



University  
of Idaho

UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

STUDENT SUCCESS CONFERENCE

MARCH 27, 2019

# EXPLORING INTERSECTIONS & DEFINING WHAT MATTERS





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# REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

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STUDENT SUCCESS CONFERENCE  
MARCH 27, 2019

CHER HENDRICKS, VICE PROVOST FOR ACADEMIC INITIATIVES

# REASON #1: WE LIVE IN IDAHO





# REASON #2: WE HAVE POSITIVE SHIFT!



**81%  
freshman  
retention**

**General  
Education  
Redesign**

**Engagement!**

**Vandal Ideas  
Project**

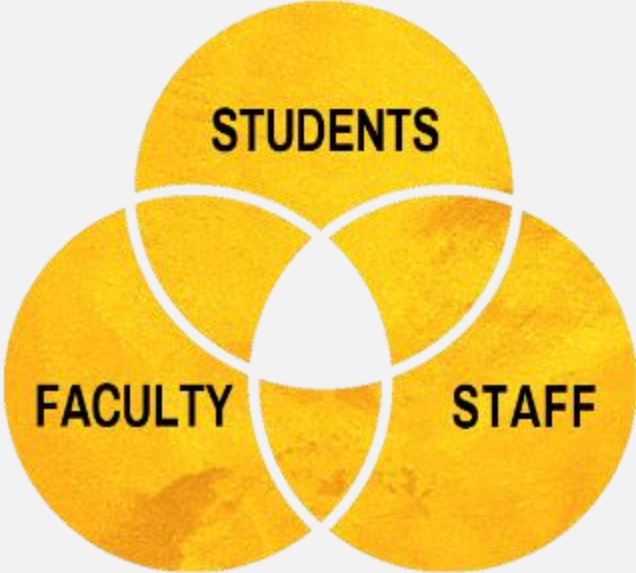
**59% 6-year  
graduation**

**UP  
5%**

**focus on program  
efficiency & quality**



# BUILDING ON LAST YEAR'S WORK





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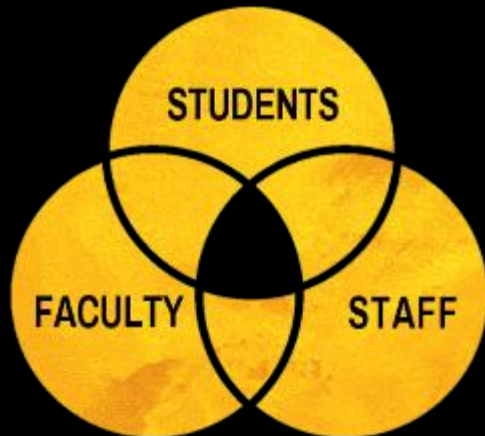
MARCH 27, 2019

# SETTING THE STAGE





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# THE FORMAT

- 1. DEFINING SUCCESS**
- 2. ASK A STUDENT!**
- 3. COLLABORATION**
- 4. SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES**
- 5. "THE ONE THING"**



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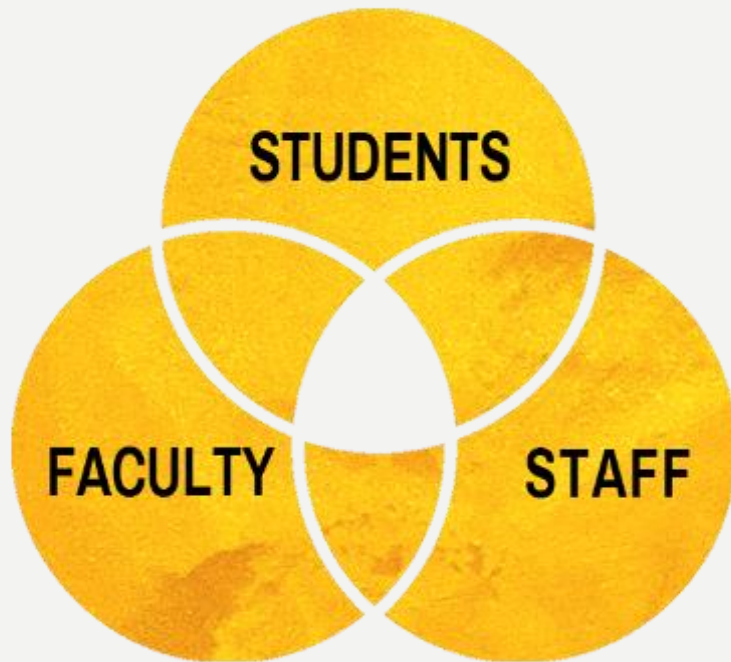
MARCH 27, 2019

# SESSION 1: BREAK-OUT



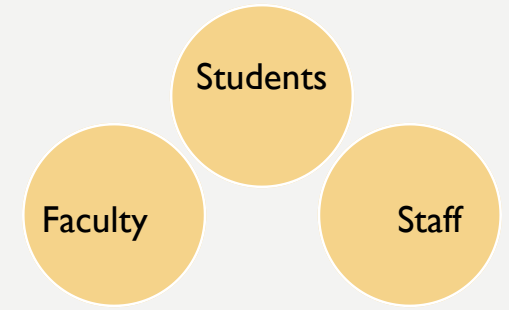


# BREAK-OUT SESSION 1



- Think about your circle and your role on campus...
- What does student success mean to you?
- How do you define and conceptualize it?
- Operationalize it?
- What does it look like to you?
- How do you, in your role, advance or support it?

