

# Using Students' Narratives and the College Student Inventory as an Early Alert Tool for Student Success

Megan Childress, Jessica Harris, and Dr. Mathys Meyer | University of Pikeville, Pikeville, KY

## Introduction & Finding the Tool

The University of Pikeville Center for Student Success (CSS) was established in 2014 utilizing the Strengthening Institutions grant in which centralized academic advising is vital to its mission. All incoming students are advised in the CSS by one of the four Student Success Advisors. Guidelines for developing relationships with advisees include: (1) communication with students a minimum of two times between GROWL (Gathering for Registration and Orientation Welcome and Leadership) and the start of the Fall semester and (2) a minimum of three times each semester, two of which should be face-to-face encounters.

The Noel Levitz College Student Inventory™ (CSI) was designed to assist in identifying at-risk incoming students using leading non-cognitive indicators of college student success. These indicators include academic motivation, general coping, and receptivity to support services.

Data on academic success and retention were matched with the respective students' CSI results from first-time freshmen at the University of Pikeville from the 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2015 fall semesters who took the CSI (n=1,254) and accounts for 82 percent of all students in these four cohorts (N=1,533).

Internal research showed that a Predicted Academic Difficulty (percentile) of 62 or higher can be used to identify students who will likely

- be placed on academic probation/suspension at the end of the first fall term ( $t(454) = 9.16, p=.00; d=.61$ )
- be placed on academic probation/suspension at the end of the first year ( $t(439) = 9.20, p=.00; d=.62$ )
- not return for a second year ( $t(961) = 5.72, p=.00; d=.37$ )

In addition, a Family Emotional Support (percentile) of 36 or lower can also be used to identify students who will likely

- be placed on academic probation or suspension at the end of the first fall term and/or spring term ( $t(444) = -7.52, p=.00; d=.51$ )

## Initial Findings

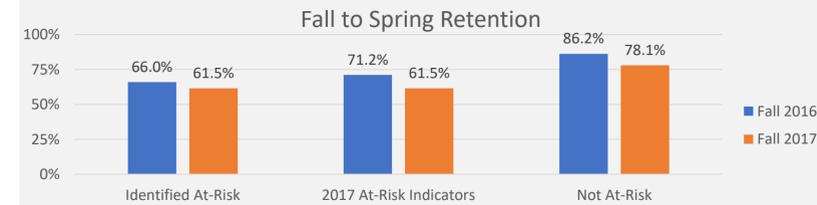
The evaluation process of first-time entering students' strengths and deficiencies was made more intentional in Fall 2016, with 88% of the freshman class completing the College Student Inventory (CSI) through collaboration with the First Year Studies program. CSI data, combined with already-known indicators of success (e.g., ACT scores, first-generation status, socioeconomic background, etc.) were merged to help evaluate incoming students' strengths and weaknesses.

Early Academic Warning alerts were created on Retention Alert for 100 new freshmen (30% of Fall 2016 cohort) with a Predicted Academic Difficulty of 62% or higher on the CSI. Advisors intentionally reached out to these students more frequently via telephone, text, or e-mail to help maintain an open line of communication and to connect students to available campus resources. Any additional alerts for these students were closely monitored and addressed once notification of the alert was received by advisors.

Early results of retention and success after the term were mixed. The retention rate was lower than the 2015 cohorts: 66% of the Fall 2016 new freshmen returned spring 2017 compared with 77% of the Fall 2015 new freshmen returning spring 2016. On the other hand, there were slight increases in the Fall 2016 cohort's first term grade point average and share ending the term in good academic standing (61%) compared with the Fall 2015 cohort. The large number of students identified, however, had advisors feeling as though they could be more effective with an even better alert identification.

As such, we determined that the presence of a second CSI predictor, specifically Family Emotional Support, would help to narrow the field of at-risk students. Ninety-six percent (96%) of the freshman class completed the CSI during the Fall 2017 semester, an increase of 8% from the previous year. Early Academic Warning alerts were created for 39 new freshmen (14% of Fall 2017 cohort) on Retention Alert for students with both conditions present: a Predicted Academic Difficulty in the 62 percentile or higher AND Family Emotional Support at the 36th percentile or lower.

## Results



While 79% of the Fall 2017 students were in good academic standing at the end of the term, it is notable that the majority of those students significantly struggled with non-academic issues (i.e. roommate issues, difficulty navigating the financial aid process, personal issues, etc.) and frequented the Center for Student Success often. Furthermore, during the 2017-2018 academic year, a behavioral intervention team was established on campus to address the rising number of behavioral concerns. The team is comprised of integral members throughout the campus community, including the Dean and Director of Student Success, the Dean of Students, the Directors of Residence Life, Conduct, and Student Life, the campus Chaplain, and the Chief of Public Safety. Behavioral concern reports were submitted on five students in the targeted group, three of which received five or more reports during the academic year. These students were either placed on low monitor, referred to counseling services, or met with the Dean of Students.



## Where Do We Go From Here?

UPIKE is currently moving from a single-response early alert system, Retention Alert, to a more comprehensive early alert and student tracking system, Nuro Retention. Throughout this transitional process, the CSS, Office of Institutional Research, and an Early Alert Committee have continued to examine CSI data to determine if there are any other combination factors may be most effective, if different from the current model, at predicting which students may require intervention and support from advisors.

This committee has also worked to develop a systematic structure for appropriate academic intervention, which considers students' current academic standing and offers tiers of support. Within the system, students can be identified as being "on path," "at risk," or "off path," which is updated daily based on flags generated from our learning management system, as well as manual flags. Once a flag is received, the CSS serves as the first tier of support and begins outreach, continuing with multiple tiers of support from key individuals across campus if unable to make contact.

For the Fall 2018 semester, we have continued merging already known indicators of success with CSI data on predicted academic difficulty and family emotional support to determine which students may require more intentional outreach. By the second week of classes for the Fall 2018 semester, 30 students had been identified through their responses to the CSI and flags have been raised in Nuro for those students. Advisors will continue to monitor these students more frequently and intentionally throughout the year. In an effort to increase support for students and collaboration between professional advisors and faculty, the CSS has notified the First Year Studies instructors for these students and have provided them with information regarding the submission of academic and behavioral concern reports.

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