Retention and Persistence Working Group

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Hello,

We know many people are interested in knowing what the Retention-Persistence Working Group (RPWG) is, who is on it, and what efforts are underway. We hope the attached document helps to do that. You will note that all the deans and faculty members Greg Dumont, Michael Brian, and Amanda Whitworth are part of the group. We are all happy to answer questions if you have them.

As noted in the attached document, increased retention and persistence will not only benefit students in the long run, it will also benefit the long-term sustainability of the institution. Together, we can improve our retention rate (now hovering around 70% for first to second-year returnees) up to the institutional goal of 85% and, more importantly, improve student learning and the post-graduate lives of our students.

Thank you!
Marcia for the RPWG

Marcia Schmidt Blaine
Professor of History
Executive Director of Government Relations
& Special Projects for the President
Plymouth State University
Plymouth, NH 03264
Dear Pat,

I apologize for this being late. Some faculty have expressed interest in knowing more about what the Retention-Persistence Working Group is and is doing. Would it be possible to have the two attached documents submitted to the faculty? I'm happy to take questions during the meeting. Greg Dumont and Michael Brian are also with the group (Amanda Whitworth is too, but has been unable to attend meetings thus far. She's taking part electronically). I've cc'd them. Along with the deans, they too can help with answers to faculty questions.

Thank you -
Marcia

P.S. We are also sharing the information with the OS and PAT speakers.

Marcia Schmidt Blaine
Professor of History
Executive Director of Government Relations
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From: Faculty Speaker
Sent: Wednesday, October 18, 2017 9:18:39 AM
To: PSU-FACULTY
Subject: Call for Agenda items for November Faculty Meeting

Dear Colleagues,

Our next Faculty Meeting will be on Wednesday, November 1. **Please email me any items you'd like to include on the agenda for that meeting by 5:00 PM on Wednesday, October 25.** I plan to get the agenda and accompanying materials out to all of you by October 26 so you will have the materials a week ahead of the meeting.

Please send your agenda items to me at psu-facultyspeaker@plymouth.edu. Thank you.

Best wishes,
Pat

Dr. Patricia Cantor
Faculty Speaker
To: Faculty and Staff  
From: Retention and Persistence Working Group  
Nov. 1, 2017

A university education is a financial, emotional, and personal investment for our students and their families; we want to make sure our efforts lead to their benefit. In August, Pres. Birx created a campus-wide group to look at retention and persistence at the 30,000 foot level to coordinate efforts along with tracking and evaluating them on a broad scale.\(^1\) We’re calling that group the Retention-Persistence Working Group. We want you to know what we are doing - and take part in the efforts.

Increased retention and persistence will not only benefit students in the long run, it will also benefit the long-term sustainability of the institution. Together, we can improve our retention rate (now hovering around 70% for first to second year returnees) up to the institutional goal of 85% and, more importantly, improve student learning and the post-graduate lives of our students.

Members of the RPWG:

The group currently includes (listed by position as well as name):
The three deans (Gail Mears, Robyn Parker, Cynthia Vascak)
Three faculty members (Greg Dumont, Michael Brian, Amanda Whitworth)
Dean of Students (Jeff Furlone)
Academic Student Advocate & Policy Support (David Zehr)
Student Accts Services rep (Amy Moll)
Student Success Coaches (Ryan Donathan and Kayla Gaudette)
Dir. of Financial Aid (Crystal Gaff)
Advancement rep (Brian Gagnon)
Dir. of Res Life (Amanda Grazioso)
Internal Communications Lead for Academic Affairs (Corey Hoyt)
Enterprise Information Management (Joyce Larson)
Dean of Enrollment Management (Jason Moran)
Career Counselor (Erik Pavesic)
E.D. of Special Projects for the President (Marcia Schmidt Blaine)

As you can see from the summary of our first meeting (included in a separate document), retention and persistence are top of mind for many with many efforts underway on campus. We are working to increase collaboration between various parts of campus. You’ll note that most of the attached ideas are related to the work PSU staff and administration is doing. But faculty see individual students on a regular basis more than any group on campus. We need faculty input and help too.

