

Student Retention
and
Enrollment Committee

Final Report
2008-2009

Strategic Plan for Student Retention
2009-2012

Executive Summary

Historically, the University of Wisconsin-Superior has faced challenges related to student persistence. This is true in areas of 1st-to-2nd year retention and graduation, especially when using University of Wisconsin System goals for comparative benchmarks.

Of the seven strategic priorities identified for the University of Wisconsin-Superior, Enrollment Management and the creation of a comprehensive student retention plan appeared an appropriate undertaking for the Student Retention and Enrollment Committee. The result of the committee's work is a strategic plan that attempts to do a number of things that is best represented by the Student Retention Mission Statement.

UWS Strategic Plan for Student Retention Mission Statement

The Student Retention Plan takes an integrated approach in our retention efforts that recognizes our mission and incorporates both academic and non-academic factors into the design and development of programs to create a supportive academic and socially inclusive environment that addresses the academic, social, and emotional needs of students.

The following strategies and action plans are designed to support 1st and 2nd year student transitioning into our university environment.

This is a first attempt at an integrated plan, reaching across academic and non-academic lines with a common goal: identify who are our students are and how we, as an institution, can make an impact on their expectations, experiences and academic readiness in order to facilitate achieving their educational aspirations.

Based on Documentary Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) project from the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University (Kuh, G.D., Kinzie, J., Schuch J.H., Whitt, E. J. & Associates (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pps. 260-261), the policies, practices and conditions worth emulating are:

- Transition programs that welcome and affirm newcomers
- Redundant early-warning systems that identify and respond to students whose academic performance or other behaviors put them at risk of failure or dropping out
- Learning support resources that are available and used by students when they need them
- Advising networks that respond effectively to the academic and related needs of students
- Campus administrators who are responsive and supportive
- Mentoring and other initiatives that help students understand and successfully navigate institutional policies and comply with procedures
- Peers who provide academic and social support in formal and informal ways

- Campus Life environments that provide academic and social support
- Faculty and staff members who are knowledgeable about factors impacting student success and are perceived by students as accessible and helpful

This is a strategically designed approach, recognizing that while overall direction is given within the strategic priorities and goals identified within this plan, action items organized and implemented as project charters with assigned roles and responsibilities provide a level of accountability necessary to move forward. The committee anticipates that action items will grow and evolve as achievements are recognized. Some project charters may not be achieved within an academic year timeframe but will be phased over time with an identified end date.

Finally, persistence goals have been identified for 2009-2010. These modest goals take into consideration that while no one activity impacts student persistence directly, the cumulative effects of integrated activities in the student experience can and do produce positive quantifiable results.

Submitted by: Jane Birkholz, Ph.D.
Chair, 2008-2009

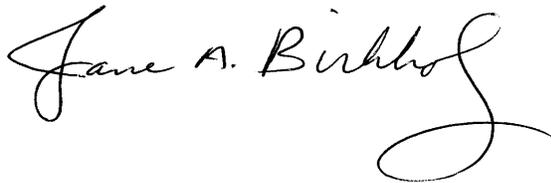
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane A. Birkholz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping final letter 'z'.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary

Page(s)

Introduction:

University of Wisconsin-Superior: An Institution in Transition	1
University of Wisconsin System Goals.....	2
University of Wisconsin-Superior Persistence and Graduation Rates.....	2-3
Present and Future Initiatives: Establishing a Direction.....	3-4
UWS Retention Rates: Historical Overview of Performance	5-8
Persistence Goals	9
Strategies to Achieve Student Persistence Goals	9
UWS Mission Statement	9
UWS Strategic Plan for Student Retention Mission Statement.....	10
Campus Strategic Priorities and Strategic Plan for Retention Goals	10-11
Next Steps: Action Items Defined as Project Charters	12
Goals and Action Items to be implemented as Project Charters	13-20
Appendix A-UW-Superior Summary Enrollment and Related Facts.....	a1-a3
Appendix B-Charter and Project Roles Template	b1-b3
Appendix C-Strategic Priorities	c1-c7

Committee Membership: 2008-2009

Dr. Jane Birkholz

Vicki A. Hajewski

Dr. Faith Hensrud

Dr. Brett Jones

Ryan Kreuser

Dr. Christopher Markwood

Ann Miller

Timothy C. Berg

Dr. Gloria Toivola

Dr. Mary Lee Vance

Hardijs Paradnieks

Invited Guests:

Tonya Roth

James Antilla

Jennifer Bird

Introduction

University of Wisconsin-Superior: An Institution in Transition

According to the most recent data (fall 2007) from the University of Wisconsin System (Informational Memorandum: Retention and Graduation 2008-09) the University of Wisconsin-Superior ranks last among the 13 University of Wisconsin System campuses in regard to new freshman students enrolling fall semester and returning to the same institution for the second year. For new transfer students enrolling fall 2007 and returning for the second year, the University of Wisconsin-Superior also ranks last. Looking historically over a ten year period and beyond, student persistence has been a chronic issue on our campus.

