LSU Retention Committee Goals, Target Completion Dates, and Individuals Responsible for Implementation

Submitted to Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor John Maxwell Hamilton

August 11, 2011
Revised on September 15, 2011

I. First-year Programs and Early Engagement in University Life
   - Develop online orientation materials to present information on university resources and regulations. This source will help prevent the “information overload” experienced by some freshman students during orientation. It will also help transfer students because there is currently not enough time to provide them with all of the information they need since transcript evaluations and advising take up much of the seven-hour transfer student orientation session. ($5,000, December 2011, Darrell Ray and Bonnie Alford)
   - Expand availability of EDCI 1001, a 3-credit learning strategies class designed to improve student retention and graduation rates by providing learning strategies (CAS) and survival skills at LSU. Literacy is a key to success at LSU across the disciplines, and the course addresses effective reading and study skills that improve student success in the classroom. It will introduce students to support services and campus activities in which they can participate. Add peer mentors to provide individual tutoring and support. Alternatively, sections of LSU 1001, a 1-credit university orientation class that emphasizes the learning and study skills along with personal management skills (budgeting, life-styles, etc.) could be implemented. ($50,000, August 2012, Earl Cheek for EDCI 1001; Melissa Brocato for LSU 1001)
   - Create an online resource with links to all campus resources so advisors, faculty, and staff can easily refer students to services. (No additional funding required, December 2011, Pamela Coltharp)
   - Systematically promote participation in academic orientation programs such as BIOS. The data consistently show that these programs increase retention in the University and in the major. (No additional funding required, December 2011, Sheri Wischusen)

II. Academic and Student Life Advising
   - Implement a mid-semester orientation and advising session for transfer students so that they can be better informed when they take advantage of their scheduling priority, just as the currently enrolled students are. As the system is organized now, transfer student advising takes place after scheduling, immediately before classes begin. ($5,000 December 2011, Darrell Ray and Bonnie Alford)
   - Create a “recruit back” program identifying and inviting all students who have left the University, but are 30 hours or fewer away from graduation, to return to complete their degree. ($5,000 to $15,000, June 2012, Sandy Walker, Patti Beste, Dave Kurpius)
   - Arrange for staff in Student Life (e.g. administrators, graduate assistants, etc.) to meet with students who do not schedule classes for the next semester before we know they are not returning, to identify needs and actions to retain them. (Emails sent to freshmen this spring who had not enrolled in courses for fall resulted in nearly 10% of these students creating schedules.) Conduct face-to-face exit surveys with students who intend to leave
LSU. The discussion should include a question about engagement. Additionally, the formal student withdrawal process should be analyzed and revised. This process should include completing a brief survey and meeting with a staff member. ($5,000 to $15,000, June 2012, Kurt Keppler, Robert Doolos or his designee)

III. Support for Student Learning and Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Development
- Create a committee to implement the adoption of the Early Academic Referral System (EARS) within Moodle. The system allows faculty to identify students whose performance (poor attendance, failure to complete assignments, low quiz and test scores, etc.) puts them at-risk academically early in the semester. It also refers students to university resources that can help them improve academic performance. (No additional cost, December 2011, Melissa Brocato)
- Communicate the expectation (by the Office of Academic Affairs) that faculty will use the Moodle system. If faculty are not using Moodle, EARS cannot be used to alert their students about poor performance. (No additional cost, December 2011, Gil Reeve with assistance from IT and Barbara McManus)
- Create an Academic Intervention Committee (AIC), modeled after the current Student Life CARE team. The team will be made up of academic advisors, staff, and faculty who will use EARS and other alerts to identify students whose academic performance may warrant intervention. (No additional cost, December 2011, Melissa Brocato and Kurt Keppler)
- Expand residential colleges and increase on-campus housing to accommodate 85% of the 5,000-member freshman class because the Shihadeh report demonstrated that off-campus students are less likely to graduate. As of fall 2011, the University is at 74%, with 3,700 beds. In fall 2012, 600 beds will be added, and 660 new beds are programmed and in design for fall 2015. The current inventory of 3,700 plus the 600 new beds will bring the inventory of residence hall beds to 4,300 for fall 2012, exceeding the 85% target. (No additional cost, August 2012, Steve Waller)
- Provide more adequate funding and additional space for academic support units, such as the Center for Academic Success and Student Support Services. The additional space and funding will provide assistance to more students, particularly to first-year and first-generation low-income students. Information supporting the need for additional space for both units appears in Appendix F of this report. ($>50,000 for increasing academic support; $5000 - $15,000 for additional space, August 2012, Saundra McGuire, Jane Cassidy)
- Reestablish funding for the Writing Center as a unit within the Communication Studio in Coates 151. Every peer institution offers writing support for students across campus and disciplines. Mastery of effective communication skills is the number one criterion that employers seek in college graduates. A formal request for funding to reinstate writing tutorial services appears in Appendix G of this report ($15,000 to $50,000, August 2011, Gaines Foster)
- Conduct training sessions for staff and faculty advisors from University College and the senior colleges to ensure that policies and procedures are interpreted and implemented consistently and to update them on university resources for students. Topics such as cultural competency and social capital should be explored, given the relatively low retention rates of minority, low-income, and first-generation students. (<$5,000 December 2011, Paul Ivey)
• Require students who are on academic warning or probation after the first semester to see an advisor and attend the IMPACT workshop offered by the Center for Academic Success. *(No additional cost, August 2011, Paul Ivey and Melissa Brocato)*
• Provide a centralized resource for faculty to learn and incorporate best practices for teaching and learning which are effective in boosting retention and graduation rates, as well as to provide training in new technology and learning pedagogy. The elimination of the Centers for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) did not end the need for faculty, staff, and administrative development. Rather other units such as the Center for Academic Success, the Faculty Technology Center, Communication across the Curriculum, and the Center for Civic Engagement, Learning, and Leadership have assumed responsibility for professional development. Yet without a centralized system, many faculty, staff, and administrators do not know how to get help with teaching, learning, and technology. The newly formed Learning and Teaching Collaborative, composed of faculty and staff from the units mentioned above, will act as this resource beginning in fall 2011. *(5,000 to 15,000 June 2012, Pamela Nicolle)*
• Expand orientation sessions for new faculty and teaching assistants to include instruction in best teaching practices and to provide information about the characteristics of LSU students. *(No additional cost, December 2011, Cecil Eubanks and Saundra McGuire)*
• Provide supplemental text for faculty to include in syllabi or on Moodle to alert students to the various academic and student life support systems available and how to access them. *(No additional cost, December 2011, Cecil Eubanks and Saundra McGuire)*
• Support on-going faculty, staff, and administrative development through participation in conferences and webinars related to issues of retention and graduation rates, including opportunities for units across campus to disseminate new knowledge and inform others of new initiatives. Those who participate in conferences using LSU support will be required to submit a plan to share information learned. *(5,000 to 15,000, December 2011, Cecil Eubanks and Gil Reeve)*

