Building Institutional Capacity to Enhance Student Persistence

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Introductions

- Why did you sign up for the workshop?

- Does your institution have a plan for increasing student persistence?
  - Is it working well?
  - Why or why not?

- Have you personally been involved in any student persistence-oriented strategic planning process? If so, in what capacity?
Our Goals Today

- Establish a common understanding of student persistence
- Review emerging student persistence issues
- Identify best practices and lessons learned
- Discuss how the SEM framework can be used to enhance student persistence
- Provide resources you can use to help guide your institution in the development of a student persistence-oriented SEM plan
Materials

- PowerPoint presentation
- Student Persistence Bibliography

www.uwindsor.ca/sem
Why Student Persistence?
Access and Success

The large number of dropouts and secondary students choosing not to enter PSE has grave consequences. It means:

- fewer students enrolled in higher education,
- lost opportunities for the students themselves, and
- loss of revenue and productivity for society

-Grayson & Grayson, 2003

The challenge is to both provide wider access to studies and to put mechanisms into place to ensure that students persevere beyond first year.
Many Student Success Perspectives

- Government Perspective
  - Human capital to drive economic growth

- Taxpayer Perspective
  - Efficient use of tax dollars

- Employer Perspective
  - Need knowledgeable & skilled graduates

- Institutional Perspective: Mandate
  - assist individuals in finding and keeping employment;
  - meet the needs of employers and the changing work environment: and,
  - support the economic and social development of their local and diverse communities.

- Student Perspective
  - Achieving life goals and aspirations = good job
Is there a difference between student persistence and student retention?
Yes!

- Student retention is about keeping students enrolled (institutional viewpoint)
- Student persistence is about ensuring the success of students over an extended period of time (student viewpoint)

It is no longer good enough merely to keep students enrolled. Student success on both institutional and student terms must be our priority! We need to find the balance.
Student Persistence Defined

- The **old** definition:
  - Described the situation where students remained in a course of studies from one year to the next; typically at a single institution and sometimes within a particular program (McElroy, 2005)

- A **new** definition:
  - The ability of students to continue their PSE studies and ultimately graduate, regardless of switches between institutions or programs or even temporary absences from PSE altogether (Conrad & Morris, 2010)
According to *Macleans*...

- In the 2010 ranking issue, *Macleans* magazine reported that the percentage of full-time, first year students enrolled in fall 2008 who returned to university the following year ranged from 70.3% to 95% in 45 Canadian universities with 34 of those universities reporting retention at 80% or above. (p.158)

- The 2010 *Macleans* ranking issue reported that the proportion of students who graduated within seven years of entering the first year of their program ranged from 72.4% to 89.8%. (p. 158)
The implementation of retention strategies illustrates the extent of the institution’s focus on student success. Strategies and programs should not be confined simply to increasing numbers, for example, of students continuing from year 1 to year 2, but should assist students to achieve their educational objectives. Any definition of retention needs to be linked to the life cycle of the student and to student success itself. It is clearly important for success to be defined in terms of a student’s educational and career goals, but it is equally important for student success to be defined in a manner that reflects the growth and development of the student on any number of dimensions and skill sets. The basic elements of success are defined both within the classroom and outside the classroom. The success continuum covers the student’s university/college career from recruitment to career attainment, from the traditional enrolment perspective and from the SEM perspective.

-Morphy & Smith, 2011
Successful Student Persistence Leads to:

- Higher levels of student satisfaction
- More student engagement and thus more learning
- Enhanced institutional reputation
- And, of course, higher levels of student retention and degree/diploma completion
Myths

When we think of myths, images of fantastical, sensational stories spring to mind—visions of Hercules, Quetzalcoatl, or Gilgamesh performing magical or otherworldly feats. However, many of the beliefs that are ratified in the student retention realm—sometimes informally via the academic culture and other times directly in policies and practices—are exactly that myths, or unproved or false collective beliefs that are used to justify social institutions.

-Myth, 2011 (dictionary.com)
What We Know About Student Persistence
7 Myths About Student Retention

1. Attrition is a “student problem,” not a campus or institutional problem
   - Student retention depends on both student effort and institutional effort

2. Retention would not be a problem if we just admitted “better students”
   - Student retention depends as much or more on what an institution does with the students it admits than on whom it admits
7 Myths About Student Retention

3. And while we’re at it, richer students would help, too
   - It has more to do with their levels of academic success and social integration
   - Finances are not the primary (or even the secondary) consideration in students’ decision to terminate their enrolment.

4. Most students drop out because they “flunk out”
   - Most are in good academic standing
   - Of those who withdraw for academic reasons, poor academic performance can often be attributed to non-academic causes (e.g., familial or emotional issues)
7 Myths About Student Retention

5. Profiling “leavers” is the best method of understanding attrition
   - The focus on leavers overshadows the primary goal of better providing for enrolled students

6. It’s not the faculty’s job to “retain” students but to promote student learning
   - The very principles and practices that promote student retention also promote student learning
     - Active engagement in the learning process
     - Social integration
     - Finding personal significance in their college experience

Successful retention is nothing more than a by-product of successful education
7 Myths About Student Retention

7. Campuses are already doing all that they can do to improve student retention
   - Research suggests that PSE attempts to increase graduation rates lag well behind other institutional priorities

-Cuseo and Farnum, 2011
Times are Changing!

- “We know very little about how many students drop out of programs or why” concluded a major review of PSE in Ontario (Rae, 2005)
- New research tools are now available, enabling Canadian researchers to examine the issue much more seriously than before
  - *Youth in Transition* Survey of Canadian youth conducted since 1999 by Statistics Canada
  - *Post-Secondary Student Information System*
Most Leave – But Only Temporarily

- Of those who drop out early in their studies, 35% returned within 2 years and 46% returned within 4 years (Shaikenks et al, 2006)
- By 1 year after leaving school 22.3% of college leavers and 35.6% of university leavers have returned (Finnie & Qiu, 2008)
- Only 21.7% of university students and 35% of college students did not return to PSE (Martinello, 2007)
Most Leave – But Only Temporarily

- Once “switchers” and “stop-outs” are taken into account and reclassified as either graduates or continuers, the 5-year drop out rate falls to 10% for university students and 18% for college students (Finnie & Qiu, 2008)

But, of course, stop-outs do not always return to their first PSE institution!
For Some – Barriers are Greater