The University of Wisconsin-Superior (UWS) is a unique campus in a number of aspects, which may help contribute to the complexity of issues surrounding our retention issues. The University of Wisconsin-Superior is the smallest campus in the 13 member University of Wisconsin System, geographically located in the farthest reaches of the northwest corner of the state. Each of our incoming classes is composed of a 40 to 60 percent split between transfer and new freshman students. Preliminary data on the fall 2009 class indicates the strong possibility that almost 50 percent of the incoming class will be transfer students. Latest statistics indicate 28% of the undergraduate population is age 25 or older yet, overall the undergraduate population is under the age of 25. A recent study conducted by Institutional Research found 43% of fall 2007 first-time, full-time freshman were first generation students (n=320), while 50% of first-time, full-time transfers were first generation (n=232).

The University of Wisconsin-Superior has had a long history beginning as a state normal school in 1893 and continuing to evolve through name and mission changes to include yet another transition in 1998. The Wisconsin Board of Regents designated UW-Superior as “Wisconsin’s Public Liberal Arts College.” In 2001, a revised mission statement was adopted to reflect its new status. The campus was named to the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) and a new vision adopted in 2008. In response, the UW-Superior’s faculty senate established a “Faculty Task Force on the Public Liberal Arts Mission” and in April 2004, the task force recommended five liberal arts initiatives.

This change in focus and emphasis is significant in that research tells us student persistence and retention is fundamentally tied to the quality of the college student experience aligned with the college mission and vision. With this relatively recent change, the campus continues to define and align itself as evidenced by adoption, in principle, of the Academic Plan (May 2009) and implementation of the Liberal Arts Initiative. Recent Student Retention Forums, held in November 2008 and composed of a broad range of constituencies within the university and community at-large brought to light that some confusion exists as to our identity and our mission, as reported by our stakeholder groups, and highlighted the need to communicate our identity for the benefit of all.

University of Wisconsin System Goals

The University of Wisconsin System has identified goals related to student persistence and graduation. These goals represent a strategic direction for the member campuses and a benchmark from which to measure achievement. The Office of Policy Analysis and Research (OPAR) collects data system-wide and tabulates averages to measure progress to systems goals in an overall sense. Individual campus data is also tabulated, allowing each campus to compare itself to the system goal.

For 2007-08, the University of Wisconsin System identified the following student persistence and graduation goals:

Retention of New Freshman from the First to Second Year

- Increase the proportion of new freshman retained at the same UW institution for the second year to 82%
- Reduce the gap in retention rates between white students and students of color

Six-year Graduation Rates

- Increase to 64% the six-year graduation rate for new freshman who graduate at any UW institution
- Reduce the gap in graduation rates between white students and students of color

University of Wisconsin-Superior Persistence and Graduation Rates

Rates of student persistence and graduation for the University of Wisconsin-Superior (UWS) do not compare favorably when compared with goals established by the University of Wisconsin System.

Retention of New Freshman from First to Second Year

- For 2007, 350 first-time freshman and 276 new transfer students enrolled for an incoming class of 626 students
- For first-time freshman entering in 2007 and returning for the second year, the retention rate is 65.9%
- For new transfer students entering in 2007 and returning for the second year, the retention rate is 64.5%

It is important to note the retention rate for each group of students given each incoming class is composed of approximately 55-60% new freshman and 40-45% transfer students.

Retention of Students of Color

- For 2007, 16 students of color entering and returning for the second year, the retention rate is 56%

Six-Year Graduation Rates

- For fall 2002, University of Wisconsin-Superior cohort (and graduating in 2008) of new freshman and graduating from an UW institution, the six-year graduation rate is 39.9%
- For fall 2002 University of Wisconsin-Superior cohort (and graduating in 2008) of new transfer students and graduating from any UW institution, the six-year graduation rate is 53.8%
- For fall 2002, University of Wisconsin Cohort (and graduating in 2008) of students of color and graduating from a UW institution is not recorded. To protect student privacy, rates are not shown when there are five or fewer graduates

Present and Future Initiatives: Establishing a Direction

Although the University of Wisconsin-Superior has struggled with low student retention and graduation rates, a renewed emphasis in addressing these issues is prevalent on campus.

In the past year: (2008-2009) the following initiatives have occurred:

University Community

- A strategic planning process that includes a component for all units to address student retention issues was initiated by the Continuous Improvement Planning Team (CIPT) at the direction of the Provost's office
- Implementation of the Public Liberal Arts Initiative with funding assistance from the University of Wisconsin System, enabling the campus to move forward in engaging students within the classroom as well as a part of campus life, as outlined in the Academic Plan.

CETL Summer Conversations

- June 2008: Recruitment and Retention at the University of Wisconsin-Superior: A Forum for the university community to engage in dialogue about these important issues
- June 2009: Academic Advising: A forum facilitated by Dr. Charlie Nutt, Executive Director of NACADA

Student Retention and Enrollment Committee

- Student Retention Forums (November 2008)
Provost Markwood sponsored two events in November to engage a broadly-based constituency of internal and student stakeholders, as well as community stakeholders on perceived barriers to student retention

The Student Retention and Enrollment Committee compiled the data collected at the Forums into 23 topical areas. Next steps involved development of short-term, middle-term and long-term goals. As a means to implementation, readily achievable short-term goals, “low hanging fruit” were targeted for immediate action. Several “low hanging fruit” items have been incorporated into this strategic plan.

