

# Retention and Relationships: *The Secret Sauce for Student Success*

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# Session Agenda

- Introduction of Topic and Presenter
- What, So What, Now What
- Key Collaborative Relationships
- Relationships Building
- Wrap Up

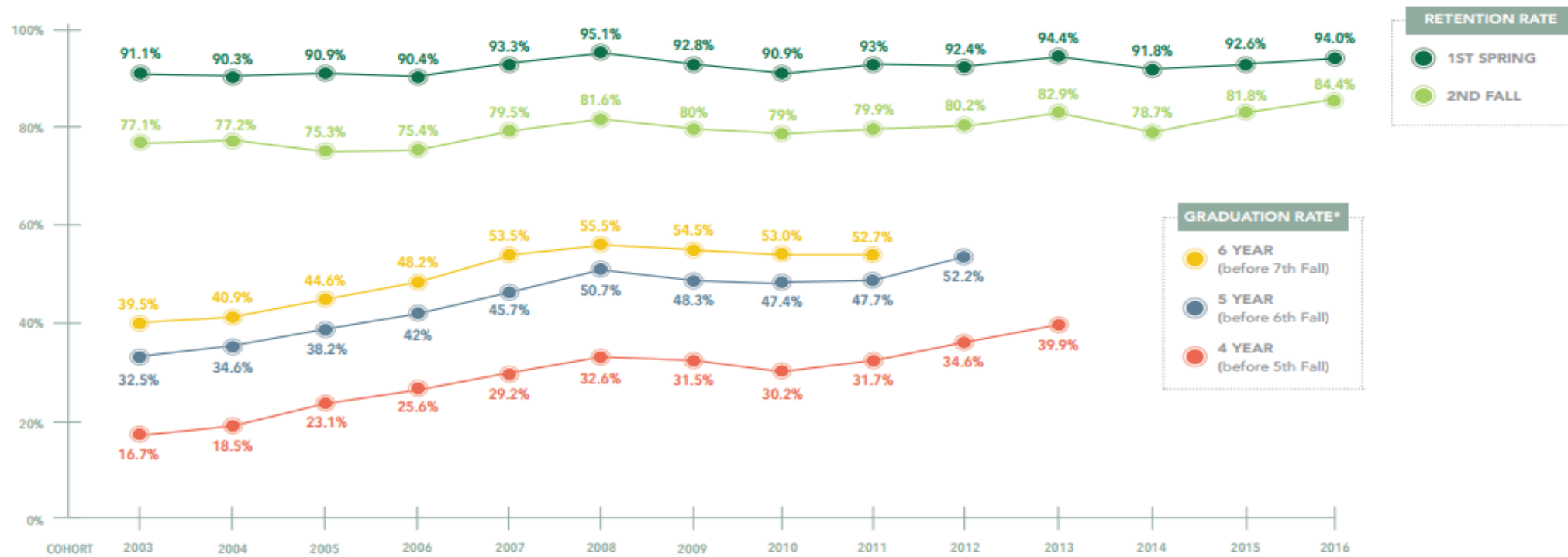


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# RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES

## FULL-TIME BACCALAUREATE-SEEKING FRESHMEN



\* Includes baccalaureate recipients only.

SOURCE: UAB Institutional Effectiveness and Analysis



# What is Retention?

- The National Center for Education Statistics defines “retention as an institutional measure and persistence as a student measure.”
- A student is retained at a particular institution. But the student may persistence in earning a degree at several institutions.
- This boils down to institutions do the retaining and students do the persisting.



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# What is Retention?

- **Retention:** Students who remain in school and do not drop out or transfer particularly during their freshmen year. This freshman cohort is used to track progression and graduation rate.
- **Attrition:** Students who leave the institution before completion of a degree or credential.



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# What is Retention?

- **Progression:** Students who progress from one academic level to the next (e.g. sophomore to junior). The progression rate is the percentage of a cohort that moves from one level to the next in a given year.
- **Graduation:** Students who graduate. Graduation rate is the percentage of an entering cohort that graduates within a certain period of time.



