Report on the Institutional Commitment of Freshmen at the Esperanza University

Fall 2012 Sample

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Executive Summary

The most powerful form of intervention takes place in one-on-one sessions with students who have been identified to be at-risk. The *College Persistence Questionnaire* (*CPQ*) Advisors' Portal provides school personnel with a tool for making these encounters helpful, effective, and fruitful in raising retention rates. It identifies individual students who are most at-risk and supplies an in-depth analysis of the problems each one is experiencing. Testimonials of advisors and counselors who have used it are uniformly and overwhelmingly positive in describing its value in their sessions with individual students.

This Institutional Commitment Report provides a perspective that supplements the one-on-one approach just mentioned. By analyzing the aggregate responses of many students at Esperanza University, patterns and trends emerge that clarify which factors are most important among large groups of students. This perspective presents the opportunity to develop or improve upon large-scale intervention programs which will have maximum effect on retention because they focus on persistence-linked qualities.

Previous research has established that the Institutional Commitment (IC) scale of the *CPQ* is a strong predictor of whether students will persist. In the absence of re-enrollment data, the IC scores are the focus of this report and are used to estimate the reasons why students may decide to stay or leave. The specific goals of this investigation were to: a) determine if the *CPQ* predicts IC, b) identify the students' characteristics that are most strongly associated with IC, and c) offer guidelines for improving retention at the Esperanza University.

To accomplish these ends, a series of multiple regressions were performed upon the IC scores of 737 Esperanza students who took the *CPQ* during the fall of 2012. The primary findings were:

1. Regressions of IC scores upon the *CPQ* items were statistically significant, explaining 54% of the variance. Thus, *CPQ* items are a valid and potentially useful predictor of IC.
2. Some modest though statistically significant correlations were found between students' backgrounds and their institutional commitment. Institutional commitment tends to be higher among (a) Hispanics, students who are (b) degree-seeking or (c) on scholarship, and those who selected the institution because (d) it provides the academic programs the student desired, or (e) it has a good reputation, or its location is (f) appealing or (g) nearby. Although the relationships between these variables and IC were not strong, they provide some useful information in planning student recruitment and marketing strategies. Additionally, the relationships identify groups of students who, needy of higher IC, might benefit from additional services.

3. Items composing the Student Experiences Form of the *CPQ* were much better predictors IC than variables associated with the students' backgrounds. This finding indicates that students' post-matriculation interactions with the academic and social environments at Esperanza have a profound impact on their commitment to the institution.
4. The best predictors of IC were students' scores on Academic and Social Integration, Degree Commitment, and Advising Effectiveness. To a lesser extent, four other characteristics were also statistically significantly associated with IC: Collegiate Stress, Academic Efficacy, Scholastic Conscientiousness, and Motivation to Learn (presented in the order of their strength of association with IC).
5. A number of scales have indirect as well as direct effects on IC. Results suggest that advising is of particular importance. The data are consistent with the premise that effective advising promotes academic and social integration, which in turn increases IC. Favorable advising also appears to have benefits beyond its role in IC in that it was associated with increased levels of functioning in most of the ways measured by the *CPQ* .

Based on these results, we offer the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. Esperanza will be successful in improving IC and subsequent retention to the extent that it augments students' Academic and Social Integration, Degree Commitment, and Advising Effectiveness. These four variables should be central to Esperanza' retention efforts. Table 4 in this report lists some specific interventions for strengthening these variables.
2. If programmatic changes are implemented, the Advisors' Portal of the *CPQ* can be utilized to quickly identify the particular students who are most needy of help. For example, a workshop on the expected post-baccalaureate earning potentials of various majors would be especially beneficial for students who scored low on the Degree Commitment scale. The Advisors' Portal has the capability to sort students from low to high on this scale as well as the other nine dimensions measured on the Student Experiences Form.
3. Quality advising will play a critical role in reducing attrition. This finding is not unique to Esperanza. It is one of the most well- established outcomes in the literature.
4. A limitation of these conclusions and recommendations is that they are based on IC scores rather than actual enrollment. An investigation analogous to this one should be conducted once it can be determined which of the sampled students return in the fall of 2013. Then a precise formula can be derived and applied to future Esperanza that predicts their persistence likelihood based on their *CPQ* scores obtained in the first semester.
5. There are many empirically validated programs for improving retention in the scientific literature. Which of these programs should be incorporated into the attrition-reducing efforts at Esperanza depends upon the resources of the institution. Development of retention programs should be guided by the scientific literature and knowledge of the resources that Esperanza can commit to improving retention.

