

BOARD OF REGENTS
BRIEFING PAPER

1. AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Freshman Retention Rate Update, UNLV

MEETING DATE: November 30 – December 1, 2017

2. BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

UNLV will provide an update on its freshmen retention rate and the initiatives supporting student success and graduation. As it stands currently, the statistics for student retention are as follows:

- Fall 2014 Cohort First-Time Full-Time Student (FTFT) Retention: 74.1%
- Fall 2015 Cohort First-Time Full-Time Student Retention: 77.1%
- Fall 2016 Cohort First-Time Full-Time Student Retention: 74.4%

What happened?

While UNLV significantly decreased the number of alternate admit students in Fall 2016, the incoming cohort grew substantially overall and included a relatively large number of students with acceptable—yet relatively low—transcript GPA and/or test scores (two of the factors associated with lower retention) that met the state-mandated minimums:

- Among the students in this incoming cohort, the at-risk students had a larger drop in retention rates (2016 rate = 68.4% or 4.5 points lower than 2015). 279 students from the 2016 cohort responded to a survey that UNLV administered to all students who did not return for the following academic year (approximately 29% response rate) and among those who responded, 64.2% reported that they transferred to another institution with 19.6% of those responding that they enrolled at CSN.
- 35.7% of the 279 respondents reported that they did not return for personal reasons, such as family hardship, finances, job opportunities, etc.
- As a class, more Fall 2016 students achieved a grade point average of 2.25 or less in their first semester at UNLV than the previous year's class (students with GPA less than 2.25 are also less likely to be retained).
- These students achieved a relatively high proportion of grades of D, F, or Withdrawn in critical gateway courses such as Math 120, 124, 126, 127, and Com 101.
- Students suspended for low academic standing at the end of their freshman year represented 5.9% of the 2016 cohort and 5.1% of the 2015 cohort.
- 2016 retention, though lower than that of Fall 2015, is within the range of past years and is higher than the 2014 cohort of 74.1%; the 2015 cohort's rise in retention is also within the range of variation in UNLV retention ranges.

What UNLV plans to do:

1. Better Recruiting and Admissions

The UNLV Admissions and Financial Aid offices have been directed to review and restructure aid distribution such that they are more proactive in awarding aid to higher achieving students. UNLV is not abandoning its state mandate to accept students at a 3.0 GPA or above; rather, UNLV aims to recruit a larger number of students who are well-prepared and more likely to succeed during their tenure at the university. UNLV will also continue to offer students at the lower GPA levels of its incoming cohorts appropriate need-based financial aid.

2. Build on the Partnerships with NSC and CSN

UNLV will much more aggressively grow the partnerships with College of Southern Nevada and Nevada State College as well as other community colleges so that UNLV has more at-risk students in the dual-

admit program—who can then successfully complete a course of study at one of the other institutions prior to enrolling at UNLV. UNLV is also exploring the feasibility of having even more of its own personnel more directly involved on the campuses associated with its partners, and/or in engaging partners on the UNLV campus.

3. Better Advising and Remediation Efforts

UNLV is already undertaking much more aggressive approaches to identifying at-risk students. This includes hiring more “student achievement specialists,” whose job it is to reach out earlier in the semester of an academic year to students identified as having three or more risk factors. At this juncture, UNLV is conducting assessments to identify where additional advisors and remediation staff are most needed across the campus, and will fill those positions accordingly.

Once at-risk students are identified, UNLV will be much more aggressive in its advising and remediation. For example, UNLV has already implemented an early alert system for faculty to employ to alert the advising staff if there are students who are having difficulty in their classes. Further, UNLV will be more proactive in advising for students with a Fall GPA less than 2.25 in an effort to identify issues and encourage re-enrollment. UNLV is also adding more resources for advising and for remediation, in addition to looking at alternative models for remediation that would have CSN, for example, helping to teach these courses.

Additionally, UNLV is building and assessing pilot projects to better serve math students, beginning with remedial math as well as working with the Clark County School District to increase student success.

UNLV will also continue to study the data for additional correlations with student success and to identify “at risk” populations as early as possible for additional interventions by undertaking efforts, including but not limited to:

- Identifying student course taking behavior associated with better or poorer course outcomes.
- Determining best financial aid strategies to promote student success.
- Refining best practices in the existing Pathways program that identifies at-risk STEM and business students to engage tutoring services in math and other content areas earlier in the students’ academic careers.
- Better assessing student success in gateway math and English courses based on incoming ACT scores.

3. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

UNLV President Len Jessup presents for information an update related to UNLV’s freshmen retention rate and initiatives to support retention and graduation.

4. IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

The Board of Regents requested an update on UNLV’s freshman retention rate.

5. BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

- Providing the Board an update on UNLV’s freshman retention rate and activities planned or underway to enhance retention is appropriate.

6. POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

None known.

7. ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:

Do not provide an update; or provide one at a later date.

8. COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

<input type="checkbox"/> Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title #_____ Chapter #_____ Section #_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Amends Current Board Policy: Title #_____ Chapter #_____ Section #_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter #_____ Section #_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Fiscal Impact: Yes_____ No_____
Explain: _____