WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Retention Implementation Task Force Final Report

December 2010

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Executive Summary

Undergraduate student retention and graduation are critical to the success of the university in meeting its fundamental mission of teaching and learning. Based on national comparisons, Wayne State has placed well below comparable urban research universities in terms of student retention and graduation rates for some time, and when various sub-groups including ethnicity are considered, we fare even worse. One key measure is the overall one-year retention rate of first-time students (called First Time in Any College – **FTAICs**.) Over the past five years, gains have been made in the overall one-year FTAIC retention rates that put us in a much more competitive position on that measure. The Fall 2005 entering cohort had a one-year retention rate of 69%. Attention paid to this issue has resulted in the rate for the Fall 2009 entering cohort increasing to 77%. The retention gains are propagating into the third and fourth year of enrollment at this point, but it will still be one or two years before we see the effects of these improvements on graduation rates. Wayne State University cannot fulfill its mission without significantly improving the retention and graduation rates of its students.

The recommendations in this report fall into six areas that have shown to have success in retention: (1) Enhancing Curriculum, (2) Increasing Academic Support – Advising, (3) Creating a Culture of Shared Academic Responsibility – Undergraduate Teaching, (4) Enhancing Readiness for Success, (5) Enhancing Learning Communities and First-Year Experience, and (6) Increasing Financial Support for Students

Through implementing the aggressive program outlined here, we anticipate a further increase of 5% additional percentage points in one-year retention over the next five years, and we expect the graduation rates to increase substantially during that time as the previous improvements and the additional gains compound. By achieving an 82% one-year retention rate Wayne State University will be among the leaders in the State of Michigan and rank well among national urban research universities. *These gains may be even harder to accomplish than the gains achieved so far and will require considerable investment, but we can build on our successes.*

With substantially increased student success, students will remain at the institution and pay tuition, thereby increasing revenue and reducing the pressure to continuously recruit new students to fill the seats. By conservative estimates, the proposed plan can generate as much as $15 million annually in additional tuition revenue due to increased student retention and the stronger recruiting position we will be in because of building our reputation for student success.

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<u>Introduction</u>

Undergraduate student retention and graduation are critical to the success of the university in meeting its fundamental mission of teaching and learning. In 2005, the one-year retention rate of first-time freshmen (First Time in Any College, or **FTIACs**) was 69%. Further, the six-year graduation rate of FTIACs who entered in 2004 (the most recent year for which data are available) was 40%. Both of these statistics place us well below comparable urban research universities and when the rates for various sub-groups including ethnicity are considered, we fare even worse. Over the past five years, gains have been made and the one-year retention rate for the Fall 2009 FTIAC class was 77%, which puts us in a much more competitive position on that measure. The retention gains are propagating into the third and fourth year of enrollment at this point, but it will still be one or two years before we see the effects of these improvements on graduation rates.

Wayne State University cannot fulfill its mission (http://wayne.edu/mission.php) of contributing "to the positive development and well-being of individuals, organizations and society" and "preparing students to excel in an increasingly advanced and interconnected global society" without significantly improving the retention and graduation rates of its students.

The recommendations in this report have been developed from careful analysis of the work of previous task forces and studies that have identified strategies and opportunities for Wayne State to improve student success. The strategies that have been developed are categorized into six areas that have shown to have success in retention: These areas are (not in priority order):

- Enhancing Curriculum - Support for General Education
- Increasing Academic Support - Advising
- Creating a Culture of Shared Academic Responsibility – Undergraduate Teaching
- Enhancing Readiness for Success
- Enhancing Learning Communities and First-Year Experience
- Increasing Financial Support for Students

The current task force has identified steps to implement short- and longer-term actions for each of the above areas that will bring about even more significant improvements than have been achieved in the last few years. Through implementing the program outlined here, we anticipate an increase of 5% additional percentage points in one-year retention over the next five years, and we expect the graduation rates to increase substantially during that time as the previous improvements and the additional gains compound. By achieving an 82% one-year retention rate Wayne State University will be among the leaders in the State of Michigan and rank well among national urban research universities. *These gains may be even harder to accomplish than the gains achieved so far and will require considerable investment, but we can build on our successes.*

