual for students to maintain communication and relationships with faculty long after they graduate.

**Proactive College [ten points]**

- Our first-year program incorporates the structured community learning group culture for all, not just high-risk students.
- All lower division classes are taught by full-time faculty or equally experienced adjunct instructors.
- Faculty mentors work hard to help develop students’ study skills and incorporate college funded off-campus excursions to museums and cultural events for academic enrichment, and for building relationships.
- Faculty tenure and compensation are determined by an instructor’s commitment towards effective teaching—emphasizing a culture of excellence.
Once a student has been assigned to a faculty mentor, that relationship is expected to last until graduation.

Faculty receive bonuses when their mentored students graduate.

Every student that graduates is expected to have participated in at least one lower and upper division high-impact project activity.
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<th>College Assessment Tool</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student Life</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional College Model [two points]</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>from the students’ perspective...</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ I had to work, so I didn’t bother to attend the Saturday orientation. I understand it was basically introducing the key administrators to the new students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ This school has a large commuter population with some students living in a few dorms. The college sponsors social functions like dances and even offers free bus transportation to several athletic events each season. Nobody shows up. Can’t figure out why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ My classmates and I are older, many with parental responsibilities. For us, balance means having the energy at the end of the day to stay awake and prepare for classes. No time to develop relationships with faculty or other students. Life comes first, then studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ The college campus is pretty, but not really built to encourage students to gather and relax. Administrative and business offices are clustered in a general area that is called a Student Center—open 9 to 5, M – F. Lots of lines when trying to get things done during registration. We can register online but the system is not easy to use and is often down or slow during busy times.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Darwinism Model [four points]</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>from the students’ perspective...</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ We had an orientation weekend when we heard presentations from faculty and advisors. No one recorded our attendance so a group of us took off after lunch. We had a great time just hanging out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Being connected to the grapevine is important. I am considering joining the Greek system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ I may not bother attending all my classes, so I can focus on the social scene this semester. No one seems to be paying attention to what I am doing, so why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ So many interesting things to do! I really enjoy the late-night discussions with my roommate and our new friends. It’s hard to get up in the morning and attend classes, but college isn’t only about study and lectures. Besides, I test best when under pressure and I will do great on exams because I cram well!</td>
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</table>
It was amazing how many people I met during freshman orientation week. We were broken into groups of 25 and were given ample time and opportunities to get to know each other. Unfortunately, I don’t see them around campus much, so we have quickly become strangers again.

Even with lots of people around me, it has been difficult to make new friends. Everyone seems to be working, living with families, or just trying to fit college into their lives. We seem to be anxiously lonely together.

I may be studying too hard, but I can’t figure out who to talk to about it. I am still afraid to chat with any professor. They are so smart, and I am afraid I will look dumb. I’m going to try and find my orientation leader to see if he has any ideas that will help me.

Wow! This place is really complicated. I am learning to hurry up and wait—lots of process lines. It’s a first come, first served kind of place. But, heck, that’s equality treatment. No one is special. Everyone gets the same service. I think I’m learning the definition of bureaucracy—patience.

**Strategic Intervention [eight points]**

*from the students’ perspective...*

- I am a shy person, but the orientation week made a difference. We continued to meet weekly with small groups led by our ‘home-class’ instructor who also teaches our history class. He and his wife are hosting dinner at their home this weekend. We’ll all be there, together!

- All freshmen participated in a personality/behavior profile session during first-year-experience classes. We sometimes wear (first-name) buttons on campus that color code our profiles so we can meet other people—it’s a great conversation starter.

- I really like our one-stop center. They help to get things done or make appointments for me. When I communicate directly online I always get immediate responses.

- Each week, the college has a social activity. Based on the points I have earned when I swipe my student ID card at the beginning and end of each sponsored activity, I’m in the run to win a laptop.

- My roommate was not showing up and someone came to talk to her. She seems to be enjoying herself now that she is more active. I’m glad someone was watching her.
During our week-long orientation program, we were organized into community learning groups. My learning group mentor and her spouse have already invited us to a bowling and pizza evening. More events have been scheduled.

I am extroverted and sometimes get too socially involved; forgetting I'm here to study. Fortunately, my mentor and college advisor assigned to me are helping improve my study habits. All is good.

With the competition, I was afraid that I had made a mistake by going to this college. I got depressed, stopped studying and began to set myself up for failure. That didn’t last long. Two of my professors talked to me after their classes and assigned me to supportive study groups. They kept track of my homework assignments and let me know how I was doing.

