

**CREATING AN ENGAGING ACADEMIC  
LEARNING COMMUNITY  
“IMPROVING STUDENT RETENTION  
AND GRADUATION RATES”**

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# INTRODUCTION

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- ✘ According to American College Tests (ACT), two-thirds (67 percent ) of all first –year students at US two – and Four year college return in their second year of school in 2010 (EMS, Student lifecycle solution).
- ✘ Recruiting students and getting them successfully through their program of study is extremely important to the mission of the colleges /universities and for their viability, but the reality is, it has been a challenge for colleges and universities regardless of private or public.

# INTRODUCTION (CONTINUED)

- ✘ Therefore universities/ colleges have to be proactive and strategic in their recruitment process:
  - + Have a comprehensive profile of their prospective students, so that the appropriate resources can be identified required to address the needs of the students in order to ensure student's success and completion.
- ✘ Based on their student profile, each university/ college can design its own internal retention tools and resources to address the specific needs of the individual student to be able to master the skills needed to succeed in their program of study and become productive and engaged citizens in the global community.

- What Are Schools Doing to improve retention?
- What are the Contributing factors that lead to students' dropout?
- What would help Retention numbers the most?
- What makes a student At-Risk for dropping out of college/university?

# 2012 NATIONAL FRESHMAN ATTITUDE REPORT— AN EXPLORATION OF ATTITUDES THAT INFLUENCE STUDENT SUCCESS.

- ✘ Many incoming male freshmen indicated lower levels of academic engagement when compared with their female counterparts, though more male than females reported they enjoyed solving complex problems.
- ✘ Adult, non-traditional-age freshmen expressed a mixture of views toward educators, along with a stronger desire than traditional-age freshmen to receive individual help with improving their mathematics and writing skills.

# HOW CONFIDENT ARE TODAY'S COLLEGE FRESHMEN FROM BY RACE AND ETHNICITY. (BY NOEL LEVITZ)

- + Black/ African American
- + Hispanic Latino
- + Asian Pacific Islander
- + American Indian/ Alaskan Native
- + White Caucasians
- × Response to the following statements:
  - + Math has always been a challenge for me
  - + I have difficulty organizing my ideas in paper
  - + My understanding of physical sciences is weak
  - + I have a very good understanding of general biology
  - + I would like to receive some help in improving my study habits
  - + I would like to receive tutoring in one or more of my courses.

# WHAT MAKES A STUDENT AT-RISK FOR DROPPING OUT OF COLLEGE/ UNIVERSITY?

- ✘ The US Department of Education defines At-Risk students as follows:
  - + Delayed college enrollment (not coming directly out of high school).
  - + Financially independent
  - + Employed full-Time
  - + Single parent, head of the household status
  - + Attending school part-time.

# WHAT FACTORS AFFECT THE LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION?

- ✘ Research shows that Risk Factors for students dropping out from school fall into three Categories (EMS).
  1. Attitudinal
  2. Situational
  3. Behavioral
- ✘ The intersection point of these three categories is where you will find your students who are AT-Risk of leaving your programs.

## WHAT ARE ATTITUDINAL FACTORS?

- ✘ Attitudinal factors are important because students' personal dispositions shape their commitment to achieving educational goals.
- ✘ As students engage in the educational process, their goals are either strengthened or weakened, depending on what type of encounters or challenges they face.
- ✘ Positive encounters will strengthened their resolve, while negative encounter will weakened their commitment and creating conditions for early withdrawal/dropout.

# HOW DO YOU PICK UP ON ATTITUDINAL FACTORS?

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- ✘ According to research conducted by Allan Quigley, body language and verbal clues may identify attitudinal barriers sufficient to lead to attrition.
  - + Skepticism
  - + Hostility
  - + Hesitancy
  - + Uncertainty
- ✘ Often these factors can only be picked up through interaction with the student.
- ✘ Through verbal and written communication college and universities can gain a better understanding of attitude and motivation.

# WHAT ARE BEHAVIORAL FACTORS?

- ✘ These include activity-based indicators such as:
  - + Poor class attendance
  - + Sporadic log on
  - + Low grades
  - + Missing assignments
  - + Failed test
  - + Failure to register

# WHY ARE BEHAVIORAL FACTORS IMPORTANT?

- ✘ According to research on behavioral factors, direct correlation between college grades and student persistence.
  - + First term grades can be the single most important factor in predicting graduation/ program completion. (Roger Mills).

