

# 22A10

## What Works in Student Retention?

7/22/2009  
8:15-9:15 a.m.




National Conference on  
**Student Recruitment,  
Marketing, and Retention**

**JULY 21-23, 2009 — SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

Convened by  
**Noel-Levitz®**

**What Works in Student Retention?**  
**Preliminary Results – 2009 Survey**  
Dr. Wes Habley, ACT, Inc.



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**The key to effective speaking**  
is to avoid talking while others are sleeping

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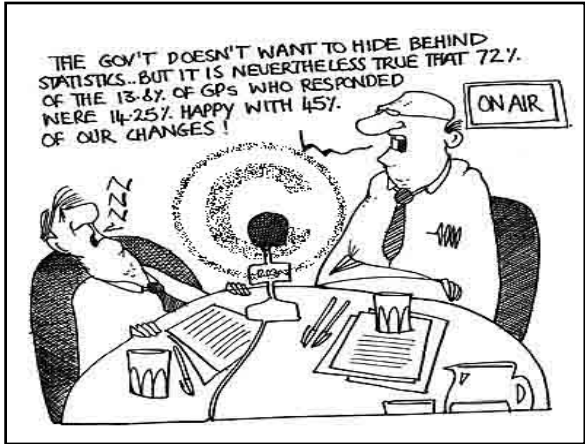
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### Fundamental of Persistence

☞ Retention should not be an institutional goal but rather the by-product of improved educational programs and services for students.

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### Types of Attrition

- ☞ **Expected and Justified**
  - ❖ realized a goal other than a degree/certificate
- ☞ **Stopping Out**
  - ❖ not on our timeframe
- ☞ **Unnecessary and subject to institutional intervention**

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### Definitions

- ☞ **Retention:** The process of holding or keeping in one's possession
  
- ☞ **Attrition:** The process or state of being gradually worn down
  
- ☞ **Persistence:** To continue to exist or prevail

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**RETENTION**



The process of holding or keeping in one's possession

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**ATTRITION**



The process or state of being gradually worn down.

Migrant Mother, Dorothea Lange  
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division  
[reproduction number LC-USF34-9158-C]

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**PERSISTENCE**



To continue to exist or prevail

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### 1983-2008 Freshman-Sophomore Retention Trends

	Lowest %	Highest %	Current %
Two-year public	51.3 ('04)	53.7 ('08)	53.7
BA/BS public	66.4 ('96, '05)	70.0 ('04)	68.0
MA public	68.1 ('89)	71.6 ('06)	70.0
Ph.D. public	72.9 ('08)	78.1 ('04)	72.9
Two-year private	55.5 ('08)	72.6 ('92)	55.5
BA/BS private	69.6 ('08)	74.0 ('89)	69.6
MA private	72.3 ('08)	78.0 ('85)	72.3
Ph.D. private	80.4 ('08)	85.0 ('85)	80.4
<b>NATIONAL</b>	<b>65.7 ('08)</b>	<b>68.7 ('06)</b>	<b>65.7</b>

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### 1983-2008 Two-year College Completion Rates\*

	Highest %	Lowest %	Current %
Public	38.8 ('89)	27.1('07)	29.3
Private	66.4 ('90)	50.2('08)	50.2
<b>ALL</b>	<b>44.0 ('89)</b>	<b>28.9('06)</b>	<b>31.7</b>

\*completion of associate's degree in 3 years or less

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### 1983-2008 Four-year College Completion Rates\*

	Highest %	Lowest %	Current %
BA/BS public	52.8 ('86)	39.6 ('06)	40.3
MA/MS public	46.7 ('86)	37.0 ('00)	38.8
Ph.D. public	50.6 ('90)	45.0 ('01)	48.6
BA/BS private	56.1 ('08)	53.3 ('01)	56.1
MA/MS private	58.4 ('88)	53.5 ('01)	55.4
Ph.D. private	68.8 ('86)	63.1 ('05)	63.4
<b>NATIONAL</b>	<b>54.6 ('90)</b>	<b>50.9 ('01)</b>	<b>52.5</b>