By so doing, Wayne State University will achieve its educational mission and will be fiscally more sound. At present, the significant rates of attrition result in increased pressure on recruiting new students in order to maintain enrollment. With substantially increased student success, students will remain at the institution and pay tuition, thereby increasing revenue and reducing the pressure to continuously recruit new students to fill the seats. By conservative estimates, the proposed plan can result in as much as $4 million dollars in increased tuition revenue not accounting for the compounding effect that students staying in the system will cause. If those factors are considered, the proposed plan could generate as much as $15-16 million annually in additional tuition revenue due to increased student retention and the stronger recruiting position we will be in because of building our reputation for student success.

RECCOMENDATIONS

Part I: Enhancing Curriculum -- Support for General Education

All undergraduates must take a variety of general education courses that contribute to a strong academic foundation. Students generally take these courses early in their programs, and as such, the general education courses provide opportunities to enhance student retention. Departments play a crucial role in student retention and success through general education offerings and the support of students in their majors. Departments must strive continuously to improve the quality of teaching, and thereby student engagement, particularly of freshmen (First Time in Any College – **FTIACs**). They must employ proven best practices in teaching by all instructors, both full and part-time. In the process, departments should utilize mechanisms to assess their retention efforts and must be provided support from the central administration in analyzing these data and determining additional ways to improve student success.

One specific issue for student retention and success is developing the academic competencies necessary for further studies. The general education curriculum has foundational requirements in mathematics, written and oral communication, computer literacy, and critical thinking. Of these, many identify mathematics as an area that must be addressed more successfully by students early in their academic careers. Several enhancements have been made in these competencies, including mathematics, and the university faculty's General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC), addresses these matters on an on-going basis. Further improvements are needed, and the Provost's Office must work with the schools/colleges to support students' academic skill development as effectively as possible.

POLICY STATEMENT: The general education program should be designed, coordinated, and focused on building the skills and abilities for students to be successful learners. Student success needs to be "owned" at the program, school/college, and university levels.

Goals:

1. All departments must be aware of student retention issues and be involved in efforts to enhance student success. One strategy would be for all departments to designate undergraduate retention coordinators who will work with their counterparts, and/or the

Dean's office and the Provost's Office, so that efforts reflect the priorities and academic cultures of the individual units.

2. Departments should develop successful, discipline-specific approaches to general education and introductory courses. Learning objectives, course coordination, and common syllabi should be explored, where appropriate. Support should be provided through the Office for Teaching and Learning and the Provost's Office.

3. Institute a *General Education Faculty Fellows* program that would provide resources to faculty/departments to identify and implement best practices for general education/introductory courses. Designation as a General Education Faculty Fellow will be considered an honor, and the fellows will be chosen for their teaching abilities and commitment to general education. This program will recognize excellent faculty members who make major contributions to the development and improvement of general education courses; who demonstrate enhanced student success through such contributions, and whose teaching at the introductory level is specially effective and worthy of emulation.

4. Support and fund those departments teaching "service" courses with high numbers of students by working to optimize class sizes based on successful teaching strategies, and by supporting teachers of large classes with graduate assistants, technology, or other resources.

5. Find cross-departmental opportunities for *faculty* learning communities, such as that already in place for teachers of large classes.

6. Increase number of general education courses that are taught by full-time faculty by hiring more lecturers and tenure-track faculty and encouraging existing faculty to teach these courses.

7. Provide training in best teaching practices for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), as well as for part-time and full-time faculty. Consider systematic certification of GTA's by requiring initial and on-going development of their teaching skills. This training would enhance student learning in their classes and also enhance their training as future faculty members.

8. Increase the number of FTIACS involved in learning communities and freshman seminars that are connected to general education classes; provide a wide variety of models which might include student support, library assistance, and designated academic and financial advisors.

9. Assist departments in using student outcomes assessment tools and means to track their students' success. This should include provision of the tools and necessary training, as well as technical support.

