



S.T.E.P.S. to

Stories, Tips, Events, Practices & Successes

Retention

SPRING 2012

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS THAT NURTURE RETENTION

cli-mate [klayh-mit]

noun

1. the composite or generally prevailing weather conditions of a region, as temperature, air pressure, humidity, precipitation, sunshine, cloudiness, and winds, throughout the year, averaged over a series of years. 2. a region or area characterized by a given climate. **3. the prevailing attitudes, standards, or environmental conditions of a group, period or place.**

In the same way the climate of a region determines what can thrive there, the climate of a college setting will influence the likelihood of persistence and success for many students.

Many climatic factors inter-play to affect a student's likelihood of persisting to complete educational goals. Some are related to the student's "personal climate"—a difficult variable for college administrators to affect.

But some climatic factors are within the power of college administrators to optimize, and if taken seriously and acted on appropriately, can support students through the steps to goal attainment despite the student's own negative personal climate.

In his article "Taking Student Retention Seriously," Vincent Tinto (Syracuse University), notes 5 optimal climatic conditions controllable by college faculty and administration:

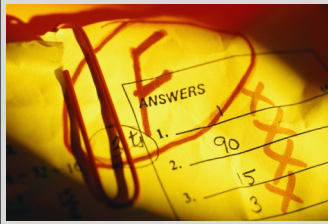
1. expectation,
2. clear and consistent information/ effective advising,
3. support (academically, socially and/or personally),
4. involvement as a valued member of the institution, and
5. active learning.

- **EXPECTATION:** Tinto asserts that if the institution expects students to succeed, they are more likely to succeed. First generation students especially are vulnerable if they perceive that faculty/staff do not expect them to perform well.
- **EFFECTIVE ADVISING:** "Students. . . need to understand the road map to completion."
- **SUPPORT:** Academic support (i.e. instruction in student skills, tutoring), social support (i.e. friendships, clubs), or personal support (i.e. opportunities to interaction with faculty and staff, opportunities to grow in self-efficacy and make personal connections, etc.)
- **INVOLVEMENT:** "Simply put, involvement matters [*no matter who the student is, or what type of institution it is—2 or 4-year*], and at no point does it matter more than the first year of college when student attachments are so tenuous and the pull of the institution is so weak."
- **ACTIVE LEARNING:** "Students who are actively involved in learning, that is, who spend more time on task especially with others, are more likely to learn and, in turn, more likely to stay."

Finding ways in your department, office, or classroom to nurture the above climatic conditions will support the mission of Ozarka College to affect "Life changing experiences through education!"

SOURCE: <http://www.mccli.dist.maricopa.edu/fsd/c2006/docs/takingretentionseriously.pdf>

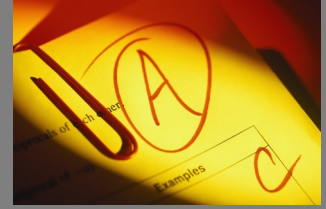
From *PASSIVELY FAILING* To *PERSISTENTLY PASSING*: How Can We Help Students “Cross Over”?



Top 7 reasons some students passively fail and stop out of college:

- #7. Academic commitment is the lesser priority compared to extracurricular activity (i.e. athletics and social organizations).
- #6. Alcohol and drug abuse: physical effects of drugs and alcohol impair attendance and performance.
- #5. Personal relationship issues that cause distractions to the point of failure. Many students are too embarrassed or intimidated to talk to their instructors, and choose instead to withdraw.
- #4. Good intentions, but lack of confidence: Students start strong, but quickly develop a sense of inferiority and loose heart.
- #3. Inertia: Low level of motivation and unrealistic perception of effort needed to earn a passing grade early in the semester creates a downward spiral that students cannot overcome.
- #2. Pressure from others to go to college: these students enroll even though they do not really want to go to college, and stop attending one or more classes early in the semester.
- #1. Lack of personal direction: no focus, no clear goals, too overwhelmed by all of the uncertainty.

Strategies to reach passively failing students: windows for intervention



1. Connect with students on the first day of classes. Instructors and support staff who reach out to students early on can combat the onset of “passivity” and assure students of the availability of approachable support.
2. Give quizzes within the first few weeks to identify potentially at risk students. Reporting those students using the early alert system will generate an early contact from student services staff.
3. Instructors and advisors: Invite students to meet with you for a “get-to-know-you” meeting. Follow up meetings with short “glad you came by” emails that encourage the student to keep you posted on progress and ask for help when needed.
4. Instructors: Watch for body language that signals boredom, disinterest, lost-ness, and ask that student to visit with you after class. Though it is unethical to pry into the student’s personal life, asking them why they appear disinterested can be helpful. This strategy tells the student you are paying attention, you care, and you want the student to be an active learner of the material.
5. Staff and faculty advisors: Make opportunities to help students explore their strengths and interests and find connections to the world of work and the training needed. Help them map out the course.

SOURCE: APS Observer, “Helping Failing Students” www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/getArticle.cfm?id=2609



October 29-31, 2012, New Orleans, <http://csrde.ou.edu/web/index.html>

THE NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON STUDENT RETENTION

Sponsored by the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange at the University of Oklahoma

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