



Academic Department Student Success Plan Annual Update: 2016-2019¹

Department: Economics

Department Chair: John Conant

Department Mission: The Department of Economics at Indiana State University seeks to provide high quality substantive contributions to all three traditional domains of faculty responsibility: Teaching, Research and Service. Through careful management of our resources, we provide well-rounded programs to educate students in our field (the Major and Minor in Economics) and balanced but challenging service courses in support of other University programs. Our faculty will continue to engage in high quality research that regularly results in publication in peer-reviewed academic journals, books from academic presses, and professional conference presentations. We find that this continued engagement in professional research enhances what we bring to our courses. Our faculty manage departmental affairs efficiently and cooperatively, while making substantive contributions of service at the college and university levels, as well as contributions to our professional community.

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

It is rare that students declare a major in economics during their freshman year of studies. While we teach large numbers of freshmen in lower division courses, most will not choose to major in economics. Consequently, this metric is not particularly relevant for our students' success. That said, we do seek to serve well the few students who declare our major in their first year, and our retention figures show modest success in this. Given the small numbers of students that fall into this category, we expect this measure to be volatile from year to year, but given a multi-year record, we believe a target of 85% is reasonable (6 of 7 students retained). At the same time, we also believe that in some cases students may be better served in their studies and professional lives with an alternative choice, so we do not necessarily consider lack of retention in our field to be a failure.

Action Steps² (with dates & person(s) responsible):

Effective academic advising that engages these students is the strategy we have chosen to maintain and improve on this goal. The small numbers move significantly from year to year. Three year average is 75 which is taken as the benchmark (no specific date; Donald Richards, Debra Israel, John Conant, advisors)

<i>Retention Benchmarks</i> (by original department)	Fall 2013 Cohort: 86%	Fall 2014 Cohort: 83%	Fall 2015 target & actual: 85% target 57% actual
	Fall 2016 target:	Fall 2017 target:	Fall 2018 target:

¹ Plan updates are due to your Dean by Nov. 4 as informed by your 2015-16 End-of-Year Report that is due to your Dean by Oct. 3.

² **Action Steps Defined:** The specific activities/actions taken to realize progress toward the goal. Such action steps should include not only student support type activities/actions but also student learning enhancement focused activities/actions.

78%

80%

82%

Other Freshmen Retention related benchmarks of focal interest to department

The impact of our department on freshmen retention is only tangentially related to those who have declared a major in economics. Consequently, we focus significant attention on students enrolled in lower division courses that largely serve other academic programs. Toward this end we intend to expand tutoring services for these courses, as the Center for Student Success has not been able to provide this reliably. A new initiative we will pursue is to collaborate with the Social Science & History Help Center administered by the Department of History. Given the close working relationship between the departments of History and Economics, we believe such a collaborative approach to tutoring services will be more effective.

Department Persistence to Completion Goal(s):

The benchmarks of 4-year and 6-year graduation rates for students majoring in economics should be interpreted carefully because (1) the number of students who choose to major in economics is relatively small (making the measure volatile across time) and (2) students typically declare this major only after their freshman year (making our measures biased upwards). For two of the three actual rates reported for 4-year graduation rates, our departmental figures were above those for the College of Arts and Sciences as a whole. Similarly, for three of the four actual rates reported for 6-year graduation rates, our departmental figures exceeded those of the College of Arts and Sciences.

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

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<i>Completion Benchmarks</i> (by latest department)	Fall 2010 Cohort:	Fall 2011 Cohort:	Fall 2012 target & actual:
	20%	22%	28% target 50% actual
4-year Graduation	Fall 2013 target:	Fall 2014 target:	Fall 2015 target:
	50%	52%	55%

Other Persistence to Completion related benchmarks of focal interest to department

<i>Completion Benchmarks</i> (by latest department)	Fall 2007 Cohort:	Fall 2008 Cohort:	Fall 2009 Cohort:	Fall 2010 Cohort:
	67%	0%	50%	60%
6-year Graduation	Fall 2011 target:	Fall 2012 target:	Fall 2013 target:	
	62%	64%	66%	

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

As a department, we have discussed two measures to improve our graduation rates. First, we have made some minor curriculum changes recently, which will allow students completing courses in basic economics (ECON 100 and ECON 103) to include that credit as part of the Major in Economics. We have found that, for many students, these courses are their first exposure to economics. These courses can be a viable recruiting area among those who find the field interesting. However, under the previous curriculum structure their work in these courses would not count toward the credit hour requirement for the Major in Economics. We now allow that, and we believe that this will serve both to facilitate earlier graduation and to attract more students to the field.

Second, we have begun to search for ways to enhance tutorial services for all of our classes (as mentioned above for lower division courses). These supplemental services to the basic study effort of our students will serve to raise their GPA as well as to reduce the likelihood that courses will need to be repeated, thus raising graduation rates. A better understanding of the material in basic courses will support success in the upper division courses that they must complete.

Finally, individual faculty members continue to explore pedagogical innovations seeking to more effectively engage students with the substance of our field, which can often appear as elusive and distant from actual events in the world. We commonly find that students are reluctant to involve themselves in discussion or to present questions to their instructors because they are insecure in their knowledge and reluctant to step outside their comfort zone. Some of these innovations seek to pull them out more effectively. These efforts include experimentation with a “flipped classroom” (D. Richards), field trips to local facilities related to environmental policy (R. Lotspeich and D. Israel), active work on classroom problems in small groups (K. Babb) and encouragement of students to engage in the production and presentation of original research (D. Israel).