- Same groups which are known to have systematic difficulties in accessing PSE also have systematic difficulties in completing it
- Barriers to completion are largely the same as barriers to access
- Social, economic, cultural and academic background significantly influence degree completion (Conrad and Morris, 2010)
Student Persistence Highlights

☑ Academic Preparation:

- Academic performance is associated with persistence.
- Weaker and less engaged students are less likely to persist; however, a significant portion of capable students nonetheless drop out (Shainks et al, 2008)
Student Persistence Highlights

☑ Academic Policies:

- Later final course withdrawal dates are correlated with more program switching in students’ first year and lower probabilities of first program completion (Martinello, 2009)

- More generous tuition refunds are associated with more program switching in first year and less PSE leaving in second year
  - i.e., later final withdrawal dates and more generous tuition refunds help students make adjustments to programs more appropriate for them before the start of second year (Martinello, 2009)
Student Persistence Highlights

### Age:

- Older students and students with dependent children or who have become parents during their studies have greater difficulty persisting.
- This is especially true if they attend part-time.
- Distance education and on-line learning provides flexibility and attracts students seeking to balance work, family and professional development.
Student Persistence Highlights

☑️ Career Certainty:

- Certainty about career goals positively affects persistence where there is a clear connection between studies and intended career path (Berger, Motte & Parkin, 2007; Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2007; Grayson & Grayson, 2003)

- Students with a plan and clear goals are more motivated to succeed
  - Importance of academic advising
  - Online academic planning tools
  - Career planning tools
  - Academic and career planning workshops
Student Persistence Highlights

☑ Family:

- Students from single-parent families more likely to switch or leave at college level, but less likely to switch university programs (Finnie, 2008)

- Leaving no different for single-parent university students than those from two-parent families (Finnie, 2008)
Student Persistence Highlights

☑ Finances:

- Recent poll says majority of PSE students (57%) work during the school year and ¾ of students (77%) believe working part-time will impact their grades (RBC/Ipsos Reid, June 2010)
  - Students who work >20 hours per week twice as likely to drop out as those who work less or not at all (Finnie, 2010)
    - Are they working more because they are already disengaged from learning – or are they disengaged because they have to work?
Student Persistence Highlights

☑ Aboriginal/First Nations/Métis:
  - The drop-out rate of Aboriginal PSE students is between 33 and 56% higher than the rate for non-Aboriginals (Shaienks et al, 2008)
  - Aboriginal students substantially more likely than non-Aboriginal students to leave PSE without graduating in first or second year (Ross, Childs, Kramer & Wismer 2010)
  - Overall, 7.7% of Aboriginal Canadians have a university credential vs. 23.4% of the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2008)
Student Persistence Highlights

☑ Aboriginal/First Nations/Métis (Cont’d):

- Key factors impacting persistence and completion are family and personal issues (Malatest et al, 2004)
- Many move to urban centres away from home communities
- On average, older than other students; more in need of child-care services and have other pressing financial needs (Holmes 2005)
Student Persistence Highlights

- **Immigrant & Visible Minority:**
  - Among lower income PSE students, immigrants and visible minorities less likely to drop out of their studies (Finnie, Childs & Wismer, 2010)
    - Parental expectations greater
  - Yet visible minorities – whether immigrant or not – are less likely to agree that faculty is “helpful and sympathetic” (Finnie, Childs & Wismer, 2010)
    - Fewer say their institution is a place where they feel they belong
First Generation:

- Parental education—and not parental income—is seen as a key driver of PSE participation in general and university in particular (Finnie & Mueller, 2008)

- Not more likely than non-first generation students to leave PSE in first or second year without graduation (Shainks & Gluszynski, 2007; Finnie, Childs & Wismer, 2010)

- But parental education is related to the decision of students to re-enrol after initially discontinuing their studies (Martinello, 2007)
Student Persistence Highlights

✓ First Generation (Cont’d):
  - Opinions differ as to whether they receive support and inspiration from their parents is similar between first generation and non-first generation students (Finnie, Childs & Wismer, 2010)
  - Spend somewhat fewer hours studying than non-first generation students and have moderately lower GPA’s (Finnie, Childs & Wismer, 2010)
  - Differences between first generations and non-first generations tend to fade with time (Auclair et al, 2008)
Student Persistence Highlights

- **First Generation (Cont’d):**
  - Other measures of academic performance and engagement may be more reliable identifiers of at-risk individuals than being first generation (Finnie, Childs & Wismer, 2010)
  - Other factors are at play: prior academic preparation, socio-economic factors (often leading to employment while studying) and students’ ability to adapt (Auclair et al, 2008)

The relationship between persistence and parental education is unclear
Student Persistence Highlights

☑ Francophone:

- Canadian students whose first language is French are less likely to complete high school and less likely to have university degrees than their English-speaking counterparts. (D’Amours, 2010)

- A recent Quebec study found that anglophones are twice as likely as francophones to see a university degree as a key to success (D’Amours, 2010).

- The roughly 10% gap in university attainment between francophone and anglophone Quebecers persists (D’Amours, 2010)
Student Persistence Highlights

Gender:

- Men less likely to be academically engaged and participate in co-curricular activities
- For low-income college students, males are more likely than females to leave PSE (25.2% of males leave vs. 21.2% of females) in first or second year (Finnie, Childs, Korducki & Wismer 2010)
- Male and female university students leave (6.7%) at about same rate (Finnie, Childs, Korducki & Wismer 2010)
- Overall grade averages in first year of PSE do not vary greatly between males and females (Finnie, Childs, Korducki & Wismer 2010)
Student Persistence Highlights

☑ Geographical Origin:

- Students from large urban centres are significantly less likely to leave PSE in first or second year without graduating – students from communities of 10,000 to 100,000 people most likely to leave (Finnie, Childs & Wismer 2010)
  - These students (urban) more likely to live with their parents in first year PSE and more likely to plan on living with parents until can pay back some or all of debt

- Rural students are underrepresented in universities; perhaps because they must leave their parental home as well as their friendship network of support (Looker 2009)
Student Persistence Highlights

- Low Income:
  - The Canadian literature offers little insight into whether parental income generally is correlated with persistence.
  - However, it matters for those with low incomes.
    - According to the Canadian Council on Learning (2009), 58.5% of 18-24 year-olds from families earning less than $25,000 per year participated in PSE in 2006. This compares to 80.9% of youth of the same age from families with an income over $100,000.
Student Persistence Highlights