The *College Persistence Questionnaire*: Esperanza University Institutional Commitment Report

Fall 2012 Freshman Sample

Introduction

Approximately half of students who matriculate at American colleges and universities do not graduate within six years. Although retention has long been an issue within higher education, several factors have greatly augmented efforts to reduce attrition rates over the past three decades. An increasing number of jobs require post-high school training. When students drop out, potentially skilled workers must be incorporated into the already overcrowded semi-skilled and unskilled labor force. If the US is to maintain a high standard of living in the twenty-first century, then American colleges and universities must produce an abundance of skilled workers that can successfully compete in a global economy.

The detrimental effect of attrition on the financial health of colleges and universities has stimulated many retention efforts. Funding at many public schools is based on the number of graduates. When financial support is tied to graduation rates, students who discontinue their education represent a loss of income and an unreimbursed expenditure. Small private colleges with neither state support nor large endowments may suffer catastrophic effects if attrition rates are high. Monies spent on recruitment must be increased to offset students who dropout. In some cases, low retention rates can result in the closure of the college itself.

Retention efforts have also increased, because colleges now show a greater sensitivity to students' needs than in the past. Thirty years ago many administrators and faculty saw the college as a crucible, a test ground for separating the weak from the strong. Thankfully, that attitude, though not eliminated, is currently the minority viewpoint. Institutions now see their role as helping students achieve their potentials. Meeting that potential often requires providing students with the support and guidance they need to stay in school.

In our view (Beck and Davidson), the most significant reason for improving retention is that a student's departure often constitutes the death of a dream. Higher education remains the most well travelled path to a good and better life. College graduates will have a greater earning capacity and a broader choice of careers than persons with only a high school diploma. Attrition often precipitates not only reduction in income but an overall lower quality of life.

The decision by Esperanza University to administer the *College Persistence Questionnaire* (*CPQ*) as part of the school's retention effort demonstrates a commitment to its students. This Institutional Commitment Report provides a perspective that supplements the one-on-one approach offered by the Advisors' Portal. By analyzing the aggregate responses of many students at Esperanza University, patterns and trends emerge that clarify which factors are most important among large groups of students. The specific goals

of this investigation were to: a) determine if the *CPQ* predicts institutional commitment, b) identify the student characteristics that are most strongly associated with institutional commitment, and c) offer guidelines for improving retention at Esperanza University.

Previous research has established that one of the *CPQ* scales, Institutional Commitment (IC), is a strong predictor of whether students will persist. In the absence of re-enrollment data, the IC scores are the focus of this report and are used to estimate the reasons why students may decide to stay or leave Esperanza University.

Method

Participants

The respondents were 737 freshmen enrolled in sections of a Freshmen Orientation course. The students were instructed to complete the *CPQ* as a part of the course requirements.

Approximately 88% of the sample were less than less than 20 year old; 58% were female; 61% of the students reported that they were Caucasian, 19% were Hispanic, and 4% were African-American; 45% indicated that they worked on campus; 89% lived in a dormitory or residence hall; 89% were on scholarship, 61% had taken out a loan,; 14% were first generation college students (neither parent had attempted college); and 94% were degree-seeking.

The Instrument

The *CPQ* is composed of two components or forms. The Student Background Form consists of three types of questions: Demographic and Family items (age, sex, ethnicity, marital status, parent's education), Work and Financial Resources items (hours working, sources of income), and Reasons for Attending Higher Education items (Table 1).

