

REPORT OF THE
ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE
PENN STATE SCHUYLKILL
FEBRUARY 26, 2013
Revised March 23, 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Penn State Schuylkill student body is quite different from the student body of 2004

- Younger
- More diverse
- Less likely to be from the local service area
- More likely to live on campus
- More likely to be seeking a 4-year degree
- Less ready for college

Therefore programs and policies in place to aid retention nearly a decade ago need to be replaced or re-conceptualized to address the changing needs and challenges of our student body

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH RETENTION

Several factors are associated with short-term and long-term retention, as well as academic performance

Short-term retention	Long-term retention	Academic Performance
First college English Grade	First college English Grade	First college English Grade
First college Math Grade	SAT Verbal Score	First college Math Grade
Student expectations		High School GPA
Race (non-White)		Age (older)
		Student expectations
		Financial Need (lower level)

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Strategies to increase marketability and appeal of Penn State Schuylkill to potential students

- Target new and growing markets, including out of state and international students as well as non-traditional students
- Use focus groups and surveys to determine what programs and delivery methods (web, hybrid, accelerated) are most appealing to a community where many members may work second and third shift (many potential non-traditional students work 2nd or 3rd shift (or rotating shifts) and the traditional non-traditional student model may be outdated
- Exploit, develop and improve a significant web presence and a high profile on social networking sights
- Develop a street presence that appeals to the local community
- Continue to implement and develop visible marketing tools

If the campus wishes to increase its appeal and market share of in-county enrollments the campus must make every effort to study the employment needs and availability of both traditional and non-traditional potential students.

RETENTION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Penn State Schuylkill faces fierce completion not only from local community colleges, private colleges and the state system of higher education, other campuses in the system are bigger, offer more services, offer a greater variety of majors and a better social scene. In order to increase campus appeal and encourage more students to not only stay in the Penn State system but to stay at Penn State Schuylkill, the campus must review what it has to offer students in order to make it competitive.

Recommendations include:

- Keep Food Services open/accessible later in the day and on weekends, and review pricing with an eye to making high quality nutritional food more affordable
- Add a commuter lounge on campus. Commuter students have few recreational options to fill in time between classes or to encourage them to do more than 'roll in' for classes and roll back out. Darts, Billiards and Horseshoes are popular in the country and would encourage commuter students to view the campus as more than a place they go to for their classes. A fall carnival (similar to New Kensington's) would encourage not only local students, but local residents to visit the campus.
- Email has been described by this generation of college students as something their grandparents use. Create and develop more programming and APPS for smart phones
- Focus groups and/or surveys should be implemented to gain multiple STUDENT perspectives about the PSU Schuylkill experience.
- Formalize exit interviews
- Child care on campus would not only encourage non-traditional students to enrollment at Penn State Schuylkill, it would enable those students who have children to STAY in college, rather than dropping out due to child care challenges
- Link more campus clubs to specific majors (like the Criminal Justice Club and Psychology club)
- Mandatory Study Halls/Tutoring for athletes (which was operational in 2012) and thespians – both groups academic performance suffers during the season and/or play

ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

- Increased advisor visibility and proactive advising techniques
- The placement of information kiosks with updated and detailed information on academic programs, courses and support services throughout the campus would allow 24/7 access to information
- Limit registration holds to tuition holds. Current holds include:
 - Academic—placed and removed by the appropriate college dean's office
 - Administrative—placed and removed by the Registrar's office
 - Disciplinary—placed and removed by the Office of Student Conduct

- Financial—placed and removed by offices such as the Parking Office, University Libraries, Office of the Bursar
- Health—placed and removed by University Health Services
- A survey of the fall 2012 First Year Seminar class yielded the following information about tutoring preferences
 - Preferred locations (other than the current Learning Center location) include C building and near the cafeteria
 - Most desired tutoring services include (in order) math, writing, natural sciences)
 - Most students prefer having a choice of drop-in and appointment-based tutoring; however, forced to choose most selected drop-in tutoring
 - Students liked having a choice of peer or professional tutors; however, forced to choose they prefer professional tutors
 - Most popular times for tutor availability were M-R 12-3pm, M-R 3-6pm, M-R 9-noon and 6-9pm. Students expressed little interest in tutoring Friday through Sunday from 9am to noon.

