PREDICTIVE STUDENT RETENTION
THE POWER OF DATA + COACHING
NEARLY 1/2 OF STUDENTS WHO START THEIR COLLEGE EDUCATION DON’T END UP FINISHING.
- NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

You’re well aware of the alarming retention rates across higher education. Our industry can do better. Yet, while federal initiatives still prioritize student access over student success, and most institutional growth strategies are focused on front-end enrollment efforts, data shows that effective retention strategies are equally important for maximizing an institution’s enrollment growth.

And while many institutions are attempting to better leverage technology in their retention strategies, the retention crisis won’t be solved with mere data alone. Effective retention solutions require a holistic approach across the institution that starts during the enrollment process and empowers faculty, administrators, advisors and success coaches with the data insights necessary to improve student success.

This quick guide explores best practice predictive retention technologies and proactive coaching interventions in higher education. Use our scorecard when evaluating your current retention strategy, and learn how to improve your efforts to help graduate every student you worked so hard to enroll.
WHEN STUDENT “SIGNALS” MEAN YOU’RE TOO LATE

1/3 of students who drop out before graduating do so after only one term.
– National Student Clearinghouse

For many students, the first few weeks and first few assignments of the very first course make all the difference. That’s when a student chooses to commit, or decides they can’t. Unfortunately, the current data silos at many institutions prohibit advisors and success coaches from having the insights necessary to act this early. But the reality is, if you’re waiting until midterm data comes back to spot student issues, you’re often too late to make a difference.

By incorporating enrollment, academic and behavioral data into predictive retention models, you can identify which students are most likely to struggle, and your academic advisors and success coaches can proactively reach out before they do.

PROACTIVE INTERVENTION EXAMPLES:
When reaching out, it’s essential you understand the student’s motivation for earning their degree, help create an action plan to get them there, and successfully connect the student with institutional academic resources such as tutoring, faculty support, degree planning, professional advising and more. Some potential questions to ask during these intervention conversations include:

• “What about college has been more difficult than you thought?”
• “Tell me more about your academic and personal goals?”
• “How much time a week are you working at a job?”
• “What other factors in your life may get in the way of making college a priority?”
“PREDICTIVE MODELS ARE ONLY AS GOOD AS THE QUALITY OF DATA MADE AVAILABLE TO THEM.”

– EDUVENTURES

Use big data to find at-risk students and small data to develop personalized intervention strategies that help them persist. Your institution is full of valuable data sources, including your SIS, LMS, CRM and more. Each contains a wealth of information that can be highly helpful in creating a big picture understanding of your institutional success. But in isolation, each data source only provides a single piece of the puzzle.

The power of your retention strategy comes in finding correlations between all of this student information and how your students actually persist – connecting data between systems and creating predictive models based upon the insights gathered, including from:

- Prior academic data
- Life events
- Financial aid information
- Registration data
- Academic performance
- Classroom engagement
- Course management software usage

BIG DATA DISCOVERIES

Big data (correlations between student information and student behavior found in the aggregate) helps find students with a high likelihood of being at-risk.

SMALL DATA INTERVENTIONS

Small data (individual data points) helps your advisors and success coaches personalize intervention solutions for these individual students.
THE INTEGRATION OF DATA + COACHING

72% OF STUDENTS WHO LEAVE AN INSTITUTION PRIOR TO GRADUATION DO SO BECAUSE OF WHAT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS WEAK TO POOR ACADEMIC CUSTOMER SERVICE.

- N. RAISMAN & ASSOCIATES

Data is an essential part of an effective retention strategy, but it’s not enough. Your retention data and insights are only as powerful as they empower your academic advisors and success coaches to effectively intervene. That’s why the integration of data and coaching is so critical. Predictive modeling can help provide you with insights as to which students have the highest likelihood of being at-risk. But your academic advisors and success coaches are the ones who actually reach out, make the connection and make the difference.

Using predictive modeling, your advisors and success coaches can then reach out to a manageable subset of students the data say may potentially be at risk, in order to ask questions, work with the student to create an action plan that matches their goals, and successfully connect the student with institutional resources to help achieve them.

This ability to find at-risk students and prioritize interventions to specific student segments allow you to make the most of often limited institutional resources dedicated to student success, and truly scale successful intervention strategies.
HOW RETENTION SHOULD SHAPE RECRUITMENT

THE AVERAGE INSTITUTION LOSES $9,910,811 IN REVENUE DUE TO STUDENT ATTRITION ANNUALLY.  
- THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY INSTITUTE

Your retention insights should help inform your recruitment strategies, too. Because in your retention data lie the answers to why students both struggle and succeed at your institution. Predictive modeling can help you pinpoint institutional issues, discover at-risk behavioral correlations, and help improve your student support strategies. But this data can also help you determine precisely what types of students best succeed at your institution.

By using found demographic, psychographic and behavioral data correlations, you can create “personas” of your best-fit students. These clusters of students who exhibit similar patterns should absolutely be used to inform your future targeting and how you recruit.

Shape your targeting requirements and create customized communication tracks for each persona to help enroll those students best matched for success at your institution. Increase the quality of your incoming classes. And increase their likelihood to persist as well.


### YOUR RETENTION STRATEGY SCORECARD

When evaluating your current retention strategy, rate its abilities on a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being the highest). Then tally the scores to determine if this strategy is the best fit for your institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does your retention strategy effectively incorporate enrollment, academic and behavioral risk factors to help find struggling students?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your retention strategy empower your academic advisors and success coaches with meaningful data insights to act proactively?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your retention strategy effectively integrate and leverage institutional data sources, including SIS, LMS, CRM and more?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your retention strategy provide insights to help improve your future recruitment strategy as well?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your retention strategy’s total costs (technology + human capital) provide you with a strong ROI?</td>
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<th>SCORECARD RESULTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>20-25 Your retention strategy may be the perfect match to maximize your institution’s enrollment growth and student success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 There are likely ways to improve your retention strategy to optimize your growth goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-14 This strategy is a poor fit for your institution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total (out of 25)

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ABOUT HELIX EDUCATION

It’s time for data + coaching to drive your institution’s retention strategies.

At Helix Education, our risk-free and data-driven Retention-as-a-Service solution incorporates our predictive Helix Retain CRM technology with proactive and personalized interventions carried out by our very own designated success coaches. All at no up-front cost or initial investment. You only pay a revenue share based on the incremental gain we create in your retention rates. With 40 years experience helping colleges and universities find, enroll, retain and teach the post-traditional learner, Helix Education’s data-driven enrollment marketing services and technologies are transforming institutional operations across the nation.

“Helix allows us to take retention to a much higher level, putting a proactive, personal touch on all outreach. By layering success coaching on top of the retention technology, we are developing a powerful resource to keep our students connected.”

- Dr. Ed Schrader, President of Brenau University

“Helix Retain created an action item for my student based on her demographic data and the fact that she was in the first week of a course with a higher-than-average attrition risk. I reached out to the student, who was indeed, experiencing frustrations with the course. We strategized a game plan moving forward and at the end of our call, she said ‘I am so happy you called me today!’”

- Mia Jones, Student Success Coach

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