A New Approach to Student Retention

There is nothing new under the sun…

The first American-born students at Harvard were three sons of Pilgrim Fathers – Bradford, Prince and Winslow – who came up in the 1640's, but did not graduate.

Samuel Eliot Morrison, *Harvard in the Seventeenth Century, 1936*

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Adult degree completion critical to U.S. leadership

- "…by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world."

  President Barack Obama
  February 2010

- U.S. ranked 9th among nations in the proportion of adults 25 to 34 years of age enrolled in college

  Organization for Economic Development

- Just 39 percent of U.S. adults had an associate's degree or higher, compared with 55 percent for Canada and 54 percent for Japan.

  Organization for Economic Development

- Fewer young adults were enrolled in adult-learning programs across its 16 [Southern] member states in 2008 than in 2005.

  Southern Regional Education Board (Academic Impressions, August 6, 2010)

Non-traditional programs are key to U.S. goals

Critical to regaining world leadership in number of graduates

- "They are critical to helping America meet the President's 2020 goal. They are helping us meet the explosive demand for skills …"

  U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan

Built to meet the unique needs of the adult student

- Proliferation of online education
- Nimble in response to scheduling needs (school and work)
- Agile in adding new programs to match career needs

  The Chronicle of Higher Education (February 7, 2010)

Serves "disenfranchised" student population

- The sector…[serves] students left out of the traditional educational system.

  First Analysis Security Corporation, June 24, 2010

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Are we tailoring interventions to the needs of our adult students?

Their situation

- Full-time professional seeking promotion
- Parent returning to workforce
- Adult returning for B.A. after 10 years
- Recent college graduate striving for M.A.

Their goals

- Career achievement
- Financial security
- Better quality of life

Their obstacles

- Full-time work
- Family / parenting obligations
- Financial constraints

Their needs

- Clarity on long-term goals
- Connection between goals and short-term actions
- Assistance organizing commitments
- Motivation & support
- Connection to the university community

Drop reasons - Summary

Drop Reason	Rank	Pct
Managing Commitments	1	29.7%
Finances	2	25.9%
Effectiveness	3	13.2%
Commitment to Graduation	4	9.3%
Health and Support	5	8.6%
School Community	6	6.8%
Academics	7	6.5%

n=30413

99% confidence level between bands

- Over a quarter report difficulty integrating school with other commitments
- Finances run a close second
- Academics is NOT a leading cause of early exit

Drop reasons vary by age group, but finances are a challenge for all

	under 25		25 - 39		40 and over	
Drop Reason	Rank	Pct	Rank	Pct	Rank	Pct
Managing Commitments	2	23.0%	1	32.8%	2	30.4%
Finances	1	30.9%	2	28.5%	1	30.9%
Effectiveness	3	12.9%	3	11.1%	4	7.7%
Commitment to Graduation	4	12.3%	5	7.8%	5	6.5%
Health and Support	7	5.0%	4	8.1%	3	12.3%
Academics	5	8.2%	6	6.0%	6	6.3%
School Community	6	7.7%	7	5.9%	7	6.0%

Managing Commitments and Finances results with 40 and over group are significant at the 0.05 level; all other highlighted results are significant at 0.01 level after Bonferroni correction for multiple tests

n=28469

Finances are a significant hurdle for adult students of all ages

Students age 25+ are more likely to drop out for reasons related to managing personal commitments

Personal effectiveness and commitment to graduation are larger issues for younger students than for older ones

The fatal assumption

"Oftentimes in higher education, we assume that students know how to behave. We assume that they know how to study, how to prioritize, and how to plan. However, given what we know about rates of college persistence, this is an assumption that should be called into question."

-Dr. Eric Bettinger
Stanford University School of Education

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Hallmarks of a student coaching initiative include:

- One on one process focused on strengthening student performance (execution) and experience (connection, activity, perception)
- Proactive support (weekly or twice-monthly meetings), aimed at helping students strive to get the most out of their educational experiences
- Tailored to the needs of the individual
- An opportunity to advertise, prepare students for – and drive traffic to – existing advising, mentoring and other services

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Coach selectivity is the key to success

How do you recruit?