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR

All students leaving high school for college will experience transition issues, whether they are academic, social or cultural. A First Year Experience, done properly it will aid in retention.

- Consider the Mont Alto JUMP START program, a virtual summer program for the less prepared student
 - Students get a “jump” on their coursework by enrolling in tutorial modules for both Math 004 and English 004 for 6 weeks prior to the beginning of the fall semester
 - The modules introduce students to college-level coursework that they will encounter during the fall semester
 - Jump Start students are paired with a Peer Mentor, a sophomore or higher student who has already been trained in peer mentoring and has successfully completed appropriate English and Math coursework
- The First Year Experience must be a work in progress, changing to meet the needs of different generations of students
- Students in the fall 2012 First Year Seminar class were surveyed to ascertain their ‘ideal’ First Year Seminar course.
 - Most preferred a one-credit seminar to a two or three credit seminar.
 - Over half stated they would prefer an all on-line format
 - More than half stated that they would prefer a FYE that also counted as a class in their major (for example, CRIMJ083S is a 3 credit variable topic criminal justice elective and includes FY content
 - The overwhelming majority DO NOT want a summer reading program or course based on a book

- The most useful components included ANGEL and study skills tutorials, presentation on clubs and student aid, information on the academic calendar and campus offices, tutorial on test-taking strategies and scheduling/majors/academic planning, and a tutorial on academic dishonesty.
- Make use of standardized content
- Include guest speakers
- Over half stated that they would prefer content individualized to their needs and requirements, including information specific to a student's age, gender, commuter status, etc.

FULL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Penn State Schuylkill currently (spring 2013) has a headcount of 791 students, with an FTE of 703. Enrollment has fluctuated over the past twenty years; however, enrollments (headcount) have declined 23.5 percent since fall of 2010 (headcount of 1034). FTE enrollments have declined 25 percent during this time frame. Based on available data, headcount reached a peak of 1108 in fall of 1992, with fall 2012 headcount (867) showing a net decrease of 28.6 percent over the twenty year period. Current headcount is 9.1 percent lower than spring of 2004.

The demographic composition of the student body has also changed significantly. In 2003 the campus served primarily Schuylkill County residents (65 percent of student body) compared to about half in fall of 2012 (52.4 percent). Current students are more likely to state they are seeking a baccalaureate degree (78.5 percent) compared to only 59.5 percent in fall of 2004. The percent of student body from out of state is 19.2 percent, up from 14.9 percent in 2004. The minority student population in 2004, from 21.3 percent of the student body to 39.6 percent in fall of 2012. The adult student population, which peaked in fall of 2005 at 24.9 percent has stabilized at about 21.5 percent after a low of 14.2% in the spring of 2009. In 2004 about 1 in 4 students lived in the on-campus apartments. In 2013 nearly one in three live on campus.

Incoming student academic preparedness has also changed since 2005. While average High School GPAs have remained stable or increased slightly, total SAT scores (Math/Verbal) for incoming students from most service areas have decreased. The percentage of students in DUS (not in an academic major) has risen from 13.2 in fall 2004 percent to 18.5 percent in Spring 2013-down from a high of 23.5 percent in 2010.

Penn State Schuylkill is a campus in transition. The student body in 2013 is quite different from the student body of 2004: it is younger, more diverse, less likely to be from the local service area, and more likely to live on campus. Students enrolling now are more likely to be seeking a 4-year degree program, while simultaneously being less ready for college (based on SAT scores and number of students in DUS rather than academic majors). Given these changes it is reasonable to assume that programs and policies in place to aid retention nearly a decade ago need to be replaced or at the very least re-conceptualized to address the changing needs and challenges of our rapidly changing student body. Enrollment management goes beyond marketing and admissions-the campus must plan not only to get students here, but to support them as they work towards a PENN STATE degree.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH RETENTION

