

**Eastern Mennonite
University
Strategic Retention
Master Plan**

Strategic Retention Master Plan

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I. Introduction:

What is Retention?

Retention at Eastern Mennonite University on a secondary level is about data – data that represents which first time students continue moving forward to their subsequent years of college. This data is important because it provides us with information that guides our effectiveness and decision making in regards to how students are best served as they strive to meet the goal of graduation. On a more primary level, retention is about having integrity as a faculty and staff to commit our best efforts to every student who enrolls at Eastern Mennonite University. It is delivering on the promise we made to engage each student in the life of the university.

The factors that influence persistence and graduation are as varied and multifaceted as the lives of students themselves. Hallberg, Hallberg, and Sauer in their 25 years of work with college enrollment programs, called Student Success Central, have isolated eight factors they have found to be essential to success in college. They are:

- **Responsibility vs. Control** – first year students believe their instructors have more control over their performance, while upper classmen increasingly accept responsibility for their own success. Students perceive themselves as more in control when they are involved.
- **Competition** – the competitive student, defined as academically prepared and assertive, is more likely to persist to graduation based on his/her commitment to the goal of college competition and his/her commitment to the institution.
- **Task Precision** – expecting to do well at class projects or tasks is directly related to persistence within the institution.
- **Expectations** – successful students set their own goals and expectations, seek and discover new and challenging experiences in college, and adopt a relative posture towards knowledge development.
- **Wellness** – increasing awareness that psychological factors impact student success have led to campaigns to inform students about the detrimental effects of stress, sleeplessness, poor nutrition, depression, and high levels of anxiety.
- **Time Management** – Planning ahead and determining time constraints in completing assignments is critical to success in college.
- **College Involvement** – the strong correlation between college involvement and student success is evidenced in residence life, campus jobs, friendships and informal peer interactions, extra-curricular activities, and faculty interaction – these elements of campus life provide important social rewards that become part of a student's generalized evaluation of the costs and benefits of college attendance.
- **Family Involvement** – encouragement and/or participation of one's family in the college experience is an important factor in success in college.

Student retention is about providing both an academic experience as well as a social and cultural experience that addresses successfully the factors above. It is easier to think about increasing

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES															
by Entry Year															
Entry Year	Total FYS	RETURNING											Total		
		1st Spring	2nd Fall	2nd Spring	3rd Fall	3rd Spring	4th Fall	4th Spring	5th Fall	5th Spring	6th Fall	6th Spring	Graduated within*		
													4 years	5 years	6 years
2000	222	203	171	161	137	138	134	133	29	10	5	4	108	132	137
		91.4%	77.0%	72.5%	61.7%	62.2%	60.4%	59.9%	13.1%	4.5%	2.3%	1.8%	48.6%	59.5%	61.7%
2001	208	197	171	161	149	149	145	138	31	22	5	9	115	141	145
		94.7%	82.2%	77.4%	71.6%	71.6%	69.7%	66.3%	14.9%	10.6%	2.4%	4.3%	55.3%	67.8%	69.7%
2002	210	192	157	152	139	134	128	120	20	7	4	3	113	131	134
		91.4%	74.8%	72.4%	66.2%	63.8%	61.0%	57.1%	9.5%	3.3%	1.9%	1.4%	53.8%	62.4%	63.8%
2003	196	187	154	143	132	128	123	111	22	14	3	3	94	117	120
		95.4%	78.6%	73.0%	67.3%	65.3%	62.8%	56.6%	11.2%	7.1%	1.5%	1.5%	48.0%	59.7%	61.2%
2004	208	188	153	139	130	123	120	115	23	13	4	2	90	113	118
		90.4%	73.6%	66.8%	62.5%	59.1%	57.7%	55.3%	11.1%	6.3%	1.9%	1.0%	43.3%	54.3%	56.7%
2005	202	192	164	147	140	139	134	129	19	7	2	0	116	131	134
		95.0%	81.2%	72.8%	69.3%	68.8%	66.3%	63.9%	9.4%	3.5%	1.0%	0.0%	57.4%	64.9%	66.3%
2006	205	188	155	142	131	125	125	121	22	8	4		93	115	
		91.7%	75.6%	69.3%	63.9%	61.0%	61.0%	59.0%	10.7%	3.9%	2.0%		45.4%	56.1%	
2007	203	187	162	153	140	140	137	128	26				99		
		92.1%	79.8%	75.4%	69.0%	69.0%	67.5%	63.1%	12.8%				48.8%		
2008	184	173	141	135	125	123	121								
		94.0%	76.6%	73.4%	67.9%	66.8%	65.8%								
2009	219	200	164	154	148										
		91.3%	74.9%	70.3%	67.6%										
2010	206	189	160												
		91.7%	77.7%												
Average rates**		92.6%	77.4%	72.3%	66.7%	65.2%	63.5%	60.2%	11.6%	5.6%	1.9%	1.7%	50.1%	60.6%	63.2%

