

# Conquering the Great Divide Student Success Is Student Retention

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**Abstract** - In 2003, fall-to-fall retention of first-time, full-time freshmen at Austin Peay State University was the lowest among Tennessee universities. Changes in organization placed all enrollment management services and academic support services under one umbrella that regularly collaborates both with faculty and Student Affairs. Academic initiatives to promote student success include a mandatory “summer welcome” and freshman orientation; all new freshmen must enroll in a freshman seminar. In addition to admissions assessments, non-cognitive factors that may place students at risk of failure are assessed using the TCI index. An academic alert system available to faculty through Banner *Self Serve*, and a redesign of developmental studies that has received national attention by the National Council for Academic Transformation (NCAT) replaced non-university credit developmental studies. An Academic Support Center with peer tutoring, a writing lab, and on-line tutoring provides academic support to all students without an additional fee. Technology is used extensively in building successful communications with students. An *Academic Alert* system, incorporated into Banner Self-Service, enables faculty to refer students for academic support. In order to “tear down the wall” between student affairs and academic affairs, a reorganization of the university placed academic affairs and student affairs under the supervision of a university provost. Thus, a seamless unit now focuses on student engagement simultaneously with academic success. When new retention initiatives were first implemented, the benchmark for improvement was set at 2 % annually for the first two years and 5% in five years. In 2004, the fall-to-fall retention rate for first-time full-time freshmen was 61.01 percent. Four years later (Fall 2008), this rate had increased to 67.58 percent. Thus APSU has already exceed its benchmark by 1.57%.

## Introduction

The SACS Quality Enhancement Plan for Austin Peay State University (APSU) focuses on improving student retention by creating new initiatives that support student success. APSU’s fall-to-fall retention rates have been consistently 10 percent lower than the other four-year institutions in Tennessee. Approximately half of the new freshmen each year are first-generation college students who are entering unprepared for university-level academic responsibilities. About 85 percent of the 9400 students who attend APSU live within a 50-mile radius of the University in an area where both the educational attainment and family income are lower than the state average; 84 percent of students are commuters; approximately 48 percent of first time, full time freshmen expect to work off campus more than 30 hours per week. APSU also has the

lowest six-year persistence-to-graduation rate in the state for first-time, full-time students, falling at times 10 percentage points below other Tennessee universities.

In anticipation of SACS reaffirmation (2002-2003) student retention was chosen through campus-wide discussions as the focus of a Quality Enhancement Plan. From these discussions emerged a three-part plan for improving student retention and success. First, a planning committee designed a freshman seminar to orient students to the University and to enhance the university's then liberal arts mission. Entitled "Introduction to the Liberal Arts and University Life," this course combined aspects of a traditional freshman experience course (e.g., emphasis on study skills, health and wellness, introduction to the library and student support services, etc.) with an overview of the content, goals, and value of a liberal arts education. Second, an academic advisement committee researched best practices in advising and recommended possible improvements to current advising procedures at APSU. Among this group's recommendations were renewed emphasis on training for faculty advisors, new advisor incentives and accountability measures, the use of student peer mentoring to supplement faculty advising, and the development of an advisement center to handle the advising of undecided students. Third, a student life and support services committee reviewed current programs and operations that have an impact on retention, researching best practices in the field, and exploring recommendations for new plans and programs that have a potential to positively impact student retention and success. Finally, representatives from all three committees formed a group that investigated early alert procedures and recommended such actions as the establishment of an Office of Student Success to oversee intervention procedures for at-risk students. The 3-part plan resulted in 13 action items that included a tracking system to monitor the progress of each action item.

### **Student Success Initiatives Lead to Increases in Freshman Retention**

The reports and recommendations of these student success committees were used to finalize the APSU SACS Quality Enhancement Plan and to develop a calendar of action for the Fall 2003 semester. Two new positions, a Director of Retention Services and a Minority Retention Coordinator, were created to provide leadership for implementing and sustaining the plan. Given the complexity of the retention issue and the multifaceted approach recommended by the student success committees, the SACS steering committee anticipated that multiple phases sustained over the course of several years would be needed to complete the implementation. Regular assessment of new initiatives would determine their impact on student retention. During the Fall, 2003 semester, the Director of Retention Services, guided by the QEP, led the work of a newly appointed retention task force, appointed by the university president, that included university-wide representation. They undertook the task of analyzing the status of the university in achieving the 13 action items.