Table 1. Retention Trends

Starting Campus: Schuylkill	Starting College: All Colleges					
	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011
#Initially Enrolled in Cohort	251	287	312	299	337	301
Retention to Semester 2	93.60%	94.10%	93.30%	95.00%	92.30%	89.00%
Retention to Semester 3	80.50%	79.40%	78.20%	73.90%	71.20%	68.80%
Retention to Semester 4	76.10%	76.00%	71.20%	68.90%	60.50%	
Retention to Semester 5	64.90%	58.50%	57.40%	59.90%	50.40%	
Retention to Semester 6	61.40%	59.20%	55.80%	57.20%		
Retention to Semester 7	51.40%	53.30%	52.20%	54.20%		
Retention to Semester 8	45.40%	50.90%	51.00%			
Retention to Semester 9	19.90%	25.10%	25.30%			
Retention to Semester 10	13.10%	16.40%				
Retention to Semester 11	6.40%	9.10%				
Retention to Semester 12	4.80%					
Retention to Semester 13	3.60%					
Retention to Semester 14						
4-Year Graduation Rate	21.50%	24.40%	24.40%			
5-Year Graduation Rate	33.90%	39.70%				
6-Year Graduation Rate	36.70%					

Study participants included a random sample of 361 students from archival academic records of Penn State Schuylkill, selecting those entering the campus in fall semesters during the eight years between 2004 and 2011 (45.2% male, 54.8% female; mean age = 18.5 years, SD = 1.5; 52.1% Caucasian, 34.9% African-American, 5.3% Hispanic-Latino, 4.2% Asian-American, 3.6% other).

Short-term retention was measured as the number of credits completed with a C grade or better during the second semester. Long-term retention was measured as the number of three consecutive semesters attending Penn State Schuylkill after the first semester (considering only the 319 students entering the campus during the seven years between 2004 and 2010 so that three next semesters were available). Academic performance was measured as the cumulative grade point average (GPA). Multiple regression analysis used each of these retention and performance measures as outcome measures, with the following eight variables considered as possible predictors: age, gender (male, female), ethnicity (Caucasian, other), high school GPA, SAT math score, SAT verbal score, first college Math grade, and first college English grade (with A = 4.00, A- = 3.67, B+ = 3.33, B = 3.00, B- = 2.67, C+ = 2.33, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, F = 0.00). Also included in the analysis was mother's education, father's education, need index and expected college GPA.

Three factors were significantly associated with short-term retention: ethnicity, first college Math grade, and first college English grade. The strongest predictor of short term retention was First college English grade, which was positively associated with number of credits completed in the second semester. First college Math grade had the second strongest effect on short term retention, followed by Ethnicity (with non-Whites 'out-performing' Whites in the second semester) and finally SAT verbal score.

Only one factor (possibly two) was associated with long-term retention: First college English grade. A related factor, SAT verbal score, was nearly significantly associated with long-term retention. Based on this definition of long-term retention, writing competence appears to have the strongest effect.

Academic Performance, as measured by Cumulative GPA, was also most strongly associated with First college English grade, followed by First college Math grade, High school GPA, and Age (with older students slightly outperforming younger students).

Finally, three final regression models were run to determine the effects of student need, parental education, and student expectations (expected college grades) on retention. Student expectations were positively associated with short-term retention (number of credits completed with a C or better during the second semester). None of these factors were significantly associated with long-term retention. Student expectations and student need were also significantly associated with academic performance: students who expected to do better, did better. Students with higher need tended towards lower academic performance.

Based on these data a major factor the campus must be considering in student retention and academic success is academic and financial support. The campus has no control over student expectations, age or ethnicity, and admission (or not) on the basis of High School GPA and/or SAT scores only appears to affect academic performance-not retention itself. Success in first semester writing and math courses is critical to both short term retention and academic performance. Financial need, and whatever the campus can do to mitigate student financial concerns, while not directly tied to retention, is tied to academic performance, which may be indirectly tied to retention.