The Student Experiences Form is the most important part of the *CPQ*. A series of investigations involving more than 10,000 students yielded 10 distinct, homogeneous clusters or scales. The scales (and their key components) are: *Institutional Commitment* (loyalty, intention to reenroll, confidence in school choice), *Degree Commitment* (the personal importance and value that students and their supportive network place on degree completion; sense of certainty in degree attainment), *Academic Integration* (positive views of instruction, instructors, and own intellectual growth; awareness of connections between academics and careers), *Social Integration* (sense of belonging, shared values, and similarity to others; positive involvement behaviors), *Collegiate Stress* (feelings of distress, pressure, and sacrifice), *Motivation to Learn* (interest and enjoyment in academic tasks; willingness to spend extra time), *Scholastic Conscientiousness* (timely performance of academic responsibilities), *Academic Efficacy* (confidence in academic skills and outcomes), *Financial Strain* (financial worries and difficulties; sense of disadvantage relative to others), and *Advising Effectiveness*

(positive views of advising and school communication processes). The meaning of these scales is clarified by examining the items that constitute them, presented in Table 2.

The Student Experiences Form has 52 close-ended items, answered on a five-point Likert scale. Although the response choices for the questions differ depending on the item wording, all are converted to a favorability continuum that ranges from -2 (least favorable answer) to +2 (most favorable answer).

Procedure

Students took Student Background and Student Experiences Forms of the *CPQ* online during the 2012 fall semester. Most persons completed the *CPQ* in less than 40 minutes.

Results and Discussion

Validity of the Institutional Commitment (IC) Scores at the Esperanza University

While the psychometric credibility of the CPQ has been established across many schools, it is important verify its validity at Esperanza so that the meaning of a low IC score there, which places students "at risk", is clear. An important indicator of the validity of the IC is its statistical association with other qualities assessed on the instrument: the students' background information and/or the favorableness of their views of the school. This type of validity, commonly known as "concurrent", was examined by regressing IC scores on the relevant individual items in the Student Background Form and the Student Experiences Form (except those used to form the IC scale). The results were highly statistically significant: $F(67, 736) = 11.61$, $p < .001$, $R = .73$, $R^2 = .54$. The analysis confirms that the IC score is valid in identifying students who are experiencing problems. Therefore, further calculations will reveal the variables that have the greatest impact on determining the institutional commitment of Esperanza students.

Delineation of the Correlates of IC at the Esperanza University: The Student Background Form

A few of the background variables were not analyzed due to having too few cases; for example, the marital status variable was not analyzed because the vast majority of students were single. The list of nineteen analyzed variables included age, sex, three of the ethnicity variables (White, Hispanic, Black), parental education (first generation college student or not), three financial variables

(employment on campus or not, scholarship recipient or not, loan recipient or not), the size of the high school from which the student graduated, whether or not English was the native language, whether or not the goal for enrollment was to earn a degree, and seven of the eight reasons for attending college (see Table 1 for the list). A second regression was performed upon the IC scores to determine the contribution of nineteen analyzable background variables to institutional commitment. The results were statistically significant, but the total amount of variance explained was substantially reduced once the items from the Student Experiences Form were removed from the analysis: $F(18, 736) = 7.09$, $p < .001$, $R = .39$, $R^2 = .15$.

Bivariates were obtained by correlating each of the nineteen variables on the Student Background Form with students' mean IC score (see Table 1 for codes of the categorical variables). Seven of the items were statistically significant ($p < .01$). High institutional commitment was associated with being Hispanic ($r = .11$); receiving a scholarship ($r = .11$); having the goal of earning a degree ($r = .37$); or choosing the school because of its "reputation" ($r = .22$), or its "academic programs" ($r = .25$), or its "closeby location" ($r = .14$), or its "appealing location" ($r = .16$). None of the other variables attained conventional levels of statistical significance.