Coinciding with the implementation of the QEP action items in Fall 2003, Enrollment Management services were moved to Academic Affairs in order to recognize the importance of the offices of Admissions, the Registrar's, and Student Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs in retaining students. This unit, with new directors, has placed service to students and faculty on a higher plane than existed before. Admission standards have increased; a category of admission, *conditional admission*, allows access for students in the region of Tennessee most served by APSU who are less well prepared to meet university requirements. Deficiencies in mathematics and writing are being addressed differently so that students no longer enroll in non-university

level courses but address their deficiencies while completing core English and mathematics courses. While these are not “action items,” they are changes that have been made to better ensure that student success goals articulated in the Quality Enhancement Plan are met.

In 2006, an Assessment and Retention Analysis Council was formed. This group monitors the progress of student success initiatives and makes recommendations for changes. Through a secure web site, the Council may access assessment data as it is posted. During the spring 2008 semester, the Council has concluded an intense analysis of the progress of each of the 13 QEP initiatives and the impact of each on student retention. With the guidance of the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, a computer-assisted tracking system was implemented to monitor the retention of first-time, full-time freshmen. It has evolved into a mature system for continuous assessment of variables, particularly those which place students at risk of dropping out.

### **The Freshman Seminar is the Foundation for Freshman Success**

The design of the freshman seminar, APSU 1000: Liberal Arts in University Life, is based on best practices cited in research on the first-year college student and the work of Dr. John Gardner and others associated with the Policy Research Council at the University of South Carolina. Common among the practices of institutions who exceed their expected retention and graduation rates (DEEP institutions) is a freshman seminar. APSU first offered a freshman seminar in 2003 by piloting a three-hour credit class (LART 1000) in Fall 2003. The class was not mandatory, and only 161 (13.5%) of 1191 first-year freshmen were enrolled; 116 (72 %) of the students passed the course. 84 (52%) returned for the fall 2004 semester. The results of the pilot suggested that if the intent of the freshman seminar was to increase the fall-to-fall retention rate, the pilot needed to be redesigned so that the focus is on the transition to university expectations as well as issues that place students at risk of dropping out.

Once the redesigned freshman seminar was approved by the university’s Academic Council, a university committee, consisting of faculty and professional student affairs staff, developed the new course. This committee met regularly, participated in the First-Year Experience annual conference in Dallas in 2004, and developed a curriculum with a dual focus: the importance of the liberal arts and making the transition to university demands. A customized textbook was created. An assessment tool, *freshman survey*, was developed and approved as the instrument to administer as the course evaluation. Faculty and professional staff were recruited as course instructors. In order to prepare faculty for this new role, a day of faculty development was conducted by Dr. Connie Staley, Professor of Communications at Colorado State University and nationally known authority on freshman seminars. All first-time, full-time freshmen, any student entering the university with fewer than 12 credit hours, and transfer students entering who were required to enroll in two areas of developmental studies are required to enroll in APSU 1000. During the fall 2003 semester, 1,353 students enrolled in 51 sections. Four sections were designated for students in the housing complex, Hand Village, and two sections were designated for students in the Honors Program. The spring semester brings approximately 100 new freshmen; they, too, are required to complete APSU 1000.

The Freshman Seminar is now a one-hour requirement (since 2004) in every academic program. Each section meets one day each week; students who enter with documented

deficiencies in mathematics and writing must enroll in a section that meets two days each week and provides a more intense focus on study skills, test-taking, and time management. All sections are capped at 20 students, and each instructor receives a modest stipend for teaching the course.

At the end of the fall semester, the course instructors meet in a day-long workshop to review the results of the *Freshman Survey* to make recommendations for changes in APSU 1000. In the beginning, the greatest concern was the emphasis on the liberal arts mission and the textbook which was too lengthy to cover. After that first semester, both instructors and students had learned that the greatest values of APSU 1000 rested in its ability to ease the transition from high school to college and to give continuous academic advising until the students can be assigned to their permanent advisors. Discussions revealed the need for an assessment of non-cognitive factors that place students at risk of withdrawal that would be administered before students are influenced by their enrollment in APSU 1000. This assessment would enable course instructors to better know the students with whom they would be working. Another recommendation was that more discipline specific sections be offered. Thus, by fall, 2008 each department offered at least one section for freshman who intended to major in the discipline.