In the beginning, my faculty mentor would check in with me regularly. Everyone here seems to know what I am doing and really cares that I am OK and doing well. I feel connected while also being given the room I need to explore and learn on my own.
## College Assessment Tool

### Nontraditional Students

### Traditional College Model [two points]

*from the students’ perspective . . .*

- My college has a mix of residential full-time students and commuter enrollments.
- Most of the commuters are evening, part-time and transfer students, many who work full-time.
- Our college could be described as ‘bi-polar’. The college is staffed to serve the full-time day students. The evening program is comprised of part-time faculty with few support services.
- I struggle to meet my children’s needs and my academic obligations. No one at the college ever checks to see how I am doing or if I need help.
- Lots of my peers drop out because instructors are strict about attendance, even when work or family issues interferes.
- Class lectures and expected homework often seems irrelevant to the information I need for my career objectives.
- Common complaints from my friends include lack of parking, no evening child care, no office hours after 5:00 p.m., M-F, lost credits when transferring, too many holidays and too few courses during the evenings and summer.
- No one sticks around after classes and the campus is a ghost town on weekends.

### Darwinism Model [four points]

*from the students’ perspective . . .*

- I am glad that I went to a community college before transferring here. I feel sorry for the part-time students with no other college experience. They really look lost and frustrated.
- The college has a great day-time child care program. Unfortunately, I work full-time and take classes at night. Family and friends help, but the expense in time and money is tremendous.
- My college doesn’t cater to older students’ social life. Many of my friends are commuter students with personal lives separate from the college’s student life programs. We are disconnected.
- To complete my degree, I must take some classes during the day because they are not offered in the evenings or weekends. This creates a problem if I cannot find online alternatives. Even then, I
can only take a few credits outside my college to meet my degree requirements.

- I wish I had gone to college right out of high school. The staff and faculty are nice, just not available to students like me. They go home while I’m just starting my evenings on campus. It’s very lonely and frustrating.

**Equal Treatment Model [six points]**

_from the students’ perspective . . ._

- My college tries to provide all services to full-time and part-time students—day and evening. While the effort is appreciated, sometimes I wish that we part-time students could receive different kinds and levels of support—e.g., financial aid, evening child care, special weekend tutorials and labs.
- The social scene at campus is geared for the younger students. I can’t imagine me or my friends showing up on campus with the little-ones.
- I really appreciate the college’s effort to provide work experience and community service activities on weekends. It has given me a chance to interact with the regular students.
- My instructors are a mixed bag when it comes to support. The evening instructors, typically adjunct faculty, are flexible and understand when conflicts occur. The day-time faculty are very strict—no allowance for delays or missed deadlines. I prefer taking classes in the evening.
- As a night student, I don’t have any faculty that have evening office hours. Some part-time faculty come early to meet with students, but they don’t know much more than us.

**Strategic Intervention [eight points]**

_from the students’ perspective . . ._

- My college provided a separate orientation program for all the transfer and otherwise nontraditional students. We all immediately bonded and feel assimilated into the college’s culture.
- To accommodate working adults, my college developed a program that ensures day and evening students get the same services, courses and schedules. Traditional winter/summer gaps have been eliminated making year-round learning a reality and on-time degree completion the norm.
- Nontraditional students are clustered during their first term into groups to help develop supportive networks of peers. This has been particularly popular with single-parents, working students and part-time commuters.
The college has recently developed several new online and hybrid programs. The courses are intended to provide access to new classes and outstanding faculty. The college is expanding online support to a 24/7 system.

I am excited about being involved with campus events, curriculum, and faculty. This has been a great college experience!

**Proactive College [ten points]**

*from the students’ perspective . . .*

- I participated in an orientation program even though I had already completed my associate degree. I especially appreciated the one-on-one counseling session where my degree plan, financial budget and personal interests were discussed.
- Even though I am only taking courses part-time, I will be meeting with some other students that started here as freshmen for dinner at my department dean’s home next weekend. My spouse was also invited.
- I took an online course this term and was surprised to find that the e-advising center was open for calls and emails at 3:00 a.m. – 24/7!
- Students can get a degree by taking classes at night and weekends. The college offers fast-track degrees—completing college in less than four years.
- Day and evening child care vouchers are offered to single parents—very thoughtful.
- I am feeling involved with the college even though I missed the first two years of my new campus’ social life by attending the local community college.

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**College Assessment Tool**

*Career Guidance*

**Traditional College Model [two points]**

- The Career Placement Center is a simple operation where students get assistance in finding on-campus part-time jobs and meeting corporate recruiters when they come on campus. No one believes that the center is very helpful in finding a career related job.
We don’t have the staff to set up internships or even help find summer jobs. The center is pretty much a 9-month operation. Students use apps to do their job searches.