- Employee referrals
- Trained recruiters
- Extensive sourcing
- Targeted searches

Who makes an effective Coach?

- Relevant professional experience
- Strong communication and organization
- Engaged and persistent
- Passion for education and mission
- Driven to perform and succeed

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A strong foundation and continuous improvement

Coaching methodology:

- 5 Elements
- Focus Areas/Success Drivers
- KSAs
- Fundamentals of Coaching/Meeting structure

Coaching evaluations:

- Evaluation by Professional Development personnel
- Build, develop and practice coaching skills
- On-demand and certification-based

Manager observations:

- Observation and scoring by manager
- Strength/weakness analysis
- Goal development and tracking

Professional Development:

- L1, L2, Master Coach, Coach Mentor
- Specialized training
- Skill building assignments
- In-depth evaluations

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Student coaching: connecting long-term goals to daily activity

Clarify where student wants to be after graduation

Connect to what student needs to accomplish every week

Help organize student's commitments to get work done

Motivate student to overcome obstacles

Reaffirm value of the university

↓

LONG-TERM GOAL

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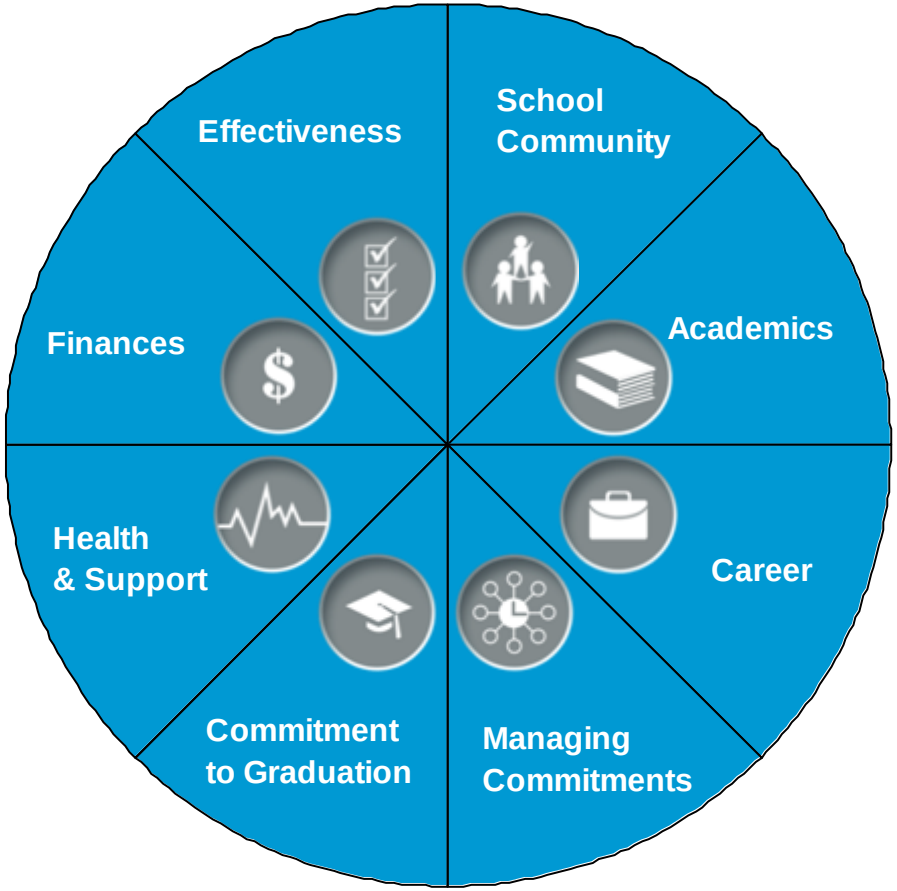
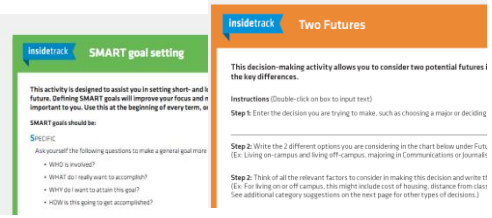
Methodical assessment to proactively address potential obstacles to completion