Since its inception in 2004, the freshman seminar continues to evolve. In 2005, peer mentors were added; they work in tandem with the course instructor to assure that students are able to navigate university processes, particularly in the use of technology required by the university. In 2006 a director of new student programs assumed the responsibility for staffing and curriculum development for APSU 1000 as well as the freshman orientation. The textbook has been eliminated and resources formerly in the textbook are now available in the D2L shell for APSU 1000. Faculty and staff contribute to the development of these resources. The CIRP assessment was used for 3 years as an attempt to track characteristics of successful students. In 2008, the TCI, which identifies the student's non-cognitive factors that can impede success, replaced CIRP and is administered during Summer Welcome when students come for a brief orientation and to enroll for the fall semester. Course instructors have the data on their students when the semester begins. Special sections of APSU 1000 were added in 2008 for students with documented academic deficiencies who are conditionally admitted students. These sections meet two days each week and include a much heavier emphasis on study skill and time management.

### **Academic Advisement Guides Students to Good Decisions**

Tinto, Astin, Adelman, Kuh and others cite the importance of academic advisement in retaining students. QEP action items addressing academic advisement included a centralized unit for advising undecided students (3), mandatory advisor training (4), an accountability system providing for student evaluation of advisors (5). Data show that 479 undecided undergraduates were enrolled on the main campus in fall 2003 and 400 in spring 2004. To enhance the quality of advising for these students, two professional advisors were employed for the Career and Advisement Center. They advise all students who have not yet decided on a major. In addition they guide students through career exploration that occurs as a part of the APSU 1000 (Freshman Seminar) curriculum. The advisors also teach a section of APSU 1000 for undeclared students. Currently, each advisor sees approximately 400 students each semester. The advising process for undeclared students has been further refined with the development of forms, up-to-date web sites to explain services, and a data base to enable tracking of student activity.

Students who have declared a major are advised within the departments that house their

majors. As is true in many colleges and universities, some faculty are more heavily involved in academic advising than others. These faculty participate regularly in advising workshops to assist them in improving their advising skills in order to enhance the concept that Academic Advising is teaching. In 2005, Dr. Nancy King, NACADA consultant from Kennesaw State University, conducted a workshop entitled “Advising as Teaching” for department chairs and faculty who advise freshmen that focused on the quality of advising described in the mission and vision of advising at APSU. An advising syllabus was developed, submitted to NACADA for approval, and subsequently adopted as a model to be used by NACADA in workshops they conduct. Both faculty and staff have participated in NACADA summer institutions and other workshops.

In order to provide for greater accountability, an assessment of academic advising was developed by the Faculty Senate and Deans Council. It is an on-line assessment; students are invited to participate in the process immediately after priority advisement and registration ends each semester. Thus far, response rates have been low; however, insights have been gained and feedback provided to departments regarding the quality of advisement in their areas.

As the university migrated from the SIS+ platform for student information systems to the Banner platform, all training focused on preparing both faculty and staff to use the advising and enrollment tools available in Banner. Thus, advisor training addresses technology to assist in the advising process and the quality of academic advising as described in the mission and vision of advising at APSU. The Office of the Registrar continues monthly training in the effective use of AP Self Service and baseline Banner. In 2007, an advising council that includes all professional advisors as members began meeting three times each semester to assure better coordination of APSU advising services.

In fall 2004, all advisor lists were reviewed and updated; every student who had no faculty advisor listed was assigned an advisor. Freshmen are assigned a permanent faculty advisor during their first semester through APSU 1000. The Faculty Senate was given the responsibility to develop an evaluation instrument; this was completed in Spring 2006 and was implemented (online) during the 2006-07 academic year. Although the participation rate was low, the comments were revealing. Anecdotal reviews of student/faculty advising sessions suggest that work is still to be done on improving the culture of advising at APSU.

Outstanding faculty advisors, who are selected by department chairs and deans, are recognized during the spring honors and awards ceremony. Department chairs recommended to deans the faculty in their departments who were especially attentive to quality advisement and who are skilled in advising students. The college deans, then, in consultation with the chairs and directors, select thirteen faculty to be recognized at the Spring Honors and Awards Day.

