

**Council on Retention and Graduation**  
**Meeting Minutes**

March 12, 2009

UC 115

Presiding: Scott Evenbeck

**Present:** Mary Jane Brown, Cathy Buyarski, Craig Campbell, Judy Carley, Lauren Chism, Scott Evenbeck, Mary Fisher, Chris Foley, Mikki Jeschke, Kathy Johnson, Andrew Klein, Nancy Lamm, Sandra Lemons, Amy Maldi, Susan Montgomery, Gary Pike, Fred Rees, Ingrid Ritchie, Frank Ross, Jennifer Schott, Kate Thedwall, Regina Turner, Rick Ward, Jeff Watt, Gayle Williams

**Regrets:** Sarah Baker, Robert Bringle, Ken Durgans, Sara Hook, Doug Lees, Ted Mullen, David Sabol, Pratibha Varma-Nelson, Marianne Wokeck, and Oner Yurtseven

**Guests:** Zephia Bryant (for Ken Durgans), John Kremer, Sheila Morris-Watson (for Sara Hook), Ken Wendeln

1. Evenbeck welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introductions were made.
2. Assignment Completion and Attendance as Predictors of Success:  
Ken Wendeln and John Kremer gave PowerPoint presentations and distributed handouts. They explained how their research developed. Their research has made a real difference in their departments and was well received at a national conference. Wendeln explained that everyone has a share of whether a student succeeds. He reviewed data for gateway courses and DFWs. In fall 2008, there was a 2% decline from the previous fall. There are a couple of reasons for this. There has been an increase in the full-time, first-time cohort, which has a much lower DFW rate compared to other students. They are still analyzing this. The other reason is a decline in both populations. The campus does a lot for the cohort; we do not do a lot for other students. Wendeln looked at some of the departments and DFW rates. He encouraged council members to take this information back their own departments. There are many factors going on in the classroom, and there are institutional factors as well. Wendeln and Kremer are working on a model about student motivation. Kremer told how some course grades went up, but DFW rates did not change. He shared data from his research with the group. DFW students fall into four groups: nonattenders, noncompliers, low performers, and dropouts. Dropouts were the lowest performing group and made up about 10% of the class. Kremer discussed severe stress and how it affects students. The largest group of students who did not pass the class was noncompliers. He reviewed this group. Kremer discussed the homework (or assignment) factor. He explained the transition of students moving from high school to college and the differences in homework. Kremer found that 50% of high school students do less than four hours of homework per week while college students are expected to do 20 hours of homework per week (if they are taking four classes). Faculty should know the first week who is having trouble with homework. Kremer reviewed the nonattenders, who are very difficult to contact. On the first day of classes, all students expected that they would complete the course. Kremer said the DFW students could be predicted by looking at class attendance and homework in the first three weeks of classes. Low performers do everything,

but still do not pass the tests. Kremer discussed study habits of students. Many students think they have studied if they have read the book and done nothing else. He explained how homework predicts students passing the course. He also discussed the practice of passing students and the pressure on high school teachers. Some students have high expectations and low motivation; many will be very disappointed in the first weeks of classes. These students have a very low tolerance for perseverance. They blame themselves or they blame the course; they do not think they can change their habits and get it done. Dropouts will come back. We already know what to do for low performers. We have found that mentors working with noncompliers works very well. We do not know what to do for nonattenders. Most nonattenders have chronically bad academic habits. Kremer discussed how long it takes to develop different habits. He told about his experience of trying to develop the habit of walking for his health. He discussed how to engage and support students, administrative withdrawals, and working with mentors. Thedwall told about a new flag system they have. The new system will cover how students perform with homework assignments at the beginning of the semester. Wendeln told about one class he taught. Any student who struggled on the first exam had to go to him with a plan on how they would improve. He heard of a clever idea at a conference. Another institution had an early warning system where they sent warning postcards to students' addresses on record, which tended to be home addresses. The institution found the students received a lot of support from their families (home) when those postcards went out. This would get the attention of the noncompliers. Wendeln said there are unintended consequences of the campus enrollment shaping effort. For example, we have more non-English speakers. Is there a good support system for these students? There was discussion about this issue. Evenbeck believes we need to get the word out about how critical homework is. Our campus can make a difference in figuring out how to do homework and an early warning system. Thedwall asked everyone to encourage faculty to attend the gateway programs and meetings. Williams gave an update on administrative withdrawals.

