

The Art of Combating Low Retention Rates: One South Texas University's Journey to Raising their Retention Rates through Effective Pedagogical and Administrative Practices

Abstract

Located in South Texas, Texas A&M University-Kingsville (TAMUK), A Hispanic Serving institution, just celebrated an all-time high Fall to Spring retention of 89%. This achievement came in part from a university-wide initiative to create a Center for Student Success (CFSS) in order to combat low retention rates in 2011. Thus in 2011, TAMUK established their CFSS. TAMUK's CFSS encompasses six components which make up their circle of care: Professional Developments, Freshman Seminar, Academic Advising, Academic Recovery, STARFISH Alert System, and Tutoring and Mentoring. This session discusses successes, challenges, and future goals of implementing a Center for Student Success.

To combat these low retention rates, a comprehensive circle of care model was developed to increase the retention rate at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. As to our knowledge, one like this was not developed and therefore we did not have any other institution to model this after. With formula funding now dependent upon retention and graduation rates, colleges and universities are looking at beginning or perfecting their First-Year Experience programs. It is up to colleges and universities to offer the innovative and comprehensive programming that will be helpful for freshmen students as they smoothly transition from high school to college. Texas A&M University-Kingsville (TAMUK), a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), created The Center for Student Success in 2011 to improve their 55% retention rate. Texas A&M University Kingsville's Center for Student Success based on a circle of care model was designed to support students who are entering Higher Education with a desire to develop and apply college readiness skills. TAMUK celebrates an all-time high academic retention rate of 89% from Fall 2018 to

Spring 2019. The Center for Student Success at Texas A&M University-Kingsville was formed in 2011 and houses numerous offices and programs that are integrated to aid students in this transition process. These resources come together to create a network of for first-year students. However, we continue to work on new initiatives to better prepare our students for their future. The programs' implementation, strategies, successes and challenges will serve as the basis for discussion.

Over the past 8 years, TAMUK has seen an increase each year in retention and graduation rates. Starting in 2011 at 55%, to now 70% Fall to Fall and 89% Fall to Spring, TAMUK's Center for Student Success has had a instrumental role in this success. In addition to institutional retention, the Center for Student Success collects qualitative and quantitative data in the form of survey's each semester from students currently in the Freshman Seminar. This is faculty, major, and content specific. After receiving and analyzing this data, action plans are put in to place to modify curriculum and implementation and provide appropriate professional developments for faculty members. Recent data shows that when comparing student success of those students who make a B or better in the freshman seminar class to those that do not, the students that are more successful in the freshman seminar class tend to be more successful in their other classes and retention of these students is higher. Academic Advising & tutoring and Mentoring go hand in hand with the interventions that occur when students begin to have challenges in their freshman year. Student mid-terms are monitored and intervention by their freshman seminar and academic advisory occurs immediately after seeing results. A comprehensive model and implementation of this circle of care will be presented and will encompass current data and trends from this past year. Currently, TAMUK's Center for Student

Success proudly celebrates becoming the FIRST Four-Year National Demonstration for AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination)

The Center for Student Success was originally created using grant money. However, after the grant ended two years later, TAMUK had to decide whether to keep funding the center. Currently, the university encompasses the cost of the center and has expanded funding over the years. The Center is creating an initiative for 2nd year students to go beyond just the first-year experience so they have extra support when they return the next year. The Center for Student Success proved to be a success and therefor funding was extended, and the center was expanded. By working directly with colleges, administration, as well as other campus resources, The CFSS has been able to develop a strong relationship on campus in such that it is a one-s top shop, if you will, for student success. The Center for Student Success is a living entity and constantly changes to meet the needs of our students.