# BREAK-OUT SESSION 1



**In your groups, consider:**

- What does student success mean to you?
- How do you define and conceptualize it?
- Operationalize it?
- What does it look like to you?
- How do you, in your role, advance or support it?

**• Your answers:**



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# SESSION 2: STUDENT VOICES



# SESSION 2



- Authentic perspectives
- Ask, listen, and learn
- Explore and examine assumptions
- Specifically...



# STUDENT VOICES SESSION FORMAT/ INSTRUCTIONS

1. Table interviews
    - 1. Faculty and staff: interview the student(s) at your table: 10 minutes
    - 2. Report out: one key success factor per table: 20 minutes total.
      1. Note what other tables say!
  2. Qualitative data from students.
    1. Brian: 5 minutes
  3. Perspective, insights, and open-mic.
    1. Nicole Skinner: 5-10 minutes.
  4. Reflection for next session: 5 minutes.
- Notes:

# SESSION 2: SOME RESPONSES



- Feeling comfortable and confident in what I'm learning and how I'm learning.
- It's not necessarily about getting an A all the time but it is about whether I'm confident and can use the information that I am getting.
- Being in Housing has helped a lot because there's resources everywhere. But I think the University could do better with making the resources to students more well-known.
- Some professors need to report grades in a more timely manner, or report them at all. It's important that students know how they're doing in their classes.
- Student success isn't just getting good grades, ... it is an improvement upon graduation. If a student gets into a job/internship/doctorate program after college, that qualifies as a success.
- Student success is coming out of college a better person than when you began.
- Learning how to work and deal with people, learning how to handle your emotions.
- College is not just a process of learning about your major. College is learning about yourself and how to constantly strive to be your best self.

# SESSION 2: SOME MORE RESPONSES

- “Student success” is when student are able to enjoy and excel in their academics while also having a healthy social and emotional life.
- Student success can be defined as the overall health and welfare of all the aspects of a student.
- Student success to me is being able to hold yourself accountable.
- A major benefit to my success is having an academic advisor. This has been extremely beneficial because it allows me to have someone looking out for my best interest.
- The greatest threat to my success is financial. It’s just...hard.
- Career services helps with interviews, Writing Center helps to correct grammar and edit essays for classes, S.I tutoring sessions for harder classes, office hours.
- The group therapy sessions have helped me emotionally.
- I have been lucky to have some pretty great professors who help me succeed. I have an advisor who is able to help answer my questions and give suggestions where they are needed.
- Providing physical, safe spaces for a wide variety of students and humans on campus.
- The University of Idaho has helped with my success by being a smaller tight-knit community, where people are open to helping you whenever.



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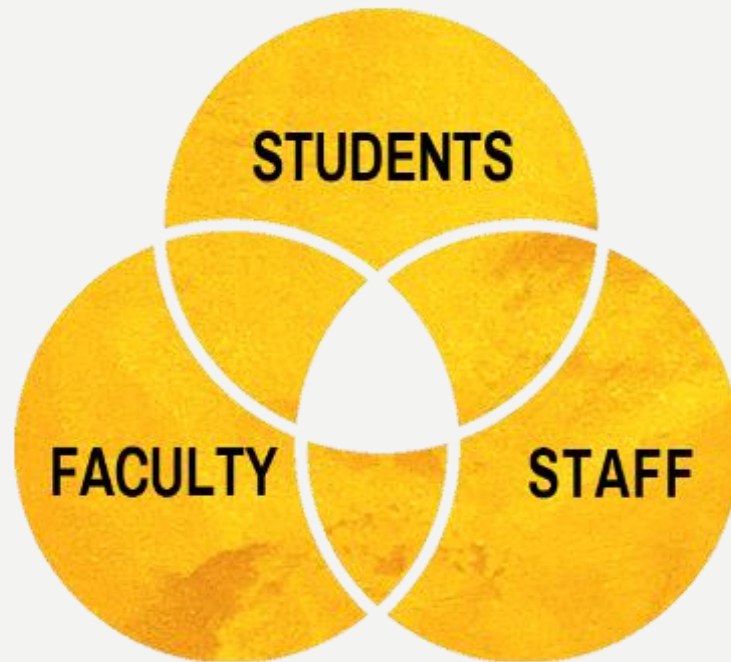
MARCH 27, 2019

# SESSION 3: COLLABORATION





# COLLABORATION EXERCISE



- Let's bring our separate circles together...
- How are your definitions, goals, and solutions similar? Different?
- What are the points of convergence & divergence?
- What are your paths forward?
- Explore the Intersections!





