



KEAN



Faculty Guide to Retention

Office of Student Success and Retention

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A Faculty Guide to Fostering Student Success and Retention in the Classroom

What is student success?

“Student success is broadly defined as retention, graduation, and educational attainment” (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2007).

How does the classroom impact student success and retention?

“For most students, the classroom is the one, perhaps only, place on campus where they meet each other and the faculty and engage in formal learning activities. If they do not succeed in the classroom, often one class at a time, they do not succeed in college” (Tinto, 2012).

How do faculty impact student success and retention?

“What students do during college, the extent to which they are engaged in activities that, as research indicates, contribute to learning and personal development, matters to student persistence and success” (Kuh 2001, 2003; McCormick, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2013; NSSE, 2002, as qtd. in Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2014).

“High levels of student engagement are associated with a wide range of educational practices and conditions including purposeful student-faculty contact and active and collaborative learning” (Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2014).

“If there is a ‘secret’ to student completion, it is that institutions that are successful in promoting greater classroom success and the learning that follows are also those that will retain more of their students to degree completion” (Tinto, 2012).

“The moments of the class must belong to the student—not the students, but to the very undivided student. You don’t teach a class. You teach a student” (Bain, 2004).

“Faculty cannot control the characteristics of their students; however, they can control how they interact with students and the classroom setting in which their students are placed and asked to learn” (Tinto, 2002, 2012).

“Fundamentally, we want to promote deep, passionate, joyous, and creative learning” (Bain, 2012).

Classroom Practice: Strategies for Improving Retention on Day One

Most students decide whether to continue enrollment within the first 6-8 weeks of their first semester. What happens on the first day of class sets the learning climate for the entire semester and may help a student decide whether to stay or leave.

On the first day of class:

- **Be enthusiastic** about the course. Share why you chose your field and your passion for teaching.
- **Display openness.** Talk about your intellectual journey and encourage students to do the same. Explore students' fears and apprehensions about the course.
- **Build connections** with your students.
 - *Introduce yourself.* Tell students what you would like them to call you and how you can be reached outside of class.
 - *Learn about your students.* Ask students to complete an information sheet listing name, address, phone number, e-mail address, major, work information, how many hours a week they work outside of class, why they are taking this class, what other courses they are taking, what grade they expect to earn, how much time they expect to study outside of class, strengths and weaknesses, previous related courses, etc. Respond to their information sheet by writing a short note to each student saying something positive as well as expressing any concerns.
 - *Learn student names* as quickly as possible, and use them when addressing students in class (and out of class).
 - *Help students connect with classmates.* Encourage students to have an in-class buddy and support student study groups.
 - *Involve students* and encourage participation in first-day activities so that they become active learners early in the course.
- **Determine students' goals and objectives.** Discuss how the course content connects with the curriculum and to students' future career paths. Ask why students chose to take this course.

- **Communicate expectations.** Provide clear information about course requirements, assignments, examinations, and projects. Retain high expectations of students.

- **Rather than just read the syllabus...**
 - Design a group activity for students to understand both the syllabus and course policies. In this way, students will get to know their classmates and begin to make connections as well as learn about the syllabus.
 - You can also give a take-home quiz on the syllabus (a great homework assignment for the first class and a great way for students who miss the first class to learn about the requirements). Scoring the quiz will help you learn what students understand and don't understand about your expectations and allow you to focus on just those points of the syllabus in the second class.
 - If there is time remaining after your syllabus activity, begin communicating the content of your course.
 - **Never dismiss class early.**

- **Help students understand the amount of work that goes into being successful.** Explain that being successful in college is less about "brains" and more about willingness to work hard and spend many hours outside of class reading, reviewing, doing assignments, and studying. Help students budget their time by informing them how much they should study outside of class.

- **Set a positive tone that focuses on student success.** When students see your syllabus and course requirements, they may feel overwhelmed. Be reassuring. Have faith in the ability of your students to succeed.

- **Require students who miss the first class** to meet with you in your office so that you can get to know them as well as answer any questions they have about the course or syllabus.

- **Be respectful of students' other responsibilities.** Many of your students have obligations to family and jobs that will consume much of their out-of-class time. If possible, include exam and assignment due dates on your syllabus or give students considerable advance notice about important dates.

Classroom Practice: Strategies for Improving Retention all Semester

The following strategies and techniques can be used throughout your course:

- **Refer to your syllabus often** so that students understand its importance in communicating information that is critical to their success.
- **Be flexible and understanding of students' outside commitments.**
- **Get to know your students.**
 - *Be the first to arrive and last to leave class* and check in with a different student before or after each class.
 - *Socialize with your students* by attending their clubs or activities, walking with them between classes, etc.
 - *Encourage or require students to visit you in your office.* Meeting one-on-one is an opportunity to learn about individual students and answer questions that they might not ask in class. In addition, students who may be timid about coming to your office with questions are more likely to seek your assistance after visiting your office the first time.
- **Let your students know that you care about them as individuals.**
 - *Create a welcoming environment* in which there is acceptance of diversity and respect for every individual.
 - *Listen carefully to students' comments and ambitions.* Make the students feel that their ideas and opinions are worthwhile.
 - *Allow students to relate and apply personal, family, or cultural experiences or histories in class assignments,* and affirm the validity of their experiences and histories.
 - *Urge students to talk to you about problems,* such as changes in work schedule, family obligations, etc. Alternate arrangements can and should be made.

➤ **Let your students know that you care about them as learners.**

- *Provide timely and non-judgmental feedback that encourages student learning and persistence.* Return materials as soon as possible with comments. Write something positive on each assignment or exam.
- *Design diverse learning experiences that appeal to a wide range of learning styles, backgrounds, and skill levels.* Be creative in designing lessons, activities, assignments, and assessments and encourage cooperation and collaboration.
- *Offer supplemental materials to support student learning* (i.e., online resources, YouTube videos, Google Classroom, etc.)
- *Move students toward mastery orientation and learning goals* by providing praise for specific tasks completed. Stress a “you can do it” attitude and emphasize your willingness to provide help.
- *Encourage students* to “use their uniqueness and be curious and more resilient” (Bain, 2012).
- *Tell success stories of past students* and share your own struggles and successes with learning.
- *Identify students who are headed for academic difficulty as early in the course as possible.* Take the initiative to contact and meet with students who are doing poorly and refer students to appropriate support services on campus as well as to the Office of Student Success and Retention.

➤ **Build a sense of community in and out of the classroom.**

- *Create a safe environment* in which students can get to know and learn from each other, while reasoning together and challenging each other.
- *Use collaborative assignments and service learning opportunities* to foster social and academic integration.
- *Provide opportunities for students to give you feedback.* Then, evaluate your efforts, and make appropriate changes.

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