*Graduated as of August 31 of year indicated.

**Weighted average, calculated using data shown in chart. For example, *Total FYS* and *2nd Fall* columns are 11-year averages, whereas the *6th Fall* column and the average 5-year graduation rate are 7-year averages.

Retention by Subgroups

Successfully reaching our retention goals will require detailed breakdown of our retention data to clearly identify at-risk student groups and develop a plan to improve retention for this group. One clear area of importance for EMU is our retention of OTM students. Since 2001, the second fall retention rate of OTMs is 67.5% compared to 86.7% for Mennonites, a difference of close to 20%. The difference between the two groups continues to grow over subsequent semesters (see Table 2).

Table 2

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES															
by Entry Year and Religious Affiliation*															
	First Year Students			Returning									Graduating within 6 years		
	Menno	OTM	Total	2nd fall			3rd fall			4th fall			Menno	OTM	Total
2001	117	91	208	105	66	171	96	53	149	95	50	145	98	48	146
	56.3%			89.7%	72.5%	82.2%	82.1%	58.2%	71.6%	81.2%	54.9%	69.7%	83.8%	52.7%	70.2%
2002	117	93	210	100	57	157	92	47	139	89	39	128	94	40	134
	55.7%			85.5%	61.3%	74.8%	78.6%	50.5%	66.2%	76.1%	41.9%	61.0%	80.3%	43.0%	63.8%
2003	115	81	196	95	59	154	88	44	132	84	39	123	86	36	122
	58.7%			82.6%	72.8%	78.6%	76.5%	54.3%	67.3%	73.0%	48.1%	62.8%	74.8%	44.4%	62.2%
2004	89	119	208	79	74	153	72	57	129	67	53	120	68	51	119
	42.8%			88.8%	62.2%	73.6%	80.9%	47.9%	62.0%	75.3%	44.5%	57.7%	76.4%	42.9%	57.2%
2005	120	82	202	106	55	161	97	43	140	95	39	134	96	38	134
	59.4%			88.3%	67.1%	79.7%	80.8%	52.4%	69.3%	79.2%	47.6%	66.3%	80.0%	46.3%	66.3%
2006	98	107	205	86	69	155	83	48	131	82	43	125			
	47.8%			87.8%	64.5%	75.6%	84.7%	44.9%	63.9%	83.7%	40.2%	61.0%			
2007	97	106	203	81	81	162	76	64	140	76	61	137			
	47.8%			83.5%	76.4%	79.8%	78.4%	60.4%	69.0%	78.4%	57.5%	67.5%			
2008	95	89	184	84	57	141	78	47	125	78	43	121			
	51.6%			88.4%	64.0%	76.6%	82.1%	52.8%	67.9%	82.1%	48.3%	65.8%			
2009	101	118	219	85	79	164	82	65	147						
	46.1%			84.2%	66.9%	74.9%	81.2%	55.1%	67.1%						
2010	96	110	206	85	75	160									
	46.6%			88.5%	68.2%	77.7%									
Averages	104.5	99.6	204.1	86.7%	67.5%	77.3%	80.5%	52.8%	67.1%	78.5%	47.8%	63.9%	79.2%	45.7%	64.0%
	51.3%														

*Menno includes Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Church Canada and related Mennonites; OTM includes all remaining students.

