

EducationDynamics Webinar: Early Interventions and Sustained Attention at Various Transition Points Are Crucial to Retaining At-Risk Students

Higher education experts Dr. George Kuh and Dr. Jennifer Jones address emerging trends influencing student retention and initiatives proven to increase persistence

Hoboken, New Jersey (December 8, 2008)—Dr. George Kuh, director of the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University, revealed key propositions crucial to [student success](#) during an EducationDynamics Webinar titled *Retention 2.0: From Theory to Tactics*. At the top of the list of considerations for colleges and universities is the need for early interventions and sustained attention at various transition points among at-risk students.

Key transition points, according to the voluminous literature on the topic of student success, include preparation for college, family support and financial wherewithal. “An integral step in working with at-risk students involves colleges and universities providing multiple support networks, early-warning systems and safety nets to ensure students receive the support needed to persist to graduation or program completion,” said Dr. Kuh.

Although higher education administrators deem technology-based interventions important to [student retention](#), few have implemented such solutions. According to EducationDynamics’ *2008 National Dialog on Student Retention Survey*, only two percent of administrators said they have early alert/early warning systems in place.

In addition to deploying early-alert systems, other propositions divulged by Dr. Kuh to boost student retention rates include connecting students with classmates, mentors or college-sponsored activities; placing an emphasis on student success through periodic examinations of the student experience; and communicating regularly with students’ support network, such as parents/guardians, spouses and employers.

When making the decision to implement any student success initiative, institutions should follow three steps, according to Webinar co-presenter Dr. Jennifer Jones, currently assistant professor of higher education administration and formerly director of retention at the University of Alabama. Tactical steps that build upon Dr. Kuh’s findings include the following:

1. **Identify Outcomes**—Desired outcomes must be clear, measurable, attainable and realistic. A stated outcome of “create an online community to connect first-year students with their peers and provide academic success resources” serves as an ideal example.
2. **Use Data**—Data tells a story about an institution in terms of the attributes of those students most likely to be retained and reveals the characteristics of students most at risk of attrition. Review your current performance numbers to gather insight.
3. **Create a Plan**—Develop an intervention plan that identifies at-risk populations, intervention and outreach initiatives, desired outcomes, and the process itself, which includes a timeframe, student communication vehicles and follow-up strategies.





“Once a plan is implemented, an institution may discover that a large percentage of students withdraw from classes during the first five weeks of a semester,” said Jones. “Institutions can then intervene within the first four weeks of the term to determine whether students are underperforming in one class or all classes and offer the necessary assistance to help ensure persistence. If an institution finds that the majority of students are experiencing difficulty in a particular course, the institution should perhaps reconsider the course design.”

Retention 2.0: From Theory to Tactics is the first in a National Dialog on Student Retention Webinar Series designed to address cost-effective, cutting-edge best practices to enhance student retention. A recording of Friday’s Webinar will be available in the coming weeks on EducationDynamics’ website at <http://www.educationdynamics.com>. Higher education professionals are also invited to join their peers in posing questions, debating issues and evolving new approaches to student retention at <http://sharing.educationdynamics.com>.

About EducationDynamics

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