A GREAT Place for Student Success: Conceptual Framework

The IUPUI Strategic Plan places a priority on the success of students, as evidenced by one goal, in particular: Promote Undergraduate Student Learning and Success. We want IUPUI to be a GREAT place for student success! GREAT is an acronym that stands for Graduate, Retain, Engage, Admit, and Tell. It is a conceptual framework that attempts to succinctly summarize the often-complex set of interrelated components and processes that contribute to student success by beginning with the end goal—graduation—and working backwards to the point where prospective students are initially made aware of our campus, its academic programs, and the distinctiveness offered by our urban context.

Considerable attention has been paid to the premise that IUPUI needs to graduate students in a timely manner. This includes an articulation and demonstration of the broad learning outcomes we want students to know and be able to do upon graduation. Furthermore, we want our students to be well-prepared for success in a variety of post-degree roles and contexts, typically thought of as employment, graduate/professional school enrollment, lifelong learner, civic-minded graduate in a globally-oriented world, and as supportive and connected alumni.

To do this, however, we must first retain students and encourage their persistence to degree completion. This can occur through offering students various support services that meet their individual needs and reflect their unique circumstances, by reducing or eliminating the barriers and bottlenecks that inhibit their progress and success, and by providing for students interventions and resources that keep them well-connected and—supported as they pursue their degrees.

Because retention is an outcome of engagement, we need to engage students through relevant in-class, co-curricular, and community-based learning experiences. This can be accomplished, in part, through the use of evidence-based, high-impact educational practices that deepen engagement in the learning process. We also must work to help foster meaningful relationships between students and their peers, their faculty and staff members, and with our external partners in the community.

To keep pace with the demands for more highly-educated society in our city, state, and beyond, we must admit students who are ready for the challenges and opportunities of college. This includes admitting better-prepared and more diverse students to our entering freshman cohort, strengthening the transfer pipeline from our two-year and international partner institutions to IUPUI, and working to facilitate the return of adult learners who have some college to help them complete their degree. As a result, our various recruitment, admissions, orientation, advising, socialization, and integration processes must be well-coordinated and effective in promoting student success from the outset—regardless of when or from where a student is admitted to IUPUI.

All of this requires all of us to be able to tell prospective students important information about higher education and IUPUI. This includes reminders about the sound return-on-investment that students can be expected to receive as beneficiaries of a college education. More specifically, we need to promote the benefits and features that IUPUI offers to students, including our array of
high-quality IU and Purdue degrees, and the urban learning advantage and distinctive opportunities afforded by our campus location in the City of Indianapolis. In sum, we must be able to persuasively answer this question “What value are we providing students who choose to attend IUPUI, and how are we different or unique from others who provide similar offerings?”

To Graduate, Retain, Engage, Admit, and Tell, several things are needed. First, ongoing attention to assessing, evaluating, and improving our individual and collective efforts to promote student success must occur. We need to continually refine and use data and evidence to inform our decision-making in a host of areas. It also means we must benchmark with others to gauge our progress, incorporate promising practices from elsewhere that are worthy of replication or adaptation at IUPUI, and to disseminate to others our own lessons learned and successful strategies. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it requires everyone—senior leaders, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and partners—to contribute towards a collective campus culture for IUPUI to be a GREAT place for student success.

Questions for input and feedback:

What are some things we are presently doing well to promote a GREAT place for student success?

What are some things we could do even better to promote a GREAT place for student success?

What are other elements that need to be included in the GREAT conceptual framework?