

Goal 2: Achieve strong undergraduate and graduate enrollments and high retention, graduation, and job placement rates.

Develop an integrated retention and student support and success program

A. Introduction and Background

Since 2010, ECU has seen a steady decline in enrollment, from a high headcount in 2010 (4,893) to a low in 2018 (3,574). Of greater concern than the steady decrease, is that the decrease is occurring in almost all recruiting categories (incoming freshman, transfer, graduate) as well as in retention across the board. Historically, ECU one-year retention percentage hovers in the low 60% range. However, the first time, full-time freshman one-year retention rate from 2015 to 2016 was 52% and from 2016 to 2017 was 46%. In fall 2015, ECU experience a large increase in new international students. For a variety of reasons, these students were not retained. The university needs a comprehensive strategic approach to enrollment management.

This initiative focuses increasing the number of students retained by offering student engagement opportunities and support during the collegiate experience to fulfill the mission of the university.

Create an enrollment committee with clearly defined goals to strength not just recruitment but retention as well. The major element of this strategy include the following:

1. Orientation
 - a. Expand freshman orientation
2. First-Year
 - a. Extend Freshman Seminar to eight week course
 - b. Identify strategies to improve retention with extensive first-year experiences (Example - Bridge to Excellence Freshman Mentoring Program)
 - c. Identify and use best practices and national trends for first to second, and second to third year strategies
 - d. Extend Academic Success Center advising of freshman for three enrollment periods
3. Incentives for involvement in student activities and programs e.g., SGA, clubs and organizations, etc.
 - a. Identify ways to increase participation in clubs and organizations
 - b. Have club and organization representatives present in Freshman Seminar
4. Student tracking and early warning
 - a. Research the possibility of a university attendance policy
 - b. Identify at-risk students sooner in the tiger alert process
 - c. Show faculty and staff the benefits of identifying and assist at-risk students
5. Advising
 - a. Create an institutional definition and expectation of advising
 - b. Identify strategies to remove barriers from the advising process
 - c. Conduct professional development opportunities to strengthen advising skills
 - d. Develop reward and recognition for good advising
6. Access to university resources and support, e.g., 24-hour computer lab and snack bar
 - a. Explore twenty-four hours a day venues for students to provide computers and alternative snacking.
7. Career planning and placement
 - a. Establish a way to track student employment

B. Contribution to Other Goals

This Strategy will contribute to the following other Goals:

- Goal 1: Achieve academic excellence

- Goal 4: Create a culture of effective communication

C. Specific Actions, Elements, Steps and Timelines

D. Potential Models

Arkansas Tech University – Bridge to Excellence Freshman Mentoring Program
<https://www.atu.edu/b2e/>

University of Wyoming
http://www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs/_files/docs/sem_uw_5-year_plan.pdf

Georgia Regents University
<https://www.augusta.edu/student-life/documents/strategicplan20152020.pdf>

University of Central Arkansas
<http://uca.edu/ssrc/files/2017/07/student-success-and-retention-plan-2017.pdf>