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# Why Retention is Important

- When students are successful it benefits the student, their family as well as their community; earning potential and career opportunities increase with the level of education.
- First year persistence and graduation rates are standard measures of academic quality as well as measures of institutional effectiveness. *#RANKINGS*



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# Why Retention is Important

*Retaining students is less expensive than recruiting new students.*

Let's look at the financial impact of retention and attrition

**A University lost \$18,819,562 in gross tuition revenue** after 2,063 degree-seeking students left the University and did not return in Fall 2015.

The amount of gross tuition revenue that could have been generated if the institution retained an additional 1% of degree-seeking students (headcount = 114) in Fall 2015 would have been **\$1,043,136.48**.

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# Key Collaborative Relationships

What is the relationship between the Retention Office and ...

- the Admissions Office?

- Student Affairs? Whether housed together or not, what is the SA role in student success?

- Faculty - how are Faculty involved with efforts?



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# Key Collaborative Relationships

## *Clarifying Myths ...*

1. *Retention would not be a problem if we just admitted "better" students* – believe there is a large conditional admit pool
2. *Students drop out because they "can't cut it" academically* - believe academic preparedness equates to persistence
3. *Retention means lowering standards* – they believe that the faculty's job is not to "retain" students
4. *Faculty members don't care about student retention* – some staff believe this and don't engage Faculty in efforts



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# Key Collaborative Relationships

What is the relationship between the Retention Office and ...

- Schools/Colleges
- the Registrar's Office?
- the Academic Advisors?
- Institutional Research?



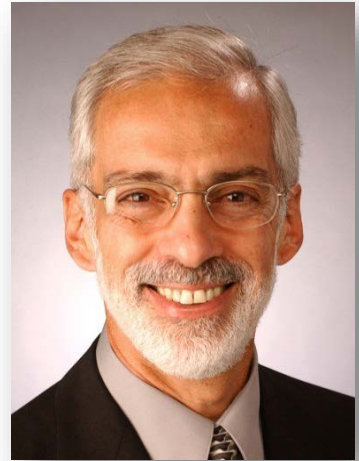
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# Theory to Practice

**Astin:** The more involved a student is with the college, the greater likelihood of student retention.

**Tinto:** Five Key Conditions: Students are more likely to persist and graduate at institutions that – 1) expect them to succeed, 2) provide clear information and sound advising, 3) provide academic, social, and personal support, 4) value students as members of the institution's community and 5) foster learning.



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# Relationship Building



## the student experience

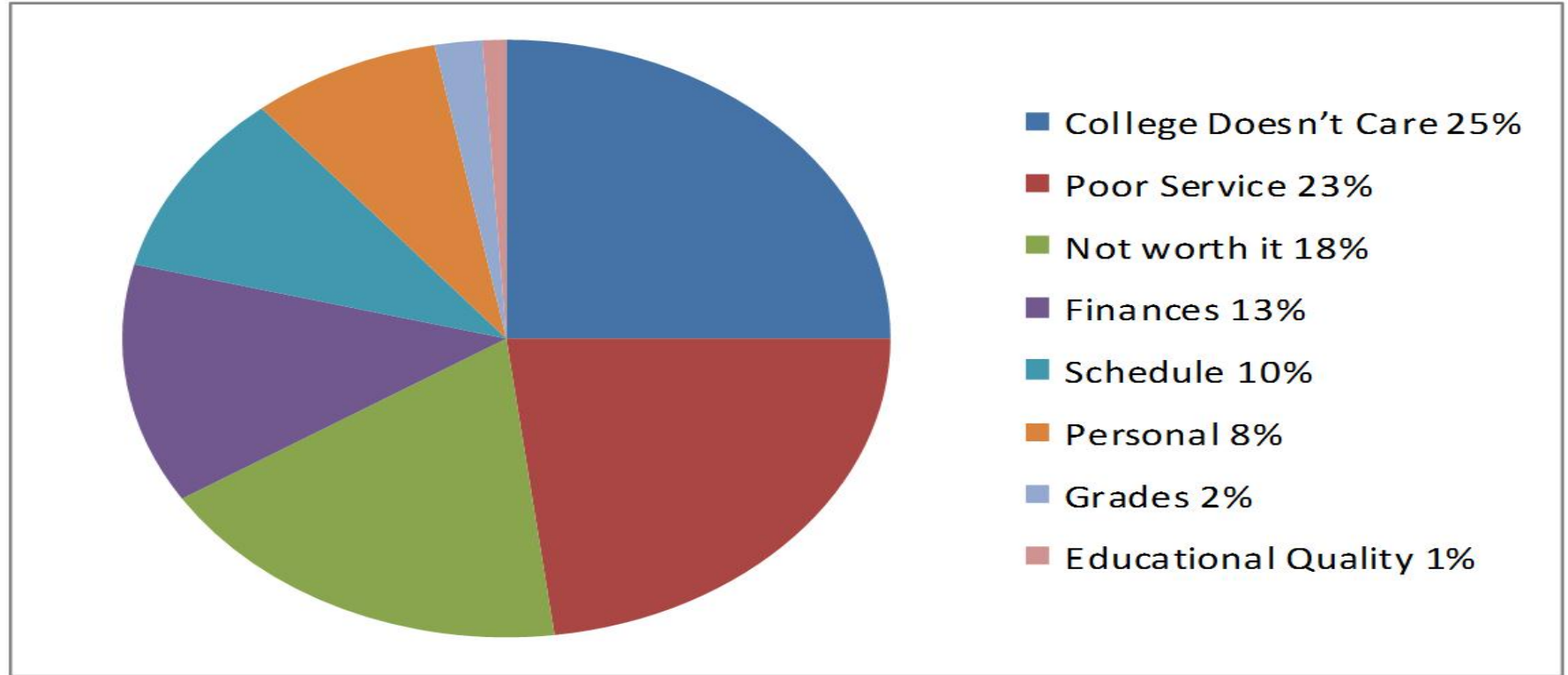
*In the ideal college culture, students should experience a harmony of people, processes, and technologies in a transparent and responsive environment. This must include smoother student interactions with services – George Mason University*

