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Student Retention for the School of Professional Studies at Regis University

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Abstract

Retention is a growing concern for the undergraduate adult program at Regis University. Action research, specifically the Pearce and Robinson action research model, was used to fully understand the issue and create solutions. The Spring 2004 new start cohort was analyzed to find reportable data. Feedback was taken from a member of the Student Success Team regarding the spring cohort, and staffs from three departments were interviewed. Collaboration is central to action research and the team that was developed helped interpret the data. This collaboration team then put together three recommendations. The final recommendation suggested for implementation is to make the Student Success Team a centralized resource for student success.

Student Retention for the School for Professional Studies at Regis University

Regis Universities School for Professional Studies (SPS) undergraduate program has experienced a problem with student retention. Several symptoms indicated this problem was growing and a major issue which needed to be researched and resolved. Action research was employed to diagnose the problem and generate possible solutions.

Background of the Organization

A group of Jesuit missionaries, from Naples Italy, came together to develop Las Vegas College in New Mexico. In 1884, Bishop Joseph P. Machebeuf of the Denver Diocese sought to establish a prestigious boys school in Colorado. He convinced the Jesuits to bring the school to Morrison, Colorado, and it was renamed Sacred Heart College. The college was relocated to Northwest Denver on September 5, 1888, where Main Hall is located today (Regis University, 2003). In 1991, Regis College became Regis University with three constituent schools: Regis College, School for Health Care Professions, and the School for Professional Studies (SPS). Today, there are seven SPS campuses: the Main campus in Denver, Colorado Springs, Denver Tech Center, Broomfield, Boulder, Fort Collins, and Las Vegas, Nevada. These campuses are designed to be convenient for adult students (Regis University, 2002).

Regis University's mission is to educate men and women of all ages to be leaders in the community. Regis stands within the Catholic and United States traditions and is inspired by the vision of Ignatius Loyola. This challenge of the vision is to attain the inner freedom to make intelligent choices. The goal of Regis is to provide value-centered undergraduate and graduate education, as well as to strengthen the community service commitment (Regis, 2002). Regis University provides flexible programs for the adult student. Over 11,000 adults choose Regis because of the convenient options of online courses; classroom- based courses, or guided independent study.

The first adult program within Regis University was developed in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1977, and was known as the Regis Career Education program (RECEP). In 1991, RECEP became SPS. This program currently offers 16 undergraduate degrees of choice and 7 graduate degrees. This program also offers more than 15 certificates.

Adult students have different needs and learning styles than traditional college-age students, who are age 18-22. Lieb (1991) explained that being an effective instructor of adult students involves understanding how adults learn best. Knowles (as cited in Lieb, 1991) identified six characteristics of adult learners. First, given that adults are autonomous and self-directed, they need to be free to direct themselves. Second, they have life experiences and knowledge, which may include work, family and previous education. Third, adult learners are goal-oriented; and may already have a goal in mind when enrolling in a program. Fourth, coursework must be relevant to what they are learning so they can apply it to the work they do. Fifth, adults are practical and they focus on the lesson most useful to them in their work. Finally, adults need to be shown respect; an instructor must acknowledge the wealth of experience from the adult learners in classes. The adults should be treated as equals in experience, knowledge, and allowed to voice their opinions freely in class (Lieb). Lieb takes these characteristics into consideration when he is teaching a class. Students can feel comfortable speaking about the experiences in their career and how the material of the class relates to these experiences.

Different barriers and issues come up for adult learners that can make it difficult to participate in getting a higher education. Most adult learners have full-time schedules, which include work and family, thereby leaving little time for going to school. Students may drop courses because of a family illness, job change, or something else that prevents them from attending class (Lieb). Sometimes a student will drop out completely, because he or she does not feel support or encouragement from family to finish. According to Lieb, the best way to motivate adult learners is simply to enhance their reasons for enrolling, such as the reminder of a goal(s) they wanted to reach, and decrease the barriers. Some barriers are not easy to go around; however, support for the students will most likely help them persist.

Adult programs are designed differently than those for the traditional learner and vary from institution to institution. Regis University offers classes in a 5-8 week academic period, where most of the courses meet one night a week. There is a total of 20 to 32 contact hours per term. Guided independent study (GIS) is another option the SPS program provides for distant learning students. During GIS courses faculty members work independently with students with set meeting times within the term that fits both of their schedules.

The courses in the School for Professional Studies are based on a facilitative learning model according to which teachers' roles shift from lecturer to facilitator. Teachers guide students on an educational journey by providing resources, monitoring, and encouraging students to ask questions and solve problems. Facilitative learning allows students to make their own discoveries, which leads to better retention of concepts (Educational Dividends, 2000).

Information given to traditional college students in 16 weeks is designed to fit into the 8-week and 5-week format in the SPS program. Figure 1 shows the adult terms broken up and compared to the traditional 16-week semester. Many courses require a minimum of 19-25 hours of combined study and classroom time each week. This depends on the subject, length, and content of the course. This particular model allows for degree completion in a shorter amount of time and the expectation is very high for independent learning outside the classroom (Regis University Bulletin, 2003-2004).

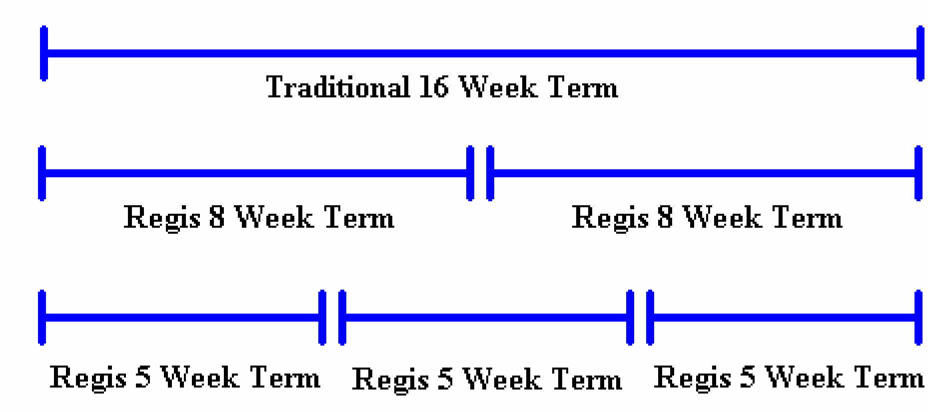

Figure 1. Traditional 16-week term broken into Regis SPS program's 8 weeks and 5 week terms

History of the Competitive Environment

Adult programs and online degrees have been developed throughout Colorado and the nation. There are many choices available for adult learners. If dissatisfied with one school's program, students may go to the competition. Regis University has to be a step ahead in service and quality education not only to attract new students, but to keep existing students motivated throughout their program until graduation.

In order to keep ahead of the competition, on September 3, 2003 changes occurred within the School for Professional Studies Program (SPS). A new unit was developed, and I was one of six individuals chosen to be a part of this new team. Marketing had a new unit entitled "The Enrollment Communication Center" (ECC). This team is made up of 11 team members, four of whom address prospective students' questions about Regis University. These four positions existed before and were part of the re-organization under the ECC title. There is one research analyst, who is tasked with downloading new student lists from the Regis Colleague system for the Student Success team, which consist of the six new positions in the ECC group. The Student Success Team (SST) uses the information pulled by our research analyst to take a proactive approach with new students to support them through their first 3 courses or 6 months at Regis. Each of us came to the team from different areas of Regis with 2 or more years of experience in higher education and being an adult student. In our prior experiences we have spoken with many students and have gained insight as to what might help them better succeed in their program. The SST was formed with three people from Graduate Student Services, two members from faculty and curriculum who were already working on retention projects, and myself from undergraduate advising. Team members proactively call students in the second week of the first course to build a relationship. We answer questions and direct them to the correct resources concerning the current course, financial aid, or other concern the student may have. Another goal of the SST is to make the transition from marketing to advising as smooth as possible for the student. The team invites students' feedback in order to serve them better.

Problem

History of the problem. Regis University's Collegue System was used to collect data from 609 SPS undergraduate students (excluding teacher education or the online program) who enrolled in the fall 1999 8-week and 5-week terms. This student cohort was tracked through the spring 2003 term. The reason for this particular study was to show how many students finished their degree programs without "stopping out". A "stop out " occurs when a student is not enrolled in courses for three or more terms of his or her program. It was found that out of the 609 students, 22.5% graduated or completed their programs and 16.7% were still enrolled. More than half (60.8%) "stopped out".

