



Boosting Retention Through Invasive Advising and an Answer Center

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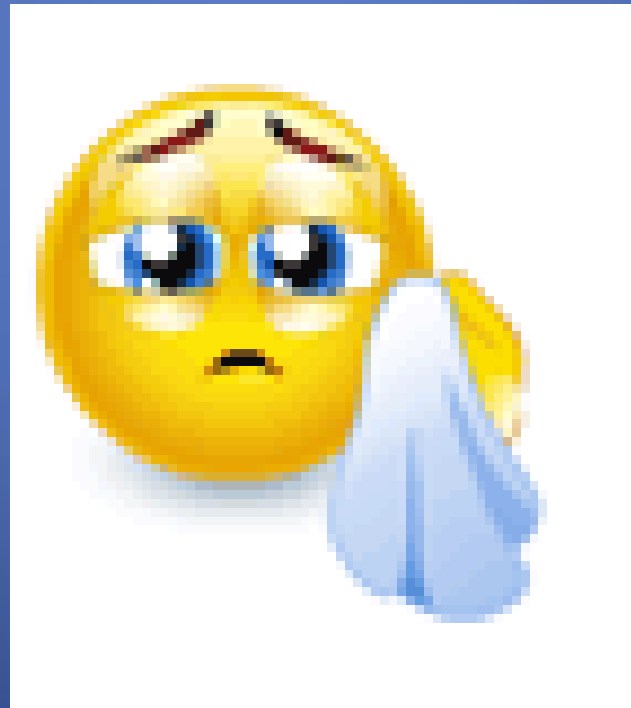
Retention Myth #1

Following up on withdrawing students will give you a good understanding of what your school can do to improve retention.



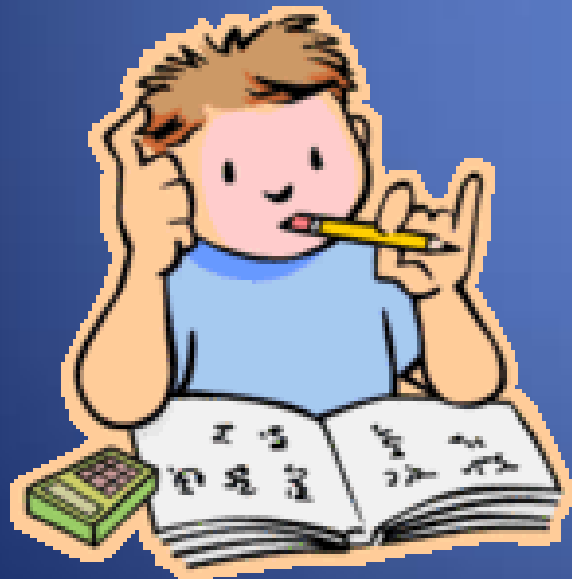
Reality #1a

Withdrawing students just want to get out and will give you a simple “cover story” seldom related to institutional processes.



Reality #1b

Two students under the same circumstances may have two different outcomes. One might stay while another may leave.



Myth #2

Eliminating student dissatisfaction will create happy students who will stay.



Reality #2

1. Something may irk a student but not be important enough to make them leave.
2. Few students who stay are completely satisfied.
3. Satisfaction may be unrelated to learning outcomes.



Myth #3

Minorities have a lower retention rate.



Reality #3

African Americans in faith-based adult programs have high retention (Tweedell & Hall, 2016)

Ohio Christian University Graduation Rate

White: 31%

African American: 38%

Insights

- Decisions to leave/stay are very complex
 - Psychological characteristics (grit, flexibility)
 - Sociological context
 - Institutional processes
- How can an institution intervene?
 - Answer Center
 - Proactive (invasive) Advising

Launching and Establishing the Ohio Christian University Answer Center

Jenni Lloyd, M.S.

Director of Customer Service



The “Answer Center”

- More than just a “call center”
- Scope:
 - Financial Aid
 - Schedule questions
 - Curriculum services
 - Admissions
 - And much more!



Our Mantra

- Answer
 - Seek to be the “one stop shop”
- Guide
 - Help students find the resources they need to succeed
- Listen
 - Support, encourage, and hear students out
- Connect
 - Get students in touch with dept. specialists



Tracking Trends

- Call Monitoring:
 - Average Queue Times
 - Abandonment Rate
 - Calls per day/time of day/etc.
 - Call origin
- Ticket Monitoring:
 - Calls per topic
 - Number of unique callers
 - Caller type: state, degree, degree level, status, etc.