**IV. LSU Policies, Practices, and Procedures**

• Identify the various proactive and reactive programming initiatives currently offered on campus that affect retention of students and determine which ones need strengthening. *(No additional cost, December 2011, Kurt Keppler and Saundra McGuire)*
• Review university policies on classroom attendance, absences and grading policy, specifically PS 22 and PS 44 as well as the LSU *General Catalog* statements on attendance. Construct a more consistent and enforceable policy that can be easily interpreted and incorporated into course syllabi with allowances for attendance to be used when determining final grades. Encourage Student Government to implement an academic honor code that stresses the importance of classroom attendance and participation. *(No additional cost, December 2011, Kevin Cope, Cody Wells, Kathleen Bordelon, and John Parker Ford)*
• Designate a working group to determine if and how academic policies/structures at other peer/aspirant institutions foster higher retention rates than those at LSU and draft recommendations to present to ASH to revise LSU policies as appropriate. *(No additional cost, December 2011, Saundra McGuire and Kevin Cope)*
• Determine the best way to cull data regarding feeder schools, high school course profiles, ACT profile, etc. in order to target and recruit the students who are most likely to succeed
at LSU. The Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management should develop a plan to accomplish this recommendation. *(No additional cost, December 2011, David Kurpius)*

- Add a statement to the *LSU General Catalog*, university websites, and printed materials advising re-entry students that they can appeal to be re-admitted if they do not meet the admissions requirements outright or if there are extenuating circumstances. *(No additional cost, December 2011, Lupe Lamadrid)*

- Determine if the re-entry GPA should be lowered from a 2.5 to 2.2 or 2.25 and/or if a sliding GPA scale for re-entry students should be adopted. *(No additional cost, December 2011, Dave Kurpius or his designee and College Deans)*

- Use data more effectively. For example, work with the Office of Assessment and Evaluation to make better use of NSSE data and other studies that identify learning outcomes desired by employers. Use Hobson Connect data up until the 14th class day to continue to correspond with new freshmen. *(No additional cost, December 2011, Bobby Matthews and Sandy Walker)*

- Identify currently enrolled students who are within 15 – 30 hours of graduation and help them set a graduation date and schedule the appropriate courses to graduate within the next one to two semesters. The Office of the University Registrar and the Office of Budget and Planning will identify these students and provide a list to the Colleges. *($5,000 - $15,000, December 2011, Patti Beste and Sandy Walker)*

- Identify students who have earned more than 120 credit hours and advise them to graduate as soon as possible. (Currently some students eligible for graduation are delaying graduating.) If they wish to remain in school longer, explore with them the option of working on a master’s degree. *(No additional cost, December 2011, Sandy Walker, Patti Best, and College Deans)*

Recommended composition of small working group to study how LSU academic policies might be changed to increase student retention and graduation rates: Kathleen Bordelon, Kevin Carman, Robert Doolos, Gaines Foster, Laurence Kaptain, Rick Koubek, Laura Lindsay, and Saundra McGuire.

Persons with Responsibilities for Implementing Recommendations in Retention Plan

Bonnie Alford, Patti Beste, Kathleen Bordelon, Melissa Brocato, Jane Cassidy, Earl Cheek, Pamela Coltharp, Kevin Cope, Cecil Eubanks, John Parker Ford, Gaines Foster, Randy Hall, Paul Ivey, Kurt Keppler, Dave Kurpius, Lupe Lamadrid, Bobby Matthews, Saundra McGuire, Barbara McManus, Kenneth Miles, Pamela Nicolle, Darrell Ray, Gil Reeve, Robert Russo, Sandra Walker, Cody Wells, Sheri Wischusen, and College Deans