

STAY@FAU

OFFICE OF STUDENT RETENTION NEWSLETTER

WHAT IS STUDENT RETENTION?

Retention is a University-wide initiative to ensure that all students have ample opportunity to complete a degree at Florida Atlantic University. The Office of Student Retention was created to coordinate activities between academic and student affairs divisions; support and monitor students' academic progress; coordinate with academic advisement units; provide referrals to campus resources and support services; and coordinate programs that foster the academic success of students. These efforts have been established in order to retain a greater percentage of students through the completion of their educational goals.

RETENTION COMMITTEE

The University Retention Committee, chaired by Jennifer Bebergal, is composed of students, faculty and staff from throughout the University. The committee has helped to create a University-wide Retention Action Plan (see below) and is currently examining several issues and making recommendations to enhance student retention. Retention Committee members are Diane Alperin, Mike Armstrong, Leslie Bates, Jennifer Bebergal, Pat Breman, Pamela Byrd, Leslie Cannon, Albert Colom, Skip Cory-Scruggs, Bob Cramer, Ulla Dawidowska, Harry DeMik, Tom Dorworth, Nanetta Durnell-Uwechue, Constance Foley, Wayne Hill, Fred

Hoffman, Ray Holland, Mark Jackson, Norman Kaufman, Ken Keaton, Elizabeth Kennedy, Frank Kora, Dorothy Leland, Steve Locke, Anthony Lombardo, William Miller, Mikki Minney, Kristen Murtaugh, Carole Pfeilsticker, Nardeo Pooran, Nancy Poulson, Rosanne Proite, Marc Rhorer, Sharron Ronco, Jeff Schilit, Alex Smolka, George Sparks, Joyanne Stephens, Karl Stevens, and Charles White

RETENTION ACTION PLAN

The Retention Action Plan developed by the Retention Committee has been approved as a University-wide retention plan. Some of the key components of the plan include:

- The creation of a survey, administered at Orientation for entering students, to better understand the goals and expectations of FAU students;
- Follow-up phone-calls by the Orientation staff to all incoming freshmen to check student progress and make referrals as needed;
- A survey of first baccalaureate students who leave FAU prior to graduation to determine why they left and whether we can help them return to FAU in the future;
- A survey of first baccalaureate students who withdraw from all semester courses to determine why they left and whether we can help them return to FAU in the future;
- Counseling for students on probation, possibly through Counseling Center intervention;

- The creation of student focus groups with target populations across all campuses to increase awareness of student needs and concerns and to identify possible barriers to student success and make recommendations
- Development of a comprehensive "First-year-experience" to include Orientation, initial advising, mandatory SLS 1501 course, residential life and creation of cohort groups;
- Creation of a University-wide Retention newsletter to be published once each fall and spring semester to educate the FAU community as to their role in retention;
- Enhancement of student service, which may include name tags for staff members and encouraging faculty and staff to wear FAU

insignia clothing to promote FAU spirit;

- Involvement of faculty and staff in recruiting/orientation/ advising/ retention activities;
- Training for faculty and staff to make referrals to campus-wide services so that students get complete and accurate information;
- Evaluation of services that are key for retention and recommendations (at all levels and all campuses) to include Academic advising, Orientation programs, Tutorial services, Mentoring program, Counseling services, Career services, Financial Aid and scholarships, Housing, Campus Life and Honors programs; and
- Involvement of parents in retention efforts (Parent Weekend, Parent Orientation program, Parent Association).



FACTS

The Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students (FACTS) system was created as a single statewide academic advising system for all of Florida's postsecondary and distance education students. It offers current and prospective students a comprehensive suite of academic services and information, all accessible from a single web site: www.facts.org. Please encourage your students to use FACTS to run degree audits to track progress toward graduation and to view transcripts on-line.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: FAU TUTORING & MENTOR PROGRAMS

In each issue of STAY@FAU, a particular office or service that works to improve student retention rates will be highlighted. Just a few of the highlights you can find in future editions will include a focus on career and personal counseling, financial aid, residential life, and student development and activities.

FAU TUTORING SERVICES

The Office of Multicultural Affairs is helping hundreds of students each year to achieve their academic goals. It does this through numerous efforts, including the Academic Enhancement Program, which provides tutoring services to those students who have either recognized their need for additional help or who have been advised by their instructors to seek it out.

