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This issue is devoted to retention topics covered at the February Enrollment Forum, *Fostering Relationships: Living the EIU Vision through Recruitment, Marketing, and Student Success.*

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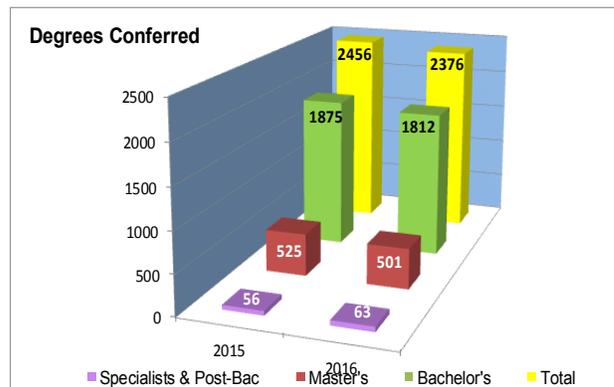
Enrollment Update

The enrollment forum began with a presentation providing background and current enrollment data from last year to this year. Data were provided by the Office of Planning, Budget, and Institutional Research and were shared by Kimberlie Moock, co-chair of CORE.

Enrollment for FA16 was at 7,402 for all students and in FA15 it was 8,875 showing a decline of 1,473 students. The chart to the right shows degrees conferred for 2015 and 2016.

New student enrollment for the two years is shown in the chart below. In FA15 there were 2,348 new students compared to 1,754 for FA16, which is a decrease of 594 new students.

Despite the decline in



enrollment, Eastern's academic profile has remained relatively consistent. The first-time freshman ACT average was 21.34 in 2016 compared to 21.55 in 2014. First-time freshman high school gpa went from 3.05 in 2014 to 3.08 in 2016 while first-time transfer students gpa averaged 2.97 in 2014 compared to 2.95 in 2016.

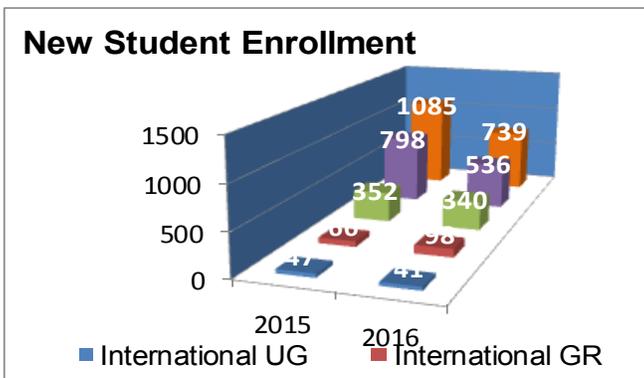
The retention rate dropped to 71% for the FA15 to FA16 students compared to 75% for the FA14 to FA15 cohort. The national average is 70.7% for master's institutions like EIU. Graduation rates for the 2010 class were at 57% compared to the 2009 rate of 58%. The national 6-year graduation rate is 43.5% for other master's level institutions like ours, so we remain 13.5% above the national average in graduation rates.

The six-year graduation rate for minority students was 46%, and the first-generation rate was 55%, so those groups remain at-risk compared to the average for that entering cohort.

In addition to enrollment,

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New Student Enrollment



Enrollment update cont.

retention, and graduation figures, the speakers also presented on factors that put students at risk of not being retained with a special emphasis on the financial risk factors: zero expected family contribution (removed in the latest model), financial aid verification (added to the latest model), financial gap, and percentage of need met.

The good news is that in FA16 the percentage of the freshman class that had no financial risk factor rose to 48% from 35% the previous year. However, the percentage of the class that had the % of need met factor (60%) also rose from 35% to 39%. Likewise, the percentage of the class that had the financial gap of \$7000 or more rose from 9% to 17%.

In addition to looking at the percentage of the classes that have the risk factors, CORE has also examined the retention rate of students in those categories. For the FA15 cohort, students with the financial gap had a 68% retention rate. Students with no financial risk factor and those with the % of need met both had a 75% retention rate. These numbers tell us that financial factors are an important part of the retention puzzle, but not the only reason students leave after their first year.

Josh Norman, the recently named Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, presented on factors influencing college choice and enrollment at Eastern and in the state of Illinois. He shared the top programs by demand for first-time freshmen, transfers, and graduate students. For freshmen:

1. Pre-Medicine
2. Pre-Business
3. Psychology
4. Engineering Cooperative/Pre-engineering
5. Biological Sciences

For transfer students, the following programs were in top demand:

1. Psychology/General Studies (tied)
2. Pre-Medicine
3. Pre-Business
4. Kinesiology and Sports Studies
5. Elementary Education

At the graduate level, the programs listed below had the highest interest:

1. Technology
2. Kinesiology and Sports Studies
3. Business Administration
4. Biological Sciences
5. Counseling

Forty-two percent of high school students indicated they started their college search junior year or earlier, so reaching those students earlier and earlier will be important.

