

WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY

February 2008 Survey Results
Conducted by the
President's Committee
on
Undergraduate Retention

Retention
Committee
Report
May 2008

Committee on Undergraduate Retention: Recommendations Survey

College:	Frequency	Percent
Business Administration	18	4.4
Education	48	11.8
Engineering	19	4.7
Fine, Performing & Communication Arts	25	6.2
Graduate School	1	0.2
Law	2	0.5
Liberal Arts & Sciences	196	48.3
Library & Information Science	5	1.2
Medicine	34	8.4
Nursing	13	3.2
Pharmacy & Health Sciences	25	6.2
Social Work	8	2.0
(Missing)	(12)	(3.0)
Total	394/406	100.0

Total Number of Respondents = 406

Status:	Frequency	Percent
Adjunct	18	4.4
Non-tenure track	81	20.0
Tenure Track	80	19.7
Tenured	218	53.7
(Missing)	(9)	(2.2)
Total	397/406	100.0

Rank:	Frequency	Percent
Assistant Professor	98	24.1
Associate Professor	112	27.6
Full Professor	120	29.6
Instructor	19	4.7
Lecturer	42	10.3
Graduate Teaching Assistant	1	0.2
(Missing)	(14)	(3.4)
Total	392/406	100.0

Full or Part Time:	Frequency	Percent
Part-time	20	4.9
Full Time	377	92.9
(Missing)	(9)	(2.2)
Total	397/406	100.0

Gender:	Frequency	Percent
Man	213	52.5
Woman	176	43.3
(Missing)	(17)	(4.2)
Total	389/406	100.0

Average Number of Years at WSU = 14.7(SD = 11.1, median = 12, range = 0 - 45).

Average Number of Years Since Highest Degree = 19.9 (SD = 12.0, median = 20, range = 0 - 52).

Have you taught an undergraduate course in the past 3 years? Yes (73.9%)

Have you taught a 1000-level course in the past 3 years? Yes (24.9%)

Have you ever taught a remedial course at WSU? Yes (9.9%)

Committee on Undergraduate Retention: Recommendations Survey Faculty Responses

The University Retention Advisory Committee and the University Retention Liaison Committee have developed this survey to poll the faculty of Wayne State University regarding our recommendations to retain students and promote their success. We believe that the faculty members have unique insight into the problems of student retention and that solutions must involve the collective perspectives and efforts of the faculty. The survey contains recommendations and ideas gleaned from the volunteer committee members as well as focus groups conducted across campus with our faculty peers. Additionally, we have included the option of submitting open-ended comments at the end of the survey. We will incorporate the results of this survey into a final report submitted to the President and the Provost.

Recommendation 1. Make student retention a priority in the institutional and academic culture at WSU.

The WSU administration is increasingly concerned about retention of undergraduates. However, it seems that most faculty, staff and students are not generally aware of the retention problem at WSU, nor are they aware of research on how to retain students. Therefore, information needs to be shared and retention efforts prominent and sustained.

	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Create a highly visible, central office in which retention activities are tracked and coordinated across academic and student affairs.	4.2%	7.6%	10.4%	17.7%	38.8%	21.3%
Knowledge from successful but fractionated efforts to improve retention across the campus should be shared.	2.6%	0.3%	0.9%	7.2%	52.7%	36.3%

Recommendation 2. Facilitate the use of student retention data for self-assessment by units/departments.

Powerful tools for evaluating and tracking retention outcomes are now available at WSU; however, few academic departments that serve undergraduates use these tools. Increased used of available retention data would allow departments to:

- make informed choices that are appropriate and acceptable to the academic culture of the unit
- focus added resources on courses that draw a high proportion of high-risk students
- track retention outcomes among their students
- and enhance collaboration with special programs on campus

	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
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Provide training and incentives for departments to examine their own student retention data.	1.7%	5.7%	3.1%	13.9%	51.3%	24.4%
Each department should have its own retention/assessment coordinators, so that efforts reflect the priorities and academic cultures of the individual units.	1.1%	9.3%	17.8%	22.1%	30.0%	19.6%
Each department should determine its own criteria for assessment of student retention outcomes.	1.4%	6.2%	12.7%	18.6%	34.6%	26.5%

Recommendation 3. Develop and enhance retention programs specifically designed for low-income and working students.