Problem statement. At the time the project was initiated, Regis University's SPS undergraduate registration for the second or third class in the students' program was low. Other symptoms of the retention issue were: (a) high drop rate from the first three courses, (b) low attendance at orientation, (c) tuition collection flags on students' accounts, and (d) an increase in academic probation.

Students enrolled at the beginning of the term but dropped out within their first or second-class. In the summer 2002 term 123 students were registered. By the end of that term, 51% dropped out of the program according to the Regis Collegue System (1999- 2003). It has been shown that approximately 50% of new students drop their classes or simply do not continue their program within the first three courses of enrollment. The reasons are unknown as to why attendance begins to decline. During fall 5week1 and 5week2 2003 terms, approximately 44% of students dropped their first class ED205 (Regis Collegue system, Fall term 2003). This class is required for students who start the program without any other college experience or have transferred fewer than 30 credits from other institutions.

Personal issues can arise during the middle of a term that can prohibit students from continuing their education. In most cases, Regis has no control over the issues. On the other hand, Regis may not be meeting the needs of some students.

If the retention issue continues to grow and too many students fail to continue their program, Regis University will lose revenue and will not be able to fulfill its mission.

Literature Review

Retention is a concern for many higher education institutions. A study done by Wlodkowski, Mauldin, and Gahn (2001) involved the accelerated learning program at Regis University and a traditional program at University of Missouri at Kansas City (UMKC). The purpose of this study was to find out why 60% of adult students drop out and do not persist in their program through graduation.

Wlodkowski et al. (2001) found several factors that led to student retention. For example, students who brought in more credits and higher grades from previous college experiences were more likely to continue. When women were compared to men in the accelerated format, women were twice as likely to graduate within 6 years at Regis University.

In the traditional format, women were two times more likely to drop out after one semester at UMKC. Adult women who attended traditional programs had more family roadblocks as they continued their education (Wlodkowski et al.). The researchers also found that students with financial aid were 2.9% times more likely to stay with the program than those without. In addition, social integration, which means new students talking with more experienced students, builds community and helps the students who are anxious about returning to school know that they are not alone. Finally, self-regulation, self-efficiency and instruction helped support a student's motivation.

Wlodkowski et al. (2001) continued their research by doing another study at both schools. The researchers wanted additional clarification as to why some students persisted when others did not. This time they concentrated on students enrolled in fall 1999, but not in 2000. The first method was to survey a cohort of 128 students by using an exit questionnaire. The information that was gathered had two variables. The first variable dealt with factors under the students' control. Academic performance, employment, financial status, and personal circumstances are examples of these factors. The second variable dealt with factors under the institution's control, such as instruction, student services, career assistance, and school environment (Wlodkowski, et al.). The second method used for this further study was a phone interview with 62 adult students. The focus was on the students' experiences before they dropped out.

The findings of the phone interviews were that students felt overwhelmed with homework, family, and career. The lack of money was an embarrassing situation for some students. Financial aid and scholarships were not available for the adult students. The quality of advising was another issue, and students felt let down and ignored by their advisor. Most students were enthusiastic about the learning environment at both schools; however, some thought the quality of teaching could have been better and more influential. Finally, students who attended Regis commented there needed to be more interaction with other veteran students (Wlodkowski et al., 2001).

When Wlodkowski et al. (2001) put together the results of the initial and the follow-up studies, most of the issues were the same. In the study at Regis, there were more recorded child-related issues for women then there were for men, 39 % vs. 13 %. UMKC women reported more financial barriers than men 32 % vs. 13 %. Seventy-two percent of the adult students attending the traditional program at UMKC stated they would return to finish. In the accelerated program at Regis, 75% stated they would return.

Greene and Greene (2002) explained most colleges have a retention rate lower than 30%. When retention is examined from an admissions point of view, it is easier, less expensive and less frustrating to retain students the organization has already enrolled instead of trying to recruit more people to start (Greene & Greene, 2002). Many students Greene and Greene studied were not the traditional age of 18-25. This means students who either did not attend college after high school, or students who started as traditional students, dropped out and then returned to continue their education. These individuals fit the adult learner profile.

The National Center for Education Statistics report (NCES) (as cited in Greene & Greene, 2002) identified “risk attributes”. The students in this study were mostly 30 years or older, with a family, a full-time job, and with little or no previous college experience. “Risk attributes” play a role in a negative way to persistence and degree attainment for students. The risks are: (a) delayed enrollment by 1 or more years, (b) part-time enrollment, (c) financial independence, (d) having children or dependents, (e) single parenthood, (f) working full-time, and (g) having a GED or having dropped out of high school. In addition to the report was a study of persistence that indicated 64% of beginning students who had one of these risks persisted in their postsecondary program or completed a degree within 5 years. This is compared with 43% of those with three or more risk factors. With these risk factors in mind it would behoove an institution to find programs, or implement programs to support students with risks of dropping out. It is detrimental to institutions' continued operations when there is a loss of two out of three admitted students to another college (Greene & Greene, 2002).

Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) conducted a study to find out why the attrition rate was so high. MECC is a two-year college and most of the students are adult learners. Work and family conflicts were the lead contributors to high attrition rates. All faculty, staff, and administrators came together for a college-wide retreat in an effort to develop a plan to research and understand how to implement effective retention strategies (Sydow & Sandel, 1998). MECC used the withdrawal system as an opportunity to gather data for the research. In fall 1995 the study was conducted to find out why students were not persisting to finish their degrees. Faculty and staff volunteered to conduct a phone survey and talk to students who withdrew from classes about the reasons for not completing the term (Sydow & Sandel).

Faculty members of MECC were surveyed about their perceptions of students. They noted lack of goals, lack of direction, and poor academic preparation. The faculty was asked: "What do you perceive as the primary reasons for attrition among our students?" The answers were divided into two categories. First, obstacles were created by personal circumstances or traits. These results included: health, marital, financial, transportation, and child care problems, low motivation, low self-esteem, employment changes, immaturity, and goals were wrong or too unrealistic. Second, a number of academic issues also created obstacles: (a) poor academic preparation, (b) poor study habits, (c) low grades, (d) poor advising, (e) inadequate orientation, (f) heavy class loads, (g) poor class attendance, (h) and lack of awareness of the demands of college (Sydow & Sandel, 1998).

Tinto (as cited in Sydow & Sandel, 1998) noted that at-risk students had the most serious barriers. Those barriers were created by family background, such as social status, values, and expectations. Individual attributes would include sex, race, and ability. The last attribute is pre-college schooling, which includes GPA, and academic and social status. Faculty and students answered differently. For example, the students stated that external influences came as a roadblock, and the faculty members said internal influences were a problem. In the 1996 spring semester, a task force was formed at MECC. The task force began looking at different institutions and their retention efforts. The task force studied students over a 5-year period and nearly 700 students dropped from their program. The task force recommended a study of those students who dropped out and did not return, and development of an intervention to help with persistence (Sydow & Sandel, 1998).

In 1994, the University of Idaho commissioned Noel and Levitz, a consulting firm that helps colleges with recruitment and retention issues, to review and analyze enrollment potential. The University was losing about 50% of the students before graduation. Most of these students had a grade point average of a 3.0 or higher. Because of these findings, the Student Counseling Center prepared itself to take a leadership role in implementing a systemic approach (Phillips-Miller & Morrison, 1999). A systematic approach explained by Rowntree (as cited in Starfsfolk, 2004) is an overall approach that involves tackling problems in a disciplined manner keeping priorities in mind.

When using a systematic approach, relationships are strengthened between departments, as is open communication regarding decisions about resource allocation. This also creates a student perception that all departments are very knowledgeable (Phillips-Miller & Morrison, 1999). According to Tinto (as cited in Phillip-Miller, et al.), the results of using a systematic approach are an asset when creating solutions for retention issues.

Student withdrawals at Regis. To withdraw from a class at Regis University, a student calls the service line and asks to be withdrawn, no questions asked (A. Leahy, personal communication, December 18, 2003). Students who withdraw from classes most often do not give feedback as to why they are dropping. If they do, then the information given usually does not help the organization institute better student services. For example the student would say that his or her job has become more demanding. Although this may be true, more detail of how Regis could have supported the student would be more useful. Students could have stated things such as, their advisors were unavailable for questions, there was not a variety of tutoring services, or the accelerated program was not up to the expectations; therefore making it harder for students to complete the tasks in the courses. These are a few reasons that could be researched and followed up on. In order for Regis to better service the student, the employees need to know the reasons behind student withdrawals. This will show trends and how Regis can assist students in persistence.

