Attrition Study
2001-2003

Overall Findings

1. Students leaving Creighton within four semesters are more likely than those who did not leave within four semesters to have the following characteristics:
    a. Their cumulative GPA at the end of the first semester was under 2.0.
    b. They were accepted on a conditional basis.
    c. They lived off-campus their first year at Creighton.
    d. Their permanent place of residence was the Omaha area.
    e. They did not join a Creighton social sorority or fraternity.
2. Except for Hispanic students, the 4 semester attrition rate for ethnic minority students decreased dramatically from 2001 to 2003.
    a. Eighty-two percent of the African American students who entered Creighton in fall 2003 were retained into the fifth semester compared to the retention of only sixty-five percent of the African American students entering Creighton in fall 2001.
    b. Sixty-seven percent of the Native American students who entered Creighton in fall 2003 were retained into the fifth semester compared to the retention of only forty-five percent of the Native American students entering Creighton in fall 2001.
    c. Sixty-one percent of the Hispanic students who entered Creighton in fall 2003 were retained into the fifth semester compared to the retention of seventy-three percent of the Hispanic students entering Creighton in fall 2001.
    d. Seventy-nine percent of the Caucasian students who entered Creighton in fall 2003 were retained into the fifth semester compared to the retention of eighty-one percent of the Caucasian students entering Creighton in fall 2001.

The basis for each finding is listed below.

Introduction

Fr. Schlegel requested John Pierce and Mary Higgins to look into the attrition rate of ethnic minority students and determine strategies for improving their retention. Mr. Pierce and Mrs. Higgins requested that Institutional Research look at the attrition data and prepare a report that would assist the University to understand the characteristics of the students who leave Creighton. Rather than focusing exclusively on ethnic minority students, this report also examined the data that has proven to have an impact on retention in the past: academic progress (i.e. grades), housing arrangements (living on or off campus), Omaha area as the home residence and Greek affiliation. The first part of the report examines all of these factors for those students entering Creighton as first-time, full-time freshmen in 2001, 2002, and 2003.

The second part of the report brings the reader up-to-date with an examination by ethnicity of two semester and one semester retention for the classes entering in 2004 and 2005.

Part One

Cumulative GPA at the End of the First Semester 2001-2003

Slightly more than 3 out of 10 students who started at Creighton as first-time, full-time freshmen in the Fall of 2001, 2002, and 2003 and received less than a 2.0 at the end of their first semester were still attending Creighton after four semesters. Over the three year period, 116 of the 175 students earning less than a 2.0 in their first semester (66%) had left Creighton by the beginning of the fifth semester – 34% retention. By contrast, for those same three years, 17% of the students achieving over a 2.0 in the first semester left the University by the beginning of the fifth semester – 83% retention.

First semester grade point average	2001	2002	2003
GPA less than 2.0	56	60	59
Number of students with 1st semester GPA under 2.0 who left CU before their 5th semester	35	40	41
Percent lost after 4 semesters	63%	67%	69%
GPA greater than 2.0	707	741	877
Number of students with 1st semester GPA greater than 2.0 who left CU before their 5th semester	125	118	161
Percent lost after 4 semesters	18%	16%	18%

Conditional Acceptance 2001-2003

For those freshmen entering Creighton in the Fall of 2001, 2002 and 2003, an average of 39% of the students accepted on a "conditional" basis had left Creighton before the beginning of the 5th semester compared to an average loss of 15% of those students not accepted on a conditional basis.

Type of Acceptance	2001	2002	2003
Number of Conditional Acceptances	97	59	29
Left after 1st year	27 (28%)	15 (25%)	4 (14%)
Left after 2nd year	11 (11%)	8 (15%)	10 (34%)
TOTAL lost	38 (39%)	23 (39%)	14 (48%)
Number of Full/Non-Conditional Acceptances	666	742	907
Left after 1st year	75 (11%)	83 (11%)	115 (13%)
Left after 2nd year	56 (8%)	52 (7%)	7 (8%)
TOTAL lost	131 (20%)	135 (18%)	122 (13%)

First-Year Living Arrangements 2001-2003

Overall, 81% of the first-time, full-time freshmen who entered Creighton in the fall of 2001, 2002 and 2003 and lived on campus their first semester were retained into junior year. Overall, only 64% of the first-time, full-time freshmen who entered Creighton in the fall of 2001, 2002 and 2003 and lived off campus their first semester were retained into junior year. If the off-campus students had been retained at the same percentage as those living on-campus, Creighton would have realized an additional 16 students of those entering in 2001, 12 students of those entering in 2002, and 19 students of those entering in 2003 and the resulting tuition revenue.