\*completion of bachelor's degree in five years or less

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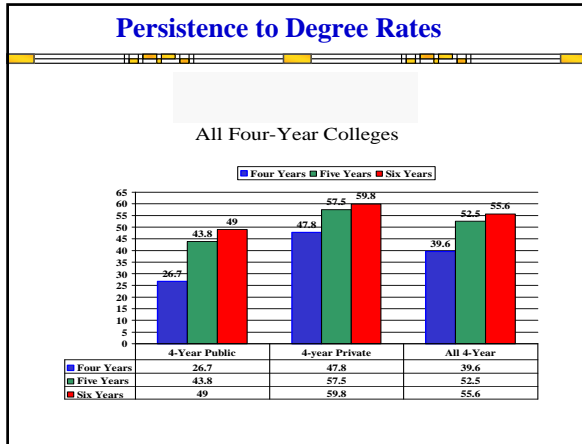
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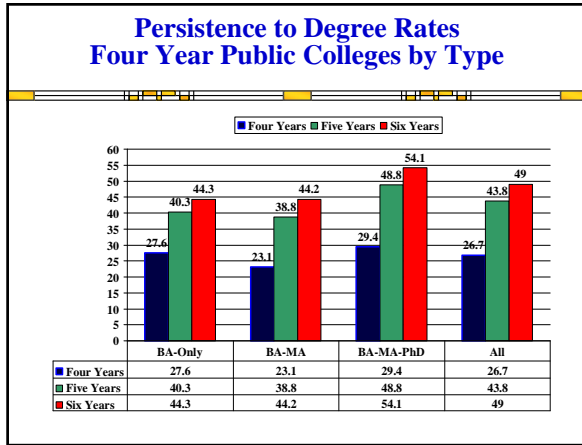
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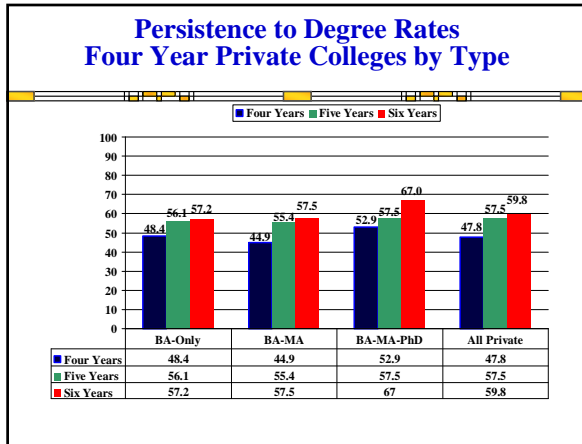
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**Degree attainment and persistence (after 6 years)**

All Institutions	
Obtained Bachelor's Degree	22.8
Obtained Associate's Degree	10.0
Obtained Certificate	12.0
Still enrolled at 4-year college	8.8
Still enrolled at 2-year college	5.6
Not enrolled/no degree	34.8

Descriptive Summary of 1995-96 Beginning Postsecondary Students Six Years Later  
National Center for Educational Statistics, December, 2002

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- What Works in Student Retention (2009 Preliminary)**
- ☛ Survey Sections
    - ❖ Institutional Characteristics (24 items)
    - ❖ Student Characteristics (18 items)
    - ❖ Campus Practices (94 items and two wild cards)
  - ☛ Preliminary responses from 614 institutions
    - ❖ 141 four-year public colleges
    - ❖ 242 four-year private colleges
    - ❖ 144 community colleges
    - ❖ 50 vocational-technical colleges
    - ❖ 37 uncategorized

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**DATA - !%&#!%\*&&@!**

**Overwhelming**




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**What Works in Student Retention**

**Results for four-year public colleges**

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**Student Characteristics (four-year public)**

Of 18 student characteristics...

