

# BUILDING COLLEGE WIDE SUPPORT FOR A COORDINATED STUDENT RETENTION PLAN

SHERIDAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND  
ADVANCED LEARNING

# LETS LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

- Essential ingredients to gaining buy-in?
- The obstacles?
- Where does accountability for student retention rest?



# OVERVIEW

How we, at Sheridan:

- got the discussion started
- facilitated College-wide involvement
- began to gain buy-in
- developed and implemented phase one initiatives
- are planning forward

HOW THE DISCUSSION GOT STARTED:

# “STUDENT RETENTION AS A PRIORITY”

- Senior Management concern, commitment and support
- Noel Levitz
- Identified project leads
- Cross college involvement and inclusivity
- Joint ownership in principle

# SHERIDAN STUDENT RETENTION COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUPS

- 47 members – cross college representation
- Selected, sought after
- faculty, student, staff, administration at all levels
- included heroes, skeptics and cynics
- empowered and supported

# COMMITTEE COMMITTED TO:

1. Understand the problem through evidence and sound data
2. Identify existing internal expertise, programs and supports
3. Look at external best practices
4. Long term: Involvement in College wide strategic Retention Plan
5. Short term: creating initiatives for 2009/10 “Phase One” plans that would involve first semester students – closely monitored and evaluated

# WHAT DATA EXISTED TO HELP US UNDERSTAND WHO, WHEN AND WHY STUDENTS LEAVE, PERSIST AND WHAT CAUSES DIFFICULTY?

- Attrition rates per academic school from semester one to two and year one to two
- Academic performance of semester one students
- Semester one in-class survey re: sources of difficulty
- Reasons for first year student failure and drop outs

*What “needed” data did not exist and how would we build the collection processes moving forward?*

# SUMMARY OF INITIAL DATA COLLECTED

“Disgusting Data”



# ATTRITION/PROGRESSION OF FALL SEMESTER ONE

COHORTS 2005, 2006,  
2007, 2008:

# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

## "FAIL-OUTS" IN FIRST SEMESTER

WHAT ARE THOSE PRIMARY REASONS  
FOR FIRST SEMESTER

“FAIL OUTS” AND “DROP OUTS”?

<b>“Fail Outs”</b>	<b>“Drop outs”</b>
37% Academic	30% Career Related
30% Personal	24% Academic
13% Financial	20% Personal
7% Medical	14% Financial
6% Career Related	9% Medical

# Academic Reasons: Details

Academic adjustment to College

Computer programming skills

Difficulty understanding course material

Class Schedule

Study skills - reading, note taking, test taking, time management

Admission issue (late registration, laptop issue, academic standing, advanced standing)

Course load was too heavy

Faculty instruction

Program/course does not meet expectations

GPA Grade Concerns

Math difficulty

Policy Related

English difficulty

Computer/mobile skills

# STUDENT PROGRESSION – TERM 1 TO 2

PCYWK	Semester 1	Semester 2				
	Day 10	On Path	On Path (PT)	Repeat	Change	Stop
2006	117	95 (81%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	4 (3%)	17 (15%)
2007	113	81 (72%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	7 (6%)	24 (21%)
2008	165	134 (81%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	3 (2%)	27 (16%)
2009	177	153 (86%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	3 (2%)	19 (11%)

# SEMESTER ONE TERM GPA

PCYWK	GPA in (2.0,4.0)	GPA in (1.50,1.99)	GPA in (1.20,1.49)	GPA in (0.00,1.19)	No GPA	Avg. GPA (GPA <2)
2006	95	8	1	12	-	0.89
2007	78	11	1	23	-	0.89
2008	133	9	4	16	3	0.95
2009	144	13	2	11	7	1.18

# IDENTIFYING AND CREATING AN INVENTORY OF EXISTING INTERNAL EXPERTISE, PROGRAMS AND SUPPORTS





# WHAT IS STUDENT RETENTION?

Student Retention *is* about: helping student to be successful

Student Retention *is not* about: letting the weak slide by, or losing academic integrity

# PROPOSED INITIATIVES 2009

## Fall 2009 Pilots

1. Early Warning Systems
  - Faculty Identified Model
  - Student Identified Model
2. First Year Experience
3. Student Finances
4. Flexible Timetabling

*Designed based on data, integrating existing expertise and programs, multi touch point approach and shared ownership – initiatives looking for a home*

# APPROVED, IMPLEMENTED WITH EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

Early Warning System: Faculty Identified Model  
*(Computing Programs 270 students)*

Early Warning System: Student Identified Model  
*(Business Programs – Davis Campus, 420 students)*

First Year Experience: Child & Youth Worker  
Program *(180 students)*

Academic Schools also directed to develop student  
retention initiatives/pilots

# HOW DID WE EVALUATE?

- 1. Semester one to semester two student retention rates**
- 2. Academic performance by cumulative GPA distribution**
- 3. Students feeling supported – Did students feel supported in their adjustment to College, to their program and in their learning?**

# QUALITATIVE TOOLS

- Student Feedback survey
- Student Focus groups
- Student Exit interviews
- Faculty Feedback
- Student Usage of Services and Supports

# OUTCOME

## EWS: Faculty Identified Model

- 3% increase in students “on path” and 3% decrease in drop outs

## EWS: Faculty Identified Model

- 4.3% increase in students “on path” and 2.9% decrease in drop outs



# OUTCOMES (CONT'D)

## First Year Experience

- 5.2% increase in students “on path” and 5.7% decrease in drop outs
- Good improvement in the distribution of Semester 1 cumulative term GPAs

*In all pilot audiences, students cited a feeling of being supported by the initiatives and college faculty and staff.*

# CURRENT EFFORTS AND INITIATIVES

1. Phase Two Plans for Pilot Initiatives
2. Supporting and Enhancing Academic Advising
3. Defining Student Success at Sheridan
4. Tailored and Accessible supports for distinct student populations



# MOVING FORWARD:

Moving from pilots and projects towards embedding and integrating efforts into strategic and operational plans

Gaining buy-in...

# ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS:

- Inclusion and horizontal planning
- Joint outcomes and accountability
- Senior management support & commitment
- Data and evidence driven planning
- Internal inventory of existing expertise
- Student Retention → Student Success
- Sharing – communicating – sharing – communicating
- Passion and commitment

OBSTACLES...  
ARE A GIVEN

# ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STUDENT SUCCESS RESTS EVERYWHERE

Maria Lucido-Bezely  
Associate Dean, Student Success  
[maria.lucido-bezely@sheridaninstitute.ca](mailto:maria.lucido-bezely@sheridaninstitute.ca)