

## **Retention and Persistence Committee Summary**

### **December 2013 - May 2017**

#### Current Retention and Persistence Committee Members

- Pamela Balls Organista, Associate Dean for Social Sciences, Arts and Sciences
- Robert Bromfield, University Registrar and Associate Dean, SEM
- Christopher H Brooks, Associate Dean for Sciences, Arts and Sciences
- Shawn P Calhoun, Associate Dean and Head of Access Services, Gleeson Library
- Marilyn E Delaure, Associate Professor, Communication Studies, Arts and Sciences
- Laura Chaney, Director, International Student and Scholar Services
- Ria DasGupta, Diversity and Community Relations Program Manager, DECO
- Hayley Farb, Associate University Registrar & Director of the Graduation Center
- Joseph A Henson, Director, Office of Institutional Analytics
- Shawn Hicks, Assistant Vice Provost, SEM
- Alexander B Hochman, Senior Director, Priscilla A. Scotlan Career Services Center
- Katy Juranty, Academic Success Coach, CASA
- Eileen Maruyama Fung, Associate Dean, Arts and Sciences
- Charlene P Lobo Soriano, Associate Dean, CASA
- Marvella Luey, Assistant Dean, CASA
- Julio E Moreno, Associate Professor, History, Arts and Sciences
- Kathy Napper, Associate Vice Provost, SEM
- Julie Orio, Vice Provost, Student Life
- Deanna L Pachinger, Assistant Dean, CASA
- Susan Kay Prion, Associate Professor, SONHP
- Peggy K Takahashi, Associate Professor, School of Management
- Christina Tzagarakis-Foster, Associate Dean for Sciences, Arts and Sciences
- Mary J Wardell-Ghirarduzzi, Vice Provost, DECO
- Gregory V Wolcott, Assistant Vice Provost of Student Engagement, Student Life
- Scott Ziehm, Associate Dean, SONHP
- Susan Murphy (was a long-term member until her retirement)

#### History

The initiative to develop a university-wide committee centered on student retention and persistence was started in Fall 2013 by then Provost Jennifer Turpin and then Vice Provost for Student Life, Peter Novak. Peter Novak and Pamela Balls Organista were appointed Co-Chairs of the committee, and they invited a number of staff and faculty who represented several constituencies and services throughout the university to join the Retention and Persistence Committee. The committee first met in December 2013 with the following charge:

*Using institutional data, study the processes and procedures to help students persist and graduate within four years for those who enter USF as freshmen, and within the typical program time frame, as well as for those who enter USF as transfers or graduate students. Make*

*recommendations for changes and/or enhancements to processes and procedures, from admission through graduation, to eliminate redundancy, improve efficiency, streamline the student experience and facilitate student success.*

- *Review recommendations from Stay on Track committee for continued efficacy or dissolution*
- *Study measures for retention and set goals for continued improvement*
- *Study statistics for 4-year and 6-year graduation rates and set goals for continued improvement*
- *Analyze statistics of specific schools and programs*
- *Analyze statistics for specific student populations and make recommendations for changes and/or enhancements that are likely to lead to improvements, including: African American, Latin@, Asian American, Native American, Caucasian, International, Athletes, Pell Grant recipients, first-generation college students, others as recommended by committee members.*
- *Review MAP-Works and Admitted Student Questionnaire data and evaluate follow-up procedures*
- *Review DegreeWorks implementation*
- *Make recommendations for how faculty can become involved in procedural changes*
- *Analyze any and all relevant policies or procedures as needed*
- *Create sub-committees as needed*

#### Initial "Stay on Track" Recommendations given to committee - December 2013

- Change timing of the declaration of major from completion of 60 to 48 units.
- Invest in more early alert monitoring and follow-up. Utilize MAP-Works data more.
- Map out clear progression toward degree completion for every program.
- Formalize LOA, Withdrawal, and medical withdrawal policies and procedures (in progress at time).
- Institute a change of major alert (in test phase at time).

#### Spring 2014 Summary

Committee members were granted access to CIPE data to see high level acceptance rates, yield, 4-year rates, 6-year rates, and retention rates for full-time students. Only high level comparisons were available because of limited staff time to dive deep and the way cohort codes were completed in banner which limited ability to filter easily.

The Registrar's office began an investigation into creating student progress deficiency reports that would analyze and provide alerts for students who drop below full-time status, who received GPAs of less than a 2.0, that are in danger of failing at mid-semester and those who have excessive absences. It was suggested that these reports go to CASA for follow up with the student in question, and that these reports be run at specific points in the semester (i.e., immediately after registration, census date, the semester deadline to drop courses, and at the end of each semester). There was also a suggestion to analyze topics of CASA visits to which

at the time had exceeded 22,000 visits per semester. The Registrar investigated reporting options in DegreeWorks.

