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student**success**

FEATURE

Seven Guiding Questions for Student Retention

by Watson Scott Swail, Ed.D.

Keeping students in school seems harder than it should be. Today's students appear to be less prepared, have more emotional baggage, and have a different set of expectations than prior cohorts. It's arguable whether any or all of this is true, but for the average campus professional, it seems so.

Our ability to keep students in school is an important daily task on our campuses. Losing students, from an economic standpoint, is just bad business. Every student "lost" represents a financial loss for institutions. Institutions miss out on tuition and fees from that student, income from books and services, housing, and other revenue streams. In the long term, institutions, especially four-year undergraduate institutions, miss out on revenue from alumni contributions, which account for billions of dollars a year nationally.

Of course, losses due to student attrition aren't just realized on the institutional side. Students lose too. Students who dropout of the educational pipeline lose their initial fiscal investment and those who leave before completion of their program are more likely to hold significant debt loan and be less likely to repay those loans. Thus, they are prone to loan default. But perhaps the most important thing students lose is time. Students who leave school often lose valuable "life" time; time spent where little is gained. We understand that education has an opportunity cost to it, but we often forget that the cost is only repaid to those who complete their studies, not those who drop-out.

Thus, there is significant motivation for institutions and students to stay the course. Unfortunately, only half of freshman students who initiate their studies at a four-year institution leave with a BA in hand. The percentage at two-year institutions is far less. Not exactly uplifting, but that's reality.

The path to increasing student retention on campus is long and hard. To help you get your mind around the task ahead of you, here are seven questions that you need to consider.

1 Do you understand the nature of the problem? This isn't as dumb as it sounds. The retention and persistence of students is a very complex issue. Simply knowing your cohort graduation rate isn't good enough. You need to get at the heart of the problem through careful analysis of your entire student population. Work with your institutional research department to disaggregate the retention and persistence data of various populations on campus, including students of color, Pell-eligible students, students from certain geographic areas, resident vs. commuter students, et cetera. And remember that it isn't only about persistence-to-degree rates. What do you know about the transfer process at your institution? Why are students transferring, and where is it they are transferring?

2 Do you know why your students leave? Ultimately, you need to know why students leave. There's an entire body of literature about this topic, but ultimately you need to know why your students leave, not someone in an "average" institution in an "average" state. Exit interviews are your friend (say it over and over again and you'll start to believe it. Really). These are extraordinarily important opportunities to capture information on why your students leave, and what role your institution plays in the departure process. Once you've collected and analyzed this information,

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then can you start asking questions about how you may better serve students.

3 Do you know what your institution is already doing to ameliorate these issues? Once you've identified the problem areas with regard to student retention, it is then necessary to audit or access current strategies on campus designed to ameliorate, or lessen, the dropout and stopout rates of students. Put it another way, if you don't know what's going on, how do you possibly know what to do? Take an opportunity to do a careful accounting of what the various departments on your campus are doing to support students. As you may imagine, this is extraordinarily difficult to do on a large campus (15,000+ student), but that doesn't undercut the importance of this step. Hey, no one said this would be easy.

4 Do you know how effective these programs or strategies are? Step one is identifying the program and strategies. Step two is evaluating their effectiveness, which can be truly difficult and complex work. And for those who are really savvy, determining their cost effectiveness goes one step further. One strategy may be effective, but you must determine whether the benefit or impact outweighs the cost. In a constrained budget, this is an important issue.

5 Do you know what programs and strategies may be worth considering? In other words, have you done your research? Whether you are a key cog in the retention machinery or you are part of a campus team, information is your accomplice in changing campus mindsets and practices. Read some articles, check out a few books, and talk to your colleagues. These are some of the ways you can become more knowledgeable about student retention. Start by checking out the reading list at the end of this article and visiting our website (www.educationalpolicy.org).

6 Do you have evidence that there exists significant support on campus to do something about this issue? The one thing I've learned over the years is that institutional change only happens when faculty and leadership are supportive of the change. Both camps must realize that retention is an important issue, regardless of whether policymakers mandate performance measures. Faculty members are the closest to students, so they automatically become the key component of a retention program. Any change that takes place at the classroom level must involve faculty. At the other end, leadership must provide solid, unwavering support for the retention program and provide an air of trust and cooperation. When either side falls down, so do retention initiatives.