Method

Action Research Methodology

I chose action research methodology to explore the retention problem at Regis University. Rapoport (as cited in Gill & Johnson, 2002) explained, "Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework" (p. 75). By using the methodology, I generated a better understanding of what students needed to persist and succeed at Regis. I also evaluated the current resources Regis provides adult students. It was important to use a collaborative team because a change process will occur more smoothly with support from all involved. Including Regis staff members who have constant involvement with students ensured high-quality feedback. This empowered the employees to become change agents as the organization moved forward and was important to the retention problem because employees are more likely to support the solution if involved in the planning process.

Action Research Model

The type of research model I chose is the Pearce and Robinson (1989) six-step model to the organizational change process (Shown in Table 1).

Table 1

Pierce and Robinson's Six Step Model

Step #	Activity
Step 1	Recognize the problem
Step 2	Diagnose the situation
Step 3	Involve affected members, admit problem exists, and gain ownership
Step 4	Involved members select and own solution
Step 5	Plan and implement the change
Step 6	Evaluate the change

In the first step the problem is recognized. An organization or individual finds something that is not working or could be improved. Next, the problem is diagnosed by answering questions such as who, what, or where. In step three, the members who are affected by the problem are identified and involved. These parties need to admit the problem exists in order for them to "own" the problem, which means they accept they are part of the problem and recognize the need for a change. Step four requires the members propose solutions and select the most appropriate. In step five the selected solution is planned and executed. In the final step the change is evaluated for effectiveness. Step six is the evaluation of the change or intervention.

This evaluation must be objective in order to make sure the intervention produces the intended results

People are affected when change occurs. Some people embrace change, some will not acknowledge it, and many will fight it, especially if it comes from the top of an organization's hierarchy. The Pearce and Robinson model was chosen because it provided an effective way to implement the necessary organizational changes, and will allow Regis to commit to one of its goals, seamless student service, which means every department that has contact with students will work together to better serve the students.

Collaborative Team

There are several benefits to putting together a collaborative team. First, more knowledge and skills are available for problem solving than when an individual works alone. Second, information flows effectively and team members learn from each other. Third, overall morale is improved and more can be accomplished. Finally, teams tend to set higher goals and achieve them more often and more effectively than an individual (Washington.edu, 2004).

Larson and Lafasto (as cited in Northhouse, 2001) stated that a collaborative climate has to be built along with the team. This meant within the team there is trust, honesty, openness, consistency, and respect. These are essential for a productive team to be problem focused. They can be open with one another and can listen to each other. They are willing to take risks and compensate for each other.

I chose eight individuals from three departments in the School for Professional Studies to make up my collaborative team. First, two faculty advisors from undergraduate advising, who work directly with the students, were included. The advisors gain insight to the students' goals and identify what motivates them to persist. The next person included on the team was a level II campus associate from the operations team. Usually when a student has an issue, the campus associate is the first person the student has contact with, whether in-person or by phone. Campus associates may see or hear about roadblocks that keep students from continuing with their educational process. The campus associates primarily fill out the withdrawal and administrative drop forms for students. Sometimes a student will talk to a campus associate about other possible options. Third, four people were selected from the Enrollment Communication Center (ECC).   The coordinator for the enrollment assistants was valuable because he spoke directly to prospective students. The enrollment assistants are more likely to get an understanding of the motivation a student had when the assistants explain what Regis had to offer in the programs. From the Student Success Team (SST), another area of the ECC, I added the SST admin manager and two SST members. These individuals proactively call new students and collect feedback regarding students' experiences within the first three terms. The feedback collected helped solutions to be clearer and identify the needs of the students. The SST members had ideas of what benefited the students directly.

Finally, the Senior Research Associate was asked to be on the team. She had been involved in other retention studies for Regis, and her skills and background helped me to get started on my research. She especially helped me think about what tools I needed to get valid data and gave me tips on what questions usually make an interviewee open up.

The goal was for the team to work well together. At the first collaborative team meeting ground rules were set. It was explained we were not there to finger point or judge other departments, and we were not to be biased when the research results came back. The team was aware of one purpose: finding recommendations for the retention issue. Unfortunately, after the first collaborative team meeting some changes were made in the operations department and two of the campus associates chosen left Regis. I was able to find one campus associate replacement.

The final make up of my collaborative team was the Senior Research Associate, who is now the Assistant Dean for SPS Program Effectiveness & Assessment, the Administrative Manager for the Student Success Team, Administrative Coordinator for the SPS Enrollment Assistants, A Campus Associate, a Student Success Team Member, and two Faculty Advisors.

Entering and Contracting

I met with the director of the Enrollment Communication Center (ECC), executive director of Marketing, and a MSM faculty member. My goal was to explain to the directors what the project would involve and obtain support from them. The director suggested I narrow the scope of my cohort group to one 8-week or 5-week term and one campus. The executive director agreed the cohort of students I had originally planned to research could be a very large group to survey. There were concerns about the collaborative team and how much time would be taken out of the others' schedules to participate. When it was explained there would only be four meetings during the participants lunch times, there was agreement from the executive director and the ECC director. The executive director was helpful with a couple of resources from undergraduate advising. Both directors supported the action research project.

Validity

According to dictionary.com, validity describes assertions, arguments, conclusions, reasons, or intellectual processes that are persuasive because they are well founded. When applied to this project, this means that I had to make sure that any data gathering methods I used provided clear, useful, and understandable results.

I used three methods to ensure that my data was valid. First, I made sure that my four data gathering methods used sources that were credible and up-to-date. Second, I used triangulation, were appropriate, to be sure that the data I gathered was supported by a variety of different sources. Third, I presented all of my gathered data to my collaborative team to ensure they agreed and didn't see any issues.

Data Gathering Methods

Regis organizational analysis. I chose to use a Regis organizational analysis to better understand how the Regis School for Professional Studies (SPS) organization is structured to assist students through their educational career. I did an analysis of three different departments: Marketing, Advising, and Operations, and investigated their purpose as to how they support the students. To accomplish this I contacted each department and obtained a description of their purpose as well as their organizational chart.

Feedback for students via the Student Success Team. According to one of my collaborative team members, the research analyst for Regis, many of the students who have dropped out of school will not give any reasons as to why, and if they are interviewed they will give ambiguous responses such as “personal reasons” or will not respond at all. In other words, it is very difficult to get valid data on this subject after the fact. Because of my position in the Student Success Team at Regis, during the spring 2004 term I was able to collect feedback from the students while they were experiencing roadblocks with the Regis system. I tabulated these responses to determine common problems that many students have encountered.

Regis staff interviews. I interviewed selected staff from three different departments within Regis University's School for Professional Studies Program: (a) advisors from undergraduate advising (b) program reps, online and classroom based, from Marketing, and (c) faculty chairs from Undergraduate Faculty and Curriculum. These interviews provided first-hand information about the processes of the SPS undergraduate program from application to graduation. I also asked individuals how effective they felt the current system was for seamless student service.

The interview questions were tailored for each department to acquire valid responses (See Appendix A for the actual questions asked). When I delivered the invitation schedule to the chosen staff members, I encountered great resistance due to the fact many of the employees did not want to risk their jobs by expressing feelings or thoughts. This continued until I informed the interviewees that their identities would be kept completely confidential and gave them the choice of having the interviews off-campus during their lunch hour or even the dinner hour.

Student cohort analysis. I followed the patterns of a cohort of students who started in the spring of 2004. I wanted to find out what occurred during certain periods of the Regis processes. This was an attempt to explain roadblocks students may have encountered and at what point in the process some students did not continue to the next term. Student information was gathered from the Regis Collegue system to determine the percentage of students still enrolled as of the Fall 2005 term. I also analyzed the data to track trends such as: (a) which students attended student orientation, (b) completed a writing sample, (c) had financial flag restrictions, and (d) what percentage had tuition assistance such as financial aid.

Results

Student Lifecycle/Organizational Analysis

The first step I took was to identify each department and determine what its responsibility was to the students. The departments identified in this process were marketing, advising, and operations. Marketing has several teams; however, I focused on the marketing representatives and SST.

I generated a flow chart using the information gathered that represents the process the student follows from the time he or she applies to the program until graduation. This flow chart is shown in figure 2. I have identified in red a couple of problems with the overall process, which could potentially increase the risk of students leaving Regis.

First, student orientation and writing samples are not required. Both of these are tools in place to help ensure student success. The student orientation is in place to prepare students for the Regis SPS system and to provide important information. The writing sample is a tool used to determine a student's writing ability. This provides a good indication as to whether the student needs to take an introductory English course or if he or she is prepared to take upper-level English courses. If students fail to complete either of these, it is likely they are at a greater risk to encounter problems during their student career.