Research shows that low-income students are often limited in the extent to which they can participate in retention resources available to them due to (a) unawareness of services available, (b) services are not offered at times that are convenient for them, (c) discomfort with possible stigmatization.

	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Create work-study learning communities to motivate students to stay in school by working to learn and learning to work in their areas of interest.	2.5%	4.2%	6.8%	13.8%	44.9%	27.7%
Monitor access to after-work hours resources.	8.0%	4.3%	5.4%	22.0%	40.9%	19.4%

Recommendation 4. Provide support and incentives to increase faculty involvement with undergraduates.

Research universities often struggle with the balance of teaching and research missions. Research indicates that faculty reward systems for successful teaching and mentoring of students helps increase the retention of those students.

	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Faculty engagement in retention efforts is weak because resources and rewards for improving undergraduate success are weak.	5.3%	7.3%	10.6%	17.3%	29.6%	29.9%

Offer teaching reductions and resources to faculty for mentoring learning communities, advising, and developing special programs to enhance retention.	2.3%	5.1%	7.9%	10.2%	48.2%	26.3%
Revise the University tenure, promotion, and merit criteria to reward faculty investment in student retention.	1.7%	18.6%	18.1%	14.7%	25.7%	21.2%
Require all faculty (full-time and part-time) to keep regular office hours.	2.0%	9.1%	11.3%	11.0%	38.5%	28.0%
Offer faculty seminars and special lectures at the dormitories.	6.2%	9.0%	13.8%	31.6%	33.1%	6.2%
Form grant-writing committees among faculty to fund or enhance funding for new programs, such as follow-up interventions, a college preparatory institute, high-school teacher outreach seminars, etc.	6.2%	7.9%	10.4%	26.4%	40.4%	8.7%
Encourage greater interactions between faculty and students outside of the classroom.	1.7%	2.8%	10.1%	25.0%	46.3%	14.0%
I would become involved in faculty mentoring or advising programs, if provided with sufficient resources to do so.	2.0%	5.4%	10.1%	19.2%	44.2%	19.2%

Recommendation 5. Enhance orientation programs for all new WSU undergraduates.

At present, freshmen and transfer student orientation activities do not extend beyond the one-day, pre-registration event. Additionally, the drop in retention rate from the first to the second year is substantial (e.g., an additional 13.6%) versus 8.2% at other Michigan Public Universities.

	No opinio n	Strong ly Disagr ee	Disagr ee	Neithe r agree nor disagr ee	Agree	Strong ly Agree
Extend orientation activities throughout the first year of study at WSU.	3.4%	2.0%	6.5%	16.1%	49.6%	22.5%
Increase the number of new-student success courses, interest groups, and learning communities.	2.6%	2.3%	7.1%	19.7%	50.9%	17.4%
Orientation programs should include explicit expectations for attendance and classroom decorum; policies for dropping courses; reasonable work-to-course-load ratios; academic integrity; explanations of prerequisites, course rotations, course schedule planning, and time management.	0.6%	1.1%	0.0%	4.5%	34.7%	59.0%
Offer second-year (transitional) programs to facilitate the transition to independence in college life.	4.9%	2.9%	5.4%	20.6%	46.0%	20.3%
Enhance marketing and recruiting for special services (i.e., academic success resources).	4.8%	4.5%	3.9%	22.0%	45.4%	19.4%

Make all faculty aware of special retention services for students.

0.8% 1.4% 1.1% 6.5% 53.7% 36.4%

Recommendation 6. Enhance academic preparedness assessments.

Early identification of academic needs and advising appropriate to those needs are essential to improve retention. Currently, students may attend orientation and register for courses without having completed placement exams in math and English, and they may delay the placement exams until they plan to register for math or English. Thus, many students proceed through advanced courses in the degree program without having mastered basic competencies. This policy is a high-probability scenario for failure.