- Financial aid:
  - Receiving need-based student assistance in the forms of loans or grants can improve persistence.
  - However, students whose financial aid package is not adequate to cover the actual cost of studying or who accumulate high levels of debt are less likely to complete their studies (Grayson & Grayson, 2003; Hossler et al, 2008; McElroy, 2004, 2005, 2008).
  - The most beneficial impact of financial aid may be that it increases students’ freedom to become more engaged in the academic and social environments of the institutions they attend.
Student Persistence Highlights

Financial aid (Cont.):

- Only a weak relationship between leaving PSE and finances; even though students often cite both academic and financial reasons for withdrawing (Mueller, 2008)
- Persistence is highest for those who receive both grants and loans ...and persistence is lowest for those who receive only loans (McElroy, 2005)
  - Students can be driven to abandon PSE if their debt load is too high (CMF, 2007)
  - Debt matters and measures to alleviate it seem to work (CMF, 2007)
  - Reducing debt by providing non-repayable bursaries has a positive impact on persistence (CMF, 2007)
  - Grant and loan recipients with the highest levels of financial need are almost 5 times as likely to earn a degree as those who get only loans (CMF, 2007)
Financial aid (Cont.):

- While decreasing debt has a positive impact on persistence, it alone cannot enable students who are short on cash to make ends meet
  - i.e., debt matters, but unmet need matters more (CMF, 2007)
- Scholarships or merit-based aid tends to benefit those most qualified academically, but academic preparedness is positively correlated with family income (i.e., it provides a subsidy to higher-income families) (Mueller, 2008)
Student Persistence Highlights

**Financial aid (Cont.):**

- Financial incentives are an expensive approach for trying to generate modest effects on retention (Angrist et. al., 2010)
  - Real issue may be poor academic preparation rather than lack of effort or motivation
  - Peer advising does not help extensively
Student Persistence Highlights

✓ Taken together:

- Reasons related to a lack or interest or satisfaction with their program or a lack of direction in their career were cited as the reason for discontinuing studies by 52% of dropouts.
- Financial reasons were cited by 22% of those who discontinued their studies.
- Academic difficulties were cited by 12%.

-Berger, Motte & Parkin, 2007
Resilience – A Key Predictor

- The one difference between those who persist and those who drop out can best be viewed in terms of resilience
- The capacity to overcome obstacles, adapt to change, recover from trauma or to survive and thrive despite adversity (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2007)
- And family background is correlated with resilience
Motivation – Another Key Predictor

- Key difference in what makes students stay or not
- Tinto referred to it as "academic integration"
- Students will sometimes describe it as "lack of fit"
Self-Efficacy—Another Key Predictor

- Self-Efficacy: the levels of confidence individuals have in their ability to execute certain courses of action, or achieve specific outcomes (Bandura, 1995)
- People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided
- People who doubt their capabilities have low aspirations and weak commitment to the goals they choose to pursue
The Key Factors

- Self-Esteem
- Social/Family/Friends’ Support
- Motivation
- Academic Preparation and Results
- Finances
- Well-Being

-Wright et al, 2008
Areas of Intervention for Success

- Advising
- Financial Aid
- Student Services
- Policies, Strategies, & Practices
- Campus Facilities/Administration
- Pedagogy

-Wright et al, 2008
A Little About Student Persistence & Student Engagement

National Survey of Student Engagement
The nature and quality of first year students’ experiences in the classroom, with faculty, and with peers are **better predictors** of desired educational outcomes associated with college attendance than precollege characteristics.

-Gerken & Volkwien, 2000
Student Engagement: Research

- Evidence from decades of studies indicates that:
  - The level of challenge and students’ time on task are positively related to persistence
  - The degree to which students are engaged in their studies impacts directly on the quality of their learning and their overall educational experience
  - The more opportunities a student has to build a connection to campus, the better their chances of success
  - The characteristics of student engagement can serve as proxies for quality
3 Key Student Success Processes

1. **Active involvement**: Time & energy invested in learning experience inside and outside classroom (Astin, Tinto, Pace)

2. **Social integration**: Interaction, collaboration & interpersonal relationships between students & peers, faculty, staff & administrators (Tinto)

3. **Personal reflection**: Think deeply on learning experiences (Entwistle & Ramsden, Flavell, Svinicki, Vygotsky)
Do Engagement Measures Predict Learning Outcomes?

- Yes (Conway, Zhao & Montgomery, 2011)
- Data linkages between NSSE & CCSSE survey responses and administrative data can provide a deeper understanding of student engagement, which can then be used to design or improve engagement strategies
- HEQCO’s conclusion: Insufficient information sharing and inter-institutional collaboration and learning
A Comparative Look: Student Engagement in the US & Canada

- Differ in term of the frequency with which they engage in active and collaborative learning and student-faculty interaction. Why?
  - The Canadian classroom experience involves less active participation by students and less individual contact with faculty members
  - The large size of most Canadian universities and higher student-faculty ratios makes collaborative learning experiences and faculty contact more challenging

- Kandiko, 2009
A Comparative Look (Cont’d)

Students in Canada participate less in three of the best practices in undergraduate education: *active learning, peer collaboration, and student-faculty interaction*. Three possible explanations:

1. As faculty spend more time doing research, there is less time available for students
2. Full-time non-tenure and part-time faculty are often overloaded with classes and unable to devote time and effort towards fully engaging students
3. Increasing student-faculty ratios leave fewer faculty assigned to larger cohorts of students
A Comparative Look (Cont’d)

- Student engagement in Canada and the U.S. was found to differ by academic major.
  - Students in professional fields, such as finance, management and pre-law had similar responses in both countries. The narrowest gaps occurred in the business and professional fields.
  - In contrast, there was a marked difference between Canadian and U.S. students in arts and humanities, life sciences and social sciences. Canadian students in those majors reported considerably less engagement overall compared to their U.S. peers.
Enrolment Management: The Classical Definition

Enrollment management is an organizational concept and a systematic set of activities designed to enable educational institutions to exert more influence over their student enrollments. Organized by strategic planning and supported by institutional research, enrollment management activities concern student college choice, transition to college, student attrition and retention, and student outcomes. These processes are studied to guide institutional practices in the areas of new student recruitment and financial aid, student support services, curriculum development and other academic areas that affect enrollments, student persistence and student outcomes from college.

- Hossler, 1990
SEM is...

