Campus Retention Workgroup

A quick overview
Why Does Retention Matter?

**Political**
- Federal scrutiny on retention and time to degree.
- State scrutiny, including an abandoned proposal from governor tied funding to graduation rates.
- Retention and 4-year graduation are on President Napolitano’s radar, too.

**Financial**
- Dropouts cost California nearly a half billion dollars per year.
- Huge savings if we really make 4 years the norm.
- Huge savings to students, too, as national education debt reaches new highs.

**Social Justice**
- Persistent differences in outcomes perpetuate social inequities.
Our 1st & 2nd year retention are great. How can we have a problem?

But... We lose upper-division students.
UC San Diego graduation rates don’t fare well in comparison with our peers.

We’re 4th overall, and 5th for 4-year rates!
Focusing on student retention

* Multi-strategy approach
  * Campus-wide Retention Summit, 2011
  * Standing Committee on Retention, 2011 (Ad hoc committee 2008-10)
  * Focus Group Project, 2012
  * Examining current UC San Diego student data
  * Researching promising practices at peer institutions
Graduation Rates of African American and Mexican American Students are Below the Mean

UCSD Retention and Graduation Rates, First-Time Freshman Cohort
Questions posed to Focus Group Participants:

- What were at least three challenges or barriers you faced during your first and second years?
- What proportion of students like you do you think experience these barriers or challenges?
- What knowledge or strategies do students need to overcome the challenges and barriers you identified?
- What changes can UC San Diego make to help students overcome the challenges and barriers you identified?
- What is currently working at UC San Diego to help students like you overcome the challenges and barriers you identified?
The planning and execution of the study involved people from across campus.

Planning Committee:
- Bill Armstrong, Student Research & Information
- Cynthia Davalos, VCSA
- Doug Easterly, Muir College
- Kathleen Johnson, Academic Affairs
- Makeba Jones, Education Studies
- Reina Juarez, Counseling & Psychological Services
- Emily Marx, Center for Student Involvement
- Gennie Miranda, Jacobs School of Engineering
- Gary Ratcliff, Student Life
- Sonia Rosado, Muir College
- Penny Rue, VCSA
- Edwina Welch, Cross Cultural Center

Facilitators:
- Frida Alvear, SPACES
- Timothy Borch, Admissions
- Haydee Cervantes, Chicano/a Arts & Humanities
- Veronica Henson-Phillips, Office of Graduate Studies
- Mentha Hynes Wilson, Marshall College
- Anthony P. Jakubisin, Sixth College
- Reina Juarez, Counseling & Psychological Services
- Alejandra Sotelo-Solis, Center for Student Involvement
- Kelly O’Sullivan, International Center
- Agustin Orozco, OASIS
- Patrick Velasquez, OASIS
- Laci Weeden, Parent & Family Programs
Findings: Six Common Challenges Identified by Students

- Diversity & Campus Climate
- Isolation on Campus
- Psychosocial Wellbeing
- Family & Home
- Academics
- Financial
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Pressures: Major expectations, getting married, pressure to come home for family events/emergencies, fear of family members being deported</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Generation: Explaining college to family, lacking guidance on course of study for career, lack of support of those who’ve gone before you</td>
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<td>Home Sickness</td>
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<td>Feeling out of place when returning home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Challenges</td>
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<td>Having to Work: finding a job, having trouble accessing campus resources because you have to work</td>
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<td>Mastering time management</td>
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<td>Lack of financial stability</td>
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<td>Worry about student loan debt</td>
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### Diversity & Campus Climate Challenges

<table>
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<th><strong>Culture Clash:</strong> Living with different roommate with different backgrounds, different economic backgrounds adjustments, different than majority culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional Perception of Minority Status:</strong> University not believing in me and my capabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lack of Critical Mass:</strong> Faculty, students, Teaching Assistants, general role models not apparent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychosocial Wellbeing Challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social: Not seeing familiar faces, Finding people who relate to your situation (first generation)</td>
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<td>Asking for Help: Learning how to ask for help, feeling overwhelmed</td>
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<td>Validation: Don’t belong here, Not feeling valued or taken care of, I don’t matter</td>
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<td>Anger and Frustration: Overcoming anger, Feeling frustrated at the system/bureaucracy</td>
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## Academics Challenges

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studying</td>
<td>Knowing how to study, how to find study groups, starting with bad academic habits</td>
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<td>Professors/ TAs</td>
<td>Few faculty mentors of color, not being able to relate with you</td>
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<td>Academic Rigor</td>
<td>Lack of help with transition from lower division to upper division, lack of prior academic prep, quarter system too fast</td>
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<td>Classroom Dynamic</td>
<td>Competition within the classroom, huge class size, grading curves</td>
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<td>Support</td>
<td>Don’t know who to ask for help, academic advisors not approachable, Lack of peer support</td>
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Themes in a similar qualitative study

Student Engagement

Meaningful Connections with Faculty

Peer Support

Accountability and Drive to Succeed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advice for Students from Students</th>
<th>What Students Ask of Instructors</th>
<th>What Students Ask of UC San Diego</th>
<th>What Students Say Works</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Find comfortable spaces</td>
<td>• Show appreciation so that you stay here</td>
<td>• Greater diversity representation in students, faculty, &amp; staff</td>
<td>• Community centers</td>
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<td>• Join SPACES</td>
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<td>• Increased outreach</td>
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<td>• Recruit more diverse population</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Admit more students of color (specifically AA)</td>
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<td>• Get involved in organized activities</td>
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<td>• Involvement of faculty of same background</td>
<td>• BSU Overnight</td>
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<td>• Join multi-cultural organizations</td>
<td>• Encourage validation from department</td>
<td>• More activities that promote diversity</td>
<td>• Cultural organizations</td>
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<td>• Cross-cultural experiences</td>
<td>• More cultural awareness weeks</td>
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<td>• More cultural awareness weeks</td>
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Moving from research to actions & strategies

* Identifying challenges
* Beginning a dialogue
* Identifying partners empowered to make changes
  * Faculty
  * Advisors
  * Student Affairs Staff
* Testing out and evaluating new support efforts
  * Teaching changes
  * Policy changes
  * Service changes
We know that high-impact practices can improve retention & achievement (Kuh, 2008)

First-Year
- Learning Communities
- Service Learning
- Faculty Engagement

Later
- Research w/Faculty
- Study Abroad
- Service Learning
- Internships
- Senior Experience