Although the statistically significant correlations from the Background Form were of modest magnitude, they do allow us to begin to develop a profile of students with a strong commitment to Esperanza. Students with high IC scores tend to be Hispanic, receive a scholarship, have the goal of earning a degree, and selected the institution because it (a) has a favorable overall reputation, (b) provides academic programs the student desired, (c) is located close to students' home, (d) has an appealing location. The profile of these pre-college background factors can be useful in several ways. First, it may aid in recruiting by identifying the types of prospective students who are likely to stick - for example, Hispanics and degree-seeking students and those who have a defined interest in the academic programs. Second, it may inform marketing strategies, such as the availability of scholarships, the sterling reputation of the school, the diverse academic programs, and its desirable location. And finally, the profile may indicate that those with certain background characteristics are being underserved once they matriculate. For example, students who did NOT choose Esperanza because of its academic reputation and programs may need extra help in seeing the value in "the Esperanza education".

Delineation of the Correlates of IC at the Esperanza University: The Student Experiences Form

IC mean scores were regressed upon the 48 items composing the Student Experiences Form: $F(48, 736) = 11.87$, $p < .001$, $R = .67$, $R^2 = .45$. It is noteworthy that a much higher proportion of the variance was explained with the variables from the Student Experiences

than the Student Background Form. This finding suggests that during the first semester students' interactions with the academic and social environments have a powerful effect on their commitment to Esperanza University.

Individual items tend to be far less reliable than are scale scores. Therefore, an additional analysis was conducted in which IC was regressed upon the other nine scales composing the Student Experiences Form. As expected, the result was highly significant but the explained variance was somewhat lower than the analysis using individual items: $F(9, 736) = 48.93, p < .001, R = .61, R^2 = .38$.

A subsequent examination of the bivariate correlations was very helpful in understanding the contributors to institutional commitment at Esperanza. As Table 3 shows, the correlations of eight of the nine scales with IC were statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level, two-tailed: Academic Integration, Social Integration, Degree Commitment, Advising Effectiveness, Collegiate Stress, Scholastic Conscientiousness, Motivation to Learn, and Academic Efficacy. The correlation coefficients were highest for the Academic and Social Integration, Degree Commitment, and Advising Effectiveness.

A closer look at Table 3 suggests that a variety of strategies could be used to raise the students' institutional commitment. The most obvious is to make improvements in qualities that have strong associations with IC, such as Academic and Social Integration. A complementary approach is to develop an intervention for a variable that is not only associated with IC but also is "networked" (or correlated) with other variables associated with IC. Positive changes in a networked variable might radiate to others, yielding multiple benefits and uplifting forces on IC. For example, consider Academic Integration, which correlates not only with IC but also with seven other key variables (each of with are correlated with IC): Social Integration, Degree Commitment, Collegiate Stress, Advising Effectiveness, Scholastic Conscientiousness, Motivation to Learn, and Academic Efficacy. Students who become more academically integrated might also tend to experience less stress and positive increments in their views of other students and advising, their commitment to earning a degree, developing motivation and confidence and conscientious academic habits. Since each of these variables also play a role in institutional commitment, the potential benefits are substantial. Of course, it should not be forgotten that these relationships are correlational and that causality cannot be assumed.

These data also show statistical evidence of the importance of good advising. This variable was associated with all of the scales except Financial Strain. A tentative model garnered from these data is that good advising strengthens students in a plethora of ways. By "advising" we are not restricting ourselves to the activities of counselors. Advising is an institution-wide responsibility and the quality of advising reflects the actions of faculty and personnel in many offices on campus.

Limitations and Recommendations

Prior research has shown that in the absence of re-enrollment data, IC scores are the best indicator of whether a student will persist at a given school. IC scores are a good but not a perfect predictor of retention. This study needs to be followed by an analogous investigation once it is determined whether the students in this sample return for classes next fall. The addition of re-enrollment data will then enable the calculation of a regression equation that specifies the exact role of each variable in retention. This school-specific equation can then be used to estimate the persistence likelihood of future freshmen who take the *CPQ* during their first semester.