- The range of activities that influence a student’s initial & continued enrolment
- The programs, policies & processes that impact institutional enrolment
- The organizational framework & structure that supports institutional & student goals
- It is tied into the institutional academic & strategic plan
Enrolment Management System

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Student Characteristics</th>
<th>Environmental Factors</th>
<th>Institutional Goals</th>
<th>Institutional Objectives</th>
<th>Institutional Strategies</th>
<th>Desired Outcomes</th>
<th>Enduring Effect</th>
<th>Enduring Behaviour</th>
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Adapted from: Kuh et al, 2007; Black, 2003
SEM is Achieved by...

- Establishing clear goals for the number & types of students
- Promoting student academic success by improving access, transition, retention, & graduation
- Enabling effective strategic & financial planning
- Supporting the delivery of effective academic programs
SEM is Achieved by (Cont’d)...

- Creating a data-rich environment to inform decisions & evaluate strategies
- Improving process & organizational efficiency
- Establishing top quality student-centred service
- Strengthening communications & collaboration among departments across the campus

- Bontrager, 2004
Promoting Student Success: The Student Success Continuum

Recruitment / Marketing

Orientation

Classroom experience

Co-curricular support

Degree/goal attainment

Student’s college / university career

Admission

Financial support

Academic support

Retention
The Student Success Continuum

Traditional Enrolment Perspective

- Recruitment / Marketing
- Orientation
- Admission

Classroom experience
- Financial support

Co-curricular support
- Academic support

Retention

Student’s college / university career

Degree/goal attainment
The Student Success Continuum

The SEM Perspective

Recruitment / Marketing  Orientation  Classroom experience  Co-curricular support  Degree/goal attainment

Student’s college / university career

Admission  Financial Aid  Academic support  Retention
Optimal Enrolment

Enrolment Quantity

Capacity Management

Enrolment Diversity

Enrolment Quality
The Enrolment Funnel is Different for Different Students

Student Type:
• Aboriginal Students
• New Canadians
• International Students
• First Generation Students
• Northern Canadians
• Rural Students
• Students with Disabilities
• Dislocated Workers
• Francophone Students
• Sole Support Mothers
• Low-income Students
• Visible Minority Students
• High-Achieving Students
SEM Transition Model

Denial
Nominal
Structural
Tactical
Strategic
No One Way

“Myths about enrolment management are abundant, yet one truism has emerged…there is no single way to implement enrollment management.”

-Black, 2004
No Blueprint

In their book, *Student Success in College*, George Kuh and associates (2005) assert that, in their study of 20 institutions that performed better than expected with regard to student retention, there was no definite pattern in how these institutions succeeded.

“a unique combination of external and internal factors worked together to crystallize and support an institution-wide focus on student success. No blueprint exists to reproduce what they do, or how, in another setting”

Kuh et al, 2005, p. 21
Developing a SEM Culture
Importance of Partnering...
What SEM factors are most associated with institutions successfully reaching their enrolment goals?
SEM Effectiveness Factors

- Dolence, 1993
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## Two-Year Public Institutions

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<td>Strategies</td>
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<td>Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>0.049</td>
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</table>
Participation & integration is the most important factor at both universities and colleges in sustaining long-term SEM success.

-Smith, 2000
What is Participation & Integration?

- Participation of senior administration, academic governance, academic administration, faculty and the persons responsible for strategy and tactic implementation.

- In short, both vertical and horizontal involvement in SEM.
Some Collaboration is Common

- High levels of collaboration generally exist between academic and student affairs activities related to counselling, first-year experience programs, orientation and recruitment

-Kezaar, Hirsh & Burak, 2002
However...

- Many institutions mistake a series of joint events for true collaboration.
- To truly be competitive and to meet the rigors of accountability, institutions must go beyond activities and embrace collaborative dialogue.
It is time for academic and student affairs professionals alike to realize that it is only through the breaking down of current barriers—real and perceived—that institutions will achieve the outcomes they seek. Through strategic collaboration, both segments...can develop and implement programs and processes that add value and benefit students

-Newton & Smith, 2009
Collaborative Dialogue Requires Partnerships with...

- Senior Management
- Deans, Associate Deans, Dept Heads
- Student Affairs
- Institutional Research/Analysis
- Finance/Budget
- Marketing/PR/Communication
Need for Broad-Based Buy-in

- What is in it for me?
  - **Faculty:**
    - Meaningful recognition in the promotion and tenure process
    - Reduction of teaching load for substantial commitments to retention
    - Professional development opportunities
    - Perhaps some financial compensation
  - **Staff:**
    - Recognition by their colleagues, supervisors and institutional leaders
    - Links to performance reviews and salary increases
“What is needed is an adjustment in the lens with which enrollment professionals view (S)EM as a quintessentially academic enterprise.”

-Henderson, 2005
SEM Ethos

- A shared responsibility
- Integrated institutional planning
- A focus on service
- Accountability
- Research & evaluation
- For the long haul
Some Guiding Principles
Guiding Principles (Black, 2010)

- Create a learning environment that praises individual effort rather than performance
- Require students to show up
- Manage classroom behaviour
- Provide early academic feedback
- Engage student with opportunities to practice
- Surround students with mentors
Guiding Principles (Black, 2010)

✓ Connect students with others in academic and social settings
✓ Ignite their passion
✓ Foster a sense of belonging
✓ Deliver on institutional promises with the students you serve

Build a campus culture where its first priority is student success
The SEM Plan: A Great Place to Start
The enrollment plan serves as the road map for achieving specific institutional goals, typically connected to student body size, enrollment mix, and revenue, while also providing specific indicators on the effectiveness of the learning environment.

-Ward, 2005
The SEM Plan - Components

1. Define relationship to the institution’s strategic & academic plan(s)
2. Produce an environmental scan
3. Collect data: informs everything (goal-setting, tactics/strategies, assessment)
4. Identify key issues
5. Identify how to respond to those issues
6. Set goals
7. Suggest strategies
8. Establish accountability
9. Include measurements/ key performance indicators (KPIs)
10. Be sure the process is on-going
Mission & SEM Goals Determined By:

- Programs
- Range of Influence
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Resources
- External Policies
- Historical Status
- Aspiration Status

Niche

Mission & SEM Goals Determined By:

- Programs
- Range of Influence
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Resources
- External Policies
- Historical Status
- Aspiration Status

Niche
Discussion

What are the niches or potential niches you have at your institution that might tie into student success?
“Without data you’re just another person with an opinion.”

-unknown

“Data is not the plural of anecdote.”

