Project Storm Spotter
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Georgia Southwestern State University, Home of the Hurricanes

Background
Georgia Southwestern State University’s (GSW) student population has special challenges in completing college.
47% receive Pell Grants
57% first-generation
24% begin college as adults
31% 25 or older
54% in one or more online class
27% live on campus

Project Storm Spotters Synopsis
1. Use data-proven method to identify non-cognitive student risk;
2. Develop data-driven responses to individual student risk factors through peer mentoring program;
3. Develop long-term, data-driven institutional strategies based on aggregated data of student risk.

Fall 2013 administered College Persistence Questionnaire (CPQ) to first-year students in the orientation course. Each student received success plan based on individual risks.

Storm Spotters, peer mentors/co-instructors assigned to each orientation class, provided immediate support mentoring students throughout the term. Aggregated data collected to develop data-driven, targeted institutional retention strategies.

Storm Spotter Project Objectives:
1. Improve Fall-to-Fall retention of first-year full-time cohort;
2. Identify individual student risk factors;
3. Provide peer mentoring and student success plans;
4. Develop strategies for GSW’s specific retention issues.

Fall-to-Fall Retention, First-Term GPA
Credits Hours Earned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Retention Rate</th>
<th>% Above 2.0 Fall Term</th>
<th>% 15+ Credits Fall Term</th>
<th>% 30+ Credits Fall &amp; Spring</th>
<th>% 28+ Credits Fall &amp; Spring</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>15.2</td>
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<td>2012</td>
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<td>74.4</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>17.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>10.8</td>
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<td>68.7</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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Results of Project Storm Spotters
1. F-to-F retention up 5% in one year (7% over two).
2. First-years earning 2.0+ GPA up 12% in two years.
3. First-years earning 15+ credits first term up 3 fold.
4. First-years earning 30+ credits first two terms more than doubled in two years.

Key Findings of Project Storm Spotters
1. Retention gains were achieved while increasing our expectations for academic achievement.
2. Providing data allowed us to shift the conversation from anecdotal and preconceived notions about why our retention is low to evidence based strategies and discussion.
3. Data indicate GSW’s key areas of risk for retention are academic integration and social engagement. Other areas of risk are academic self-efficacy and motivation to learn.
4. Peer mentoring is a key component to student support.