

**Title III Coordinating
Committee:**

Carrie Ahern, Kristy Ahrendt, Ethelle Bean, Patti Beck, Linda Brozik, Amy Crissinger, Judy Dittman, Sara Hare, Meghan Peterson, Steve Shirley, Cecelia Wittmayer

Title III Objectives:

- Develop an information-based student support system that includes early alert, registration, and student tracking.
- Redesign developmental education courses and tutoring to support student success.
- Increase accuracy, accessibility, and efficiency of timely institutional data.

Important Dates:

Advising Training **April 24th**

Student Engagement Webinar **April 24th**

Retention Committee **April 25th**

Advising Training **April 30th**

www.departments.dsu.edu/assessment/

www.intranet.dsu.edu

Title III Newsletter

Strengthening Student Success & Retention through Improved Information Access and Services

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Collaboration Is Key to Successful Retention Efforts at DSU

*Written by Kate Stover, Editor,
Magna Publications*

“Increased collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs” may be on the wish list for many campuses, but it’s increasingly the way of life at Dakota State University in Madison, South Dakota. Their Institutional Effectiveness Committee includes representatives from each office on campus so that everyone can support the strategic plan’s goals.

Why everyone? There is a lot to do: In 2004, DSU received a five-year Title III Grant, joined the Higher Learning Commission’s Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP), and developed several new retention strategies. These three ambitious initiatives share a set of seven projects.

Recently, *Recruitment & Retention* spoke with Steven Shirley, Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs; Ethelle Bean, Title III Project Coordinator; and Carrie Ahern, Title III Activity Director about what has led to the increased level of collaboration on campus. The group identified four factors:

1. *The nature of student success requires cross-campus efforts:* According to Steven Shirley, a number of things triggered the increase, but perhaps the greatest was the

emphasis on increasing student retention by supporting student success, which involves virtually everyone. “We recognize that the lines of responsibility don’t really start and stop anywhere,” says Steven Shirley, Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs. “Whether you’re in academic affairs or student affairs, student success is in your domain.”

“Our goal is to improve student success through access to services and information,” said Ethelle Bean, “and we are a small campus, with a limited number of staff and resources.”

2. *Goals and strategies are clear, measurable, and communicated well:* Because there is so much going on, there has been a huge effort to coordinate and clarify the initiatives. The goals for all three programs (Title III, AQIP, and Retention) have been aligned, so that it’s clear how specific strategies help in multiple ways. That means that people understand how their work fits with the overall effort.

As a result, “you do see people throughout campuses talking about retention” notes Carrie Ahern.

For an example of an outcome of collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs, Ahern points to the new “Living and Learning Community” for women in technology. Early indications show that this program may help

achieve the goals of increasing the number of women who enter technology programs and stay in them.

3. *There is an entrepreneurial campus spirit:* Collaboration is further aided by the “entrepreneurial, innovative” spirit of the campus, says Bean. “We try to avoid analysis paralysis. We just try things. We do a pilot and see if it works.” Then, after the event, the team will talk about what can be done better.

For example, she says that when there was an “underwhelming” response to an event for mid-year transfer students, the committee identified the barriers and redesigned the program, which resulted in better attendance when the event ran the next time. It’s important, she noted, to have a campus where people are willing to take risks instead of waiting for the perfect plan to emerge.

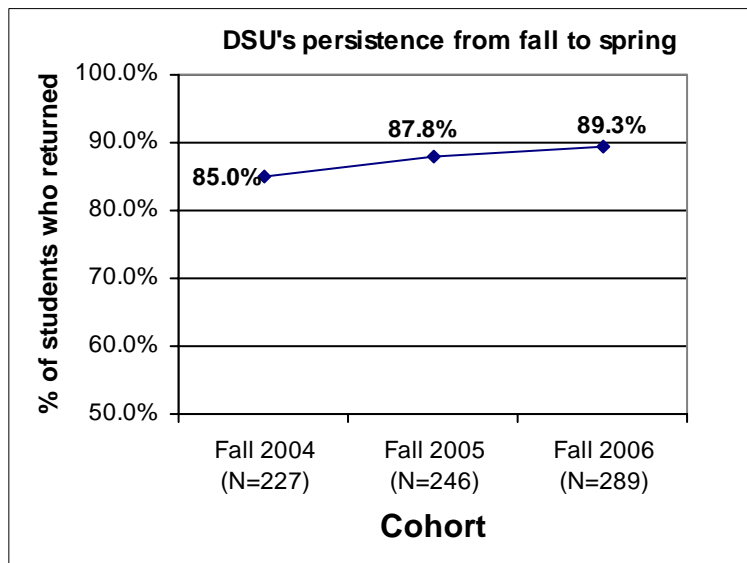
4. *The retention committee has strong cross-campus backing:* The retention committee’s co-chairs are the vice president of student affairs and the vice president of academic affairs, which sends a very clear signal that an integrated effort is expected.

“On a small campus, if we’re going to make progress and move forward, we can’t have turf battles or we won’t get anywhere,” said Shirley.

Persistence Pays

Kristy Ahrendt, Information Development Specialist

Each fall and spring semester, Dakota State University tracks the percentage of first-time, full-time, baccalaureate, degree-seeking freshmen who return to DSU the subsequent semester. As illustrated in the graph below, DSU's term-to-term persistence rate has gradually increased over the past three years.



*Note: The "N" represents the number of students in the fall cohort who were identified as first-time, full-time, baccalaureate, degree-seeking students.