- ☞ 13 are cited as making a moderate contribution or higher to student attrition
- ☞ Student characteristics making the highest contribution to attrition
  - ❖ Level of preparation for college-level work
  - ❖ Study skills
  - ❖ Adequacy of personal financial resources
  - ❖ Level of student motivation to succeed
  - ❖ Level of student commitment to earning a degree
  - ❖ Student low socio-economic status

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**Institutional Characteristics (four-year public)**

Of 24 institutional characteristics...

- ☞ Only 6 are cited as making a moderate contribution or higher to student attrition
- ☞ Those institutional characteristics are:
  - ❖ Amount of financial aid available
  - ❖ Ratio of loans to other forms of financial aid
  - ❖ Quality of interaction between faculty and students
  - ❖ Student-institution fit
  - ❖ Consistency of instructional quality
  - ❖ Student employment opportunities

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**Greatest Contribution to Retention (four-year public)**

Program/Service clusters making the greatest contribution to retention fall into three categories

**Academic Advising**

**Learning Assistance/Academic Support**

**First Year Transition Programs**

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**Highest Rated Interventions – four year public colleges**

- ☞ Increase number of advisors (4.1)
- ☞ Academic advising center (4.0)
- ☞ Advising interventions with selected student populations (4.0)
- ☞ Supplemental instruction (4.0)
- ☞ Summer bridge program (3.9)
- ☞ Comprehensive learning assistance center (3.9)
- ☞ Honors student programs (3.9)

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**Greatest Impact (four-year public)**

- ☞ Identify the three programs on your campus that you believe have the highest impact on student retention.
  - ❖ Freshman Seminar/University 101 for credit (23%)
  - ❖ Supplemental Instruction (15%)
  - ❖ Tutoring (15%)
  - ❖ Advising Interventions for selected student populations (14%)
  - ❖ Residential Living/Learning Communities (11%)
  - ❖ All remaining practices (89) cited at fewer than 10% of the colleges

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**What Works in Student Retention**

**Results for four-year private colleges**

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**Student Characteristics (four-year private)**

Of 18 student characteristics...

- ☞ 10 are cited as making a moderate contribution or higher to student attrition
- ☞ Student characteristics making the highest contribution to attrition
  - ❖ Adequacy of personal financial resources
  - ❖ Level of student preparation for college-level work
  - ❖ Student study skills
  - ❖ Level of student motivation to succeed
  - ❖ Level of student commitment to earning a degree
  - ❖ Student personal coping skills

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**Institutional Characteristics (four-year private)**

Of 24 institutional characteristics...

- ☞ Only 3 are cited as making a moderate contribution or higher to student attrition
  - ❖ Amount of financial aid available to students
  - ❖ Student-institution fit
  - ❖ Ratio of loans to other forms of financial aid

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**Greatest Contribution to Retention (four-year private)**

Program/Service clusters making the greatest contribution to retention fall into three categories

- Academic Advising**
- Learning Support**
- First-Year Transition Programs**

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**Highest Rated Interventions – four year private colleges**

- ☞ Academic advising center (4.0)
- ☞ Advising interventions with selected student populations (3.9)
- ☞ Comprehensive learning assistance center (3.9)
- ☞ Extended freshman orientation (3.8)
- ☞ Integration of advising with first-year transition programs (3.8)
- ☞ Reading center/lab (3.8)
- ☞ Pre-enrollment financial aid advising (3.8)

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**Greatest Impact (four-year private)**

- ☞ Identify the three programs on your campus that you believe have the highest impact on student retention?
  - ❖ Freshman seminar/university 101 for credit (19%)
  - ❖ Early warning system (16%)
  - ❖ Advising Interventions with Selected Student Populations (11%)
  - ❖ Faculty mentoring (11%)
  - ❖ All remaining practices (90) cited at fewer than 10% of the colleges

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**What Works in Student Retention**

**Results for community colleges**

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**Student Characteristics (community colleges)**

Of 18 student characteristics...

