

BE WHAT YOU WANT TO BE

Intervention for Retention: How can academic and social support help universities keep their students?

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CRICOS PROVIDER CODES: QLD 00219C, NSW 01315F, VIC 01624D

International Education Environment

- Reduction in government funding
- Perceived safety and quality issues
- Strong Australian dollar
- Tightening of student visas and skilled migration options
- Increased competition (global)

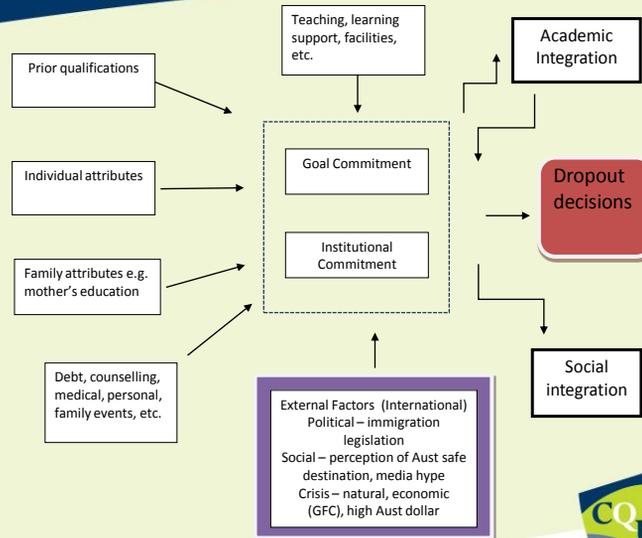


Measuring Retention

- Definition: “..the percentage of students in a particular year who neither graduate nor continue studying in an award course at the same institution the following year,” (Crosling & Heagney, 2009, p.9)
- Benchmarks approximately 15% annual
- International student ruling of first 6 months
- Terms per year?
- Change of program?
- Quantitative data



Student Retention



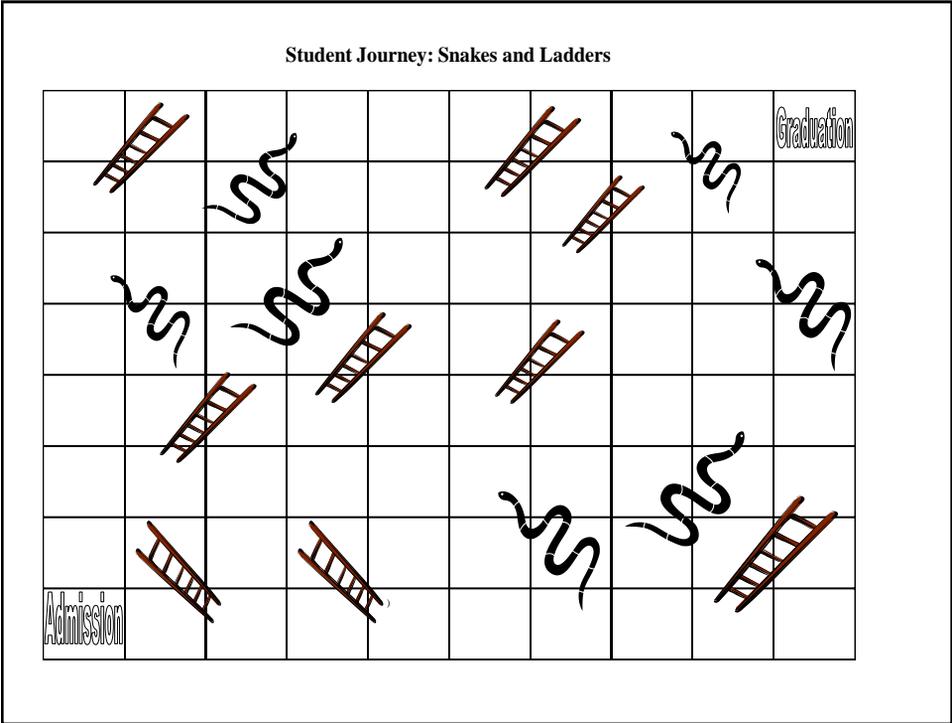
Adapted from Tinto, V. (1975)