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**REPORT OUT**

**ONE PER TABLE**



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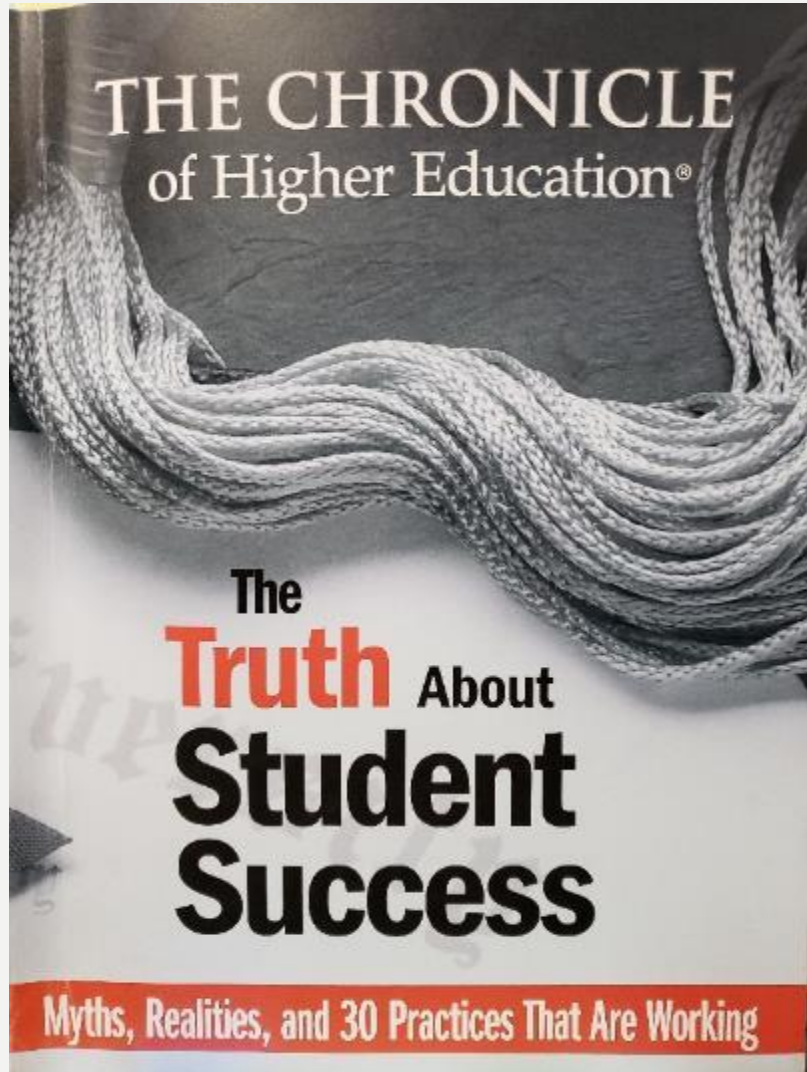
MARCH 27, 2019

**SESSION 4:**  
**SOLUTIONS & STRATEGIES**  
*DEFINING WHAT MATTERS*  
**DISCOVERING WHAT WORKS**





# THE RESEARCH



## Categories and Considerations

- Applying Student Data
  - Improving the Educational Experience
  - Integrating Academic Support
  - Promoting Students' Well-Being
- 
- *“The student success movement is at a turning point between rhetoric and reality” and we are experiencing that. But there are no quick fixes...*
  - *“Innovations in teaching and learning should be central to campuses’ student-success plans – or other efforts will have little effect.”*

# HIGHER ED INSIGHTS: RESULTS OF THE SPRING, 2016 SURVEY



## TOP 3 OBSTACLES TO STUDENT SUCCESS

- Insufficient funding
- Faculty hiring, training, and incentive structures that de-emphasize or discourage improvements in teaching and student support
- Administrative silos, which prevent fruitful coordination and collaboration across institutional departments

## TOP 3 SOLUTIONS

- Reward faculty for experimentation and innovation around teaching and learning, including taking a research-based approach to their own teaching
- Promote more research and evidence on how to bring student-success initiatives to scale
- Develop more robust collaboration across systems to streamline articulation

# FROM THE FIRST YEAR AND FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS...

## Reinvent the First-Year Experience

### THE CHALLENGE

Shall a university take a first-year experience?

### THE APPROACH

Start with research, listening to what students and a variety of stakeholders on campus.

### THE RESULT

After just three years, the university's first-to-engage first-year students is up nine percentage points.

**W**HEN THE first-year experience at Southern Utah University fell five percentage points in five years, college leaders knew they had a problem. They just weren't sure what to do about it.

The college had tried several "high impact" practices that are supposed to help with retention, but they weren't retaining its side.

At a loss for solutions, administrators hired a chief retention officer, Jared Tippetts, who had been the director of student success at Purdue University. Tippetts, whose formal title is vice president for student affairs, started from scratch with his team, building

students arrive on campus, they're given a choice between homogenous welcome parties and more intimate gatherings. Peer mentors offer to take students to their first class, making so they don't have to go alone.