The University had been conducting the MAP-Works survey for new students in the sixth week to identify “at-risk” students for potential follow-up. Factors such as what skills these students bring to the university with them, their ability to adjust to college life, and their financial decisions are examples of what determines this risk framework. Social and academic integration are also large factors in student retention. MAP-Works had demonstrated that students who are high in social integration but low on academic integration are leaving the university at the fastest rate. However, the information gained from that survey had mostly been limited to CASA coaches and housing staff for follow-up and not widely shared and/or easily reported out to other stakeholders. The committee thought it would be helpful to utilize this data resource in a more robust way.

The committee conducted an analysis of “low-hanging fruit” and identified the following:

- Students participating in internships in more mission-driven majors don’t get paid. Could the University provide a “scholarship” from USF for these internships?
- Earlier and stronger communication throughout acceptance, onboarding, orientation and into the first year.
- More support for undeclared students - perhaps a mandatory class about major exploration.
- Increased support for transfer students.
- Increased focus on learning career “hard” skills such as LinkedIn, resume, interview prep, etc.
- Expansion of bridge programs for traditionally at-risk populations.
- Possible creation of a first-year orientation course.
- Increase support for veterans through CAPS or other resources.
- Finalize the LOA policy and follow-up process for when students return.
- Create an exit interview process for students leaving or transferring.
- Rejuvenate the faculty advising system, requiring faculty to be more proactive in tracking, reporting, and guiding students at risk, especially first-year students.
- Make all forms and administrative processes digitized and streamlined and more accessible online.
- Keep policies and websites up-to-date (had not been maintained).

The committee created the following subcommittees with focused outcomes:

- Subcommittee on Deficiency Reporting and Graduation Check:
  - Generate a list of current practices across all undergraduate colleges
  - Suggest software and procedures that can maximize faculty and staff feedback and communication
  - Analyze which reports are most indicative of success/failure, and suggest timelines, checklists, and mechanisms for sending and receiving reports between relevant departments.

- Determine which offices take responsibility for follow-up or "own" the process.
- Make recommendations for developing a comprehensive review of the grad check process, including deadlines for students, automatic grad checks before the senior year, and a process by which this can be accomplished with existing staff and faculty.
- Subcommittee on Advising:
  - Clarify and define roles and responsibilities of advising for CASA, Career Services academic departments and faculty that are clear and consistent and can be communicated to all parties involved (faculty, staff, and students).
  - Determine the best type of advising model whether it is ultimately carried out by professional staff or faculty.
  - Establish consistent advising practices for all undergraduates across schools and programs.
  - Compile and analyze data about specific majors, time to completion, and report on those programs that have lower graduation rates.
  - Work closely with the Deficiency Reports subcommittee to determine how reports are communicated in the process of advising.
- Subcommittee on Historically Underrepresented Ethnic Minority Groups
  - First, determine the needs of each separate population by analyzing retention and graduation data for Asian American, African American, Latin@, and Native American students.
  - Work closely with the multicultural recruitment staff in Admission to identify areas of concern and increased communication/collaboration.
  - Analyze current MOUs with College Track and KIPP schools for models of support throughout the four-year journey.
  - Work with existing programs/offices/departments to recommend a comprehensive support structure of collaborative efforts between Muscat Scholars Program, CELASA, Intercultural Center, academic programs and others.
  - In the future, the group may also want to analyze data and make recommendations for other subgroups including but not limited to LGBTQ and first-generation students.
- Admission and First-Year Student (Freshman and Transfer) Subcommittee
  - Use data from MAP-Works to determine needs of incoming freshman.
  - Determine how MAP-Works data can be best disseminated to faculty and other advisors.
  - Work with first-year seminars in Nursing, Management, and Arts and Sciences to create supplemental materials that help transition students throughout the first semester (Extending New Student Orientation).
  - Work with Transfer Center to help communicate degree plans for transfer students and how best to communicate those plans.
- Students at Risk / Students who Succeed Subcommittee

- Identify "choke points" where students meet the most difficulty in terms of persistence and graduation goals.
- Make recommendations for clearing these "choke points" programmatically.
- Evaluate "Back on Track" program for students on probation.
- Identify mentoring, research opportunities, and special engagement in the classroom that make USF unique.
- Compile and analyze data for completion rates on: students who change majors, double major, declare early/declare late, and other questions, making recommendations for policy changes.
- Identify factors that are highly correlated with 4-year graduation rate.
- International Student Subcommittee
  - Research current retention data for international student population.
  - Analyze current practices of transition into the a)cultural b) social and c)academic environments and make recommendations for each.
  - Provide and suggest workshop opportunities with the Center for Teaching Excellence to include best teaching practices for International Students.
  - Research creation of opportunities for greater internship and job placement opportunities for international students.

