Engaging, Advising, Supporting, & Retaining First-Year Students

DURING AN ONGOING PANDEMIC
WHY?

Student:
1. Ownership of their degree
2. On time graduation
3. Decrease in debt
4. Ability to start one's career and increase earning potential
5. Engaged students are happier students

Institution:
1. Retention & Persistence Rates
2. Lower DFW Rates
3. 4 & 6 Year Graduation Rates
Programming
(Academic, Social, Collaborative)

- Grab and Go Bags (Individual Wrapped Give Away)
- Major Meet-Ups (Faculty, peer matches)
- How do I pass this class? (faculty partnerships based on DFW rates)
- Workshops focused on Limited Access Majors
- Institution specific giveaways
- Speed friending
- Meet the family/pets
- Scavenger Hunts (On campus/On-line)
- Target Interventions/Appointment Campaigns (Late Admits, GPA Dip, Probation, Mid-Semester Alerts)

Warm vs Cold Weather States
Technology

- CRM – Take Academic & Personal Notes
- LMS – Leverage your learning management systems (Advising 101 Class, New Student orientation or Clearance Modules)
- Appointment Scheduling Software for sending out campaigns
- Apply case management strategies and utilize student tracking tools
- Social Media Engagement (utilize student employees)
- Trickle Campaigns
Get Personal

- Preferred names and pronouns
- Mail Merge
- Eliminate institutional lingo and abbreviations
- Get to know their dreams/aspirations/fears
- Provide better referrals – set up meet ups with other departments
- Celebrate good GPA and support those academically struggling
Advising

- Revise policies and processes
- Communicate with students
- Apply skills and techniques
Revise Policies and Processes

- Identify gaps in enrollment, retention, persistence.
- Re-evaluate the reason(s) behind processes, policies, and beliefs that correspond to the gaps.
- Questions to consider:
  - What is the department wanting the student to do and why?
  - Is there another way for the student to meet that goal or expectation?
  - Are there any unnecessary barriers currently in place?
  - Is the process easy for a student to follow?
  - Is there an easier way for the student to do what the university wants the student to accomplish?
- Consult with the Registrar and other departments prior to implementation.
- View related free resources at [www.EAB.com](http://www.EAB.com) (EAB, 2020)
Communicate With Students

- Alter communications to lead with empathy and care
  - Email/texts to be purposeful, clear, brief, personalized, actionable
  - If using social media be consistent across campus offices and platforms
  - Website needs to be updated frequently
- Considerations when meeting with students
  - Scheduled phone, video, in person appointments
  - Drop-in's (virtual and in person)
- Track student registration progress to avoid generic reminders
- Answer emails/voicemails/system prompts (when expected/promised)
- Be proactive and consistent

(Signal Vine, 2020)
Apply Advising Skills and Techniques

- Re-focus and re-align efforts with advising philosophy
- Advisors can continue to guide students in:
  - Academic planning
  - Goal setting / re-adjusting goals
  - Decision making
    - Ensure understanding of temporary policies created in response to the pandemic
  - Problem solving
  - Making appropriate referrals
EAB. (2020). The student success playbook: 14 recommendations to improve student outcomes and ensure financial stability across the next decade.

Supporting
Supporting Students During a Pandemic

- **Know Your Resources**
- **Create Partnerships**
- **Learn from Existing Models**
The ‘Why’

1. Practical: retention, meeting students’ demands (competition for students)
2. Theoretical: student isolation in an online setting, promoting democracy over authoritarianism
3. Moral: assisting students to their best outcomes

“If one justification for student support is to help student progress their studies, there is a higher moral imperative that sometimes conflicts with that—assisting students to do what is right for them in whatever situation they are currently experiencing.”

(Simpson, 2018)
The ‘How’

- Remind students you are still there for them.
- Humanize yourself.
- Reflect on how to challenge and support your students.
- Repeat some of the lessons you taught in class.
- Model hopefulness and optimism.
- Facilitate student interaction.
- Talk about COVID-19 and fear. Address misinformation.
- Remember that students have lost more than academics.
- Let your students know they can reach out to you.
- Ask each of your students how you can help them.

References


Contact Me: wendy.yoder@swosu.edu

Academic Support Center Director
Retaining First-Year Student During a Pandemic

What’s Your Motivation?
What’s Your Motivation?

Retaining First-Year Student During a Pandemic

Compassionate, Advocacy (Assistance), Resources (Responsive) in Education
**Maslow Before Bloom**

**Retaining First-Year Student During a Pandemic**

![Maslow's Hierarchy of School Needs](image)

- **Physiological**
  - Basic Needs Are Met (eats breakfast, has clean clothing, safe place to go home, able to sleep)

- **Safety**
  - Emotional and Physical Safety (clear school/class routines, access to counselors/nurse, ok to take risks)

- **Belonging**
  - Forming Relationships (advisory, adult role models, friendship groups, peer relationships)

- **Esteem**
  - Positive Classroom Culture Present (positive feedback, time for reflection, encouragement to take risks)

- **Self-Actualization**
  - Student Is Available to Learn
Retaining First-Year Student During a Pandemic

Emotional Unwellness

Concerns on health
- None: 9%
- Mild: 31%
- Moderate: 44%
- Severe: 16%

Difficulty of concentrating
- None: 11%
- Mild: 21%
- Moderate: 36%
- Severe: 32%

Disruptions to sleeping patterns
- None: 14%
- Mild: 21%
- Moderate: 27%
- Severe: 38%

Increased social isolation
- None: 14%
- Mild: 28%
- Moderate: 26%
- Severe: 32%

Concerns on academic performance
- None: 18%
- Mild: 31%
- Moderate: 31%
- Severe: 19%

Disruptions to eating patterns
- None: 30%
- Mild: 23%
- Moderate: 30%
- Severe: 17%

Changes in living environment
- None: 33%
- Mild: 22%
- Moderate: 19%
- Severe: 25%

Financial difficulties
- None: 41%
- Mild: 30%
- Moderate: 17%
- Severe: 12%

Increased class workload
- None: 46%
- Mild: 15%
- Moderate: 28%
- Severe: 11%

Depressive thoughts
- None: 56%
- Mild: 92%
- Moderate: 29%
- Severe: 5%

Suicidal thoughts
- None: 5%
- Mild: 3%
Retaining First-Year Student During a Pandemic

Amend Policies, Procedures, & Processes
1. What is your main concern working with students throughout the pandemic?
   • Engaging
   • Advising
   • Supporting
   • Retaining
   • Other

2. What tip or technique have you found works well during this time?

3. What new partnerships have you developed on your campus?

4. How have you facilitated student interaction during COVID restrictions?
Upcoming
AFYS
Programming

Friday Casual Conversations
Friday, February 5, 2021 @ 5:00 p.m. EST. Please join us to casually share ideas and offer support.

Best Practices in Advising Video Series

Online Discussion
March 2021 - Best Practices in Orientation and Scheduling Advising - Success on the Orientation Express.

Please join our AFYS Listserve, Facebook group, & upcoming YouTube channel for additional programming information.
Dr. Alexandra Yanovski - Bowers
Andrea Miller
Dr. Wendy Yoder
Darryl C. Cherry
dacherr@siue.edu