- ☞ 15 are cited as making a moderate contribution or higher to student attrition
- ☞ Student characteristics cited as making the greatest contribution to attrition are:
  - ❖ Level of student preparation for college-level work
  - ❖ Level of commitment to earning a degree
  - ❖ Student study skills
  - ❖ Level of student motivation to succeed
  - ❖ Adequacy of personal financial resources

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**Institutional Characteristics (community colleges)**

Of 24 institutional characteristics...

- ☞ Only 6 are cited as making a moderate contribution or higher to student attrition
- ❖ Amount of financial aid available to students
- ❖ Student engagement opportunities in the classroom
- ❖ Quality of interaction between faculty and students
- ❖ Student employment opportunities
- ❖ Student access to financial aid advising and information
- ❖ Adequate academic/learning support services

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**Greatest Contribution to Retention (community colleges)**

Program/Service clusters making the greatest contribution to retention fall into three categories

- Learning Assistance/Academic Support**
- Academic Advising**
- Assessment and Course Placement**

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**Highest Rated Interventions (community colleges)**

- ☞ Nine interventions with a mean rating of 4.0
  - ❖ Increased number of academic advisors
  - ❖ Mandated placement in courses based on test scores
  - ❖ Remedial/developmental coursework required
  - ❖ Comprehensive learning assistance center
  - ❖ Math center/lab
  - ❖ Writing center/lab
  - ❖ Reading center/lab
  - ❖ Tutoring
  - ❖ Programs for first generation students

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**Greatest Impact (community colleges)**

- ☞ Identify the three programs on your campus that you believe have the highest impact on student retention?
  - ❖ Mandated course placement testing (28%)
  - ❖ Tutoring program (19%)
  - ❖ Required remedial/developmental courses (12%)
  - ❖ Academic advising center (12%)
  - ❖ Summer orientation (12%)
  - ❖ All remaining practices cited at fewer than 10% of the colleges

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**What Works in Student Retention**  
**Results for Vocational/  
Technical Colleges**

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**Student Characteristics**  
**(vocational/technical colleges)**

Of 18 student characteristics...

- ☞ 14 are cited as making a moderate contribution or higher to student attrition
- ☞ Student characteristics cited as making the greatest contribution to attrition are:
  - ❖ Level of commitment to earning a degree
  - ❖ Student study skills
  - ❖ Level of student motivation to succeed
  - ❖ Adequacy of personal financial resources
  - ❖ Student personal coping skills

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**Institutional Characteristics**  
**(vocational/technical colleges)**

Of 24 institutional characteristics...

- ☞ 8 are cited as making a moderate contribution or higher to student attrition
  - ❖ Amount of financial aid available to students
  - ❖ Quality of interaction between faculty and students
  - ❖ Student employment opportunities
  - ❖ Consistency of instructional quality
  - ❖ Student engagement opportunities in the classroom (active learning)
  - ❖ Quality of interaction between staff and students
  - ❖ Student-institution fit
  - ❖ Student access to financial aid advising and information

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**Greatest Contribution to Retention (vocational/technical colleges)**

Program/Service Clusters making the greatest contribution to retention fall into three categories

- Academic Advising**
- Learning Assistance/Academic Support**
- Career Planning and Placement**

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**Highest Rated Interventions (vocational/technical colleges)**

- ☞ Top-rated interventions
  - ❖ Supplemental instruction (4.2)
  - ❖ Summer bridge program (4.2)
  - ❖ Enhanced/modified faculty reward system (4.1)
  - ❖ Performance contracts for students in academic difficulty (4.1)
  - ❖ Reading center/lab (4.1)
  - ❖ Seven interventions tied at 4.0

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**Greatest Impact (vocational/technical colleges)**