Coaching generates student success

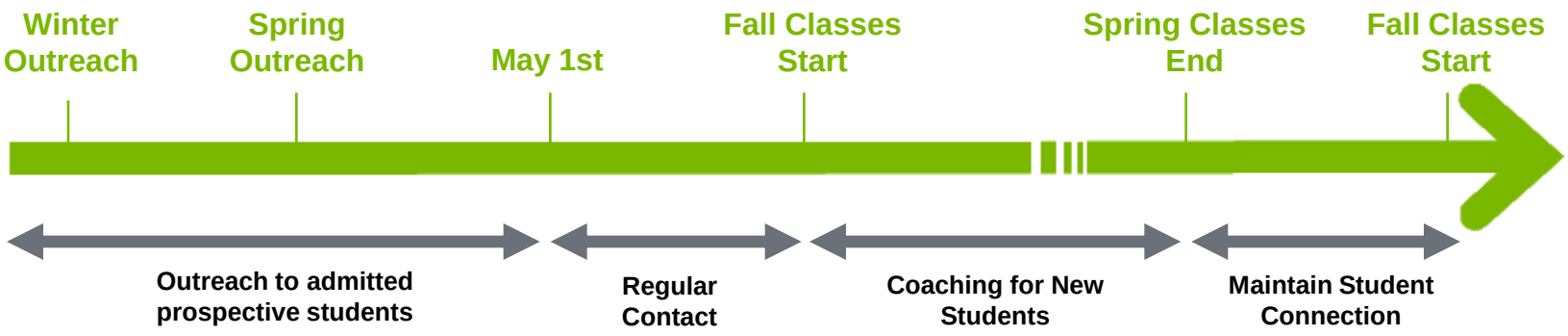
Admission → Start → Graduation → Employment

Academic preparation	Family, work & school balance
	Personal finances
Financial planning	Academic performance
	Time management
Goal setting	Decision making
	Health & wellness
Contingency Planning	Commitment to graduation
	Career planning



Through a combination of people, process and technology

This approach provides proactive support for students throughout life cycle



Connect

- Help students make the right decision
- Demonstrate commitment to student success
- Direct students & parents to key campus contacts

Prepare

- Create strong connection to the university
- Help student with housing, financial aid, athletic programs
- Create a plan for first-year success

Transition

- Support the transition to university student life
- Ensure use of campus services
- Establish pattern of success

Consolidate

- Build momentum on first-term success
- Proactively identify and surmount obstacles
- Maintain focus on key goals: academic, social, personal

Reinforce

- Maintain university affiliation and connection
- Plan for sophomore year and prepare for Fall return
- Short check-in sessions

Inquiry reasons - Summary

Inquiry Reason	Rank	Percent
Referral	1	18.8%
Convenience	2	18.0%
Availability of Program	3	16.9%
Location	4	11.9%
Class Format	5	9.1%
Reputation	6	8.7%
Flexible Scheduling	7	5.5%
Admissions Requirements	8	4.1%
Ease of Process	9	1.8%
Finances	10	1.6%

n=12,478

Differences between bands are significant at 99% level

- Top 3 reasons account for 50%
  - Referral, convenience, availability of program
- 4 of top 7 involve fit with lifestyle:
  - Convenience, location, class format, flexible scheduling
    - Consistent with prior research
- Referrals (from family, friends, co-workers) are an important reason for evaluating a school/program

Only minor significant differences were found by age group

Inquiry Reason	under 25 Rank	under 25 Pct	25 - 39 Rank	25 - 39 Pct	40 and over Rank	40 and over Pct
Referral	1	49.7%	1	40.8%	1	37.2%
Availability of Program	3	12.0%	2	17.1%	2	17.0%
Location	4	10.9%	3	12.2%	3	14.9%
Reputation	2	14.3%	4	10.8%	5	8.1%
Class Format	5	8.0%	5	7.7%	4	8.4%
Admissions Requirements	7	1.1%	6	3.6%	7	3.4%
Ease of Process	7	1.1%	7	3.4%	7	3.4%
Finances	9	0.6%	9	1.6%	6	5.0%
Flexible Scheduling	6	1.7%	8	2.1%	9	1.6%
Customer Service	11	0.0%	10	0.7%	10	0.6%

n=1111

Highlighted results significant at 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction for multiple tests