Now students complete a questionnaire that asks about their financial, emotional, and social well-being before the semester starts, and again three weeks in. When a student shows signs of struggle, an advisor, faculty member, or peer mentor will intervene.

As with most major overhauls, there was some initial pushback. Faculty members, Tippetts says, didn't always appreciate being told how to help their students. So administrators stopped telling them to teach a specific class at a specific time, and started asking them to reach out to students in their own way.



Incoming freshmen and their parents can visit with current students at Southern Utah U.

Meanwhile, the college continues to invest, aiming for a retention rate of 75 percent. To generate new ideas, it hosts a "what tank" competition, inviting anyone to present a proposal for improving retention to the president's council. The contest has led to the creation of a peer-mentoring program and the hiring of a "withhold coordinator" who looks for ways to keep would-be

dropouts enrolled.

Other changes have been driven by departure. After surveys showed that students were continuing to leave for financial reasons, the college hired a financial-literacy expert. And when personality assessments revealed an uptick in introverts, it added more small-group options to welcome week.

"Welcome weeks are notoriously programmed for extroverts," Tippetts said. "A lot of our students struggle in those environments."

## Revamp General Education

**W**HEN an accrediting agency found that the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh had not thought out its general-education program carefully enough, the institution decided it was time for an overhaul.

The program hadn't been updated since the 1970s, and students didn't understand how general-education requirements fit into their degrees, says Ken Price, director of the current program. In 2007, Oshkosh convened a group to tackle the challenge. Over the next five years, it developed a program it hoped would increase student engagement and raise retention. Called USP, it was approved by the Faculty Senate in 2012 and took effect the following year.

At the program's core is a trio of courses known as the Quest sequence, which are guided by three "signature questions" relating to cultural competence, community building, and sustainability. The goal, Price says, is to prepare students for careers in modern society.

In the fall of their first year, students take Quest I, limited to 25 students a section. While the subject varies, the constant is meant to acclimate students to college, says Debbie Gray Patton, the program's associate director for student success. Students also take a college writing or speech course together, and must attend a certain number of campus events.

Pushing students to go to events pushes their experience in the long

run, and can encourage their involvement in a campus organization, says Gray Patton. Meanwhile, the small class size helps professors notice if a student is struggling or not attending regularly, she says.

Quest II, a larger course taken in the second semester, is also offered in various subject areas and aims to get students thinking about academic and career plans. As of 2018, students attend three academic open houses, where they can talk with faculty members in various departments.

To finish off the sequence, in Quest III, sophomores spend about 15 hours doing community-engagement work. As part of a course, for example,

The program is guided by three "signature questions" relating to cultural competence, community building, and sustainability.

they might design a website for a local nonprofit.

Sometimes such work helps students think critically about the future. One group recently worked with elementary schoolers. While some students came away knowing they didn't want to work with children as a career, Gray Patton says, others found that it reinforced a passion for teaching.

### THE CHALLENGE

Engage students in general education as a valuable, relevant part of their academic experience.

### THE APPROACH

Create small, core courses guided by overarching questions and requirements designed to help students throughout their lives.

### THE RESULT

Students are encouraged to think about their rights and careers and to participate in campus and community activities.



# ...TO THRIVING AND FINISHING...

## Help First-Generation Students Thrive

### THE CHALLENGE

How do we best address generational students the support to make successful and feel like they belong in college.

### THE APPROACH

Develop a program that provides social and financial resources, mentor skills, and career development.

### THE RESULT

The students feel supported and valued, and graduate at slightly higher than the average rate.



Students participate in a learning activity as part of the Georgetown Scholarship Program, which provides support for low-income and first-generation students.

**W**HEN CHRIS FISK was admitted to Georgetown University, he was ecstatic. A Miami native, Fisk grew up in a low-income household with his mother and grandmother, neither of whom had attended college. The transition into his freshman year was a shock.

When he arrived at Georgetown, in 2013, Fisk found himself surrounded by peers who seemed to have much stronger social connections and finances than he did, he says.

But the Georgetown Scholarship Program, founded in 2004 to provide financial and social support, as well as career development to low-income and first-generation students, helped him close some of those gaps. A scholarship awarded at admission serves as a "passport" into the program, but its services and resources are open to anyone, says Missy Foy, the program's director. Today it serves more than 550 undergraduates.

Though Georgetown meets all demonstrated financial need of its students it admits, the program helps them with expenses that can pop up around the margins. Its "necessity fund" provides money for groceries, a winter coat, or medical bills. It can also

pay for students to travel home and offers a place to stay if they don't have a stable living situation.

Beyond money, the program aims to help students like Fisk feel like they belong on campus where many classmates are more affluent. For example, if a student's family can't come or move in day, local alumni will show up at the airport, clad in Georgetown apparel, to greet the student and help set up in her dorm room. The program also matches students with alumni and peer mentors and gives them career resources.

The program is funded by the university, but several efforts, like the necessity fund, are supported solely by donations, Foy says. Many ideas come from the students themselves, she says, and Fisk describes that as the heart of the program's success.

