



## Committee on Retention Efforts (CORE)

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To see the slides from the Forum or other retention information, go to our web site at <http://castle.eiu.edu/~core>

Want to contact us? Send us an email at [core@eiu.edu](mailto:core@eiu.edu)

## New Resource Available in Report on High Risk Courses

Over the summer CORE members worked with ITS to develop a new report in reportal to allow departments to track their high risk courses. This report was requested based on data that Eastern shared with Noel-Levitz for our retention review. Academic struggles are contributing factors to student attrition, so Noel-Levitz routinely looks at courses with a 30% or higher rate of Ds, Fs, and withdrawals as opportunities for intervention for retention.

Such data may be used to determine which courses could benefit from tutoring or Supplemental Instruction (see the SP12

issue for a story on a department successfully using SI). While some fields may have a “weed out” beginning course designed to determine students’ fitness for continual study, CORE encourages departments to develop ways to help students who have chosen the wrong major. Rigor and challenge are part of the college experience, but as educators, it is our job to provide resources for students to succeed even when tackling challenging subject matter.

This new report offers the number and percentage of students earning Ds, Fs, and withdrawing across all

sections of a course to provide departments with an overview of their curriculum’s difficulty.

In Spring 2012 a total of 81 courses matched these criteria. Eighteen were general education courses, and 21 had fewer than 10 students enrolled. Twenty-two courses were at the 1000 level; 17 at the 2000 level; 30 at the 3000 level; 7 at the 4000 level, and 3 at the graduate level. So, challenging courses and opportunities to reach a helping hand to students are available at all undergraduate levels. Deans and chairs have access to this new tool.

## CORE Corner: Responses to Noel Levitz & AY13 Plans

CORE has focused the last few months on continuing retention strategies, such as the Early Alert System and the not registered emails, and on responding to recommendations made by Noel-Levitz.

Although Eastern’s retention rates are very good compared to national numbers, there is always room for improvement, and Dr. David Trites of Noel-Levitz provided a number of recommendations to Eastern on ways to increase our retention rate.

Several of his recommendations dealt

with using data to develop a retention plan, and CORE has drafted that plan. A final version will be available on the CORE web site.

He also suggested mining the existing data for cohort information, and this task will be the focus for CORE’s work for AY13.

Dr. Trites also suggested the adoption of the Student Retention Predictor in order to move to a more proactive retention model rather than reactive. A request has been put forward to purchase this model, but

its adoption is dependent on University fiscal priorities.

The recommendation related to alerting students early in the semester to faculty expectations can be accomplished through the Early Alert System.

The recommendation to review current publications and promotional messages has been passed on to Patrick Early, the new AVP for Marketing.

Better communication to students regarding campus events was also recommended. Progress has been made on



## Spotlight On . . . Major Forum Courses

Students who are undeclared are more at-risk of attrition than students with a major goal. CORE examined data for undeclared students compared to those with a declared major in one of the colleges. When looking at students enrolled for FA11 and not enrolled for SP12 and those enrolled for SP11 and not for FA11, we found the average for non-persisters to be 16.24% for all grade levels compared to 13.09% for College of Sciences, 9.90% for Lumpkin College of Applied Sciences, 7.98% for the College of Education and Professional Studies, and 9.18% for the College of Arts and Humanities. These differences indicate the importance of helping students find a

major that is a good fit for their strengths, talents, and interests.

Theatre Arts has had a course to help acclimate its majors to the field for over 20 years. Initially developed as a way to introduce freshmen to the department, it has evolved into examining the broad scope of the degree. "It gives them a better insight into what the major/minor entail," explained Interim Chair, Dr. Jean Wolski.

Each faculty member presents to the class on their specific profession, including stagecraft, costuming, acting, directing, theater history, sound, and lighting. Guest artists on campus are

*(Continued on page 3)*

### Did you know?

Students who live in University Housing have a stronger grade point average than their counterparts that reside off-campus.