Non-start reasons - Summary

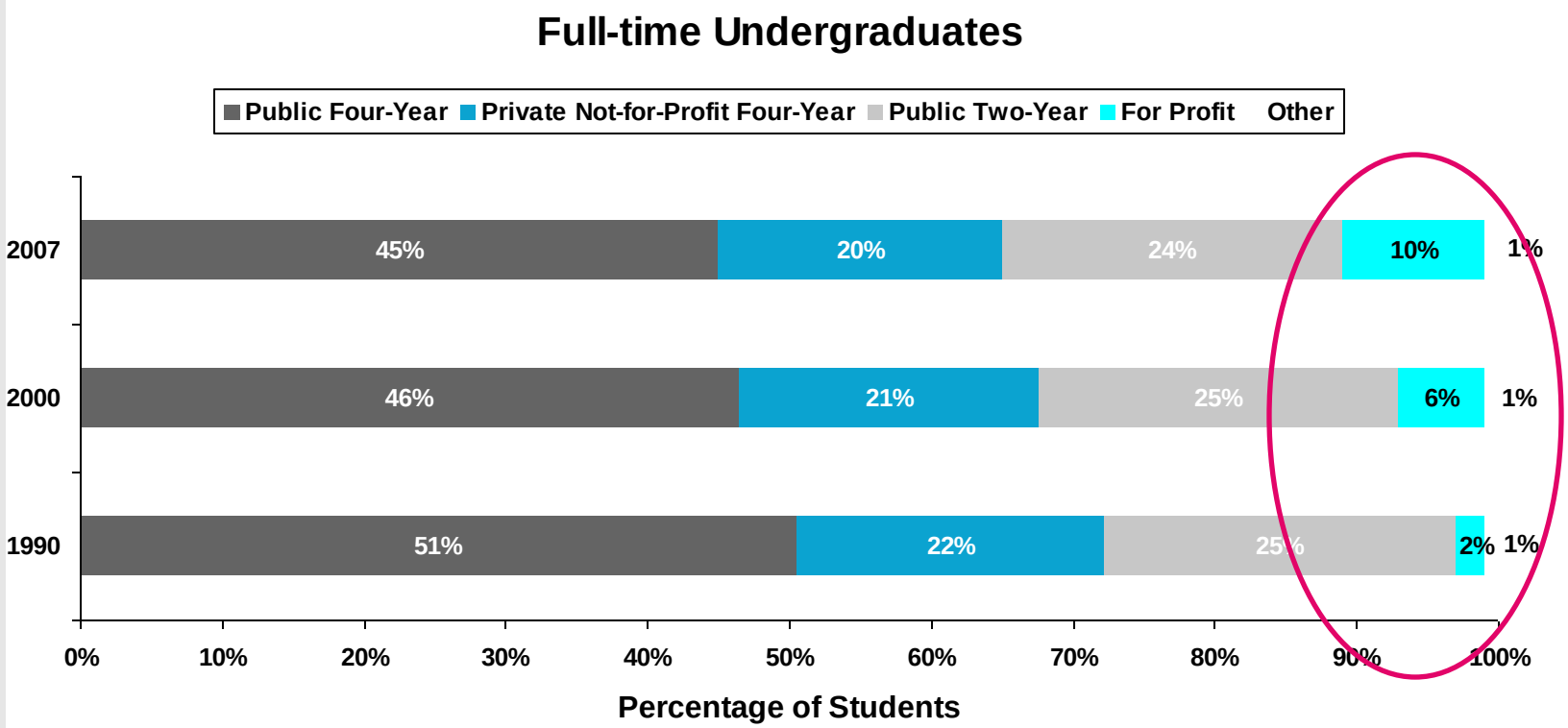
Non-start Reason	Rank	Pct
Competitor	1	18.2%
Suitability	2	17.9%
External	3	17.8%
Finances	4	13.9%
Delayed Start Term	5	13.4%
Program not offered	6	11.6%
Administrative	7	3.0%
Commitment to degree	8	1.9%
Not Interested	9	1.1%
Managing Commitments	10	0.9%

n=18088

Differences between bands are significant at 99% level

- Many enroll elsewhere!
- External circumstances change, affecting enrollment plans
- Finances are important – but below the median
- Delay to subsequent term is common

Competition: For-profit providers are gaining share at all others' expense



Sources: The College Board, *Trends in College Pricing 2009*; NCES, unpublished data provided by *IPEDS* staff.