Retention rates by ethnicity are a key area of focus for us as we progress toward the future. Historically we have had a substantially lower retention and graduation rate for AHANA students (see Table 3). Interestingly, our retention and graduation rate for international students has mirrored our overall average as an institution (see Table 3).

Table 3

Retention and Graduation Rates of AHANA Students														
Entry Year	N	% of All FYS	Returning:						Total Graduating within:					
			2nd Fall		3rd Fall		4th Fall		4 Years		5 Years		6 Years	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2001	19	9.1	11	57.9	10	52.6	10	52.6	3	15.8	7	36.8	8	42.1
2002	16	7.7	5	31.3	5	31.3	4	25.0	4	25.0	5	31.3	5	31.3
2003	20	10.2	17	85.0	14	70.0	13	65.0	6	30.0	10	50.0	10	50.0
2004	42	20.2	31	73.8	23	54.8	23	54.8	14	33.3	19	45.2	21	50.0
2005	33	16.3	20	60.6	12	36.4	12	36.4	7	21.2	8	24.2	8	24.2
2006	42	20.6	22	52.4	16	38.1	14	33.3	6	14.3	11	26.2		
2007	24	11.8	17	70.8	11	45.8	11	45.8	5	20.8				
2008	28	15.2	20	71.4	17	60.7	14	50.0						
2009	35	16.0	19	54.3	17	48.6								
2010	42	20.4	26	61.9										
Average	31.3	15.4		62.8		47.9		44.4		23.7		34.6		39.6
19.1														
Retention and Graduation Rates of International Students*														
Entry Year	N	% of All FYS	Returning:						Total Graduating within:					
			2nd Fall		3rd Fall		4th Fall		4 Years		5 Years		6 Years	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2001	12	5.8	8	66.7	7	58.3	7	58.3	6	50.0	7	58.3	7	58.3
2002	7	3.4	7	100.0	7	100.0	7	100.0	5	71.4	7	100.0	7	100.0
2003	13	6.6	8	61.5	7	53.8	6	46.2	5	38.5	6	46.2	6	46.2
2004	4	1.9	4	100.0	4	100.0	3	75.0	2	50.0	3	75.0	3	75.0
2005	5	2.5	5	100.0	5	100.0	4	80.0	3	60.0	4	80.0	4	80.0
2006	5	2.5	3	60.0	2	40.0	2	40.0	2	40.0	2	40.0		
2007	12	5.9	9	75.0	7	58.3	7	58.3	7	58.3				
2008	1	0.5	1	100.0	1	100.0	1	100.0						
2009	6	2.7	4	66.7	2	33.3								
2010	10	4.9	7	70.0										
Average	7.0	3.4		76.2		66.0		63.8		52.2		64.7		69.0

*International students = non-resident aliens

As to be expected, another important breakdown of students is by admissions status (conditional vs. unconditional). Our conditional students have a significantly lower retention and graduation rate (see Table 4).

Table 4

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES															
by Entry Year and Conditional Status															
	First Year Students			Returning									Graduating within 6 years		
				2nd fall			3rd fall			4th fall					
	Cond	Uncond	Total	Cond	Uncond	Total	Cond	Uncond	Total	Cond	Uncond	Total	Cond	Uncond	Total
2003	30	166	196	21	133	154	15	117	132	12	111	123	11	111	122
	15.3%			70.0%	80.1%	78.6%	50.0%	70.5%	67.3%	40.0%	66.9%	62.8%	36.7%	66.9%	62.2%
2004	32	176	208	20	133	153	12	117	129	10	110	120	10	109	119
	15.4%			62.5%	75.6%	73.6%	37.5%	66.5%	62.0%	31.3%	62.5%	57.7%	31.3%	61.9%	57.2%
2005	31	171	202	21	140	161	14	126	140	12	122	134	10	124	134
	15.3%			67.7%	81.9%	79.7%	45.2%	73.7%	69.3%	38.7%	71.3%	66.3%	32.3%	72.5%	66.3%
2006	36	169	205	20	135	155	14	117	131	11	114	125			
	17.6%			55.6%	79.9%	75.6%	38.9%	69.2%	63.9%	30.6%	67.5%	61.0%			
2007	29	174	203	20	142	162	13	127	140	13	124	137			
	14.3%			69.0%	81.6%	79.8%	44.8%	73.0%	69.0%	44.8%	71.3%	67.5%			
2008	29	155	184	16	125	141	9	116	125	7	114	121			
	15.8%			55.2%	80.6%	76.6%	31.0%	74.8%	67.9%	24.1%	73.5%	65.8%			
2009	28	191	219	17	147	164	12	135	147						
	12.8%			60.7%	77.0%	74.9%	42.9%	70.7%	67.1%						
2010	31	175	206	18	142	160									
	15.0%			58.1%	81.1%	77.7%									
Averages	30.8	172.1	202.9	62.2%	79.7%	77.0%	41.4%	71.1%	66.6%	34.8%	68.7%	63.4%	33.3%	67.1%	61.9%
	15.2%														