It is noted that the sample included some but not all of the freshmen at Esperanza. The degree to which this limits generalization depends upon why students did not take the *CPQ*. If taking the *CPQ* was dependent upon factors unrelated to the student, then extrapolation is more warranted than if the respondents and non-respondents differed from each other in important ways.

The regression of IC scores on *CPQ* items is encouraging in that it indicates that the Advisor Portal does, with a high degree of accuracy, identify those students most likely to discontinue their education at Esperanza. This information can be very helpful in that it distinguishes those students who might most benefit from one-on-one interactions with college personnel.

It is also encouraging that items from the Student Experiences Form tended to be better predictors of IC than items from the Student Background Form. Background variables (e.g., sex, parents' educations) are not subject to change while Experience variables (e.g., social integration) are more malleable and responsive to programmatic interventions. This result also emphasizes the importance of measuring student interactions with the academic and social environments and justifies the decision to wait some weeks into the semester before identifying at-risk students.

The data also provide direction in allocating resources and designing programs that will be most effective in reducing attrition at Esperanza. As we previously mentioned, increasing the students' academic and social integration and their commitment to the goal of earning a degree will be critical to the school's retention efforts, along with maintaining effective advising and providing interventions to assist students with stress, confidence, conscientiousness, and motivation. The prognosis is favorable if programs are instituted that make a positive impact on these qualities in students. Otherwise, retention at Esperanza might fluctuate as a function of external variables (e.g., the economy) over which the institution has very little control.

Once programs are established, we can be reasonably certain that the persons charged with instituting these programs will believe that they are successful. Such testimonials, though useful, are obviously subject to bias. Therefore, an objective evaluation system needs to be developed to determine if programs are achieving their goals and to better understand why retention rates vary from year to year. For example, let's assume that a new program to decrease attrition was begun at Esperanza. If effective, then we might expect that students exposed to the program would show more favorable scores on the *CPQ* scales than previous students not exposed to the program.

Now that we have identified the variables that tend to be the most critical determinants of retention at Esperanza, the next logical question is: What programs should be employed to address these issues and reduce attrition?

Developing an effective retention program requires knowledge of the empirical literature on interventions, the characteristics of the students who will be affected by the program, and the infrastructure, staff and financial resources of the institution. Although we are reasonably well versed in the retention literature and have learned a great deal about The Esperanza students from this study, we do not know enough about the resources Esperanza might dedicate to reducing attrition. Therefore, it will require school personnel to design the programs that best fit the institution.

Fortunately, there is a rapidly growing list of empirically validated interventions that can guide your program development. The seven sources listed below provide an excellent introduction to the field. You will find that some of the interventions would not be practical to implement at Esperanza. Others will be within the realm of your staff and financial resources. The key is to find a set of interventions that builds upon the strengths of your institution.

In addition to the readings listed below, we also include a brief list of interventions that are considered "best practices" nation-wide. The document, entitled "High Impact Interventions and Their Outcomes," is Table 4 of this report. It provides specific guidelines for how to strengthen students in each of the domains measured by the CPQ.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). How College Affects Students, Volume 2: A Third Decade of Research. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass (ISBN 0-7879-1044-9).

Seidman, A. (2005). College Student Retention: Formula for Success. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers (ISBN 0-275-98193-2)

Upcraft, M.L., Gardner, J. N., & Barefoot, B. O. (2005). Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass (ISBN 0-7879-5968-5)

Gordon, V.N., Habley, W. R., Grites, T. J. & Associates (2008). Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook (2nd ed.). San Francisco,CA: Jossey-Bass (ISBN 978-0-470-37170-1).

National Resource Center for The First Year Experience and Students in Transition. Retrieved January 15, 2010, from http://www.sc.edu/fye/center/index.html

Nutt, Charlie L. (2003). Academic advising and student retention and persistence. *NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources*. Retrieved January 15, 2010, from http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/retention.htm.