3. 21 Club Data:

Williams explained how the 21 Club came about. One year, when a group was discussing retention, they realized that retaining 21 students would increase the campus retention rate by one percent. They decided to survey students to find out who they thought made a difference, such as faculty, advisors, staff, etc. The 21 Club has become an annual survey. Students receive nothing for participating in the survey. Williams explained how the survey is administered. Ross reported on the number of people who were nominated in the first year of the survey. He discussed emerging trends in the survey and additional questions that have been added. Williams discussed some of the nominations this year; one advisor received 10 or 11 nominations, and a faculty member received 11 or 12 nominations. Some people are nominated year after year. Thedwall said she would like the nominees' names for the University College Web site. Foley said this would be great information to have for presentations.

4. GPA 1.0 Dismissals:

Evenbeck reminded the council of the University College policy for dismissals. In the past, no student was ever dismissed after the first semester, but now students are dismissed if their GPA is below a 1.0. Pike thanked people who helped with his research: Janice Childress,

Michele Hansen, and Kathy Burton. Pike used a PowerPoint presentation to review his analysis of the 1.0 dismissals. Pike said the research might give insights, but probably would not give a fundamental conclusion. Pike reported that Dean Sukhatme wanted to know if we could identify this at-risk group. What are the characteristics of dismissed students? Can we create a model of those likely to be dismissed? Pike said he used logistic regression in his research. He reviewed the criteria for a good model, especially the ability to predict at least 90% of the at-risk students and few false positives. Pike reviewed his analysis. Gender is significant; females are less likely to be dismissed. Some of the students who are at risk are bright kids who did not apply themselves. This is an issue of motivation. One factor that stands out is being eligible for Twenty-first Century Scholars. It is a combination of being low income and first generation. Pike reviewed other factors in his study and discussed his models. He believes it goes back to what Kremer and Wendeln were saying—if you are unable to tell ahead of time, you need to monitor students' performance to know who is in trouble. Pike did his study independent of their analysis. He reviewed his conclusions. Waiting until week four, five, or six is too late. One problem is reaching students who never attend class. Pike told about a pathfinders program at Mississippi State; they now have a 10% higher retention rate. He also told about a program at the University of Arizona. Buyarski discussed students who are administratively withdrawn. Some of these students are not here, and if they are not attending, they are disengaged from campus completely. She gave a brief update on the early warning system. There was discussion about the efforts of the campus to get this system operating effectively.

5. Updated Retention Action Team Report:

Ward used a PowerPoint presentation and handout to update the council on the Retention Action Team final report. He reviewed the recommendations that were made by the action team and gave a progress report on each item. We are making a difference, particularly in the first part of the pipeline, but we are not there yet. Evenbeck reported that Dean Sukhatme has appointed a small group of deans to look at the pipeline. It will be good to have their attention focused on this work. The work of Ward's action team will be helpful to the deans.

6. Task Force Reports:

Ross gave an update on the task force for sophomores. They are working with Kathy Burton to get data. Ross distributed handouts about sophomores. He discussed how we can track students who do not reenroll. What we do not know is why students leave. The task force will survey schools to find out what they do to serve sophomores. One of the national trends is sophomore seminars and career strategies for second-year students. Buyarski gave an update on the task force for transfer students. She told about offsite transfer hubs that some institutions are using.

7. Other Business:

Buyarski announced that Paul Gore (University of Utah), a national expert on the impact of advising and career interventions on student success and retention, is coming to campus on April 16. The council will be invited to hear his presentation. Williams announced that Bonita Jacobs (University of North Texas), a national expert on transfer students and financial literacy, is coming to campus on April 21–22. Ross reminded everyone that Ishmael Beah would be giving his presentation later in the day. Evenbeck reminded everyone that the

retention conference was March 13; the focus of the conference is on transfer students and veteran students.

8. The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:  
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