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CENTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
RETENTION EXCELLENCE

High Impact Retention Practices – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research suggests 12 core practices, among others, if implemented with fidelity – a tall order - can significantly increase retention on any campus and for any kind of program, but harder to do for part-time students.

1. **Quality "bridge" programs** to overcome summer melt – such as on-campus programs the summer after graduation - combining academic and "soft" skills training, including more involved and subsidized gap year programs; and programs that bring high school – and even middle school – students to campuses to introduce them to "college life."

2. **Predictive analytics/data management and monitoring of students** - to track success and offer support such as "intrusive coaching and advising," wherein counselors and advisors, and peer mentors if available, keep track of students likely to experience issues related to adjustment to college life and stay in contact with them from the start of the school year – careful data planning and collaborative tracking are the key.

3. **Intrusive advising** that applies predictive analytics to support more challenged students – with personalized advising and counseling and other holistic supports, including those directed to adult learners, especially those with families.

4. **"First Day, First Week, First Month, First Year"** – strategies to create ongoing campus connection, especially for challenged students, from the first day on campus, either via peer mentors or trained staff.

5. **Quality First Year Experience course** and comprehensive approach, may be part of learning communities – a key part of the first year for many students, ideally offered to all new students.

6. **Embedded support/Supplemental Instruction**: new students take regular, credit courses (e.g., English and/or Math 101), supplemented by additional, intensive ("developmental") work outside regular class time, via regular instructors and/or peer mentors

7. **Guided Pathways** – structured mechanism to support student academic program selection process. "Stackable credentials," both "vertical" (in one academic

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concentration) and "horizonal" (crossing disciplines) that provide "pathways" to understandable goals.

8. **Early, quality, career exploration** – Academic counseling to help students develop and refine tangible career goals - may be part of a guided Pathways program, including financial aid for certificate programs and alignment of certificate programs with longer-term degree programs.

9. **Training/professional development of faculty** on the challenges typically faced by the current generation of students, especially those from challenged backgrounds

10. **Emergency funds** to help underrepresented, first gen and otherwise challenged students address unforeseen expenses

11. **Hybrid courses** – which may need to continue as a regular option, especially for older students with family and/or work responsibilities, to create greater flexibility of learning and as cost-saving.

12. *Perhaps most important:* **Appoint a 'Director' or 'Vice President'** for Retention or Student Success to articulate a school-wide retention vision and coordinate retention work -- all the pieces, administration and faculty, across the campus.

References

1. *CHERE has gained extensive knowledge of best practices through its many years bringing together staff and students from all over New England and New York State, and participation in several national conferences.*

2. *Existing programs in Connecticut at Univ. of Connecticut, each of the State's Public University Campuses, Capital Community College, Manchester Community College, Univ. of Hartford, University of Saint Joseph, and more. See also, "Raise expectations Early to Improve College Readiness," in The Truth About College Success: Myths, Realities and 30 Practices that are Working – proven practices on 30 campuses.*

3. *Increasingly sophisticated data management and student risk monitoring systems at Univ. of Conn., Univ. of Hartford, and others. Best national model at Georgia State University. See CHE report, "The Evolving State of Predictive Analytics: How it benefits students and where the tools fall behind." S2020. See also, "Using Data to Improve Student Outcomes: Learning from Leading Colleges," The Education Trust, 2016.*

4. *"Strategies for Improving Postsecondary Credential Attainment among Black, Hispanic and Native American Adults," Community College Research Center, 2021.*

5. *"Redesigning Advising With the Help of Technology: Early Experiences of Three Institutions," Community College Research Center, 2018.*

6. *"Caring Campus: An Initiative to Involve Community College Staff in Increasing Student success," Community College Research Center, 2021.*

7. *Many good examples in New England Journal of Higher Education – for example, a recent article on the gap year program -- a longer form of bridge programs, in Denmark, reminds us of how valuable such programs can be, especially if funding could be found to support lower-income, first generation students to experience such "middle-class" opportunities*