	<i>No opinio n</i>	<i>Strong ly Disagr ee</i>	<i>Disagr ee</i>	<i>Neithe r agree nor disagr ee</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strong ly Agree</i>
Placement exams for math and English should be completed before registering for courses.	1.4%	0.8%	0.8%	6.7%	35.9%	54.3%
Enhance diagnostic evaluations for students who test into remedial courses (i.e., Math or English). Provide comprehensive evaluations and proactive planning to ensure that students have adequate preparation and support to pass remedial-level courses.	2.0%	2.0%	1.7%	7.6%	40.4%	46.3%
Allocate resources for administration and staff to conduct research on math and English readiness skills among entering new students.	1.7%	6.5%	4.5%	17.2%	40.0%	30.1%

Recommendation 7. Enforce early completion of competency requirements.

Early completion of competency requirements will help to ensure that students are prepared for advanced-level courses, and it will eliminate the potential for students to be stuck at the end of the degree program, unable to complete the basic competency requirements.

	<i>No opinio n</i>	<i>Strong ly Disagr ee</i>	<i>Disagr ee</i>	<i>Neithe r agree nor disagr ee</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strong ly Agree</i>
Require all students to complete basic competencies in the freshman and sophomore years, unless specific program requirements dictate otherwise.	2.3%	0.8%	3.1%	8.5%	32.7%	52.7%
Consistently enforce the 60-credit rule on declaring a major.	7.4%	0.8%	3.7%	18.4%	31.2%	38.5%

Recommendation 8. Enhance monitoring and success in entry-level courses.

Entry-level (i.e., 1000-level) introductory courses frequently have low attendance and high failure rates. WSU should focus on improving success skills in these courses, which form the foundation of students’ skills and attitudes about college.

	<i>No opinio n</i>	<i>Strong ly Disagr ee</i>	<i>Disagr ee</i>	<i>Neithe r agree nor disagr ee</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strong ly Agree</i>
Identify “gatekeeping” introductory courses that draw high rates of at-risk students: Provide and prioritize targeted resources to enhance success (e.g., learning modules, supplemental instruction, learning communities) for these courses.	5.6%	2.8%	6.8%	20.3%	39.5%	24.9%
Reduce class sizes for “gatekeeping” introductory courses.	3.4%	1.7%	5.9%	15.9%	43.1%	30.0%
Take attendance in entry-level courses to trigger early-warning advising and follow up.	1.7%	3.7%	8.2%	13.0%	38.0%	35.5%

Recommendation 9. Enforce Early Academic Assessment (EAA) policy.

Follow-up data at WSU indicate that EAA makes significant differences in student success (e.g., 82% of students given EAA report that they sought help, and those students who sought help earned higher grades than those who did not). One central problem is that only one quarter of instructors submit EAA reports, although it is theoretically mandatory to do so in 1000-level courses.

	<i>No opinio n</i>	<i>Strong ly Disagr ee</i>	<i>Disagr ee</i>	<i>Neithe r agree nor disagr ee</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strong ly Agree</i>
Enforce the policy of mandatory EAA reports in all 1000- and 2000-level courses.	5.3%	3.4%	5.1%	16.6%	36.8%	32.9%
Provide adequate support for faculty responsible for EAA reporting (i.e., training and/or resources).	4.5%	2.0%	3.1%	15.8%	42.5%	32.1%

Recommendation 10. Establish earlier cutoff dates for drop/add.

Earlier cutoff dates for dropping and adding courses will encourage students to make realistic and meaningful choices about their courses.

	<i>No opinio n</i>	<i>Strong ly Disagr ee</i>	<i>Disagr ee</i>	<i>Neithe r agree nor disagr ee</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strong ly Agree</i>

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Require that students register by the end of the first week of classes; exceptions should be approved by the instructor.	0.8%	0.8%	4.5%	8.5%	33.0%	52.4%
Establish an earlier final date for withdrawal (currently, it is the last day of classes).	2.0%	3.1%	8.1%	9.3%	27.8%	49.7%

Recommendation 11. Enhance the culture of student responsibility for success.