The other problem I found is there is no connection between when the SST stops contacting a student and when a faculty advisor is assigned to the student. After a marketing representative has successfully enrolled a student into his or her first course, an admissions representative contacts the student to complete the admission file by sending in transcripts from previous colleges. At the same time the student moves under the responsibility of the SST. The problem is if the student has not completed his or her admissions file after 3 terms, he or she no longer has the proactive contact from the SST and has not been assigned a faculty advisor. These students do not have official support if they run into problems, and are therefore considered a retention risk.

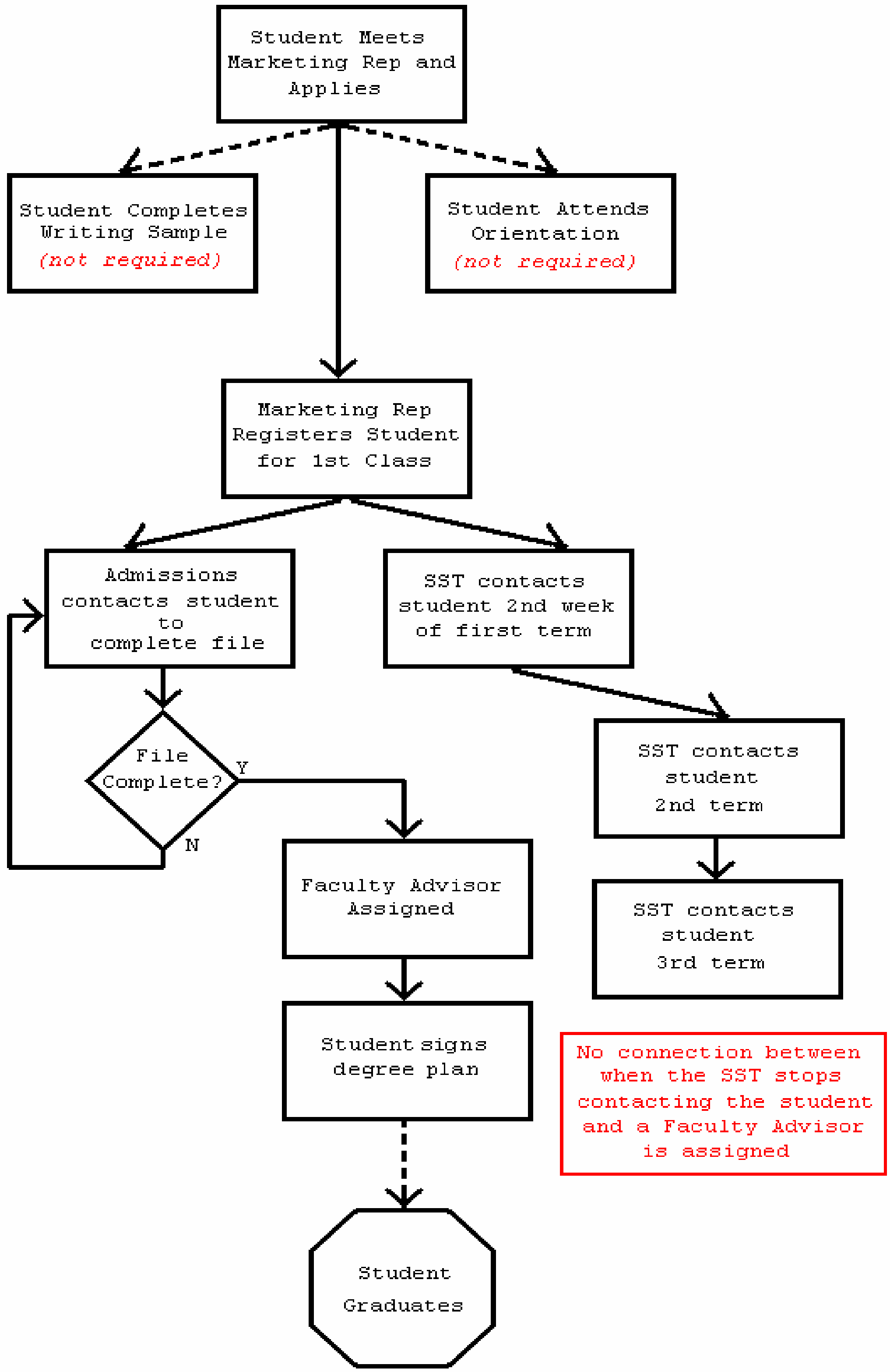

Figure 2: Regis SPS Student Process

The next step I took was to try to understand the process from a student's perspective. Figure 3 shows where the SPS departments interact with the students during their time at Regis. This is assuming one three-credit course per term. As shown, the marketing representatives are responsible for getting the students to apply to a program and get them registered for the first course. In the next step, the SST takes a proactive approach by contacting the student within the first three terms. Finally, the advising department is responsible for the remaining terms until graduation. The operations department is available throughout the students' educational careers to assist students with registration and administrative services.

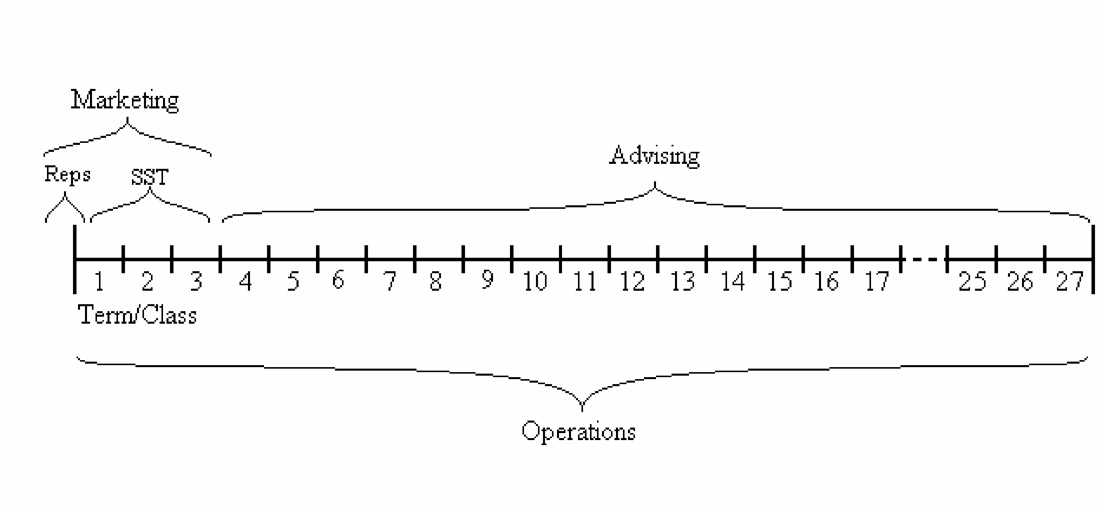

Figure 3: Regis SPS department responsibility

Figure 4 show the headcount in each department. This gives an idea of how many staff members are available to support the students in each area.

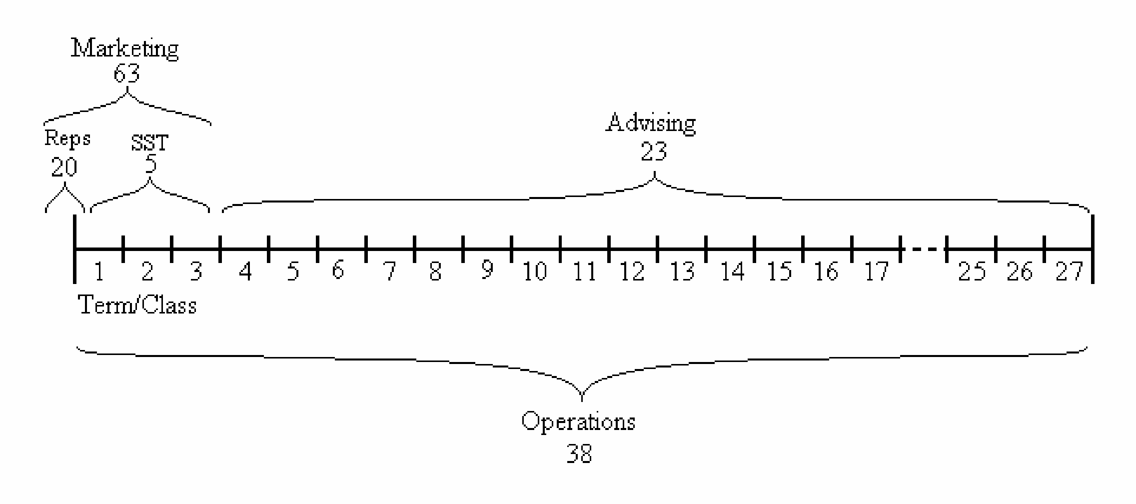

Figure 4: Regis SPS department headcount

As shown, there are 20 Marketing representatives, 23 staff members in Advising, and 38 staff members in Operations; however, there are only 5 members of the SST who actually contact students.

