Solutions for Student Retention and Success

Prepared and Presented
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to
EKU Implementation Team

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Solutions for Student Retention and Success

- Solutions are in pieces at different institutions.
- SREB & other best practices: Are we doing these?
  - Graduating students should be 1st priority of frontline people students encounter every day (faculty and staff)
  - Making administration, departments, colleges accountable for recruitment, retention, degree production
  - Targeting out-of-state better performing students
  - Increasing online programs at all levels and colleges
  - Aggressively recruiting community college transfers who only have 2 years to degree
  - Recruiting grad students out of EKU’s graduating class
  - Recruiting stop-outs with a financially creative solution
- DEEP study focused more on deep learning—classroom and faculty solutions.
Project DEEP

To discover, document, and describe what high performing institutions do and how they achieved this level of effectiveness.
DEEP Research Questions:

- What do high-performing colleges and universities do to promote student success?
- What campus features -- policies, programs, and practices -- contribute to high levels of engagement and better than predicted graduation rates?
DEEP Selection Criteria

Controlling for student and institutional characteristics (i.e., selectivity, diversity, institutional type), DEEP schools have:

- Higher-than-predicted graduation rates
- Higher-than-predicted NSSE benchmark scores

Region and institutional type, special mission
Findings from Project DEEP

- Many roads to becoming an educationally engaging institution
- No blueprint for success
- Institutions created own way, experimenting with home-grown ideas and adapting promising practices discovered at other institutions
- Complementary, interactive and synergistic conditions promote student learning
- Sustained at many levels, no “unsupported mandates”
Characteristics of DEEP Schools

- Learning-centered philosophy
- Shared responsibility for educational quality
- Acculturate and affirm students
- Capitalize on location
- Purposeful infusion of diversity
- Focus on improvement-oriented assessment
- Use of technology to support and enrich the learning environment
- High expectations balanced by support
Academic Challenge

Themes:

- Intentional socialization to academic expectations
- Writing Intensive
- Co-curriculum connected to academic program
- A rigorous senior culminating experience
Academic Challenge

Intentional socialization to academic expectations

**Best Practice:** First-year students read a common novel and write a short essay connecting it to their own lives. The eight best essays are published and distributed to all new students, creating the first class celebrities. Faculty and staff dine with students to celebrate beginning of the year.
**Academic Challenge**

Intentional socialization to academic expectations

**Best Practice:** In addition to reading a common book, incoming students have access to a website with essays written by the faculty in response to the reading. The assigned readings, faculty responses, and the website combine to introduce incoming students to the ways an academic community engages an issue.
Best Practice: Common Intellectual Experience (CIE) is a two-semester course for first-year students. Common readings and “Uncommon Hour” give students a shared intellectual experience outside the classroom that complements class activities.
Academic Challenge

A rigorous senior culminating experience

Best Practice: All seniors take part in “comping,” a rigorous synthesizing exam in their major area that can last as long as a week. The process has become a symbolic rite of closure for students. Also, capstones, senior seminars, senior theses.
Active and Collaborative Learning

Themes:
- Ample applied learning opportunities
- Use of student preceptors/mentors
Active and Collaborative Learning

Ample applied learning opportunities

Best Practice: Require all students to complete both a lower- and upper-level service learning experience as a means to apply knowledge and connect with the local community.
Active and Collaborative Learning

Use of student preceptors/mentors

- Best Practice: Student preceptor program is academically challenging for the preceptors themselves. There was a power that peers had in elevating the class dialogue. The program was about getting stand-out students to raise other students’ levels of expectations. In the end, students are being challenged by the preceptors and the faculty.
Student-Faculty Interaction

Themes:

- Undergraduate research opportunities
- Extensive feedback on performance
- Community celebrations of scholarship
- Students serve on University committees with faculty and administrators
Best Practice: Undergraduate Summer Scholars (USS) program enables students to do research or other creative activities in the summer under the supervision of faculty. During the fall, a Symposium provides opportunities for students to present their projects to students and faculty. “Having a Summer Scholar in the classroom enhances the learning of all students”.
Student-Faculty Interaction

Extensive feedback on performance:

- **Best Practice:** Extensive feedback on performance from faculty on assignments. The time and effort put into these carefully worded comments (each about a half to a third of a page, typed) was evident. “I put my time into comments that aim to engage the student as a thinker,” he said.

- **Best Practice:** Concluding each set of feedback with a note of encouragement.
Student-Faculty Interaction

Community Celebrations of Scholarship:

**Best Practice**: “Spring Symposium” a day when no classes are held and all students, faculty, & administrators are given the opportunity to present research, artistic, intellectual, & other creative projects, and learn from others.