10. Identify and develop specific enhancements to the support of students in basic courses in mathematics, written communication, and other competency areas, as appropriate. These could include expanded tutoring and supplemental instruction, increased individual study skill development opportunities, and better-targeted placement strategies.

ACTION	ASSESSMENT	Permanent	One-Time	Total	Comments
General Education faculty fellows	• Increased 1-year FTIAC retention • Participant success longitudinally, measured through ongoing tracking	$100,000	$0	$100,000	
Faculty member to serve as Retention Coordinator in the Provost's Office	• Improved faculty involvement in retention efforts • Monitor student achievement in key courses that affect student retention and graduation • Improved communication about best practices and student achievement among faculty in departments, within colleges, and university-wide • Increased student success students finishing courses, grades, retention and graduation • Expand training of Graduate Teaching Assistants to be annual for all GTAs and on-going throughout the academic year	$0	$500,000		$500k over 5 years

Add additional tutors and support programs centrally and in the colleges/schools to reduce backlogs of active students with greater than 60 credits who have not completed competency requirements	• Reduce backlogs by 50% in the next academic year • Eliminate backlogs by the end of 2011-2012	$120,000	$0	$120,000	

Part II: Increasing Academic Support--Advising

Effective advising keeps students focused and on target to graduate. Advising must involve the appropriate mix of professional advisors and faculty to meet the needs of students in relation to their general education and within their school/college as they complete their college-specific and major-specific requirements. In addition, disabilities counselors, psychological counselors, and academic support specialists play important roles in student success depending on particular student needs.

Wayne State University employs University Counselors, Academic Service Officers, and faculty who play various roles in advising undergraduate students. The student-to-advisor ratios vary greatly across the campus, from as low as 10:1 for advanced students in some majors to as high as 640:1 for students in the School of Business. Taking the overall undergraduate student population and the total number of employees with designated advising functions, the ratio averages approximately 180:1.   However, this number is misleading in that it does not account for the percentage of time individuals devote to advising functions. If the issue of full time equivalency of advisors is considered, an estimated ratio of 300:1 is a reasonable target. As a result, student access to advisors is very uneven, and in many cases students do not see advisors on a regular basis.

We need to increase student access to advisors by significantly increasing the number of advisors and by making advisors available in a variety of venues, both centrally and within the colleges/schools. We must train and employ faculty and peer advisors to assist effectively in the advising process and require that students consult regularly with advisors. Further, we need improved advising tools, such as web-based planning tools, that allow the advising process to more efficient and effective.

As the university implements improvements to the registration calendar and mandatory advising requirements, students will be forced to look at both their current semester's courses and their on-going program concurrently, allowing them to make better choices and to keep on target with graduation goals. For example, students who are warned through the Early Academic Assessment (EAA) system that they are failing a class during Week 7 of the semester will be on schedule to see their advisors for registration advising during Weeks 8-11. If students choose to

drop classes, they will do so by Week 10 and know to re-enroll in that class during Week-11 registration.

POLICY STATEMENT: Advising is a broad term that refers to a range of academic and social support services to ensure that students develop their abilities as productive university students and graduates, make informed career choices, address deficiencies and solve problems, and make timely progress toward their degrees. The university assumes a highly level of responsibility in assuring that all students receive active and ongoing advising that assists them in making appropriate choices to successfully achieve their academic goals.

Goals:

1. Have colleges/departments assess the needs of their own students for advising.
2. Assess the need for additional advisers at the university level.
3. Examine models for non-traditional advising (e.g., online)
4. Require mandatory advising for all FTIACS.
5. Develop a system to provide all students with appropriate advising at all levels.