Fisk, who served on the program's student board, says the program gives him the support he needed to be proud of his background and to thrive. By senior year, he was vice president of the university's student body.

The program helps students all the way through to graduation, and 96 percent of them finish in six years, a rate slightly above that for all students.

## Get Students Across the Finish Line

### THE CHALLENGE

Supportability near graduation through that final stretch.

### THE APPROACH

Create "graduation specialists" positions to help students overcome barriers to graduation.

### THE RESULT

The university's four-year graduation rate has risen almost four percentage points since the program started.

**W**hen Indiana State University's retention rate slipped by nearly 6 percentage points in 2016, the institution sharpened its focus on student success. Administrators explored ways to help new students, while considering how to propel more juniors and seniors to the finish. The university's four-year graduation rate had hovered around 20 percent for at least a decade.

About half of Indiana State's students are first-generation, and about two-thirds receive financial aid. After examining data and talking with advisors, administrators identified common challenges juniors and seniors were facing, such as scheduling problems and

not being offered. Or students didn't know where to get help with course planning or felt abandoned.

She encountered pushback at first, she says. "It was hard to get buy-in," especially from academic advisors and local faculty members who felt like she was meddling.

The university now employs these graduation specialists, who pore over student records, trying to catch gaps in degree progress or other irregularities, and serve as one-stop shops for students' questions. They also contact students who have left without finishing their degrees.

The specialists cross-train with the university's financial aid office. Scholarships

can depend on students' earning a certain number of credit hours each semester or year, and for students who work, those targets can be difficult to achieve. "The specialists were first contact for students struggling to maintain their scholarships, and the university has returned aid for students whose credit hours fell just short.

Indiana State's four-year graduation rate has risen a most four percentage points in 2016, continuing an upward trend in the past several years. While the program cannot be

attributed solely to the specialists, their role has been an important factor, Powers says.

Carewell often hears from graduates who may not have earned their degrees without that additional support in the home stretch. "I get lots of emails from students just thanking me for giving them, you know, a little bit of extra time," she says.



Indiana State U. has created a new role, the "graduation specialist," to help students plan their classes and overcome obstacles to getting a degree.

financial barriers, says Joshua Powers, associate vice president for student success.

Inspired by a program at California State University at Fullerton, Indiana State created a "graduation specialist" role in the 2015-16 academic year. Christian Carewell, the first one, was quickly able to see a lot of "balls being dropped," she says, like prerequisite



# ...TO UNDERSTANDING WHAT MATTERS...

## Find Former Students Who Almost Made It

**W**hile the University of Memphis began recruiting former students in 2011, its efforts mostly fell flat. The university held an open house with admissions specialists, financial-aid advisers, and representatives from different degree programs, with the attitude that “if we built it, they will come,” says Tracy Robinson, interim director of the Center for Academic Retention and Enrollment Services.

But, for the most part, former students didn't come.

“We were not really getting the message right,” Robinson says. “We needed to ask the students to give us a second chance, as

back to campus.

Once students have re-enrolled, they are assigned to one of Finish Line's three full-time advisers, who call themselves “completion coaches.” The advisers work closely with students, about 150 to 200 per person, compared with the usual 250 to 400 served by a single departmental adviser, Robinson says. Advisers stay with Finish Line students until graduation, reaching out every two weeks to check up on their progress.

“I've called it ‘aggressively friendly,’” Robinson says. “We want to be the person that is pushing them to finish.”

The program also provides financial support in the form of completion grants for students who have exhausted their federal financial aid. Memphis pays for the program's overhead and staffing, but the money for completion grants comes from private donations.

Finish Line also allows students to earn credit at a discounted rate for prior learning outside the classroom. A student might pay \$200 to demonstrate knowledge on an exam, for example, compared with \$1,700 in tuition for a regular course.

The intensive advising combined with completion grants has helped Finish Line succeed where earlier recruiting efforts failed, Robinson says. Since 2013, 526 students have graduated from the program, and 90 more are projected to graduate at the end of 2018.

The program also benefits the university, since Tennessee's outcomes-based funding formula rewards colleges for graduating adult and Pell Grant-eligible students. Many Finish Line participants fall into both categories.

### THE CHALLENGE

Key people were disengaged, and it was hard to get them to see their roles.

### THE APPROACH

Memphis tried to identify these roles to graduation and take them back with scholarships and strong advising.

### THE RESULT

Since 2013, more than 500 former students have returned and graduated.



A U. of Memphis program brings students who dropped out back to campus to complete their degrees.

opposed to us giving the students a second chance?”

So in 2013, the university created a program called Finish Line, combining intensive advising with financial support to help people complete their degrees.

To recruit participants, Robinson and her team mine institutional data to identify who might be eligible. They also work with a vendor to locate dropouts and guide them

## Give Students a Financial Safety Net

**I**n 2013, administrators at Dillard University were in a surprising position. They'd assumed that students who dropped out of the program by black 1,000 were struggling academically or weren't prepared for college. But after digging into data, they discovered that many of the students had unpaid balances. Almost 75 percent of the college's nearly 1,400 students receive Pell Grants, and nearly 50 percent are on financial aid.