### **Early (now Academic) Alert Rescues Students in Academic Jeopardy**

A cumbersome paper/pencil Early Alert System was implemented during the fall 2003 and continued through the spring 2004 semester. The few faculty who used the system referred students for non-attendance and poor performance in the classroom. An analysis of the students who were academically suspended or who were placed on probation indicated that students who needed to be referred were not. Furthermore, many students who were referred did not respond to the meeting request issued by the academic alert coordinator. The system proved to be

ineffective and a very labor intensive process both for faculty and for the Academic Support office.

In fall 2004, an e-mail based system managed by a graduate assistant was implemented. Faculty participation increased but inefficiencies still existed. When comparing the lists of students referred with those who were placed on academic probation or suspended—the student population that should have been referred—very few names appeared. Discussions with faculty members revealed that many placed no faith in such a system to improve student retention and were, therefore, unwilling to take the time necessary to refer a student. Building a system into the student information system (SIS) was an additional burden for which Information Technology Services lacked the staffing.

Even with the continued use of a web-based system in the 2005-06 academic year, faculty participation began to increase. During that year, nearly 2000 students were referred to Early Alert; 51 percent were referred for excessive absences. A 0.2 point grade increase was noted in the average course of those students who responded by seeking tutoring or counseling. Furthermore, the retention rate among the students who responded was over 6% higher than those who did not respond. These results were encouraging, and the university budget was increased to provide more support for the system the following year. A part-time coordinator was hired to manage the referrals.

In order to develop an Early Alert system that would enable faculty to refer students with minimal effort, the office of Academic Support investigated systems used by other universities and worked with Information Technology Services to create a system connected to the faculty grade book in SIS. With the newly designed system, each faculty member was able to report students in academic jeopardy using a special column that was added to the class roll; the instructor could refer the student by simply choosing the reason for poor performance and typing in the corresponding code number. A data base file was updated nightly for the Academic Support office; the graduate assistant initiated the first contact with students the following day. Participation in the early alert system increased significantly. Subsequently, the Assessment and Retention Analysis Council recommended that the name be changed to Academic Alert so that faculty would understand that it was never too late to refer a student whose academic performance started to decline. This recommendation was approved by the president.

But the new system was short-lived; migration to the Banner platform began in fall 2007, and the Banner platform would not support the SIS system. Thus, in fall 2007, a web-based system was designed and implemented. Although it was not as cumbersome as a paper/pencil system, it lacked the ease of use characteristic of the grade-book based system. Furthermore, faculty who attempted to use the system often experienced difficulty with the technology. The number of students referred to academic alert plummeted to 340 students.

A major change occurred in fall 2008 with the discovery of an Early Alert system compatible with Banner and housed in the faculty member's Self Service. A full-time coordinator was employed with a graduate assistant to assist during the peak times. When the faculty member files an alert, an e-mail is sent to the coordinator with a copy to the student. The coordinator attempts to reach the student and requests a conference to discuss academic performance. Many of those contacted are referred to the Academic Support Center for tutoring. Referrals were limited to 1000 and 2000 level classes so that the major focus would be on freshmen and sophomores. In addition, tutoring is more likely to be available for such courses. The implementation of this system brought about increased use and the number of referrals increased to approximately 1500. Included in Academic Alert is required submission of mid-

term grades for 1000 and 2000 level courses. Students who have not already been referred who have a D or F at mid-term are contacted by the coordinator. Retention data is collected each semester in order to determine the impact when students are referred and respond.

### **The Academic Support Center Curbs Academic Failure**

The university makes peer tutoring available for most core courses in a centralized Academic Support Center at no additional cost to the student. The services provided include peer tutoring and a Writing Lab which supports students in any course, using any writing style. Created in 2001 as a Learning Center, the Academic Support Center has observed exponential growth in demand for support from students. From fall 2001 to fall 2008, the number of students supported increased from 179 to 1586 per semester, an average annual growth of 36.6 percent. By collecting, using, and sharing data, the Academic Support Center has been able to tailor the support provided to the needs of the students and focus support on individual students in a timely manner.

In 2007, the university eliminated developmental mathematics and writing and implemented Structured Learning Assistance (Ferris State University) as the venue for students to address their deficiencies. This program links mandatory workshops, supervised by student workers, with core mathematics and English courses in order to allow students to remove their mathematics and English deficiencies while earning core course credit. By combining technology with small group exploratory learning activities and review sessions, the workshops allow the university to provide support more efficiently than could be done with tutors.