- ☞ Identify the three programs on your campus that you believe have the highest impact on student retention?
  - ❖ Vocational aptitude assessment (18%)
  - ❖ Early warning system (16%)
  - ❖ Tutoring program (12%)
  - ❖ Mandated course placement (12%)
  - ❖ Required remedial/developmental courses (12%)
  - ❖ Pre-enrollment financial aid advising (10%)
  - ❖ All remaining practices (87) cited at fewer than 10% of the colleges

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**Summary**  
Top-Ranked Institutional Attrition Characteristics

Institutional Characteristic	All	vo-tech	CC	4-public	4-private*
Amount of financial aid available to students	1	1	1	1	1
Ratio of loans to other forms of financial aid	5	x	x	2	3
Student Institution fit	2	x	4	4	2
Quality of Interaction between faculty and students	3	3	2	2	x

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**Summary**  
Top-Ranked Institutional Attrition Characteristics

Institutional Characteristic	All	vo-tech	CC	4-public	4-private*
Student engagement opportunities in the classroom	4	2	2	4	x
Student employment opportunities	x	2	4	3	x
Consistency of instructional quality	x	4	x	6	x
Adequate academic/learning support services	x	x	6	x	x

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**Summary**  
Top-Ranked Student Attrition Characteristics

Student Characteristic	All	vo-tech	Com. Col.	4-public	4-private*
Adequacy of personal financial resources	1	1	4	1	1
Level of Student Preparation for college work	2	x	1	1	2
Student Study Skills	3	4	2	1	3

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### Summary Top-Ranked Student Attrition Characteristics

Student Characteristic	All	vo-tech	CC	4-public	4-private*
Level of Student motivation to succeed	4	1	4	4	4
Level of Commitment to earning a degree	5	1	2	5	5
Student personal coping skills	x	5	x	x	5

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### John Gardner comments....

It is disturbing to note....that in spite of all we know about student retention that institutions are still inclined to *hold students responsible* for their retention/attrition while dramatically *minimizing the institutional role* in student retention.

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### Highest Rated Intervention Clusters

	4-public	4-private	CC	Vo-Tech
Academic Advising	1	1	2	1
Learning Assistance/ Academic Support	2	2	1	2
First-Year Transition Programs	3	3	X	X
Assessment/Course Placement	X	X	3	X
Career Planning/ Placement	X	X	X	3

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**Additional Analyses**

☞ 106 colleges with black student enrollment  $\geq$  20%

☞ 33 colleges with Hispanic student enrollment  $\geq$  20%

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**Educational Attainment Levels**  
25 years of age and over

Race	HS Grad	Some Coll.	BA or +
<b>ALL</b>	<b>84.6%</b>	<b>52.5%</b>	<b>27.0%</b>
<b>All White</b>	<b>85.1%</b>	<b>52.9%</b>	<b>27.6%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic (white)</b>	<b>89.4%</b>	<b>56.4%</b>	<b>30.0%</b>
<b>Black alone</b>	<b>80.0%</b>	<b>44.7%</b>	<b>17.3%</b>
<b>Asian alone</b>	<b>87.6%</b>	<b>67.4%</b>	<b>49.8%</b>
<b>Hispanic (any race)</b>	<b>57.0%</b>	<b>29.6%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>

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Asian/American	Caucasian	3
Asian/American	Hispanic/American	3
	Caucasian	1
Caucasian	Hispanic/American	2
	Caucasian	1
African/Hispanic/American	Caucasian	1
African/Caucasian/American	Asian American	2
Asian American	African/American	1

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### Student Characteristics Hispanic Institutions

- Of 18 student characteristics...
- 15 are cited as making a moderate contribution or higher to student attrition
  - Student characteristics cited as making the greatest contribution to attrition are:
    - Level of preparation for college-level work
    - Adequacy of personal financial resources
    - Student study skills
    - Level of job demands on students
    - Level of student motivation to succeed
    - Student family responsibilities