The unpaid balances — for tuition or other fees — were typically modest, ranging between \$1,500 and \$2,500, Barnes says. The college realized it had students who were at risk for financial reasons.

When Dillard sent no email to alumni, they'd spent over \$500,000 in just a few months. After looking out grants to students in need, Barnes says, the university saw its retention rate inch up and decided to expand the effort. The SAFE fund was born.

Now in its sixth year, the fund, Student Assistance for Financial Emergencies, is a backup for students who have exhausted all other means of financial assistance. They must apply to be considered, and some are prompted to do so by the financial-aid office.

Students can apply at any point in the semester if they can't keep up with payments, says Kimberly Woodard, Dillard's director of development. If the financial-aid office determines that a student has contributed as much as possible and utilized all other forms of aid, it may award the student a grant at the semester's end. Students with outstanding balances cannot enroll for the next semester.

To date, SAFE has provided over 750

awards. It is completely funded by donations from alumni, trustees, and other community members, and by local foundations, Barnes says.

One challenge with such a fund is that students can begin to rely on it, Barnes says. After 150 monitoring that attitude early on, Dillard attached stipulations to the awards. SAFE recipients must take a financial-literacy class and attend a campus event like a lecture, so they have “skin in the game,” says Barnes. The college also stresses that future grants are never guaranteed.

“We have a lot of stories of students who would have dropped out of school had they not received this funding,” Barnes says. The data reflect the students' success. Since the fund began in 2013, the college's six-year graduation rate has risen to 42 percent, up from 31 percent.

### THE CHALLENGE

Some students were dropping out because of unpaid balances they owe the university.

### THE APPROACH

Create a fund that awards students who have exhausted other aid and are at risk to pay their balances.

### THE RESULT

The university's graduation rate has risen by 11 percentage points, so more students taking financial challenges are able to stay enrolled.



Adi Muresan, a physics major at Dillard U., was able to graduate in 2018 with help from the university's financial fund for financial emergencies.

# ...AND WHO MATTERS...

## PUTTING THE PERSON FIRST

People with disabilities share their experiences searching for accessibility and inclusion

STORY BY **Mailey Stewart**  
PHOTOS BY **Jessica Evans**  
DESIGN BY **Alex Brown**

There are approximately 61 million Americans, or 18 percent of the United States population, living with a disability, according to 2010 census bureau data.

Of those Americans, the most recent figures show around 11 percent of students with disabilities are enrolled in higher educational institutions.

These institutions must provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and beyond to ensure their accessible equal educational opportunities. The U.S. Department of Education notes,

For the phrase “reasonable accommodations” and the term “disability” are both broad, said Amy Taylor, the director of the University of Idaho’s Center for Disability Access and Resources (CDAR). Disabilities can range anywhere from physical disabilities to learning and neurological disabilities. That is why the Center works to involve all students who want or need additional help, regardless of their disability.

“We’re here to make the university and education accessible to all learners,” Taylor said.

The Center provides advising, academic coaching, alternative studying and testing arrangements, classroom and campus accessibility options and assistive technologies, among others.

Christin Fort, CDAR’s assistant director, said flexibility is key in providing a more accessible and inclusive education for students with disabilities. After a detailed and interactive intake process with Taylor or Fort, they discuss the variety of options available for any particular student.

“We can be creative to find what does work for a student,” Fort said. “Because every



IMAGE CREDIT  
Daniel Robertson studies in the Idaho Commons Library.

“Once diagnosed, the base urge from everyone is to put you in a box ...”  
— Daniel Robertson

student — no matter their disability — needs something different to help them succeed.”

When CDAR moved into the Bruce Pitman Center just over a year ago, Taylor said it gave the program more room to provide services for students. In the basement of the building, multiple study areas and resting rooms are filled with sound proofing, adjustable lighting and convertible desks for the varying needs a student may have.

Many of the nearly 500 students the Center works with ask for help with note taking, attendance, academic planning

and testing accommodations. Fort said,

In addition to the help students can receive from CDAR, another program on campus is also designed to help and advocate for students on the autism spectrum.

The Raven Scholars Program, coordinator Leslie Gwartney said, was introduced in 2010 as an organization to help bridge the gap between high school and college for students with autism. Similar to CDAR, the program aims to provide individualized academic coaching and planning for the 23 students enrolled in the program this semester.

More than anything, Gwartney said she



IMAGE RIGHT  
Michaela Brown works in her lab as a research assistant.

“I definitely love spreading the message that if you have a disability you can participate in science fields and science research.”  
— Michaela Brown



# ...TO ADDRESSING IT IN NEW WAYS...

## Make Advising a Science

### THE CHALLENGE

Merely sifting through success data.

### THE APPROACH

Invest in proactive advising capability by predictive analytics software.

### THE RESULT

The retention rate for first-year students rose seven percentage points over a five-year period, and overall undergraduate retention rose four points.

**W**hile Middle Tennessee State University started using predictive analytics software in 2014, administrators suddenly had a world of data at their fingertips.

