**Action Steps to Increase Student Retention**

1. Leadership must start at the top and:
   a. Be consistent in message to every audience
   b. Be constant
   c. Celebrate success in retention to build momentum
   d. Look to tie retention to fiscal issues and benefits

2. Create or identify senior administrator to lead efforts
   a. Must be visible and empowered position
   b. Have priority access to institutional data
   c. Create a retention budget to support faculty and staff training

3. Retention begins at outreach
   a. Create student and family expectation of graduation and success
   b. Be explicit at all times including a four-year graduation goal
   c. Support students and parents in the transition to college
   d. Be honest about your institution—match is a critical factor in student success
   e. Identify at-risk students at point of admission for receipt of additional support

4. Work from all levels
   a. Remember retention can be affected by interactions with all members of the university staff including physical plant or classified staff.
   b. Many lower division courses are taught by adjuncts—make sure they are agents of retention as well
   c. Include faculty in orientation activities to create connections for students

5. Emphasize academic advising
   a. Start academic advising process at orientation sessions
   b. Timely and proactive advising for first generation, low-income and minority students is particularly critical
   c. Conduct an advising review to identify gaps and intentionally build duplicative advising for higher risk students
   d. Make sure all advising is on the same page
   e. Empower a strong central advising office for new students, students without majors, students who are changing majors, or students who need additional support
   f. Follow NACADA best practices
   g. Celebrate advising success—have an advisor of the year
   h. Don’t assume faculty are natural or skilled advisors—provide support and training for their success.

6. Provide financial support to students
   a. More financial aid

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b. Multi-year packages tied to academic progress and success
   c. Predictable tuition and financial aid
      i. Western Tuition Promise

7. Make campus budget decisions explicitly connected to retention
   a. Work with faculty and share budget status and the positive or negative impact of enrollment changes
   b. When new funds are available use a process that connects the allocation of the funds to retention as well as academic needs
   c. When funds are being reduced be explicit about protecting teaching and enrollment activities

8. Keep retention messaging simple and consistent
   a. At campus events and in emails continue to promote the value and importance of retaining students to graduation as a campus priority
   b. If performance measures are available share with the campus community
   c. When celebrating staff or faculty success or tenure or service time make mention of the number of students this person has served and their positive impact on student success and retention

9. Empower all members of the campus community to promote retention
   a. Make sure that student leaders are aware that they can be part of the retention team. This includes Resident Assistants, peer leaders, and student leaders.
   b. Use new employee orientation to set the expectation that all campus employees can make a difference and provide examples. Also educate new employees about the connection to the budget and fiscal health.
   c. Work with the faculty senate and adjuncts to increase awareness of retention importance.

10. Be intentional in your efforts
    a. Identify campus success and share information
    b. Identify areas of need and focus energy where it is needed or can have maximum benefit
    c. Review all aspects from outreach to commencement

11. Create and use an assessment system
    a. Collect quantitative and qualitative data
       i. Survey students regularly (NSSE or campus surveys)
    b. Have meaningful performance measures (retention, persistence, graduation numbers and rates…)
    c. Have data disaggregated at student and department level
    d. Disseminate data regularly to stakeholders (Deans, chairs and directors)

12. Be ready and willing to use a crisis to focus campus community on the vital importance of retention

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