Another innovation recently implemented at APSU is a Virtual Academic Support Center as the academic support system for online students and provides tutoring support for all students using D2L and Wimba. This service was piloted during the 2008-09 academic year. During the pilot, the service averaged 32 requests for assistance per week. By using student workers and existing technology to provide this support to our students, the Academic Support Center was able to reduce the cost of online support by \$20,000 annually.

Peer tutors and Structured Learning Assistance peer leaders are selected only after a recommendation by the academic departments that house the courses for which peer tutoring is provided. Students who are selected must participate in a rigorous training program that focuses on content delivery and classroom management. Tutors generally work six hours each week and earn an hourly wage for their services.

### **Minority Retention Surpasses Overall Retention**

APSU's enrollment of African American students mirrors the percentage of African Americans in the APSU service area. Although fall-to-fall retention rates for African American students are similar to the overall retention rate, graduation rates of these students continues to lag behind those of the student population as a whole. The fall-to-fall retention rate of black students saw an increase with the implementation in 2001 of special academic support initiatives, which were funded for five years by the state, as a result of the settlement of a 38-year old court case, *Geier vs. Tennessee*.

During the last year of Geier funding, a minority retention coordinator directed an academic support program that provided scholarships to African American students who were in

academic jeopardy. Students “earned” the scholarship by committing to raise their cumulative GPA by participating in prescribed academic support initiatives. Approximately half of the students who began the program finished it and made the necessary gains to earn their scholarship.

The retention rate for the Fall 2003 cohort of white students (66.8% of the student population) was 62.48%; the retention rate for the Fall 2007 cohort was 66.85%, an increase of 4.37%. In Fall 2008, 61.7 percent of the student population was white; their freshman fall-to-fall retention rate for the Fall 2007 cohort was 66.8 percent. African American students represented 17.4% of the student population in 2003 with a retention rate of 57.62%. This increased for the Fall 2007 cohort to 68.8% or 6.76% greater gain than for white students. This increase in retention demonstrated that a strong academic support program does indeed affect student success.

Once the funding ended, the definition of minority retention was expanded to include all underrepresented populations. New scholarship opportunities were provided and were designed to increase the representation of these groups. The design of academic support initiatives was influenced by the initiatives that contributed to minority student success. The major thrusts for retaining minority student populations are the African American Culture Center and the Hispanic Culture Center. Both provide activities that are open to all students but reflect the culture of the minority population.

### **Enrollment Management is Integral to Student Retention**

The importance of the service rendered to APSU students from admission to graduation is recognized by the university’s organization which places Enrollment Management and Academic Support Services under one dean who reports to the provost who is also the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Standards of excellence combined with an accountability system that includes an on-line assessment of service quality and evaluation of anecdotal comments have elevated the quality of enrollment management services including Admissions, the Office of the Registrar, and Student Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs. Regular meetings of the directors of these units with the directors of academic support units create a seamless process for students as they complete their APSU academic journey—from the time they are recruited to attend APSU until they leave with cap and gown in hand, ready to graduate, at the Grad Finale event.

The “one-stop” created by locating all enrollment management services in one building, which is easily recognized and accessible, has greatly minimized the time students once spent going from place-to-place for these services.

When the decision was made by the Tennessee Board of Regents that all higher education institutions would migrate to the Banner platform for student information in 2005, the Enrollment Management unit was charged with significant responsibility for converting to Student Banner. Lengthy training sessions were required and staff worked many, many hours overtime implementing the system and providing much of the training for faculty and staff. The initial migration was complete by fall, 2007; however, work continues as Banner evolves to provide more services for both faculty and staff. Most recently, technology to improve academic advising has been the focus of faculty development.

Another significant change that impacts service is the Transfer Center, implemented in 2008 as a unit in the Admissions Office and Office of the Registrar. The transfer counselor who

recruits students and oversees their progress through admission, orientation, and registration is housed in the Admissions Office while the Transcript Evaluator for transfer students is housed in the Office of the Registrar.

The Office of Student Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs serves 94 percent of the student population. They oversee all initiatives that provide funding for students to attend college including lottery scholarships, loans, Pell grants as well as an office that serves veterans who make up 15 percent of our student population. New technologies have been employed to better inform students of their financial aid status. This office now provides workshops that pertain to borrowing and the wise use of resources while in school. They visit all high schools in the area and conduct a Sunday workshop in February to assist prospective students in filing a FAFSA form. The Student Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs office is one of the busiest on campus.

