

Applying Positive Deviance to Retention

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are needed to see this picture.

Overview of the Process Plan

§ *Define the Problem*

§ *Define the Outcome*

§ *Identify the Positive Deviants*

§ *Discover Successful Practices & Strategies*

§ *Design the Intervention*

The Problem

- § The 5 year retention rate of underrepresented (African, Native, Hispanic) students at University Park Campus is substantially below that of majority students. Retention rates of 5 cohorts shown below.
- § Majority students are currently retained at 60% while underrepresented students are retained at 48%. (*See Cohort of 1999, enrolled or graduating in 2004.*)

Cohort Entering Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Majority 5 year Retention Rate	56%	58%	60%	60%	60%
Minority 5 year Retention Rate	33%	39%	42%	42%	48%

Desired Outcome

§ Achieve equal retention rates of minority and majority students. (Lessons learned would serve the overall retention rate.)

APPLICATION-

Apply Positive Deviance techniques in Fall 2005 to a peer mentoring program making it more effective in retention of underrepresented students. Track Results.

Identify Positive Deviants: Two Groups

ü **Group One:** Underrepresented upper class students who participated in Bridge, Mentoring or Orientation programs in the first year.

ü *A Summer Bridge Program is typically a 4 to 6 week math-intensive residential experience attended in the summer prior to the first academic year. Research shows that these programs consistently increase the retention and graduation rates of participants by making them conscious of the tools of success. The PreFirst year in Science and Engineering Program at Penn State has a typical cohort graduation rate of 73%.*

Identify Positive Deviants

- ü Group Two: Underrepresented upper class students who have remained in Engineering successfully without Bridge or mentoring experience.

APPLICATION

Select mentors (Positive Deviants) and participating first-year students in September 2005.

Discover Successful Practices

- § *Discover* by engaging and facilitating discussions with successful students.
- § Define specific practices that positive deviants identify as making them successful.

APPLICATION

Positive Deviants meet as a focus group to discuss successful practices. Identify top 5-10 practices for new students to adopt.

Designing Intervention

- § Helping the community communicate success among themselves.
- § Identifying changes needed in the environment.

APPLICATION

Mentors meet on a bi-weekly basis through Fall 2005 semester with designated groups of first-year students to reiterate the top practices that lead to retention and college success. Retention results tracked.

Penn State Program Summary

- § Goal: Achieve at least 60% retention rate of underrepresented engineering students.
- § Positive Deviants: Underrepresented upper class students and freshmen from Summer Bridge programs.
- § Approach: Focus groups are used to identify key behaviors and a peer mentor program is instituted between positive deviants and new students.
- § Status as of September 2005: Focus groups initiated and mentors selected.