



## Committee on Retention Efforts (CORE)

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## Noel-Levitz Retention Predictor Model

As part of our efforts to increase retention and graduation rates, Eastern has partnered with Noel-Levitz on their retention predictor model.

Data for Eastern's new freshmen for FA10 and FA11 and their retention the following fall were shared with Noel-Levitz who built a retention predictor model based on over 55 key data points from Banner, including financial information.

Noel-Levitz ran statistical analyses on the data to determine what best predicted student persistence at EIU, and the model came back with eight variables, which is more than many institutions have. Three of those variables were related to financial issues. The following variables make up Eastern's model; these are given in order of importance:

1. Percent of financial need met;
2. Expected family contribution;
3. Financial aid gap;
4. Attendance at EIU Reads reading

circle discussion;

5. Student athlete;
6. High school grade point average;
7. Department or program area, and
8. Hispanic ethnicity.

Because one of the variables—student athlete—only lifted students above the average retention rate, that variable was not used as a risk factor because all non-athletes are not at risk.

Percentage of need met indicates the percentage that financial aid covers of a student's college costs. For Eastern, students whose need is met at 43.5% or higher are retained at 82% while those whose need is met from 22.5-43.5% retain at 72.7%, and those whose need is met at 22.5% and below are only retained at 56.9%.

Expected family contribution indicates if a student's family is at zero EFC or not; those at zero EFC are retained at 73.7% compared to those who are not at 79.3%.

Students whose financial aid gap is

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## CORE Corner: Predictor Strategies

Armed with the data described above for the incoming freshman class, CORE began working with faculty and staff colleagues who have a great deal of interaction with new freshmen on ways to use this information to find resources and strategies to help these new students succeed.

Because new freshmen are all advised at the Academic Advising Center at 9th Street Hall or in Gateway, the advisors were given the predictor information for each of their own advisees and

were asked to determine strategies they could enact based on this information and their work in advising students.

The advisors in the AAC have devised interactions they will each use with students for whom the predictor revealed certain issues. For example, for students who did not attend EIU Reads, advisors are suggesting ways in which students can become involved on campus. They have also put together resources to find help and advice with

money matters for students. The variable related to major allows advisors to discuss graduation and major requirements as well as academic rigor; some students are good candidates for referral to Career Services or the Student Success Center as well.

The offices of the Bursar and Financial Aid have also created new strategies for aiding students based on the predictor information. Financial Aid has

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## Spotlight On . . . College-to-Career In School of Business

### Did you know?

The *Prowl* program was launched by New Student Programs in the Fall of 2006. *Prowl* provides ongoing orientation and transition programming for new students. The objective is to provide educational and social opportunities for students to understand community standards and institutional expectations and to make connections to EIU, providing students with a solid foundation.

There are several key activities in which freshmen and transfers participate. New Student Programs tracks the retention rate of the entering class and student participation in key activities. The data indicates that students engaged in the three signature events are retained at a higher rate than non participants. (freshman +25.09%, transfers +15.66%). Students participating in the EIU Reads discussion circle are retained at a 17.12% higher rate and transfer students who attend the college meeting retain at a 19.18% higher rate.

The College-to-Career program was launched by the School of Business in Spring 2012 as part of ongoing efforts to prepare students for transitioning into their professional careers and is a vital retention tool. The program focuses on academic and professional activities throughout the student's program, from freshman to senior year. College-to-Career heavily relies on collaborative support from Advising and Career Services.

The program design team spent at least two years in development. According to Kathy Schmitz, Business Advisor, the team knew students who follow a program of professional development typically are

more successful in their job search and their transition to their professional career. She calls it a "roadmap for success" that "helps students in attaining success here and in making the transition from student to professional."

The program entails a four-step plan for students to follow for each academic year. In the freshman year, the central theme is "Explore." Schmitz describes the Explore stage as a discovery stage in which students answer two key questions: "Who are you? and What are your interests?" The program is first introduced to freshmen taking the BUS 1000: Introductory Business Seminar

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## CORE Corner cont.

contacted students with the financial predictors who have not completed their verification in Banner. Verification is needed for students' financial aid to be secured.

The Bursar's office has contacted students with the highest percentage of need not met to discuss ways to pay for school. These two offices are working together to develop information to help students understand their bill and financial obligations and determine ways to stay in college.

