

Track and Connect: Increasing First Year Student Engagement, Retention and Success at the University of Sydney

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In 2012 Student Support Services staff at The University of Sydney, in consultation with Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and faculty academics, piloted an early intervention strategy to increase student engagement and retention. Track and Connect was designed in response to a study undertaken by the University's Planning and Information Office, which identified a range of demographic factors that may indicate risk for early attrition among first year undergraduate students at our institution. The program facilitates contact, monitoring and service referral to students identified using demographic markers and on-time assessment and engagement data as at-risk of withdrawal from a key first year subject. Contact is made by trained senior students at key decision points throughout the semester. This paper takes a reflective approach to identifying emerging trends in the four semesters that the program has run to date, assessing strengths and considering areas for refinement and expansion.

Key Words

Retention, transition, attrition, student experience, success