In 2004 a new “Summer Welcome” program replaced the previous “Transitions” program and brought new students to campus for a brief orientation, academic advising, and enrolling for the fall semester. A more intense orientation, beginning with freshman convocation, now brings all new freshmen to campus for two days immediately preceding the beginning of the fall semester. As a cooperative effort between the Academic and Student Affairs divisions, new students meet with the other students in their APSU 1000 sections for small group activities and with larger groups for non-academic activities. The purpose of the orientation is to prepare students for their classes and to create a level of confidence needed for success. Students are introduced to all academic support services as well as other student services such as the Health Center, Recreation Center, and Counseling Center. They review the code of conduct and academic requirements that affect the entire campus.

### **Student Affairs and Academic Affairs Strengthening Partnership**

Student Affairs became involved once again in the new student registration program at APSU – Summer Welcome. The Dean of Students and Director of New Student Programs now jointly select and train the student Orientation Assistant. The Office of Housing, Residence Life, & Dining Services is providing an overnight option for students to stay in the residence hall during selected Summer Welcome sessions. The Director of Student Affairs Programs and Services has revived the dormant parent program to become APPA – Austin Peay Parent (Family) Association. Student Affairs is also supporting Summer Welcome with the design and publication of a *New Student Guide* distributed during the program, facilitation of two parent panels, and evaluation of the experience of both parents and students. Other Student Affairs initiatives and collaboration with academic departments include:

- designating two buildings in one of the residence areas for new freshmen only and linking to APSU 1000 sections taught by Student Affairs professional staff;
- notifying the Associate Director of Housing/Residence Life if student lives on campus and has not responded to other Academic Alert contacts;
- allowing new transfer students to check-in the residence halls early with new freshmen and participate in welcome activities if desired;
- recruiting faculty to participate in the Housing/Residence Life “Welcome Wagon” move-in event for new students;
- establishing AP Reads program using faculty to moderate discussion groups and connecting to academic courses/departments as appropriate;

- expanding the AP Reads program sponsored by Student Life & Leadership to a common reading program through APSU 1000 for all first-time freshmen;
- providing grants from student activity fee funds to academic departments to host welcome events for their new students;
- hosting social activities for new freshmen during Orientation weekend such as a Luau and Dive-In Movie at the recreation center pool;
- publishing three newsletters during the academic year sent to the parents of first-time freshmen highlighting adjustment/transition issues and important deadlines;
- increasing travel stipends available to students who will be representing APSU and academic departments attending conferences and/or presenting papers/research;
- initiating Global Govs Passport series by Student Life & International Education and encouraging co-sponsorship or support from academic departments;
- making the Child Learning Center available for use by academic departments and classes for projects and as an educational lab;
- having faculty director of the Hispanic Cultural Center while providing administrative supervision and support from Student Life; and
- enhancing the assistive technology available through the Office of Disability Services.

As student retention and graduation rates in colleges and universities continue to rise in importance in state and national-level discussions, APSU seeks to achieve a proper balance between serving under-prepared students, who are limited in access to higher education by distance to a community college, and improving retention and graduation rates. Retention efforts since 2004 have been most heavily focused on students entering as first-time, full-time freshmen (fewer than 12 college credits.) Retention data is submitted to the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE) for analysis and comparison with peer institutions nationwide. When compared with 9 self-selected CSRDE peer institutions, APSU ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in fall-to-fall retention. When compared with 15 generated peer institutions in [College Results.org](http://CollegeResults.org), APSU ranks 11<sup>th</sup>. When the QEP was implemented in Fall 2004, the fall-to-fall retention rate (2003 freshman cohort) was 61.01%; the rate rose to 67.59 % for the Fall 2007 cohort. Thus APSU exceeded the 5<sup>th</sup> year benchmark after 4 years by 1.58%. Students who enter with no academic deficiencies are retained the following fall at 71.3% . Students entering with remedial level deficiencies are retained at 53.3%, and students entering with deficiencies at the developmental level are retained at 64.4%. Student success is the pinnacle of strategic planning at APSU, the focus of discussion in the President's Cabinet, and continually emphasized in both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs initiatives. Retention data for APSU can be viewed by visiting <http://www.apsu.edu/ire/stats/APSURetentionReportSpring2009.pdf>

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