

Achievements of Curtin University's Retention Plan

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Background

- Curtin adopted a Student Retention Implementation Plan in June 2008
- See:
<http://retention.curtin.edu.au/retentionplan/>

Guiding Principles

- Student retention is a responsibility of the whole University community
- Retaining students within the University is a higher priority than retaining students within any individual enrolling area, which carries the implication that there should be no unnecessary impediments to students seeking to switch courses within Curtin
- Improving student retention is a long term objective which should be widely embedded in University processes and functions
- All areas of the University will act together in a collaborative and integrated manner to address retention issues; with the proviso that some areas may also act independently to address retention issues peculiar to their own area of responsibility
- Current students and alumni should be actively engaged in student retention initiatives wherever feasible
- Wherever it is appropriate, the University will seek to engage students in support roles where there is suitable training and supervision and where this does not abrogate the University's duty of care to provide professionally qualified staff.
- The plan aims to improve the student experience across the whole Curtin community, whilst also targeting specific areas, groups or variables which are known to impact on retention
- Early intervention is a critical feature of all retention initiatives.
- It is important to take account of workload implications of interventions directed at improving student retention
- There will be on-going identification and development of new opportunities to improve student retention added to this plan as appropriate

Core Priorities

- Development of interventions directed at students placed on Conditional status
- Review of processes associated with course switching within Curtin with the objective of reducing impediments to students seeking to change course
- Development of processes which identify and support at-risk students as early as possible
- Further development of student mentor programs for students, with a focus on enrolling areas with lower than average retention rates
- Development of the links between University courses and future career pathways
- Increase on-campus student accommodation

Students on Conditional Status

- Lots of discussion has taken place
- Some developments in “action plan” processes for students
- See <http://retention.curtin.edu.au/programs/conditional.cfm>
- But still “a work in progress”



Facilitating Course Switching

- Changes to some course structures
- Greater publicity of course switching as an option
- Better Career resourcing



Early identification of at-risk students

- On-line referral system at http://retention.curtin.edu.au/programs/student_support.cfm
- JumpSTART program - http://retention.curtin.edu.au/programs/jump_start.cfm



Development of student mentor programs

- The most visible and successful of the retention interventions
- All beginning undergraduate are assigned a mentor
- See: <http://mentoring.curtin.edu.au/start/>
- Profoundly positive evaluation of the program by mentees and mentors



Career Pathways

- Higher profile of Careers Centre
- iPortfolio



Increase on-campus student accommodation

- Private providers have entered the market, relieving pressure on the University-run resources
- No action on this goal as a result



Plenty of other things happened

- By raising the profile of transition, persistence and retention, many other areas of the University acted to improve the student experience
- Too many to list here...



Has it done any good?

- Note: the measure of retention is a lagging statistic
- Therefore – the most recent figure we have is the 2010 retention statistic. This is the percent of students enrolled in 2009 who are still enrolled in 2010

The stats...% of 1st year undergraduate retained

Year	Still at Curtin	Same Faculty	Same operational area	Same course
2004	82.3	78.9	75.8	73.2
2005	85.1	80.6	77.0	74.4
2006	83.4	79.8	75.8	72.9
2007	84.2	79.9	74.9	72.4
2008	81.2	77.1	72.6	70.0
2009	83.8	78.4	73.5	71.3
2010	83.6	78.6	70.6	68.4

Comments

- The improvement has been at university and faculty level – not at course level
- The 2 or 3 percentage point improvement represents a large amount of dollars saved in a University like Curtin
- International student retention rates have improved more than domestic

We are not finished yet

- We expect the statistic to continue to improve
- There is still work to be done to consolidate and embed retention interventions
- We want to get away from calling them “retention interventions” and focus on concepts like engagement and the student experience

Discussion/questions?

- Or contact me later...
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