

Southern Nazarene University
Retention Task Force
Recruit + Award + Educate + Support = Graduate

Cabinet Approved

1/2009

Key Retention Indicators

- 2nd, 3rd, and 5th semester retention for Freshman by: Track, Nazarene, Track & Nazarene, Sport, Gender, and Ethnicity.
- 6 year graduation rates for Freshman by: Track, Nazarene, Track & Nazarene, Sport, Gender, and Ethnicity.
- 2nd and 3rd semester retention for Transfers.
- 6 year graduation rates for Transfers.

Recruit

- Continue efforts to aggressively recruit Nazarene students and their families.
- Expand the base of potential applicants by building or further strengthening strategic relationships with OKC metro mega-churches who are like minded in theology (Life, Crossings, etc.). Develop aggressive outreach and recruitment strategies to these families. Consider providing financial aid incentives in programs similar (in smaller amounts) to Nazarene scholarship programs.
- Expand the base of potential applicants by building or further strengthening strategic relationships with denominations who are like minded in theology and have little local/regional higher education opportunities for their students (Salvation Army, Methodist, etc.). Develop aggressive outreach and recruitment strategies to these families. Consider providing financial aid incentives in programs similar (in smaller amounts) to Nazarene scholarship programs.
- Develop an admissions matrix based on high school GPA and ACT score to determine admission. Work on adding class rank as a variable over the next several years.
- Create a small working group of Admissions, the Registrar, Wes Lee (ACE) and Academic Affairs staff/faculty to review significantly at-risk applicants before (or if) admission is granted.
- Based on our retention data, significantly at-risk students include non-Nazarenes with below an 18 ACT. These students would have to exhibit other significant attributes (high school GPA, mission fit, etc.) to receive provisional admission status granted by the At-risk Admissions committee.

Award

- Consolidate and coordinate in a more centralized fashion academic scholarships.
- Create a financial aid matrix based on high school GPA and ACT score to award academic financial aid. Work on adding class rank as a variable over the next several years.
- Given our retention study, focus institutional aid dollars on those students most likely to graduate (Track 3 and Track 2 Nazarenes, All Students with 23-27 ACT scores).
- Continue to work with Athletics and Music to streamline and coordinate aid process to ensure maximization and a focus of all institutional aid dollars across scholarship programs on students most likely to graduate (see above).

Educate

- Implement a pilot thematic learning community program in Fall 2009. Run full assessment and implement needed changes as program rolls out for all new students between 2010-2012.
 - All NSI groups must have at least one faculty member serving as a Faculty mentor. Load assignment responsibility for this area would reside with Academic Affairs. NSI groups must move to being 12-13 students in size instead of the current 7-10.
 - Have the NSI faculty mentor be the academic advisor for all new students.
 - NSI faculty mentors will need to meet at least once in the first three weeks of class individually with all students to review academic progress.
 - Link a student's mentor group membership to the learning community courses (2 per term for the first three terms) we pre-schedule students into.
 - Here's how it would work: 2 gen ed courses linked together to create a pod with 25 students in each course. In semester 1, One course would be Communications I and the other would either be a gen ed course based on the theme of the learning community (Arts and Culture community will take an aesthetics course), Semester 2 would be Communications II and Christian Thought. Semester 3 is TBD.
 - Re-invigorate the required nature of New Student Institute by re-creating a curriculum of educational and social activities that would be a required portion of the learning community courses.
 - Bring staff from Student Development, Spiritual Development, ACE, etc. together to develop programs that would support the learning community academic programs, attend to the developmental and academic support issues of first year students (Transition issues, Study skills, Writing, Career exploration, Vocational Calling) and build community and peer support across the entire first year (coordinate with Class officers, Gen Ed, Support Services, etc.)
- Develop a faculty-led NSI mentor training program utilizing a best practices model that has been developed by peer mentors over the years at SNU.
- Develop an institutional attendance policy for general ed courses that is adhered to across the campus for underclassman students.

Support

- Further develop and expand student mentor training for NSI utilizing a best practices model that has been developed by mentors over the years.
- Develop a more clearly defined, well understood and easily accessible early alert system so that support and assistance can be quickly brought to bear. We need to more quickly identify students having academic, social, financial, connecting difficulties (within 2 weeks of the start of school).
- Work with Admissions staff to develop a list of students who, based on some information they have gleaned from their work, they believe are at a greater risk for academic or social difficulty. Have meetings before school begins with Athletics, ACE, and Student Development areas to put in place a plan for coordinated support and engagement.

- Continue to require provisionally admitted students to participate in ACE programs and support services.
- Move to expand the employment of students in on-campus jobs. National data clearly indicates that students who work between 6-10 hours a week in on-campus jobs have much higher levels of engagement and academic success.
- Create a campus group to formulate and plan a coordinated Sophomore Year Experience program. This group would work to develop programs that would support the pod/learning community academic programs, attend to the developmental and academic support issues of second year students (finalizing a major, StrengthsQuest, Career Development, etc.), and build community and peer support across the entire first year (coordinate with Class officers, Gen Ed, Support Services, etc.)

Still To-Do

- Put in place a plan to disseminate Key Retention indicator data to decision making bodies to document institutional effectiveness. (Board of Trustees, Cabinet, Academic Council, Student Learning Committee, Scholarship Committee, Student Life Council, Athletic Committee, Strategic Planning Commission, and SSS Advisory Committee)
- Develop a communications strategy to engage the campus community in an on-going fashion on retention issues, best practices, and support services available.
- Develop a system to track and gather information from students who leave the university early (current pilot program is moving forward).
- Develop a system to gather data from SNU graduates about their experiences at SNU (Alumni Survey).