7 Do you understand the institutional change process? Building on the previous item, understanding how change occurs on campus is as important as understanding what you want to change. Leadership and faculty are the agents of change, but you and your colleagues must understand what is involved in changing eons of practice. Let's face it, higher education isn't exactly known for its flexibility. Look at Peter Senge's work or other authors, or bring in a consultant to help with the process. But know your change management. It's a make-it-or-break-it deal.

If you can answer each of these questions, you're well on the road to success. If not, at least we've set your GPS for success. As I quipped in one of the questions, no one said this would be easy. And it's not. Serving students is hard work; serving them well is harder. But for those of you who work on business terms, students are our clients and we owe it to them to provide them with the best opportunity for success. We can't guarantee perfection for every student, nor can we promise success. But we can do what is in our control to maximize their opportunities on our campuses.

Dr. Watson Scott Swail is President of the Educational Policy Institute and an expert on student retention. This article was originally written and published for TG (Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation).

Resources

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Retention 2006

An International Conference on Student Retention

May 21-23, 2006, Flamingo Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada

CALL FOR PAPERS

All researchers, administrators, practitioners, and policymakers are invited to participate in RETENTION 2006 this May 21-23 in Las Vegas, Nevada. The conference offers attendees the unique opportunity to discuss issues related to increasing the persistence of students in postsecondary/tertiary education.

RETENTION 2006 is now accepting proposals for presentations, panels, posters, and roundtables for this year's Las Vegas conference. Proposals may be submitted by individuals, institutions, organizations, foundations, associations, and education service providers. Subjects may include, but are not limited to:

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Speakers include:

Senator Barack Obama (invited)
United States Senator from Illinois

Dr. Raymund Paredes
Commissioner of Higher Education, Texas Higher Education Coordination Board, Austin, TX

Dr. George Kuh
Chancellor's Professor of Higher Education and Director, Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University, Bloomington campus, and director of the NSSE.

Dr. Watson Scott Swail
President, Educational Policy Institute Director of *studentretention.org,* & author of *Retaining Minority Students in Higher Education.*

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INTERVIEW - Dr. George Kuh

George Kuh is the Chancellor's Professor of Higher Education and Director, Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University, Bloomington campus. Dr. Kuh is perhaps best known for his work with the National Survey of Student engagement, or NSSE. EPICenter recently took the opportunity to talk with George about the NSSE and his new book, Student Success in College, recently published by Jossey-Bass. Dr. Kuh will be a keynote speaker at the upcoming RETENTION 2006 conference, May 21-23, 2006 in Las Vegas, Nevada (studentretention.org/retention2006).

Q. The title of your new book is *Student Success in College*. Do you think we focus enough on student success, or has postsecondary education become too much about the business than about the learning?

A. Higher education is essential to insuring a vital democracy and enhancing the quality of life for its citizens. So, keeping the doors open – especially for the historically underserved — and the enterprise functioning effectively is important. But your question implies that many institutions are focusing more on the former and less on the latter, thus possibly shortchanging students in terms of getting their full measure of the promise of a college education.

We learned a lot about effective educational practice from the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) project, our two-year study of 20 strong-performing colleges and universities. The ***Student Success*** book describes key policies and practices at the DEEP schools, all of which have higher-than-predicted student engagement results on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and higher-than-predicted graduation rates. Together, these indicators suggest that these schools are adding something meaningful to the student experience beyond what students bring with them to college or what the institutions have by way of resources. Indeed, our time at these campuses convinced us that not only have they intentionally fashioned policies and practices that respond to their students' academic and social needs, other schools could learn some valuable lessons from them.

Q. Getting to college is such a challenge for students. But keeping them there seems to an even bigger dilemma for many colleges. What should they be focusing on to help students succeed?

A. One of the major conditions shared by the 20 strong-performing DEEP schools is that they clearly mark the pathways to student success in college. In this regard, they do two things very well. First, they teach students what the institution values, what successful students do, and how to take advantage of institutional resources for learning. These lessons are conveyed through programs tailored for first-year students and by organizing first-year experiences in educationally-purposeful ways to support a satisfactory transition and adjustment experience. Formal orientation activities ensure that new students do not get lost in the shuffle or struggle aimlessly. In addition, many informal events and processes communicate to new students, faculty, and staff what is valued and how things are done. These processes represent acculturation.

Second, DEEP schools make sure their resources are compatible with the institution's educational mission, as well as student characteristics, and are available to all its students. They do this by providing redundant early warning systems, safety nets, and ongoing assessment and feedback we describe in the book. DEEP institutions also provide what students need *when* they need it through accessible and responsive systems that support teaching, learning, and student success. Matching resources, policies, and practices with the institution's educational purposes and student characteristics represents alignment.