\(^1\) This is what separates the group from the Student Affairs retention group. They are boots on the ground. The RPWG deals with broad initiatives.
Focusing now on what needs to be done to retain students this year for next year, three themes are emerging for our current work:

1. **One-on-one retention/persistence efforts.** Reaching out to individual students (and, depending on the issue, occasionally their parents as well since parents are allies in retention/persistence) for those who need extra support. Student Success Coaches - following up on students with a variety of issues (from leaving school to a desire to study abroad) and coordinating students’ needs with the right help/office. Frost House work with individual students on a wide range of issues. EAB Student Success Collaborative - Campus updated information - providing expanded individual attention to those who need support. Faculty and staff across campus are key in this area. Issue: staffing concerns, especially in mental health counseling, coaches, and career services.

2. **Group led/supported retention/persistence efforts.** Creating cohorts. Plymouth summer bridge program has had good, even excellent, results. Sports, intramurals, and particular majors do this well too. How and where else can we create cohorts NOW? (Other groups working on this. More to follow. Ideas and energy welcome).

3. **Summer melt.** Efforts to prevent summer melt (the loss of students from Admission to deposit to showing up in the fall) include discussion of creating post-Admission cohorts using technology; use of variety of engagement mechanisms including majors and career exploration guidance; summer connections to faculty and professional advisors, etc.

Steps for October:

1. Add to the Student Success Coaches calendar of retention/persistence efforts, creating a campus-wide calendar and improving collaboration.
2. Create more concentrated subgroups within the RPWG (with additional people drawn in as needed) to collect data and look more closely at efforts underway and new initiatives.
3. Share information broadly.
4. Improve Panther Days in ways that focus on retention.
Campus-wide Retention and Persistence Efforts (as of late August 2017):
Divided into three areas:
   What are we already doing? (currently underway)
   What are new initiatives for the year? (new initiatives in process)
   What might be possible in the future? (future ideas/needs)

From Admission to Panther Days:

Currently underway:
1. Developing a search strategy to identify students that would make admissible candidates for Admission.
2. Creating recruitment programs and communications that introduce a PSU experience prior to matriculation.
3. Develop a financial aid strategy aimed to attract, enroll, and retain new students.
4. Develop relationship with student-athlete and family during recruiting process.
5. Promote academic policies that support student progress – while maintaining academic integrity.
6. Supporting and identifying attractive academic programs.
7. Supporting faculty engagement in informational sessions, orientation, Panther Days, etc.

New initiatives in process:
1. Working with Student Success to artificially bridge information collected in the Salesforce CRM and the Student Success Collaborative.
2. Creating a parent recruitment/communication program that can be passed off to Student Affairs.
3. Redesigning the “4 tools for integrated clusters” with retention and persistence in mind.

Future ideas/needs:
1. Raise enough funds to fully meet need for all students.
2. Have an external support resource assessment performed to identify resource needs to support enrollment.
3. Transfer equivalencies at PSU. Ability to show potential transfer students how they fit into PSU programs.

Summer between admission through Panther Days:

Currently underway:
1. Online modules for registration orientation and for summer success course.
2. Focus2 summer assessment of career goals.
3. Career exploration: Focus2
4. Support development of program assessment to ensure quality of academic product and demonstrate student learning.
5. Orientation support in June and Panther Days.
6. Major exploration/declaration, minor exploration
7. Orientation
8. Pilot programs that help Admissions to determine other attributes associated with “fit” not currently factored in the admission review process.

9. Covering all orientation/open house and accepted student events with 4-5 faculty and 5-7 students from CoBA Student Advisory Council. Spring AY2016-17 introduced simulation @ accepted student event. Same simulation to be introduced in Principles of Marketing (gamification of curriculum).


11. Counseling students/families with financial issues. (Student Success Coaches: how can we help with financial literacy?).

12. Administer special scholarship fund to help retain students with reasonable balances and who are out of options (all students).

13. Panther Days

14. Panther summer bridge program: NH students, Pell-eligible, 1st generation. Aims: create cohort, orient students, create leaders. – multiple offices

New initiatives in process:
1. Focusing orientation sessions on the “engagement imperative” focusing on CoBA student organizations.
2. Increase staff at Counseling Center.
3. Continue launch of clusters and curriculum revisions.

