A Large-Scale, Comprehensive Institutional Retention Initiative:

How Did We Get There, Is It Working, and Will It Produce Lasting Change?

EPI Retention 2010
Chicago, June 11

Paul Thayer
Associate Vice President for Student Affairs/
Special Advisor to the Provost for Retention
Colorado State University
Question:

- If you had the chance to design a broad scale framework for institutional commitment to student retention and success, what would you include?
  
  ◦ Program Elements?
  
  ◦ Organizational/Structural Elements?
A Large-Scale, Comprehensive Institutional Retention Initiative: The CSU Student Success Initiatives

- Initiatives crossing academic and student affairs
- Endorsement by the Cabinet, President, and Governing Board
- An attempt to change the culture around student success at a large public university
- A $3.8 million plan (33% in place)
Principles:

- Retention = a function of educational quality
- Commitment and investment
- Comprehensive, sustained effort
- Explicit attention to diversity of population
- Data and improvement
“Pillars” of the Plan

Create opportunities for exceptional educational experiences across the breadth of the curriculum

Create a community-wide culture of high expectations for student involvement and success

Require data-driven planning and administration
Outline of the CSU Plan
Student Success Initiatives

Preparing the Pipeline and Assuring Access

Promoting Successful Transitions:
- Student Engagement Outside the Classroom
- Student Engagement Inside the Classroom

Academic Initiatives
Student Success Initiatives: Total Plan

- Enhancing Academic Support, 2,238,000, 59%
- Enhancing Curriculum, 1,032,000, 27%
- Preparing the Pipeline and Assuring Access, 300,000, 8%
- Promoting Successful Transitions: 226,000, 6%

Percent of Total Plan:
- Pipeline/Access: 8%
- Successful Transitions: 6%
- Academic Initiatives: 86%
Implications for structural integration

High

Low

STUDENT IMPACT

INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT
Comprehensiveness

Example: Academic Support

High

Learning Center: collecting a few services

Supplemental Instruction

Tutoring Program

Facilitated Study Group

Low

Comprehensive Learning Center

Letter of warning to failing students
Preparing the Pipeline and Assuring Access

- Reconfiguring financial aid and workstudy programs
- Changing admissions process to focus on rigor of courses and use holistic file review to identify non-curricular predictors of success

Expanding the scope of partnerships with targeted schools and communities

- Expanding the Bridge Scholars Program
Promoting Successful Transitions In and Out of the Classroom

- Enhancement of first-year course offerings
- Expansion of residential learning communities
- Increasing peer mentoring and retention programming in the Advocacy Offices

Development of improved feedback, early warning, and intervention capacity
Enhancing Learning through Increased Academic Support and Curriculum Development

- Enhancement of the course designs of core, foundational, and gateway courses
- Promotion of experiential learning strategies
- Development of a more proactive system for providing support for academic advising during students’ first two years
- Outreach and intervention with students who experience academic difficulty
- Support and development of outstanding student scholars
Providing Coordinated Learning Support in a Highly Visible Learning Center

- Institute for Learning and Teaching
- Enhanced programming in undergraduate research, experiential learning, nationally-competitive scholarships, supplemental instruction, tutoring
- House academic advising, support, and enrichment services that help students:
  - Transition to university life
  - Promote active learning in and outside the classroom
  - Take personal responsibility for their success at CSU and after they graduate
Sustaining and Evaluating the Access and Student Success Initiatives

- Assign accountability to the Vice Provost for Student Affairs, Vice President for Student Affairs, Vice President for Enrollment and Access, and Office of Institutional Research (VPIT)
- Monitor and report progress
- Evaluate and amend strategies in response to assessment
Goals of the Student Success Plan

At the point when the entire array of Student Success Initiatives is in place:

- Achieve a 70% or greater 6-year graduation rate for that cohort
- Eliminate the gap between 6-year graduation rates of minority and non-minority students, adjusted for entering background characteristics
Retention and Graduation

- Retention: Up 1 percentage point to 83%
- Graduation: Up 1 percentage point to 64%
Probation Rate

Graph showing the probation rate from FA00 to FA09. The percentage ranges from 12% to 20%. The trend shows an increase from FA00 to FA06, peaking at 20%, and then a decrease to 15% at FA09.

Data Source: Education Trust

Data Source: Education Trust

Data Source: Education Trust

Data Source: Education Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Graduation Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington State University</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina State University at Raleigh</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Colorado at Boulder</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa State University</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa State University</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Colorado at Boulder</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas A &amp; M University</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas A &amp; M University</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa State University</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Colorado at Boulder</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State University</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State University</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Education Trust

- Oklahoma State University Main Campus: 6.3%
- Texas A&M University: 7.9%
- University of California, Davis: 8.0%
- North Carolina State University: 8.8%
- University of Colorado at Boulder: 11.6%
- Washington State University: 12.8%
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: 14.2%
- Purdue University Main Campus: 15.5%
- Michigan State University: 16.8%
- Oregon State University: 17.2%
- Ohio State University: 17.3%
- University of California, Berkeley: 17.40%
Cumulative Return on Investment (at 30 students on the margin)

Year 1: ($300,000)
Year 2: ($217,108)
Year 3: ($17,930)
Year 4: $286,704
Year 5: $780,651
What worked?
What worked...

- Receptive leadership
- An advocate
- Report: comprehensive, data-laden
- Legitimacy through broad campus involvement
- Demonstration of return
- Focus on quality of academic experience
- Integration of in-class and out-of-class experience (Academic and Student Affairs)
- Data and assessment
- Institutionalization
- Synergies abound!
Limitations and Failures
Limitations and Failures

- Data analytic capacity
- Constant battle: others (colleges) want the resources. Requires rationale; where logical, college-based strategies
- Economic collapse: possibility of loss of faith
- No “quick fix.” Needle not yet spiking (other factors)
- Constant change in people, roles: Requires constant education and reassurance
Lessons Learned
Lessons

- Major task: Convincing that long-term commitment and resources are essential
- Connection to academic mission
- Partnerships: especially academic, student affairs, enrollment and access divisions
- People are the issue
- Dedicated role
- Demonstration of progress
- Data and assessment: including willingness to jettison ineffective strategies
Lessons, continued...

- Go for the things that will last beyond you, even if things go badly
- Keep in mind: This is not about you, but is about students, opportunity, and the future
- This is not easy:
  Believe in what you do
Questions and Discussion