



Record retention rate highlights SIUE spring enrollment

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EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville improved freshmen retention from fall 2017 to spring 2018 by two percent to reach a record 92 percent. A 4.25 percent increase in African American retention led the way as African American retention matched overall student retention for the first time.

Kevin Thomas, EdD, SIUE director of retention and student success, pointed to a change in campus culture during the past six years with regard to student retention. “As a whole, the campus has shown a ‘culture of care’ that has enhanced the experience that students have on our campus,” he said.

Thomas described a variety of impactful strategies that have factored into the improvement:

Fifth Week Freshmen Assessment: During the fifth week of the fall semester, faculty provide information regarding first-year student attendance and academic progress. The information allows advisors and staff from the Office of Retention and Student Success to follow up with intervention strategies, including tutoring, study skills development, and time management growth.

Caseload Advising Systems: Established caseload advising systems throughout campus, but specifically for exploratory/undeclared students prior to declaration of their major. Each advisor has a caseload that allows for more direct support and intervention on the students’ pathway into a major.

Learning Support Services Supplemental Education Opportunities: On an annual basis, more than 30,000 usages occur with students for tutoring, the Writing Center, the Speech Center and Supplemental Instruction (SI). One-on-one tutoring with our student tutors has begun, allowing for a more focused conversation and learning pattern to develop between the tutor and the student. The SI program has grown over the past few years and provides direct support, in collaboration with the faculty members of those courses, for difficult first and second year courses.

Taking Aim Program: Each fall and spring semester, students who have not registered for the upcoming semester are contacted by the Office of Retention and Student Success, the Office of Academic Advising and professional advisors throughout campus who have an established relationship with the student. These conversations typically focus on the roadblocks to registration, questions the students may have and resources that could support the student in registering for classes for the upcoming semester. In the

past few semesters, the collaboration between these offices, as well as Student Financial Aid, the Bursar's Office, SOAR (Student Opportunities for Academic Results), the Office of Admissions and the Service Center have aided in overall retention growth.

GRASP Program: Spring 2018 pilot program for exploratory/undeclared students who are on academic probation. These students are working with graduate student mentors from SIUE's College Student Personnel Administration program on the students' academic growth. The probationary students meet with their GRASP mentor and have conversations about their academic progress throughout the spring semester as well as work with strategies to overcome the obstacles that an academic semester may provide.

Student Academic Success Sessions (or SASS): These sessions have become incredibly popular with students throughout their time at SIUE. Since the sessions began in the fall 2014 semester, there have been 3,170 attendees at sessions focused on time management, test anxiety, utilization of health and fitness resources on campus, and academic success.

Thomas acknowledges that retention is a campus-wide effort. "There are teams throughout campus that are impacting student success every single day," he said. "Our retention growth comes from the work of academic advisors, Financial Aid, the Bursar's Office, SOAR, the Service Center, University Housing hall professional and student staff, Counseling Services, Health Service, Campus Recreation, Veteran Services and many other offices.

"Our faculty play a significant role in our success, as well. Faculty members reaching out to a struggling student and supporting that student make all the difference in the world."

Thomas believes that to improve upon the current success, the campus must continue to enhance the student experience. "Those enhancements are happening in course redesigns, curriculum reviews, conversations and growth in our diversity and inclusion efforts, and more," he said. "Those enhancements will continue to move our retention and ultimately our graduation rates to reach the goals we set forth."

Other spring 2018 enrollment highlights included:

Census headcount enrollment of 12,976 ranked eighth all-time for a spring semester, but trailed spring 2017 by 2.3 percent (300 students), which was anticipated after fall 2017 was down 2.4 percent from the previous year

Graduate enrollment increased two percent led by an increase of 80 students in the School of Nursing (252 total) and 34 additional students in the integrative studies program (93 total)

Latino enrollment increased two percent and reached 541 students, an all-time high for any spring term

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River's rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of nearly 14,000.