

Academic Department Student Success Plan Update 2015-2018

Department: Social Studies Education

Department Chair: Daniel A. Clark

Department Mission: To prepare students for the profession of teaching in secondary education by developing their knowledge in the fields of the Social Studies (Economics, Geography, Government, History, Psychology and Sociology) and their understanding of the distinct pedagogy of these fields.

Department Freshmen (1st year) Retention¹ Goal(s):

If one examines the long-term trends comparing the retention data for the latest college or dept., the trend is improving from a low of 42% back in FA 09 to a consistent performance in the upper 50s and 60s with a high of 70% in FA13. This likely displays the impact of University College. For SSE majors persistence within the Dept. (i.e. retention by original college or dept.) offers a more consistent picture and there the trend has been consistently in the upper 60s with a recent 71.8% for FA 14. A backward tick in original dept. retention in FA12 and FA13, I believe reflects some of the ill-effects of the “war on teachers” in the state, most pointedly the fiscal crisis/hiring freeze, as SSE saw many of its most talented freshmen (and others) change majors, so that the average quality of the freshmen then was down within the major (although overall retention for those going to other depts., went up, indicating again perhaps the impact of university-wide retention efforts.

Aside from maintaining a good working relationship with UC advisors and making sure that our curriculum continues to function as efficiently as possible, both of which we have done, I do not see any significant steps that we could take as a department to enhance freshman retention. We already conduct a mandatory freshman meeting in the Fall of the year and coordinate this effort with the UC advisor. We have made clear the optimal classes for freshmen to take and have taken pains that most of these will be useful should the student change majors. Our curriculum revisions of last year involving the History specialization, while not helping freshman with regard to accepting dual-credit courses, were made with the integrity of the overall degree and the success of graduates at the licensing stage. It remains to be seen what kind impact, if any, this will have on retention and completion, but these changes had to be done. On the subject of UC advisors, we have had a good working relationship with them over the years of UC’s existence, but the persistent turnover of advisors in such a demanding area such as SSE cannot have ideal long-term ramifications. SSE freshmen have had a different advisor each year. Again, while all competent and hard-working, familiarity with the program and its demands cannot be listed as a strength.

The SSE retention goals should be kept modest, as my targets indicate.

Action Steps (with dates & person(s) responsible):

¹ Departments w/o undergraduates can adapt the retention and persistence to completion sections to serve their graduate student success purposes or alternatively, integrate into the Other Goal(s), Action Steps, and Benchmarks of focal interest to department section at the end of the template.

I do not see any new action steps as necessary at this point. I will continue to communicate with the UC advisor, as I have done already, and will continue to conduct the Fall mandatory freshman meeting before advising season.

<i>Retention</i>	Fall 2012 cohort:	Fall 2013 cohort:	Fall 2014 cohort:
<i>Benchmarks²</i>			
(by latest department)	55.00%	68.75%	63.69%
	Fall 2015 target:	Fall 2016 target:	Fall 2017 target:
	65%	66%	67%

Other Freshmen Retention related benchmarks of focal interest to department³

Click here to enter text.

Department Persistence to Completion Goal(s):

The general trend is decidedly upward. I would hope to sustain the trend. I will reserve official judgment, but propose that what we are perhaps witnessing in the numbers is evidence of the impact of the program change of about 3 years back, when SSE cut the number of required areas of concentration from 3 to 2, making it far more possible to graduate in four years. As stated in previous success plan statements, I believe that this program revision (requiring only 2 content areas), constituted the most important “heavy lifting” with regard to boosting completion rates. After reading the recently produced “Why Undergraduate Students Leave ISU,” and listening to Dr. Powers’ presentation on the problem, I believe that audits and contacts with students at key points in their academic careers could play an enhanced role in the SSE program. For several years (although with various levels of intentionality) since I have been SSE director, I have conducted an audit of sorts for rising juniors (so roughly at or just below the 60 credit hour level). As you might know there are certain prerequisites for acceptance into the BCP program for secondary ed run by the BCOE. I usually examine the record of all SSE majors around 50 credit hours to assess their readiness for applying to the BCP program and also then for our SS 305 (our first methods course). I do this since our SS courses are only offered once a year and if they fall out of sequence in taking them, then this severely affects their timely graduation, and I hate for this to happen. I usually contact those who have missed a pre-req, which includes a low gpa, to see what is going on. This is all in addition to the conversations they should be having with their advisors. But since I am already conducting a de facto audit at this midpoint in their academic trajectory, it certainly would not entail much more work to be more intensive about contacting students who display some troubling trends. And, upon reflection, it does seem wise to conduct another audit at the 90 credit hour level. I keep in pretty good contact with students

² Department level current and historical retention and completion benchmark data to be integrated into the plan can be found through Blue Reports: <http://irt2.indstate.edu/cms/ir/blue-reports/>.

³ A retention and completion rate is an essential benchmark, but it is not necessarily the only benchmark of interest to a department. Others of interest to the department can be integrated as well.

through that point roughly. The problem occurs after that point, when contact with some upper-level students becomes less regular. An audit around the 90 credit hour level would, I think, be helpful in keeping students on track through their student teaching and final few upper-level courses, where some of them tend to falter.

Action Steps (with dates & person(s) responsible):

Conduct audit of SSE majors at the 45-60 credit hour level and again around the 90 credit hour level. Conducted in November of the year (Fall advising time). Coordinator (Dan Clark) will be responsible.

<i>Completion</i>	Fall 2009 cohort:	Fall 2010 cohort:	Fall 2011 cohort:
<i>Benchmarks</i>			
(by latest department)	14.29%	23.53%	35.00%
	Fall 2012 target:	Fall 2013 target:	Fall 2014 target:
	36%	38%	40%

Other Persistence to Completion related benchmarks of focal interest to department

Click here to enter text.

Other Goal(s), Action Steps, and Benchmarks of focal interest to department⁴:

What concerns me frankly more than completion rates is graduate performance (passage rates) on state licensing exams. Ultimately the state and public will judge the quality of the SSE program more by this metric rather than completion rates, since it takes successful passage of the licensing exam to procure a teaching job. The recent reform of the History specialization (in essence protecting ourselves from the scourge of dual credits by demanding more upper-level courses), while not particularly helpful for completion rates, was triggered by the necessity of protecting the integrity of the curriculum and to ensuring that students have the best shot at passing the increasingly rigorous licensing exam in that field. I will continue to monitor the necessity of similar revisions regarding other fields as more data are accumulated. Additionally, I believe that upping the required gpa, either for all education majors or perhaps programmatically just for SSE majors, might become increasingly attractive. The BCOE would likely not support a blanket increase in the required gpa (now at 2.5), but more and more secondary education programs in the fields of social studies have moved to 2.8 and even 3.0 as requirements. This would certainly lower the enrollment but would also likely increase completion rates. It also would boost the passage rates for the licensing exams.

⁴ Departments may have student success related goals, action steps, and benchmarks that do not fit neatly into the other categories. If so, feel free to place them here.