Students are most likely to persist in settings that expect them to succeed and expect them to take responsibility for their progress (Tinto, 2003). In addition to the recommendations expanding student involvement in orientation, academic preparedness assessments, early completion of competency requirements, and raising explicit expectations for attendance and decorum, WSU should:

	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Require that all students complete and maintain a plan of work on line.	4.8%	3.1%	11.8%	20.5%	39.9%	19.9%
Require that all students complete annual or biannual self-assessments on the web. Include links to appropriate resources and follow through on requests for help.	4.8%	4.8%	14.2%	22.7%	39.1%	14.4%
Require all students to visit Career Planning and Placement services at least once during their first two years of college.	3.4%	5.4%	14.4%	22.0%	32.5%	22.3%

Recommendation 12. Initiate an attrition follow-up program.

University data collection should include information regarding reasons for stop-drop, whether students transferred to other institutions (and if so, where), and inquiries about the student’s future education plans.

	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Contact students who stopped out or dropped out (especially those with good GPAs).	1.1%	2.2%	5.6%	4.2%	40.7%	46.1%

Recommendation 13. Enhance “provisional admissions” programs for at-risk students.

Tighten and enhance monitoring of at-risk students, including more rigorous expectations of student commitment to their own success.

	<i>No opinio n</i>	<i>Strong ly Disagr ee</i>	<i>Disagr ee</i>	<i>Neithe r agree nor disagr ee</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strong ly Agree</i>
Require that all academically at-risk students (i.e., students not meeting regular admissions criteria) be actively affiliated with an intensive special-admissions program.	3.4%	2.8%	1.4%	11.8%	42.6%	38.1%
Require at-risk students to make student-success contracts that include attendance criteria, mandatory contact with advising, and participation in early-warning systems and tutoring.	2.5%	3.1%	3.4%	12.6%	41.0%	37.4%
Offer non-matriculant status for all students who do not meet regular admissions criteria and/or who require remedial course work below the level offered by WSU. (Non-matriculant status means that the student is not officially enrolled in a degree program.)	4.8%	6.7%	9.8%	20.2%	33.3%	25.2%
Require all students who do not meet regular admissions criteria to undergo a comprehensive evaluation of their college readiness.	2.3%	2.5%	3.4%	11.3%	34.6%	45.9%

Recommendation 14. Monitor admissions standards.

Our admissions policies appear to evoke some controversy of opinion among the faculty.

Currently, our admissions policies are well below those reported by ACT as “open admissions” universities and below those of our “sister” schools in the Great Cities’ Universities Network (formerly the “Urban 13”). Our retention rate among students at risk in this nature is exceedingly poor. For example, the Fall 2005 enrollment at WSU included approximately 32% students who did not meet our regular minimum admissions criteria (ACT Composite 21 or High School GPA > 2.75). At the lowest end of admissions, approximately 12% of the enrollment was admitted to WSU with very low indicators of college readiness (e.g., ACT ≤ 15 or missing and High School GPA < 2.5); only one in four of those students were retained at the sophomore year (Fall 2007). Some faculty members believe that our mission compels us to admit students regardless of preparation for college, whereas others believe that some minimum criteria for admission to WSU should be adopted.

	<i>No opinio n</i>	<i>Strong ly Disagr ee</i>	<i>Disagr ee</i>	<i>Neithe r agree nor disagr ee</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strong ly Agree</i>
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WSU should not encourage students with very low indicators of college readiness to enroll at WSU—perhaps wasting their opportunities for financial aid—before they are reasonably ready to succeed.	0.8%	2.5%	5.6%	5.9%	27.0%	58.0%
WSU should focus our resources and efforts on students with a realistic probability of succeeding in college by reducing the number of students admitted with very low readiness for college (e.g., ACT Composite ≤ 15 and High School GPA < 2.5).	1.4%	2.8%	7.1%	5.9%	26.3%	56.5%
WSU should create a college preparatory institute on campus to serve students with very low college readiness separately from the general student population.	3.9%	15.4%	11.0%	16.6%	26.7%	26.4%
If WSU chooses to maintain an admissions policy that enrolls a large proportion of students with needs for remedial-level (pre-1000-level courses) education, we should provide resources in proportion to that need.	2.0%	6.5%	2.8%	8.2%	31.4%	49.2%

Recommendation 15. Address the need for expert teaching of remedial-level courses.

Our teaching resources for remedial education are not adequate to meet the current demand.