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

On December 1, 2012 The Economist published an article entitled “Not What It Used to be”, stating that ‘American universities represent declining value for money to their students’. Higher education is currently at a crossroads, and many are questioning the value or even desirability of a four year college degree. Penn State Schuylkill is not immune to this changing sentiment, and declining enrollments are indicative of this national trend.

In addition to the uncertainty of the future and shape of higher education, the campus has experienced a number of **local threats**. Penn State Schuylkill has the smallest recruitment area of any campus in the system, and its tuition is relatively high. While the campus has no control over its assigned recruitment area or tuition costs, there are some steps that the campus can take locally to address some of the recruitment problems facing the campus. Housing costs can be reassessed to determine the necessity to increase fees. Increased visibility and contact with local high school students and with the community will help offset some of the concerns local residents may have about the campus. Currently many faculty offer web-based and hybrid courses: more aggressive advertisement of these classes could help cultivate new markets, including adult learners who may have child or elder care responsibilities that limit their availability for traditional classroom delivery methods.

Penn State Schuylkill also faces a number of **challenges**. A small campus, the number of academic programs offered is limited; however a limited budget and shrinking faculty make it imperative that any new programs considered not only are selected on the basis of desirability and marketability, but also after a careful consideration of available faculty resources and potential collaboration between programs and ideally with nearby campuses. The changing demographics of the local service area and aging of the local population should propel the campus to carefully assess both the employment needs and flexibility of non-traditional students. Even the best academic programs require advertisement; Penn State Schuylkill’s limited staff and resources require a careful reallocation of resources and personnel (including cross-training employees to provide additional assistance during the busiest marketing periods) to increase familiarity with the campus and its programs throughout the service area, especially via both traditional (newspaper and television) and ‘new’ media (social networking sites, web-based presence)

Despite a shrinking service area and other threats to enrollment, the campus has a number of **strengths** that may help it weather changing model of higher education in the United States. For many potential Penn State students the 2+2 model offers them an opportunity for a world class education without the culture shock of going from their local high school to a campus of more than 40,000 students. The campus must continue to market not only its degree programs, but the opportunity to ‘start small’ before moving on to a more traditional University environment. A small campus, like a small town, is in a unique position to provide personalized customer service. For the first generation student (and family) especially, the personal touch makes the process much more manageable. Staff, administration and faculty should be aware of and active partners in the recruitment process, including participation at campus and community events. To this end staff, and especially faculty, need to feel vested in the campus.

Change is frightening, and many will resist; however, the campus is very different from the way it was a decade ago, and a number of **opportunities** are 'out there' and can be exploited to the campus' benefit. There are new and growing markets: out of state and international students as well as local non-traditional students should be targeted. The campus should conduct focus groups and/or survey the local community, targeting which programs and delivery methods (web, hybrid, accelerated) are most suited to a community where many residents work second or third shift, who may be called to active duty during the academic year, or who may have familial or other time constraints affecting their ability to attend college. Most institutions of higher learning have a significant web presence and high profile on social networking sites-these should be exploited. The campus itself lacks a street presence-while many Penn State campuses feature electronic signage at their front entrance, Penn State Schuylkill has, at best, a sandwich board-digital signage would not only draw attention to the campus, it would send a signal to potential students and their families that Penn State Schuylkill invests in itself, and wants the public to know who we are, and what we have to offer.

RETENTION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Student Expectation. We also face a number of issues with student expectation of what college and what PSU Schuylkill can and should do for them. **First generation students** often display a naiveté about college life; they think college is what they see on television or that it is high school. Traditional aged students often lack basic coping, bill paying, or time management skills due to the ubiquity of **helicopter parents** in American society. Some students come to us with **multiple issues** and require a large investment in staff and faculty resources. **Problematic students** who commit numerous crimes and are a nuisance to the county judicial system and the community at large are rarely suspended or expelled from our campus. Other students fear these individuals.

High achieving students leave us because they cannot finish a degree here. We lack a substantial STEM degree; Hazleton, for example, has a degree in General Engineering (Alternative energy and power generation track) that is highly sought after.

