

# From Retention to Persistence: Framing the Conversation



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**FACILITATED DISCUSSION AT THE 34<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE ON THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE**

# Session Agenda



- **Overview of Literature on Persistence and Retention**
- **Definitions of Retention**
- **Definitions of Persistence**
- **Top Practices**
- **Assessment of Practices**
- **Alignment of Practices**
- **Action Plans**

# Overview of Literature: Retention



- **Six-year graduation rates have remained relatively stable (50%)**
- **Policy focus has not made a significant impact on attrition rates**
- **Increasing diversity of student body could be one factor contributing toward less positive movement in retention percentages.**
- **Can be viewed as an organizational phenomenon**
- **Astin's (1993) I-E-O model**

# Overview of Literature: Persistence



- Can be viewed as an individual phenomenon
- Focus on goal-attainment
- Term is often used interchangeably with retention
- Tinto's theory of student departure

# What is Retention?



- **Retention (noun): The act of keeping someone or something**

# What is Persistence?



- **Persistence (noun):** The quality that allows someone to continue doing something or trying to do something even though it is difficult or opposed by other people

# Discussion Questions



- Is there a difference between retention and persistence?
- How do we bring these overall definitions in to a higher education context?

# Your Definition



- **Given your specific institutional role and context, develop your own definition of retention and persistence.**



# Retention Practices



- List 3-5 key retention practices you engage in at your institution
- How do you assess and measure these initiatives?

# The Third Column



- **Given your personal definition of retention and persistence, do your retention practices align with that definition?**

# Developing an Action Plan



- **What are next steps for continuing the conversation at your institution?**

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