Central to this effort is a small corps of volunteers, mostly retirees from fields relevant to the subjects in which they tutor – English, math, physics and Spanish. With an impressive combination of degrees and practical experience, these volunteers are a necessary supplement to the limited number of student tutors who can be hired under university budget restraints. Their length of service, ranging from four to nine years, attests to the fact that they love their work. Here's how English tutor Sue Gardner describes her work: "The students crowding into the FAU Office of Multicultural Affairs for tutoring seek personal attention that often is desperately needed. English tutors provide one-on-one instruction in a quiet, non-distracting environment to freshmen often shocked by the demands of a college-level writing course. A tutor may also assist an upperclassman or graduate student intent on submitting a good paper in virtually any subject

taught on campus. Reviewing for the CLAST, other students concentrate with a tutor on basic rules of grammar and punctuation. When a student returns for additional sessions, bearing an essay that has received an improved grade, pride in the achievement emanates from both student and tutor."

Math tutor Emanuel "Manny" Halpern puts it this way: "Mathematics is such a varied field that it can never become boring. And the individuals who come for help are of such a variety: all ages, both sexes, many different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. I find it hard to imagine a more interesting or worthwhile occupation." In a recent semester, volunteers provided more than 350 hours of tutoring help, but the demand keeps growing. Referrals of additional candidates would be appreciated.

The Multicultural Affairs Office in Davie also offers tutoring services in specific subjects (eg: Accounting, Finance and C++) and in general education areas as students prepare for the CLAST exam. Students from all campuses are invited to sign up for tutoring opportunities at any FAU campus. In order to facilitate this process, a new Web site is being developed at www.fau.edu/tutoring/ to provide students with information about University-wide tutoring services that are available.

Students in need of tutoring should call (561) 297-3959 (Boca) or (954) 236-1256 (Davie) to schedule an appointment or visit www.fau.edu/tutoring/ to learn more about tutoring opportunities at FAU. If you know a student who could benefit from a little extra assistance in his or her courses, please make the referral to the Multicultural Affairs Offices.

MENTORING

The FAU Mentoring Program is another service provided by the Office of Multicultural Affairs. With a mission of the retention and success of FAU students, the program consists of administrators, faculty, staff, and graduate students who volunteer their time to mentor freshmen, sophomore, and junior transfer students. The FAU mentors assist the students (protégés) in connecting and adjusting to FAU. Mentors encourage students to persist in accomplishing their own educational, social, personal, and career goals.

Mentoring is a one-on-one learning opportunity for both students and mentors. It is also a networking opportunity as the program offers group activities. A mentoring committee has been formed to assess the program and make suggestions for improvement. Jaquira Brown, a sophomore in the mentoring program, likes having a mentor who she can talk to easily. "My mentor is available and I can just stop by to talk about classes, or life in general."

To join the mentoring program, the potential mentor or protégé needs to complete an application. Based upon the information provided, the mentoring program coordinator matches the student with a mentor. They then meet at times that are mutually convenient, and create a personalized learning plan to reach the student's goals. For more information or to become a mentor/refer a protégé, contact Renata Carvalho, Mentoring Program Coordinator. E-mail: rcar2985@fau.edu or call 297-0157.

THE STUDENT IS...

...the most important person on the campus.
Without students, there would be no need for the institution.
 ...not a cold enrollment statistic,
but a flesh and blood human with feelings and emotions like our own.
 ...not someone to be tolerated so that we can do our thing.
They are our thing.
 ...not dependent on us.
Rather, we are dependent on them.
 ...not an interruption of our work,
but the purpose of it.
We are not doing them a favor by serving them. They are doing us a favor by giving us the opportunity to do so.
 by Larry Tyree

President, Santa Fe Community College

HOW CAN I HELP?

Another regular feature of STAY@FAU is the "how can I help" section. A question we often hear in the Office of Retention is "What can I do as a member of the FAU community to enhance student satisfaction and retention?" Each newsletter will give tips for faculty and staff – little things that you can do to help to retain students.

The "how can I help" tip for the spring semester is for each of us to get involved with our students. Sign up to become a mentor through the Office of

Multicultural Affairs or volunteer to help teach the one-credit introduction to academic life course, "Learning Strategies and Human Development," SLS 1501. Although we are all busy, spending just a little bit of time getting to know our students and helping them to succeed make all of our jobs more rewarding and satisfying.

Dr. John Childrey sent this reminder about the important role of the faculty and staff in retention efforts:

1. *Being available to students.*
2. *Keeping lines of communication open--especially with students*

struggling and in ultimate danger of failure.

3. *Telling students what courses will be available in upcoming semesters--informal advising before and after class.*
4. *Taking a minute or two to chat about upcoming lectures, community plays, exhibits, and events relative to a discipline or to the broader role of education (our Chamber Soloists, for example or the Psych Fair or "Meet the Faculty night"). The greater the participation, I believe, the greater the personalization' of educational experiences, and I suspect the greater the chance of retention and recruitment of others.*