The expansion of **the VLN and online offerings** has not been warmly met by students; honestly, they hate the VLN for two reasons: they feel abandoned sitting in a room with no teacher and they do not feel that they are spending their tuition dollars wisely. This is an issue of their price sensitivity,

Resident Students keenly feel that Food Services is not open long enough and is not affordable, and have a difficult time getting to jobs in surrounding towns.

Commuter students feel disconnected and disenfranchised on campus; there is no commuter lounge, the game room and vending machines are gone, and so any space the commute could claim is gone. Commuter students often work long hours and have family responsibilities.

Currently, our challenges come from a variety of sources; some may not be issues that our staff and faculty can do anything about.

Communication with Students --Technology has changed quickly in the past decade but Penn State's monitoring and record keeping of contact information has not kept pace. We email and send letters to student addresses for pressing matters relating to retention and get sluggish or no response in many cases. We ask: Why don't they check their email?

They answer is they don't. We need to change because they have moved on. Since students don't use email for social communication as much as they used to, they do not check it often and there is a lag or complete lack of response in attempts to connect via email.

The majority of traditional students own smart phones; they text, surf the web, and look at Facebook or other social networking sites. Both traditional and non-traditional students usually have to seek the assistance of the computing staff to add webmail to their phones. While our students believe themselves to be very tech savvy, they may be missing out on PSU emails when they forward webmail to free email programs such as Hotmail or Yahoo!; group mail to these accounts is bounced as spam.

Adult students may not yet have adopted the smart technology and still respond to email and letters; they often express a preference for face-to-face contact with staff and faculty, but do not find offices open in the evening when they are on campus. Some express concern with slow response times.

These communication challenges thwart the good work of staff and faculty to retain students.

Monitoring Student Attitudes – The campus need to monitor more closely, through regular **focus groups**, and **exit interviews**, how PSU Schuylkill students feel about their experiences on campus. **Focus Groups** could be run by faculty, staff, and outside interviewers to gain multiple perspectives about the PSU Schuylkill experience. **Exit Interviews** can track students leaving PSU Schuylkill, finding out why they have left PSU Schuylkill before graduation. These efforts on campus have been fragmented at best. We need to more closely monitor students who are

- graduating,
- leaving PSU,
- leaving for other campus locations, or
- leaving college entirely.

More diligent monitoring of the reasons students leave will give retention efforts a sharper more defined focus.

Unrecognized Challenges to Retention– Most PSU Schuylkill efforts are currently targeted toward a “putting the fires out,” and “oiling the squeakiest wheels.” We do less to address student concerns that are unlikely to create a “problem” for the campus community and are doing little to emphasize the **value created by our small campus community**.

Child Care-- Many students return home after becoming pregnant because they lack residential living and child care; adult students cannot come to class if a child is home sick from school. Child care for 1-5 year olds would help parents access day class opportunities.

Keeping High-Performing Students. The Honors Program and its high standards make high performing students feel valued and recognized for their efforts. The Criminal Justice Club does much to inspire camaraderie among its members by taking educational and social field trips. More defined campus efforts with clubs key to specific majors could enhance this feeling of belonging to a community of scholars.

Career Counseling

First Generation students with loans are very concerned with career placement and counseling; therefore, so should we be concerned. A coordinated effort between **Academic Advising, Program Leaders**, and **Career Counseling** could alleviate these issues and leave students with more realistic expectations.

VALUE CREATION -- The key to these unrecognized challenges to retaining students is **Creating Value for the PSU Schuylkill Experience**. We need to emphasize from their first day on campus that we may not be able to do everything UP does, but what we do, we do well, so that students graduate on time and with good job potential.

Our **Strength** currently can be found in our internal communication about student issues. Among staff and faculty we have strong reporting lines and issues are addressed as they become known through informal and formal means of communication mechanisms including:

- The Enrollment Management Team,
- the Retention Management Team/ Retention Action Team (RAT),
- The Campus Climate Committee meetings,
- Academic Progress Reports,
- Tutoring Referrals,
- and Judicial Notifications.