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**Institutional Characteristics  
Hispanic Institutions**

- Of 24 institutional characteristics...
- ☞ 13 are cited as making a moderate contribution or higher to student attrition.
- ☞ Institutional characteristics cited as making the greatest contribution to attrition are:
  - ❖ Amount of financial aid available to students
  - ❖ Quality of interaction between faculty and students
  - ❖ Student engagement opportunities in the classroom
  - ❖ Student access to financial aid advising and information
  - ❖ Consistency of instructional quality
  - ❖ Adequate academic/learning support services

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**Student Characteristics  
Black Institutions**

- Of 18 student characteristics...
- ☞ 13 are cited as making a moderate contribution or higher to student attrition
- ☞ Student characteristics cited as making the greatest contribution to attrition are:
  - ❖ Level of certainty about educational major
  - ❖ Level of preparation for college-level work
  - ❖ Student low socio-economic status
  - ❖ Student study skills
  - ❖ Level of student motivation to succeed
  - ❖ Level of job demands

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**Institutional Characteristics  
Black Institutions**

- Of 24 institutional characteristics...
- ☞ 9 are cited as making a moderate contribution or higher to student attrition
- ☞ Institutional characteristics cited as making the greatest contribution to attrition are:
  - ❖ Amount of financial aid available to students
  - ❖ Quality of interaction between faculty and students
  - ❖ Student employment opportunities
  - ❖ Student engagement opportunities in the classroom (active learning)
  - ❖ Level of academic advisors' concern for students

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**Distribution of Means**

Number of Items	All Colleges	≥ 20% Black	≥ 20% Hispanic
Less than 3.0	9	1	10
3.0 – 3.2	16	13	16
3.2 – 3.5	28	30	28
3.6 – 3.8	21	32	21
3.8 and above	19	18	19

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**Distribution of Means**

Number of Items Rated	All Colleges	≥ 20% Black	≥ 20% Hispanic
Less than 3.0	9	1	10
3.0 – 3.2	16	13	16
3.2 – 3.5	28	30	28
3.6 – 3.8	21	32	21
3.8 and above	19	18	19

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**Distribution of Means**

Number of Items	All Colleges	≥ 20% Black	≥ 20% Hispanic
Less than 3.0	9	1	10
3.0 – 3.2	16	13	16
3.2 – 3.5	28	30	28
3.6 – 3.8	21	32	21
3.8 and above	19	18	19

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**Agreement on High Impact Interventions**

Identified by 10% or more of the institutions	All Colleges	≥ 20% Black	≥ 20% Hispanic
<b>Freshman Seminar/University 101 (credit)</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>18%</b>

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**Agreement on High Impact Interventions**

Identified by 10% or more of the institutions	All Colleges	≥ 20% Black	≥ 20% Hispanic
Freshman Seminar/University 101 (credit)	15%	19%	18%
<b>Mandated placement of students in courses based on test scores</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>12%</b>

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**Agreement on High Impact Interventions**

Identified by 10% or more of the institutions	All Colleges	≥ 20% Black	≥ 20% Hispanic
Freshman Seminar/University 101 (credit)	15%	19%	18%
Mandated placement of students in courses based on test scores	12%	20%	12%
Early warning system	12%	12%	15%

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### Additional High Impact Interventions

- ☛ All Colleges
  - ❖ Tutoring
- ☛ Colleges with  $\geq 20\%$  Black students
  - ❖ Required remedial/developmental coursework
  - ❖ Study skills course, program, or center
- ☛ Colleges with  $\geq 20\%$  Hispanic students
  - ❖ Training faculty advisors
  - ❖ Academic advising center
  - ❖ Supplemental Instruction
  - ❖ Math center/lab
  - ❖ Tutoring

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### What Works in Student Retention?

Dr. Wes Habley, ACT, Inc.



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