Other than landing a job through college scheduled interviews, most students are on their own after they graduate.

Job openings and on-campus recruiter information is typically posted on an electronic job board. Seniors are restricted to making appointments with only three companies each semester.

No information is collected to determine placement percentage of our graduates or satisfaction of employers with our graduates.

Darwinism Model [four points]

- Our Career Placement Center is very active. We have a variety of programs and courses available to help students get the information they decide is necessary to be successful.
- In our environment, ‘You snooze, you lose’. That means that we get our students everything they need, but they must take the initiative and tell us what it is.
- We have a terrific job fair program where some of the best national and regional firms come to our campus. However, the large number of graduating students makes it difficult to get more than one or two campus interviews.
- Most of our students can get their summer internships through personal contacts and family. We’re OK with the concept that summers are a time for travel and rest and don’t encourage our students to apply for internships.
- We don’t worry about freshmen and sophomores changing their major several times. It is a normal part of the exploration process.

Equal Treatment Model [six points]

- We put a lot of attention into helping our freshmen understand what opportunities each major degree provides. Our freshmen survival classes are mandated for all first-year students. They learn about career opportunities for each major degree and what is required academically to be successful.
- During the survival classes, students take self-assessment tests and frequently visit local employers and faculty workshops where career information is provided.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The career center actively advises all students from freshmen to graduating seniors to make certain that career guidance is provided.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students are encouraged to take resume preparation classes and participate in mock job interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We have not been able to place all students after they graduate. Since we don’t track them, we assume that everyone either eventually gets a job or continues to grad school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strategic Intervention [eight points]**

- Many of our students come from low-income families and need our assistance to prepare for professional careers.
- We work closely with students that may need a little extra polishing. This includes lessons in social etiquette, office protocols and workplace dress standards.
- We target high need students to make certain they obtain paid summer internships. They are matched with alumni who mentor them at their workplace. Most of our degrees require internships to graduate.
- Students that participate in the Career Placement Center’s special programs persist and graduate at higher rates than previously recorded before the program was started.
- We do a good job of championing our successful alumni. They let us know when a career achievement has been reached—e.g., promotion. We send a quarterly career-oriented magazine to motivate our students that include alumni achievements.
- We know our freshmen and what they need to do to graduate and get into a great career. We track and work with all our students and later after they graduate evaluate how they are doing.

**Proactive College [ten points]**

- The Career Placement Center believes that it is fundamental to the curriculum and the degree attainment process.
- Freshman are profiled using personality assessment tools. We look for and guide students that may enjoy careers in high demand areas—e.g., STEM.
- We use historical class-grade data to profile whether a student, based on their high school and college grades, is likely to graduate in their chosen degree field and guide them to alternate degrees when appropriate.
- We track student progress as they investigate majors and provide coaching assistance as they seek information related to career opportunities.
Our college is heavily committed to integrate academics with internship experiences. Some students take a semester to obtain career related skills although most students participate in summer internships.

Our students often need assistance in developing professional behavior skills that we provide through workshops.

Our alumni volunteer to help students gain experiences in new settings, often hosting a summer intern in their home.

Our retention and job placement rates are well above national norms.
Assessing a College’s Retention Culture

*Finish in Four* has introduced two methodologies for evaluating and improving a college's student success programs and graduation rates:

- The Control Point Accountability Measurement (CPAM) model; and
- The College Assessment Tool (CAT).

Both are self-assessment instruments that provide different institutional perspectives about a college’s student retention practices and philosophies.

The CPAM model emphasizes the operational aspects of high impact student retention program areas for the purpose of strategically planning and implementing procedural changes for improvement. The CPAM model provides a detailed assessment of what is ‘broken,’ how it can be fixed, and who will be responsible for achieving quantifiable results.

The CAT is an aggregate or high-level empirical assessment of a college’s culture related to how well it provides student services that supports on-time graduation. It is useful for identifying which of the ten areas examined in *Finish in Four* might benefit from additional focused effort to improve programs and institutional philosophies. The CAT is also helpful for providing a cultural overview of how a college’s current student retention practices and philosophies compare to other colleges, and through discussion during the scoring process, whether the institution’s stakeholders believe that the college is ready to strengthen its student support efforts.

This chapter will summarize the findings of the previous chapters’ CAT scores and provide general observations, based on participants’ scores, about the opportunity for institutional improvements.
evaluated. It was suggested that after a profile was selected, the numerical point value (2 thru 10) be placed on the score sheet located in this chapter or downloaded from finishinfour.com. This tool identifies the college’s culture for each of the ten high impact retention areas explored in Finish in Four.