# HOW DO YOU CAPTURE ATTITUDINAL, BEHAVIORAL AND SITUATIONAL FACTORS?

- ✘ Attitudinal Factors can be obtained through surveys and interviews:
  - + Career goals
  - + Disposition toward school
  - + Self efficacy
  - + Subjective norms
- ✘ Behavioral Factors can be obtained through System Information/ student records.
  - + Poor Grades
  - + Attendance
  - + Not registered.
  - + Not completing assigned class activities.
- ✘ Situational Factors can be obtained through Interactions with students.
  - + Personal Issues
  - + Change in Financial Issues
  - + Change in family issues.

## WHAT DO YOU DO WITH ALL THE DATA?

- ✘ Based on the attitudinal, behavioral, and situational factors, you should be able to identify students that are at risk and the reasons why they are at risk. The next step is to develop appropriate offices with highly qualified individuals with the dispositions and resources to address students' needs to help them succeed and eventually graduate from their respective programs.

# VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY'S APPROACH TO ADDRESS RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT VSU.

- ✘ Creating an Engaging Academic teaching and Learning community.
- ✘ Our heritage as a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) with a land grant mission established in 1882.
- ✘ Mission Statement:.....we provide access and opportunity to any one seeking higher education.
  - + Student population is about (90%) are of African American ancestry.
  - + Our (90%) of our students receive some form of assistance from the Federal Government in the forms of aids, loans...
  - + About 70% of our students are First generation to attend college.
  - + Our Retention Rate is about 64-67%.

# STEPS TAKEN TO ADDRESS THE RETENTION RATE OF OUR STUDENTS

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- ✘ Established a University College that provides academic support for most of the Majors in the University with the exception of some Professional degree programs. Such as Business, Education, Nursing.
- ✘ Raise the admission standard to 2.2 GPA.

# STEPS TAKEN TO ADDRESS THE RETENTION RATE OF OUR STUDENTS (CONTINUED)

- ✦ The University College is staffed with a Director, and highly trained staff to advise students and also work closely with Deans, Chairs and Faculty from the respective majors, so that the appropriate information and course schedules are developed for students based on their academic needs of the moment. Students' performance in Mathematics and English are highly monitored to ensure success in these courses.

# SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISTINGUISHED TEACHER/FACULTY MEMBER

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- ✘ An effective faculty should:
  - + Highly Knowledgeable in their in the courses they teach.
  - + Highly competent, caring and effective
  - + Passions for teaching and for students
  - + Engage the institutional process
  - + Invites to be able to engage all students
  - + Be committed to students and their learning
- ✘ I believe:
  - + That accomplished teachers are dedicated to making knowledge, and educational skills accessible to all students,
  - + That all students can learn,
  - + That teacher should meet student equitably, but recognize the individual differences that distinguish their students from one another
  - + Can adjust (differentiate) their teaching as appropriate to the basis of observation, and knowledge of their students interests, abilities, skills, knowledge of family circumstances and peer relationship.

# SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISTINGUISHED TEACHER/FACULTY MEMBER (CONTINUED)

- ✘ Can engage students in the learning process
- ✘ Have a sense of Humor
- ✘ Use appropriate teaching aids to emphasize a concept
- ✘ Develop activities that encourage and foster activities participation in class
- ✘ Make the content relevant and interest to the students
- ✘ Provide a much broader response to the students why they need to know this concept from their lesson, course, rather than to get a passing grade for the class
- ✘ Develop a holistic approach in teaching your students.

# STUDENT ADVISING

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- ✘ Advise and register all Freshmen, Sophomore and Transfer student
- ✘ Provide individual counsel to all Freshmen, Sophomore and Transfer students on academic and personal concerns
- ✘ Provide individual counsel and academic advisement to upperclassmen by request as needed
- ✘ Serve as liaisons to assigned schools and/or academic departments
- ✘ Maintain contact with parents in compliance with FERPA
- ✘ Maintain student records as needed to ensure on time graduation
- ✘ Create Personal Student Academic Growth plans

# STUDENT ENHANCEMENT & SUPPORT

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- ✘ Advise Undecided majors
- ✘ Assist with Major changes
- ✘ One on one remediation
- ✘ National Student Exchange
- ✘ Fully Equipped Computer labs
- ✘ Study rooms
- ✘ Student Meeting Rooms
- ✘ FERPA Records maintenance

# FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE TEAM

- ✘ The program provides opportunities for first year students to become active integrated members of the university and to develop skills needed for academic and personal success. It provides students with activities that complement academic learning.
- ✘ Bridge the Career Planning Gap
- ✘ Study Skills Gap
- ✘ Financial Guidance Gap

# FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE TEAM (CONTINUED)

- ✘ In addition the VSU university college is created to enhance the chances for students to survive the university experience by providing a centralized location for academic support especially for their first two years of college. The primary mission of the college is to improve the academic performance of our students, faculty and staff in retaining, educating, and graduating students especially those from underserved diverse population.

