Retention and Academic Success

Recruiting larger numbers of strong students to Southern Miss is key to enrollment growth, and retaining those we recruit is where the true positive institutional impact will be seen. First, by getting more students to graduation we significantly contribute to the lives of those students and their communities; our students are predominately first generation and relatively low-income, and a college degree can be transformative. Second, the more USM students are retained, the more economically stable the institution will be. In this month’s newsletter, we thus start with a focus on the role of faculty in retention then move on to explore some institutional initiatives and changes to impact student success. Read on!

1 RETENTION ROLES
People say “retention is everyone’s job,” but what does that really mean for faculty?

2 SPEAKING & WRITING CENTERS
What do they offer students and faculty?

3 WHERE’S MAT 99?
Why are we moving away from MAT 99 and towards “labs” for MAT 100 and MAT 101?

Canvas is here!
Need help?
online@usm.edu

Student Success Series discussion of diversity
Monday 11/13 at 3:30pm in Cook Library Art Gallery

What’s going on in your Southern Miss spot?
Share your student success events with us to help coordinate!
a.c.miller@usm.edu
RETENTION & faculty

Keeping more students enrolled until graduation... what does it take?

Nationally, institutions of higher education are focused on retention and how we encourage admitted students to persist to graduation. At Southern Miss, retention of students is critical to institutional stability as well as the personal and professional growth of the students themselves. We can and should improve the rates at which our freshmen, sophomores, and transfer first-years in particular are kept at the university. The most likely groups to leave Southern Miss are males, non-white students, those receiving Pell grants, and those not living on campus. We also see national patterns reflected here—those who are connected to peers, staff, and faculty are far more likely to continue.

We say that “retention is everyone’s job” because all of us interact with students and thus can influence whether each student is able to push through challenges or makes the decision to leave. Small or routine interactions can dramatically impact the retention of these students. Sometimes, of course, students leave for reasons we cannot control—significant financial stress, personal crises, family illnesses, and so on. But most of the time the obstacles are not insurmountable, if students believe that hard work will lead to success and they use the resources available to them.

Research on retention consistently shows that the relationships between students and faculty members are the most critical to their retention. Does that mean that faculty need to take extreme measures to bond with students and continuously keep them enrolled, regardless of their performance or needs? Certainly not. What national research shows us and what we see reflected in data collected at USM is clear: Students want and need faculty to engage them in the classroom, articulate that success is possible with hard work, and be approachable during office hours. Those are the most critical elements to student success, and they are primarily in the hands of faculty. No one has more “face time” with students than faculty; classes provide a forum for continuous, regular interaction with a set of students, typically for over 2000 minutes per term. What is said and done during that time shapes the choices that students make. There are some students, of course, who will excel regardless of what a faculty member does; similarly, others will fail regardless of anyone’s support or effort. But a wide swath in the middle could go either way.

The most significant variable impacting student motivation to work in a class is a perception that the faculty member cares about them. What makes a student see a faculty member as “caring”? Telling the students what work is expected and that they can be successful if they try; interacting in class to see if students are getting it and adapting teaching methods based on feedback; using humor; encouraging students to come by office hours. Simple elements such as these can have a huge impact on student motivation. If students come by office hours or work with a GA or undergraduate learning assistant, they can learn about how to better prepare for the course (e.g., study strategies and note-taking). Conversations in office hours also provide a time to get to know students and encourage their involvement on campus and in their major, as we no that impacts retention.

In addition to faculty time with students, we have a large network of resources for student support (see the Student Success website). Staff in various areas will work individually with students to support faculty efforts. Please also note that the Center for Faculty Development maintains a list of resources and offers regular teaching forums and other opportunities for faculty. Thank you for all you do for students!
The Speaking Center and Writing Center, both located in Cook Library, offer students, faculty, and staff at Southern Miss individualized support for an array of writing and/or speaking projects. Undergraduate students often need substantial development of their communication skills, and these Centers provide guidance both to the students directly and also to the faculty and staff with whom they work.