When comparing scores for each of the ten areas, a college may have a mix of high (proactive), average (equal treatment), and low (traditional) retention scores. A low score in a specific area is useful for identifying retention related practices that may need additional attention or efforts. Conversely, high scores in selective areas identifies where positive retention efforts are occurring and where strengthening efforts could result in additional success. The accumulative score for the ten chapter topics also provides an accurate estimate of how supportive a college’s overall culture is for maintaining and improving student retention, and how likely—under status quo conditions—the college will be able to improve its graduation rates.

Below is the College Assessment Tool’s summary scoresheet where each chapter’s score can be listed and tallied. An interpretive analysis of aggregate scores that profile college readiness for improving student success initiatives is also provided. The critical component of this process is not just to evaluate the selected college’s overall retention capabilities, as determined by an accumulated score, but to identify which of the ten assessed areas have the greatest promise for improving students’ persistence and graduation rates. Even colleges with relatively high scores should find the tool helpful in determining which areas can be strengthened to provide continued positive student success results.

Scoresheet Summary Results
To compile aggregated values from the completed College Assessment Tools, record scores from each of the ten preceding chapters (4 to 13) on the scoresheet below. It is rare for a college to score higher than the norm (5 points) in all ten areas. This exercise is not purposed to justify your current performance level, but to identify areas where focused improvement can result in higher student retention and graduation rates. After listing and totaling your
# College Assessment Tool
## Accumulative Score Sheet
### (Chapters 4 through 13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Success Impact Area</th>
<th>Points Scored</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Institutional Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chapter 4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Predictive Modeling</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Chapter 5)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Recruitment and Admissions</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Chapter 6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Financial Planning</td>
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<td>(Chapter 7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Proactive Advising</td>
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<td>(Chapter 8)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Curriculum, Scheduling &amp; Degree Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Chapter 9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Faculty Influence</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Chapter 10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Student Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Chapter 11)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Nontraditional ‘Ghost’ Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Chapter 12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Career Guidance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Chapter 13)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subtotal for Each Column**
College Assessment Tool—Bonus Points

To recognize that activities are often in place that provide significant support to students attempting to graduate on time, the above scores can be adjusted—up to ten ‘bonus’ points—by identifying specific retention programs.

Following is a sample list of student retention practices that have been successfully implemented at colleges. From the list below, adding to the list if appropriate, identify any practices that are in place at the selected college and add one bonus point for each program that has been incorporated into its student management program—up to a total of ten points. To qualify for bonus points, the following must be considered:

1. it is something that the college is already doing;
2. are there specific quantifiable goals;
3. are expectations and results measurable;
4. do accountable leaders regularly review results; and
5. are action plans regularly revised or updated as performance is assessed?

After identifying institutional retention initiatives and programs that meet the five-step criteria above, total the number of programs. Adjust the total number of points in the College Assessment Tool in the summary scoresheet below—up to ten points.
## College Assessment Tool
### Retention Bonus Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retention Activity Currently Practiced at College</th>
<th>Point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community learning groups with assigned faculty mentors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-year experience program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOPS (Equal Opportunity Post-Secondary) programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math, engineering, and science (STEM) programs for minorities (MESA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty mentoring programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni mentoring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer internships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milestone recognition events—before graduation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit interviews for stop-out freshmen, with follow-up procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division, program, course, and instructor success indicators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular review of success statistics by instructor, department, and division college-wide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-stop center</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online advising and degree planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-time financial aid awarding/distributing and budget planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family orientation—including the development of a freshman-to-graduation budget</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Proactive advising vs. drop-in services for tutorial and assistance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mandatory daily attendance online, with faculty follow-up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree audit program with a target for number of credits to completion of degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List other programs or activities as appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total bonus points not to exceed 10 points**
Again, the purpose of the accumulated scores is not to identify colleges that may have weak student retention programs, but to determine what efforts would be required to shift towards a stronger student retention-oriented culture. There may be reasons why improving student support programs are not desired or possible, including:

- lack of resources;
- acceptable persistence and on-time graduation rates;
- resistant staff and faculty to change;
- resistant trustees to change;
- union resistance and contracts; and
- campus culture satisfied with the status quo.

The following are general interpretations of the scores generated by the College Assessment Tool.

Interpretation of College Assessment Scores

**Status Quo and Educational Darwinism**

Total scores that fall below 50 points (Status Quo and Educational Darwinism) suggest that institutional processes dealing with volume-related issues (e.g., large campus or high student-to-staff ratios) take precedence over a college’s ability to respond to the individual needs of students, particularly high-risk students. Students can still have a positive college experience, but at-risk students are often left to find extra support services on their own—even when remedial and tutorial programs are offered.