The lower rates of certain groups of students, notably AHANA and OTM students needs to be a primary focus of our institution as we move towards the future. Data and trends show that our probable growth in enrollment will come from these populations, so it is very important that we identify and develop strategies for improved retention of these groups.

III. Research-Based, College-Based Retention

Data Analysis

The retention efforts of Eastern Mennonite University need to be research driven. Our plan for the future is being built on and supported by considerable existing data relevant to student retention and a quality institutional research department. The Enrollment Division will oversee the implementation of the retention plan and analyze its effectiveness in order to reach institutional enrollment goals.

I plan to put in motion a plan for more centralized leadership of retention that allows for deeper and more consistent data analysis. We will organize and centralize the collection of retention data, pulling information from financial assistance, academics, the registrar's office, the business office, and other pertinent departments on campus. The Enrollment Division will collaborate with the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. We will provide detailed analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data to develop strategies and new initiatives for improved student retention.

IV. Key points for discussion:

As we move forward with our retention strategy, our plans and decisions will be based on some key points:

- **Making connections with students is essential to retaining them, as connections allow for involvement and ownership in the university. These connections may ultimately influence a student's choice to remain at EMU.**
- **Retention efforts need to be both proactive and reactive. Various persons, offices, divisions already conduct programs and provide services/opportunities conducive to making connections with students. These include but are not limited to: Student Life and it's various departments, academic advising, the classroom experience, faculty/student research opportunities, Academic Support Center and Disability Support Services, work-study jobs.**
- **Retention must be comprehensive in that students' needs and concerns must be addressed at each grade level. For example, we currently tend to the issues and needs of incoming first-year students. Should we also consider the needs of students entering their second year? Do we think intentionally and programmatically about students entering their senior year?**
- **Retention must be comprehensive in that it involves the entire university.**

V. New and Growing Initiatives on Campus

PULSE Group

Since 2004, the PULSE group has served to provide analysis and support to the institution in order to see that retention goals are carried forward. The PULSE group prioritized initiatives and data gathering projects resulting in the following initiatives.

Assumptions:

1. At EMU, we value the whole student and believe that a successful college student engages mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually.
2. Every EMU office and division assists in creating a rich learning environment for students.
3. Every EMU employee, office, division has the potential to positively impact a student's experience.

Rationale or "Why should a Pulse pilot group exist?"

1. To identify students who are experiencing difficulty in their college experience and to take appropriate steps toward intervention.
2. To determine if there are gaps in what we do that if tended to would enhance the learning environment for students.
3. To determine if an inter-divisional group is the most effective way to have a "pulse" of the environment, an awareness of students who are experiencing difficulty.

Group members:

- Lisa Crist, Student Accounts Office
- Heather Stifler, Student Accounts Office
- Michele Hensley, Financial Aid Office
- Ken L. Nafziger, Vice President for Student Life
- Luke A. Hartman, Vice President for Enrollment (Chair)
- Amy Springer, Assistant Dean/Coordinator of Student Success
- Sue Kolb, Assistant Athletic Director for Student Athlete Well-Being
- Eric Coddington, Associate Dean of Students
- Julie Hatfield, Assistant to the Vice President for Enrollment

Meetings:

The Pulse group will meet monthly to address any student concerns as well as tend to the larger issue of effectively addressing student needs. The group will also agree to meet on an as-needed basis in between the designated monthly meetings.