Another attractive feature common to these schools is an "improvement-oriented ethos." People at these schools are *positively restless* – they are comfortable with what the institution is and where it wants to go. But they also constantly wonder if they can do things better – reach out to more students, improve their programs and learning environments. This positive restlessness is second nature to most, a cultural norm that may well be a precursor to systemic change and improvement. It can't be legislated, but can be cultivated and must be enacted at every level. So even these strong performing colleges and universities want to get better.

Q. Your book talks about student engagement, student-faculty interaction, and supportive campus environs, among other issues. How do institutions, especially public institutions, balance these needs with budget constraints?

A. As much as we would like to say money doesn't matter, it does. But not in the way most people think. What seems to be important to promoting student success is not always the *amount* of money an institution has, but that it spends it wisely by investing in the right things — effective educational practices such as the kinds of activities that NSSE measures. DEEP schools span a substantial range in terms of available resources. Even those that in relative terms are advantaged in this regard—Miami, Michigan, Wabash, and Sewanee, for example—cannot fund all the attractive programs and initiatives they would like. But DEEP colleges with fewer resources still found a way to support worthwhile efforts that promise to add value to the student experience and we describe illustrative initiatives in the book. So, why and where an institution invests in student success can make a big difference, both in terms of what gets funded and the messages sent about institutional priorities and values. Resource decisions are mission driven and informed by data, with the salient question being: What will this investment produce in terms of student learning and success?

In the end, promoting student success is enlightened institutional self interest. Putting educationally effective policies and practices in place benefits students in terms of their learning and various institutional bottom lines including graduation rates and tuition revenues.

Q. The NSSE has enjoyed great success over the past few years. It seems that everyone is talking about it. Why the NSSE, and why now?

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A. NSSE's growth has been a pleasant surprise. Almost 1,000 different four-year colleges and universities have used the survey at least once since 2000; more than three-quarters have administered the tool two or more times, which suggests they find student data useful for various purposes.

There are several reasons why NSSE has taken off. First, NSSE is a research-based tool; its questions are psychometrically sound and focus squarely on many things that matter to student learning and personal development. Second, regional accreditors and others want evidence of student learning and that institutions are using data to guide improvement efforts. NSSE is not an outcomes measure per se, but it does serve as a proxy in some ways. Third, NSSE results typically point to areas schools can address almost immediately without investing substantial additional resources. Finally, we've tried from the outset to be exceptionally responsive to NSSE users and make institutional reports accessible and easy to understand to most people, on or off the campus. We've also made special efforts to communicate the import and value of student engagement to the media, parents of current and prospective students, and others.

Q. What's next for NSSE?

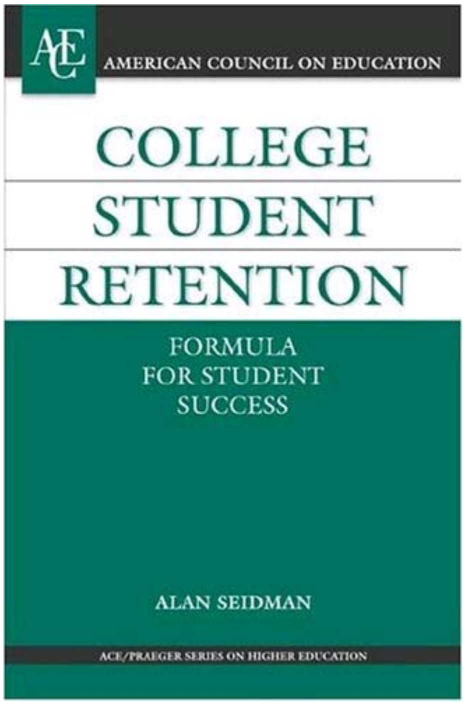
A. Right now, we are finishing up the 2005 survey cycle. Imagine contacting more than 700,000 randomly-sampled students at 500+ colleges and universities. We're also in the field at 110 institutions with FSSE – the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement. We're doing the Law School Survey of Student Engagement at 53 law schools, and we're preparing for a second field test of the new Beginning Student Survey of Student Engagement, which will allow schools to match pre-college expectations and experiences with what students do during the first college year to better estimate the institution's influence on student engagement and learning.