Robbins, S.B., Oh, I., Le, H., & Button, C. (2009). Intervention effects on college performance and retention as mediated by motivational, emotional, and social control factors: Integrated meta-analytic path analyses. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 94(5)*, 1163-1184.

Table 1

Student Background Variables By Type

Demographic and Family	*Work and Financial*	*Reasons For Attending*
Age Sex	Total Hours Working	Degree-Seeking
Ethnicity	Work On-Campus	Close By
Native Language	Scholarship	Friends Attend
	Loan	School's Reputation
Marital Status	Lottery	Academic Programs
Residence		Family Attended
Mothers Education		Sports Programs
Fathers Education		Appealing Location

Note. Codes for categorical variables were: Age (0=18/19, 1=20+); Sex (0 = Female, 1 = Male); Ethnicity (0 = Non-Caucasian, 1 = Caucasian); Native Language (0= Not English, 1 = English); Marital Status (0 = Not Married, 1 = Married); Work On-Campus (0 = No, 1 = Yes); First Generation (neither parent attended college) (0=No, 1=Yes); Scholarship (0 = No, 1 = Yes); Loan (0 = No, 1 = Yes); Lottery (0 = No, 1 = Yes); Close By (0 = No, 1 = Yes); Friends Attend (0 = No, 1 = Yes); School's Reputation (0 = No, 1 = Yes); Academic Program (0 = No, 1 = Yes); Family Attended (0 = No, 1 = Yes); Sports Program (0 = No, 1 = Yes); Appealing Location (0 = No, 1 = Yes); Degree Seeking (0=No, 1=Yes).

Table 2

College Persistence Questionnaire: Scales And Item Topics

Institutional Commitment
1. Intention to persist in pursuit of degree
2. Likelihood of earning a degree from here
3. Likelihood of enrolling next semester
4. Confidence in choice of school
5. Thoughts about stopping out
6. Advantages or disadvantages of attending this school
7. Feelings of loyalty toward school

Academic Integration
1. Interest in class sessions
2. Fairness of tests
3. Accuracy of instructors' course previews
4. Rating the quality of instruction
5. Clarity of instructors and syllabi
6. Interest in class discussions
7. Usefulness of instructor feedback for improvement
8. Satisfaction with quality of instruction
9. Feelings of capability instilled by instructors and courses
10. Understanding the thoughts of instructors in class

Financial Strain
1. Difficulty in handling college costs
2. Strain in purchasing course materials
3. Feelings of financial disadvantage relative to other students
4. Worrying about money to meet personal needs
5. Reduction in courses taken due to costs

Social Integration
1. Impact of interactions with other students on intellectual growth
2. Impact of interactions with other students on personal growth
3. Qualities in common with other students
4. Sense of connectedness with others
5. Satisfaction with social life
6. Impressions about other students

Degree Commitment
1. Intention to persist in pursuit of a degree
2. Commitment to earning a degree
3. Feelings of uncertainty about overcoming degree obstacles
4. Disappointment of significant others if student quits school
5. Family support and encouragement for earning a degree

Table 2 *continued*
Collegiate Stress
1. Overall feelings of distress at school
2. Feeling overwhelmed by the academic workload
3. Feeling pressured to meet deadlines in courses
4. Worry about completing work on time
5. Sacrifices endured due to being a college student
6. Preoccupation with personal troubles

Advising Effectiveness
1. Satisfaction with academic advising
2. Rating of academic advisement
3. Ease of obtaining answers to questions about academic matters
4. Effective communication about information students need to know

Scholastic Conscientiousness
1. Tardiness in submitting assignments
2. Tardiness in attending classes and other events
3. Unexcused absences from class
4. Forgetfulness of important responsibilities

Motivation To Learn
1. Weekly study time per credit hour taken
2. Completion of reading assignments before class
3. Willingness to devote extra study time when necessary
4. Procrastination in studying for tests
5. Reading relevant but unassigned material
6. Enthusiasm for academic tasks
7. Proofreading writing assignments before submission
8. Size of workload in an ideal course