Student Feedback via Student Success Team

Because of my position in the Student Success Team at Regis, I was able to collect feedback from the students via e-mail while they were experiencing roadblocks with the Regis system. The major concerns students had when contacted by the Student Success Team were: (a) financial aid concerns and confusion, (b) writing, math, and accounting anxieties, and (c) facilitator problems.

First, financial aid can be a very complex process, and our adult students do not have the time to navigate obstacles concerning the red tape of financial aid. Many of the students have said they do not get the attention needed to complete their file before their first class. A completed file means the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application has been processed by the government and sent to Regis with award eligibility. Members of the SST noted for each student cohort assigned, at least 50% of the students received a tuition restriction flag within the second week of their first course. SST members also observed 10% to 15% of students contacted felt they were rushed to sign up for the first course before they filled out the FAFSA. Also, according to at least 50% of the students I have spoken to, the financial aid process is confusing, it is not explained well, other schools they have attended do not operate this way, and this process was their worst experience at Regis.

Second, the three academic areas most students have trouble in are math, writing and accounting. Student demand for tutoring assistance in these areas is high, according to Student Success Team members. While Regis does provide online tutoring via Smarthinking.com, many students have said they prefer to sit down face-to-face with an actual person than submit work through a computer. Some of the students stated they feel uncomfortable using a computer.

Third, students have stated they find the course facilitators to be inconsistent with expectations and grading of assignments. Some online facilitators do not return feedback on assignments in a timely manner before the due date of the next assignment and sometimes disappear from the course forums. The students get frustrated and have said they may leave Regis if all of their courses are facilitated this way.

Regis Staff Interviews

Student enrollment focus. There was a consensus among the individuals interviewed that the main focus of the Regis SPS program is to bring students in the front door and less attention is spent on keeping them enrolled. Each marketing representative has a monthly quota of prospective students he or she is required to enroll. Many of the representatives perceived their jobs are threatened if the quota is not met. Additionally, they reported there was not time to get a good sense of a student's personality or drive for education due to this pressure and nature of the job. This numbers-driven mentality has made several of the representatives feel as though they have to make quick judgments about a student's fit with the accelerated SPS program, and may register a student for an upper division course when he or she may not be ready for the requirements and expectations.

Unofficial evaluations. There is a miscommunication between marketing representatives and who is responsible for the task of performing unofficial evaluations, which are used to give a student a basic guideline of what credits may transfer to Regis from another institution. These types of evaluations were originally in place for those students who had been registered for their first class, but had not submitted their official transcripts to complete their admissions file. Students need to understand the official evaluation may change after their official transcripts are received and evaluated by a trained transcript analysis specialist. Currently, there is one unofficial transcript evaluator and one official transcript evaluator. Many students have stated they will not register for their first class until they have discussed which credits would transfer. Most of the marketing representatives interviewed felt the official evaluation process takes too long. Marketing representatives tell their prospective students the evaluation process will take 10 business days or less. However, evaluations are done by hand, and the evaluator argues that 10 days may not be enough time for some students because of the complexity of the transcripts received. Because of this and the pressures they are under, the marketing representatives have been performing their own unofficial evaluations, even though they are not officially trained. In addition, when the newly hired marketing representatives were asked, “Who performs the task of unofficial evaluations?”, the response was that this was their task if requested by the student. The new marketing representatives were not aware of the academic advisor in Undergraduate Advising who is trained to do unofficial transcript evaluations, indicating an internal department communications problem or training issue. Advisors are concerned that many students will take to heart what a representative or any staff member has told them and may get upset when the advisor corrects the misinformation.

Advisor caseload. The faculty advisors interviewed were asked how many students they were responsible for and if they believed this number was the same for every advisor. The responses were that each advisor had a number of active and inactive students, or currently enrolled students and non-currently enrolled students. None of the advisors interviewed knew the exact number for either of these categories, but were fairly certain that the load was evenly distributed for each advisor.

I was able to determine the number of active students at each campus from the university registrar, as shown in Table 2. The numbers vary across the different campuses, but on average each advisor is responsible for 204 active students. One potential problem is at the Fort Collins campus, which has one advisor for more than 400 active students

Table 2

Number of Active Students at Regis Campuses

Campus Location	Number of Students Enrolled	Number of Advisors	Students per Advisor
Lowell	856	7	122
DTC	814	3	271
FC	401	1	401
Boulder	117	Lowell Campus Advisor	117
Broomfield	158	Lowell Campus Advisor	158
Colorado Springs	721	4	180
Total	3067	15	204

The advising support staff was able to provide me with the total number of students assigned to each advisor, as shown in Figure 5.

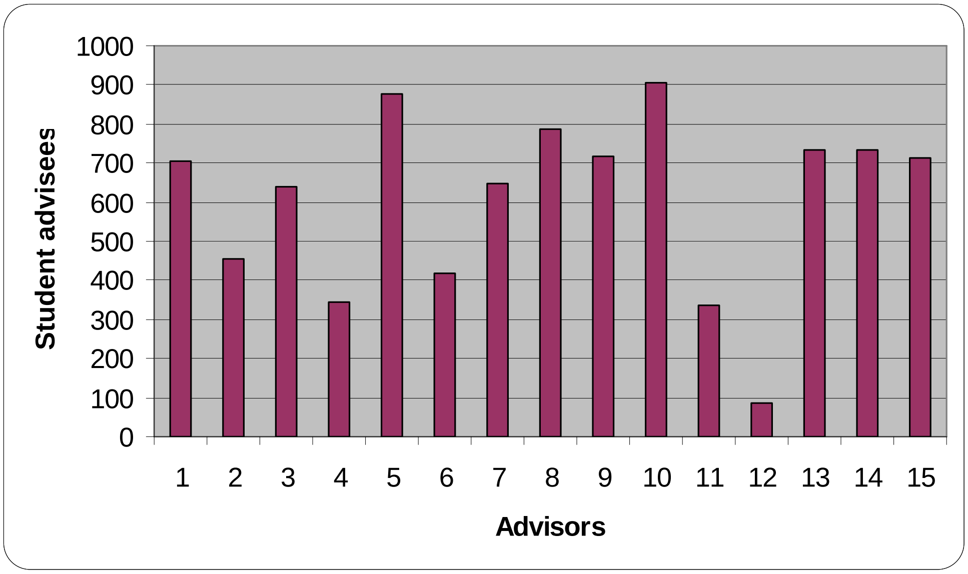

Figure 5: Advisor versus Student advisees

From this data there are three conclusions, (a) there is a large number of total students for each advisor, (b) the total number of students assigned differs for each advisor, and (c) the number of inactive students an advisor is responsible for is generally larger than the number of active students.

Advisor daily activity versus proactivity. The advisors interviewed stated there is not enough time in the day to proactively contact students assigned to them. Table 3 shows some of the possible duties advisors are responsible for as reported in the interviews.

Table 3

Faculty Advisor Responsibilities

Duty	Time	Description
Degree plan appointments	1-1.5 hours	The new student sits down with the advisor and they go over transfer credits and what courses are to be completed in their chosen course of study. The advisor will go through testing and financial aid and how to register for classes and what services are available to them.
On call advisor/deals with walk ins	8 hours	Advisors take care of walk in students who have not made an appointment, phone calls and emails that require immediate attention. They are also the cover for any advisors who are out on vacation. In addition they continue their daily routine of student appointments etc.
Student emails or calls	15min-1hr	Many students will contact their advisors with questions or concerns. The amount of time required depends on the nature of the question asked. For example, if a student wants to change his or her degree emphasis there is a lot of paperwork involved to develop a new degree plan.

Table 3 cont.

Faculty Advisor Responsibilities

Duty	Time	Description
File Reviews	30min/1.5hrs	This is the process of updating student degree plans with what courses have been completed and the grades earned. The time taken depends on the nature of the degree plan and how long it has been since it was last reviewed.
Graduation Verifications	1 to 2 hours	Graduation Verification is like a file review, however it involves counting up the actual courses completed, making sure they match the courses the registrar has on the degree plan, and ensuring 128 credits have been completed.
Serving on 4 committees	Depends	This depends on what committee the advisor is interested in and how much involvement they will have in the committee. The meetings can be during a lunch hour or any time during the day. How many times the committee meets in a month and how long the meetings last is also a factor

Table 3 cont.

