

TIPS FOR RETAINING STUDENTS

“Student-Faculty interaction has a stronger relationship to student satisfaction with the college experience than **any other** involvement variable, or indeed, any other student or institutional characteristic.” Alexander Astin

Focusing on student retention does not mean lowering academic standards in your classroom or lab. Retention is not the goal; rather it is the result of providing a quality undergraduate experience. In fact, setting high expectations, while providing adequate support, is a basic premise of all retention efforts.

Connecting with students and helping students connect with each other:

- Get to know your students—have them fill out brief info/interest sheets and learn their names as soon as possible. Consider talking with one student a day before and after each class.
- Occasionally ask students to work together in groups during class, which not only increases student engagement, but also helps them get to know each other.
- Facilitate study groups: consider asking former successful students to lead them. Host an evening study session in an available classroom right before a test.

Increasing Student engagement:

- Take advantage of all CETL has to offer to increase “active learning” and student engagement.
- Make certain students understand that “involvement” should start in the classroom.

Helping students in lower division courses succeed:

- Communicate expectations clearly—what you expect of them and what they can expect from you. Be positive and encouraging: they already have what it takes; you are just going to enhance their skill sets.
- Spend part of an early class period discussing study strategies appropriate for your course. Explain the amount of work it takes to be successful. Perhaps invite former successful students to give some tips.
- Give a low stakes assignment within the first four weeks (university policy for lower division courses).
- Make certain students know about help that is available for your course and for studying in general. (Academic Skills Center, Center for Writing Excellence, Math Lab, etc).
- Record mid-term grades on CampS. This way an adviser can tell how an advisee is doing.
- Make certain that students know your office hours and that you really want to see them; consider requiring all students to meet with you, perhaps in small groups. Or perhaps you could have some of your office hours once a week in a less intimidating space than your office, like an available classroom near your office.

Identifying students in trouble and reaching out to them:

- Reach out to students who are doing poorly (especially early in the semester); they will probably not come in for help on their own; a personal email or invitation is more effective than a blanket statement. This early “warning” can positively impact and motivate students-
- Make certain you report students’ non-attendance on the rosters sent by the Registrar. The Dean of Students reaches out to these students. We want to catch students before they fall too far behind.
- After the fourth week attendance roster, report students who are not attending class to the Dean of Students office using the “Students of Concern form.” While you may think it’s just your class, our Dean of Students colleagues can establish if there is a pattern and reach out to these students.
- Err on the side of caution; if you think a student is having serious difficulty (especially if they mention “personal issues” or “trouble at home” when explaining non-attendance or missing assignments), either talk with them or contact the Dean of Students.

Encourage and acknowledge successful students:

Remember, we do occasionally lose the more academically gifted students, as well; reinforcing that they did a good job can make a huge difference for some students.