Using The Foundations of Excellence, Institutional Data and the Process, Wabash National Study II and Institutional to Keep Students on the Path to Graduation

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Gallaudet University
Profile:

Located in Washington, D.C. 
Only bilingual liberal arts institution for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students 
23 years average age (undergraduate) 
980 undergraduate full time 
373 graduate full time 
26% from ethnically diverse backgrounds 
7% international 
85% receive financial assistance 
52% from schools for the deaf 
48% from mainstream programs
Timelines

• **2006-2007** Participation in the Foundations of Excellence (FoE) and identified data needs to answer key questions

• **2007-10** Implementation of FoE and development of concept Path to Graduation

• **2010-present** Wabash II (surveys targeting student literacy needs) and readministration of 2006 FoE surveys to document improvement
What is a Path?

• Path has
  – Goal and therefore direction
  – Guideposts or markers
  – Turning points and possible stumbling blocks

• Path to graduation should include
  – Career goal
  – Specific course plan
  – Key transition points
  – Imbedded support
Conceptualizing Movement to Graduation
I-E-O model - Astin

Prospective Students

Input Variables

Higher Ed Institutions

Environment

Output

Novice Professional Practitioners

Social/Emotional

Academic
Making the Path to Graduation Work

Gallaudet University

Prospective Students → Entry → Semester 1 → Semester 2 → Year 2 → Major → Novice Professional Practitioners

Personal Communities

Professional Communities

Entry Semester 1 Semester 2 Year 2 Major

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Roadblocks to the Path

1. Are students connecting to the institution?
2. Is early alert in place?
3. Are trigger courses – those with a high (more than 30%) DFWD rate identified addressed
4. What prevented students from earning credit?
Actions to address this

- **Institution** (culture, policy and practice – early alert)
- **Department** (pedagogy, expectations)
- **Course** (triggers -points where students struggle – curriculum – add SI and modify)
- **Instructor**  Reduce size or pace of assignments -- but not expectations or standards. If there are large numbers of failing students allow greater opportunity for success. i.e larger assignments with high percentage grades become several smaller sequential assignments. Are they available?
- **Student** (variables in input or present)
Need for a unifying concept:
Improve retention and six year graduation rates

Gallaudet University’s situation in 2007

- Attendance Pattern
- ACT
- Credits taken toward graduation

- Total Credits Taken
- GPA above 2.75
- Course Passage

- GPA above 2.5
- ENG 101 Course Passage
- Department Course Passage
Identifying the path: Recruit those who will succeed

Earned vs. attempted credits are up

Total number of credits are up
Identifying the path:
Provide intense, mandatory support in the first semester

Spring & Year 2 enrollment as a percentage of initial freshman Enrollment
Personal behavior that contributed to the retention of Fall 09 First Time Freshman

• Better class attendance
  – Retained averaged 3 instructor reported total course cuts versus 10 for leavers
• Less often referred for problems
  – Retained averaged 5 Starfish referrals versus 8 for leavers
  – Leavers almost two and one half times as likely to be recommended for tutoring
• More stable academic progress
  – Retained Fall term GPA (from mid-term to final) stayed the same while leavers declined 33%
Identifying the path: Move them into a major

Percentage of entering first time freshmen cohorts who declare a major by their fifth semester
What Supported the Improvement?

- High DFWD classes (43) had Supplemental Instruction
- Borderline Students admitted attended JUMP START & continued with Fall PLUS PROGRAM – academic coaching
- New Signers continued with Fall PLUS PROGRAM – support
- STAR FISH – Early Intervention identified students at risk
- Weekly intervention meeting with Directors of Student Success, Residence Life and Academic Advising
- Strong connections with athletics, and Keeping the Promise
- Costa Rica trip requires 2.75 or above GPA
- Stronger entering students
- Rigor and support in General Studies
- The “right people (faculty and staff) on the bus”
- Focused Financial Aid
Action Item - Short Term

**Faculty**
• Early Intervention
• Target prompt and timely feedback and strategies for helping students with reasonable chances of improving grades by the end of the semester

**Student Affairs**
• Communicate with Deans on academic issues related to Student Life via Student Success

**Student Success (FYE)**
• Weekly team meeting with Advising, Student Life
• Alert KTP when students of color are involved
• Assess and develop non-cognitive skills (EQ-i)

**Academic Deans and Department Chairs**
• Assess need at course and instructor level. Begin with high DFWD courses
• Major advisors contact all students with D and F and design action plan

**Advisors and Tutoring**
• Work with deans and chairs in tutoring and support
• Contact pre major students at risk and develop plans
Faculty Initiatives

• Early alert
• Early intervention
• Actions plans
• Faculty tutoring
• Understanding and addressing the whole student
• Faculty using best practices
• The right faculty
• Faculty taking ownership of the path
• Faculty learning communities
The Path Works

2007
- 100% First Fall Enrollment

2011
- 90% Return Semester 2
- 75% Return Year 2

2015
- 65% Enter Major
- 50% Graduate
References

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