The **Writing Center** is a tutorial service available to any Southern Miss student who wants help with a writing project. The Center offers one-on-one writing instruction designed to help students become more self-sufficient and effective writers. Writing Center tutors are trained to help with any writing assignment, for any class, in any discipline. These tutors, both highly-trained and knowledgeable, work with thousands of students every year, helping them clarify their thoughts and determine ways to proceed with their projects. The Center is open 44 hours per week to be available to as many students as possible. The Center also provides in-class and in-center orientation sessions and presentations on writing-related topics. It is located in Cook Library, Room 112, next door to Starbucks and can be reached at 601-266-4644.

The **Southern Miss Speaking Center** is a nationally-renowned program that supports students, staff, and faculty across campus, in any discipline, on any aspect of oral communication. Graduate and undergraduate peer consultants are highly trained to work with speakers on everything from early brainstorming and outlining to delivery practice and critical self-reflection. The Speaking Center also offers workshops for classes and campus groups on topics such as speech apprehension, visual aids, verbal and nonverbal communication, and audience analysis. The thoughtfully-designed and welcoming facility, located on the first floor of Cook Library adjacent to the Writing Center, includes four small practice rooms, a common area, and a classroom equipped with technology for recording and viewing presentations. Stop by the Center or call 601.266.4965 to learn more.

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**STEM Capstone Workshop Series: Spring 2018**

*Are you a faculty member in a STEM discipline who teaches a Capstone course?* If so, you are invited to apply for a specialized 8-hour workshop series on Speaking and Writing Pedagogies in STEM fields. The series will consist of four consecutive two-hour sessions, 1-3pm Wednesdays, starting February 14 and ending on March 7, 2018. Faculty who complete the entire series will earn a certificate from the Center for Faculty Development. Want more information? Contact Laura Stengrim or Melanie Barthleme, or stop by one of the Centers.
Moving from the MAT 099 Pre-requisite to a Co-Requisite Model

Nationwide, a significant percentage of high school graduates require “remediation” before they are ready for a college-level mathematics course. Roughly 40% of students entering Southern Miss require some form of math “remediation”; this is twice the national average for universities but lower than a typical two-year school rate. Research demonstrates that delivery of pre-requisite remediation (e.g., MAT 099) is costly for the institution and the student and is not the best strategy for maximizing the number of students who successfully complete the subsequent credit-bearing courses.

Drawing on national and local research, the Department of Mathematics at USM is piloting a co-requisite model this fall in which students co-enroll in MAT 101 (College Algebra) and an accompanying “lab” section to receive additional support and instruction. Indications thus far are that the pilot is going well, and we plan to expand to a full co-requisite model in spring 2018.

With a co-requisite model:

- Students take the credit-bearing course (MAT 100 or MAT 101, depending on major) \textbf{and} an associated lab section (MAT 100L or MAT 101L) at the same time;

- The lab content is designed to provide additional support and instruction to those with lower ACT scores in math and others who elect to enroll; \textbf{and}

- Students are able to complete the required sequence in \textbf{one} term rather than the two needed for MAT 099 followed by either MAT 100 or 101.

Big Changes for Entry-Level Math

MAT 100 and MAT 101

Selecting the right start for students...

At USM, we offer two primary entry-level mathematics courses with different foci and intended audiences. Some degree plans require that students take MAT 101 (College Algebra); others also allow MAT 100 (Quantitative Reasoning). Factors to keep in mind:

- Those students who plan to take Calculus should start with \textbf{MAT 101}, as that will give them the foundation needed for that next step.

- Students in majors with only one math required or who require statistics should consider advising students into \textbf{MAT 100} for their requirement, as this course will introduce them to fundamentals of mathematical thinking and core concepts in statistics.

OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS and PLACEMENT POLICIES

Students with math sub-scores below 20 on the ACT should enroll in an entry-level mathematics course in their first semester or as soon as possible:
- MAT 100 \textbf{and} MAT 100L \textbf{OR}
- MAT 101 \textbf{and} MAT101L

The choice of which course should be made based on the degree plan requirements in consultation with the student’s advisor.

Students with math sub-scores of 20 or better on the ACT should enroll in either MAT 100 or MAT 101 their first semester, and they can elect to add the lab section if they need or want additional support.
Alumna Sheena Allen Develops App to Promote Financial Health

As a senior at Southern Miss in 2011, Sheena Allen developed her first app and was hooked; her career quickly took off following graduation, taking her to the Silicon Valley, Austin, Texas, and ultimately New York. She describes her most recent app, CapWay, as the “gamification of finance.” With this app, she hopes to educate young people on critical financial matters and help them to improve their financial knowledge and well-being over time.

We are excited to announce that Southern Miss is serving as the beta test site for CapWay, starting this fall. First, we will partner with Allen to gather data on students’ financial knowledge and begin testing the app, gathering feedback from student ambassadors as we go. Next, in spring 2018, Allen’s team will release gaming opportunities to students in the app; through gaming, they will continue to learn about loans, credit cards, budgeting, and other critical financial topics. With the CapWay implementation, USM will also gain valuable new information about students’ financial literacy and behaviors. That information will guide CapWay’s development and simultaneously help us better understand our students’ financial health and behavior.

Allen is driven by a passion for the financially underserved and a desire to prevent people from falling victim to predatory lenders. Through her work, she strives to help those who are low-income and/or unbanked learn more about money management and how to use banking systems to build credit and financial stability. Read more about CapWay on their website. We are excited about this partnership and look forward to seeing the app develop through use (see below on how you can help!).

Want to help? Ask students to download the app and answer the questions to help guide the game development; the more students participate, the more helpful the app will be. Southern Miss students who download the app will be also be entered in a drawing to win a cash prize or one of two Apple watches! CapWay is currently available for iPhone and will soon be downloadable for Android here.
Did you know?

A new Learning Space Committee at Southern Miss focuses on learning space design, development and implementation on campus. A current project involves creation of a large classroom space in Harkins Hall to provide faculty who utilize active learning techniques with a more functional classroom environment. This classroom will seat roughly 180 students and will be used beginning in spring 2018, primarily for QEP Gateways courses. Look for more details (and pictures) in future newsletters.

RESOURCES FOR SYLLABUS DEVELOPMENT

The website for the Office of the Provost contains a variety of resources that may be useful in developing syllabi. In particular, we have a page of guidelines to summarize what is required and some optional elements. Interested faculty can also download a template to use. Suggestions for what should be included? Email Provost@usm.edu.

KEY ACADEMIC CALENDAR DATES

November 1: Last day for students to apply for May 2018 graduation without a fee
November 22-24: Thanksgiving Holidays
December 8: Commencement
December 11: Semester grades due
December 11-19 and January 4-12: Winter Intersession
January 16: Spring semester classes begin

TEACHING FORUM

THURSDAY, NOV 2
IC 319 (Center for Faculty Development)
3:45-4:45

Encouraging Diversity and Inclusiveness in Your Classrooms
Join Dr. Holly Foster (Educational Research and Administration) and Dr. Jennifer Regan (Biological Sciences) to learn about ways to establish and maintain safe, civil learning environments for our diverse student body.

REGISTER HERE

FIRST DAY OF CLASS TIPS

Note that the Provost’s office page on the first day of class offers suggestions as well as links to a variety of first day resources.

Students can now download the Pocket Points app to earn points by locking their phones during class. Earned points can then be redeemed for online purchases or discounts and local restaurants. After downloading the app, Southern Miss students should enter the code “SMTTT” to get bonus points. Local businesses can also contact the company to be added to the program.