Non-start reasons – Suitability breakout

Non-start Subcategory	Rank	Pct
Not Qualified	1	48.4%
Did Not Intend To Inquire	2	15.2%
Location	3	11.1%
Course Schedule	4	4.9%
Delivery Format	5	3.9%
Dissatisfied with Service	6	2.4%
Programs Offered	7	2.4%

n=3205

Non-start Reason	Rank	Pct
Competitor	1	18.2%
Suitability	2	17.9%
External	3	17.8%
Finances	4	13.9%
Delayed Start Term	5	13.4%
Program not offered	6	11.6%
Administrative	7	3.0%
Commitment to degree	8	1.9%
Not Interested	9	1.1%
Managing Commitments	10	0.9%

Many prospects are simply not qualified at time of inquiry

Or, they never intended to inquire

Suggests gaps in lead-gen processes

Differences between bands are significant at 99% level

Non-start Suitability categories differ by age group

Non-start Subcategory	under 25 Rank	under 25 Pct	25 - 39 Rank	25 - 39 Pct	40 and over Rank	40 and over Pct
Not Qualified	1	73.5%	1	66.7%	1	42.6%
Did Not Intend To Inquire	2	19.1%	4	4.4%	6	5.6%
Programs Offered	3	2.9%	2	8.7%	2	13.0%
Location	7	0.0%	3	5.8%	3	9.3%

Highlighted results significant at 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction for multiple tests n=191

Non-start Reason	under 25 Rank	under 25 Pct	25 - 39 Rank	25 - 39 Pct	40 and over Rank	40 and over Pct
Suitability	1	37.8%	4	18.8%	2	24.3%
Competitor	2	20.6%	2	23.3%	1	25.2%
Finances	4	13.9%	1	25.2%	3	23.4%
External	5	7.8%	2	23.3%	4	18.5%
Program not offered	3	20.0%	5	9.4%	5	8.6%