First-Year Living Arrangements	2001	2002	2003
Number Living Off-Campus	75	89	99
Left after 1st year	20 (27%)	16 (18%)	26 (26%)
Left after 2nd year	9 (12%)	12 (13%)	12 (12%)
TOTAL lost	29 (39%)	28 (31%)	38 (38%)
Number Living On-Campus	688	713	837
Left after 1st year	72 (11%)	82 (12%)	93 (11%)
Left after 2nd year	50 (7%)	48 (7%)	70 (8%)
TOTAL lost	122 (18%)	130 (18%)	163 (19%)

Permanent Home Residence 2001-2003

By junior year, Creighton lost 17% of the first-time, full-time freshmen who entered in the fall of 2001, 2002 and 2003 and did not permanently reside in the metropolitan Omaha area. However, 23% of the first-time, full-time freshmen who entered during that time and did permanently reside in metropolitan Omaha had left the University by the beginning of their fifth semester. As an average of 32% of the first-time, full-time students enrolling as freshmen during those three years were from the Omaha area, even a small increase in the retention rate would yield significant additional students and tuition revenue. A two percent increase in retention of the Omaha area students would net five additional students in 2001 and 2002 and six additional students in 2003.

Permanent Home Residence		2001	2002	2003
Omaha/Council Bluffs		274	243	285
	Left after 1st year	41 (15%)	26 (11%)	44 (15%)
	Left after 2nd year	21 (8%)	27 (11%)	36 (13%)
	TOTAL lost	62 (23%)	53 (22%)	80 (28%)
Non Omaha/Council Bluffs		489	559	651
	Left after 1st year	61 (12%)	72 (13%)	75 (12%)
	Left after 2nd year	37 (8%)	33 (6%)	47 (7%)
	TOTAL lost	122 (18%)	105 (19%)	122 (19%)

Membership in a Greek Organization 2001-2003

We know from the literature and experience that the more a student is engaged or involved in activities both in and outside the classroom, the more they are likely to be retained. While there are many activities in which students could become involved, and any involvement may yield the same results, approximately 30% of each entering class participates in the Greek system and a listing of their members is readily available. As most students do not join the Greek system until the second semester of their freshman year, the data below do not include students who left Creighton after their first semester because they did not have the opportunity to be part of these groups. It is unknown whether or not the Greek system helps keep students at Creighton or whether those attracted to the Greek system have already made the decision to complete their college education at Creighton. However, the data show that Creighton retains a significantly higher percentage of students who are part of the Greek system than students who opt not to join the Greek system.

Involvement in the Greek System	2001	2002	2003
Member of a sorority or fraternity	203	214	294
Left after 2nd semester	0 (0%)	2 (0.9%)	8 (3%)
Left after 3rd or 4th semester	1 (0.5%	6 (3%)	19 (6%)
TOTAL lost	1 (0.5%)	8 (4%)	27 (9%)
Not members of a sorority or fraternity	560	588	642
Left after 2nd semester	79 (14%)	58 (10%)	73 (11%)
Left after 3rd or 4th semester	57 (10%)	54 (9%)	63 (10%)
TOTAL lost	136 (24%)	112 (19%)	136 (21%)

Native American Students 2001-2003

Forty-five percent of the Native American students who started at Creighton as first-time, full-time freshmen from 2001 to 2003 (15 of 33) had left Creighton after two years. While not minimizing other struggles these Native American students may have had with their adjustment to Creighton, their academic background, as evidenced by an average ACT score of 22, was not as strong as other Creighton students who averaged an ACT of 26 during those three years. The average grade point average for these Native American students was significantly lower than the average grade point average for all students with an average of one-third achieving less than a 2.0 during the first semester. As is evidenced later in the report, being more selective academically has increased our retention rate of Native American students.