That knowledge was as exhilarating as it was daunting. With so much information, the university had to choose its priorities carefully. "If we don't, we get spread too thin," says Richard Sluder, vice president for student success.

MTSU has zeroed in on academic advising, investing in a new infrastructure that puts data in the hands of advisers and encourages a proactive approach. Under the old model, students came to see advisers to get a check-off to register, Sluder says. "The new model is that advisers are making outreach to students and then paying attention when they're off track."

The university invested \$4 million to restructure advising, bringing on 47 new advisers to more than double the staff. A three-year grant covered the cost of the analytics software, though administrators had already budgeted for that expense.

Using the software, advisers in each college flag at-risk students by looking at various factors, including performance in 10 general education courses found to be predictive of success. About 80 percent of students who receive an A in a survey course on U.S. history, for example, go on to graduate, compared with only

40 percent of students who get a D.

Before the use of predictive analytics, a D student might never have come onto an adviser's radar. Now, if students struggle in a key course, "they're going to be set for an alert for an adviser to pay attention to them," Sluder says.

Advisers reach out to students by email, text, and phone. Other outreach tactics have included making isofortia workers' T-shirts asking "Have you seen your advisor?" and hosting social events at the various colleges' advising centers.

Each center regularly reports its results. The retention rate for first-year students rose to 26 percent in 2018, up from 69 percent in 2012, and the overall undergraduate retention rate rose by four percentage points over the same period. "It's not like, 'work hard and do your best,'" Sluder says. "We have data and allocated resources, and we're expecting that everybody's doing what they need to do."



At Middle Tennessee State U., advisers use data to help identify students' needs.

## Help the Faculty Apply Student Data



Officials at the California State University system developed this illustration for a faculty training session on using data to help students succeed.

### THE CHALLENGE

Developing faculty members to use data to engage students.

### THE APPROACH

Create a professional-development program to train the faculty to apply predictive analytics to learning.

### THE RESULT

In three years, retention and graduation rates have both increased in several percentage points.

**A** host of problems to raise graduation rates by 2025, the California State University system is putting data directly in the hands of the faculty.

Professors across the system have access to an online dashboard showing student data broken down to campus. The dashboard also allows professors to see achievement gaps in their own courses and track how long it takes their students to graduate.

"Our goal is to not just to show data that make people say, 'Oh, that's interesting,'" says Jeff Gold, assistant vice chancellor for the student-success strategic initiatives. To help translate data into action, Cal State started the Student Success Analytics Certificate Program in 2018 on two campuses, Cal State East Bay and San Francisco State University. Teams of about 20 faculty and staff members met biweekly for two hours over three months. Aside from in-person meetings to kick off and conclude the program, all sessions were held online.

Although the program provided some training on the dashboard, its chief focus was how participants could use data to support experiential learning. Each group submitted a list of proposed projects, which included an analysis of strategies to im-

prove success rates for African-American students and a comparison of assessing grades for certain courses online versus in-person.

"They had to apply the data to something meaningful," Gold says.

Early results are promising, he says. Both campuses' groups submitted proposals for changes in pedagogy and student-support infrastructure that could improve grades, retention, time to graduation, and other measures.

The pilot project was backed by a \$484,000 grant from the Sempki Foundation, a philanthropic group serving San Francisco and Hawaii. The Cal State system began rolling out the program on eight more campuses in late 2018. The system picks up travel costs for in-person meetings. For each campus, faculty decide how, or whether, to incentivize faculty participation. Some offer stipends, but most rely on personal motivation and interest in analytics, Gold says.

The system has also created awards to recognize faculty leadership in improving student success, and that has helped generate buy-in, says James Minor, senior strategist for academic success and inclusive excellence at Cal State.



# ...THROUGH ENGAGED LEARNING, AND...

## Redesign Courses for Student-Centered Learning

### THE CHALLENGE

Improve students' academic engagement and performance.

### THE APPROACH

Offer 13-week training sessions to help faculty members develop teaching skills and redesign courses.

### THE RESULT

More than 300 faculty members have received training, and 581 courses have been redesigned.

**P**URDUE UNIVERSITY embarked on an ambitious campuswide effort to improve undergraduate teaching and learning in 2011. The program, called Impact, stands for Instruction Matters: Purdue Academic Course Transformation. It grew out of the recognition that "the large lecture is not working for the majority of students," says David Nelson, associate director of Purdue's Center for Instructional Excellence, which runs the program.

It is based on developing "autonomy, competence, and relatedness — meaning the connection among students and with faculty," says Chantal Levesque-Bristol, executive director of the center. During a 13-week training program, faculty groups hear from curricular-design and tech experts, study research on effective learning, and try out new teaching strategies aimed at promoting active learning and other student-centered approaches.

Impact is a large-scale effort, with more than 300 faculty members trained so far. First-time participants may receive up to \$10,000 to retool a course. Some 581 courses have been redesigned, and nearly nine out of 10 Purdue undergraduates have taken at least one Impact course.