-numerous authors
Data

- What puts the “S” in “SEM”?
  - Transactional data
  - Recruitment & retention analysis
  - Assessment of strategies & services
  - KPIs

- Meaningful metrics
  - How clean is your data?
  - Does everyone understand the definitions?
Creating a Data-Driven Enrolment Plan

The Enrolment Data Agenda

- Alumni Research
- Placement Data
- Graduate Rates
- Retention Data
- Student Surveys
- Financial Aid Analysis
- Yield Data
- Admission Statistics
- Competitive Analysis
- Market Research

Enrolment Strategies

- Alumni engagement
- Graduation/Career Development
- First Year Exp. & Retention Programs
- Yield
- Recruitment
- Marketing
Metrics - Retention

- % of students persisting from 1 class level to next
- Graduation rates after 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 years
- Credential progress & completion for each identified target group
- % of students on academic probation
- Persistence rates by target group
- Persistence rates by program
Predictive Modeling

- Use historical data to develop a model that estimates the probability of a student dropping out in the future (Conrad & Morris, 2010)
  - i.e., can develop a drop-out risk for individual students and intervene before they leave the institution
  - early warning data such as students’ goals, commitments, preparedness, and involvement in studies

- University of Windsor/Cri project
Some Other Examples

- ‘in-stream’ data such as ‘gatekeeper courses’ indicators of integration and engagement
University of Calgary

Created NSSE Action Team: Results oriented

- Provost
- Senior Student Affairs leaders
- Academic representation
- Students’ Union
- Planning/Institutional Analysis analyst
- NSSE Project Coordinator

Used newsletters, websites and faculty council presentations to present results
Results, Issues and Actions

**RESULTS** showed students were concerned about the lack of courses & quality of advising available to them.

**ISSUE:** U of C students expect to get the courses they need to graduate.

**ACTION:**
- ✔ Enhanced advising – also initiated campus advising network
- ✔ Introduced the four-year Graduation Guarantee
University of Calgary Graduation Guarantee

- For BA and BSc students wishing to complete in four years:
  - Must enrol full-time
  - Must meet with an advisor prior to and after registration each term to develop or review a course plan and monitor progress
  - Must register on time and accept any available section of a required class
  - Must declare a major by end of first year
  - Must remain in good academic standing
  - Must meet all program requirements

- University agrees to:
  - Ensure prompt and effective academic advising
  - Offer the courses necessary for students to finish their degree in four years
Results, Issues and Actions

RESULTS: showed that students are very career-focused; faculties required assistance in offering advice to students

ISSUE: Students need information regarding career paths, hands-on opportunities to explore job markets

ACTION:
- Viewbook now has an “explore” page – circles of areas of study and career; shows students different academic paths to reach their career goals
- Career Services – staff shared between specific faculties and Career Services
- Career Fairs by faculty and/or theme
Results, Issues and Actions

**Results:** showed that U of C needed to offer more volunteering and service learning opportunities

**Issue:** There was a disproportionate number of students who wanted to have a community service experience versus those who actually completed the experience

**Action:** Community Service Learning and Leadership programs

- Established a new office to work with entire campus on increasing the visibility and experiences available for CSL
- Created a Student Leadership program
Results, Issues and Actions

**RESULTS:** Students are interested in research

**ISSUE:** First year students said they wanted a research experience but not enough graduating students said they had the opportunity to have this experience

**ACTION:**
- Created Research In Action program showcasing undergraduate research
Results, Issues and Actions

**RESULTS:** A common thread throughout U of Calgary’s surveys – communication efforts need to be increased and coordinated

**ISSUE:** Students not well enough informed about: what is happening on campus, how they can get involved, and the importance of their own engagement

**ACTION:**
- Student and Enrolment Services introduced a sharper communications focus
- Improved messaging at Orientation & in Viewbook
evolve
innovate
engage

BE DIFFERENT

Disting is the process by which something acquires a distinctive character. University life is your evolution waiting to happen. The University of Calgary experience will offer you new ideas, new perspectives, new solutions, new friends and new challenges to exceed your expectations. Come evolving and see what the bold, brave, creative, and revolutionaries in the business of education have to say.

BE NEW

An innovative kind of way of thinking about success and making a difference. This means that you will understand the beyond, by creating, discovering, and making your place in tomorrow’s tomorrow. With the University of Calgary you will acquire an unexpected learning experience, world class research and interact with professionals, researchers and fellow students. You can choose your own adventure. Discover at the U of C.

BE CONNECTED

You need to see how theory connects to the real world. To real problems and real solutions. As a part of your university experience, new ideas will emerge from what happens outside of the classroom. The University of Calgary is dedicated to giving you the opportunity to learn from experts, from your peers and from real experiences. That means when you graduate, you’ll be ready to hit the ground running with the confidence and skills you need to be successful. To equip you with the skills to be successful student. Be connected. Engage at the U of C.
Other Data Sources

- Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium (CUSC)
- Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey (CGPSS)
- Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE)
- Common University Data Ontario (CUDO)
- Community College Survey on Student Engagement (CSSE)
S.W.O.T. Analysis

- **Strengths**
  - Internal
- **Weaknesses**
  - Internal
- **Opportunities**
  - External
- **Threats**
  - External

**Environmental Scan**
Environmental Scanning Elements

- **Student enrolment behaviour**
  - enrolment patterns (full-time vs part-time)
  - enrolment preferences (time of day, day of week, instructional delivery)
  - enrolment goals (degree, certificate, PD, personal enrichment)
  - enrolment choices (institutional type, size, location, programs, etc.)