Norman also shared information about how students decide where to study these in-demand programs. Fifty percent of students in the recent college choice survey said that relationships were the basis for institutions being on their first list of colleges. In addition, 42% of students said someone they know had attended their first-choice institution and had talked to them about the school or they were related to an alum.

The enrollment management team has taken this information about the importance of relationships in the college choice and have responded by sending peers to their home high schools as EIU's representative. This year 27 current students visited their former high schools armed with t-shirts, print materials, and training about how to talk about EIU to high school students. Current students are also calling prospective students to chat about EIU and the student's college choice through a series of calling campaigns.

Incentives are being offered to family members of alums to encourage their application. Alumni Services has partnered with enrollment management to share news about scholarships and recruitment activities.

Norman also shared ways the audience could help with recruitment. He encouraged his listeners to spread the word about the excellent education to be gained at EIU by asking "Do you sit on an area school board? Are you friends with a high school teacher in a nearby town? Do you belong to a club or organization whose members have children and grandchildren who should be future panthers? If so, spread the good word about EIU." Admissions has brochures and fact sheets to share with anyone who would like materials in their "Go Bag" for recruitment.

Along with these relationship-driven strategies, Admissions has also bought 18,000 sophomore and junior names to send information about Eastern. They have interacted with over 1,400 students at summer camps and conferences. Dr. Glassman sent letters to 475 students who attended Boys and Girls State last

summer. Eastern has increased the number of emails sent to prospective students by 62% (1,057,639 emails) and text messages by 28% (23,916 texts). Visits to high schools and college fairs are up by 25% (791 visits), and phone calls to prospective students (24,521 calls) is up by 64%.

Norman encouraged attendees to be friendly, positive, and helpful when interacting with potential students and their families, noting that every encounter matters, and the college visit is vital to making the decision to attend EIU.

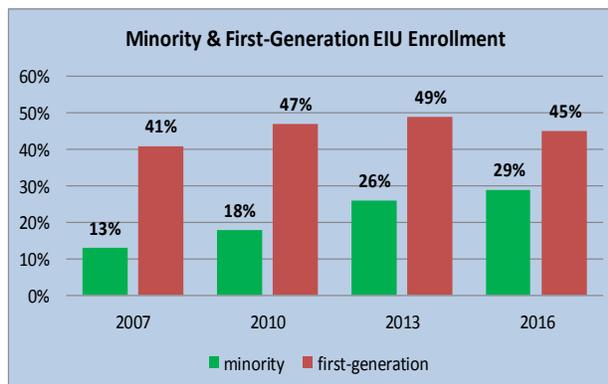


Creating Meaningful Engagement For Underrepresented Students

Minority and first-generation students are populations that CORE tracks because traditionally they have lower retention and graduation rates than other populations. Jennifer Stringfellow, Special Education, Mona Davenport, Minority Affairs, and Kimberlie Moock, New Student Programs presented on ways to engage Eastern students in these populations.

The percentage of students at Eastern who are minority or first-generation are shown in the chart to the right. Minority students at Eastern have had lower retention and graduation rates than the entire population. For the 2010 cohort, the minority 6-year graduation rate was 46% (55% for first-generation students) compared to 57% for the whole class. Likewise the most recent retention information for minority and first-generation students was at 67% compared to 71% for all students.

Underserved learners—racial/ethnic minorities, low income (combined parental income is \$36,000 a year or less), or first-generation to attend college—often lack access to high-quality education. In the United States, these populations continue to rise. For example, in 2015 almost half of the children under age 18 in this country were people of color, and the U.S.



Census Bureau projects that the majority of Americans will be people of color by 2050.

At the same time, jobs are requiring at least some college, but approximately two-thirds of minority students have a gap between financial aid, their family's ability to pay, and the cost of college attendance.

Despite these issues that impact students graduating, there are ways institutions can support their underserved populations. Student who are intellectually, socially, and emotionally engaged will thrive and persist to graduation.

Presenters explained Laura Rendon's validation theory, which posits 2 types of validation: academic and interpersonal. Academic validation occurs when faculty and staff help students "trust

their innate capacity to learn and to acquire confidence in being a college student." Think about ways you can encourage engagement from students. In the classroom you can move around the room, ask questions and wait for responses, make eye contact with students.

The engaged student will be taking notes, asking questions, and making eye contact with you. Instructors can plan for student engagement individually or in small groups during lectures.

