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## LEARNING LOG

### Success of Non-Traditional Students

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## DETAILS

MAKING IT WORK, UNDERSTANDING WHAT WORKS, AND SHARING WHAT WORKS

### TITLE

Success of Non-Traditional Students

### SOLUTION

Redesigned Planning Advising and Student Services;Developmental Education Reform and Supports for Learning

### CAPACITIES

Strategic Finance;Policy;Leadership & Culture;Institutional Research

### Owner



[David Pokrajac \(/education/s/profile/00536000003BifrAAC/\)](/education/s/profile/00536000003BifrAAC/)



### Record Type

Monthly-Current 2017



### INSTITUTION

Delaware State University

### REFLECTION

### SITE INITIATIVE

The aim is to provide insights on the success of non-traditional students in their first year at DSU. In order to design and implement educational and advising approaches to cater to these specific subpopulations the following groups are considered: Transfer students; Single parents; Students with dependents; Students who declared independence; Students who did not enroll at DSU the same year they finished high school; Veterans. We compared first year GPA, retention rate and passing rate in particular classes of non-traditional students with the general population.

### PROGRESS TOWARD STUDENT SUCCESS

The dataset containing Incoming freshmen and transfers from 2011/12-2014/15 Frontier set cohorts was assembled from submitted Frontier set data and the data from institutional repository. The dataset includes students' transfer status, veteran status, graduation date from high school, cohort, academic year, FAFSA data (number of dependents, whether a student is independent, marital status) and 2<sup>nd</sup> year retention. Course data includes course number and term, students' grade, number of attempted and earned credit hours, and students' cumulative GPA in the first year of study. Dependency of student's non-traditional status and retention, cumulative GPA and course passing rate was determined using Chi-square test, t-test and the Fisher's exact test, respectively. The results were used to gear a proposal submitted to Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI).

### IMPACT

The steps were effective. We were able to assess differences in quantitative measures related to students' success including cumulative GPA, retention rates and passing rates in introductory and general education courses. Based on this, we were able to design and write proposals for remedial measures that can provide better personalization of educational approaches to different groups of non-traditional students.

We learned that achieving retention goals requires segmentation of the student body based on their needs and particular characteristics. The retention can be improved only if retention-driven actions are tailored to best fit these specific categories.

### INTERNAL/EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Institutional research, Business analytics, IT. The expertise did not include other Frontier Set members (however, any advice, help, suggestion or collaboration is, as always, appreciated).

### NEXT CRITICAL STEPS

- Non-traditional students have (with exception of single parents) significantly *higher* first year cumulative GPA than the rest of the population.
- Students with dependents and students declared as independent; however, have significantly *smaller* retention rates that could be explained by financial reasons.
- W.r.t. course passing rates, non-traditional students underperformed traditional (smaller passing rates) in a number of courses, including: 1) General education Math classes (MTSC075, MTSC101, MTSC110, MTSC121); 2) University seminar courses; 3) ENGL101 and ENGL102; 4) General education courses such as SCCJ101, PHIL101, MIS105 and MGMT201.
- Transfers and students who do not continue immediately after high school have smaller passing rates in similar courses; in addition, the later may have problems in particular university seminar classes.
- MTSC075 seems to be a challenge for the largest set of non-traditional students.
- Depending on the characteristics of a group of non-traditional students, particular educational approaches (including e.g., extra tutoring in Math and ENGL102 for transfers and students who do not continue university education immediately after high school, attention to students who declared independence, etc.) may be beneficial.
- University seminar courses need be revamped to better fit the non-traditional students.
- Development of novel programs aimed to retaining academically promising students who have dependents or who declared themselves independent is needed.

## OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

There is an opportunity to improve retention rates and hence graduation of non-traditional students by providing them merit-based scholarships to better address their financial needs and shortfalls. Further research should also include performing corresponding analysis for part-time students. A challenge is to determine “ownership” of various categories of non-traditional students to particular academic offices (e.g., “who should be responsible for students with dependents?”)

## QUESTIONS/REQUESTS

We would like to know whether there is any university that tailors retention strategies specifically to groups of non-traditional students such as Single parents; Students with dependents; Students who declared independence; Students who did not enroll at DSU the same year they finished high school.

## STATUS

Final

Completion Date 

5/31/2017

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