

Council on Retention and Graduation

Annual Report

2006–2007

1. What aspects of the charge to the council have provided the foci for the council, and what specific goals have you been pursuing?

The council was asked to examine current activities, to look for best practices, and to develop plans for improving the retention and graduation rates of our students, particularly among those not well represented. The council's work builds on earlier work by the Doubling the Numbers Task Force (<http://academicaffairs.iupui.edu/pdf/goals2010/RetentionTLTF.pdf>) and the Foundations of Excellence in the First Year Task Force (http://uc.iupui.edu/staff/research_projects.asp) as well as the ongoing work of University College and the Gateway Group.

The council works with the Council on Enrollment Management and all the schools in projecting enrollments. Activities of the Council on Enrollment Management have studied numerical projections with the Council on Retention and Graduation, focusing on the academic programs and practices as well as administrative policies and practices that have impact on retention and graduation.

Retention efforts for IUPUI have centered on the retention of entering students, and this year the council has led efforts to examine specifically the retention of the fall, first-time, full-time cohort. These students represent only 36 percent of those who begin study at IUPUI in a given 12-month period, but this is the cohort whose retention is reported as our official retention rate. IUPUI compiles a comprehensive report on retention initiatives each year (http://uc.iupui.edu/staff/research_retentionInitiatives.asp). This report gives the wide range of programs in academic and administrative units to enhance student retention. Council efforts have highlighted the curricular efforts (learning communities, first year seminars, bridge programs, etc.) that have resulted in enhanced retention. The council has responsibility for commissioning and reviewing program evaluations that continue to affirm the effectiveness of the programs.

The council has also coordinated IUPUI's efforts to assess the impact of student retention beyond the first year. We have reviewed student success rates in 300- and 400-level courses and identified, with IMIR research, unexpectedly low rates of student success in many of these classes (<http://registrar.iupui.edu/emc/ppt/bottleneck.pdf>). School-level reviews have suggested that the council increase its work with upper division students; schools are now reviewing data on the success across schools in moving seniors to graduation.

The council has commissioned reports on the impact of student finances (not only financial aid but also the impact of finance in general for our entering students where low-income and first-generation students are overrepresented relative to many peer institutions). We are now reviewing the proportion of students on the bursar checklist, precluded from registration, with the Office of Student Financial Aid Services reviewing records on an individual basis. Derek Price, of DVP-PRAXIS LTD, conducted a study to propose a set of quantitative

research activities to more accurately identify the characteristics of students who initially enroll full-time at IUPUI but do not continue to enroll into the second and third academic year.

His core research questions included the following:

- What is the relationship between academic preparation and student retention?
- What is the relationship between special programs, such as summer bridge or first-year seminars, and student retention?
- What is the relationship between course performance in high DFW classes and student retention?
- What is the relationship between financial aid awards and student retention?
- Do these relationships vary among different student groups as defined by race and ethnicity, gender, and family income?
- Which set of relationships (academic preparation, special programs, course performance, financial aid) best predict student retention?

(Source: Derek Price, "Student Retention at IUPUI," 2007)

Price presented his preliminary report to the council in November. He gave an update on his research at a joint meeting of the CRG and Rick Ward's retention action team. Many faculty members were invited to attend the meeting as well. After Price's presentation, he responded to many questions and from the audience. Price's final report was distributed at a meeting of CRG Steering Committee members, Enrollment Services staff, and faculty. It may be found on the CRG Web site (<http://ucrg.uc.iupui.edu/docs/handouts/fc/041907/PriceReport.pdf>). For the first time, IUPUI has longitudinal analyses of student retention that includes student preparation, participation in initiatives to support retention, and student finance analyzed over time.

In response to campus events in the fall, the CRG Steering Committee spent a great deal of time discussing how diversity affects the persistence of IUPUI students. The committee sent a list of recommendations to the Office of Academic Affairs via committee chair Scott Evenbeck.

Appendix A is a listing, with actions taken, of specific objectives for 2006–2007.

2. How have you approached each of these goals (what activities have you pursued related to each goal)?

The goals (identifying best practices, reviewing activities, activities, Derek Price study, develop plans) have included highlighting data on student success including new measures (e.g., specially with the cohort of fall, first-time, full-time students and students on the bursar checklist), a comprehensive review of all campus programming with wide distribution of best practices, inviting faculty and other council members to hear special guests, and collaborative programming with the other councils to attend to IUPUI's doubling goals.

3. What evidence have you collected and considered for each of the goals, and what variables are you tracking to assess progress?