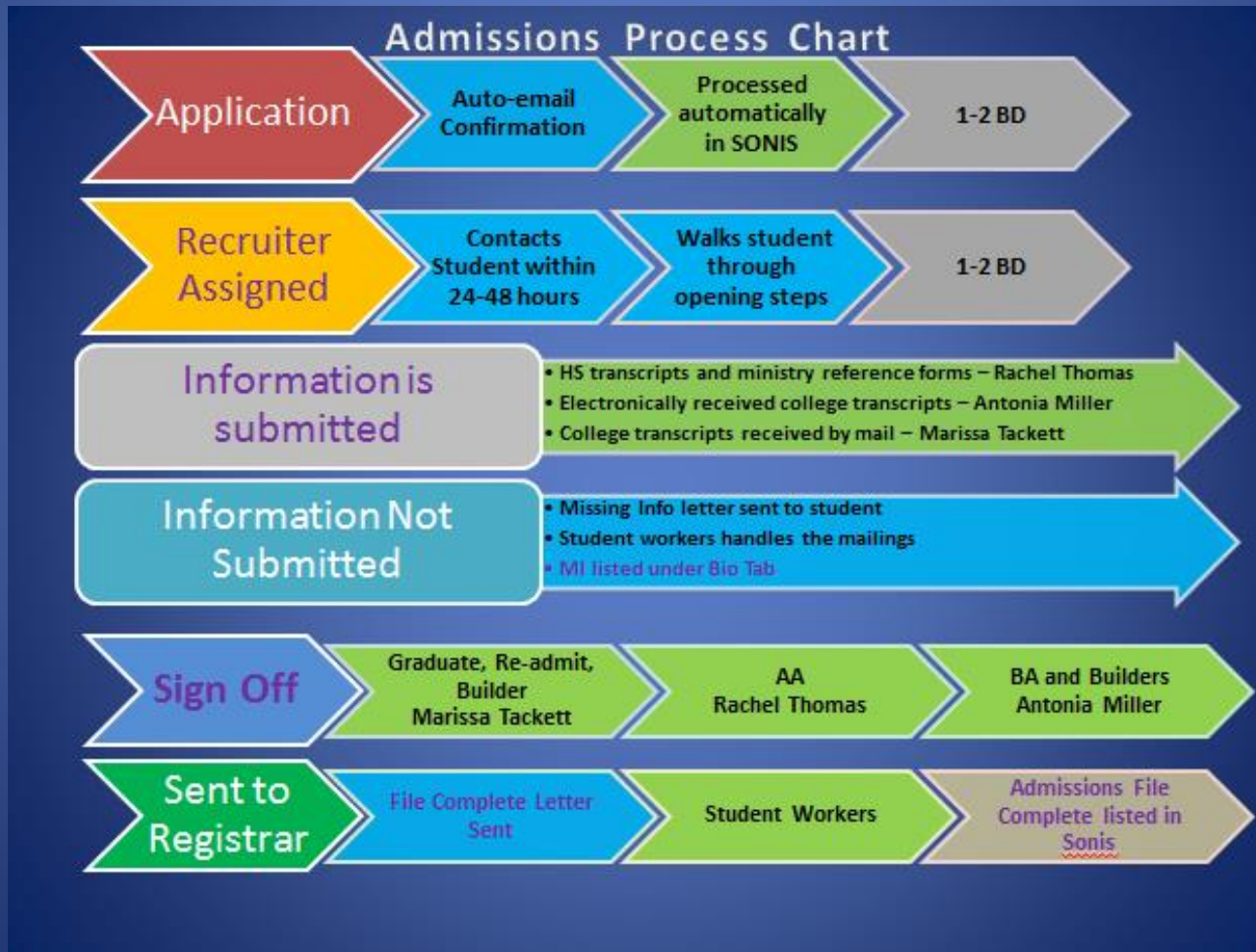
Improving Service & Identifying Breaks in Service

- Call & Ticket Data
 - Check and follow up on open tickets
 - Monitor trends in ticket categories
 - Evaluate spikes/drops in key words
 - Assess queue times/abandonment rate
 - Abandonment rate dropped after re-recording queue recordings



Improving Service & Identifying Breaks in Service

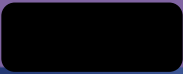

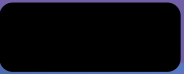

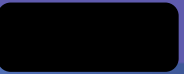









- Process Maps



Improving Service & Identifying Breaks in Service

- Staff Roles Chart

AGS ADMISSIONS STAFF

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Director of Onsite Recruitment and Admissions • Oversees Admissions Department  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions Asst./AGS Op. • AGS Operator Phone • Enters prospects into SONIS • AGS Program and AGS Reassignment email accounts, Inventory, Supply Orders, • Manages classroom schedule • Oversees AGS Directory • Helps Silvia with billing  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record Support Specialist • Electronically received college transcripts • AGS Admissions Email • Sign-off for Builders  	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records Support Specialist • HS Tran and MR Form • Oversees AGS Fax • AA Sign-off  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records Support Specialist • College trans by mail • Graduate, readmit, and builder sign-off • Compiles admissions reports  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGS Admissions Assistant • Helps oversee AGS Admissions email account • Covers the Purechat for the dept.  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee Bad Mail • Oversee AGS ID email account • Mail out timed letters for recruitment activities  

Data & Collaboration

- Monthly Meetings with:
 - Financial Aid
 - Change in process with financial aid processing list
 - Student Services
 - Implementing advising appointments
 - AGS Admissions
 - Etc.