**Best Practice**: Celebrating seniors research at a Capstone Conference in May
Enriching Educational Experiences

Themes:

- Technology enriches learning
- Diversity infusion
- Civic engagement
- Place-conscious pedagogy
- Cross-cultural experiences
Enriching Educational Experiences

Infusion of diversity

- **Best Practice**: Working to transform the curriculum, alter teaching practices, modify student activities and programs with an eye toward the incorporation of diversity.
Enriching Educational Experiences

Place-conscious pedagogy

- **Best Practice:** Using the beauty and uniqueness of the campus to drive student engagement. The campus can be a learning laboratory for such majors as environmental studies and geology.

- **Best Practice:** Engaging students recreational outdoors programs such as hiking, rock climbing, and boating.
Enriching Educational Experiences

Cross-cultural experiences

- **Best Practice**: Intentionally crafting shorter study abroad experiences to meet the needs of their large non-traditional population.

- **Best Practice**: Arranging class-based trips that are more accessible to their first generation students.
Supportive Campus Environment

Themes:

- Asset-based approach to learning (honoring prior knowledge)
- Assessment supports learning
- Organized for learning support efforts
Supportive Campus Environment

Asset-based approach

- **Best Practice:** Accepting and embracing students where they are in the educational process. “You must teach the students you have, not the ones you wish you had.”
It Takes a Whole Campus to Educate a Student
Ultimately, it’s about the culture…

The good-to-great transformations never happened in one fell swoop. There was no single defining action, no grand program, no one killer innovation, no solitary lucky break, no miracle moment. Sustainable transformations follow a predictable pattern of buildup and breakthrough… (Collins, 2001, p. 186)
Ultimate Best Practices

1. A compelling sense of place
2. Early Identification coupled with Early and Continuous Intervention on Academic and Social Levels
3. Complementary policies and practices that support students academically and socially
4. Setting and holding students to high performance standards, inside and outside the classroom
5. Inducing students to use supportive structures and programs
6. Support from every corner—a university mantra from the classroom to the dining hall
NSSE Nuggets for Student Success

- Hidden gems in our 2011 NSSE results
- Nuggets of NSSE Student Learning groupings—smaller, more focused measures for making NSSE results more meaningful and useful to efforts to enhance student learning and success.
- NSSE scales, deep approaches to learning, and "scalelets"
EKU 2011 RESULTS ON SCALES

- Practical Competence: Very Good
- General Education: Good
- Higher Order Thinking: Good
- Personal / Social: Mixed
- Integrated Learning: Not Good
- Project Deep—Integrative Learning: Bad
- Reflective Learning: Very Bad
Very Good or Good

EKU 2011 RESULTS ON SCALES

- Using computing/technology
  - Analyzing quantitative problems
  - Solving real world problems
  - Acquiring job skills
  - Writing clearly and effectively
- Exams challenged me to do my best work
- Seniors only reporting speaking
- Seniors only report values & ethics
- Seniors only report synthesizing
- Seniors only report learning on your own
- Freshmen only making judgments about the value of information
Negative

EKU 2011 RESULTS ON SCALES

- Freshmen only integrating ideas from various sources
- Putting together ideas from different courses
- Discussing ideas with others outside of class
- Examining the strengths/weakness of your views
- Learning something that changed how you understand an issue
EKU 2011 RESULTS ON SCALELETS

- Interpersonal Environment: Very Good
- Practical Skills: Very Good
- IT: Very Good
- Course Interaction: Very Good to Good
- Out-of-Class Interaction: Good
- Higher Order Thinking: Good
- Active Learning: Good
- Course Challenge: Mixed
- Support for Student Success: OK
- Writing: OK
- AAC&U High Impact Practices: Not Good
- Diversity: OK to Not Good
- Collaborative Learning: Very Bad
Very Good

EKU 2011 RESULTS ON SCALELETS

- Quality of relationships with other students, faculty, and staff
  - Seniors only report skills in computing and IT
  - Seniors only using computers in academic work
  - Seniors only report acquiring job skills
  - Discussing grades or assignments with faculty
  - Received prompt feedback on academic performance from faculty
  - Seniors only report discussing career plans with faculty
  - Freshmen only report making judgments about value of information
  - Asking questions or discussing topics in class
Negative

EKU 2011 RESULTS ON SCALELETS

- Lack of a culminating senior experience
- More often come to class without completing readings or assignments
- Spend fewer hours preparing for class
- Not working with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
- Not being able to tutor or teach fellow students
- Not discussing ideas from class with others outside of class
- Not participating in community service or volunteer work
- Not taking foreign language coursework
- Not having campus events and activities students want to attend
- Not having serious conversations with students of different races or ethnicities
Discussion Questions

- Which of the DEEP best practices are transferable and adaptable to EKU?
- What can Eastern do to improve student learning and success based on EKU’s results from the NSSE Scales and Scalelets?