The reports cited above have been considered for each of the goals. The variables include primarily the one-year retention rate and six-year graduation rate, but the council has broadened the variables to the success of students beyond the first year and to the mediated variables (i.e., participation in learning communities as a function of admission status) ultimately associated with increasing the retention and graduation rates.

4. What have you learned in connection with each goal, and what actions are being taken to address your findings?

We have learned that addressing only the retention of entering students will not “solve” our low graduation rate. We are losing many students in each year of their enrollment. Among the issues identified are students seeking particular degrees (e.g., nursing) and leaving IUPUI when not successful in entering the desired programs. The council has learned from Derek Price’s study that financial aid makes a difference in retention.

The council continues to consider the transfer of students to other programs. Many highly qualified students (including those on prestigious scholarships) move, for example, to Purdue University where retention is not included in our official data, in contrast with internal IU transfers who continue to be tracked across campuses. Statewide data would give all campuses more accurate retention and graduation data. Particularly on a campus where many students begin with the intent of transferring to Purdue and do so, including those students in our reports would give a more accurate reflection of retention and graduation rates.

5. With what other groups or individuals has the council engaged to pursue our goals and objectives? Are there any other groups or individuals you hope to engage in the coming months?

The council works closely with the other councils and with the Gateway Group. The Gateway Group originated in the planning of a group of faculty, staff, and students and whose work includes the following:

- Coordinating communication among those involved in gateway courses across the curriculum
- Disseminating information on best practices for promoting learning in these courses, obtained either through campus experimentation and research or findings from other campuses
- Seeking funding and other resources to foster innovation and improvement
- Promoting existing resources available through University College, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and other campus units
- Fostering best organizational and administrative practices to support student success
- Identifying work that needs to be done in connection with the improvement of gateway courses and early student success, and funding task groups to accomplish this work

- Reporting on progress with respect to student achievement in gateway courses and organizational changes that have occurred to better support these courses

The Gateway Group worked with the Office of Information Management and Institutional Research to identify courses that enroll high numbers of first-time, full-time freshmen. Most of the efforts of the Gateway Group revolve around these courses.

OPD, in conjunction with the Gateway Group, is now discussing and thinking critically about models of student retention and focusing primarily on the factors that can be influenced by individuals, programs, and other institutional efforts. These include institutional academic integration and social integration variables. The Gateway Group is IUPUI's primary group for bringing all together, in conjunction with the Council on Retention and Graduation and all the schools, for enhancing student learning and persistence with entering students. The Office of Student Life and Diversity and other campus units continue to implement the recommendations of the Foundations of Excellence in the First Year report (<http://uc.iupui.edu/uploadedFiles/Assessment/ImprovementPlan.pdf>).

The Council on Retention and Graduation is the context for considering new programs, particularly those developed across units, such as the new Mathematics Bridge Program, the Mini-Bridge Program launched in 2006, and the expanded Summer Academy Bridge Program. These programs are being expanded in summer 2007.

The council's primary activity this summer will be reviewing the action team reports and moving forward with initiatives in the campus academic plan. The committee will use recent reports prepared by Victor Borden and Gary Pike, in addition to the Price study, to better understand factors associated with retention as it works with the schools in enhancing student academic achievement and persistence.

Appendix A

TOP TEN FOR RETENTION AT IUPUI

1. Increase scholarship support coupled with academic support for low-income and first-generation students, targeting the Twenty-first Century Scholars. National data confirm the very strong association between family income and earning a bachelor's degree. IUPUI can build on the success of Indiana's Twenty-first Century Scholars program by increasing both financial support and academic support for students enrolled at IUPUI.

ACTION:

- a. To begin addressing the lack of need-based scholarships at IUPUI, the Office of Student Scholarships implemented an incentive scholarship for incoming freshman who have received an admission-based (merit) scholarship and who have an expected family contribution of less than \$5000. The incentive scholarship will match the amount of the admission-based scholarship. Approximately 200 offers were extended and the projection is that 50–60 percent of the scholarships will be accepted. The initiation of the federal Academic Competitiveness Grants for Pell recipients will provide additional funding for low-income students during the first two years of study.
 - b. In addition to increased funding, increases in academic support is essential. The Office of Student Scholarships, in collaboration with University College, will expand the summer bridge program with a focus on Twenty-first Century Scholars. Recognizing that it is not feasible for some of the students to leave their jobs for a two-week period, a weekend format is being piloted with student athletes. It will provide a structure that will permit further growth of the summer bridge program.
2. Coordinate communications for prospective and entering students. Present efforts are disjointed and uncoordinated. There is, for example, no letter from the Chancellor. A systematic program of communication (printed materials, e-mails, letters, postcards, handwritten notes from students, phone calls) should be implemented.