Concurrently, the committee was provided information regarding an Undocumented Student Task Force that would be formed by DECO and chaired by Genevieve Negrón-Gonzales, faculty member in the School of Education. The retention of this population would be a focus of this task force and thus a point of intersection with the retention and persistence committee.

In the summer of 2014, Peter Novak brought forth the idea of creating a University Life course that would be an extension of orientation and suggested that this was also a project whose work would overlap with that of the Retention and Persistence committee.

#### Fall 2014 Summary

CIPE shared initial data with the committee regarding their analysis of two models: logistic regression and random forest. CIPE shared that the models are works in progress and they had been looking at all undergraduates across the academic years 2011-13. Seventy-eight variables were being considered. Initially declared nursing students were more likely to be retained. Students coded as natural sciences majors in the College of Arts & Sciences were more at risk for attrition. Only one major was significantly connected to first-year retention and that is accounting in the School of Management. Additionally, Chinese students had a greater propensity to be retained, while students from outside the West Coast were slightly less likely to be retained. Many other geographic variables did not significantly relate to first-year retention.

Overall, race and ethnicity were significant factors. No classification was significantly different from the white base case, except in three cases: African-American students were less likely to be retained. Asian-American students were more likely to be retained. Hispanic/Latino students

were also more likely to be retained. Other factors included that part-time students and athletes were less likely to be retained. Non-traditionally aged students were less likely to be retained.

Three findings regarding financial aid were of interest to the committee. Students who received a Pell grant did not have a significantly different propensity to retain. Students who received any institutional merit aid, institutional need-based aid, or the Cal Grant were more likely to stay. The magnitude of institutional merit aid, institutional need-based aid, and the Cal Grant were significant positive predictors of retention.

The Admission and First-Year Students subcommittee, led by Greg Wolcott, reviewed past MAP-Works data and focused solely on the development of the USF 101 course. Greg, together with Marilyn DeLaure, serve as Co-Directors of the USF 101 initiative. Many other universities are using similar models to increase their retention and graduation rates and the subcommittee reviewed similar programs at Loyola Chicago and the University of South Carolina, a leader in FYE programs. The original plan for USF101 was to have a required course for all new students in the Fall of 2015, but concerns were raised around classroom space and scheduling as well as faculty to teach. While staff were willing to teach, there were questions about if this would violate aspects of the faculty agreement, and questions were also raised on how to pay staff for this. It was decided that students who were forced over 18 credits by the addition of the class would not be charged for the course. The committee also debated pass/fail options, and if the addition of a required course would be overwhelming for new students. There was also a suggestion that student mentors be added in some way. Initial primary areas of focus for the course included: academic success, USF acclimation, and personal development.

The Graduation Check & Deficiency Reporting Subcommittee, led by Robert Bromfield, worked to identify the main lines of inquiry pertaining to graduation checks that need attention, including the need to identify checkpoints for students who have not declared a major, and policy implications for current practices (e.g., double dipping, the use of a course for 2 or more majors/minors). There need to be clear guidelines in place for this to work effectively. Additionally, the Department of Education is also paying closer scrutiny to institutions/students who are exhausting their financial aid because they are only eligible for 150% of their program length. The committee began development of a timetable to be worked on for various deficiency reports that will outline their frequency and distribution.

The Advising Subcommittee, led by Laleh Shahideh, focused on creating a working definition of the word “advising” as it pertains to students at USF and suggested including personal and professional development as well as policies and procedures as these are important aspects of advising students. The committee felt that students are often confused by having two advisors (faculty and CASA). The advising experience of students is not consistent as well as it happens differently in different schools and departments. All advisors are not trained the same way. The subcommittee hoped to establish a list of questions to pose to Department Chairs, and they

would then converse with the deans of the various schools to determine the best way to distribute these questions to chairs/faculty.

The International Student Subcommittee was led by Laura Chaney. The largest concern was that it was unclear what training faculty are getting in regards to working with International Students. The committee decided to approach another committee on international students within the Center for Teaching Excellence to collaborate.

