

Proof of Concept: Robust Retention in the NMSU System



Introduction

Research demonstrates that having ties to a university improves a student's persistence to graduation. Toward that aim, our co-curricular programming is designed to promote a sense of belonging through participation in a vibrant campus life. The Aggie student experience provides students opportunities to engage with peers and explore ideas, activities, organizations, and leadership experiences.

Analysis

Retention and academic metrics for students who received an iPad bundle (1,880 students) and who did not receive a bundle (107 students), Fall 2021 to Fall 2022.

	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022
Retention			
iPad, %	NA	86.4%	75.2%
No iPad, %	NA	87.9%	72.9%
iPad, N	NA	1,624	1,414
No iPad, N	NA	94	78
% Credits completion			
iPad	84.1%	87.4%	89.3%
No iPad	80.1%	84.9%	87.4%
Term GPA			
iPad	2.83	2.82	2.85
No iPad	2.85	2.85	2.83
Cumulative GPA			
iPad	2.87	3.00	3.05
No iPad	2.85	3.04	3.11

Continued efforts

- Ground truthing to understand differences between results from software and institutional data. Example: Retention in the software counts a student as retained if they are enrolled anywhere in the NMSU system. This number will be higher than institutional retention, which is based on retention on a campus.
- We are importing demographic data that will allow us to better disaggregate our data to understand issues of equity. Other sensitive data remains outside the software.
- In April, we are introducing this feature at an event targeted at the NMSU system.
- Persistent challenge: How do we code students for participation in programming and for factors like on-campus employment or commuting student?

We gratefully acknowledge Dr. Renay Scott, VP for Student Success, for her unfailing support of students and our work.

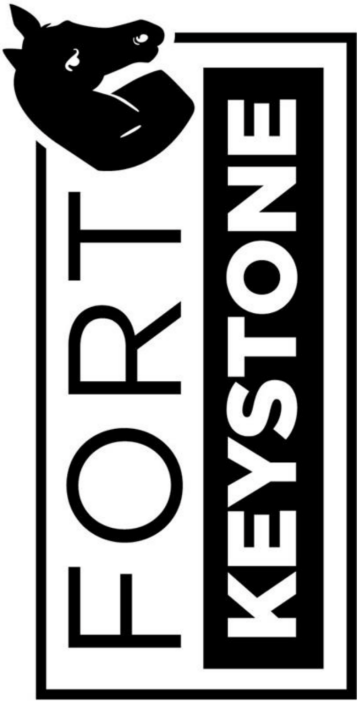
Objective

Although research supports engagement as a high-impact practice, we had no means to measure the persistence of our participants in these programs. Our big, hairy, audacious goal was to find a system that allowed us to understand the persistence patterns of students who engage in student life programming.

Methodology

NMSU implemented system-wide student success software in 2019. We had not yet explored the software's analytical features when our priorities shifted to respond to the covid-19 pandemic. This project was envisioned just when analytical features of the success software were being implemented.

The software can generate lists of students based on features imported in Banner, such as class enrollments or major. However, the software can perform analytics based on lists we create, and this is the feature we used to assess retention for students in our proof-of-concept study.



Academic metrics for participants in an extended orientation program, Fall 2021 and Fall 2022.

	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
First-semester retention	83%	100%
First-year retention	78%	N/A
N	18	11
% Credits completion, first fall semester	84%	91%
Term GPA, first fall semester	3.05	3.07

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