- **Competition analysis**
  - curricula
  - admission requirements
  - apprenticeships/internships/co-ops
  - class size
  - job placement rates
Environmental Scanning Elements (Cont’d)

- Demographic trends
  - Shifts in gender, ethnicity, age

- Technology trends
  - Interactions with faculty & peers
  - On-line service support delivery

-Jim Black
Identify Issues

- An issue is a challenge that affects (or may affect) an institution’s ability to achieve its strategic goals
- Issues may have been clarified during the SWOT analysis as barriers & opportunities & may touch on:
  - Demographic trends
  - Labor market trends
  - Economic trends
  - Social & lifestyle trends
  - Competition trends
Examples of Issues

- “Where are the boys?”
- Many initiatives; not enough research/evidence to see what works
  - HEQCO has funded some studies
What are the emerging student persistence issues at your institution?
Enrolment Goals: Student Success

- Attrition/retention (by term, year)
  - i.e., persistence rates by cohort & program
- Graduate rates
- Credentials awarded by program
- Time to degree completion (number of terms)
- Student debt load at graduation
- Student default rate
- Student employment rate
  - 6 months after graduation
  - 2 years after graduation
UNB’s Strategic Plan (November 2010)

- **We will measure:**
  - Student success in several ways, such as time to completion, and the retention, graduation and employment rates of our students
  - Student and alumni satisfaction…
  - Experiential learning opportunities such as work/study, service learning, internships and extracurricular/co-curricular opportunities for students…

- **Targets:**
  - We will increase selected measures of student satisfaction such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)…
  - We will increase our retention of students by approximately 10%…
  - We will increase the number of our students studying abroad to 4%…
University of Saskatchewan Enrolment Plan (2010)

- **Goal 1 (overall size):** The University of Saskatchewan will take a selective approach to growth, focused on strategic interests and contingent on having resources adequate to manage planned increases in student numbers. This will mean by 2010, the University will be at an overall size of 21,000 students (undergraduate and graduate) or 18,000 FTE, a level it should expect to sustain for the second decade of the 21st century.

- **Goal 2 (graduate students):** The graduate student body will be expected to increase from an average headcount of approximately 1,790 students to 2,500 or 2,100 FTE. In addition to ensure that the University of Saskatchewan continues to be included as a major doctoral-granting institution, greater attention will be placed on recruiting students into doctoral programs. Funding priority and faculty recruitment will be placed here.

- **Goal 3 (undergraduate students):** Undergraduate enrolment will increase, in selective areas, by approximately 2,600 students, from an average headcount of 15,900 students to 18,500 or approximately 15,800 FTE by 2010, and measures will be taken to sustain that enrolment for the period beyond 2010. To accomplish this goal, the University will place primary emphasis on the academic preparedness of students (from Saskatchewan and elsewhere), establish aggressive recruitment policies for the best Saskatchewan and Canadian students and increase its admission average to direct entry colleges from the currently advertised 65% to 70% by 2005 and to 79% by the end of the decade.
Mohawk College

Goal 1 (financial viability): Mohawk will grow postsecondary and apprenticeship enrolment in each year for the next five years.

Goal 2 (funding diversification): Broaden the distribution of College enrolment across other student types in order to reduce the College’s dependency on postsecondary (funded) enrolment.

Goal 3 (competitive positioning): Increase Mohawk’s market share by becoming more competitive within the traditional (regional) market as well as expanding beyond the traditional market.

Goal 4 (student-community diversification): Diversify the student population to enhance the learning environment and overall student experience at Mohawk College by focusing enrolment growth on specific demographic groups.

Goal 5 (program quality and currency): Offer high quality programs that are in demand and are financially viable through sustainable enrolment, and align with the economic development of the Region and the Province.

Goal 6 (flexible learning and teaching environment): Create and E-learning environment that supports a flexible alternative for the delivery of services and learning that enhances the learning environment of Mohawk College for all students of Mohawk College.
Five Components of the Student Retention Framework

- Educational Policy Institute, 2007
# Financial Aid

## 1.1 Financial Aid Counseling/Training

| 1.1.1 Improve the flow and ease of information to students and families regarding college financing options. |
| 1.1.2 Ensure that prospective students and families receive aid and other college information early. |
| 1.1.3 Collaborate with financial management professionals to offer financial management seminars to students and families. |
| 1.1.4 Provide financial aid counselors with cultural diversity/sensitivity training. |

## 1.2 Grants and Scholarships

| 1.2.1 Maximize availability of grant and scholarship aid compared with student loans |
| 1.2.2 Create additional sources of grant and scholarship aid through the private sector. |
| 1.2.3 Ensure that funds are available to provide emergency grants to students as required. |

## 1.3 Loans

| 1.3.1 Educate students and family members about student loan obligations. |
| 1.3.2 Streamline bureaucracy and forms to simplify loan application process. |
| 1.3.3 Integrate mandatory career development with student borrowing. |
| 1.3.4 Provide emergency loans to students in need. |

## 1.4 Assistantships and Work-study

| 1.4.1 Expand assistantships and work-study programs for undergraduates |
| 1.4.2 Restrict assistantships and work-study to 15-25 hours per week for full-time undergraduates |
| 1.4.3 Partner with area businesses in close proximity to campus to forge assistantships and research opportunities for undergraduates |
| 1.4.4 Create opportunities with public and private businesses that lead to employment after graduation with “loan forgiveness” compensation plans |
### 2 Recruitment and Admissions

#### 2.1 Student Identification

- **2.1.1** Collaborate with pre-college programs and high school counselors to identify prospective recruits.
- **2.1.2** Develop outreach programs that target the student demographics of interest to the institution.
- **2.1.3** Monitor the participation of students enrolled in pre-college programs.
- **2.1.4** Conduct on-campus orientation activities for counselors and teachers from local secondary school and pre-college.
- **2.1.5** Include work-study students and education majors on college recruitment teams to inform middle and high school students of the academic, social, and financial requirements for college participation.
- **2.1.6** Coordinate recruitment with alumni associations to identify prospective students.

#### 2.2 Admissions

- **2.2.1** Identify students’ academic and career goals and use to develop match with those of the institution.
- **2.2.2** Establish admissions criteria using a holistic approach for a more comprehensive assessment of students’ commitment to college and compatibility with the institution.
- **2.2.3** Evaluate the use of college admissions tests scores in admissions profiles to ensure an appropriate mix of criteria in the admissions formula.

#### 2.3 Orientation

- **2.3.1** Provide opportunities for pre-college secondary school students to live on campus.
- **2.3.2** Provide early student orientation activities for students and families.
- **2.3.3** Involve all campus departments in the student orientation process.
- **2.3.4** Provide orientations at satellite locations for non-local students.
- **2.3.5** Ensure personal communications with students and families via telephone and visitations.
- **2.3.6** Institute freshmen orientations as credited course requirements.
### 3 Academic Services

#### 3.1 Academic Advising
- **3.1.1** Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for counseling staff.
- **3.1.2** Provide appropriate academic advising and counseling to students throughout the college experience.
- **3.1.3** If faculty members act as academic advisors, ensure that they are properly trained and are cognizant of specific policies, course structures, and credit requirements within the institution.