The results? The courses generally have higher final grades and fewer students who withdraw. Students and faculty members report greater satisfaction and more active engagement, and professors also say students who take the courses are more likely to demonstrate criti-

cal thinking and problem-solving.

Pamela Karagory, interim head of Purdue's School of Nursing, says 70 percent of nursing courses incorporate Impact goals. "About five years ago, we looked at our curriculum and learners, and reached out to the health-care industry for feedback," she recalls. While Purdue has always aimed to produce clinically competent nurses, she says, the Impact program brings added value to students' nursing careers. A simulation board game called "Friday Night at the ER," for example, prepares students for real-world situations.

Support from campus leaders, the faculty stipends, and — most of all — clear results have all contributed to Impact's success. Karagory says the program has helped



Purdue U. has focused on improving undergraduate teaching through a 13-week faculty-training program.

students take ownership of the learning process. "Impact has empowered faculty," she says, "but it's really empowered our students."

## Offer Online Learners More Personalized Contact



GREAT PLAINS IDEA

**F**or online learners, communication with faculty and staff members can be hit or miss. Important messages often take the form of an email, which can be shuffled into a spam folder or mistakenly overlooked. And more generally the relationships can feel transactional.

Improving that communication is a goal for the Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance, known as Great Plains IDEA, a consortium of 19 public universities that offers online degrees in human sciences and agriculture. Since its students take classes from different institutions, they receive emails from addresses they may not

recognize, and they don't time-sensitive information. Ohmes, who oversees all instructors in the consortium.

Ohmes, who also serves as coordinator at Kansas State University, found inspiration from a school, where the teacher called Remind to communicate. The app allows users to send reminders and Ohmes plans to try it out and present results at other institutions.

Meanwhile, the consortium made sure its members minimize the impersonal nature of learning. Campus postcards to send to students by email to congratulate them or encourage them during their studies. "They get to see your face, they get to see your handwriting," Ohmes says.

Great Plains IDEA is determined to determine how best to work with them. And some members are trying their own tactics outside of the consortium. At Michigan State University, the campus coordinator has sessions to answer student questions at the start of the semester.

"That just helps students that we're not just here on a computer," Ohmes says. "and we're empathetic, and you, whatever that looks like."

## Train the Faculty to Create Inclusive Classrooms

**S**T. CLOUD, a largely white city in central Minnesota, has a long history of racial tension, and its state college is no exception. From swastikas scrawled on campus buildings to the harassment of Somali students, the college, like the city, has grappled with racism and xenophobia for decades.

In the process, St. Cloud State University has become a model for how to combat racism through education. A program created in

the wake of a federal complaint alleging anti-Semitism by the college now trains 1,000 people each year — students as well as faculty, staff, and community members — in antiracist organizing, advising, and teaching.

Workshops range from a few hours to several days. The most intensive course, "Anti-Racist Pedagogy Across the Curriculum," or Arpac, as it's known, gets professors to confront their own biases and teaches them to create more-inclusive classrooms.

Over the course of five to nine days, participants study systemic racism in higher education, examine their own pedagogy, and redesign a course. They leave with a new syllabus or curriculum to try out. The Arpac project was inspired by a similar course at Minnesota State University at Moorhead.

Since 2009, 113 faculty members and graduate students have taken the course at St. Cloud, including nearly 50 from other colleges. In the first six years, nearly 90 courses were re-made. St. Cloud hasn't studied how the course changes affect students, but other research has found that more-inclusive classrooms can improve outcomes for students of color.

Debra Leigh, a professor of dance and



ST. CLOUD STATE U.

An anti-racism education program developed by St. Cloud State U. provides training for graduate students (shown), faculty, staff, and community members.

### THE CHALLENGE

Prevent courses or instructors from inadvertently alienating students.

### THE APPROACH

Create intensive workshops in "antiracist pedagogy."

### THE RESULT

Dozens of faculty members have revamped their courses to make classrooms more inclusive.

lead organizer of the university's Community Anti-Racism Education Initiative, says most Ph.D. programs don't prepare professors to teach diverse classes. The workshop, she says, "gives us the opportunity to have critical conversations about race that we may not have had in our preparation." Faculty members who struggle to remake their courses can attend monthly meetings to get support from past participants.

Kyoko Kishimoto, an associate professor of ethnic, gender, and women's studies, says the course taught her to "de-center authority" in the classroom. Now, instead of simply lecturing to her students, she shows them how to facilitate a discussion, then lets them take the lead. Mary Clifford, a professor of criminal-justice studies, starts courses with conversations about the history of racism in crime and punishment.

But not all faculty members are as eager to overhaul their pedagogy: A majority still haven't taken the voluntary seminar. It's not an easy move, Leigh says.

In the workshop, "people realize how their way of working may be complicit with racism," she says. "Coming to terms with that is difficult and, in some cases, traumatic."

# **YOUR IDEAS**



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MARCH 27, 2019

# SESSION 5: THE ONE THING





# “THE ONE THING” ...

- I/my program can/will do:

- The University of Idaho should do:



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**THANK YOU!**