#### Fall 2010 Facts

- New first-time freshmen who lived on campus had a 2.8 cum g.p. a. compared to a 2.04 cum g.p.a. of first-time freshmen who lived off-campus.
- New transfer students who lived on-campus had a 2.80 cum g.p.a. compared to a 1.79 cum g.p.a. of new transfer students who lived off-campus.
- Sophomore students who lived on-campus had a 2.92 cum g.p.a. compared to a 2.76 cum g.p.a. of sophomores who lived off-campus.

*Statistics provided by Planning and Institutional Studies.*

### CORE Corner cont.

developing an e-mail supplying events from the campus events calendar and is set to launch in mid-October. This will coincide with a campaign to encourage departments and offices to submit items to the calendar.

Lastly, EIU has been encouraged to strengthen and expand campus-based employment; 2,773 undergraduates were employed by the University during the 2011-2012 academic year. Data will be examined to determine what effect working on campus had on retention. Also, a review of student employment capacity and willingness to work will inform CORE on ways to address this recommendation.

Several recommendations are beyond the scope of CORE's purview. For example, Noel-Levitz encourages institutions to provide freshman students with the best teaching faculty. Another recommendation involves increasing faculty development on "increasing innovation and student engagement with the learning process." The recommendations also included requiring the University Foundations course, including orientation programming for sophomores.

Advising was stressed as important to student retention, and Dr. Trites

emphasized providing a "University-wide set of clear advising expectations for all divisions in order to encourage more consistent advice and mentorship." This suggestion has been passed on to the Campus Advising Network that continues to work on these issues through the Advisor Coffees and other meetings especially for faculty advisors.

### Quick Financial Aid Fact

As the nation has faced challenging economic times this is reflected in the student population. The chart below illustrates our students' ability to pay for a college education. The University's new scholarship strategies will aid students in affording an EIU education. Visit our website [http://eiu.edu/scholarships/highlighted\\_scholarships.php](http://eiu.edu/scholarships/highlighted_scholarships.php) to learn more about the new scholarships.

% of students	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Income range of Less than \$34,575 (150% of Federal poverty level and below)	37%	36%	33%
Expected Family Contribution of \$0	30%	27%	25%

## Spotlight On cont . . .

also incorporated into the course. Initial assessment data are gathered here as well. Wolski believes that this course “tends to bond the freshman class together and gives them a resource for any questions that pop up throughout that critical first semester. It’s a nice transitional environment from their high school experiences into college—and the expectations of not only our program, but college in general.”

Theatre Seminar II is the other bookend to Theatre Seminar I, and students take this course in the second semester of their junior year. This course is designed to prepare students for internships, application to graduate schools, and entrance into the job market, “Theatre Sem II prepares the student for what comes after graduation,” Wolski stated.

Over the past few years, several departments at EIU have instituted major forum courses to introduce new majors to what it means to study in that field and pursue a variety of careers.

Sociology’s course, “Sociology Professional Seminar,” is a one-credit, course “designed to familiarize students to the field of sociology, career opportunities and challenges in both education and the labor force.” Students prepare a resume and write two papers for this course: a reflective essay on sociology as a major and career and an essay on cheating and meritocracy.

One student wrote in the reflection piece, “SOC 2000 was extremely helpful with exploring the many opportunities, career options, and jump-starting my thoughts on graduate school and resume-building.” Another student echoed these sentiments and added, ‘I thought it [the seminar] would be a course that would do me no good and basically take up my time for no reason. It did the exact opposite though; it helped me to see that the occupation that I thought I wanted to go into was actually not [what] I wanted to do at all.’”

Not only does the seminar introduce students to potential careers, but it also allows them to meet the faculty in the department and learn about research in the field. Faculty come in as guest speakers to discuss their research and professionals guest lecture on social service organizations and other career opportunities related to this major.

BUS 1000: Introductory Business Seminar acts as a gateway course for freshmen and transfers planning to study one of the business majors—accountancy, finance, management, information systems, or marketing. Six or seven sections of this 2-credit course are offered each semester; the course focuses on three major areas:

1. professional and academic development;
2. orientation to the expectations and culture of the School of Business; and
3. Introduction to crucial skills needed for success in college and careers.