#### 3.2 Supplementary Instruction
- **3.2.1** Encourage the development of peer study groups to foster learning.
- **3.2.2** Incorporate more practical application exercises with class assignments.
- **3.2.3** Integrate a variety of instructional methods to support student learning.
- **3.2.4** Employ peer instructors for supplementary instruction, when possible.
- **3.2.5** Develop academic learning centers to provide supplementary support for students.
- **3.2.6** Provide non-classroom opportunities for student-faculty interaction.

#### 3.3 Tutoring/ Mentoring
- **3.3.1** Provide regularly scheduled, easy access tutoring to students for all courses.
- **3.3.2** Use Teaching Assistants (TAs), Research Assistants (RAs) and exemplary undergraduates as tutors.
- **3.3.3** Encourage peer tutoring and group studying within class population.
- **3.3.4** Encourage faculty members to support the academic development of students outside of class time.
- **3.3.5** Create incentives for faculty participation in mentoring programs.
- **3.3.6** Recruit a diverse mentoring staff of students, faculty, and staff.

#### 3.4 Research Opportunities
- **3.4.1** Support the development of faculty-student research projects.
- **3.4.2** Integrate regular research activities into curricula.
- **3.4.3** Develop partnerships with industry for research opportunities.
- **3.4.4** Collaborate with business and industry on in-class presentations and experiments.

#### 3.5 Pre-College Programs
- **3.5.1** Develop pre-college programs at elementary and secondary education levels.
- **3.5.2** Offer pre-college programs on and off campus.
- **3.5.3** Monitor students’ progress in pre-college programs.

#### 3.6 Bridging Programs
- **3.6.1** Provide summer academic and social support for students requiring additional support during the summer before matriculation.
- **3.6.2** Provide on-campus residency to students during bridge program participation.
- **3.6.3** Monitor all students’ progress in bridging programs.
## 4 Curriculum and Instruction

### 4.1 Curriculum Review and Revision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.1.1</th>
<th>Design curricula with interdisciplinary and real-world emphasis to stimulate interest and profound understanding on behalf of students.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2</td>
<td>Develop a continuous review process of curricula utilizing faculty, student and outside consultation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1.3</td>
<td>Incorporate current and innovative technologies into the curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.2 Instructional Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2.1</th>
<th>Incorporate interactive, relevant, hands on, exploratory, instructional practices.</th>
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<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>Establish learning communities</td>
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<td>4.2.3</td>
<td>Integrate Supplemental Instruction into the curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2.4</td>
<td>Provide students with short- and long-term research and application assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2.5</td>
<td>Utilize educational technologies to complement instruction.</td>
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</table>

### 4.3 Assessment Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.3.1</th>
<th>Develop assessment instruments that require students to utilize diverse cognitive skills</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2</td>
<td>Perform regular student testing and assessment to monitor student progress (e.g., standard question/answer tests, lab assignments, out-of-class assignments, observation, portfolios, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3</td>
<td>Employ early intervention programs to identify and assist students experiencing academic difficulty in each semester.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.3.4</td>
<td>Develop digital monitoring system for instant trend analyses of student’s achievement as determined by assessment tools.</td>
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### 4.4 Faculty Development/Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.4.1</th>
<th>Provide appropriate in-service development opportunities for teaching faculty.</th>
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<tr>
<td>4.4.2</td>
<td>Establish teaching faculty reward system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4.3</td>
<td>Create a center for teaching excellence to support faculty development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.4</td>
<td>Identify and/or provide grant opportunities for classroom research.</td>
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</table>
## 5 Student Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.1 Campus Climate</th>
<th>5.3 Housing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1 Build a supportive pluralist environment for students by embracing multiculturalism through campus leadership, faculty, staff, student enrollments, curricula, programming, and campus artifacts.</td>
<td>5.3.1 Ensure affordable housing and meal plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2 Provide a safe campus for all students, faculty, staff, and visitors</td>
<td>5.3.2 Encourage on campus residency for undergraduates.</td>
</tr>
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<td>5.1.3 Support campus student organizations that help develop a positive campus culture.</td>
<td>5.3.3 Provide the appropriate number of housing slots to meet the needs of the student body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.4 Work with academic services to provide non-classroom opportunities for student-faculty interaction.</td>
<td>5.3.4 If college experiences a campus housing shortage, ensure on campus housing for underclassmen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.5 Develop social activities that build community among all campus constituencies, e.g., intramural sports and academics, convocations, homecoming, entertainment, etc.</td>
<td>5.3.5 Provide campus residents housed off site with additional services to support campus integration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.3.6 Incorporate special living-learning housing options to further academically integrate students.</td>
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<tr>
<th>5.4 Accessibility/Transportation</th>
<th>5.5 Counseling</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.4.1 Ensure transportation link with local area transit system for increased access to campus.</td>
<td>5.5.1 Provide counseling, psychological, and other health services to students to enhance coping strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.2 Offer classes in a variety of timeslots to permit flexible scheduling by students, including weekends and Friday-Saturday course combinations.</td>
<td>5.5.2 Provide career counseling that connects academic and financial advising to ensure students are following the proper path to reach their goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.3 Utilize distance-learning technologies and practices to broaden and support student participation and allow increased flexibility of courses schedules.</td>
<td>5.5.3 Offer counseling services cultural and racially sensitive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.5.4 Offer a variety of counseling resources (e.g., legal services and family counseling) and techniques, including individual, group, peer, computer, and video sessions, as necessary.</td>
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Canadian Best Practices
Foundations for Success Project

- Offers case-managed support services & financial incentives to students at 3 Ontario colleges (Seneca, Mohawk & Confederation)
  - Assesses students after admission but before they begin, identifying those that would benefit from academic tutoring, peer mentorship and career counselling
  - Highest impact when matched with a (small) financial bursary
  - Has led to 6.4% increase in student retention
  - Project specifically benefited low-income students, ESL students, students entering with low (under 65%) high school grades and women
Pathways to Education

- Started in Toronto’s Regent Park in 2001 and now in 11 Canadian communities in Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Manitoba
- Integrated academic, social and financial support to at-risk students through community-based initiatives
- Tackles low ambition and low marks by building students’ positive self-image
- Provides mentors and tutors from Grade 9 on and a $4,000 bursary following high school graduation ("learning accounts")
Pathways to Education (Cont’d)

- **Results:**
  - Dropout rates fell from 23%-58% in different sites
  - Teen pregnancies and crime rate plummeted
  - College and university enrolment almost doubled - 80% of graduates from Pathway’s original site in Regent’s Park have gone on to PSE (2009)