Group leadership:

The Pulse group will be chaired by Luke A. Hartman, Vice President for Enrollment. Other members may be added as the need arises.

Confidentiality:

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords students the right to consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in the student's educational records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception which permits disclosure without prior consent, operable for this Pulse Retention team proposal, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. Both "school official" and "legitimate educational interest" are defined in the EMU Student handbook (see p. 13).

Evaluation: *How will we know if we've accomplished our goal?*

Names of students who are referred to the Pulse group will be documented to allow follow-up to determine retention and graduation rates. This also allows us to potentially contact them to find out their perception of the effectiveness of the interventions by the Pulse group.

Construction of an evaluation instrument will take place in consultation with Karen Miller in the Institutional Research and Effectiveness Office (IREO). This data will be made available to the IREO for possible dissemination in aggregate form with personal identifiers removed.

A second aspect of the retention plan at Eastern Mennonite University results from the strong leadership role of the individual departments and their willingness, ability, and proclivity to bring university-wide initiatives into the individual programs and tailor them to the unique needs of the students in that particular department. Once the Retention Strategic Plan is approved, it will be taken to each department and “customized.”

Guiding Principles:

1. *Student retention is an outcome of a quality student experience and includes student satisfaction and student success.*
2. *Student success is a critical part of the academic work of every college and is based on learning strategies for success built into the disciplines of each college.*
3. *Connectedness to faculty and staff, both within and outside of the classroom, is critical to student success; thus all areas of the university share the responsibility for facilitating these connections and eliminating barriers to them.*
4. *Student success is a core value at Eastern Mennonite University, the result of a culture that engages diversity and values student participation. It is to be celebrated and rewarded.*
5. *Optimal student retention can only be fully achieved when all students – including students of color, first-generation students, transfer students, and students with disabilities – experience success in degree completion at the same rate as the majority population.*
6. *Interactions at all levels and among all participants in university life can be enhanced by a web of technology that connects students, faculty, and staff.*

The EMU Pathways to Academic Success (Pathways) Program

Purpose:

To attain EMU’s Strategic Enrollment objective E.1.b, we aim to improve average retention and graduation rates by at least 2% for each EMU entering cohort over the next six years.

Evidence-Based Program:

Our Pathways Pilot Program is based on the Pathfinders Program at Mississippi State University. The Student Affairs Leadership Council (2010) reported that MSU monitored first-to-second year retention rates for entering cohorts from 1998 to 2007. The entering characteristics of the MSU class had a consistent median ACT composite of 23-24 over that decade, similar to EMU’s median ACT over the last five years.

After implementing the Pathfinders program, MSU improved from a baseline of 76% retention prior to the program in 1997, to 79% in 1998, and increased retention to a high of 84% for the 2007 cohort. The key to increasing beyond 80% was increasing faculty participation from 30-40% to 80%. EMU’s ten-year average retention rate is 76%. Increasing EMU’s average retention rate to 79% while maintaining a similar increase in retention rates in subsequent years for each cohort would increase EMU’s six-year

graduation rate from 62% to 65%. In addition, the average first-year GPA for MSU students with at least three absences in one class was 1.98, whereas those with less than three absences averaged 2.96. If similar differences held at EMU, those under 2.0 would be on academic probation or possibly unable to return for their sophomore year.

Method:

Collaboration between the Undergraduate Academic and Student Life divisions to create a culture that values class attendance as a pre-requisite for engagement and improved learning

Importance of attendance emphasized in orientation meetings, residence hall meetings, and the first session of class for all first-years.