In addition, we are working with some colleagues in other countries to adapt NSSE to their local context so that they can begin to obtain student engagement results. We're developing an interactive portion of the NSSE website so that users will be able to do some of their own preliminary analyses of performance by comparing their scores with those of other groups of institutions. We annually conduct psychometric analyses of the tool. This spring, for example, we are doing another non-respondent study to determine if those who do not complete the survey are somehow different than respondents. We did this in 2001 and found almost no differences. But it's important that we continue to do these kinds of studies so that NSSE users can be confident of the reliability of their results. Another effort is the Lumina-funded "Connecting the Dots" project where we are working with 18 colleges and universities to examine the links between student engagement and indicators of student success, such as persistence and graduation rates. On the drawing board are plans to experiment with developing modules of additional questions that may tap some contemporary college student experiences that the core NSSE survey does not address.

Like the DEEP colleges, NSSE is a "positively restless" operation. Our goal is to provide top quality products and services and to get better. We always open to suggestions toward those ends.

Visit www.iub.edu/~nsse for more information. **Student Success in College** is available at *josseybass.com* or *amazon.com.*

THE REVIEW



Seidman, Alan (Editor). *College Student Retention. Formula for Student Success*. Westport, CT: ACE/Praeger Publishers, 2005.

The massification of higher education in the US, now standing at 14 million students and counting, has also magnified the issue of student retention and persistence in our nation's colleges and universities. Over one third of beginning postsecondary students leave without a degree after six years, and only half of those with a goal of a bachelor's degree met their goal (Berkner, He, & Cataldi, 2002, p. 10). Because these students receive a public subsidy to attend these institutions, and because higher education is a big government-sponsored industry, retention is at the heart of the college cost dialogue on Capitol Hill and in state capitals. Even with the knowledge that higher education serves a public service, especially open door institutions, politicians are keenly aware of the inefficiency and expense of our system and are beginning to ask for greater accountability among college administrators.

College Student Retention, a new ACE/Praeger book edited by Alan Seidman, provides a perspective on issues important to the study of student retention. In doing so, he has amassed an excellent cadre of authors, including Vincent Tinto, John Bean, Alberto Cabrera, and John Braxton. The book covers important ground in many respects, but also has its share of "academic filler." Being an academic publication, I guess most readers will enjoy the academic discussion. Others looking for more pragmatic, practical information won't find it here.

Some of the best chapters include those by Hagedorn, Mortenson, Bean, and Tinto. Tom Mortenson, editor of *Postsecondary Opportunity* and Senior Scholar at The Pell Institute, writes about the various measures and definitions of retention and persistence. In fact, the title of his chapter, "Measurements of Persistence," brings to light the dissonance in our addressing the issue as either "retention" or "persistence." Albeit similar concepts, they are not the same thing, but no one seems to mind. Retention typically is used to address the passing from period of time to another period of time, as in semester-to-semester, or year-to-year. Persistence is reserved for a student's ability to persist toward the end goal, usually a certificate or degree. This issue is described in Chapter 4 by Linda Hagedorn, although she uses an NCES definition of the two terms that I find unsatisfying.

Mr. Mortenson does an excellent job of defining the types of measurements and the data sources available. He also provides information on the strengths and limitations of each measure. Typical to his analytical work, Mr. Mortenson stresses ACT and US Census data, even though the latter is very limited in telling us much about retention or persistence. Census data do tell us about participation, but is limited by self-reporting and weak samples. ACT data are generally very good. What I found astonishing was the absence of NCES data, especially the longitudinal datasets and IPEDS. Longitudinal sets, such as National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), Beginning Postsecondary Student (BPS), and Bacheloreate and Beyond (B&B) are staples of retention research and should be mentioned on the highest order. Cabrera et al. use the High School & Beyond (HSB) database in Chapter 7.

An excellent followup to Mortenson's chapter is Linda Hagedorn's chapter, "How to Define Retention." It may have been better to have the two chapters back-to-back since they cover similar ground. Hagedorn showcases the complexity of calculating "retention" statistics, and warns that graduation rates are not retention. If anything, this chapter is an argument for unit-record data collection and analysis. Those of use who work with data understand the need to go that route, even if a few association and college heads do not.

Braxton and Hirschy's "Theoretical Developments in the Study of College Student Departure" provides a historical background on the development of retention theory, for those that find this useful. Tinto's work is always at the core of these discussions, and Braxton has spent considerable career time trying to modify Tinto's theory, with limited success. In most books like this, I find a perspective on theory very useful, especially for newbies in the field. This chapter suffices, but I found several inconsistencies, including the fact that the diagram of Braxton et al.'s modification of Tinto's theory left out the variable "academic ability," perhaps the most important background variable in the student retention model. In addition, while I agreed with the recommendations at the conclusion of the chapter, I'm not sure where they came from nor how they ended up there. They just seem plucked from the research by choice, not by analysis. Certainly, a list of recommendation along the lines of those in the chapter would be much more detailed and inclusive.