How do students make meaning of what they experience?

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# MYTH: *Students drop out because of finances, work, and/or family - Reasons out of our control*



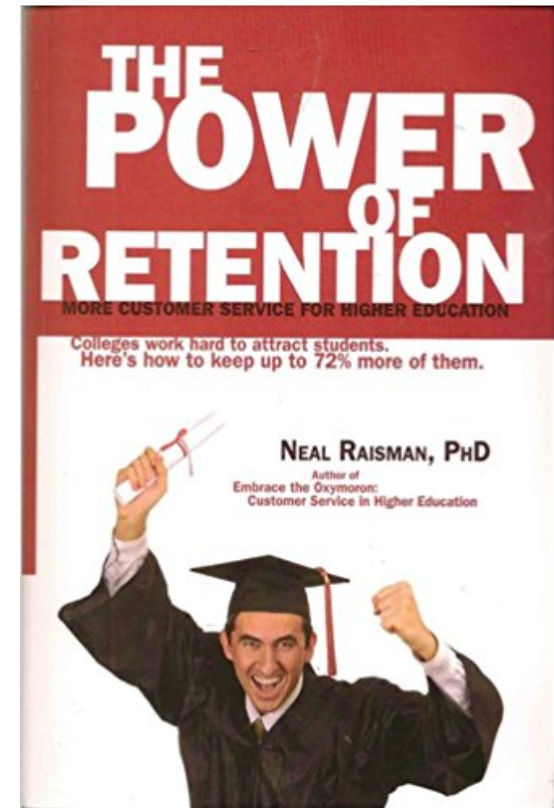
Why Students Really Leave College

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# Retention and Academic Customer Service

*Studies have shown that 76% percent of all attrition finally comes back to some aspect of academic customer service. Students leave a school because they do not receive the service they expect or need to succeed and feel a true member of the college community.*