Faculty Advisor Responsibilities

Duty	Time	Description
Transfer credit/Concurrent enrollment update	20 to 30min	Some students do concurrent enrollment, which is where they attend a community college taking courses while still being enrolled at Regis. These courses will transfer for Regis credit and required degree plan updates.

Student file availability. This situation is created because once a student is assigned an academic advisor; the advisor retains all of the student's information. This information includes: evaluated transcripts, the degree plan, and other notes about the student's educational goals. All of the records are in paper form, and the only way to access any of the information is through the advisor. One faculty member stated it was frustrating to assist a student when there was not quick access to the information to make a decision. This creates a bottleneck in the seamless student service that Regis, as a whole, wants to provide students.

Concurrent enrollment. I also identified potential problems with concurrent enrollment, which occurs when students attend a community college and transfer the credit back to Regis. Concurrent enrollment can potentially affect student retention numbers because there is no way to code a concurrently enrolled student in the Regis collegue system. When retention numbers are accessed, the system recognizes these students as a stop out or those who did not continue.

Unless the advisor puts a note into the Collegue system other staff members are not aware of when or if these students will return.

Advising availability. According to other departments interviewed, advisors are not available for the students after 5 p.m., before 6:00 p.m. classes when it would be convenient for students. Many students cannot take care of school business while at work and may not have enough time at lunch to drive to campus for an appointment. Because students have full-time jobs and families to tend to, extended or flexible advising hours may be needed.

Inter-department communication. Several individuals interviewed stated that some of the employees in management would not talk with someone from another department unless that person had a management title. However, this does not appear to be an issue for non-management employees. Many of the non-management employees in different departments work with each other without getting management involved. The feeling is it’s much faster to address problems inter–departmentally with someone at a lower level than by involving the directors.

Problems with student orientation. When asked about Student Orientation, many interviewees thought the content was inadequate and needed to have more substance. Many felt the presentation was disorganized and there was not a main focus. One person also stated the orientation should be mandatory. Another respondent commented that while there have been many changes to its structure in the past few years, Student Orientation doesn’t seem to benefit the students enough.

*Student communication overload. A*ll of the people interviewed mentioned some sort of communication issue within the departments and with the students. Many of the staff agreed there were too many emails being sent to students relaying similar messages, but coming from different sources. Because of these similar messages students get confused as to whom they need to respond. For example, students tend to think the SST representative is their advisor and expects the degree plan questions to get answered.

Another example of this are the emails sent out when a student first starts at Regis. First is the welcome email Operations sends out, then an email is sent confirming registration, and 2 weeks later the welcome email from SST is sent. In addition, the student receives an email from admissions to get his or her transcripts in. The students get confused about the services we provide and are not really sure whom they are supposed to contact.

Unsigned degree plans. According to the faculty advisors, after a file is sent to Advising from admissions and has been evaluated, the assigned advisor is listed into the Collegue system before the student is contacted for an appointment via email. If there is no response to a second email, a phone call is made. If still no response, the student is sent a letter through the mail and the file is put in a drawer labeled "unsigned degree plan." This causes confusion for other departments who may be looking for the file to help a student. The Collegue system will show the student is assigned to a particular advisor even though the advisor does not have the student's file at the time.

As of June 2005, 107 students who had applied to Regis in January 2005 had unsigned degree plans. These students may have taken 1 to 3 courses but never made an advising appointment and have possibly stopped out.

Financial aid and student account problems. Several interviewees stated one of the biggest frustrations for SPS students is the financial aid and student account procedures. The way the staff in student accounts communicates to the student after a flag restriction is placed on the student's account is a letter sent by postal mail. Those letters are mailed about 8 days after the restriction is applied, so there are late fees attached to past due payments. There are also issues when students fax deferment forms to student accounts. Often the deferment forms never get entered into the student’s file because the correct staff member does not receive it. The student does not knows there is an issue until he or she receives the past due invoice.

Another ineffective communication with Student Accounts occurs when a student fills out the wrong deferment form because the differences were not fully explained. The deferment is denied, and the student is not notified immediately. He or she receives a letter, and in most cases the letter is received too late to do anything because the restrictions are already in place.

Student Cohort Analysis

A total of 126 students started their program in the spring of 2004. As of the end of the Summer 2005 term, only 46 of these students were still enrolled in classes. This is a 63% loss, which is more than half of the cohort. This loss represents approximately $1,769,600 lost in potential revenue if all courses taken were classroom based, or $2,148,800 if all courses were online. This is based on the number of three-credit courses the lost students could have taken up to the Summer 2005 term, current tuition rates, and accounting for the average number of credits hours (49) a student may have transferred into Regis from other institutions. Some students could have transferred fewer or no credits, so the potential loss could be even more substantial.

I took a more in-depth look into the spring cohort and found that 6% dropped the first course, meaning the student either did not attend the first night or asked to be dropped within the first week. Eleven percent withdrew from their first course within the second or third week. Twenty three percent completed the first course and “stopped out”, or did not continue. Ten percent of the cohort completed two classes and stopped out. Thirteen percent of the cohort completed three courses before stopping out. All of the students who made it into their fourth course and have an advisor are still enrolled as of summer 2005.

As stated previously in this document, student orientation and writing samples are in place to enhance student success. I did a numerical analysis to determine if students who completed a writing sample and/or attended orientation stayed enrolled versus those who did not. I found that out of the percentage of students, who did not continue courses, 30% completed a writing sample and 35% attended orientation. Of the students who did continue, 39% completed a writing sample and 52% attended orientation. The numbers show there is not a great difference between students who did not continue and students who did. This is an indication that the current format of student orientation and writing samples may not be making the impact on student success and retention that has been expected.

My next step was to look at potential risk factors that might explain the large stop out rate. As stated before, two frustrations students encounter are problems with financial aid and student account process problems, resulting in late or non-payment of the tuition. These student account process problems generate flags on the student's account, which restrict registration for future courses. I did an analysis and tracked which students utilized financial aid, which had account restriction flags, and which were utilizing financial aid and had restriction flags. Of the currents students who did not continue, 61% had a restriction flag on their account, 28% were utilizing financial aid assistance, and 50% of the students who utilized financial aid had a restriction flag. Of the currents students enrolled in summer 2005, 60% had a restriction flag on their account, 50% utilize financial aid assistance, and 48% of the student who utilized financial aid assistance had a restriction flag. Both groups had over half of their members with restriction flags, again indicating a potential barrier with the student account process. Also in both groups half of the students with financial aid have restriction flags, indicating misunderstandings with the information regarding deferments or delayed payment forms.

Discussion

Interpretation of Results

Student retention is directly tied to student success. If students are successfully completing courses and not encountering any process barriers, it is less likely they will leave Regis. There will always be personal barriers that Regis cannot provide help for, such as employment restrictions, family emergencies, or personal illnesses. However, those factors that Regis can control, such as administration and curriculum, should be as streamlined as possible. Also, Regis should make every effort to provide students with the tools to succeed in the program.

The problem statement indicates one of the symptoms of the retention problem is a high drop rate from the first or second courses. The data from the student cohort analysis confirms this. The 62% of spring 2004 cohort who did not continue or stopped out did so within the first three classes. Those students who made into their fourth class were still enrolled as of Summer 2005. I spoke to the Assistant Dean of SPS program Effectiveness and Assessment, who stated the Student Success Team was the only strategy thus far that has been put into place regarding student retention. As shown in Figure 3, the SST is placed to help students succeed during the first three classes. However, according to data pulled by the director of the SST, there has not been a significant change in the retention rate since SST has been in place. During one of the Town Hall meetings the SPS vice president who put the idea of the SST into motion, stated the SST was being under-utilized, meaning many of the departments do not use the SST as a resource nor does the staff let the SST know when students have left Regis. With some different strategies and a different focus the SST could be in the proper position to make a difference in the retention rates for the SPS program.

Two additional symptoms of the retention problem are tuition collection flags on students' accounts and an increase in academic probation. The student cohort analysis that included measurements of these showed that both the students who did not continue and those who were currently enrolled had over half of their members with restriction flags, indicating a potential barrier with the student account process. Also in both groups half of the students with financial aid have restriction flags, indicating misunderstandings with the information regarding deferments or delayed payment forms.

As stated in the Regis organizational analysis, the student orientation and writing sample are not required. These two tools are supposed to help students prepare for the expectations of the program. However, the feedback from students and interviews from staff indicate that the information presented during orientation is confusing and ineffective. The student cohort also indicates that of the students who attended orientation, there is little difference in the number of students who are still enrolled and those who are not. The situation is similar with the writing sample. These tools should be making an impact on student success and therefore student retention, but my results indicate they may not be.

