

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

Custom Research Brief

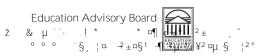
Research Associate

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January



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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 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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While many institutions have focused on retention of students through the first year, a growing number of university administrators are realizing equal numbers of students depart the university in the sophomore and subs equent years. Late or inappropriate major declaration, poor academic performance in early and foundational coursework , and failure to complete program requirements all contribute to attrition.

Universities should incorporate active learning components into courses with at least 25 percent drop, failure, and withdrawal (DFW) rates that serve as gateways to future courses in a program of study. Critically sequential courses in math, science, and composition often feature large sections and offer few opportunities to review content in smaller groups; these courses often disproportionately result in

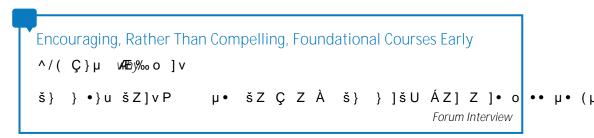
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Key Academic Checkpoints toward Student Persistence and Timely Graduation¹



Evidence from IHELP Research





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

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Remind students of registration holds



Additional Strategies to Reduce Course Withdrawals

Limit number of withdrawals from a single course

Limit total number of withdrawals over undergraduate career three times

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 $\langle \cdot \vec{a} \cdot \langle \cdot \vec{a} \cdot \vec{a}$

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



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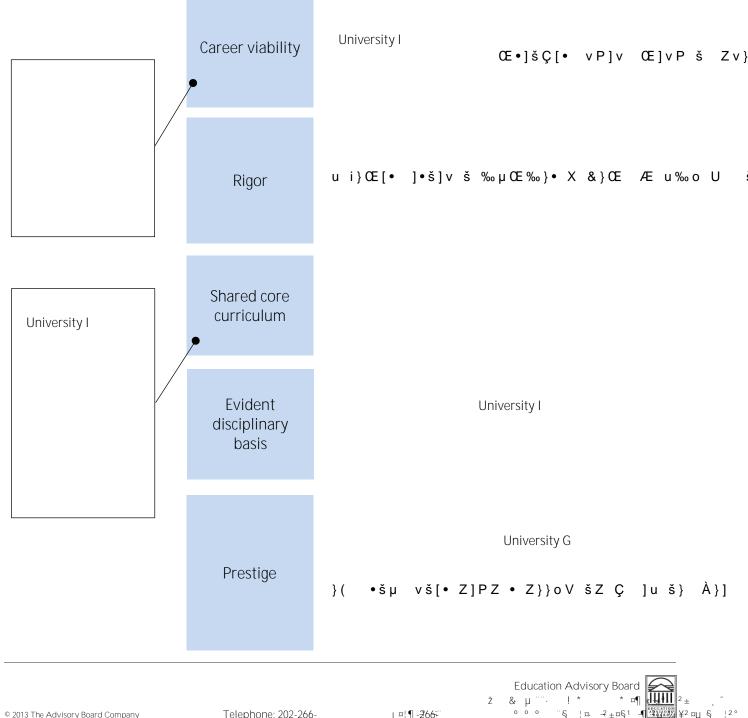
Common Theme or Disciplinary Basis

Select Program Profiles





Characteristics of Effective Alternate Majors and Degree Tracks



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