

The Whole-Student Retention Checklist

Retention strategies are often built around a single question: who is at risk? That's the right question. It's also an incomplete one. The institutions with the strongest persistence and completion outcomes are tracking momentum as actively as they track risk, because the relationship an institution builds with a thriving student is just as consequential as the one it builds with a struggling one. Use this checklist to evaluate where your strategy stands.

Detection and Outreach

- ☐ Our early alert system flags declining performance. We also have a process for identifying and acknowledging improving performance.
- ☐ Proactive outreach is triggered by risk indicators. It is also triggered by positive milestones: grade improvements, consecutive term completions, credit thresholds reached.
- ☐ Every student (not only those who self-identify as needing help) receives meaningful contact from a coach or advisor during each term.

Coaching and Relationship

- ☐ Coaches and advisors maintain ongoing relationships with students who are doing well, not only with students in crisis.
- ☐ Students receive recognition when they hit academic milestones, not only when they need intervention.
- ☐ Our coaching model is designed to sustain momentum, not only to help struggling students recover.

Data and Infrastructure

- ☐ We track positive academic signals (grade trends, engagement patterns, completion milestones) alongside risk indicators.
- ☐ Our advising and coaching staff have the capacity to reach students who are not in distress as well as those who are.
- ☐ We can identify which students are thriving and describe what is working for them.

Institutional Alignment

- ☐ Retention strategy conversations at the leadership level include discussion of students who are persisting and progressing, not only students who are struggling.
- ☐ Our definition of retention success includes sustaining students who are on track, not only recovering students who have fallen behind.

Students who feel known by their institution are more likely to persist, add credits, and pursue graduate programs at the same school. If several items above are unchecked, there may be an opportunity to expand what your retention strategy sees and who it reaches. Noodle for Student Support and Retention works alongside institutions to build the coaching infrastructure that supports every student, from enrollment to completion.