Academic Efficacy
1. Correct anticipation of upcoming tests questions
2. Confidence in making desired grades
3. Doubt about making desired grades
4. Perceived effectiveness of study skills and techniques

Table 3

Factors of the Student Experiences Form of the College Persistence Questionnaire: Intercorrelation Matrix

	IC	AI	FS	SI	DC	CS	A	SC	ML	AE
IC	1.00	.45 *	.04	.47 *	.38 *	.18 *	.33 *	.15 *	.10 *	.18 *
AI		1.00	.00	.40 *	.33 *	.13 *	.63 *	.15 *	.42 *	.42 *
FS			1.00	.05	.12 *	.20 *	.05	.12 *	-.02	.06 *
SI				1.00	.22 *	.15 *	.33 *	.06	.14 *	.24 *
DC					1.00	.11 *	.25 *	.27 *	.27 *	.28 *
CS						1.00	.14 *	.16 *	.05	.36 *
A							1.00	.15 *	.30 *	.28 *
SC								1.00	.26 *	.32 *
AM									1.00	.43 *
AE										1.00

Note. IC = Institutional Commitment; AI = Academic Integration; FS = Financial Strain; DC = Degree Commitment; CS = Collegiate Stress; A = Advising; SC = Scholastic Conscientiousness; ML = Motivation to Learn; AE = Academic Efficacy.
* $p = < .01$, two-tailed.

Table 4

HIGH-IMPACT INTERVENTIONS AND THEIR OUTCOMES

Once a school identifies the students' psychosocial reasons for premature departure, it must then design ways to strengthen these important qualities in vulnerable students. The *College Persistence Questionnaire* enables schools to assess the psychosocial qualities that place students at-risk, but the question still remains what to do about it. To be maximally effective, the interventions must match the students' weaknesses. The purpose of this document is to fill this void. It provides a comprehensive list of interventions used nationwide, classified by the 10 *CPQ* dimensions they are most likely to impact.

The list of interventions is based on a 2010 ACT report entitled, "What works in student retention: Public four-year colleges and universities." The results of a national survey of 258 schools yielded ratings of nearly 100 interventions, some of which were similar enough to be combined, producing the 39 high-impact interventions listed here. We *italicize* nine that have had the most pronounced effects on attrition nationwide in that they are practices that differentiate the top quartile schools with the best retention rates from lower quartile ones with the worst retention figures.

SECTION 1: INTERVENTIONS WITH CODE GROUPED ACCORDING TO

10 CPQ DIMENSIONS

A) INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

1 extended orientation (summer or fall)

2 freshman seminar

20 *summer bridge programs*

39 required on-campus housing for freshmen

B) DEGREE COMMITMENT

17 assessment of career interests and aptitudes, learning styles, values, and personality

18 internships, service-learning, and job shadowing opportunities

19 career guidance in face-to-face and computer-assisted formats

C) ACADEMIC INTEGRATION

2 freshman seminar

4 *living/learning community (residential)*

20 *summer bridge programs*

25 organized study groups

28 faculty development initiatives for teaching, assessing student performance, use of technology in teaching and communicating with students, online instruction, and interdisciplinary courses

D) SOCIAL INTEGRATION

1 extended orientation (summer or fall)

4 living/learning community (residential)

32 programs for specific student sub-populations such as non-traditionals, commuters, ESLs, first-generationals, racial/ethnic minorities, veterans, *honors.

33 school-sponsored social activities

34 diversity information/training

35 student leadership opportunities

37 residence hall programs

38 social organizations such as fraternities, sororities, and clubs

39 required on-campus housing for freshmen

E) COLLEGIATE STRESS

36 physical and mental health and wellness programs

F) FINANCIAL STRAIN

3 parent-family orientation

29 pre-enrollment financial aid advising

30 workshops in money management

31 short-term loans

G) ADVISING EFFECTIVENESS

1 extended orientation (summer or fall)

6 training for academic advisors

7 advising interventions with selected high-risk student populations

8 increased number of academic advisors

9 assessment of advising

10 workload credits for faculty advisors

11 advising centers

12 integration of advising with other programs such as career planning, first year transition, etc.