- **March 2011:**
  - $20M federal investment in program – will expand to 20 high-need communities by 2016
LE, NONET (le-non-git) @ uVictoria

- Salish for “success after enduring many hardships”
- Recognition that improved outcomes for Aboriginal students necessitates institutional change in cultures & practices “to create a more respectful & culturally safe environment”
- Suite of services
  - Bursary program (between $1000 & $5000 per year)
  - Peer mentoring program (linking students to university $, Aboriginal community & services)
  - Research apprenticeship program
  - Community internship program & Aboriginal community partnerships
  - Staff & faculty cultural training & support
LE, NONET (le-non-git) @ uVictoria

Cont’d

- Increase in Aboriginal student enrolment (70 in 2000 to 700 2011)
- Between 2005 & 2009 LE,NONET students experienced:
  - 100% increase in term-to-term continuation
  - 20% increase in graduation rates
  - 67% reduction in withdrawal rates
Success@Seneca

Awarded 2009 Outstanding Retention Award by the Educational Policy institute

http://www.senecac.on.ca/student/success/
UR Guarantee

✓ University of Regina promises all students who complete their program but can’t find a job within 6 months following graduation 30 free undergraduate credit hours the following year.

✓ Participating students must attend regular academic advising sessions and be involved in campus engagement, service learning and career counselling opportunities

- Students must maintain full-time continuous enrolment
Learning Accounts

✔ Cambrian College recently created learning accounts, a new student financial aid program (up to $5,000 toward tuition)
  - To assist students who are First Generation students, Aboriginal, have low incomes, permanent disabilities, or are youth identified as at risk of dropping out
  - Couples financial support with participation out-of-class in learning activities
Best Practices

- Aboriginal student access/retention
- Academic civility
- Academic programs/courses – specialized
- Academic support – writing
- Access – special populations
- Bridging programs
- Building connections between curricular and extracurricular experiences
- Career development
Best Practices (Cont’d)

- Coaching (case managed access to student services, coaching first-year students on probation)
- Co-curricular record
- Community outreach
- Cross-departmental collaboration
- Cultural sensitivity
- Early identification programs
- Emotional Intelligence interventions
- Faculty development
- Financial aid
Best Practices (Cont’d)

- Graduate student teaching development workshops
- Integration of enrolment management & student services
- Learning & information commons
- Peer mentor programs
- Planning (staff/faculty retreats and symposia)
- Recognition for staff & faculty
- Residence (academic, bridging and transition programs)
Best Practices (Cont’d)

- Service learning
- Services for students at risk of dropping out
- Supplemental instruction
- Teaching (clickers, critical thinking, early feedback, hybrid courses, idea incubator, technology in large classes)
“Not everything that counts can be measured.
Not everything that can be measured counts.”

- Albert Einstein
Accountability & Measurement

- Establish accountability
  - Who does what and when?
  - How is progress measured and documented?

- Include Measurements/ Key Performance Indicators
  - Most goals should be measurable
  - Know your baseline data, and measure against it
The View from COU Colleagues

- Universities need to become more strategic in their investments around retention
- If retention is to be positioned as a student success quality indicator, careful thought should be given to the retention variables that relate to quality and how these will be measured
- Retention is a moving target, affected by changes in the environment including economic conditions, social and cultural issues, technologies and competitive environments
The View from COU Colleagues

(Cont’d)

- Retention statistics should not be tied to government key performance indicators because it would affect student access
- It may be time to invest in an Ontario retention evaluation system that would track students over time

-Albert, 2010
EXECUTION OF THE PLAN

- There’s no shortage of enrolment strategies
  - The problem: inability to execute

- We’re no different than other organizations
  - 9 out of 10 fail to implement their plans
SEM – Follow-up

- Follow-up on assessment of the KPIs

- Update often – this is not a long range plan...it is a strategic plan. Be strategic!

- Assure continuous communication with appropriate and interested parties.
Why Do Plans Fail?

- Unclear vision/vague directions
  - People responsible for executing strategies don’t understand the big picture & how they contribute/fit in

- Unmotivated people
  - No reason to change behaviour/culture

- Unfocused leadership
  - Fire fighting instead of managing strategically
  - No accountability

- Disconnected resource allocation

-Copeland, 2009
Discussion

- What are the most important SEM components to work on first at your institution to enhance student persistence?
- Why?
Lessons Learned
Lessons Learned

1. Access and success should not be targeted in isolation. The barriers and obstacles are largely the same.

2. The financial barriers to PSE participation are compounded by other factors—academic performance, individual behaviour and environmental circumstances. A holistic approach to student persistence is needed.
Lessons Learned

3. The enrolment funnel and student life cycle experience is different for different groups of students. Retention strategies need to be customized to meet the needs of each special population group. Strategies must take into account the diversity within the groups based on socio-economic status, age and individual experiences. We must also be wary of making assumptions and stereotyping students.
**Lessons Learned**

4. There is a need for both specialized/targeted student support programs and services as well as the integration of underrepresented groups into regular programming and campus activities. We need to create connectivity and ensure that we do not create group silos but welcoming and supportive campus communities that serve all our students.

5. There is a need for longer term resource commitment to ensure that the strategies we put in place have a lasting impact on students.
Lessons Learned

6. Assessment is key to determining the success of initiatives we may wish to undertake, but data is difficult to come by. Targeted communities sometimes are reluctant to self-identify, which makes it hard to set goals for enhancing the recruitment and retention of these groups.

- Benchmark progress
- Let data drive decision-making
7. Student retention efforts are often described in terms of programs and strategies. While such initiatives contribute to the success and persistence of students, alone they possess marginal power to impact retention outcomes. The true power any institution has to affect academic performance and enrolment behavior is the campus culture. A retention-centered culture focuses holistically on the developmental needs of students—intellectual, social, emotional, and physical.
Lessons Learned

8. Given limited resources, stay focused on 2 to 3 “big ideas” and strategize specific strategies to meet them.

9. Be intentional about communicating with stakeholders what you are doing, why you are doing it, and what the outcomes of your programs and services are.
Your toolkit
Resources

- National Survey on Student Engagement Website: http://nsse.iub.edu/html/reports.cfm
- National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition Web site: http://www.sc.edu/fye/
- Community College Survey on Student Engagement: http://www.ccsse.org/index.cfm
- Canadian SEM Website: www.uwindsor.ca/sem
  - Student Persistence Bibliography
  - Student Engagement Programs in Canada
  - SEM Plans on the Web
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