Future ideas/needs:
1. Use cohorts throughout Panther Days (perhaps even before). Create cohorts by cluster/dorm hall/interest/etc. Mandate attendance at Panther Days events.

First Year:
1. Student interactions – attempt to meet with majority of student within first few weeks (80-90%).
2. Meet with students on warnings, probation, and severance.
3. Class schedule audits: make sure students are taking the right classes/signed up for the proper classes in the next term.
4. Campus-wide coordination of Student Success Collaborative - campus data gathering outreach.
5. Life skills programming speaker series. Winterim programs for winter athletes.
6. Transition students from Success Coaches to faculty advisors.
7. Thoughtful assignment of 1st year students to discipline-based advisors who take advising responsibility seriously.

New initiatives in process:
1. 1st year mentorships.

Future ideas/needs:
1. Mandate student involvement in at least one student organization.
2. Have alums outreach over holiday break-January.

Sophomore:
Currently underway:
1. Intro courses – include careers exploration (some disciplines). – add financial aid component to course.

New initiative underway:
1. Review all returning student awarding strategy to determine impact on retention.
2. Undeclared sophomore advising.
3. More formalized SAAC (Student Athlete Advisory Council).

Junior:
New initiative underway:
1. Create effective INCO Gen Ed Capstone. Integrated project-based open labs.

Future ideas/needs:
1. Tuition relief as part of project work.

Senior:
Currently underway:
1. Senior capstone courses already in some courses (anticipated throughout major; continued career development).

Future ideas/needs:
1. Use NSSE data to better understand student experience.
2. Ensure all students have at least 4-5 high impact learning experiences throughout academic career. Scaffolded.

Graduation - Alums:
Currently underway:
1. Establish alumni chapters.

Future ideas/needs:
1. Sourcing alumni chapters for individual student support.
2. Educate Alumni about student loan repayment and financial basics.

General:
Currently underway:
1. Following students based on concerns (intent to withdraw, financial concerns, interest in study abroad, 4 year plans, etc) to target specific populations.
2. Working with PSU community to realign to integrated clusters including curriculum revisions, Gen Ed, scheduling changes to support new model.
3. Support for cluster projects.
4. Networking Events.

Future needs/ideas:
1. Online planner to track degree with achievements and milestones along the way.
2. Confer associates degrees and/or mini credentials for students to collect/achieve along the way.
3. Perhaps creating course link for advisees that shows up in “my courses” link within student view of Moodle.
4. Moodle: add career link?
5. EduNav software – a GPS for students.
6. Scheduling
7. Academic scheduling for athletes (and others). How can we fix pressure on getting the perfect schedule?
8. Honest appraisal of General Education program.
10. Open labs in residence halls.
11. Mentor programs: peer mentors, alumni mentors.
12. Develop more and bigger events to support scholarships.

All four years:

Currently underway:
1. Engage and support student organizations.
2. Supplying faculty with appropriate information throughout the year so they can better support students (ongoing).
3. Working with faculty to increase student academic engagement.
4. Rec and intermural programming (linked to retention).
5. Specialized payment arrangements in order for students to register.
6. Scholarship work.
7. CARE process
8. Withdrawal/Leave of Absence.
10. Team academic study hall; academic monitoring forms.
11. Collaborate with offices across campus to help resolve student issues.
12. Providing opportunities for faculty and staff to collaborate on retention initiatives – University Days, January Jamboree.
13. Co-curricular development and general programming.
14. Single point of contact unaccompanied and homeless youth.
15. Counsel all students/families about options to pay bill.
17. Academic trouble-shooting
19. Academic monitoring forms. Class dismissal forms.

New initiatives in process:
1. Student involvement in campus wide learning events (University Days; January Jamboree).
2. Consult with reform of academic policies where appropriate.
3. Create a space for students and faculty to connect on scholarship.
4. Create major maps including co-curriculum mapping (include internships, study abroad, clubs, etc too).
5. More formalized and analytic end of season evaluations.
6. Retention dashboard.
7. Directly inform all advisors of conduct/social issues.

Future ideas/needs:
1. Student involvement in retention projects.
2. Peer mentorship groups/round tables led by students.
3. Academic Advocate Outreach (e.g. res. Halls…).