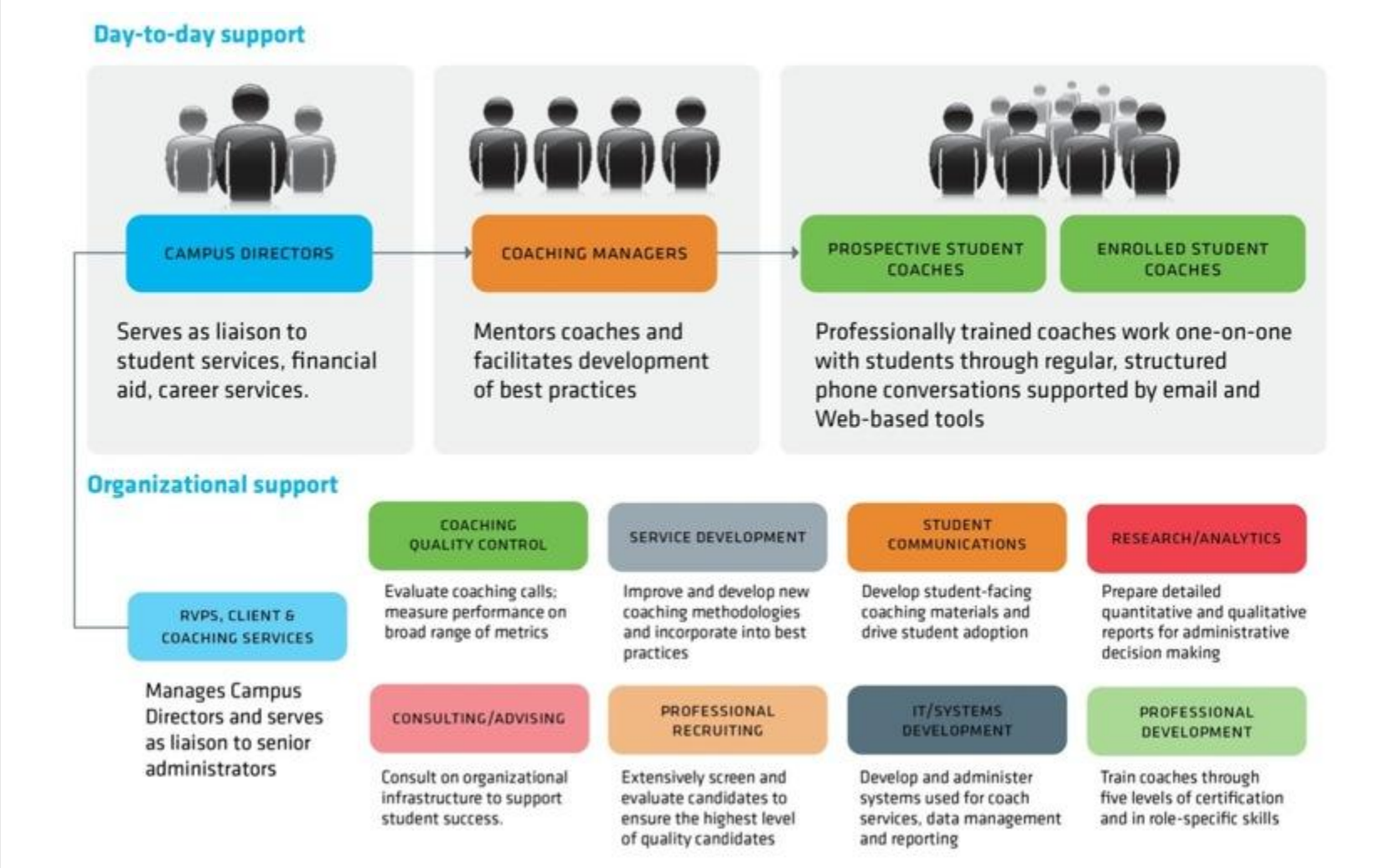
Highlighted results significant at 0.01 level after Bonferroni correction for multiple tests

Finances are the leading non-start reason for the middle age group

Suitability is overwhelmingly a qualification issue for under-25

- But significantly less so for the 40 and over group
- Significantly more young adults did not intend to inquire

To get real results it takes more than a coach!



Pilot program emphasizes adaptation, testing, and careful measurement

Step 1: Identify cohort of new students to receive coaching

Step 2: Create "pilot" and "control" groups of similar demographic characteristics

Step 3: Check for sufficient size to ensure statistical significance of outcomes (aiming for $p>.05$)

Step 4: Run implementation process to establish initial communication plans and content, learn university routines and key contacts

Step 5: Initiate operations "tuning" period: Coaching begins, but performance measurement does not

Step 6: Initiate full-scale test, including performance measurement

Step 7: Evaluate

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Structure of the Stanford University research

Large –	The treatment group involved 8,049 students and the control group included 5,506 students.
Multisite –	The student involved students at eight different higher education institutions, including two and four year schools and public, private, non-profit, and proprietary colleges, over two different years of entering student cohorts.
Randomized -	In 17 separate lotteries, students were assigned randomly to either the treatment or control group.
Well-implemented -	Statistical tests applied to the data confirmed the effectiveness of the randomization.
Well-designed -	Assigning coaches only to some students, randomly, across multiple sites make it possible to isolate the impact of coaching.

Recent Stanford research confirms the results

"The results are clear: retention rates were greater in the coached group and the results do not change when we control for key demographic factors. Moreover, the expenditure is much smaller than that which would be required under an alternative policy."

Professor Eric Bettinger, Associate Professor, Stanford University

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

NBER NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH

Results from Stanford University research

Research shows 1-on-1 coaching improves retention and graduation rates of students by 10 to 15 percent.

These retention and graduation patterns held true when the researchers controlled for age, gender, ACT score, high school GPA, SAT score, on or off campus residence, receipt of merit scholarship, Pell grant status, and math/English remediation.