Native American Students	2001	2002	2003
Number enrolling	11	10	12
Range of ACT scores	16-28	17-27	16-29
Mean of ACT scores (average score)	22	22	22
Average 1st semester GPA for Native American students	2.15	2.21	2.18
Average 1st semester GPA for all students	3.08	3.12	3.13
Number achieving less than 2.0 first semester	4 (36% of those enrolling)	3 (30% of those enrolling)	6 (50% of those enrolling)
Those achieving less than 2.0 who left after 4 semesters	4 (100% of those achieving less than a 2.0))	3 (100% of those achieving less than a 2.0.)	3 (50% of those achieving less than a 2.0.)
Total percent lost after 2 semesters	55% (6)	30% (3)	25% (3)
Total percent lost after 4 semesters	55% (6)	50% (5)	33% (4)

African American Students 2001-2003

While twenty-five percent of the African American students who started at Creighton as first-time, full-time freshmen from 2001 to 2003 (15 of 60) had left Creighton after two years, one can see that the four semester retention rate of this group of students is improving. The average first semester GPA for African American students is also improving and in 2003 surpassed the average first semester GPA for all students.

The data regarding retention of African American indicates the University did a better job of retaining metropolitan Omaha area students into the fifth semester in 2003 than in 2001. In 2001, forty percent (6 of 15) metropolitan Omaha area students left by the beginning of their fifth semester. In 2003, the percentage of metropolitan Omaha area students leaving Creighton by the beginning of their fifth semester dropped to 27% (3 of 11).

African American Students	2001	2002	2003
Number enrolling	20	18	22
Range of ACT scores	15-30	17-30	16-30
Mean of ACT scores (average score)	23	23	23
Average 1st semester GPA for African American students	2.60	2.68	3.17
Average 1st semester GPA for all students	3.08	3.12	3.13
Number achieving less than 2.0 first semester	5 (25% of those enrolling)	4 (22% of those enrolling)	1 (5% of those enrolling)
Those achieving less than 2.0 who left after semesters	4 (80%of those achieving less than a 2.0.)	2 (50% of those achieving less than a 2.0.)	1 (100% of those achieving less than a 2.0.)
Total percent lost after 2 semesters	25% (5)	17% (3)	9% (2)
Total percent lost after 4 semesters	35% (7)	28% (5)	18% (4)

Hispanic Students 2001-2003

Retention of Hispanic students dropped dramatically with the class enrolling in fall 2003. As seen with the African American students, the geographical diversity of Hispanic students increased from 2001 when 50% of the students were from Omaha to 2003 when 34% of the Hispanic students were from Omaha. However, while losing a slightly higher percentage of Omaha students in 2003 than in 2001, Creighton was more successful retaining the out-of-state students in 2001. In 2001 only one of the non-Omaha Hispanic students left Creighton after four semesters (9%), in 2003, eight of the 25 non-Omaha students left Creighton after four semesters (32%).

Hispanic Students	2001	2002	2003
Number enrolling	22	22	38
Range of ACT scores	19-28	18-29	17-31
Mean of ACT scores (average score)	23	23	24
Average 1st semester GPA for Hispanic students	2.62	3.01	2.66
Average 1st semester GPA for all students	3.08	3.12	3.13
Number achieving less than 2.0 first semester	4 (18% of those enrolling)	0	6 (16% of those enrolling)
Those achieving less than 2.0 who left after 4 semesters	3 (75% of those achieving less than a 2.0.)	0	5 (83% of those achieving less than a 2.0.)
Total percent lost after 2 semesters	23% (5)	5% (1)	18% (7)
Total percent lost after 4 semesters	27% (6)	9% (2)	39% (15)

Asian/Pacific Island Students 2001-2003

The Asian students attracted to Creighton are generally very good students who are retained at higher levels than any other ethnic group. The mean entering ACT score of the Asian students from 2001 to 2003 was equal to or slightly above the Creighton average and the first semester GPAs were generally (two of three years) than the average for all freshmen.