ACTION	ASSESSMENT	Permanent	One-Time	Total	Comments
Increase the number of advisors available to students in the colleges/schools and in the University Advising Center, as appropriate, reducing maximum ratios from about 600:1 to 300:1	• Improved advising effectiveness • More students seeking advisement • Retention	$925,000	$0	$925,000	$2.9 M over 3 years
Provide appropriate incentives to faculty, such as course buy-outs, professional develop opportunities, etc., to engage in advising-related activities and provide leadership in their departments	• More students seeking advisement • Retention	$250,000	$0	$250,000	
Develop enhanced advising tools, including electronic handbooks, on-line advising capabilities, and improved websites	• Improved advising effectiveness • More students seeking advisement • Retention	$0	$100,000	$100,000	

Pilot a project in which students will need to get a PIN number from an advisor in order to register, using this year's first-year students as they move to their second year	• Students will register for fall before leaving for the summer	$0	$30,000	$30,000	

Part III: Creating a Culture of Shared Academic Responsibility – Undergraduate Teaching

It is crucial to foster an environment that teaches students explicitly to take responsibility for their own success and supports them in making good academic decisions. *Students must be expected to commit to their own success.* Some of Wayne State's retention problems are driven by a culture that caters too much to students' demands outside school; we allow students to devalue their own education and sabotage their own success.

Culture change is also an issue for faculty members and administrators. We must adopt a university commitment and sense of urgency among all constituencies that increased student success is *everyone's responsibility* and is of the *highest priority*. Because of the many demands to fulfill the University's important research mission, good teaching—particularly good undergraduate teaching—and effective undergraduate advising are not stressed or rewarded with the emphasis that they deserve in the evaluation of faculty members. To achieve significant increases in student success and retention, faculty members should make these goals a high priority, and to encourage this, administrators must cultivate an atmosphere in which undergraduate teaching gains stronger recognition as a core activity of our mission as an urban university. Schools and colleges should seek ways to reward excellence in retention efforts and undergraduate teaching, including their roles as factors in the faculty member's promotion and tenure review.

POLICY STATEMENT: Wayne State University will become a university that has high expectations for student success and assumes the responsibility to teach students how to be successful while supporting and nurturing them in ways that help them reach their potential as learners.

Goals:

1. Encourage instructors to *require* attendance in general education and introductory-level classes, because attendance has been proven to enhance success. Provide appropriate technology and teaching/student assistant support to faculty.
2. Implement and fully support best practices in the use of student outcomes assessment to enhance learning.
3. Encourage students to take *15 credits per semester* so that they can graduate in four years, and so that they will see school as their priority.

4. Investigate different models for tuition, such as plateau-type tuition structure and implement as appropriate.
5. Limit the number of add/drop days at the beginning of semesters so that students will not enter classes prohibitively late.
6. Find models to reward excellent undergraduate teaching in a meaningful way.

ACTION	ASSESSMENT	Permanent	One-Time	Total
Increase the deployment of Personal Response System technology and provide increased training opportunities for faculty to facilitate taking attendance in large classes	• Improved student achievement • Retention	$0	$100,000	$100,000
Engage outside nationally-known consultants to review the Office for Teaching and Learning and the university's support for enhancing teaching and learning	• Enhanced support for teaching and learning development • Improved student success • Enhanced support for teaching and learning development	$0	$50,000	$50,000
Expand and enhance support for teaching and learning development on the campus, including expanding the impact of the Office for Teaching and Learning, and improved support for the effective use of technology in teaching and learning	• Increased faculty participation in OTL activities • Enhanced use of technology in courses	$250,000	$0	$250,000
Communication: use various media (posters, websites) to communicate new expectations to students	• Student surveys/focus groups to assess awareness	$0	$150,000	$150,000

Part IV: Enhancing Readiness for Success

Many students enter Wayne State under-prepared for the demands of college and with the need to develop skills in time management, effective study habits, written/oral communication, and qualitative/quantitative reasoning. Students must learn to inventory and monitor their own skills and seek assistance as needed to increase their success with college-level classes.

One critical issue for readiness is whether Wayne State admissions standards are appropriate. For the purposes of the current Retention Implementation Task Force's work, the issue of admissions standards was "tabled" so the group could focus on what we can do to make our current student body more successful. Recently, a Student Success Task Force completed a study and submitted reports on undergraduate admissions and transfer that include analysis and recommendations. It is strongly recommended that these reports be reviewed by the university community and acted upon shortly after the completion of the current implementation effort.