- Summit meeting on Advisement at UW-Superior (January 2009) with Dr. Charlie Nutt, Executive Director of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA). The purpose of the session was to examine topics related to academic advising: assessment of academic advising, academic advising syllabus and student learning outcomes

Campus Life

- First-Year Experience initiative offered optional first-year seminars to incoming first-year students (Fall 2007-Fall 2009) and a FYE Coordinator and First-Year Seminar Coordinator (faculty) positions were posted and filled
- Campus Life staff examined student life programming with the intent of renewing and refocusing energies designed to help incoming students in transitioning into campus life at the University of Wisconsin-Superior as well as engaging continuing students in student development

Enrollment Services

- Academic Advising conducted a self study process utilizing LEAN processing principles. This comprehensive process examined the function of academic advising, beginning with processes and procedures administered through the Center for Academic Advising and Disability Resources and continued through examination of the critical role faculty academic advisors and academic staff advisors play in student engagement and academic success.
- The Office of Admissions and Recruitment adopted a predictive modelling approach as a means of targeting student recruitment. Predictive modelling identifies the characteristics of current students at our institution and seeks out prospective students who exhibit the same characteristics

UWS Retention Rates: Historical Overview of Performance

Retention rates and graduation rates are two ways of measuring student persistence through college and successful completion of a degree. Retention to the second year and graduation with a bachelor’s degree within six years are standard national metrics calculated for cohorts of new freshman entering full-time in the fall semester. Retention and graduation rates are most commonly calculated for new freshman entering full-time in fall semester. However, retention and graduation rates of full-time fall new transfers are also included in the recently developed Voluntary System of Accountability.

The tables below displaying historical data for retention rates is for the most recent five years for which complete data is available for UW-Superior.

First to Second Year Retention Rate: New Full-Time Freshman

UW-Superior	Fall 2003		Fall 2004		Fall 2005		Fall 2006		Fall 2007	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
	336	67.0	329	71.7	336	69.0	293	62.5	343	65.9

First to Second Year Retention Rate: New Full-Time Transfers

Entering full-time to:	Fall 2003		Fall 2004		Fall 2005		Fall 2006		Fall 2007	
	Cohort	Rate								
UW-Superior	308	66.6%	286	67.8%	303	68.0%	278	65.5%	276	64.5%

The graduation rate tables below display six-year graduation rates for UW-Superior over a five-year time period. The most recent entering class for which six-year graduation rates can be computed is fall 2002.

Graduation Rate: New Freshman

UW-Superior	Fall 1998		Fall 1999		Fall 2000		Fall 2001		Fall 2002	
	Cohort	Rate								
	377	38.7	412	40.8	406	39.9	339	43.1	286	39.9

Graduation Rate: New Transfer

Entering full-time to:	Fall 1998		Fall 1999		Fall 2000		Fall 2001		Fall 2002	
	Cohort	Rate								
UW-Superior	244	52.0%	283	46.3%	212	54.7%	222	48.6%	299	53.8%

Retention rates of full-time new fall freshman vary by race/ethnicity. For students of color, the UW System averages for race/ethnicity cohorts entering full-time in fall 2007 and returning to the same institution varied considerably. Asian Americans (non-Southeast Asians) had the highest retention rate of any race/ethnic group at 82.6 percent. African Americans had the lowest rate in the UW System, 67.4 percent.

The table on first to second year retention rates for students of color reflects the smallest cohort (16) in system in 2007, distributed across five race/ethnicity classifications including: African American, American Indian, Southeast Asian, other Asian American and Hispanic/Latino. UW System reports this total includes international students of color. Tracking and reporting of students of color, including international students of color from 2007 forward will be significant, given implementation of the Liberal Arts Initiative, in particular, the Global Awareness component.

Students of Color Race/Ethnicity	First to Second Year Retention	
	Students of Color (Fall 2007)	
African American	UW-Superior	Cohort
American Indian		Rate%
Asian		16
Hispanic/Latino		56.3%

Summary 1998-2007
Retention and Graduation Rates for New Freshman
University of Wisconsin-Superior

Although retention to the second year and graduation within six years are the most commonly-used measures, other time periods are also of interest. The attached Summary 1998-2007 table highlights the University of Wisconsin-Superior data, beginning with the 1998 cohort year for new freshman entering full-time in fall semester.

Retention to the third and fourth years provides information about continued persistence in college. Graduation within four years of five years shows how many new freshmen attain a bachelor's degree within the minimum number of years needed if enrolled full-time. The credits necessary to graduate from the majority of UW academic programs can be earned within four years, for certain professional programs with additional requirements, five years is more common. Finally, the rate of continued enrollment in the seventh year, when added to the percent who graduated within six years, is a good predictor of the proportion of new freshman who will eventually graduate from the UW-Superior campus or within the UW System.