The staff interviews identified several possible problems related to student success in the advising department. Many of the staff in other departments felt frustration because when they were trying to help a student over the phone or on a walk-in basis, the visit required information in the student file that was not immediately available. The files are in the possession of the advisor, and only available when the advisor is available. Staff members can contact the advisor or redirect the student to his or her advisor, but this increases the time taken to answer a question and can cause student frustration. A related issue is advisors' inflexible schedules, working from 8:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Our students are working adults and may not be able to set up appointments during these hours. Student success may be impacted if students are unable to get answers to their questions.

Another issue is the ability of advisors to proactively call their assigned students. Both the student cohort analysis and Table 2 in the advisor caseload section of the staff interviews indicate the advisors are adequately staffed to take care of currently active students (the exception is the fort Collins campus). However, as indicted earlier there is a large number of students who are enrolled in the Regis SPS program, but are not currently active. Potentially these students could still be interested in taking courses, but, giving the information in the advisor daily activity versus proactivity section of the staff interviews, the advisors do not have enough time to proactively contact these students.

Collaborative Team Meeting

After completing my data gathering methods and formulating the resulting data, I held a meeting with my collaborative team. We discussed all of the data gathered and identified problem areas and potential solutions. The previous sections show the problems identified and the three recommendations below were a result of this collaboration.

Recommendation 1

The first recommendation for correcting the student retention problem is the evolution of the SST into a new department called New Student and Retention Strategies Department, which would be the bridge between marketing and advising. This evolution would give greater flexibility, and build trust and cohesiveness between departments.

Currently the SST proactively contacts students within the first 3 terms or 6 months of courses to answer any questions or concerns a student may have. The team's goal is to reach 80% of each member's assigned cohort either by phone or email. A reach is defined as a two-way conversation with a student. After the team reaches the required 80% they move on to the next list of new students.

There are some changes and responsibilities that need to be added to the SST Team to help correct problems that impact student retention. First, the SST should become a department of its own and be funded from the Marketing, Advising and Operations departments. It should act as a communication bridge between all the departments involved. The team would become the primary resource students could utilize until they are assigned an advisor. Up until this point the team would essentially be pre-advising, working in conjunction with advising to better serve the students.

The new structure would begin with the Marketing representatives introducing the students to SST using a warm transfer method, which means giving the student the name of the SST member who will be in contact. The SST would be responsible for students' unofficial evaluations, registration for the first three courses, deferments, and filling out the Free Application For Student Aid (FAFSA). The new team would include a contact from financial aid who would specialize in the government laws regarding financial aid and would be specifically trained to handle adult student needs.

The Student Success Team would not be restricted to helping new students but would also contact students who have stopped out. Because of time restriction in advising, the SST team would research and contact students who have been out of school for more than a year. A degree plan has a life of 7 years, so it is likely there are many students who would still be interested in completing the degree if given the opportunity.

After the SST member conducts unofficial evaluations and registers students for the first course, he or she will make sure each student's file contains original transcripts and is complete. If a student does not complete his or her file in the allotted three-term time, the student would remain under the member's care for another three terms. The specialist would continue to contact the student, possibly offering other options to completed the file. The SST member also would be responsible for making sure the student attends orientation and completes a writing sample.

Most of the students have been assigned an advisor by the time they complete their third term; however, there is a 50% to 60% rate of unsigned degree plans. An unsigned degree plan indicates the student has not had a meeting with the assigned advisor to get further direction and a structured path to graduation. The student success team would monitor unsigned degree plans and will work closely with advising to make sure the students meet with their advisor.

Recommendation II

Recommendation II involves modifying the Advising department to carry the excess load at the Fort Collins campus and re-working the office schedule so it is more adult-student-focused for the customer service needs of the working adult. There is also a need make student information available to other departments.

Right now advisors work on a schedule that would suit a traditional college student, 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. The adult program is for working adults, who are most likely at work during these hours. The hours of advising should be extended or made more flexible. Other options include the advisors rotating their shifts and staying later on certain days a week, or hiring additional advisors who could work a later schedule. There is also a need for one more advisor in Fort Collins or a part-time advisor to carry the extra load of students being assigned.

Advisors' student files need to be available to other departments in order to provide help to students, which can be done electronically. An inquiry system should be formulated to add notes from a student's file. According to some staff members the collegue system is a very versatile system and has a lot of room to develop more informational screens.

Recommendation III

Recommendation III is similar to the first one; however, the Student Success Team would stay under the umbrella of Marketing. The Student Success Team would gain more responsibilities, proficiency testing for students would be required, and there would be additional student orientation schedules. Adding the testing and orientations would improve the existing tools that are in place to help with student success. These changes would also help the understanding of what additional tools the potential students need to fit into the accelerated learning process.

The Regis process needs to be modified to ensure student success. Figure 7 shows a new flow chart with the suggested changes highlighted in red.

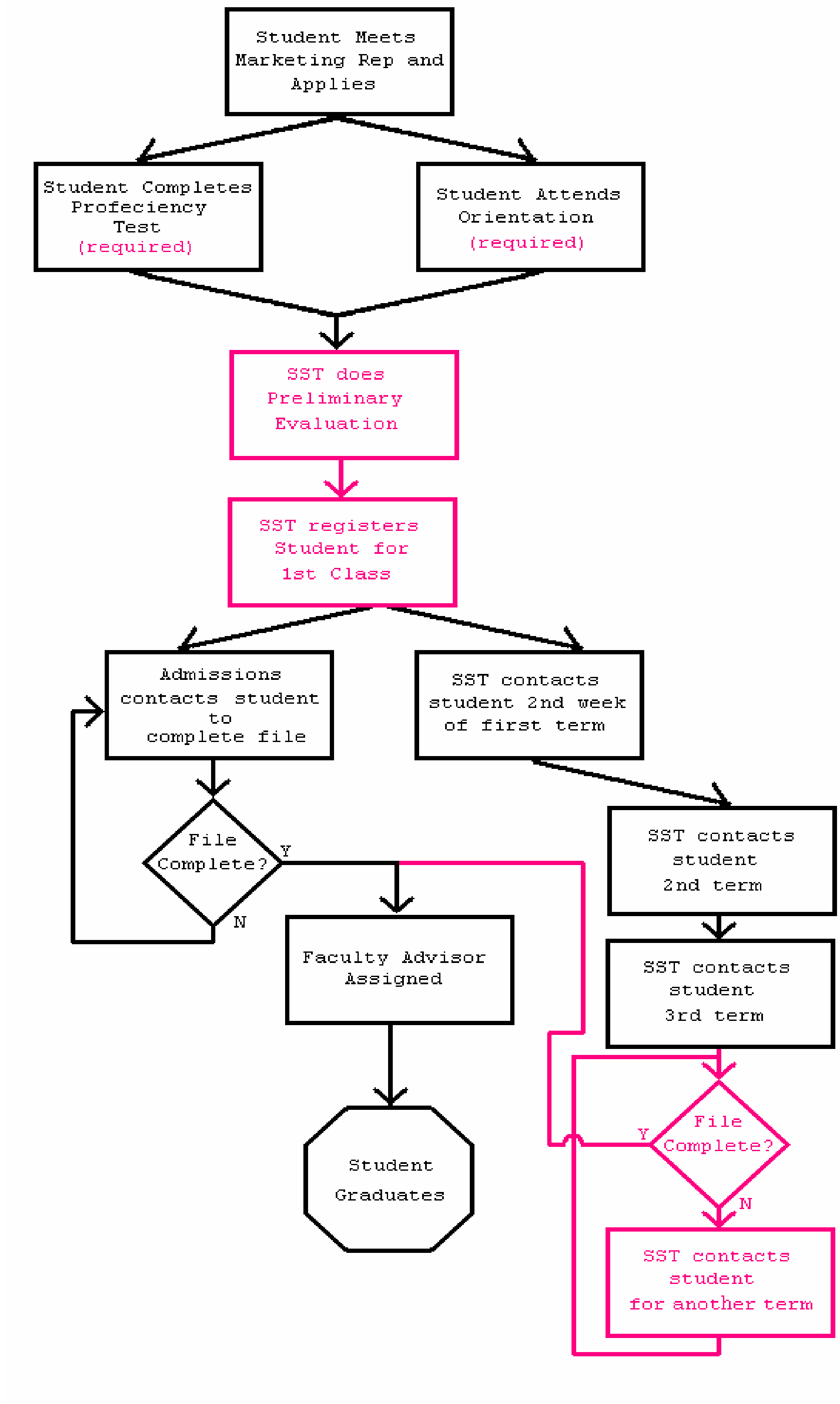

Figure 7: New Regis SPS Student Process

The new process flow would be: (a) Student meets with a Marketing representative and applies. (b) Student completes proficiency testing which is how the marketing representatives will now record their numbers. Student's proficiency in math and English will be tested. (c) The student attends orientation, which would be a requirement. Because of this change, additional sessions will be in place according to the 5-week format, as shown in Figure 8. (d) At the same time the SST then executes the unofficial evaluations and register students for their first course. (e) An account representative contacts the student to remind them to get their transcripts in to complete their admissions file. At the same time the Student Success Team continues with the duties of contacting the students for the first three terms. If the student's file is not complete at that time, the SST continues to contact the student for another term (f) The student completes their admissions file and is assigned an advisor. (g) Student continues until graduation.