Proficiency Preparation Update

Carrie Ahern, Title III Activity Director

During Spring 2007, the Title III Grant provided funds for faculty to develop new methods to assist students in their preparation for the system-wide proficiency exams. Students in the South Dakota regental institutions must receive a minimum score on the ACT Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) in the areas of reading, writing, math and science reasoning.

More information on the exams and the procedures for students is available at

<http://www.departments.dsu.edu/assessment/proficiency.htm>.

Maureen Murphy, Assistant Professor of English, and Barb Szczerbinska, Assistant Professor of Physics, developed review modules and conducted practice sessions for DSU students who were retaking the exams in science, reading, and writing. Rich Avery, Associate Professor of Mathematics, prepared online review modules for students who were retaking the math exam.

The students completed their retests in March and the results will be used to recommend modifications to the process for next year.

Year 2 Produces Many Accomplishments

Carrie Ahern, Title III Activity Director

Each December, the University compiles information for the US Department of Education's Annual Performance Report (APR). The 2nd year of the Title III Grant (October 1, 2005 to September 30, 2006) focused on supporting student success through the accomplishment of four major objectives.

Highlights reported in the Year 2 Report:

- DSU's Development Office raised matching funds to enhance the Title III Endowment
- Usage of online tutoring service increased from 85 sessions to 252 sessions
- 99% of the main campus freshmen registered online for the redesigned first-year experience course
- Students' success rates in the developmental math course increased by 11%
- The Math Center provided a comfortable learning environment for students in DSU's developmental math courses
- Title III Staff presented DSU's accomplishments at national conferences
- The Title III-funded Dashboard system provided access to several institutional reports critical to the decision-making process
- DSU piloted a new living-learning community for women in technology
- An enhanced Early Alert Referral System was re-piloted in Fall 2006, and Fall to Spring retention increased for referred students

Longitudinal Database Developed

Kristy Ahrendt, *Information Development Specialist*

DSU recently implemented several retention initiatives (e.g. early alert, tutoring, retention modeling) to support student success. To evaluate the initiatives, DSU is developing a longitudinal, comprehensive database. The database will include specific data elements for each initiative which will

be collected each term over the next six years. This database will facilitate statistical analysis of the relationship among the metrics of each initiative and the link to several indicators of student success. For example, the database will enable us to track the usage of SMARTHINKING by subject and time in relation to students' GPA at various time points in their academic

career. DSU's Retention Committee distributes an annual *Retention Report* which includes a general overview of DSU's retention trends, peer comparisons, and retention rates by selected variables (e.g. major, gender, ACT scores).



Student Support Specialist Reports on Academic Advising Conference

Patti Beck, *Student Support Specialist*

I recently attended the 2007 Region 7 NACADA Conference, held in Austin, TX. Presentations on many topics regarding best practices in academic advising were available. Of special interest were several presentations that focused on strategies to improve the persistence of incoming freshmen.

A faculty/staff team from Lamar University (Beaumont, TX) recently developed a new orientation presentation to address a common miscon-

ception shared by many new freshmen: *College is basically the same as high school.* The message they deliver to the students is, "Wrong!" A brief part of Lamar's actual orientation presentation, which provides more realistic information on what college will be like, including the responsibilities of the student, was demonstrated.

Faculty advisors from the University of North Texas (Denton, TX) gave a presentation on recent changes implemented in their new student orientation program. This session focused specifically on the development of a

standard "Freshman Guide Book."

The Guide Book was developed as a mini catalogue, with content and format directed toward the needs of their new freshman population.

The information available at the conference was very beneficial. I would be happy to share information in more detail to any campus groups that may be interested. Materials from the conference sessions will also be available soon on the Region 7 website at: http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Regional_Divisions/region7/index.htm

News Items

Meghan Peterson, *Retention Specialist*

Advising Training - This spring, the Faculty Advising Specialist Team continued its series of advising training sessions. Topics covered this semester include working with underprepared students, strengths-based advising, NSSE/FSSE results and brainstorming, identifying troubled students, assisting students with disabilities, and practical advising matters. On April 24th, Lynette Molstad-Gorder and Marie Lohsandt will present a workshop entitled "Advising Students about Career Opportunities" at noon in TCB 109. Peg O'Brien will present the final workshop of the semester, "Advising Non-Traditional Students," at noon on April 30th in TCB 111. For additional advising information and resources, please see the faculty advising handbook, available online at www.courses.dsu.edu/onlineadvising/.

System-wide Retention Committee - In January 2003, Tad Perry, Executive Director of the South Dakota Board of Regents, appointed a taskforce to review retention practices at each of the public universities in the state. A new system-wide retention committee was formed in November 2006 to review the recommendations from the 2003 taskforce and establish new retention strategies to guide the institutions for the next five years. The committee is also charged with updating the literature and best practice reviews, examining current system-wide retention practices, and preparing a report for the Board. Judy Dittman and Meghan Peterson are serving as DSU's representatives on this committee. The final report is due to the BOR in June.



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For more information on DSU's Title III Grant, check out
<http://www.intranet.dsu.edu/titleiii/>

The Title III Grant website includes the following information:

- Title III organizational chart, grant administration, Title III-funded positions, and Title III committees
- Progress evaluation plan, monthly progress reports, and evaluation of annual objectives
- Year I & II External Evaluator reports and review procedures
- Title III Grant policy and personnel procedures