



Success Factors & Retention Programs

Overview of the TypeFocus™ Careers Program

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Introduction

“On one level student retention is about numbers - the numbers of incoming first-time, full-time freshmen who make it to their sophomore, junior and senior year, and the time it takes them to graduate....On another level, student retention is about the moral and ethical commitment that we ... make to every student who enrolls here – a commitment to engage them in the life of the university....We state unequivocally our commitment to facilitate the successful journey of every student who comes here.”¹

Retention, therefore, becomes a measure of success in achieving this vision.

Research links the following factors² to student retention:

- Academic preparation (previous GPA scores),
- Current career focus (declared or undecided),
- Psycho-social factors
 - Self-esteem,
 - Locus of control
 - Family support (parent(s) earned a four-year degree?),
 - Demographics (sex, race, socioeconomic status),
 - Current time demands (work, family, studies),
 - Current skills (time management),
 - Current involvement (with students, classes, activities), and
 - Current experiences (with students, classes, administration).

The **TypeFocus Retention**: Students complete a ten-topic 30-question survey based on factors relating to academic persistence such as self-esteem, self-efficacy and goal persistence. When completed, the students' results are displayed immediately and provide feedback to increase self-awareness in these topic areas. Other data such as major selected, high school grade average, satisfaction with major, clarity of career goal, first generation are also collected.

High Costs of Student Attrition

In 1972, the first programs using this type of data were created.³ Over the years their effectiveness has been documented.⁴

“Despite the fact that emphasis on retention strategies has increased over the past decades, attrition rates continue to be relatively high. Data collected by ACT over the past 20 years have indicated little change in five-year graduation rates for combined Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. granting institutions (ranging from a high of 54.6% to a low of 50.9%) with a 2003 rate of 51.6%. For two-year institutions the three-year graduation rates have ranged from a high of 44.0% to a low and current rate of 34.3%.”⁵

It is straightforward to demonstrate that colleges' and universities' attrition rates are costing millions of dollars a year in lost tuition fees alone.⁶

It is axiomatic that students who don't finish their education bear a large personal cost in lost income, opportunities and self-esteem.

Importance of Good Retention Research

In the long run, organizational resources will flow to those programs that can demonstrate their cost-effectiveness. In the Napier example cited below, they were awarded over \$500,000/year in government funds to promote their programs because they could demonstrate good results.

Napier University in Edinburgh, Scotland, has created a Student Retention Project⁷ (SRP) whose aims are to:

- Research student success and the factors influencing retention and progression.
- Translate research outcomes into practical products/initiatives and promote integrated and collaborative approaches to addressing retention.
- Stimulate cultural change by informing institutional strategy and planning and shaping evaluation and review processes.
- Act as a resource and source of expertise for academic staff undertaking retention-related research and work.

How Success Factor Results Link to Retention Programs

TypeFocus Success Factors Questionnaire (SFQ)

Part I of the SFQ for colleges and universities captures the background information of the student such as year of enrollment, year of graduation, high school grades, major selected, satisfied with major, etc.

Part II is a 30-question survey based on ten topics related to psycho-social indicators of successful persistence such as self-esteem, locus of control, time management, social support, etc.

Combined, Parts I and II give students feedback on these topics. The immediate payoff to the student is improved self-awareness and self-efficacy leading to a number of benefits.⁸

Colleges, high schools, and universities can decide for themselves what programs they might want to offer to address these topics. Good evidence exists that these types of programs make a positive difference.⁹

Enhanced Admin Interface

This interface allows counselors to find any individual student in the database so their results can be reviewed in preparation for a counseling session. However, for purposes of retention, the interface can make multiple sorts and therefore easily filter the data along any number of variables.

For example, this is a screen shot from the admin interface reporting on one of the variables captured by the Success Factors Questionnaire: Have you selected a major?

Report for TypeFocus Careers

Descriptive Statistics for Student Population

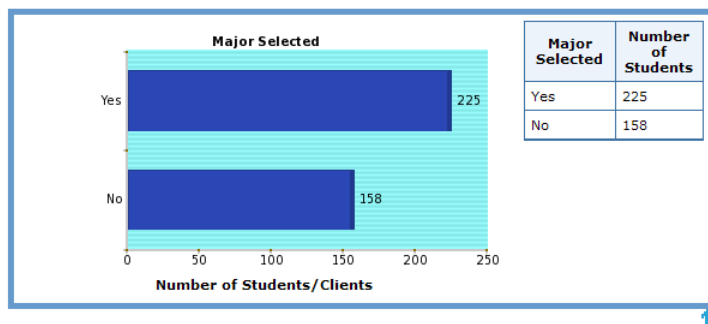
Population Selected :