Asian/Pacific Island Students	2001	2002	2003
Number enrolling	49	64	64
Range of ACT scores	16-32	17-34	15-34
Mean of ACT scores (average score)	26	27	26
Average 1st semester GPA for Asian/Pacific Island students	3.14	3.16	3.08
Average 1st semester GPA for all students	3.08	3.12	3.13
Number achieving less than 2.0 first semester	3 (6% of those enrolling)	4 (6% of those enrolling)	5 (8% of those enrolling)
Those achieving less than 2.0 who leave after 4 semesters	3 (100% of those achieving less than a 2.0.)	3 (75% of those achieving less than a 2.0.)	2 (40% of those achieving less than a 2.0.)
Total percent lost after 2 semesters	4% (2)	11% (7)	5% (3)
Total percent lost after 4 semesters	18% (9)	19% (12)	16% (10)

Caucasian Students 2001-2003

As we have seen with the other ethnic groups, first semester GPA appears to be a significant contributor to whether or not Caucasian students stay at Creighton.

In 2001, six Caucasian students were either “no-shows” or left at some point during the first semester which resulted in earning a semester GPA of 0.00. If those students are removed, the average GPA of the remaining eleven Caucasian students leaving after the first semester was 3.19. The seven students with GPAs over 3.30 enrolled at University of Iowa (2 – both Iowa residents), Nebraska Wesleyan (2), University of St. Thomas (Minnesota resident), University of Portland (Idaho resident), and University of Minnesota (Minnesota resident).

In 2002, ten Caucasian students were either “no-shows” or left at some point during the first semester which resulted in earning a semester GPA of 0.00. If those students are removed, the average GPA of the remaining 22 Caucasian students leaving after the first semester was 2.65, much lower than in 2001. Of the five students who left earning higher than a 3.3 we could trace one to Nebraska Methodist, one to Marquette, one to Sierra College, and one to Iowa Western.

In 2003, seven Caucasian students were either “no-shows” or left at some point during the first semester which resulted in earning a semester GPA of 0.00. If those students are removed, the average GPA of the remaining 22 Caucasian students leaving after the first semester was 2.83. Of the seven students who left earning higher than a 3.3 four went to state institutions in their home states, two who were from Nebraska transferred to Lincoln, and one transferred to St. Louis University.

Caucasian Students	2001	2002	2003
Number enrolling	645	675	775
Range of ACT scores	17-34	17-35	17-35
Mean of ACT scores (average score)	26	26	26
Average 1st semester GPA for Caucasian students	3.12	3.17	3.17
Average 1st semester GPA for all students	3.08	3.12	3.13
Number achieving less than 2.0 first semester	40 (6% of those enrolling)	49 (7% of those enrolling)	41 (5% of those enrolling)

Caucasian Students (cont)	2001	2002	2003
Those achieving less than 2.0 who leave after 4 semesters	22 (55% of those achieving less than a 2.0.)	32 (65% of those achieving less than a 2.0.)	30 (73% of those achieving less than a 2.0.)
Total percent lost after 2 semesters	13% (81)	12% (82)	13% (104)
Total percent lost after 4 semesters	19% (126)	20% (132)	21% (164)

Part Two

Review of 2004 Entering Students by Ethnicity

Native American Students 2004. It does not appear that Creighton will improve its retention rate of Native American students with the twenty who entered in 2004. The range of ACT scores was 15 to 27 and their mean ACT score was lower than the previous year (21 compared to 22). Their 1st semester grade point average was 2.07 (compared to 3.12 for all students). Nine students (45%) achieved less than a 2.0 at the end of the first semester, four of whom left the University at the end of their first year (20%). An additional student earning les than a 2.0 took a leave of absence. The other four returned to Creighton for their second year but it is unlikely that at least two will survive academically (1.388 gpa and 1.416 gpa).

African American Students 2004. It does not appear that Creighton will improve its retention rate of African American students with the twenty-six who entered in 2004. The range of ACT scores was 17 to 28 and their mean ACT score was lower than the previous three years (21 compared to 23). The 1st semester grade point average of these African-American students was 2.59, lower than the previous three years. Five students (19%) achieved less than a 2.0 at the end of the first semester, the highest number to do so since 2001. Three of the five African-American students who achieved less than a 2.0 at the end of the first semester had left Creighton by the beginning of the third semester for a loss of 12%.

Hispanic Students 2004. The 36 Hispanic students starting at Creighton in the fall of 2004 had an average ACT of 24, equal to the previous year. Their first semester grades were slightly better than the previous year (2.88 compared to 2.66) but five students earned less than a 2.0. Three of these students did not return for their third semester as did one student earning over a 2.0 for a loss of 11% after the first year. Three of the four students who left after the first semester were from Omaha and lived off-campus their first semester.

