The Student Retention Study is a comprehensive review designed to examine factors related to the Fall 2012 re-enrollment of Fall 2011 new, full-time, baccalaureate-seeking first-year students. The one-year retention rate is critically important to the University, as the Strategic Plan goal is 80% retention from 2007-2012. However, the retention rate has declined each academic year from 79.6% in AY 2009-2010 to 78.0% in AY 2011-2012.

The study examined the variation in retentions rates according to demographic, pre-college, and enrollment variables. Data were collected from the University’s student information system, Ball State’s Summer Orientation Survey, Ball State’s MAP-Works survey, and responses from first-year students in Fall 2011 to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

No demographic or pre-college variables had statistically significant relationships with retention that showed medium or large effect sizes. Only three enrollment variables had statistically significant relationships with retention that showed medium or large effect sizes: the student’s college at the beginning of the Spring 2012 semester, credit hours completed in the Spring 2012 semester, and cumulative grade point average at the end of the Spring 2012 semester.

**Demographics**
Retention rates were higher for:
- Females (79%)
- International students (93%)
- Asian students (85%)
- Non-first generation-students (80%)
- In-state students (78%)
- Students with a dependent financial aid status (78%)
- Students whose financial aid dependency status could not be determined (80%)
- Students with greater levels of family financial contribution to the cost of college
- Students with higher SAT and ACT scores
- Students with higher high school grade point averages and graduation percentiles

**Enrollment**
Retention rates were higher for students in:
- College of Fine Arts (91%)
- Teachers College (90%)
- Interdisciplinary majors (90%)
Retention was higher among larger departments including:
- Interdepartmental CAP (91%)
- Modern Languages and Classics (90%)
- Interdepartmental TC (89%)
- Special Education (89%)
- Theatre and Dance (89%)
• Speech Pathology and Audiology (86%)
• English (85%)

Students were better retained if they participated in the Honors College; lived on campus during their first year; lived in the DeHority Complex; lived in living-learning communities; and participated in Summer Bridge groups. Retention was higher for students retained from Fall 2011 to Spring 2012 who completed a greater number of credit hours and achieved higher grade point averages in the Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 semesters.

Conclusions
Emphasizing to an even greater extent than is currently the case the Honors College, working to ensure that students come to class prepared, recruiting students with higher levels of family financial contribution to college costs, providing support for students who need to care for dependents, emphasizing graduates’ career success and national rankings of academic programs, providing students with options that allow them to remain at Ball State if they are considering changing majors, promoting college visits (including Ball State Preview Day), and following up on cues from MAP-Works and other sources where students may be indicating they are experiencing attrition-prone behaviors are all actionable tactics suggested by this study’s results. Current efforts to facilitate students’ awareness of their success in first-year courses during the times they are enrolled in those courses are also supported by this study.

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