As another new cohort of students arrives on campus, the work of enrolling these students may have ended, but the job of retaining these students has just begun.

Even though college and university leaders recognize the complex nature of student retention, many still do not fully embrace data-driven, best practice approaches. Only through information and commitment can institutions develop enduring programs to enhance retention results.

**Four Retention Strategies**

We see considerable value in structuring student retention efforts along multiple dimensions, each having the potential to improve performance. Through our research we have identified four of these retention dimensions. Although institutions vary in their ability and willingness to pursue a particular approach, a college will have the best results by bringing them all into play together.

1. **Focus on Accountability.**
   Retention is a broad institutional concern. It is so broad that a process, which should be owned by everyone, is often actually owned by no one. Countering this organizational paradox requires establishing clear accountability. Whether with a senior official or campus-wide office, the buck must stop somewhere to produce consistency across diverse functions. Student success leaders should marshal accepted retention metrics to their cause and use them to sharpen focus and raise general awareness.

2. **Intervene to Help at-Risk Students.**
   Knowing and understanding what factors identify at-risk students at an institution is the first step to successful interventions. While holding on to students improves an institution’s standing and finances, colleges also have a higher moral imperative—to address the social and academic needs of those they admit. These efforts require both human and financial resources. Recent initiatives, such as The City University of New York’s ASAP (Accelerated Study in Associate Programs) program, show that institutional commitment coupled with modest investments can make a big difference in student retention and graduation.

3. **Be More Student Focused.**
   At each point in the enrollment pipeline, institutions face greater scrutiny by today’s students and families. Gone are the days where students accepted substandard housing or poor dining as character building. The panoply of administrative and academic support services needs oversight to engage today’s consumer-oriented students and parents. Colleges should strive to provide as much post-enrollment attention as they do in recruitment.

4. **Make Better Initial Matches.**
   Colleges should make better use of profile data to identify and recruit “best-fit” students. Cohort survival analysis can sharpen admission and financial aid decisions to provide a more integrated approach to enrollment management. Inevitably, some students will be a poor fit, but focused efforts to maximize good matches will make financial support more effective and gradually improve student persistence. Short-term consequences might include a somewhat smaller freshman class, ideally offset by a somewhat larger sophomore cohort.

(Over, please)
Colleges and universities should incorporate their retention and graduation efforts into long-term strategic planning. Each institution stands in a somewhat different position, depending on mission, resources, and history.

The plan for each should reflect this variation; leadership needs to measure performance not against an abstract standard but against its own goals. Implementing and integrating the four guidelines on the front page represents a very good start.

**About Maguire Associates**

Maguire Associates is a leading consulting firm that serves higher education institutions so they may optimize net revenue and enrollment objectives. Maguire’s team of dedicated experts serve Presidents, CFOs, COOs, Vice-Presidents of Enrollment Management, and other higher education professionals by helping them establish best enrollment management practices. In addition to offering customizable products and solutions, Maguire offers a suite of services including:

- Financial Aid Optimization
- Enrollment Management
- Strategic Planning
- Market Research
- Marketing, Communications & Branding

For advice on how our data-driven approaches might help your retention program, please call 978-371-1775 or visit MaguireAssoc.com.

---

**Maguire Associates can help you remove the guesswork** when planning your retention goals. While it’s not unusual for colleges and universities to concentrate on growing inquirers and applicants, this often results in student retention taking a back seat. When you build a retention program, not only will it be beneficial to your students, but it will significantly impact your school’s tuition revenue. Here are just some of the products Maguire offers to help your school be successful **at every stage of the funnel**.

**The Enrollment Management Funnel**

- **EFCIT™** Helps you grow the top of the funnel.
- **EMPOWR™** Converts more of your inquiries into applicants.
- **EMFASYS®** Use scholarship funds to maximize yield, shape the desired class, and optimize net total revenue.
- **Retention Modeling** Identify the factors that predict retention. Choose the students who are most likely to succeed.
- **Customized Market Research** Impact each stage of the enrollment funnel with our custom designed research studies.

---

**About Maguire Associates**

Maguire Associates is a leading consulting firm that serves higher education institutions so they may optimize net revenue and enrollment objectives. Maguire’s team of dedicated experts serve Presidents, CFOs, COOs, Vice-Presidents of Enrollment Management, and other higher education professionals by helping them establish best enrollment management practices. In addition to offering customizable products and solutions, Maguire offers a suite of services including:

- Financial Aid Optimization
- Enrollment Management
- Strategic Planning
- Market Research
- Marketing, Communications & Branding