ACADEMIC AFFAIRS FORUM

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LEGAL CAVEAT

IMPORTANT: Please read the following.

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

- What factors do administrators consider to identify and track students who withdraw from the institution? How do administrators determine these factors?
- What factors or limitations prevent an institution from tracking student withdrawal?
- What steps compose the withdrawal process at other institutions? What factors influenced its design?
- Which offices are responsible for identifying student withdrawal? How is student withdrawal information shared with other institution offices?
- What are the staffing resources necessary to identify student withdrawal?
- What factors (e.g., admission materials, financial status, health status, etc.) allow institutions to identify students at risk of withdrawing, even if students are in good standing? How do administrators use this information to prevent students from withdrawing?
- What methods do institutions use to communicate with students who withdrew?
- Which offices are responsible for reaching out to students who withdraw? What are the staffing resources necessary to reach out to these students?
- How do institutions collect and track feedback from students who withdraw? How do these findings inform strategies to prevent student withdrawal?
- Which variables most influence students decision to withdraw from an institution? How have these variables changed over time?

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

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- The Chronicle of Higher Education (http://chronicle.com)

Most students withdraw from contact institutions voluntarily, usually for personal and health reasons; less than one percent of students withdraw because of academic ineligibility . Students with low academic performance, while eligible to continue at the institution, may withdraw citing personal reasons. Contacts note that financing the cost of attendance, military reactivation, and family-related issues are other common motivating factors for student withdrawal. Existing student enrollment management systems, in conjunction with student retention software, store data on students who have withdrawn from the institution.

Contacts use the period of enrollment eligibility as the benchmark to determine whether student drop -outs have permanently withdrawn from the institution. Most institutions allow students two terms to re-enroll in the institution before eligibility is forfeited. Students who withdraw while in good standing must contact their academic advisors and/or their academic deans to regain their eligibility. Institutions where students indefinitely retain their eligibility permit students to re-register for two terms before listing the student as a potential drop-out.

Administrators use enrollment, attendance, and financial/bursar data to identify s tudents who have left campus without formally withdrawing (i.e., dropping out). Contacts developed reporting systems in which faculty submit missing student reports five weeks into each term to a student success committee. ’ — Š — Œ ’ Š • 1 Š ’ • 1 Š — • 1 ‹ ž › œ Š › œ • 1 ˜ • • ’ Œ Ž œ 1 which students missed tuition payments or are at risk of losing financial aid to a student success committee. After reviewing missing student cases, the student success committee forwards cases to each œ • ž • Ž — • œ 1 Š Œ Š • Ž – ’ Œ 1 Š • Ÿ ’ œ ˜ › ï 1 ˜ — • Š Œ • 1 ’ — œ • ’ • ž • ’ ˜ lists to advisors of students who have failed to register for classes either at the end of early registration or two weeks after the beginning of the term. Students in all of these cases are assumed to have dropped out of the institution.

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## Withdrawal Processes Collect Information from Students on Macro-level Motivating Factors

At University B and University E, 90 percent of students who officially withdraw from the institution indicate a standardized reason for withdrawal (e.g., personal, academic, employment, family, financial, medical, veteran, and other). Enrollment management staff aggregate and analyze this information. Registrar office staff determine which macro-level categories to include on withdrawal forms; current categories correspond to the policies on re-entry and readmission of withdrawn students. S

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## Student and Academic Affairs Administrators Build Student Withdrawal Profiles in Institution-wide Retention Software

Student retention software provides administrators with centralized access to valuable data housed in offices across the institution which helps administrators identify students who are at risk of withdrawing from or dropping out of the institution. Typical student retention software aggregates and analyzes student data to provide metrics based on:

- Academic performance: attendance, enrollment, relative grade point average for the œ•ž•Ž—• œ1–Š“˜› ğ1-fail Š•Ž œ1 classes, etc.
- Financial standing: bursar holds, debt loads, etc.
- Campus socialization: recreation facility use, student organization membership, etc. (at some institutions)

Advising systems ûŽï•ïð1œ¢œ•Ž–œ1•'Š•1–˜—'•˜›1Š1œ•ž Ž—– are built into some student retention software; the advising functions provide advisors with information about the student s relative academic performance to peers in their major, whether the student is on track to graduate on-time[1], and early-alert notifications (e.g., for poor class attendance, low midterm grades, failing to enroll in classes, etc.).

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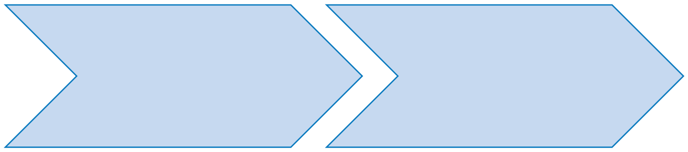
| | MAP-Works | Banner | Starfish | Student Tracking and Retention |

Student retention software uses student profiles compared against existing student populations to determine which populations are at risk of withdrawing from the institution. Students identified at risk are then flagged by student retention administrators for academic advisors to begin holding discussions and planning intervention with students.



Student retention teams (e.g., an assessment officer in the office of the provost, an assessment analyst in the office of student affairs, and an analyst from the office enrollment management) at University A and University C process student indicator data together to determine which students have either self-identified as intending to withdraw from the institution or meet standard risk categories for risk of withdrawal.

University B uses Banner to house all student retention data. However, the queries to draw out the information are managed through IBM Cognos, which allows for highly customized reports (e.g., focusing on specific range for one or more metrics, isolating a particular student subgroup, etc.). While the Banner/Cognos system has the capacity to identify students who meet certain risk categories (i.e., academic and financial standing), administrators do not actively use the system to address student retention concerns, due to minimal retention issues at the institution.

Students who attend this program are reportedly more confident and knowledgeable about the campus, and generally adjust faster to academic life than those who do not.

that the goal of meeting with students before they complete withdrawal paperwork is to ensure that students utilized every possible on-campus resource and that their withdrawal is the last possible recourse for the student.

Contacts at University C emphasize that the face-to-face interaction in the withdrawal process helps students re-enroll by introducing them to the staff contact who will manage their re-entry. Staff members who meet students before they withdraw better understand the issues facing each student and can direct them to the most appropriate resources (counseling services, financial aid, etc.) when they return to campus. Contacts note that since implementing this system last fall, of the 240 students who withdrew in the fall semester, 68 returned the subsequent semester (a 28 percent return rate).

d Z v } ( • š µ vaš [• } ( ( ] employs seven counselors who meet with students who intend to withdraw. Counselors are trained to address many issues