## ACADEMIC SUPPORT AND RETENTION TO:

- ✘ Enhance student success by creating a climate that promotes, cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity.
- ✘ Advocating for students, by developing a broad range of programs and services to ensure that needs of all of our students are met and will make it possible for them to succeed.
- ✘ The University college offers a variety service, such as tutoring, advising, mentoring and workshops that will bridge the knowledge gap between High School and college.

# PROMOTE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER:

- ✘ Customer service can make or break your institution. Centralize service provided to students.
- ✘ Student today expect nothing less than highest level of service, especially when the cost of higher education is extremely expensive.
- ✘ Customer service is the backbone that makes institutions successful.

## **SIMPLE WAYS CUSTOMER SERVICE CAN BE ENHANCED IN YOUR INSTITUTION IS AS FOLLOWS:**

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- ✘ Respond quickly
- ✘ Establish a relationship with your students, right from the start.
- ✘ Listen to what the student is saying.
- ✘ Anticipate students' needs.
- ✘ Personalize the experience.
- ✘ Create a one stop shop for relevant service.

# DEVELOP A CENTER FOR INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING.

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- ✘ Identify effective teaching strategies and learning experiences that students student enjoy. Make student active participants in their learning process. Teach the whole student.
- ✘ Create an engaged learning community that provide learning experiences that will affect student attitudes, behaviors and their understanding of themselves to be very productive in a global community.

# DEVELOP A CENTER FOR INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING. (CONTINUED)

- ✘ Everybody in the university (president, Vice Presidents, other administrators, School deans, department chairs, Faculty and staff and food services and facility personnel...) should play that part in creating that environment to foster learning. Let the students know that we all care for their overall well-being and their success.

# DEVELOP A COMMON GOAL OF SERVING AS A RESOURCE FOR:

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- + The promotion of a campus climate that emphasizes academic excellence
- + Cultural awareness
- + Personal development.
- ✘ Additional incentives are provided for faculty who provide effective mentorship and work closely with student to ensure their success.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. Retention is not what you do. Retention is an outcome of what you do.
2. Gather the village
3. Get your data together
4. Try to manage milestone completion but be aware of your attrition curve.
5. Don't forget why you are doing what you are doing.

# SOURCES

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- ✘ *Increase Student Retention Now*
- ✘ *The importance of an Early Warning System in identifying at-risk students (ESM) Student Lifecycle solutions. A Xerox Company*
- ✘ *<http://www.esm-sls.com>*

# EFFECTS OF AN ENGAGING ACADEMIC LEARNING COMMUNITY ON RETENTION, GRADUATION RATES AND FACULTY MORALE

KNOWING AND UNDERSTANDING THE  
EFFECTS OF A WELL DESIGNED  
ACADEMIC LEARNING COMMUNITY:  
KENTUCKY STATE UNIVERSITY STORY

**Sam O. Oleka, PhD.**

**AWA COLLEAGUES WHO WROTE THE REPORT  
FROM WHICH THIS PRESENTATION IS ADAPTED**

- **Sandy Trammell, AWA Pilot Coordinator**
  - **Sue Stamper, ACE Director**
  - **Dr. Betty Fritz-Cook, UNV 101  
Coordinator**
  - **Chris Russey, Math Instructor**
  - **Dr. Caroline Carter, CITLA Director**
- ***“A Campus-Wide Learning Community:  
Becoming Agents of Change”***  
**Kentucky State University**  
**Academics with Attitude 2008 -2012**

# Kentucky State University

- Chartered May 1886 as the State Normal School for Colored Persons
- Smallest of Kentucky's State Universities with a Land Grant Institution, an HBCU and a Liberal Arts Missions statements
  - 2800 students
  - Approximately 150 full-time faculty
  - 15:1 faculty ratio

# TYPES OF STUDENTS ATTENDING KENTUCKY STATE UNIVERSITY

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- Mixed levels of high school academic preparation; those who are well prepared and those who are (underprepared) not well prepared to do university work
- This condition raises the following question:
  - **If you grant admission to students with three or more developmental education needs in reading, writing and Mathematics, what would you do for their success, retention, and eventual graduation?**