### Spring 2015 Summary

The committee began discussion of a pending campus climate survey that would be coordinated from the offices of Mary Wardell and Gerardo Marín. They planned to investigate external surveys where USF would be able to incorporate some of our own institutional questions. The audience for the survey would be students, faculty and staff.

It was determined that USF 101, Expedition USF, would not be required of all students but instead be a pilot of 400 students with 16 sections, each capped at 25 students. All courses would be held in the lower library level, and students would meet once a week for 50 minutes. The subcommittee continued to work on syllabus and course content. The plan to have a special transfer section was delayed to Fall 2016. The subcommittee had also begun to engage CIPE to build in assessment throughout the development of the course, particularly related to tracking persistence to sophomore year, GPA, and then eventually graduation rates.

Susan Murphy worked with a group to address the issue of holds. Specifically they investigated current holds to ensure they serve a purpose and are not redundant. They divided the holds up by ownership (i.e., student accounts), in order to have these areas give further explanation as to what exactly each hold is for and its purpose. They also revised the notifications to students, and edited the language to inform students that they have a hold they need to address, rather than simply a reminder to check their holds.

Continued conversations were had regarding MAP-Works and early alert systems in AdvisorTrac. If faculty members put early alert progress reports indicating a grade below a C-, it can autogenerate alerts to others that need to know. Not all faculty complete progress reports. In the fall there was an 89% response rate to the MAP-Works survey although transfer students and off-campus students had lower return rates. Outreach for identified at-risk students continue to be done by housing staff and CASA coaches. USF only uses the initial MAP-Works. Homesickness and anxiety are the largest issues students are presenting with in the survey results.

### Fall 2015 Summary

First to second year student retention dropped in 2015 and enrollment numbers were also low. Additionally, there was a housing shortfall and over-discounting of student tuition. This resulted in significant financial impact for the University in the present year and the years ahead. CIPE presented preliminary data to the committee. This year saw the steepest one-year decline in the

freshman retention rate since the university started reporting data. Initial sharing of data had not been examined enough to determine causality. Important items to note regarding trends included:

- Overall retention rate was 83.1% with women retaining slightly higher than this and men slightly lower.
- There was a sharp decline in retention of women science majors.
- Tripling did not seem strongly connected to retention although it was unclear if the overall experience expectations were not met given that increased enrollment also resulted in crowded dining facilities and classrooms, etc.
- Retention of white students dropped from 82 percent to 72.6 percent. Only 68 percent of white males returned.
- There was only a slight decline in the Hispanic/Latino retention rate.
- There was a significant decline among Asians Americans.
- The performance of African Americans, though admittedly a small group, was outstanding with a retention rate of 90.4 percent.
- International students decreased but they held up pretty resiliently from the year prior.

CIPE was exploring if gapping had played a part. On average, the greater the gap, the more the propensity to leave the university increases. CIPE was not prepared to assign a huge proportion of the blame to the gap, though SEM would explore further.

Julie Orio added that a housing umbrella group would be formed to prevent a housing shortfall from happening in future years.

The Deficiency Reporting Subcommittee had completed their list of reports that would help identify students at risk. They had also improved the graduation check process aiming to ensure that the programs and tools with respect to graduation are embraced by students. The registrar had kick-started the degree audits, which will be offered six times a semester.

The Advising Committee had stalled a bit due to the leave of absence taken by Laleh Shahideh. Although the committee had continued to work on a confirmed definition of advising informed by a faculty survey, and the subcommittee also did a student survey to see how the responses compared to those of the faculty survey.

The Historically Underrepresented Ethnic Minority Students Subcommittee had continued discussions but had not yet found a solid focus on which to concentrate. Similarly, the Students At Risk/Students Who Succeed Subcommittee had not met and thought it might need some refocusing. The International Students Subcommittee also had not met very much and there was concern that it was duplicating efforts with other committees on campus.

USF101 had kicked off. Greg Wolcott explained that they have intended the course to be a flipped classroom environment, and it is a reflection-heavy course. Enrollment was not a full pilot group of 400. There was a suggestion to have a transfer course in the spring and to

potentially offer to 2nd semester freshman in the spring as well, particularly those students who may not have done well in the first semester. A suggestion was made to move the course to a better facility with more technological capability.

The committee felt it was important to communicate more with SEM as the quality and makeup of incoming students should ultimately affect the retention and persistence of the students. The admission office was going to Common App only and also wanted to ensure that we did not have an enrollment shortfall in Fall 2016. However, they would not compromise on academic quality and would try to limit high gapping.

There were challenges with the social data gathered from MAP-Works in the Fall of 2015. The company had been acquired and the whole survey platform was redone. Unfortunately, there were many glitches and it was not complete in time for us to gather as reliable student data as in past years.

