

Recommendations

Non-Traditional Student Retention

Recommendation #1: Provide enhanced academic advising service to non-traditional students.

Mechanism: Create and designate a single advisor for all non-traditional students; this will ensure consistent and expert advisement service that addresses problems known to affect student decisions about retention. Specifically, the non-traditional student advisor position should provide advice that 1) fosters academic self-confidence, 2) helps students make decisions about degree selections and career paths, and 3) guides students to take a course-load and selection of courses commensurate with their abilities. Further, the existence of the position will 1) demonstrate that GSW is committed to helping students succeed and 2) provide higher levels of student satisfaction with the advisement process. Both of these factors, student perceptions of institutional commitment and advisement satisfaction, affect students' retention decisions.

Recommendation #2: Provide daycare referral service.

Mechanism: Provide an information packet to non-traditional students about day and evening childcare services, to include some service quality indicator of the potential providers. Providing the service helps non-traditional students in two ways. First, it saves them time in terms of having to research the cost and quality of child-care providers. Second, the service lessens their anxiety about having to make choices when not knowing about the particular provider's quality.

Recommendation #3: Establish minimum score on the Compass test for admission to GSW.

Mechanism: Find a Compass score that is equivalent with the ACT or SAT scores as a means to set a minimum Compass test score for allowing admission to GSW. Currently, GSW accepts all non-traditional students regardless of their test score. Although, regrettably, some students will no longer be admitted under this standard, a minimum score on the Compass test will screen and eliminate those students who do not have the academic ability to be successful in college and are not likely to graduate.

Recommendation #4: Academic skills course

Mechanism: Require all non-traditional students who are admitted without the appropriate SAT or ACT scores to take the Academic Skills course, ACSK 1100. This course will not only cover the usual and very necessary topics such as study skills and time management; it will also include sessions on values and goal setting. Research has shown that students with realistic, definite goals are more likely to succeed. By encouraging our non-traditional students to set goals and instructing them in how to do so, retention for this group should increase.

Recommendation #5: Alternative Course Offerings

Mechanism: Increase the number of evening and once-per-week courses. Taking night classes will alleviate the problem of non-traditional students missing classes due to conflicts with their daytime work obligations. Attending class more frequently will increase student academic performance and thus lessen their discouragement that may affect their decisions about remaining in college.