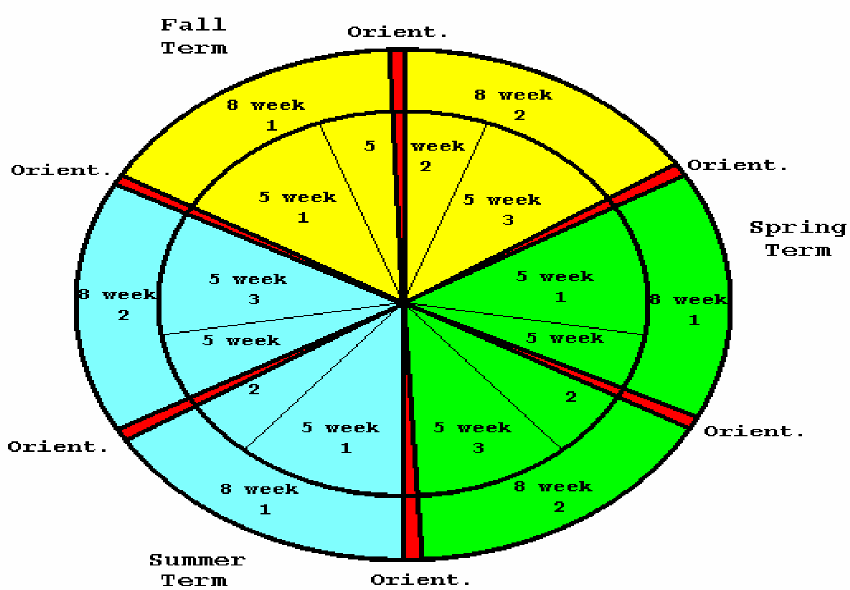

Figure 8. New Student Orientation Schedule

Critical Evaluation of Recommendations

The execution of all four recommendations would most likely have positive impacts on student retention. Ideally, I would prefer all four to be implemented. However, if only one could be implemented, it would have to be the one that would have the most impact in the least amount of time with the least cost. The following is an evaluation of each with regard to these criteria.

Recommendation I: SST Changes

This recommendation would involve a large amount of organizational change, which would include reworking departmental budgets and attitudes. However, the student cohort analysis showed that all of the students who didn't continue stopped out before their fourth term. This indicates that most of the students' problems occur within the first three courses, and this is where any change really needs to occur to have a major impact on the student retention problem. Since the SST is focused on this time period of the student life cycle, modifying the current responsibilities of the SST should have a significant positive impact on student retention.

Recommendation II: Modifying the Advising Department

Implementing this recommendation would potentially involve hiring additional employees and modifying current employees' work schedules. This should provide additional support for adult students and possibly improve communication between departments. However, the student cohort analysis showed the problem with student retention appears to be primarily focused within the first three terms and that all of the students who made it successfully into their forth term are still enrolled. This indicates that making this change will probably not have a large impact on the student retention problem.

Recommendation III: SPS Process Change

Implementing this recommendation would involve a large amount of organizational change. It also includes the creation of proficiency testing and increasing the number of student orientations during the year. While there is little doubt that helping to prepare the students for the Regis SPS process would help ensure their success, this recommendation appears to make the most drastic changes within those processes themselves. It would likely take some time to implement this and, would involve significant cost.

Recommendation Choice

Given the above evaluation, Recommendation I is the best choice. While it may not be the most easily implemented, it would definitely make the biggest impact on student retention in the shortest amount of time.

Reflections

During this project, I have learned many things about my leadership qualities. Remembering many of the lessons throughout the program, my thoughts in class were of how would I use this particular process, this lesson, or book to help me advance with my project. In spite of this, when I began the project, I felt I did not have the self-confidence to start. At this point I had been in school consistently for about 12 years and was very burned out. I did not know where to start or what questions should be asked in the staff interviews. I was afraid to ask for help, especially from my collaborative team, and I second-guessed all of my methods and the results I might get. However, I found I am very persistent and not one to give up. When I set goals I work hard to achieve them. I forced myself to approach the research expert on my collaborative team and obtain guidance on where to begin. She worked with me to clarify my methods and what I hoped to accomplish. With this information I was able to solidify my plan of action and proceed with my data gathering

I found two of my strengths to be working collaboratively with people and creating a comfortable atmosphere where people are willing to talk. During the interview process I found these strengths helped the interviewees open up to what I was asking and really get to the bottom of what they felt was going on with the systems at Regis. I have never led interviews before and was surprised to see what I had accomplished. I did not realize how much I had learned during the MSM course work until I was able to apply them during the project, especially with the coaching of my mentor.

These skills showed themselves recently when I decided to take on training to become a diversity facilitator. When the training class participated in a role-play activity I was able use some of the techniques I learned through the interviews and I was encouraged how the dialogue changed and people opened up to the subject being discussed.

In my current job as a Student Success Team member, the team has been evolving since we began in 2003. We are now moving to a coaching style to help new students and because of the skills I have acquired, I feel more confident then ever to work with them and help the students get through their program. As far as my team, I feel I can work with them and lead any project that will be handed to us for research.

If I had to do it all over again I would definitely not waste time over thinking my processes and I would ask for help and more clarification earlier. I tend to waste time worrying about what needs to be done and what others might think. I would have not been so frustrated with myself if I had gone to my team from the very beginning and asked for their input on my plan of action.

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Appendix A

Staff Interview Questions

Qualifier

The interview process was dynamic. While all of the following questions were asked, often the resulting answers that led to additional questions that are not listed here.

Questions for faculty chairs

1. How do you learn about students who are doing poorly in a course of program?
2. How do you deal with those students in trouble
3. What if a student is no cut out for the intended program? Is it something you look at? What do you do?
4. I know seamless service was a concern. How do you feel Regis is addressing seamless service?

Questions for academic advisors

1. What is the process for getting an Advisor?
2. How do you advise students who have not yet completed their admissions file?
3. How is an advisor assigned to a student file?
4. Are there guidelines for transfer credit evaluations? Are the guidelines written down? Can exceptions be made?
5. Are these guidelines applicable to all of the undergraduate programs?
6. Do you believe the students know what the guidelines are?
7. What happens to the student file after it is evaluated
8. Once you evaluate, do you create a written record? If so, how? Where is it kept?
9. Is there a report letting you know what credits transferred from other institutions? How do you record the file evaluation?

Appendix A cont.

Staff Interview Questions

10. How are students assigned to you?
11. How are online students assigned? Are there different guidelines for online students?
12. How many advises do you have? Do you know how many are currently enrolled in a course? Is that information recorded?
13. Do you encourage concurrent enrollment? How do you follow up with concurrent students, is there a record?
14. Is there an official policy that tells advisors how to inform a student there will be a change is the advisor? Once a student is notified is there a record?
15. Are you, as the advisor, confident the advisee was placed in the correct course for his or her program? If not, why?
16. Do you initiate contact after you have the initial degree plan-signing meeting with your advisee?
17. I know seamless service was a concern. How do you feel Regis is addressing seamless service?

Questions for marketing representatives

1. Are there sets of standard questions that are asked during a meeting with a potential student? Is so, what do they entail?
2. What is the next step after your initial meeting with the student? For example, I come in and say I want to sign up for a business degree, what is the next step?
3. How do you decide in which course to register the student for first? Is there a list? How do you know the first course is a good fit for the intended degree?
4. Give me an example of what else you discuss with students in their first initial meeting?

Appendix A cont.

Staff Interview Questions

5. Do you talk about orientation? Is orientation required? Why or Why not?
6. How do you assess the potential client is a good fit for Regis? Do you have access to a list of criteria? Why or why not?