# KSU'S RESPONSE

## Academics with Attitude

**We believe that *academic* pursuit is the concerted endeavor of the entire KSU community, faculty, staff, and students, not students alone.**

# Definition of AWA Project

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- **The Academics with Attitude project reflects the entire university's positive commitment to continuously change to improve teaching and learning.**

# AWA PURPOSE

**KSU learning community is**

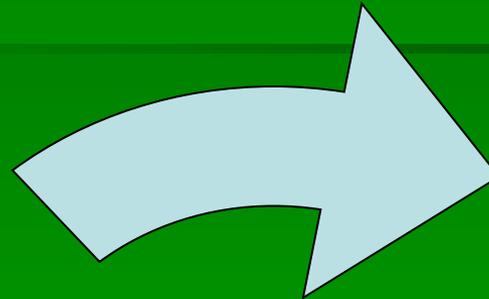
- **to be actively engaged in the development, practice, and assessment of a developmental-gateway freshman project.**
- **To position AWA project as an interrelated academic program in which students' academic and cognitive development is supported by the KSU community.**

# AWA DESIGN

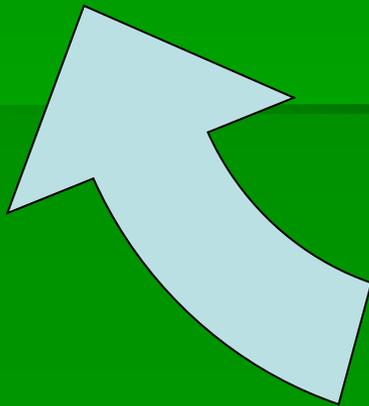
- The KSU “Academics with Attitude” is best conceived as a cycle of university community attitudes that are continuously *affektive* as well as *effective*.

# AWA Continuous Learning Support Cycle

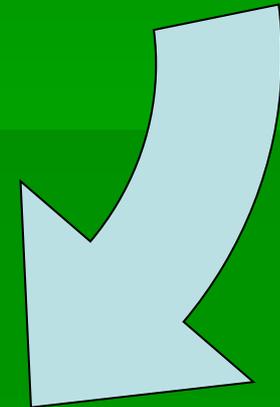
Faculty committed to continuous improvement of positive, constructive methods of teaching.



Administration and staff committed to continuous, positive, constructive funding and support of developmental education.



Students committed to continuous acquisition of developmental knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for promotion to college level courses and programs, active engagement in academic study, academic and personal support programs, and living-learning communities.



# Student Characteristics

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- **The current 18 year old arriving on KSU's campus learns best through**
  - **teamwork**
  - **experiential learning**
  - **structure**
  - **technology**

# Our faculty *attitude* is continuously committed to

- leading the change.
- using positive and constructive methods of teaching *that improve students' engagement in learning.*
- engaging students in learning through engaged teaching.

Student *attitude* is continuously committed to

- active engagement in academic study,
- instructional support programs;
- academic advising;
- personal counseling programs;
- living-learning communities; and
- acquisition of developmental knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for promotion to college level courses and programs.

Administration and staff *attitudes* are continuously committed to \_\_\_\_\_

- **continuous positive and constructive funding and useful and proactive support of developmental education.**

# What we did

- **Revisited our 2005 Developmental Education Committee Recommendations;**
- **Seized the opportunity to mesh part of our accreditation process with the SACS quality enhancement plan by focusing on our tremendous developmental/preparatory education needs; and**
- **Designed the Academics with Attitude 2008 pilot.**

# How we did it

- We established the parameters of our cohort based on the first tier of developmental need
  - ACT English sub scores of 15 or below  
*AND*
  - ACT Reading sub scores of 15 or below  
*AND*
  - ACT Math sub scores of 18 or below  
(or SAT equivalents)

# We Created A Learning Community

- Professors/advisors
- Interrelated curriculum
- Integrated classes and project seminars
- Block scheduling (15 students/cohort)
- Co-curricular activities
- Collaboration among faculty, seminar leaders, supplemental instructors, administrators
- UNV 101
- Faculty Collaboration
- 3 class meetings + 2 seminars
- MAT 095, ENG 088, ENG 089, UNV 101
- Off-campus lecture, dinner, court room trip
- Weekly Team Meetings

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**UNV 101**  
**Professor/Advisor**  
**Model**

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# Our Underlying Premise.....