Campus Stakeholders

Our retention management efforts do focus on early intervention and address the major issues that cause students to drop-out or go to another campus. These include social adjustment issues, judicial issues, academic difficulties, motivational problems, and financial setbacks. The following entities on campus communicate well to address these concerns:

Advising/DUS – Gives students personalized schedules at FTCAP, runs Academic Reviews each semester, schedules appointments with each student below a 2.0 GPA, conducts monthly workshops and produces newsletters, provides walk-in advising with additional with evening hours, and gives and takes referrals on the spot.

Counseling and Health Services – PSU Schuylkill has a counselor who speaks with students and refers on an array of issues including but not limited to depressive illness, anxiety issues, eating disorders, and psychological adjustment to campus life. A psychiatrist comes to campus once a month to supplement this counseling. Students charged with certain judicial offenses and others charged with drug and alcohol offenses come to sessions mandated under their disciplinary judgment must visit the counselor; there is no AA, NA, AL-Anon or Alateen group active on campus, but there are adequate services in Schuylkill county for all of these. While there is no Alateen group, one recommended by Alateen's home page, is run out of the White Church.

Health Services offers gynecological services here on campus, including std testing, pregnancy testing and referral services to help those who do become pregnant. Catholic Charities and Care Net of Pottsville offer counseling during a student's pregnancy and after. Health Services helps the new parent get set up with insurance for themselves and their unborn child. Most times the students can stay here at Schuylkill for their term. We offer a physician weekly to prevent students from going home with medical conditions that can be handled here on campus. The Nurse teaches about specific disease processes to staff and faculty that may be involved in a student's special needs. She does stress

management sessions with students, and spends many hours discussing health related topics with our students.

Living– Residence Life oversees day-to-day student living on campus. Staff interacts with students in a non-instructional capacity when they are relaxed and are able to monitor issues as they emerge. Residence Life aids students in finding help on campus and are often the adults that resident students tell about issues other students may be having. Because Residence Life does not hand out tickets or give grades, resident students may trust them with confidences. Residence Life can then make referrals as necessary.

Finance – Many students have financial difficulties and carry a balance with the Bursar. In these cases, Finance staff works to get a payment and also seeks help from Financial Aid through scholarships, trustee funds, or the student emergency fund. The Registering Committee works with students to get them into registered status.

Academic– Early Student Progress Reports are submitted by course instructors in the 4th week of the semester; they acknowledge and record failings in academic performance or attendance. At the end of the semester, faculty members also submit the date of last participation for F-grade students who receive financial aid. Negative progress reports go to the DAA and DUS for follow-up through email. The registrar, Advisors, DUS, and the DAA can access them and also follow-up when necessary. Faculty members may submit Learning Center **Tutor Forms** for students struggling with course material or poor study habits. Faculty members may receive a report if the student follows up and then asks for the report to be sent to the instructor.

The **Retention Action Team (RAT)** is a subcommittee of the Retention Management Team. The RAT compiles lists of students with negative progress reports. More than 2 reports triggers a personal contact from RAT through email and a letter sent to the home address in cases where no response is forthcoming. The RAT includes members from most of the entities listed above.

During this period of changing technologies and student need a number of opportunities present themselves to Penn State Schuylkill. Communication and recordkeeping of **contact information systems** across campus are fragmented. Systems should be updated and centralized. We need to collect cell phone numbers and text students instead of or in addition to emailing them. This may require updating or changing the current record keeping system(s). Students, who have smart phones but do not pay for texting, may opt to add apps to their phones that offer free texting. We should be more proactive about hunting students down and meeting with them face-to-face if they fail to respond. Obviously, email and letters fail in too many instances.

Create and market an App (both Android and Apple platforms) for smartphones to take the mostly outdated information on our website and provide continuously updated and targeted information directly to students. Instead of focusing on multiple constituencies (Friend, Potential Student, Alum, Faculty, Staff) as the website must do, streamline this app by focusing only on PSU Schuylkill student concerns. This app could:

- Use a fictional character, like Yul L. Lischk, the groundskeeper PSU gnome, to answer student questions Dear Abby style (see Yul Lischk on Facebook);
- give short articles about services available on campus—i.e. explain the difference between a Registrar and Bursar;
- Send out text reminders about upcoming important deadlines – i.e. drop-add, exam conflict...
- Announce non-recreational career or academic events.