Coaching appears to be more cost-effective than increased financial aid. $1k spent on coaching can be expected to increase retention by 5 percentage points contrasted to 3 percentage points for $1k in additional financial aid.

Coaching works for all students.

The cost-effectiveness and scalability of the coaching intervention offers the potential to impact not only individual students and institutions, but also our nation's overall competitive position.

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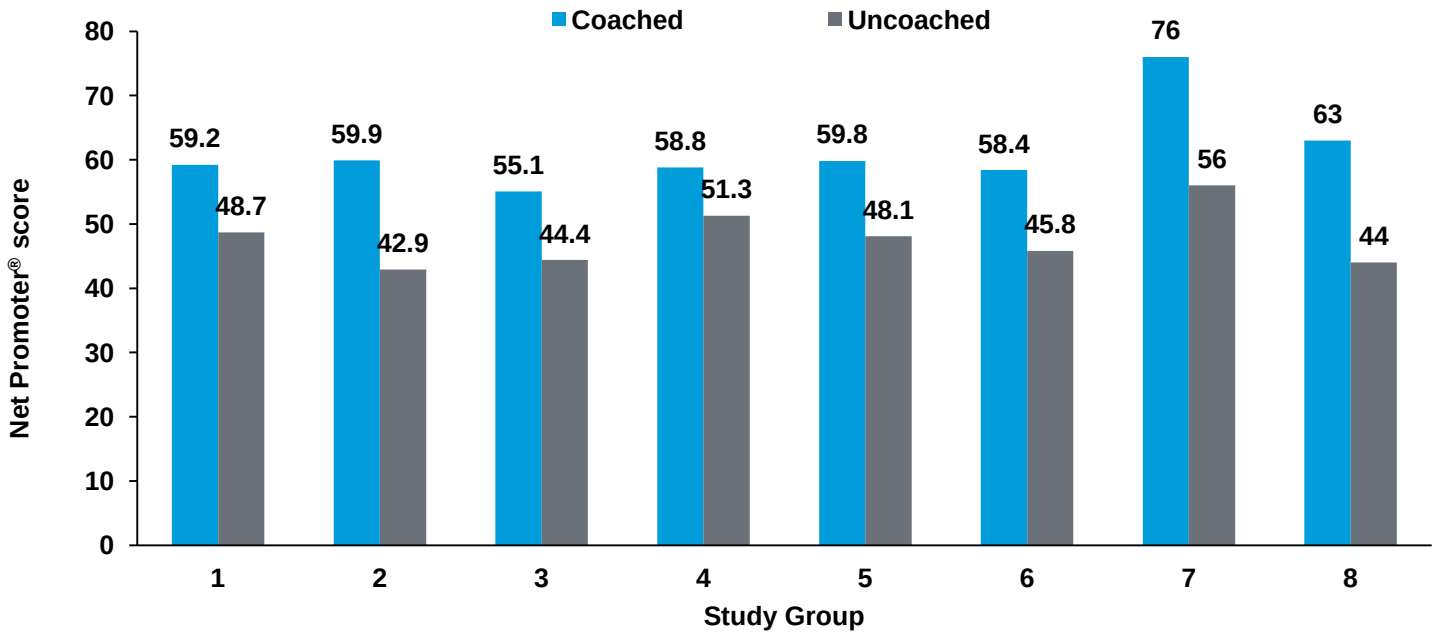
Other benefits of the Student Coaching Model