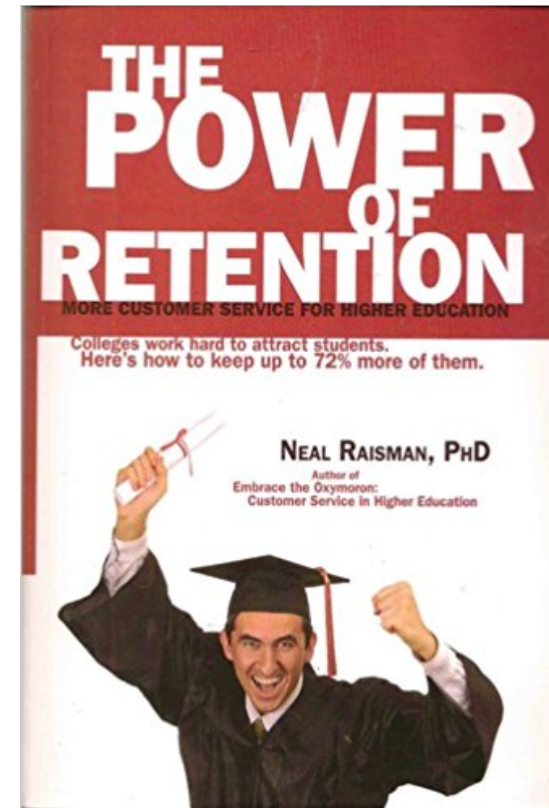


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# Retention and Academic Customer Service

*As competition between institutions increases, providing good academic customer service is more important than ever. Student attrition can have significant repercussions on campus life and the financial stability of an institution.*



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Chickfila: "hi welcome to<sup>®</sup>  
Chickfila it's a beautiful day it  
is 72° and you are blessed  
abundantly how may I help  
you"

Mcdonalds: "go head"

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# BUILDING THE IDEAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The paths of this roadmap represent the future of an evolving institution grounded in the fundamental values of what students want and need.



## STUDENT CARE

All students should encounter proactive, coordinated and nurturing interactions and services in every part of the institution, beginning with their very first interactions and extending through their entire Mason journey.



## ENABLE & REINFORCE RELATIONSHIP-DRIVEN PRACTICE



## SMART CAMPUS

All students should experience a harmony of people, processes, and technologies in a transparent, responsive environment.



## REDUCE BARRIERS



## STUDENT ACCESS

All students should feel part of an inclusive community of learners, educators and innovators who share in unified, holistic practices and experiences regardless of time, location or mode of learning.



## REDESIGN INITIATION EXPERIENCE



## DRIVE CONSISTENT ADVISING, MENTORSHIP, & COACHING

## STUDENT VOICE

Students should be active contributors to the evolving vision and expression of the collective Mason experience.



## PROVIDE 24/7 SERVICE

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RETENTION

# COMMITMENT BELL CURVE

Some students will LEAVE no matter what we do

Some students will allow us to **influence their decision to leave or stay**

Some students will STAY no matter what we do

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# Institutional Policies

Get Out  
of  
Your Own Way™

Research shows that perceptions of mattering and marginalization influence student departure decisions. Improving policies, procedures, and providing a culture of good customer service will increase retention rates. We must seek ways to serve students by removing unnecessary “speed bumps” on the road to graduation.



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# Best Practices

**Summer Touches:** Who and how often do we engage with students after Orientation?

**Handoff:** What is the starting point of retention?

**Summer Bridge:** Do you have a program for at-risk students?

**Progression Rate:** Is anyone tracking progression to completion – this may be markedly lower than the retention rate?

**Online Learner:** Is access to appropriate student services, advising, and academic services and resources being planned with this population in mind?

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# Best Practices

**Early Alerts:** Have you considered inclusion of staff concerns along with academic concerns? What about a requirement of early alerts for all 100 level classes?

**DFW Rates:** What is being done about high DFW rates and gateway courses? Are the DFW courses different for First Year students?

**At-Risk Office:** Who follows up on at-risk students and those returning from probation, suspension?

**Second Year Office:** Do you have formalized engagement for students in the second year?

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# Best Practices

**Meta Majors:** Have you considered clustering majors?

**15 to Finish:** How are you marketing and incentivizing on-time completion?

**Gap Funding:** Do you provide financial support to seniors who are near cohort completion but lack the resources to afford their final year?

**Recognition:** How are you honoring faculty and staff that go above and beyond to help with retention efforts?

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# Heart Matters - WFF



I've learned that people will forget  
what you said, people will forget  
what you did, but people will never  
forget how you made them feel.

— *Maya Angelou* —

AZ QUOTES

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# Questions? Comments?



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