



Improving Upper-Class Engagement and Retention: Academic and Co-Curricular Strategies

Custom Research Brief

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I. Research Methodology

Leadership at a member institution approached the Council with the following questions:

Improving Academic Components: After the first year, what crucial points of intervention influence student retention? What policies or programs do other institutions employ to promote completion of general education requirements, timely major declaration, and overall credit accumulation? How have other universities engaged faculty to redesign courses that ultimately increase student success? How do other faculty and administrators determine the appropriate course sequence to introduce next-level and advanced content at the optimal time?

Encouraging Co-Curricular Engagement: What intentional signature programs have other universities implemented that blend academic study and participation in high-impact co-curricular activities in the sophomore and upper-class years? Which divisions and staff are responsible for development and implementation of these initiatives, and what outcomes have they achieved? What strategies do other institutions employ to improve collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs to promote student engagement and retention (as time permits)?

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

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Key Academic Checkpoints toward Student Persistence and Timely Graduation

Early Credit Accumulation

Evidence from IHELP Research

Encouraging, Rather Than Compelling, Foundational Courses Early

Forum Interview

Remove Burdens to Optimal Course Enrollment

Students may fail to enroll in the correct courses for a number of reasons, but the following emerge as strategies to ensure students enroll in the right amount and correct courses:

Strategies to Facilitate Optimal Course Enrollment

Remind students of registration holds

University J

Additional Strategies to Reduce Course Withdrawals

Limit number of withdrawals from a single course

three times

Limit total number of withdrawals over undergraduate career

V. Enhancing Academic Engagement through High-Impact Practices

Prioritize Evidence-based Engagement Programs

Many universities prioritize academic and co-curricular experiences that have been labeled high-impact. These programs are those that have been fully endorsed in full by the Association of American Colleges and Universities¹. Dr. Kuh identified high-impact programs as those whose development impact was verified by student responses on the National Survey of Student Engagement. Such practices include the following:

¹ *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*

Characteristics of Select Co-Curricular Pathway Programs

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Considerations for Developing Peer Academic Support Programs

Common Theme
or Disciplinary
Basis

Select Program Profiles

B.S. in Hospitality Management, with a Focus in Sport and Sport Venue Management

business school

Characteristics of Effective Alternate Majors and Degree Tracks