Asian/Pacific Island Students 2004. The 82 Asian students starting their undergraduate studies in the fall of 2004 looked very much like the Asian students arriving in 2002 academically. The range of ACT scores, mean ACT and first semester grade point average were almost identical. While more 2004 freshmen (7) had less than a 2.0 grade point average at the end of the 1st semester (compared to four in 2002), the percentage having left Creighton after two semesters is about the same. In 2004, ten percent (8) of the Asian students left Creighton after two semesters – almost three times as many students as had left by the end of second semester in 2003.

Caucasian Students 2004. While the data show that forty-six of the seven hundred ninety-six Caucasian students who entered Creighton in the fall of 2004 earned less than a 2.0 at the end of the first semester, eleven (almost ¼) were either “no-shows” or dropped out during the fist semester

resulting in a 0.00 GPA. The over-all percentage of Caucasian students lost after two semesters was within the typical 12% range, however.

Review of 2005 Entering Students by Ethnicity

Native American Students 2005. The Native American students entering in 2005 reflect an obvious change in recruiting tactics which should be reflected in significantly improved retention. Only fourteen students enrolled but the range of their ACT scores was 20 to 29 with an average of 23. These fourteen students had a combined GPA of 3.27 after the first semester, higher than the average GPA for all students of 3.19. Further, no Native American students left after the first semester!

African-American Students 2005. Thirty-five African American students entered Creighton in the fall of 2005, the largest number to do so since at least 1991. Their ACT range was 18 to 34 and the mean ACT was 23, up from 21 the previous year. The average 1st semester GPA for these students was 2.95 but three African American students earned less than a 2.0. Two of those three students did not return for their second semester. However, because the number enrolling fall 2005 was so large, Creighton should experience a higher retention rate for this group than previously see with African American students.

Hispanic Students 2005. The 38 Hispanic students who started at Creighton in the fall of 2005 are very similar academically to the 38 Hispanic students entering in 2003 –the same range of ACT scores and the same mean ACT of 24. The 2005 students however, had a stronger 1st semester GPA (3.01 compared to 2.66) and only one student achieved less than a 2.0 (compared to 6 in 2003). Only one Hispanic student left Creighton after the first semester.

Asian/Pacific Island Students 2005. The 91 Asian students starting as freshmen at Creighton in the fall of 2005 are academically superior to those previously described. While the mean ACT is identical to the previous years' the range of scores is an impressive 19 to 34. The average 1st semester GPA was 3.35, higher than the average GPA for all students of 3.19. Two Asian students achieved less than a 2.0 after their first semester but both remained at Creighton for the second semester. Two other Asian/Pacific Island students did leave Creighton after the first semester so the 2005 retention rate for this group will no doubt exceed 2001 and 2003 rates.

Caucasian Students 2005. While the data show that forty-two of the seven hundred eighty-eight Caucasian students who entered Creighton in the fall of 2005 earned less than a 2.0 at the end of the first semester, thirteen (31%) were either "no-shows" or dropped out during the fist semester resulting in a 0.00 GPA.

Conclusions

1. As the quality of ethnic minority student has increased (as measured by high school academic preparation and test scores), their retention has increased.
2. Factors such as being accepted on a conditional basis, not living on campus during the first semester, being from the metropolitan Omaha are and achieving less than a 2.0 at the end of the first semester contribute to student attrition.

Recommendations

1. The University needs to develop an honest yet viable strategy for dealing with the "no-show"/"1st semester drop-out" issue. Resolution of this issue alone could impact our retention rate by at least one percentage point.

2. Preliminary information from the National Student Clearinghouse indicates that we lose many Omaha students to University of Nebraska, Omaha. A more detailed study of the students who leave Creighton for U.N.O. needs to be undertaken to examine possible differences in factors such as family income, major field of study and high school attended.

3. A complete retention study needs to be done which combines admissions data, financial aid information and Creighton academic progress to date with August and April freshmen survey data. This study should be completed by the beginning of the 2006-07 academic year.

4. The University needs to implement a strategy for the completion of an exit interview by all students who leave the University. The University needs to study other institutions where this strategy has been successful and develop a model that can be successfully implemented at Creighton.

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