Nora, Barlow, and Crisp do a nice review of the literature regarding retention, and also provide analysis of a first-time in college (FTIC) database. My only complaint is that they don't describe the database or source to any degree, so I'm not sure what to make of the data themselves. This chapter dovetails nicely to Cabrera, Burkum, and La Nasa's chapter on four-year degree persistence. Cabrera is very familiar with the national databases, and chooses to use the 1982 High School and Beyond (HSB) database for his analysis. The data presented in this chapter provides a rich perspective on four-year degree programs and what it takes for students to persist, if not persevere, through the experience. I understand that publication timelines requires HSB to be used for this analysis, but the more recent NELS database (1988 to 2000) provides richer details.

Sandy Astin and Leticia Oseguera offer their own data analysis using the CIRP data from UCLA. I found this chapter useful and think that readers will also be able to use this chapter as a resource for comparison. For instance, Astin and Oseguera state that only 28 percent of undergrads at public universities graduate in 4 years, and 58 percent in 6 years. Comparatively, the rates at private universities are 67 and 80 percent, respectively. This is the type of information that is important for readers to gain perspective of the scope of the retention and persistence challenge at their institution. However, the recommendations on the final pages do not necessarily echo or translate from the findings. Second, I find the use of ordinary least squares potentially risky for use on dichotomous variables.

Non-data laden chapters include Berger and Lyon's historical look at student retention (Chapter 1). Although this chapter is a typical academic piece, I found its utility limited. At best, it describes the making of higher education in America. But this historical perspective doesn't help us understand the issues of retention today or what we should do with it. At the other end of the book, Schuh's chapter on finances and retention is similarly limited. As with the Berger and Lyon chapter, this chapter provides much data on finances, but with little relevance to the retention and persistence dialogue.

The two best and most useful chapters in the book are those written by John Bean (Chapter 8) and Vincent Tinto (Epilogue). Both authors are "fathers" of student retention research, and their words still resonate well within the current dialogue. In fact, I would go as far to say their words provide much-needed and well-thought balance to this book. Bean provides nine themes of student retention, including student intentions, commitment/fit, attitudes, academics, social factors, bureaucratic factors, external environment, student background, and money/finance. As Bean notes, change in student retention requires changes in institutional personnel and the services provided by these individuals, changes in the composition of the student body, and "changes in the way these two groups interact." Ultimately, this former is the greatest challenge, as change at the institutional level is required to leverage change at the student level (notwithstanding policy changes in admissions). Bean's chapter hammers home the necessity that retention is ultimately about institutional change, and unless colleges adhere to that belief, positive developments in student retention are unlikely to happen.

Tinto's epilogue provides a capstone to the efforts of the various authors in this book. Like Bean, he provides a more pragmatic perspective on student retention, and while he talks mostly about producing a model of student retention, he reminds us that this is a complex endeavor and that the model perhaps isn't as important as understanding what works at the institutional and student levels. "We have yet to develop an effective model of institutional action that provides institutions guidelines forth development of policies, programs, and practices to enhance student success."

College Student Retention is sure to serve as a good reference for researchers and less so for practitioners. It would have benefited from half as many chapters due to redundancy and effective utility. My general wish is that a book on student retention will clearly uncover histories while also opening new doors on the retention dialogue. This book does an average job of both.

BEST PRACTICE

The Access for Success Program

(College of the North Atlantic)

The College of the North Atlantic (CNA) has over 20,000 students spread over 17 campuses in the Canadian provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador. The ideas for CNAs *Access for Success* program were born in 2001 out of the provincial need for increased access to and success in college. These ideas were brought to fruition by CNAs Vice-President of Academic and Student Services, Brian Tobin. After receiving input from stakeholders, at the institutional and governmental levels, including students, administrators, and representatives from the Department of Education, Tobin and his team put together the foundation for *Access for Success*. The program was implemented in a pilot test in 2001. At that time, *Access* was being tested on 3 campuses and involved 120 students. Currently, the program is being utilized at 9 of CNAs campuses,assisting close to 1,000 students, and will be rolled out to 4 more campuses by the end of the month. Administrators of the program plan to have it in use at all CNA campuses by 2007. Recently, this program earned CNA the Retention Excellence Award by Noel-Levitz, one of the leading institutes in retention policy.