POLICY STATEMENT: Wayne State is a university that prides itself in being accessible to students who might not otherwise have access to a high quality research university. Wayne State's admission processes and standards should realistically assess whether students have a sufficient background to succeed and in those cases where deficiencies exist, direct students to appropriate remedial resources, either at Wayne State or other institutions such as community colleges. At the same time, we must ensure that students who we admit are provided the support necessary to achieve their goals.

Goals:

1. All students who have academic deficits will seek assistance and will be served.
2. Provide skill assessments for all students at appropriate points in their academic careers.
3. Increase student readiness for college via iStart, add-on units within general education classes to address readiness issues (possibly for credit), and/or transfer student orientation.
4. Increase the use of peer mentoring to aid students in college success.

ACTION	ASSESSMENT	Permanent	One-Time	Total
Increase funding to Academic Success Center and Academic Pathways for Excellence to support underprepared students (increase staffing, tutoring/supplemental instruction, and related support)	• Number of students served • Retention	$250,000	$0	$250,000
Enhance and expand orientation programs to better prepare students for college-level work	• Number of students served • Retention	$80,000	$0	$80,000

| Incorporate enhanced peer mentoring into orientation programs | • Number of students served
• Retention | $0 | $50,000 | $50,000 |

Part V: Enhancing Learning Communities and First-Year Experience

The first year of college is a critical time for transition. Students who are new to university life, whether traditional- or non-traditional age, as well as first-time or transfer students, experience transition issues. These issues can affect their initial academic success, and if they struggle during the first year, it is well known that they are at high risk to drop out.

The existing learning community program and specific orientation courses within colleges and schools currently serve this purpose of providing a supportive environment for the transition to successful college life. National research shows that first-year experience programs substantially improve student success and retention rates. Our data show that these efforts at WSU have been successful as well. However, our current programs depend on the students' choices of major or their self-selection into existing learning community options; many students are undeclared for the major or not attracted to the foci of existing learning community options. This means that we have groups of students who do not have this experience and may be more at risk because of it.

POLICY STATEMENT: The university must guarantee that all students have a first-year experience designed to enhance their likelihood of success. We should build on our existing strengths in this area and expand programming to cover all students, first-time and transfers.

Goals:

1. Charge a faculty, administrative, and student task force to study our current programs and to recommend enhancements that will meet the goal of all students being supported with the appropriate first-year experience.
2. Based on the review, expand existing programming as soon as possible and fully implement new programming as indicated, by Fall, 2012.

ACTION	ASSESSMENT	Permanent	One-Time	Total
Develop appropriate first-year programming for all incoming students, both first-time and transfers	• Fully-developed plan by May, 2011 • Expand existing programming by Fall, 2011 • Fully implement new programs by Fall, 2011 to cover all students • Student success and retention	$150,000	$150,000	$300,000

Part VI: Increasing Financial Support for Students

Data on retention nationally and at Wayne State reflect that finances play a central role in students' decisions about which institutions to attend and about their persistence to degree. Deciding on a college or university is a value proposition that involves many factors, including cost of education, perceived value of the education, and satisfaction with the institution. Persistence is very much affected by students' academic preparation and level of academic progress, but those issues loom large for individuals and families in the face of financial challenges.

Wayne State University has focused on both merit- and need-based financial aid, in appropriate proportions to attract high-potential students to Wayne State and to assist them in completing their degrees. Recently, the university initiated an "Equity Packaging" model for financial aid that guaranteed incoming students sufficient grant, work-study, and other institutional support beyond their federally-determined expected family contribution to cover the entire expected cost of tuition and fees without loans. This has proven to be an excellent recruiting tool and has assisted many students in continuing their studies. Further, Wayne State has developed a highly competitive program of awards to high-potential prospective students, including the Presidential Scholars (tuition and fee scholarship) and the Wayne State Scholars (next level for those invited to Scholars Day recruitment events), which has allowed us to attract excellent students who are highly likely to complete their degrees at Wayne State.