Instructors teaching University Foundations were given the predictor information for the students enrolled in their courses. The Executive Director of CASA, Karla Sanders, who oversees the UF courses made several suggestions for incorporating information into the course that would address issues related to the variables. The first suggestion was to use Academic Foundation Day to learn about the majors and minors at Eastern and the opportunities for academic engagement. Instructors were also encouraged to address topics already embedded in the course in a more purposeful way based on the needs of the students in the course. For example, Dr. Sanders' own course had

many students with the financial variables in the predictor, so greater emphasis on financial literacy was added to the syllabus this semester.

The Student Success Center is also using the predictor information and has teamed up with the Writing Center to sponsor an Open House to which students with multiple variables have been invited. The Open House was designed to make students aware of the services these units provide to aid in academic success.

University Housing and Dining is utilizing the information to develop specific activities targeted at key indicators. They will be hosting a workshop in collaboration with Career Services for students who have not chosen a major. Also, they are currently conducting a needs analysis of Hispanic students living in the residential environment.

CORE is currently in the process of identifying additional strategies that can be established for the 2014 entering class. In particular the group will be looking at ways to communicate to students prior to arriving on campus, initiatives for Hispanic students, and ways address undecided students.

## Spotlight On cont . . .

course. The Explore stage covers three main areas with checklists of activities to be completed: (1) make academics a priority, (2) explore opportunities for professional development, and (3) begin to develop a career plan.

In the sophomore year, the central theme is “Engage.” Schmitz describes the Engage stage as critical in motivating students to get

involved: (1) in student organizations, (2) in getting to know faculty as they take more core business courses, and (3) in professional development and networking activities. Schmitz notes Engage is about “fine tuning the students’ career plan by encouraging students to update their resumes developed in BUS 1000.” The Engage stage covers

three main areas: (1) strengthen your academic preparation, (2) strengthen skills through professional development activities, and (3) develop your career plan.

Juniors are encouraged to “Connect,” which is centered on the students’ academic plan and building professional development. Students begin to connect their academic programs to their careers.

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## Predictor cont.

\$9,006 or higher have a retention rate of 67.3%; \$5,913-\$9,006 retain at 79%; those students whose gap is less than \$5,913 retain at 81.4% while students with zero or less have an 83% retention rate.

As can be seen from these three financial factors, lack of funding is an issue for student persistence at Eastern. Since this model was run on data before the new Commitment to Excellence scholarships were awarded, CORE will be watching for changes in these areas.

Students who attended their EIU Reads discussion circle had a retention level of 79.3% compared to those who did not attend at 71.2%. Attendance at this event indicates motivation levels and willingness to complete expected tasks.

High school grade point averages at 2.84 and below were a risk factor with a 71.7% retention rate. Students whose high school gpa was 2.84-3.71 were retained at 80.3% and those whose gpa was above a 3.71 had a retention rate of 89.2%. ACT scores were not a predictor for EIU.

Although specific majors were not given as risk factors, departments did tend to lift a student’s predictor score or lower it depending on the persistence patterns of students in those departments in the past. Departments at risk included African Studies, Psychology, Sociology/

Anthropology, Health Studies, Family and Consumer Sciences, Physics, Biological Sciences, Mathematics and Computer Sciences, Art, and Communication Studies. Undeclared students were also at risk.

The final variable was Hispanic ethnicity; these students had a retention rate of 68.6% compared to 79.6% for those students not of Hispanic ethnicity.

The incoming freshman class was scored against this model, which gave a predictive score and the number of variables for each student. Only 5% of the freshman class was in the top quartile of students at the lowest risk of attrition; 48% were in the second quartile; 38% placed into the third

quartile, and 9% were in the lowest quartile and were at the most risk.

Thirty-eight percent of the freshmen had the high school gpa variable, and 48% had majors in at-risk departments. Thirty-three percent had a zero expected family income; 11% had the highest financial aid gap, and 19% had the highest level of need not met. Ten percent are student athletes, and 7% are of Hispanic ethnicity. Ten percent also elected not to attend their EIU Reads discussion.

Two percent of the new freshmen had no risk factors and 21% had only 1. Twenty-eight percent of the new freshmen had two variables, and 25% had 3 leaving 24% of the class with four or more at-risk variables.

