

THE NEED:

Student retention at Wright State could be improved. Specifically, for Lake Campus, we will do a pilot study on first year, at risk students to improve retention rates. Through implementing a first-year seminar, we hope to improve student retention toward 70% by the end of the first year, and hope to improve the retention rate to 75% over time.

Currently, we have an Orientation meeting prior to a student's first semester, typically over the summertime. It provides much information, but the retaining of the information presented may not be there, in spite of receiving packets which has all the information. Students need collegiality with their peers and faculty to keep them on track. Simply, they don't know what they don't know, and they forget. As stated in the abstract, research strongly connects student success and retention with social networking and bonding. Feeling alone is a strong indicator of student drop-out. We hope to fill the need with a seminar which connects faculty with students over their first semester, alleviating the feeling of isolation with connection, and providing support and networking with the students. The second semester will be for first-time students, as well as Fall semester students if space allows, for their further enrichment.

Our Advisors, which also provide support but are not faculty (in some universities, they are), do not have the time for this degree of need. They help when they can, but have the primary job of assisting students in class enrollment. Students need more than advisors, they need rapport with their peers and faculty to be successful.

THE REMEDY:

Connecting students with their peers and with faculty assists in making students feel welcome. Feeling like one belongs, that one is known and not a number, greatly improves student retention, as referenced in the abstract. Based on a recent Kent State University survey from their website, by providing the following, students will be less likely to drop out (according to reasons why students left):

1. Sense of belonging
2. Financial security
3. Feeling at home
4. Having support
5. Welcome campus climate

Connections are important. No student should go it alone. This seminar will be a periodic check-in with students to be sure they are on track, are making friendships with others and feel welcomed. Topics will cover relevant issues of first year students.

THE COST:

We will donate our time and knowledge; the cost is in enticement. To entice students in completing all 4 sessions of the seminar per semester, we will provide a \$10.00 "gift card" (actually, not a physical one, but monies will be loaded onto their wright-one card) when proven all four seminars are completed. Lake Campus will assist in the loading of the monies onto student's cards. This preliminary grant will be conducted over a two-year timespan, not including summers, at a total of four semesters to allow for

long term study on the retention of students. One semester of intervention would not be sufficient to see if results are significant.

The benefit, at even one student retained, is greater than the cost invested. We do not expect to have 100% participation, although that would be great! Total cost over two years will probably be less than the \$7,200.00 request as a result. The return on investment, even if one student was retained per semester, is far greater than the monies requested for this study. In addition to the benefits of retaining students, we do expect to solicit local businesses or the WOE Board to continue this funding if possible. Recruitment of students is important, but the retainment of them is equally so. The retainment of students is strongly linked to feeling they belong. We hope to provide this important connection to them in their first year.

References:

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