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- **Student engagement binds students to each other and to the institution and promotes positive attitudes related to meaningful learning activities.**

# Basic Goal of AWA 101

“Through engaging students in a systematic support network of AWA 101 instructors who have a teaching and advising role, students will develop positive attitudes that lead to **productive behaviors** that promote academic success”.

# The UNV 101 Professor/Advisor Will ....

- Meet with the AWA Teaching Team weekly to discuss student's progress for three semesters
- Meet with the student regularly during the semester to discuss his/her performance
- Serve as the student's ombudsman in a variety of situations
- Provide information to the student's parent/guardian as upon request

# Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Records

- **80% - 94% Success Rate in Tutored Classes**
- **One-on-One and Small-Group Supplemental Instruction**
- **Self- or Faculty-Referred Student Clientele**
- **Peer Tutors and Professional Instructional Counselors**

# Academic Support Characterized by:

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- **Professional Standards**
- **Critical Thinking Process**
- **Talent Development/Constructivist Philosophy**
- **Inductive/Socratic Approach**
- **Student Engagement and Personal Responsibility**

# Math 095 Classroom Case Study

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**What really happens on the front line?**

- **Students attend their normal 3 credit hour developmental course in math.**
- **Students meet an additional 2 times per week (50 minutes each) for seminars for each course.**

# Faculty Preparation

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- **Faculty are trained on differentiated instruction towards student learning styles**
- **Faculty plan labs for their most effective use**

# Labs

- **Not intended to allow the instructor to cover more content**
- **Should deliver the content in a more diverse and in depth way**
- **Labs are intended for more student practice as opposed to an additional lecture**
- **Great opportunity for use of manipulative, technology and other learning aids**

# Interrelated Curriculum

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- **Common texts**
- **Vocabulary words**
- **Activities**
- **Projects**

# Valuable Lessons Learned

- It is good to allow students to know that their voices are heard but make sure a listening ear is not used to validate a disrespect and undermining of the program itself.
- Be consistent in the purpose of the seminar.
- If possible, allow students to have frequent access to their grades and how every decision affects their grades.

# More Valuable Lessons Learned

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- **Students were receptive to the faculty who seem to show much care for their success**
- **The extra practice in seminars helped their performance**
- **The community aspect can be a bonus or a crutch depending if the students use it to inspire each other to greatness or to pull others down with them**

# Retention for AWA Pilot Groups & First Implementation

Retention Period	AWA	AWA + or	Control	University Wide Rate
Fall 08	58	-	41	Fall 687
Fall 08-Fall 09	53 (92%)	+22%	29 (70%)	-
Fall 08-Fall 09	36 (62%)	+35% +10%	11 (27%)	360 (52%)
Summer 09	55	-	-	-
Summer-Fall 09	54 (98%)	-	-	-
Summer 09-11	36 (64%)	-	-	-
Fall 2009	134	-	29	Fall 540
Fall 09-spring 10	116 (87%)	+11%	22 (76%)	290 (53.7%)
Fall 09-spring 10	74 (55%)	+0%, +1.3%	-	-

# Retention for AWA Pilot Groups & First Implementation

Retention Period	AWA	AWA + or Control	University Wide Rate
Summer 2012	97	- -	fall 635
Summer -Fall 10	?	- -	-
Summer 10- Fall 11	47 (48.8)	+0% (equal)	308 (48.5%)
Summer 2011	101	- -	Fall 558
Summer -fall 2011	?	- -	-
Summer 11-fall 12	56 (56%)	+6%	279 (50%)
Summer 2012	92	- -	fall
Summer-fall 2012	92 (100%)	- -	-
Summer- fall 2013	TBD	- -	TBD

# OVERALL 1<sup>ST</sup> TO 2<sup>ND</sup> YEAR RETENTION RATES

**2007-2008**

**49%**

**2008-2009**

**52%**

**2009-2010**

**54%**

**SOURCE: (Office of Institutional Research, 2011)**

**Data from the first cohort , fall 2008, shows that 62% of students in the AWA cohorts returned to school for the fall 2009 semester, whereas only 25% of the control group was retained from fall-to-fall. The grades were higher as well. Students in the fall cohort also had a higher retention rate than the control group. The summer cohorts did not have control groups. No graduates yet until May 2013.**

# EFFECTS ON FACULTY MORALE

**A well designed engaging academic learning community provides faculty with a sense of fulfillment and personal satisfaction as they make a difference in the lives of underprepared students.**

THIS IS THE END

■ THE END