Dates of registration between 1 Sep 2006 and 30 Nov 2006

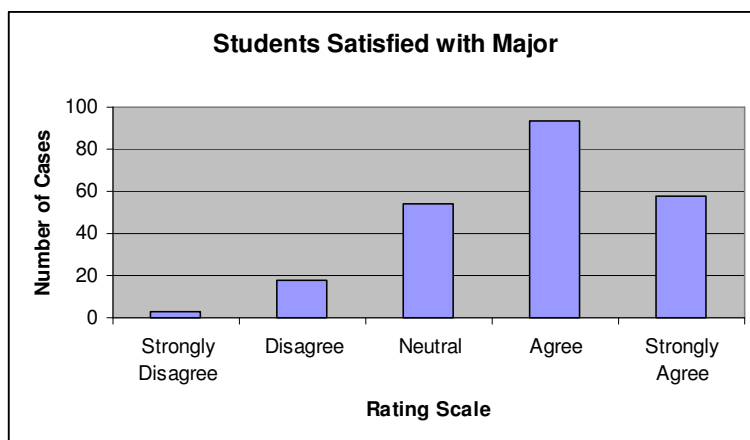
Sample Size : 636

Numbers completing both questionnaires: 383

Major Selected



One can now “drill down deeper” by looking at the satisfaction levels with their choice of major.



Of the 225 students who have selected a major, there are 58 who indicated they “strongly agree” that they are satisfied with their choice; there are 21 who indicated they disagree or strongly disagree that they are satisfied with their choice.

How do these two groups differ? We can “drill down deeper” by looking at the clarity of their career goals.



Only 3 of the 21 (14%) of those students who were dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied with their choice of major indicated that they had a clear career goal.

However, 56 of the 58 (96%) of those students who were strongly satisfied with their choice of major indicated that they have a clear career goal.

The conclusion is that within a large group of students who have selected a major there is a subset of potentially at-risk students who are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their choice of major. The defining feature of this smaller population is the clarity of their career goal.

Proactive Communications

Whatever group has been identified by the Sort & Select section of the Admin Interface can be proactively contacted by an email feature which allows the administrator to contact large numbers of students with little effort. In the above example, the administrator could email everyone in this sub-set of students and offer support to clarify their career goals. Students would receive individualized messages with focused content on their situation.

“[Our approach] is based on the philosophy that the counselor and the student share responsibility for student academic success or failure. ...This requires responsible, pro-active behavior on the part of the advisor. Students are seen as individuals whose uniqueness and diversity are taken into consideration from the beginning of their academic journey until they have graduated or transferred.”¹⁰

Your Own Retention Program

The TypeFocus Careers program provides an excellent career development program along with an interactive database that is a good starting point for your own retention program -- developed by you to meet your unique needs and resource allocations.

We can export your students' data in an Excel format that can be imported into a statistical program such as SPSS. Now you can meld the TypeFocus data with additional information such as your current students' GPA, persistence or program area and perform sophisticated analyses of your own choosing.

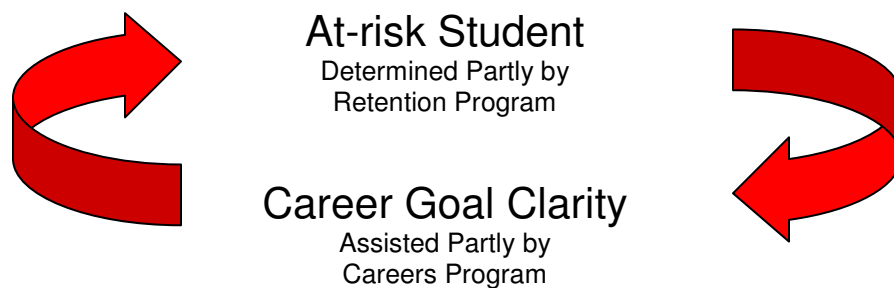
Integration of the two programs

Both the **TypeFocus Careers** and **TypeFocus Retention** programs can be purchased separately, but they have been designed to function together. What makes the two programs mesh seamlessly is that they share a common and interactive database.

The shared interactive database allows the administrator to have full access to both programs at the same time. This means that one can access data on personality type or values (components of the Careers program) and sort for success factor results as well (components of the Retention program).

Another benefit is that users only login once and they receive reports in both retention and careers areas that are holistic and interactive.

When at-risk students are identified through the Retention program, the Careers program provides a solution: improving self-awareness and fostering self-efficacy through goal setting.



At TypeFocus, our vision is to help you facilitate the successful journey of every student who comes under your care. You provide the professional career counseling expertise; we support you with excellent online tools.

All the effort put into creating good career plans may not help if students drop out, and at-risk students drop out more readily without additional support. That's why we believe career counseling goes hand-in-hand with retention efforts.

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