Risk Factors and the FA13 Incoming Freshmen		
Variable	# FA13 Freshmen	% of the Freshman Class
Hispanic Ethnic Flag	94	7%
EIU Reads Attendance	130	10%
Financial Aid Gap	144	11%
Percent of Need Met	257	19%
Expected Family Contribution of Zero	439	33%
High School GPA below 2.84	505	38%
At-Risk Department or Undeclared	640	48%
Not an Athlete	1194	90%

## Handy Resources for Mentors and Advisors

We've all been there. A student appears at your office door, or stops you in the hall, needing assistance with.....well, you name it! More likely than not, if it's a question about curriculum within our own departments, we are good to go! No sweat! But what about all those *other* questions? The ones that deal with obtaining tutors for some general education class, financial aid, majors and/or minors in another area, etc., etc., etc.?

We don't always have that information at the ready. No need to despair! There are resources for advisors and mentors that can provide the answers – or at least direct you to someone who *does* have the answer. Check out the following resources the next time you're stumped.

### Campus Advising Network

([www.eiu.edu/caneiu/](http://www.eiu.edu/caneiu/))

This is the repository of all things advising related and should be the first stop on your quest for advising knowledge. They have links to *almost everything* under "Advisor Resources A to Z." So, if you are in need of waiver forms, are trying to decipher Banner Codes, or are just wondering what all those acronyms mean, check out this site!

### Academic Advising ([www.eiu.edu/advising/](http://www.eiu.edu/advising/))

The "Advisor Quick Links" tab on this website will help keep you on track with your advisees. Of particular note is the "Resources for Advisors" link. This will provide you with all you need to know about General Education requirements by year, Exam and Placement information, and resources for working with transfer students.

From this link, you can check if that summer class your advisee wants to take will transfer to EIU without any problems. In addition, you can get help on how to fill out the Satisfactory Progress Form (SAP) for your advisees who have lost their financial aid and would like to appeal. There is an on-line training form to request training in areas that you may need assistance.

Can't find what you want online? Call the office (581-2313)! The advisors there are very knowledgeable and can help you navigate any tricky issues that may arise.

### Financial Aid ([www.eiu.edu/finaid/](http://www.eiu.edu/finaid/))

From instructions on applying for aid to financing study abroad, this site has a wealth of information. The "FAQ" tab offers help on navigating

PAWS, including quick tips, as well as Financial Aid Facts.

Under "Other Resources," students can check out Financial Awareness Counseling, a valuable tool in educating students as to financial need and aid.

And, don't forget about the scholarship search at <http://www.eiu.edu/~scholars/>. This site offers information about finding scholarships at EIU and elsewhere.

### Student Success Center

([www.eiu.edu/success/tutoring.php](http://www.eiu.edu/success/tutoring.php))

The Student Success Center can assist with getting tutor information to students in classes where they may be struggling. But, the website does much more than that. Under the "Academic Resources" tab, students can find study tips, information on time management, and hints for successful test taking. Students can also request individual help in those same areas. For the Advisor, there are tips for recognizing "at-risk" students and a link to the early alert system.

Bottom line? Help is out there! Don't be afraid to ask!

## Spotlight cont.

The Connect stage continues to focus on strengthening the student's academic preparation and professional development activities.

The senior theme is "Focus," which emphasizes the academic and professional development activities but focuses on the student implementing the career plan through presentations and workshops by Career Services and the School of Business.

Students have praised the program. Dominic Baima, Pre-Business Marketing major, notes: "Creating a resume now, as a freshman, gives me a leg up on my fellow students and it makes it easier to update and develop my resume to fit my needs as I progress through my college career at EIU." Dani O'Brill, Accounting Major, notes:

"Without the outline that College-to-Career provides, I'm not sure I would have the same level of assurance about my future" and "College-to-Career prepared me for the business world by teaching me goal development and time management."

Schmitz observes "We have excellent resources here at EIU and students need to be encouraged to use them." Schmitz adds "College-to-Career is how we can assist students in achieving their very best by helping them discover personal goals and how to achieve them – that's their map."

For more information see <http://www.eiu.edu/business/collegetocareer.php>) or contact Dr. Kesha Coker.