This app can help feel students feel more connected to campus. It can serve in place of or in addition to the campus newspaper which has been defunct for a number of years. It can be introduced at FTCAP and used in FYS.

Study Halls for Athletes and Thespians. Students, especially those who have low GPA's, should not be allowed to schedule classes when they know they will have to leave for games or go to play practices. Many universities have mandatory study halls for students in these types of activities. The Learning Center can oversee such study hall activities.

Commuter Students—often feel disenfranchised. A suggestion for improving this situation is the founding of a Commute Student Club or a Schuylkill County Heritage Club in addition to clubs catering to the majors most of these students express an interest in whether that is a major here or at UP. More events geared toward Schuylkill County natives' interests inviting students back to campus for evening and recreational (non-time-intensive activities) might also help. Dart leagues, Horseshoe leagues, a fall carnival, and a student run EMT service would be attractive to locals.

RAT could be enhanced with the additional of a member from finance.

Exit Interviews and follow-ups stymied by the disappearance of the PSU email address of non-retained students can be performed with Survey Monkey and delivered to smart phone numbers. This may not catch all students leaving PSU Schuylkill but will potentially give us a better response to non-graduating exit interviews. Additionally, **graduating seniors** should have an in-person exit interview with a member of administration or a member of the Advisory Board. These can be made mandatory and added on to the financial aid exit interview. This type of interview will serve two purposes: to gauge what students value about their PSU Schuylkill experience after the first two years and to provide an opportunity to personally thank and congratulate students who have persisted to graduation and become PSU Schuylkill alums.

Academic Support Services

Several **threats** and **challenges** to academic support servicing have been identified by the task force. An immediate **threat** could be described as student perception that they are receiving substandard academic support. In many instances this can be attributed to student unrealistic expectations, and may be mediated by provided high quality student friendly services. Appropriate student academic progress continues to be one of the campus' **challenges**. Academic progress may be impeded by student 'self-advising', registration holds for a number of issues, and limited information flow to students. Increased advisor visibility and proactive advising techniques may encourage students to seek professional

advising. The placement of information kiosks (and updated and detailed information on academic programs, courses, and support services) throughout the campuses (including in the residence halls) would allow students immediate and 24/7 access to information about course and major selection. Of course, in order to be effective the information on the kiosk would not only have to be accurate, it would have to be updated daily or weekly and presented in a user friendly and attractive format. Finally, many students find their academic progress impeded by registration holds, which affect their ability to register for classes, submit quizzes and materials for on-line classes for the on-line component of hybrid classes, to receive grades for classes, and to graduate. The task force recommends limiting registration holds to tuition issues.

The campus' small size facilitates personal interactions between students and staff, which may increase as campus enrollments decline and the student to staff ratio decreases, a significant **strength** of the campus. The smaller client base encourages personal, one-on-one interactions with academic support staff.

The release of the core council letter and the new administration at Penn State Schuylkill has placed the campus in the position of being able to take advantage of the **opportunity** to restructure programming and academic support based on information collected directly from the students. The campus should make use of both focus groups and surveys to best determine what type of programs are not only 'best' for our students, but what type of programming would appeal to our students. For example, last fall (2012) students in the First Year Experience class were surveyed to determine what type of tutoring center they would find most useful and what they would be most likely to use. While students were most likely to state they liked its current location (66.9 percent), C building and the cafeteria were the second most popular locations, with 11.3 percent of students selecting each one of these locations. Very few students (3.8 percent) stated they would like the tutoring center (or an annex) in the student apartments. Sixty-five percent of all students surveyed were interested in math tutoring, then writing, then the natural sciences. Most students would like the option for both drop-in tutoring and tutoring appointments; however, given a choice of one or the other, drop-in tutoring was most popular. Students prefer to have a choice of peer and professional tutors; but given a choice, selected professional tutors over peer tutors. The most popular times for tutoring appointments was Monday through Thursday from noon to 3pm, followed by Monday through Thursday from 3pm to 6pm (suggesting the need for late afternoon hours). Monday through Thursday 9am to noon and 6pm to 9pm were next most popular choices. Students were least likely to prefer tutoring Friday through Sunday from 9am to noon.