The committee also began to discuss the possibility of implementing exit surveys for students who leave.

#### Spring 2016 Summary

The committee continued to discuss and analyze data as they were joined by Provost Heller. USF has a 90 percent 4-year graduation rate for white students but students of color were below 70 percent. The Provost stated goal is not to get USF to a 100 percent graduation rate but to see a closing of the gaps so that all of our students have the same shot at success. Recognizing that students come in with different levels of knowledge, different social capital, etc., we need to ask ourselves if we have in place the right processes, policies, and people to make this happen, and the right advising and resources in place.

The committee expressed the desire to narrow the focus of its work. Specifically, the committee had not clearly defined what was the definition of an at-risk student or how to even identify them. There is a lot of data spread across departments but the committee felt that a sharing of data in an organized way across departments was not always occurring. There was also limited staff time to analyze it all. Members of the committee felt that the pending campus climate survey was long overdue and the data gathered there would be imperative. Focus groups and other qualitative data collection methods were discussed as a potential way of gathering information. Exit interviews were discussed again as well.

USF 101 has resulted in some gathered data and informed recommendations for the future. This subcommittee's focus on one project (USF 101) has been successful and perhaps is a model that could be adopted by other subcommittees who have struggled with focus.

In an effort to continue the pattern of clear communication with the Admission team, April Crabtree shared an audit of all its practices this past summer and into their travel season. The team had been more aggressive with California students due to UC being more aggressive

as well. They stayed consistent with out-of-state efforts. The team increased work with high school counselors, and had used NACAC (National Association for College Admission Counseling) lists to build its contact base. They had piloted Nursing Fridays with the SONHP which proved successful. They had also started Spanish language tours. Overall, April felt optimistic about Fall 2016.

Mary Wardell from DECO shared their work with promise programs, where an entire municipality works together to create a college-going culture in the community. Specifically, they are working in the San Francisco Bay Area with the mayors of two key cities: the City of Oakland and the City of Richmond. USF has signed an MOU with the City of Richmond; the University of California is a primary player and the Cal State University system is very involved in these programs. Other California universities are participating in this effort, but USF is one of only three private universities. USF is currently acting as Oakland's technical advisor. The initial yield of these programs is likely to be low but it is a mission-driven initiative and the programs will likely improve in time.

CASA's Back on Track program was reported as being very successful, and the retention of probation students is 92 percent. Students on probation are required to meet with all their professors and bring CASA their progress reports. Survey results revealed students wanted to have more personalized one-on-one time with their academic success coaches, and CASA has responded. All academic success coaches now call their advisees who have taken a leave of absence. Anecdotally, students have said they were touched to hear from a representative of the university during their leave. CASA sends early alert reports to CAS and SOM faculty and is open to sending them to other groups or programs. CASA holds extended hours in the residence halls, and this has proven so helpful that the academic success coaches are extending their office hours. These resources are advertised directly in the residence halls. CASA is also doing outreach to continuing students who have not yet registered using data provided by the registrar. It was noted that this kind of intensive advising isn't happening across the board and this is where the committee could focus its work.

#### Fall 2016 Potential Areas of Focus

The R&P committee is a large, disparate group and it is wonderful that there is a wide representation. However, the committee has not been good about limiting a focus to one or a few areas and thus there has been a lot of discussion but major movement in only two key areas: USF 101 and degree audit/graduation check improvements in the registrar's office. It is suggested that the committee focus on projects rather than topical areas as had been the case with subcommittees. Throughout the two years of discussions, there have been themes and topics that have consistently come up. Therefore, it is suggested that for 2016-2017, the committee focus on the following projects:

- Retention Analysis: Deep dive into the groups that we are not retaining at the institution.
- Identify patterns and threads.

- Development of an exit interview: Exit interviews need to be created and mandated for all students who take an official leave or withdrawal.
- Streamlining of advising: Students experience advising differently based on major and school. The University should consider implementing consistent advising practices across schools with more robust faculty involvement. Online tools and resources related to advising should be developed and implemented.
- Climate survey: After implementation, a subcommittee could review and analyze data. Additional qualitative methods of data collection (focus groups, etc) could be facilitated by the subcommittee based on initial analysis. Recommendations and outcomes for future projects could be developed by this group.

MAP-Works will not be implemented in the Fall of 2016. Due to poor service by the company that provides it, CASA opted to implement a different product called Success Navigator by ETS. Overall, the committee should continue to analyze data collected from this early alert survey and USF 101 data as well.