Impact

- Feedback forms
 - 4.77/5 Customer Service Rating for FY15-16
- Impact on retention



Advising

Bradford Sample, Ph.D.
Assistant Provost & Vice President of
Academics
College of Adult & Graduate Studies

Advising at OCU

- Professional Advisors
 - 11 Advisors
 - 1 Assistant Director
 - 1 Director
- Team Approach
 - Business
 - Ministry
 - Social Sciences / Humanities / Nursing
- 400 – 1 Ratio
- Move in 2014 to Proactive Advising

Pro-Active / Invasive Advising

- **deliberate intervention** to enhance student motivation
 - using strategies to show **interest and involvement** with students
- intensive advising designed to **increase the probability of student success**
 - working to **educate students on all options**
 - approaching students **before situations develop**

Varney, J. (2012, September). Proactive (Intrusive) Advising! *Academic Advising Today*, 35(3). Retrieved from <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Proactive-%28Intrusive%29-Advising!.aspx>

Issues at OCU in 2014

- Advising Reactive
- Issues with Leadership in Advising
- 600 – 1 Ratio
- No Coordination Among Various Offices within AGS Concerning Communication with Students
- Advisors aligned by students last names, not programs

Changes in 2014-2015

- Answer Center opened in August for Financial Aid questions & started taking advisor calls in September
- New Director – Trisha Bradley
- Analysis of Advising Issues & Study on Alternatives
- Move to Specializations, September 2014
- Move to Pro-Active / Invasive Advising, November 2014

Some Brief Research Articles

- Leah P. Hollis, “Academic Advising in the Wonderland of College for Developmental Students,” *College Student Journal* 43:1 (March 2009): 31-35.
- Hadyn K. Swecker, Matthew Fifolt, and Linda Searby, “Academic Advising and First-Generation College Students: A Quantitative Study on Student Retention.” *NACADA Journal* 33:1 (2013): 46-53.

Overall Assumptions

- It is impossible to do a job well if –
 - No one sets expectations or provides you with tools or resources to do the job (**training**)
 - There is no feedback on effectiveness (**assessment**)
 - You receive no recognition or reward for exemplary work (**recognition**)

Step 1 – Coordinate Communication

- Development and Implementation of an Academic Advising Communication Plan

Academic Advising: Communication Plan
<u>Associate of Arts Students:</u>
Week 2 - Answer Center Welcome Call /Automatic Welcome Email from Sonis
Answer Center will offer to set up advising appointment for student and advisor within the next week. AC will send list to Director of Student Services including any students who were unable to be reached.
Week 3-4 - <u>Advisor Phone Appointments</u> (if applicable)
Advisor will follow through with phone appointments sent by AC.
<u>Week 11 (start of 3rd class) – TR/grad plan sent</u>
Send Degree Audit form (or TR for those with advanced standing).
<u>Week 16 – Resources email (sent by AGS Advising)</u>
Email sent to students outlining some helpful resources available – highlighting myOCU (forms and ags advising page), apa template, helpdesk, remedial helps, etc.
Week 25 – AGS Advising postcard sent (sent by AGS Advising)

Step 2 - Advising Tracking

- Created an Advising Dashboard to Track Activity
- Implementation of To-Do List function for student communication tracking
- Increased Visibility of Advising Resources in myOCU and e360 (e-classroom) Student Communities

Step 3 – Advising Focus

- The knowledge of the Academic Advisor and the effectiveness and care with which they carry out their role has a great impact on the student's advising experience.
- Team members, with the same expertise, can cover for each other over vacations or when a member is sick.
- Transcript Review Errors / Graduation Errors Fell

Future Initiatives in Advising

- Structural Plan for Retention of Advisors
- Specialization of Activities to Support Advising

Results? -- Retention

- 2013 – 2014 – AGS Retention Rate 60.18% (all students)
 - National Average – Open Admissions Private Institutions 64% - 70%
- 2014 – 2015 – AGS Retention Rate 62.80%
- **2.62** Point Difference = **4.35%** increase in retention
 - National average – 1.0 points / 1.1% (2014)



Questions?