1. *Faculty of first-years submit alerts:* Faculty are prompted by their department heads to track attendance and submit email alerts to the Pathways Coordinator (associate dean of students Eric Coddington; attendance@emu.edu) for any first-year student who misses two or more classes in any one class. E-mail to attendance@emu.edu will go to the Pathways Coordinator (Eric Coddington) and to the Coordinator of Student Success (Amy Springer).
2. *Pathways Office Processes Alerts:* Pathways Coordinator processes alerts daily, creating database with flagged students' contact information. A student receives only one Pathways class attendance intervention per semester, but subsequent absences are reported by faculty and recorded by the Pathways Coordinator.
3. *Residency Status Determines Intervention Delivery Method*
 - a. On-Campus Students – Contacted in-person by specially trained CA's.
 - b. Off-Campus Students – Contacted via phone by program coordinator
4. *Key Elements of Pathway Interventions:* Delivered directly by two specially chosen and trained CA's or the Pathway Coordinator.
 - a. Brief: No longer than two minutes
 - b. Supportive and non-threatening: communicate concern for student with up-beat tone
 - c. Carefully Scripted: CA's follow approved script with three-part message
 - d. Greeting and explanation of Pathways program. Explaining connection between attending class and academic success. Presentation of Information Card detailing support services available on campus.

Academic Success Plan for Student Athletes

Purpose:

Two of the most critical factors in reaching the enrollment goals for the university are recruitment and retention. The athletic department is one area of the university that has recruitment inherently built into the program. We are establishing goals for roster sizes for each sport and working to achieve them. Our coaches work extremely hard at the recruitment part of their responsibilities. Retention is an area of the athletic program that we began monitoring the last two years as part of the College Sport Program, and from those data we recognize our need to improve compared to our NCAA Division III peers with selective admissions.

The Athletic Department was recently awarded a two year Ethnic Minority and Women's Internship Grant from the NCAA. This grant funds a half-time position in the athletic department for a woman or ethnic minority intern to encourage a career in athletic administration. Since most of our coaches are half-time, we received special permission to

write the position for Susan Kolb, our new women's soccer head coach. Her title is Assistant Athletic Director for Student Athlete Well-Being.

Sue will be focusing on three main areas of student athlete well-being that we believe will increase our retention and graduation rates: Class attendance for all athletes, academic progress for freshmen athletes and upperclassmen on academic probation, and educational programming for athletes.

Importance of Class Attendance:

Research has shown the strong correlation between class attendance and academic success. We want to begin tracking attendance for all athletes. We recognize that the Pathways pilot program for attendance also begins this year and don't want this to be confusing. But due to the nature of the grant, we need to start tracking attendance for all athletes this year to meet the goals of the internship. Faculty will be receiving weekly attendance sheets listing the athletes in each of their individual classes. We are asking that they be dropped in campus mail on Fridays.

Consequences:

The following consequences will be enforced for class absences in any single class:

- 1st – e-mail reminder from Sue
- 2nd – meeting with Sue
- 3rd – missed practice – issued by the Athletic Director
- 4th – missed game – issued by the Athletic Director
- 5th – missed game and meeting with athlete, coach, AD and Sue to determine future involvement with the team

Academic tracking for freshmen athletes and athletes on academic probation:

Individual meetings will be held within the first two weeks to review schedule, four year plan, past history, study habits, fears, challenges, etc. Academic progress will be monitored through follow-up meetings and responses from faculty on the attendance sheets or via e-mail correspondence. Sue will connect students with tutors, study groups and mentors. In addition, Sue will be the conduit for academic issues for all athletes when they arise. Linda Gnagey will maintain responsibility for her advisees who are athletes.

Educational programming

Sue and Dave will be holding weekly meetings of all freshmen athletes during the first semester to assist in the transition to college and EMU. Topics include sports psychology, study habits and skills, the flag/national anthem practices of EMU, nutritional education, and life lessons available through sports. Throughout the year, additional programs will be held for all athletes. Possible topics include diversity education, team dynamics, alcohol education and guidance on nutrition, supplements and out-of-season conditioning.

Sue will be working closely with and supporting the ongoing work of Linda Gnagey in the Academic Support Center and Amy Springer, Assistant Dean. We realize this may add a few minutes of extra work, but we need your help in retaining our students and making them successful in the classroom. It takes the entire campus community working together to help us retain our students and provide them the quality education we are known for.