The program is comprised of several components. Upon enrollment, students are given three assessments in order to measure their level of risk for attrition. The first test, the Program Awareness Inventory, provides the student with information on the degree program of their choice, such as the Early Childhood Education program or the Office Administration program. The basic purpose of this test is to determine whether the or not the student correctly understands the dynamics of the program of their choice. The second assessment, the Partners in Education Inventory, requires the student to rate the importance of various facets of student life such as math and reading skills, counseling services, or career employment. The purpose of the Partners in Education Inventory is to assess academic preparedness. The final assessment is the College Board's ACCUPLACER program, which serves as an online measure that can be completed on or off campus by the student. ACCUPLACER provides admissions representatives with immediate feedback on the student's proficiency in general skills such as Math and English. All three tests have cutoff scores that indicate which students are at risk for attrition. Should an incoming student be classified as at-risk, they are assigned an advisor in the *Access for Success* program.

The final component is a software program titled the Personal Career Plan. This software is used by academic advisors and students to keep track of information regarding the student and their progress throughout the course of their program. The software keeps track of information such as assessment reports, learning plans, course work, advisor recommendations, and attendance. The students work side-by-side with their advisor to ensure that they successfully complete their programs by minimizing and correcting risks for attrition, while maximizing and building upon the students' strengths and abilities. Although the primary focus is placed on incoming students, students later identified by faculty as "at risk" can take advantage of the program as well.

Initial results seem to indicate that the program is successful to a degree. According to *Access for Success's* Vice Chair, Shirley Woodward, the pilot test of the program at one campus increased retention from 89 to 95 percent on one campus whose majority aboriginal population tends to yield high rates of attrition. Also in the pilot study, another campus reported an increase in retention from 83 to 85 percent. Results from other campuses where the program has been implemented since 2003 are not yet available.

Woodward reports that, when students are asked if *Access for Success* works for them, those involved in the program indicate that they feel they have more of an advantage compared to those that are not in the program. Additionally, they report that the program fosters personal involvement in academic programs and personal relationships with faculty/advisors. They also report that it was easy and gave them a sense of mastery over their academic paths.

As far as general implementation and success of the program, Woodward says that the results are showing that the program works. However, the implementation and maintenance of *Access for Success* has been met by challenges and some degree of struggle. Woodward points out that it is a large-scale change for both faculty and students. The goal is to keep moving forward by meeting the challenges and working with the students and faculty to fine-tune the program.

For more information about the College of North Atlantic's Access for Success program, please visit their website at www.cna.nl.ca/AccessSuccess/default.asp.

Best Practices in Student Retention Database & Award Program

EPI's Award for **Outstanding Student Retention Program** is presented annually to a two- or four-year institution that exhibits excellence in the development and implementation of a student retention program. Research has shown that students who drop out or stop postsecondary education not only personally suffer negative consequences, but also pass those consequences on to society and the institution itself. By honoring the excellent work being done by institutions today to create programs that use innovative means to help students realize their goals, EPI hopes to further its mission of creating opportunities for minority students at post secondary institutions.

Successful student retention programs recognize that cognitive, social and institutional factors all play a role in student retention and persistence. The most effective student retention programs address these three components by examining financial aid packages, course availability and content, as well as implementing support mechanisms such as tutoring, mentoring, and career counseling. It is also imperative to have a means of tracking students through school and monitoring the program's success so that the institution may determine which methods are effective and those that need improvement. For example, programs may be in areas of financial aid, student services, academic services, and recruitment and admissions, among others. Individuals interested in submitting their program/strategy for inclusion in our database must complete an online registration form, which includes a program description, evidence of success, and other particulars. Eligible entries will be reviewed by a team of experts, with a prize of $500 for the top program and acknowledgement at the **RETENTION 2006** conference in Las Vegas, May 21-23, 2006. This year's competition closes on April 1, 2006.

To register for the database, please contact Sarah at *shosford@educationalpolicy.org*.

Outstanding Service Award

The Educational Policy Institute is now receiving nominations for the Outstanding Service Award for individuals who have served students and institutions well with regard to student retention. Nominations may be made by anyone who completes the online nomination form and does so by April 15, 2006. Awards will be made at **RETENTION 2006** in Las Vegas, Nevada on Tuesday, May 23, 2006. To nominate yourself or a colleague, please contact Sarah at *shosford@educationalpolicy.org*.