

## Determining Who Are Rising-Potential Students on Our Campuses?

A student group considered to be rising-potential on one campus may not be considered rising-potential on another campus. How can we determine who are rising-potential students on our campuses? “Follow the data!”

Start by connecting with institutional research office personnel or the registrar to determine the kinds of student data kept on campus. Ask for new student data (that does not identify individual students so confidentiality is not breached) that goes back three years. Look for patterns regarding students who were and were not retained after the first year. Look for discrepancies between students who graduated (or completed their planned program of study) and students who did not.

Ask questions to stimulate discussion such as:

- What characteristics do students who succeed have in common as compared with those who do not reach their goals?
- What indicators stand out when looking at the group not retained?
- What characteristics did students not completing their program of study have in common?
- Were students who did not complete from common “feeder” schools?
- Were placement scores for students not completing different from those who did? If they were, how were placement scores different from the scores for students who did complete?
- Was there a difference in the retention and completion rates for student academically underprepared in one or more basic skills areas when compared to students whose basic skills scored in the college-ready range?
- Did first-generation students succeed at the same rate as students whose parents had attended college?
- How did students learning at a distance do in courses?
- Did students from minority ethnic and racial groups succeed on campus?
- Were students in certain groups at risk of failure in particular courses? Look at the D, F, and Withdraw (D/F/W) rates for courses. In which courses did entering students have the most trouble? What academic support services exist to help these students succeed?

View the data in various ways and look for patterns. Contact students who did not complete and ask them for feedback regarding their experiences at the college. Pool the gathered information to identify characteristics or a combination of factors (as previously highlighted in the University of Nebraska - Kearney and Temple examples) common to students most at risk. Then examine the support strategies used to connect these rising-potential students with needed services.

Excerpted from: Harding, B. and Miller, M.A. (2013). *Cultivating the Potential in At-Risk Students*. NACADA Pocket Guide No. 11. Manhattan, KS: National Academic Advising Association.