Interpersonal validation can come from any staff or faculty member who encounters a student. Get to know your student workers and show an interest in their lives outside of your office. Help students find a home at Eastern by making them a part of your staff and the Eastern community. Encourage students to join RSOs or attend campus events; perhaps even offer to go with them.

Year after year our alumni data indicated that the relationships students built with faculty, staff, and other students had the most positive impact on their educational experience.

Student Panel: How Life Can Impede College Success

Echarial Gaines from New Student Programs moderated a student panel. The panelists represented backgrounds of students being overworked, balancing multiple roles, and battling health issues. The panelists' distractions were characterized as follows: A freshman who worked nearly 40 hours/week during her first semester of college; an adult learner who is also a wife, mother, and veteran; a veteran who often engages in military training throughout the semester; and a student who had emotional, mental, and physical health challenges.

The overworked freshman had to find financial means to support college expenses that her family could not af-

ford. She took on the graveyard shift at McDonald's and was often denied time off requests to balance work and school. Working long hours led to sleep deprivation and then trouble with getting up to attend class. Missing class made some faculty see her as irresponsible; however, it takes a responsible student to balance such a workload and still excel in the classroom as she did.

Imagine a student with their phone out anticipating a notification. Typically, this would be considered rude and unacceptable. But, what if the student was a mom awaiting a call from her children's school in case of an

What Can Faculty Do to Help with Retention?

CORE members, Dr. Jean Wolski, Theatre Arts, and Dr. Jennifer Stringfellow, Special Education, gave a presentation to help faculty learn about their role in retention.

They began the presentation by going over Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and relating those needs to retention. Some students having trouble meeting basic needs of getting enough sleep or enough food, may have physical issues that impair their ability to focus and learn. "If we have students who are coming to class and sleeping or being easily distracted, this may be an indication of something more significant occurring. Similarly, if students are absent a lot, this may be another indication that they are not getting their basic physiological needs met," Stringfellow explained. She went on to note that "It is important for faculty to demonstrate concern for the whole student and encouraging students to use the services and supports provided across EIU's campus." Such support is vital to our mission as a regional, public university.

Since most students decide whether to continue enrollment within the first 6-8 weeks, faculty can help encourage students to stay by setting a positive learning climate:

- ◆ Let students know who you are and that you are there to help them succeed.
- ◆ Show an interest in what drew them to your class.
- ◆ Be enthusiastic about your teaching and discipline.
- ◆ Set up peer mentors to help students connect to classmates

"Nine tenths of education is encouragement."

—Anatole France

through study groups, in-class buddies, and so forth.

- ◆ Set a positive tone that shows an expectation of success.
- ◆ Explain your expectations and the differences that may exist in the college versus high school classroom.

Being encouraging and concerned about retention does not mean faculty should lower their standards or expectations. It's about helping students reach their full potential. Set high, but realistic expectations. Challenge your students, but provide adequate support. Consider increasing rigor as the course progresses to provide students with success early on while keeping them engaged throughout the semester.

Providing consistent and timely feedback will help students identify where they are doing well and what they can do to improve; this includes using the Early Alert System and submitting midterm grades. Help students understand the amount of work that goes into being successful.

You may need to remind students about class policies in the syllabus throughout the semester. Encourage them to use campus resources such as the writing center, the student success center, and tutoring. Students who do so typically earn higher grades than they would without assistance.

Help students find the connection between what they are learning in the classroom and their everyday experiences by discussing current events, selecting materials that reflect diverse views, and illustrating interdisciplinary connections. Encourage students to get involved outside of the classroom and alert them to opportunities such as study abroad, lectures, plays and concerts, exhibits. Demonstrate your own involvement in these activities. Sponsor an RSO. Be willing to offer advice as they continue their academic careers.

Student Panel cont.

emergency? In one instance, participation points were deducted because having her phone out for that reason contradicted standard classroom etiquette. Another example shared was distinguishing between excused and unexcused absences. To miss a class to take her children to the doctor was unexcused but for her it was excused. Ultimately, the decision rests on the instructor's discretion. However, from these two examples, we get a glimpse of how traditional classroom practices are not always inclusive of parents.

The third panelist was a student veteran who participates in military drills (out of state). Active military service members will always have documentation to verify training to show their instructors should they need to miss class (See IGP 95).

Our last panelist shared experiences of dealing with emotional, mental, and physical health battles. Specific challenges included depression, anxiety, and fibromyalgia. Such health conditions can lead to missing classes unexpectedly. Panelists suggested approaching students genu-

inely and in private when noticing a concern to avoid embarrassment. Know campus resources and directing students to the right services when making referrals. Ensuring that your classroom policies are inclusive for all students to be engaged.

Positive relationships motivated students to be engaged. Talk to students about why they are missing class, assignments, or work before penalizing. They may be trying to balance many commitments.