H) ACADEMIC EFFICACY

2 freshman seminar

15 placement of students into basic skills courses on basis of pre-matriculation test scores

16 diagnostic academic skills assessment H

20 summer bridge programs

21 remedial/developmental programs

22 academic skills centers for reading, writing, mathematics, language-learning, time-management, study skills, tutoring, supplemental instruction, online-learning support

26 library orientations, workshops, and/or course

I) MOTIVATION TO LEARN

17 assessment of career interests and aptitudes, learning styles, values, and personality

27 mentoring by peers, faculty, staff, and/or community members

J) SCHOLASTIC CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

22 academic skills centers for reading, writing, mathematics, language-learning, time-management, study skills, tutoring, supplemental instruction, online-learning support

24 performance contracts for students in academic difficulty

25 organized study groups

23 early warning system / mid-term progress reports

SECTION2: MASTER LIST OF INTERVENTIONS AND CODES FOR CPQ OUTCOMES

1 extended orientation (summer or fall) A D G

2 freshman seminar A C H

3 parent-family orientation F

4 living/learning community (residential) C D

5 learning community (non-residential) C

6 training for academic advisors G

7 advising interventions with selected high-risk student populations G

8 increased number of academic advisors G

9 assessment of advising G

10 workload credits for faculty advisors G

11 advising centers G

12 integration of advising with other programs such as career planning, first year transition, etc. G

13 specification of student learning outcomes for advising G

14 application of technology and online tools to advising G

15 placement of students into basic skills courses on basis of pre-matriculation test scores H

16 diagnostic academic skills assessment H

17 assessment of career interests and aptitudes, learning styles, values, and personality B

18 internships, service-learning, and job shadowing opportunities B

19 career guidance in face-to-face and computer-assisted formats B

20 summer bridge programs A C H

21 remedial/developmental programs H

22 academic skills centers for reading, writing, mathematics, language-learning, time-management, study skills, tutoring, supplemental instruction, online-learning support H J

23 early warning system / mid-term progress reports J

24 performance contracts for students in academic difficulty J

25 organized study groups C J

26 library orientations, workshops, and/or course J

27 mentoring by peers, faculty, staff, and/or community members I

28 faculty development initiatives for teaching, assessing student performance, use of technology in teaching and communicating with students, online instruction, and interdisciplinary courses C

29 pre-enrollment financial aid advising F

30 workshops in money management F

31 short-term loans F

32 programs for specific student sub-populations such as non-traditionals, commuters, ESLs, first-generationals, racial/ethnic minorities, veterans, honors D

33 school-sponsored social activities D

34 diversity information/training D

35 student leadership opportunities D

36 physical and mental health and wellness programs E

37 residence hall programs D

38 social organizations such as fraternities, sororities, and clubs D

39 required on-campus housing for freshmen A D

SECTION 3: DECIDING WHICH INTERVENTIONS TO IMPLEMENT

Given the reality of limited resources, the choices to be made about intervention activities are extremely important. The obvious goal is to maximize the benefits to students and minimize the costs. It is necessary to realize that the interventions that best suit one school will not necessarily do so well at others. They might be more or less costly due to variations in infrastructure and the personnel who deliver them. And they might be more or less beneficial to students depending on characteristics of the student body, not necessarily shared across schools, that catalyze or dampen the effects.

Once schools use an instrument like the CPQ to identify the psychosocial vulnerabilities of their students and peruse the list of interventions that target those weaknesses, administrators and/or policy makers must still narrow the list of choices. Certainly the italicized, high-impact interventions are attractive, but they may not coincide with the ideas mentioned in the previous paragraph. Therefore, some expert advice from outside consultants may be helpful. Ideas about this are available from the Beck-Davidson partnership as well as other outlets.