**Retention/Persistence to Degree**

**Project Narrative**

Background

The Institutional Data Questionnaire (IDQ) has been an annual fixture at ACT since approximately 1962. At its origin, the IDQ collected data elements from American colleges and universities that included, but not limited to, contact information, admission standards and policies, academic programs, co-curricular offerings and financial aid availability. The data were collected to support publications that helped students and their parents learn more about colleges they were considering. The most prominent of these was an annual publication called *The College Planning Search Book.*  In the early 80’s, elements of the data set were incorporated in the DISCOVER program (a computer-based career and educational planning program). Data were also included in on-line college search engines. These applications are no longer in use.

Over time, the IDQ has been revised and expanded three times to include information that was useful to ACT. (e.g. tests required/accepted, use of tests for advising and course placement, religious affiliation) And, in 1983 questions were added to identify the percentage of first-time full-time students who enrolled for a second year and the percentage of first-time full-time students who persisted to degree in a reasonable time period. Since 1983, ACT has annually published *Retention and Persistence to Degree Tables* reported by institutional type and selectivity. The reports have been cited in numerous publications and serve as a broad-based metric.

The Problem

There are actually several problems:

* The IDQ data elements are a rich source of information which would be useful for understanding retention and persistence to degree. Those data element are virtually untapped. Only institutional type and admission selectivity are reported in static tables.
* The mean percentages reported in the tables are institutional means (unweighted) and not weighted means (students retained/persisted).
* Because the tables are based on only two variables, they can only be used for gross comparisons with other institutions.
* The IDQ retention and persistence to degree data are static.

The Proposal

Campus practitioners should be able to query the data base to answer a basic question: “How does my campus compare with similar campuses on retention and persistence to degree rates?”

Ancillary questions are:

* Which campuses (similar to mine) are have higher retention and persistence to degree rates?
* Which campuses (similar to mine) are have lower retention and persistence to degree rates?
* What characteristics differentiate my campus from others with higher (or lower) retention and persistence to degree rates?

There are permutations and combinations of data elements Identified by the project team which would enable practitioners to drill down into IDQ data.

Primary Audience

This tool should be designed for college enrollment managers

Secondary Audiences

Institutional researchers, academic officers, student affairs officers

Tertiary Audiences

High school counselors, parents, students

Potential Uses by Enrollment Planners

* To respond to information requests from governing boards, and public officials
* To build justification for additional administrative or programmatic resources
* To validate or revise recruitment strategies
* To identify targets for retention interventions
* To enhance promotional/marketing materials

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