For Consideration:

1. Assign each entering freshman a faculty advisor and assess the quality of faculty advising. We must determine where we are currently and where we want to be.
2. We require all freshmen to live on campus.
3. Transitions Class (explain)
4. Increase preparation of incoming students.
5. Expand transition programs with Blue Ridge C.C, Dabney Lancaster C.C., and Lord Fairfax
6. What is our tutoring program are our tutoring hours increasing?
7. Expand efforts to meet the needs of minority students by enhancing retention focused activities of departments and support units.
8. What are the strengths of the University reported by students on the SSI? (satisfaction)
**course content, faculty as knowledgeable, Academic advisors, intellectual growth
faculty availability, campus environment, The people, The administration,
undergraduate research opportunities, wide range of services, Student diversity
Residence life, student involvement, Honors Program, community service projects
learning communities, positively charged campus community**
9. What are the challenges of the University reported by the students on the SSI?
**student parking, Registering for classes, the “run-around”, financial aid
tuition, activity fees, security, Availability for expressing student complaints,
financial aid counselors, Quality of instruction, billing policies,**
10. Determine if there are common characteristics among students on probation
11. All fall 2012 students who do not register for spring 2013 will be contacted by a representative from their department for the purposes of ascertaining why they have not registered and if they plan to return and to give them the name and number of a personal contact to facilitate re-admission.
12. Explore formal methods of communicating progress on retention planning.

VI. Additional Critical Retention and Graduation Questions and Goals

Questions for consideration:

- What percent of first-time, full time freshmen are on probation after their first semester and first year?
- First-time, full-time freshmen on probation after the first semester have a one-year retention rate of how many percentage points less than the total first-time, full-time freshman population? Also, when looking at six-year graduation rates, how many percentage points less does a first year student on probation at the end of their first year have compared to a first year student who is not on probation after their first year?

- First-generation college students, make up about what percent of the total first time, full-time freshmen population? What percentage point lower retention rate do they have comparably and what percentage point lower for four-year graduation rate, and six-year graduation rate?
- When comparing males and females who has a lower six year graduation rate?
- Honors students have a one-year retention rate of how many percentage points higher than the total first-time, full-time freshman population?

Goals:

- Goal 1: Increase the retention rate for all first-time, full-time freshmen to ?% by 2016.
 - Reduce number of students on academic probation after their first year to ?% by 2013 and ?% by 2016.*
- Goal 2: Increase persistence rates of sophomores to ?% and juniors to ?% by 2014.
- Goal 3: For first-time, full-time freshmen entering in 2011, increase four-year graduation rates to ? percent, five-year rates to ? percent, and six-year rates to ? percent.
- Goal 4: Study transfer students' persistence and graduation rates to learn where interventions are needed.

VII. Recommended Action Proposed:

- Organize and streamline institutional structure of retention**
 - See current flow chart PowerPoint Slide*
 - See proposed flow chart PowerPoint Slide*
- Centralize leadership for undergraduate retention efforts at EMU (Director of Retention and Vice President for Enrollment).**
 - Provide centralized leadership to the various student support, student alert, and retention systems in place across campus including efforts within financial assistance, academic support services, athletics, the registrar's office, the business office, academics, admissions, housing, CoachLink, and counseling services.*
 - Establish a clear first line of contact of action in response to retention related alerts for individual students.*
 - Establish a clear and seamless alert system between faculty and the enrollment division for at-risk students based on attendance, assignment completion and other factors.*
 - Prior to each semester, collaborate with admissions and financial assistance to identify new incoming students who are retention risks who may not have been identified through traditional academic or demographic indicators.*
 - Manage the action plan for at risk student groups (academically, financially, emotionally, and culturally) throughout the academic year.*
 - Lead proactive efforts during semester transition periods for students who have not registered for subsequent semesters or who have been labeled as retention risks.*

c. Consistent and Detailed Data Analysis

- i. *Organize and centralize the collection of retention data, pulling information from financial assistance, academics, the registrar's office, the business office, and other pertinent departments on campus.*
- ii. *Collaborate with the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness to relieve some of their data analysis burden.*
- iii. *Provide detailed analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data to develop strategies and new initiatives for improved student retention.*

d. Continue to make new advising procedures known to students (completed by academics)

e. Early alert system and piloted programs

- i. *Continue to monitor and improve the early alert system and piloted programs for specific at-risk groups, in collaboration with selected undergraduate academic departments. Students targeted were non-engaged students at the end of Fall 2011 and non-registered students at the end of Spring 2012. Future initiatives in this area covered in specific Action Plan.*

f. Develop clear communication channels for students and faculty in the campus decision making process.

