

A Guide to Addressing Retention Challenges

Higher education institutions are facing lower completion rates, making graduate student retention strategies increasingly essential. Common challenges for graduate students include lack of access to student resources, mental health hardships, financial obstacles, school-life balance issues, workforce uncertainty, and academic stress.

An effective student retention strategy begins with a comprehensive understanding of the challenges students face and the resources available to them. We've put together the following list of questions to help you clarify what might be at the root of your university's specific challenges and how to explore solutions through a proactive and data-driven lens.

1. Assessing Student Support Services

How would you rate the current level and variety of student support services in your institution? Are these services accessible to students of all modalities (e.g. online and/or on-campus)?

2. Balancing School-Life

How well does your institution help prepare students to integrate school, and possibly field placement, into their current life commitments?

3. Addressing Mental Health Issues

What strategies does your institution have in place to address the mental health difficulties faced by graduate students? Are these strategies proactive?

4. Managing Financial Obstacles

Are there financial support systems or resources available for students who may be struggling financially? Can students access these in multiple formats (e.g. in-person and/or online)?

5. Predictive Analysis

Have you considered the use of predictive analysis to identify at-risk students and intervene before they drop out?

6. Workforce Uncertainty

How is your institution preparing graduate students for workforce uncertainty, especially in the current economic climate?

7. Feedback Mechanism

How often does your institution gather feedback from students and take action across departments based on this data?



Identifying Retention Challenges

Utilize this checklist to evaluate your university's current strategies for student success and completion. This tool is designed to promote critical thinking regarding existing resources, potential improvements, and proactive measures that can be taken.

Assessing Student Support Services

- We offer a variety of student support services
- Our services are accessible to all students, both online and on-campus
- We regularly evaluate and update these services based on student needs

Balancing School-Life

- We provide resources and guidance to help students balance school with life commitments
- We have provisions for integrating field placement with existing commitments
- We actively promote these resources to our students

Addressing Mental Health Issues

- We have strategies in place to address mental health difficulties
- Our strategies are proactive and preventive in nature
- These strategies are easily accessible and regularly communicated to students

Managing Financial Obstacles

- We have financial support systems in place for struggling students
- These resources are accessible in multiple formats
- We communicate about these resources regularly to ensure awareness

Predictive Analysis

- We use predictive analysis to identify at-risk students
- We have mechanisms to intervene before at-risk students drop out
- We constantly upgrade our predictive analysis models based on data and patterns

Workforce Uncertainty

- We have programs to prepare students for workforce uncertainty
- These programs are relevant to the current economic climate
- We regularly update these programs based on industry trends and forecasts

Feedback Mechanism

- We have a system for gathering student feedback regularly
- We take action based on the feedback data across departments
- Our feedback mechanism is transparent and results are communicated back to students

Strategies for Improvement

Upon completing the **self-assessment checklist**, review areas that were identified as needing improvement.

Consider the following strategies:



Data Utilization

Use data to identify early warning signs for at-risk students and implement targeted communication measures.



Community Building

Encourage student engagement and build a community that supports students both academically and emotionally.



Predictive Analysis

Apply predictive analysis to not only identify at-risk students, but also to understand patterns and improve support services.



Continuous Feedback

Regularly gather and act on feedback from students to improve resources and services.



REMEMBER

The ultimate goal is to assist students from the moment they deposit until they graduate. Noodle can partner with you to achieve this goal with our team of student affairs professionals and placement experts. Together, we can drive higher student retention and satisfaction, helping more students cross the finish line.

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