. . . And improves student satisfaction & referrals

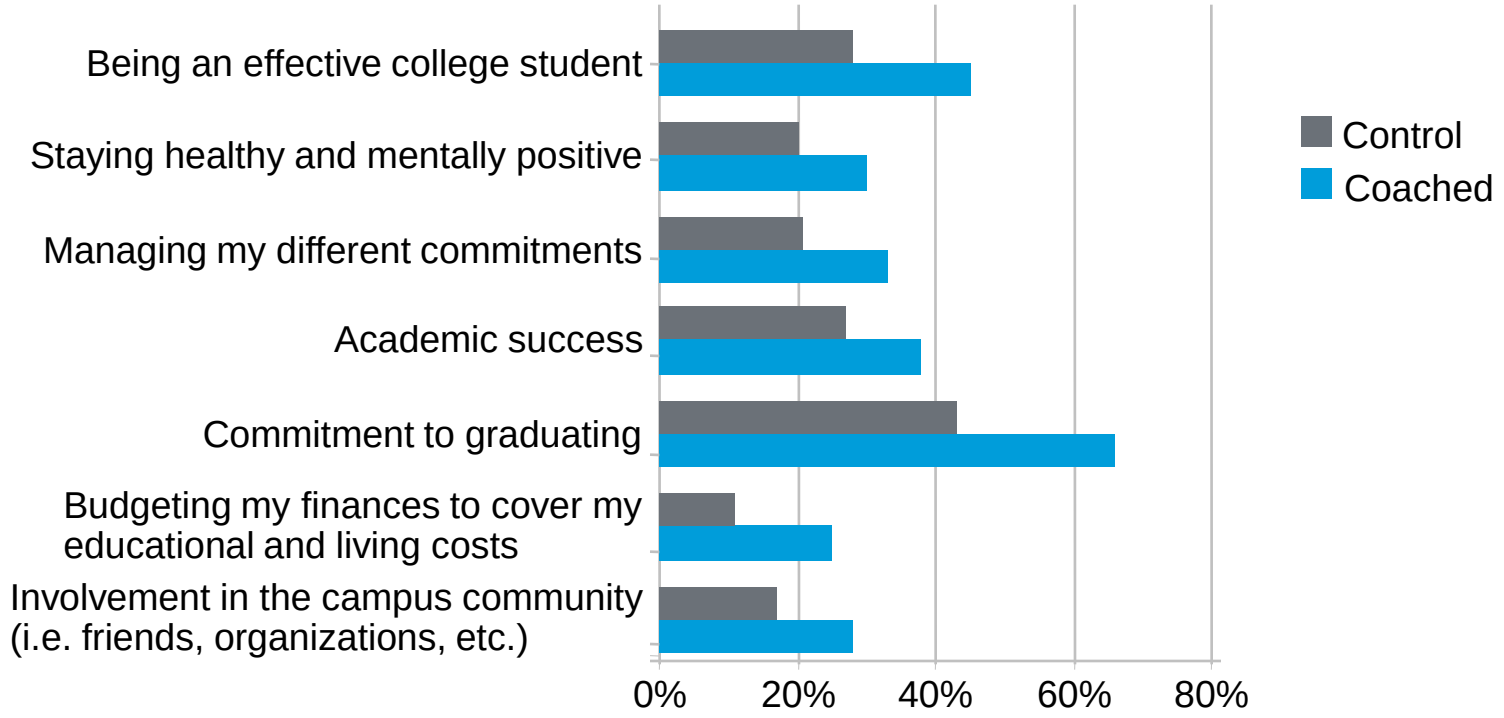
13.6 average point increase in Net Promoter® score

(Independent controlled studies of 14,080 students over 2 years)



Student satisfaction rises with InsideTrack

Percentage of students who reported they were very satisfied with the following areas of college life:



All differences between Coached and Control groups were statistically significant for this question
Scale went from Very Dissatisfied, Somewhat Dissatisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, Satisfied, Very Satisfied

Connecting with online students

School Profile

- Offers undergraduate and graduate programs in more than 30 disciplines
- Has more than 52,000 students enrolled in ground and online courses

Results

- 95% student adoption
- 7% point increase in first-year persistence
- 5-7% point increase in Graduation Rates

"We've experienced improved retention, persistence and graduation rates and our students are saying 'wow – this a great service that you've provided and it's been very valuable."

Steve Riehs
President
DeVry Online

Coaching: the solution for today's environment

Current macro environment

- Uncertain regulation – scrutiny of graduation, employment, and loan default rates
- Increase in competition – inability to differentiate effectively
- Economic recovery – difficulty in acquiring new students

Benefits of Coaching

- Drive enrollment and retention
- Improve graduation rates
- Increase revenue per student
- Encourage resumption after drop
- Maximize loan re-payment rates
- Enhance brand reputation
- Heighten competitive differentiation
- Boost student referrals/NPS scores
- Obtain actionable student data and feedback

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Thank you!

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