First Year Experience

All students leaving high school for college will experience transition issues. Some of these are academic, others social or cultural. A First Year Experience is designed to mitigate transition issues, allowing students to adjust more fully to college life. If done well it should aid in retention. Because transition issues can come in such a variety of forms, the First Year Experience is not taught from a specific department or unit, but draws on all of the resources of the campus.

There are a number of local **threats** to the successful delivery of a First Year Experience at the campus. Because the entire campus is involved in the First Year Experience Program, no one really feels a sense of ownership. It is one of those extra duties we fit in where possible. Getting buy-in from students has traditionally proven difficult. Most of even our least developed students arrive with high school GPAs that are quite high, and feel themselves to be ready for college. Failure to raise retention has economic consequences to the campus. Some of these threats can be reduced by providing some reward structure for those participating in the First Year Experience. It may also be advisable to change the name to rebrand it for student consumption.

There are also some **challenges** to the delivery of a First Year Experience at the campus. Our campus has a very diverse student body. Some are well prepared for college academically, others are not. Some are transitioning from very different communities to Schuylkill Haven, others are commuters who face less need for geographical accommodation. As a result a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. Students expect the First Year Experience to meet their needs, and if it isn't perceived as doing so, often reject the program as a "waste of time". Once earned this reputation is hard to remove. It is difficult to maintain continued buy-in from faculty and staff in the face of perceived student opposition. Some of this may be reduced. There are a variety of templates for the First Year Experience currently used by the University that may help us. For example Mont Alto has initiated a Jump Start program (http://www.ma.psu.edu/Student_Services/LRC/30684.htm) which involves a virtual summer on-line program for less prepared student. They also offer specialized learning opportunities through courses like CAS 126 "Developmental Listening" and CNED 100 "Effective Career and Decision Making". Greater Allegheny has offered Language and Literacy Education 005 and Liberal Arts 296 as developmental options. Students should be brought more fully into a discussion of what they need (note results of First Year Experience survey from fall of 2012).

One of the strengths of the program is Penn State's fifteen year history of offering a first year experience program. During that time a wide variety of templates have been created. The faculty and staff of the campus have a history of successfully cooperating to provide a first year experience. This can be exploited by gathering together information on the various methods of delivering a first year experience at Penn State. The campus can also present options to a meeting of the various campus stakeholders, including students, trying to find what is right for us.

The campus is currently at a point where it can take advantage of a number of different opportunities re: First Year Experience programming. By offering a good First Year Experience program we will increase retention. Some of the activities involved in the First Year Experience may be enjoyable to

students. Peer mentor programs offer opportunities for leadership. The first year experience program needs to be a work in progress, changing to meet the needs of different generations of students. Someone needs to take ownership of the program and work to keep it up date, assessing it versus the programs of our peer institutions. There are well developed programs of grants and pedagogical research devoted to first year experience programs.

A survey of First Year Experience students administered in the fall of 2012 captured student suggestions as to the length, structure and content of their 'ideal' First Year Experience. The majority of students (48.7 percent) preferred the one credit seminar to a two or three credit seminar. Over one-half (54 percent) preferred an all on-line format. More than one-half (54 percent) stated that they would prefer a FYE that also counted as a class in their major, such as CRIMJ083S (a 3 credit variable topic criminal justice course that encompasses FYE content). The overwhelming majority (84 percent) did not want the course to include a book based reading program. The most useful components of a FYE class, according to the fall 2012 class include: ANGEL and study skills tutorials, presentations on clubs and student aid, information on the academic calendar and campus offices, the presentation on test taking strategies and tutorial on academic dishonesty, and information on scheduling, majors and academic planning. Over one-half (53.5 percent) stated that they would prefer content that was more individualized to their needs and requirement, including information specific to a student's age, gender, commuter vs. resident, etc.