CQUniversity Sydney approach

“Retention is everyone’s business,”
(Tinto, 2006, p.5)





Student Journey: Snakes and Ladders

			Financial Problems			Fail Courses		Graduation
LSU Exam Preparation				Home Sick	End of Term Trip			
Struggling to understand (English)						Teacher Support: Revision Classes		Working too Much
								
			Engaged Teaching		Support Student Service (LSU & MAP)		Fail Assignment	
Mid-term Party					Trouble finding Accommodation			
								
Admission		Facilitated Enrolment assisted by Academic Staff		Campus Tour (Customer Service)		Student Services		Orientation

Challenges for International Students

Snakes & Ladders

- Homesickness/isolation
- Trouble finding accommodation
- Working too much
- Fail assignments
- English problems
- Cultural adjustment
- Academic advice – facilitated enrolment
- Orientation
- Friendly faces
- Supportive teacher
- LSU
- Social activities
- Revisions classes



How CQUniversity enhances the student experience

- Recruit staff with customer service value and 'can do attitude'
- Comprehensive orientation
- Learning Skills Unit
- Engaged teaching and learning
- Job Ready Workshops
- Social integration strategies
- Student monitoring program



Student Monitoring Program

For students who have not passed 50% or more of courses studied during a term

For students who have failed a course twice

Students not attending not submitting assignments

Steps: (put on a contract)

MAP 1 – as above

MAP 2 – must show cause

MAP 3 – student enrolment cancelled



Student Portal Captures

Student Portal

- Student details
- Enrolled courses
- Grades
- Attendance
- Assignments submitted (when)
- LSU
- Notes about students
- Multiple fails
- Any referrals
- MAP History



Research Methods

- Little qualitative data seeking to explain reasons for persistence and drop-out
- 'Persisters, drop-outs and throw-outs'
- Failing courses as a 'critical drop out event' – MAP cohort are high risk
- Individual interviews
- 7 in-depth interviews



Research Results

- English proficiency and disparities between prior and current study
- The combined factors of change culture, learning and teaching paradigm, new field of study – specialised language embedded in second language
- Examination-only backgrounds and the challenge of assignments
- Independent study and the decline in directives from teachers and mentors
- Time management – work and study
- Personal problems – health, stress, failure



Loss of Control

“... I lost all control, in high school you know, teachers are always checking on you but at uni you have to do everything yourself, it’s a big change you know...,”
(Chinese male undergraduate).

“In India I studied very well after coming here I lost myself somewhere.. I was like crying, crying, crying daily, what happened to me? I was not able to cope.” (Indian female postgraduate).



Student evaluations of MAP and CQUniversity

- Positive experience – reporting to staff weekly
- Friendship, wide ranging advice, inspiration
- LSU
- Managing time and managing the boss
- A sense of 'fit' – 'may not be the best university but very good for your ability as an international student'.
- The importance of socialising with other students and staff
- Feedback from student surveys
- Customer service – all staff
- Quality and accessibility of teachers
- Student intentions after graduation



Discussion of results

- Spending more time on their studies
- Improved time management
- Improved ability to access information and resources
- Self regulation
- Motivation
- The critical role of individual counselling and support
- Cost benefits
- Anxiety and 'locus of control'
- Building the transition pedagogy – what this means
- A sense of fit or belonging
- The critical role of faculty



MAP Results – Term 1, 2010

NUMBER OF COURSES PASSED OUT OF THOSE ATTEMPTED	NUMBER OF STUDENTS ON MAP	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
100.00%	225	63%
75.00%	17	5%
66.00%	34	10%
50.00%	28	8%
33.00%	18	5%
25.00%	9	3%
0.00%	26	7%
	357	100%



Recommendations

- Digging beyond the statistical measures of retention
- Students as customers – feedback and 'fit'
- Monitoring engagement – attendance, assignments submission
- Invest in support staff – academic support and personal support
- Rolling, comprehensive orientation - DVD
- Transitional pedagogy
- Social integration opportunities



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