Financial aid policies have been put into place that provide incentives to encourage and enhance student achievement and success. Limited premiums are offered to students who receive need-based aid based on grades. Those achieving higher grades and making satisfactory academic progress may be eligible for increased grant aid in their need-based packages. Such policies encourage persistence and higher achievement.

POLICY STATEMENT: Wayne State University will enhance and expand its merit- and need-based financial aid programs to attract increased numbers of high-potential students and will establish financial aid policies that increase student retention and success.

Goals:

1. Enhance merit aid by increasing the values and number of Presidential Scholarships and Wayne State Scholarships.
2. Enhance need-based aid by increasing the funding for the equity packaging model and expanding the scope of policies to enhance retention and success.

ACTION	ASSESSMENT	Permanent	One-Time	Total	Comments
Increase value and number of Presidential Scholarships from 207 to 522	• Number of Presidential Scholarships awarded	$800,000	$0	$800,000	$2.4 M over 3 years

	• Retention of Presidential Scholars • 4-year graduation rate of Presidential Scholars • Number of Wayne State Scholarships awarded				
Increase value and number of Wayne State Scholarships from 488 to 870	• Retention of Wayne State Scholars • 4-year graduation rate of Wayne State Scholars	$500,000	$0	$500,000	$1.5 M over 3 years
Increase funding for Equity Packaging Model	• Increased retention • Longitudinal monitoring of grades and credit hours earned	$1,800,000	$0	$1,800,000	

PROJECTED RETENTION COMMITTEE IMPLEMENTATION COSTS
Winter 2011

Category	Permanent	One-Time	Total	Comments
I. Enhancing Curriculum - Support for General Education				
General Education Fellows	$100,000	$0	$100,000	
Faculty member to serve as Retention Coordinator	$0	$500,000	$500,000	$500K over 5 years
Additional tutors and support programs	$120,000	$0	$120,000	
II. Increasing Academic Support – Advising				
Increase the number of advisors (Student to advisor ratio drops from 600:1 to 300:1)	$925,000	$0	$925,000	$2.9M over 3 years
Provide appropriate incentives to faculty, such as course buy-outs, professional develop opportunities, etc., to engage in advising-related activities and provide leadership	$250,000	$0	$250,000	
Enhance tools for advising	$0	$100,000	$100,000	
Develop PIN technology for advisors	$0	$30,000	$30,000	

Category	Permanent	One-Time	Total	Comments
III. Creating a Culture of Shared Academic Responsibility - Undergraduate Teaching				
Increase the deployment of Personal Response System technology and provide increased training opportunities for faculty to facilitate taking attendance in large classes	$0	$100,000	$100,000	
Engage outside nationally-known consultants to review the Office for Teaching and Learning and the university's support for enhancing teaching and learning	$0	$50,000	$50,000	
Expand and enhance support for teaching and learning development on the campus	$250,000	$0	$250,000	
Enhance Communication to express expectations of students	$0	$100,000	$100,000	
IV. Enhancing Readiness for Success Assist Academically Challenged Students				
Enhancements to Academic Success Center and Academic Pathways for Excellence	$250,000	$0	$250,000	
Enhance Programs & Orientation Programs Add Peer mentoring program	$80,000	$0	$80,000	
	$0	$50,000	$50,000	

Category	Permanent	One-Time	Total	Comments
V. Enhancing Learning Communities and First-Year Experience				
Develop Appropriate First Year Programming for all Incoming Students, both first-time and transfers	$150,000	$150,000	$300,000	
VI. Increased Financial Support for Students Enhance Merit Financial Aid				
Increase value and number of Presidential Scholarships from 207 to 522	$800,000	$0	$800,000	$2.4 M over 3 years
Increase value and number of Wayne State Scholarships from 488 to 870	$500,000	$0	$500,000	$1.5 M over 3 years
Enhance Need Based Financial Aid Increase Funding for Equity Packaging Model	$1,800,000	$0	$1,800,000	
GRAND TOTAL	**$5,225,000**	**$1,080,000**	**$6,305,000**	