	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Hire faculty with expertise and interest in teaching remedial-level courses in proportion to the number of students needing such services.	1.1%	12.6%	9.6%	16.6%	36.5%	23.6%
Most of the WSU faculty do not have expertise in teaching at the remedial level and are understandably reluctant to do so.	6.2%	2.0%	5.4%	16.4%	39.4%	30.6%
Personally, I have interest and expertise in teaching remedial-level courses at WSU. I would teach pre-1000-level courses in my area if asked to do so.	6.7%	37.5%	22.7%	14.8%	12.9%	5.3%
WSU should not offer courses that cover pre-remedial-level skills and content (i.e., below 0900-level, college entry-level) courses. Community colleges can best serve our pre-remedial needs.	3.7%	6.5%	14.1%	16.6%	23.1%	36.1%

Recommendation 16. Enhance community outreach to high schools / high school teachers.

	<i>No opinio n</i>	<i>Strong ly Disagr ee</i>	<i>Disagr ee</i>	<i>Neithe r agree nor disagr ee</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strong ly Agree</i>
Increase communication with high school teachers and community colleges regarding standards for incoming freshman, as well as the larger issue of college readiness.	0.8%	1.7%	8.9%	44.3%	44.3%	0.0%

Recommendation 17. Enhance Advising.

According to the Pell Institute (2007), proactive and “intrusive” advising is a highly effective method to improve retention.

	<i>No opinio n</i>	<i>Strong ly Disagr ee</i>	<i>Disagr ee</i>	<i>Neithe r agree nor disagr ee</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strong ly Agree</i>
Implement an on-line degree audit available to students, faculty, and advising.	10.7%	2.0%	2.8%	12.6%	44.4%	27.5%
Assign all students to a specific advisor when they are admitted to WSU.	1.7%	1.1%	3.7%	11.3%	44.2%	38.0%
Increase advising staff (at the University, College, and Department levels).	3.4%	2.8%	5.1%	13.9%	39.1%	35.7%
Support faculty involvement in advising by providing training and resource materials for those who wish to take on these duties.	2.0%	3.4%	3.4%	9.3%	51.3%	30.6%
Require that department advisors file advising plans with the university advising office.	6.8%	11.3%	15.5%	29.7%	23.4%	13.3%
Implement mandatory contact with advisors, with higher expectations of contact for students who are undeclared as majors or who have been identified as at-risk.	3.4%	1.4%	3.7%	11.9%	49.0%	30.6%
Provide access to an up-to-date PDF of the Schedule of Courses that can be downloaded by students and faculty.	3.1%	0.6%	1.4%	13.3%	42.9%	38.7%
Improve processing of transfer credit information.	10.2%	0.6%	0.6%	16.1%	39.4%	33.1%
Clarify general education requirements.	6.8%	0.3%	0.8%	10.2%	41.8%	40.1%

Recommendation 18. Enhance Financial Aid and Financial Aid Advising.

Information from our focus groups suggests that students are often unaware or misinformed about the status of their financial aid and whether it affects their ability to register for classes in a timely manner.

	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
During on-line registration, provide explicit information to students about policies related to registration while awaiting financial aid. Students approved for financial aid should be identified as such in the registration system to reduce students' concerns and confusion about whether they can register while awaiting their funds.	4.3%	0.6%	0.0%	7.2%	43.8%	44.1%
Provide financial advisors for students.	4.0%	3.4%	4.3%	16.3%	42.6%	29.4%

Recommendation 19. Enhance the use of peer mentoring and tutoring.

Research supports the effectiveness of peer-assisted academic support, especially in introductory "gatekeeping" courses (see Pell Institute, 2007).

	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Enhance special programs that employ peer mentors (e.g., provide tuition credits or work-study jobs for students who complete a specified number of hours in peer tutoring, leadership in learning communities; involve Honors College students in service hours with their peers in tutoring, etc.).	3.7%	1.7%	3.1%	14.1%	51.0%	26.5%

Recommendation 20. Involve departments in the allocation of Supplemental Instruction resources.

	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Supplemental Instruction resources should be allocated to the departments because the	1.4%	5.4%	23.9%	42.8%	26.5%	0.0%

departments know best how to spend their allowance.