Faculty require students in this course to become involved in the culture of the department as well as to participate in the co-curriculum, which includes attending presentations and workshops on topics related to business and joining RSOs relevant to their program of study. Dr. Christie Roszkowski, Associate Chair of the School of Business, noted that “The integration of in-class and out-of-class activities is intended to encourage students to become more aware of and engaged in their development.”

On most Fridays guest lecturers are invited to address topics such as internships, selecting a major, and becoming involved in recognized student organizations. BUS 1000 also requires students to meet with a counselor in Career Services to review their Focus 2

results and identify potential career paths and interests. This is the basis for a semester-long project in which students develop an academic and professional plan that helps to guide the rest of their college career.

Dr. Roszkowski explained the rationale for this plan, “A primary purpose of this part of the course is to encourage students to see their college education as an introductory stage of professional development that will continue throughout their lives.

We have spotlighted three different approaches to a major course designed to connect students to the field and introduce them to the department and faculty. Other departments that have such courses are Family & Consumer Sciences, Kinesiology and Sports Studies, English, Communication Disorders and Sciences, Health Studies, and Biology. These courses can help make connections to programs for students, and such connections help with student satisfaction and retention.

**Are you or your colleagues involved in a program or practice to help students succeed and thrive?**

**CORE would love to learn what your department or office is doing to aid in Eastern’s retention efforts. Email us at [core@eiu.edu](mailto:core@eiu.edu).**

# Mark your calendars!

## Retention Forum

February 12, 2013, Grand Ballroom, 2:00 p.m.

**CORE hopes to share data and ideas related to improving EIU's retention rate. More details will follow.**

### Early Alert: The View from the Trenches

This fall marks the second fall semester for the Early Alert System (EAS). In AY12 (FA11 and SP12), faculty submitted 1,768 alerts for 1,149 students. Of those students, 30% of students withdrew from the course for which they received an alert. Twenty-eight percent received a passing grade or credit for the course (A, B, C, or CR), and 41% earned a poor grade (D, F, NC, or X grade).

While we have no before and after data to compare against these date, we do know that students who receive alert are offered help and information on resources available on campus more than they were prior to the EAS.

This year CORE has two graduate students who are heading up the contacts with students: Aseret Gonzalez in Housing and Jamell Barber in CASA. Once an alert is made by a faculty member, then, the student is contacted either by telephone, email, or in person.

As the GA in Housing, Gonzalez forwards the concerns to resident assistants who conduct face-to-face interventions with students living on their floors. She also follows up with faculty and collects the data from

RAs for entry into Banner. Gonzalez and her team of housing staff contact all students living in University Housing.

Jamell Barber is responsible for contacting students who are submitted to the EAS who do not live on campus, so his contacts are via telephone and email. He also enters data and responds to faculty.

CORE asked Aseret and Jamell for their perspectives on student

receptivity to these calls, emails, and visits.

"The reaction of students has been overall very positive," Jamell responded. "Many students are very grateful for the contact being made to insure their success. Many have expressed that they needed help but were unsure where to find services that they needed. The students who have accepted assistance were all very willing to discuss their issues so that they could be referred to the appropriate units for assistance."

He added, "Even the students

who have declined assistance were happy to know that we are here to help them in being successful students. Overall, they are very thankful to know that there are others taking an interest in their success."

Aseret concurred, "Students have been reporting that their struggles are not necessarily negative; they are understanding they may need more help outside of class in order to succeed. The positive part of the EAS is that students are seeking out that extra help whether it is tutoring or having a discussion with their professor."

Students who

have been submitted for non-attendance have stated they were "too tired" but knew "they had made a mistake by not attending," Aseret explained. These students are encouraged to visit the Student Success Center for help with time management.

CORE encourages all faculty teaching undergraduate courses to take advantage of the Early Alert System by logging into PAWS.



Jamell Barber, EAS GA



Aseret Gonzalez,  
Housing GA