Taking Student Retention Seriously: Rethinking the First Year of College

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Theme:
How would we organize the first year of college given what we know from research about the conditions that promote student learning and persistence in college?

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Retention is the result of effective education. We must focus on student learning and those conditions that promote student learning. Increased retention will follow.
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We must begin at the beginning.

We must focus on the first year of college and those actions that promote student education in that year.

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We must locate our efforts in and around the classroom, the one place, perhaps only place, where students and faculty meet.

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We must be intentional, proactive, and intrusive. We cannot leave the education of our students to chance.
We must begin by focusing on those conditions in college that promote student learning and persistence over which we have control.

Conditions for Student Learning

What do we know about student learning and persistence and those conditions that promote student learning and persistence in college, especially in the first year?

- Expectations
- Support
- Feedback
- Involvement
  - contact with faculty and students
  - time on task
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Holding High Expectations

- Setting high expectations - No one rises to low expectations
- Validation and countering the myths - Shaping beliefs of what is possible
- Providing role models - Recruiting faculty and staff of color

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Building Support for Students

- Providing academic support - Advising, tutoring, learning centers, summer bridge, study groups, etc.
- Providing social support - Counseling, mentoring, advising, etc.
- Building supportive communities - Ethnic study centers, student "safe havens", etc.

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Providing Feedback

- Early assessment and appropriate placement
- Monitoring of student progress
- Early warning systems
- Classroom assessment
Answer:
Students will get more involved in learning when they are placed in supportive educational settings in which they obtain feedback about their learning and which require them to share the experience of learning with others.

Involving Students in Learning: Some Possibilities
- Cooperative/Collaborative learning
- Problem-Based learning
- Service learning
- Learning communities
- Supplemental instruction/Study groups
- Classroom assessment

Cooperative Learning: Shared Learning within the Classroom
- Positive interdependence
- Face-to-face promotive interaction
- Group processing
- Interpersonal and group skills
- Individual and group accountability
Problem-Based Learning: Shared Problem Solving within the Classroom

- Learning in groups to solve problem(s)
- Curriculum/pedagogy organized to promote problem solving.

Service Learning: Learning while Serving

- Students perform service activities as part of a class
- Service experiences integrated into curriculum
- Use of reflection to promote learning

Learning Communities: Shared Learning Across the Curriculum

- Students enroll in classes together
- Central theme or problem which organizes the curriculum
- Students asked to build explicit academic and social connections
- Team designed and sometimes team taught
- Use of cooperative/collaborative learning
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Supplemental Instruction: Connecting Assistance to the Classroom
- Academic support linked to classes
- Small group instruction coordinated with the demands of the linked class
- Cooperative teaching
- Peer tutor or instructor led

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Supplemental Instruction

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Classroom Assessment: Shared Conversations about Learning
- Frequent assessment of learning
- Frequent feedback about learning
- Frequent feedback about teaching
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Research Findings
• Developing supportive peer groups
• Studying together: Becoming involved in learning
• Involvement, learning, and persistence
• Learning better together

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“In the cluster we knew each other, we were friends, we discussed everything from all the classes. We knew things very, very well because we discussed it all so much. We had discussions about everything ... it was like a raft running the rapids of my life.”

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“You know, the more I talk to other people about our class stuff, the homework, the tests, the more I’m actually learning ... and the more I learn not only about other people, but also about the subject because my brain is getting more, because I’m getting more involved with the other students in the class. I’m getting more involved with the class even after class.”
### Slide 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Score</th>
<th>CSP</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>3.05*</td>
<td>2.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>2.15*</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>2.25*</td>
<td>1.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>3.12*</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>2.81*</td>
<td>2.65</td>
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<td>Arts</td>
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<td>1.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gain</td>
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<td>2.46</td>
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* indicates significant difference between groups at .05 level.

### Slide 26

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<th>Perceptions of...</th>
<th>CSP</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
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<td>Classes</td>
<td>6.03*</td>
<td>5.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other students</td>
<td>5.64*</td>
<td>5.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>6.00*</td>
<td>5.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>4.86*</td>
<td>4.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus climate</td>
<td>5.31*</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yourself</td>
<td>5.80*</td>
<td>5.01</td>
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* indicates significant difference between groups at .05 level.

### Slide 27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>CSP</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pass Rates</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>55.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continuation</td>
<td>57.3*</td>
<td>41.2*</td>
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</table>

* estimated from several studies.
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“I think more people should be educated in this form of education. I mean because it is good. We learn not only how to interact with ourselves, but with other people of different races, different sizes, different colors, different everything. I mean it just makes it better … not only do you learn more, you learn better.”

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Classroom Assessment

The ‘one-minute’ paper - why even little assessments improve student learning.

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Taking Student Retention Seriously

- Make shared learning the norm of student classroom experience
- Connect academic assistance to the classroom
- Make assessment of student learning matter
- Reorganize our work - Build collaborative partnerships for student success
- Reward faculty and programs that promote student learning
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Resources: Cooperative Learning

Barbara Millis & Philip Cottell,
Cooperative Learning for Higher Education Faculty (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1998)

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Resources: Problem-Based Learning

University of Delaware
Institute for Problem-Based Learning
http://www.udel.edu/pbl/

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Resources: Service Learning


Service Learning Project
American Association for Higher Education
www.aahe.org/service/
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Resources: Learning Communities
The Washington Center for Undergraduate Education
Evergreen State College
(360) 866-6000
http://learningcommons.evergreen.edu

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Resources: Supplemental Instruction
Center for Supplemental Instruction
University of Missouri-Kansas City
www.umkc.edu/centers/cad/si

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Resources: Classroom Assessment