The **Status Quo (<30 points)** category of institutions is not likely to dramatically improve its retention rates unless motivated by (external) factors that impact a college’s (fiscal) survival or perhaps negatively impact its reputation. Many institutions in this category believe they are student-oriented because substantial resources have been dedicated to fund support activities. However, programs typically rely on students to seek services; less effort is expended on providing proactive or anticipatory institutional efforts to help at-risk students succeed. There is also little to no effort to evaluate whether the offered programs are making a difference.

While colleges in **Educational Darwinist (30-50 points)** category can be large and perhaps open-admission institutions with a substantial number of commuter students, these institutions can also include exclusive admission flagship colleges and private universities that attract academically ready students that are perceived to need less aggressive interaction and proactive support. Colleges that foster a ‘survival of the fittest’ culture,
sometimes seen in small, exclusive educational settings, can also be considered Darwinist as they see themselves as a pipeline that provides a means to obtain a college objective and therefore assume that the burden of achievement falls upon the student.

Institutional change can best be accomplished by proving, through quantitative analysis, that there are broken processes and activities that negatively impact graduation rates—e.g., poorly implemented remedial programs. Once a college accepts that improvement is desirable and can be measured by using quantifiable indicators, CPAM model control points and success indicators can be identified and used to hold individuals accountable for success.

Focusing on change in these two environments by proving that there may be some college processes that are broken can be politically dangerous. Yet, it may be a necessary motivator to neutralize an institution’s culture keepers. This is especially true when change is attempted in institutions that believe process (access) over completion (student success) is the prime objective.

**Equal Access and Services Available to All Students**

**Equal Treatment (50-70 points)** indicate that a college is already accomplishing many student retention efforts and is poised to move to the next level of performance. This should be considered positive evidence that the college is embracing a culture that wants to balance access with student success. Any of the ten areas that scored less than five points offer the greatest opportunity for improvement.

The term ‘equal treatment’ is used because scores indicate that a college may have chosen to make its programs available to all students, not focusing resources on selected high-risk students. If resources are finite, this approach may dilute the efforts to help at-risk student populations. Colleges in this category may consider shifting to a more proactive advising and intervention strategy that aggressively seeks out students more likely to drop out.

Scoring in this range suggests that staff and faculty are ready to improve performance but need evidence of what is not working. The Control Point Accountability Measurement (CPAM) model should be used to provide this information. Utilize the CPAM model to
Accumulated scores of 70 points or higher (Strategic Intervention and Proactive College) signifies that a college is strongly oriented towards anticipating and meeting students’ needs. The institution’s opportunity for maintaining and improving graduation rates is high. Rather than spreading resources widely, **Strategic Intervention (70-90 points)** colleges in this range typically look for big-impact or high-return-on-investment opportunities. Considering which students can be successfully assisted to graduate on time, and then willingly committing resources—time and funds—to meet enrolled students’ needs is what differentiates this category of colleges.

Some high-retention colleges restrict enrollment to low-risk students—accepting only top tier applicants. These are not colleges that would merit high-retention rankings when using the College Assessment Tool process. A **Proactive College (90-110 points)** understands that admitting and graduating at-risk students is not a retention problem if proper planning and a willingness to initiate support before students get into academic trouble is achieved.

Colleges in these classifications rarely need internal motivation for successful student retention efforts. These colleges are already motivated by the internal values they follow. Colleges that rank high on the College Assessment Tool are successfully intervening and assisting high-risk students to achieve their goal(s). For these colleges, it’s not about being the best in overall graduation rates that counts. It is about being the best at improving students’ ability to succeed, especially when compared to peer colleges that treat at-risk students as collateral damage.

**Summary**

The College Assessment Tool is an excellent way for stakeholders (faculty, staff, trustees, students—current and prospective, etc.) to do an evaluation of a college to determine how well students’ success is supported by the institution. Obtaining input on what could be improved can be based on:

- best practices information provided in chapters 4 through 13;
- evaluation (via the CPAM process) of institutional processes that have proven to be helpful or harmful to previous students’ success; and
- what is known about other colleges that have implemented best practices in their strategic plans that resulted in improved student retention.
Colleges have found it useful to complete the College Assessment Tool as a high altitude ‘fly-by’—a determination of what is considered culturally important. Its use is not recommended for a prescriptive determination of what is missing or should be improved. That should occur by using the CPAM model.