**Table Topic 12**

**Increasing Retention & Graduation for All Students**

Facilitators: Ginger Zierdt & Sandra Loerts

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**3-Point Executive Summary and Next Steps:**

1. Acknowledgement of the good work and ideas that have been suggested over the past years related to retention, but now need to be assigned to key leadership for accountability, implement the initiatives, and then give these efforts reasonable length of time to assess impact to help inform practice as well as future program/initiative investment. [i.e. sophomore retention initiatives.]
2. Individualized, personalized interactions (not categories) are needed as part of intentionally connecting to our students – 1-1 mentoring, by students and alums, noted as a key strategy.
3. Being mindful of a culture shift – “Service after the sale.” Intentionally wooing our students and appreciating their investment at our institution.

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**“A” Round:**

1. Take action from recommendation generated within the past campus committees and task forces on this topic (i.e. Enrollment Management)
   a. “Low hanging fruit” may have already been acted on, but do we know for certain, and by whom?
   b. We may need to define whom the central role players are in order to assign responsibilities/accountability for achievement of goals and monitoring of metrics.
2. Point of "woo-ment" – lathering occurs at admission and graduation/alumni and friend raising, but how does the University keep wooing the students/engaging/connecting/informing them throughout their experience between the bookends?
   a. Information can be powerful means of helping students feel valued and appreciated.
   b. What grabs today’s student? How do we personalize our University’s relations with students?
3. Could we explore mentor/mentee models (current students to current students, or involve alumni)?
4. Can we invest additional funds, without tons of "strings attached," to address retention?
5. We need to show greater customer/client appreciation to our students who, today, pay 70% of their education (state of MN funds 30%).
6. Are we able to launch a sophomore retention campaign involving “appreciation / thanks fro coming back”?

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**“B” Round:**

1. Individualized contact makes BIG differences in the lives of students (i.e. OASIS)
2. Transfer students – Unique analysis of each student’s transfer – consideration of admissions policy and procedures.
   a. Are transfer students successfully able to “rebound”, in some cases, academically and financially when they come to our University – are they able to stay in the game and finish? Or do our policies and procedures get in the way?
   b. Finding the sweet spot for a University between policy and procedures, related to transfer, that balance the needs of macro and micro scales (“all” vs. “individual”)
   c. What does a great transfer experience look like?
   d. Transfer “bucket of credits” – balancing the needs of academic integrity and meeting the students where they are. Are we an institution who takes in all credits but they count for nothing toward your program? What messages are we sending?
3. Are we able to marry research-based, high-impact practices with sustained programs and personnel (relationships matter)?
   a. Do we allow time to monitor and evaluate our upstart programs? We have habits of piloting and discontinuing, due to lack of funding, before we can ever be certain of the type of impact made. Perhaps we need to jettison programs that are not yielding results, but one has to monitor the progress and evaluate to determine impact.
4. Do we actively recruit Military students?
   a. Perhaps this should be a future goal and population to focus effort.
   b. Do we widely know how to support military students and Vets?
   c. Are we, as a campus, Vet-smart, Military student-smart?
   d. Can we expand our support services?
   e. Are we proactive or reactive to their needs?
   f. Are we protecting their privacy?
   g. Support for Veteran degree completion – how are we ensuring they are being tended to appropriately in this area?
5. Sophomore retention – we cannot allow them to hit a slump. We supported a full-time person for one year, but it was soft-funded, impact cannot be fully measured. Are we able to commit – FULLY?
6. Exit interviewing of our students – do we know why they leave when they do leave?
7. Engagement/involve ment – actively inviting students…intentionally creating moments-of-connectedness. Personalized, individualized methods to connect students to programs to the greater University community.
8. Do we actively survey students on their interests? If we do, do we use the data to inform our practices?
9. Positive peer influence is needed to help engage more students. When a student calls, visits, meets another student – powerful connectivity can occur.
   a. Student mentors? Intentional, personalization – beyond the point of admission – year 1, 2, and beyond.
   b. Alumni mentors?
   c. Every interaction with a student is an opportunity to build a relationship.
10. “I graduated. No, wait! I got a letter that said, “I didn’t graduate.” Argh!!! How do we ensure that all is in order for every student when they are preparing to depart us – who needs to be involved in “advising” to ensure assurance-of-completion. No surprises after one walks across the stage!

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S. Loerts and G. Zierdt, Table Facilitators
11. Non-traditional students, part-time students BY CHOICE – as an institution, they are not, and do not want to be on the 4-year plan for it doesn’t fit their life, so as a University, are we able to flexibly accommodate their desires and balance with the call to action for completion of degree within 4-years?