2017 Texas Higher Education Leadership Conference
Making College More Affordable for Students

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High Impact Strategies.

GPS Advising: Use predictive analytics and a system of more than 800 alerts to track all undergraduates daily, to identify at-risk behaviors, and to have advisors respond to alerts by intervening in a timely fashion to get students back on track. System went fully live in August 2012. This past academic year, the system generated more than 52 ,000 individual meetings between advisors and students to discuss specific alerts - all aimed at getting the student back on path to graduation. Since Georgia State went live with GPS Advising, freshmen fall - to - spring retention rates have increased by 5 percentage points and graduating seniors are taking fewer excess courses in completing their degrees.

Results: Credit hours at the time of graduation (which have declined by an average of 8 credit hours per graduating student since 2011. Percent of students in majors that fit their academic abilities (up by 13 points) Progression rates have increased by 16 points (from 47% to 63%) Decline in changes of major in the sophomore, junior and senior years (down by 32%) Bachelor's degree six-year graduation rates are up 6 percentage points and associate degree three-year rates are up 5 percentage points since their respective launches (2012, 2016) Bachelor's degree conferrals up 22% and Associate degree conferrals up 17% since launches Wasted credit hours have declined by 8 credit hours per graduating student while average time to degree is down by half a semester, saving students roughly $15 million a year. All achievement gaps based on race, ethnicity and income have been eliminated. Boston Consulting Group has determined a positive ROI for the initiative

Panther Retention Grants (Emergency Financial Aid): *P*rovide micro - grants to students at the fee drop each semester to help cover modest financial shortfalls impacting the students' ability to pay tuition and fees to prevent students from stopping/dropping out. This past fall, more than 18,000 of Georgia State's 25,000+ bachelor - seeking students (72%) had some level of unmet need (we are using Fall 16 data to set a baseline for our associate - seeking students), meaning that even after grants, loans, scholarships, family contributions and the income generated from the student working 20 hours a week, the students lack sufficient funds to attend college. Each semester, hundreds of fully qualified students are dropped from their classes for lack of payment. For as little as $300, Panther Retention Grants provide the emergency funding to allow students who want to get their degrees the opportunity to stay enrolled. Last year, nearly 2,000 Georgia State students were brought back to the classroom - and kept on the path to attaining a college degree - through the program. 61% of the seniors who received PRG support last academic year graduated within two semesters of receiving the grant and 82% either had graduated or were still enrolled one year after receiving the grant. With 9,121 grants awarded over the past five years, the program has prevented literally thousands of students from dropping out of Georgia State.

Results: Of freshmen who were offered Panther Retention Grants in fall 2013, 93% enrolled the following spring, a rate higher than that of the student body as a whole. 83% of freshman PRG recipients returned to class in fall 2014. The retention rate for freshmen who were offered the grants in fall 2014 was 88%. We are also tracking the rate of "returnees" to the program, which we have been able to keep under 25%. Of the Perimeter College students receiving Panther Retention Grants during the Fall 2016 semester, 73% returned for the Spring 2017 term. 68% of seniors who receive the grant last year have graduated.

Chat-Bot Technology to Reduce Summer Melt: In the Fall 2015, almost 18% of Georgia State's incoming freshman class were victims of "summer melt." Having been accepted to GSU and having confirmed their plans to attend, these students never showed up for fall classes. We tracked these students using National Student Clearinghouse data and found that, one year later, 274 of these students (74% of whom were low - income) never attended a single day of college classes at any institution. We knew we needed to be far more proactive and personal with interacting with students between high - school graduation and the first day of college classes. Towards this end, we launched a new portal to track students through the fourteen steps they needed to complete during the summer (e.g., completing their FAFSA, supplying proof of immunization, taking placement exams) to be ready for the first day of college classes. We also become one of the first universities nationally to deploy a chat - bot in support of student success. In the summer of 2016, we piloted a new student portal with partner EAB to track where incoming freshmen are in the steps they need to complete during the summer before fall classes. With the help of Admit Hub, we deployed an artificial - intelligence - enhanced texting system, a chat-bot, that allowed students to text 24/7 from their smart devices any questions that they had about financial aid , registration, housing, admissions, and academic advising . We built a knowledge - base of 2,000 answers to commonly asked questions that served as the responses. We secured the services of Dr. Lindsey Page of the University of Pittsburgh as an independent evaluator of the project. From these efforts, we lowered "summer melt" by 2 2% in one year. This translates into 324 more students, mostly low - income and first - generation, enrolling for freshman fall who, one year earlier, were sitting out the college experience. Critical to success is building an adequate knowledge base of answers so students can rely on the system. Many students reported that they preferred the impersonal nature of the chat-bot.

Results: Summer Melt rate of 18% for the incoming freshman class of 2015. In the three months leading up to the start of Fall 2016 classes, the chat-bot replied to 201,000 student questions, with an average response time of 7 seconds. Summer Melt was reduced by 22% in one year, translating into 324 more students, mostly low-income, who matriculated for the Fall 2016 semester. Dr. Lindsey Page has published a research article confirming these results. See https://www.ecampusnews.com/top-news/gsu-summer-melt-enrollment/