g. Address course availability

- i. *Work with Undergraduate Academic Dean and Registrar for timely release of general education courses for continuing students and pre-scheduling of courses during orientation, resulting in increased advisor and student satisfaction with registration process. Future initiatives in this area covered in specific Action Plan. Conduct a systematic review of the university processes, identifying where students receive the campus "run-around".*

h. Other strategies

- i. *Provide non-credit alternatives for Freshmen placed into pre-college math*
- ii. *Develop faculty-staff online referral system to identify students who are early struggling early in their first semester.*
- iii. *Develop a contractual obligation with specific corrective actions for students on academic probation after their first semester.*
- iv. *Create exit and re-entry interventions for students who withdraw voluntarily.*

i. Early Graded Experience (see proposal from Nancy below)

- i. *Move from mid-term grades for first-year and conditionally re-admitted students to an early graded experience for all 100 and 200-level courses.*
-

To: Undergraduate Council
From: Nancy R. Heisey
Date: 30 December 2011
Subject: Move to Early Graded Experience

Below is a proposal to move from mid-term grades for first-year and conditionally re-admitted students to an early graded experience for all 100 and 200-level courses. A similar process is currently being used at Goshen College. See also the attached article discussing the grades-success process in broader perspective.

Rather than being based on many graded exercises, this “measure” is an “impressionistic” grade. (Students are told it is a grade). As with mid-term grades this measure does NOT become part of their permanent record/transcript. The grade should be based on three questions:

- a. are they coming to and participating in class?
- b. are they doing their homework and preparing for class?
- c. how have they done on any graded exercise? (quiz, response paper, etc.)

The process would work as follows: The mid-term grade function is turned on in myEMU at the end of week three and closed at the end of week four. With those results, advisers are notified of any student in the surveyed courses with a grade of C- or lower, as is the assistant dean. The advisers set up a personal check-in with those students. This would preferably be a meeting, but could be a phone call or e-mail if the student is less responsive.

I think it would be helpful to develop standard messages that are conveyed if there is one low grade or several, and have a shared list of resources to recommend and methods of getting students to those resources. Benefits:

1. Easier schedule for faculty: this can be done with fewer exercises/observations, and while faculty are at work (not during breaks)
2. Awareness of problems that may be turned around or headed off early enough to enhance possibilities for success.
3. Engagement of students with advisers early in their career in a way that helps them know who the advisers are and think of advisers as advocates

Questions:

1. Can this process be coordinated with Student Life interventions (student life, athletics)? Can we build a one-stop shop for faculty input into retention efforts?
 2. What role should faculty play with students “in trouble”? Would the intervention be better coming from them than from the adviser?
 3. Other?
-

VIII. Summary

While it is clear that the EMU has come a long way toward identifying the ways in which it can strengthen the student experience, most of the hard work lies ahead. Faculty and staff across campus have dedicated countless hours to this institution and their commitment to students has led to our success as an institution. As I have shown, there are clear areas where we can and need to improve as an institution in order to reach our enrollment goals.

As we move forward, there are a few central areas where I would like to see progress and growth. First of all, it is very important that we centralize retention leadership and have clearer collaboration

between the many campus retention efforts. I hope to continue to establish and implement and clearer system of accountability, record keeping and oversight of our different retention efforts. Another clear goal is the establishment of a more comprehensive and clear line of communication between faculty/staff and the enrollment division about retention risks.

As mentioned, our retention efforts are data driven and require a detailed, systematic and consistent review and analysis of data. We need deeper analysis of students who are leaving EMU. While we have a wealth of information about students who don't matriculate, we are not looking very closely at students leaving EMU.

I also plan to have a stronger plan in place for proactive identification of at-risk new students prior to their first semester, based on information from admissions, financial assistance, and known risk factors identified through data analysis.

Overall, it is clear that a successfully functioning alert system on campus is vital to our success in retention. These include attendance, financial, registration, student life, housing, emotional and academic alerts. While we have made great strides this year, I hope to continue to fine tune both our alert system and a clear and comprehensive action plan for specific alerts that arise.