



The Road to **STATE'S REAFFIRMATION** 2015



WVSU's Dedication to Recruitment and Retention

As we learn more about the reaffirmation of accreditation each week in *The Road to State's Reaffirmation 2015*, we will examine how select elements of West Virginia State University (WVSU) campus life and culture interact with the Self-Study Report. It is essential that the University demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs. As a result, let us briefly examine recruitment and retention at West Virginia State University.

WVSU is acutely aware of the importance of retention, persistence and completion of degrees offered at the institution. Recognizing the impact that student services, faculty and staff interactions and institutional commitment have on WVSU's ability to retain and graduate students, the University implemented a variety of improvement strategies and enhancements to ensure students progress academically and graduate in a timely fashion. These strategies were driven in part by the reorganization of the structure of the University in response to the separation of the community college component of the institution, which resulted in a rather sudden reduction in student enrollment. Despite that reduction, the University is making strides in increasing its student enrollment. This change provided the opportunity to improve the quality of efforts to ensure student success in terms of persistence and graduation.

The major enhancement implemented by the University to increase student enrollment and to monitor retention, persistence, and completion at the institution was to move from a decentralized recruitment and student service entity to an enrollment management model that links all facets of the WVSU student journey from entry to graduation under one unit. The newly created Division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs was introduced in July 2012. This strategic organizational change has allowed the University to coordinate enrollment, retention and graduation efforts and to utilize strategies that facilitate student persistence and success.

The University has engaged in a number of initiatives, many implemented since summer 2012, to follow best practices and updated productive approaches in its efforts to recruit, retain and graduate students. Recruitment and retention initiatives are informed by data and intentional efforts to review and respond to data trends. The University is poised to provide one-to-one student support from the time a student makes an inquiry as a prospective student through to graduation.

New academic programs, such as the energy management concentration and the 2+2 in engineering, along with new facilities, including the Judge Damon J. Keith Scholars Hall, the D. Stephen and Diane H. Walker Convocation Center and the Gregory V. Monroe Athletic Complex, provide tremendous support to recruitment and retention efforts.

Recruitment

During the past two years, the University has enhanced recruitment programs resulting in increased applications, admission offers and enrolled students. The University utilizes the following initiatives in an effort to increase retention efforts:

- Increased and Improved Outreach;
- Territory Management;
- Timely Admission Decisions and Follow-up;
- Events;
- Scholarships; and
- Timely Awarding of Financial Aid.



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Retention

Recruitment is vital to the University, but to achieve the enrollment results the University requires, it must focus on retention, as well. In January 2014, a University Retention and Student Success Council was formed, co-chaired by the Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs and the Assistant Provost/Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. Council representation includes students, faculty and staff. The Council is working to create a retention plan with input provided by a variety of sources, including recommendations from the Degree Completion Task Force. It is anticipated that the plan will focus on student advising, the use of DegreeWorks (MyDegree@State) and degree paths, compiling and sharing data, and improvements to orientation together with other new initiatives. In addition, the University is engaged in a variety of ongoing retention activities as follows:

- More faculty members are using the faculty referral (early alert) system with staff follow-up to each referral.
- More students are encouraged to use available tutoring services, including Smarthinking, a free online tutoring program; in-person tutoring; and one-on-one meetings with an Academic Affairs staff member and at-risk students.
- Support departments for military students and adult and commuter students opened in fall 2012. A food pantry opened in March 2013, and a campus clothes closet to assist students in creating a positive impression in interviews, internships and jobs opened in spring 2014.
- An improved one-stop service was created by co-locating the Cashier's Office, Registration and Records and Financial Aid in the same area of Ferrell Hall, facilitating easy navigation for students.
- Staff members are contacting students the University believes should have registered, but did not.
- Staff members are conducting exit interviews/communications with students who withdraw to set the stage for a student's return.

Under the new enrollment management model and University leadership, the University increased overall student enrollment by 1.2 percent and its undergraduate enrollment by approximately 2.4 percent from fall 2012 to fall 2013. An examination of the data shows that the increase is primarily attributed to a tremendous boost in the enrollment of first-time freshmen (43.6 percent) and new graduate students (53.8 percent).

For more information about The Road to State's Reaffirmation 2015, please click [here](#) to discover in-depth information about the process, read the University's Self-Study Report and more!

For questions or comments regarding the University's reaffirmation of accreditation process or the self-study report, please send all inquiries and information to reaffirmation@wvstateu.edu or call (304) 204-4300.