Chapter 2
Utilizing Interactive Technologies to Engage, Integrate, Involve, and Increase Community amongst College Students

Pamela M. Golubski
Carnegie Mellon University, USA

ABSTRACT

Retention in higher education is a forefront goal for most administration, staff, and faculty members. For this goal to be achieved, college professionals must go above and beyond to ensure students are engaged socially, successfully integrated into the campus community, and actively involved during college. When these interactions occur, students are more likely to experience a sense of belonging, as, evident from developmental research theories, an institution could experience an increase in overall retention rates. However, to achieve engagement, integration, involvement, and feelings of belonging, it requires staff and faculty members to offer and encourage continuous interactions with students, both inside and outside the classroom. While these interactions in the past usually happened through face-to-face methods, today, the Web 2.0 and virtual technological tools have extended opportunities for college professionals to interact more often with students. Two such virtual technologies are Google Wave and Wimba Collaboration Suite (Voice, Pronto, and Classroom).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60960-791-3.ch002
RETENTION OVERVIEW

Retention of students is a pinnacle goal for any higher education institution. This is most likely due to the fact that only approximately 58 percent of students who enter a four-year institution will persist to earn bachelor degrees within six years (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). If college administrators, staff and faculty members do not strive to make retention a priority, rates could continue to drop (Tinto, 1993). This means that staff and faculty members have to actively engage, integrate, involve, and increase social presence (socialization) of students during college. Research has found when these actions occur inside and outside the classroom a reduction in attrition rates is most often experienced by an institution. However, achieving student active engagement, integration, involvement, socialization, and sense of affinity/belonging to an institution requires staff and faculty members to offer and encourage continuous interactions with students. So the question becomes how can these interactions occur in an already over-scheduled, time deprived world? The answer might lie in utilizing and interacting with students through virtual technologies and tools.

In order to better understand how to effectively interact effectively with students it is essential to first understand retention from a theoretical perspective.

Tinto’s Model of Student Departure

Tinto’s (1975, 1987, 1993) Model of Student Departure has been the theoretical foundation for retention research in higher education. Tinto’s model views student departure as a complex relationship between student involvement, academic achievement, and social integration while at college. The conceptual framework of Tinto’s theory was developed through Pantages and Creedon’s 25 years of attrition research, Durkheim’s model of suicide, Spady’s research on social system departures, and Van Gennep’s research on an individual’s rites of passage from childhood to adulthood (Tinto, 1993).

Tinto discovered that a student’s departure from an institution was due to five critical factors that include (1) a lack of personal commitment, (2) time and resource adjustment issues, (3) the lack of a social network or social integration, (4) academic difficulty, and (5) the lack of clear academic and career goals (Tinto, 1975, 1993). In past research, when students left college, the term used to define these students was “dropout” or “failure” which assumed students did not have the capabilities or characteristics to succeed in college (Tinto, 1993). Today, students who leave an institution are viewed from an attrition standpoint, and rarely termed “failures” (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993).

In an effort to better understand student departure, Tinto’s (1993) model further divides the causes of departure into three critical areas: (1) individual characteristics prior to entering college, (2) the experiences of the individual upon entry into the college community, and (3) external forces that hinder the college experience.

Individual characteristics (1) include intention and commitment towards earning the degree and learning. Intention is the individual’s personal goal(s) that guides his/her related educational activity. According to Tinto, the higher a student sets his/her goal(s) the more likely the student will persist. Commitment is the level of motivation that influences a student’s drive to complete a degree program in that commitment “not only help set the boundaries of individual attainment but also serve to color the character of individual experiences within the institution following entry” (Tinto, 1993, p. 37).

For the college experiences (2) critical area, Tinto separated the area into four clusters of occurrences or circumstances that effect the student’s decision to either depart or remain enrolled at a college. These clusters were entitled (a) adjustment, (b) difficulty, (c) incongruence, and (d) isolation.
13 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the product’s webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/utilizing-interactive-technologies-engage-integrate/55156?camid=4v1


www.igi-global.com/e-resources/library-recommendation/?id=1

Related Content

Winning an E-Learning Proposal or Grant
www.igi-global.com/chapter/winning-learning-proposal-grant/12076?camid=4v1a

Investigation into Gender Perception toward Computing: A Comparison between the U.S. and India
www.igi-global.com/chapter/investigation-into-gender-perception-toward/61254?camid=4v1a

Practicum-Based Approach to Bridge Between Information-Systems Industry Expectations and Graduates Qualifications
www.igi-global.com/article/practicum-based-approach-to-bridge-between-information-systems-industry-expectations-and-graduates-qualifications/181715?camid=4v1a

Exploring the Usage of MOOCs in Higher Education Institutions: Characterization of the Most Used Platforms
www.igi-global.com/article/exploring-the-usage-of-moocs-in-higher-education-institutions/212574?camid=4v1a