ACTION:

A subcommittee on marketing of the Enrollment Management Committee is working on this initiative. A communications calendar has been developed and is available at <http://registrar.iupui.edu/emc>.

3. Commission qualitative and quantitative research on students who have left and those who have stayed to better understand the factors impacting student success (and then address the factors working against success that are under our control).

ACTION:

Derek Price, of DVP-PRAXIS LTD, conducted a study to propose a set of quantitative research activities to more accurately identify the characteristics of students who initially enroll full-time at IUPUI but do not continue to enroll into the second and third academic year.

Price has made the following recommendations based upon his research:

- For regularly admitted students, retention policies and practices should address participation in the first-year seminar, number of gateway courses attempted in the first term, and share of grant financial aid as a proportion of total aid.
- For conditionally admitted students, retention policies and practices should address limiting enrollment in gateway courses in the first term, offering block schedules (especially for students who place in MATH 001), and maintaining adequate total financial aid during the academic year.
- IUPUI should further investigate the impact of grant financial aid on student retention.
- IUPUI should further examine the patterns of gateway courses attempted by conditionally admitted students.
- IUPUI should develop and conduct a survey of nonreturning students.
- IUPUI should conduct focus groups of students who successfully returned to IUPUI for a second year.

(Source: Derek Price, "Student Retention at IUPUI," 2007)

For the first time, IUPUI has longitudinal analyses of student retention that includes student preparation, participation in initiatives to support retention, and student finance analyzed over time.

4. Implement a scorecard for all schools on implementation of powerful pedagogies and programming associated with retention (scholarships, scholarships coupled with academic support, honors, service learning, learning communities and first year seminars, study abroad, undergraduate research, etc.)

ACTION:

Priority for 2007–2008.

5. Support faculty development to enhance diversity in the curriculum. Involvement with diversity increased engagement in learning. IUPUI's students are diverse. We need to increase our attention to diversity in the curriculum.

ACTION:

As part of a grant from the Lumina Foundation, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) staff developed the Diversity and Learning Web site (www.opd.iupui.edu/meiupui). The Web site was designed to be a one-stop, user-friendly, comprehensive, online resource for faculty interested in issues of multicultural education. The Web site consists of five resource areas: (1) a revised multicultural classroom resource guide, (2) multicultural teaching techniques, (3) the Multicultural Teaching and Learning module, (4) a collection of faculty essays, and (5) a dynamic listing of campus resources. In addition, the CTL partnered with the Office for Multicultural Professional Development to host the Multicultural Teaching and Learning Institute in March. Participants explored various topics.

6. Implement an enhanced program of involvement and support for parents and family members, particularly important for our low-income and first-generation students.

ACTION:

Parent newsletter, fall program.

7. Develop models on campus and with community partners where work can be an asset rather than a deficit in students' educational experiences, not only through internships but also through curricular involvement and through engaging employers as partners in supporting student success.

ACTION:

Priority for 2007–2008.

8. Inventory administrative and academic policies and procedures, determine their impact on student success, and then address places where we are not satisfied with our performance (e.g., no academic forgiveness in place for entering students coupled with a five-year limit on changing F to W leaves many students in limbo).

ACTION:

Ongoing. The campus has broadened participation in the early warning and administrative withdrawal initiatives.

9. Focus on the fall, full-time, first-time cohort. Engage faculty, staff, and students in strategies to engage and understand the cohort in particular (increased communications, exit interviews, ongoing contact, reentry scholarships, etc.).

ACTION:

Cohort identified; contacts ongoing.

10. Enhance the coordination of student financial aid and bursar policies and procedures, enlisting academic units as partners in understanding issues and serving students in ways that result in enhanced service to students.

ACTION:

The Office of Student Financial Aid Services (OSFAS) and the Office of the Bursar continue to move forward with collaborations to enhance services to IUPUI students. For example, OSFAS has initiated contacts with students in the first-time, full-time cohort who are unable to register due to a bursar hold and have offered to work with the students to explore avenues to remove the hold. Educational sessions have been provided for the academic unit personnel so that they have a better understanding of the federal and state regulations that mold the policies of OSFAS and the Office of the Bursar. Enhancements in student self-service are anticipated with the implementation of the SIS upgrade in February 2008. Review of business practices underlying student services is being conducted in anticipation of the move to the new campus center.