

Parents' 411

THE OFFICE OF STUDENT RETENTION



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MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
THE OFFICE OF STUDENT RETENTION

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GREETINGS FROM THE RETENTION STAFF



In this first issue of 2006, we are highlighting some of the retention activities and programs sponsored by the Office of Student Retention and the retention staff in the various colleges and schools across campus. These activities are designed to improve your student's academic performance and keep your son or daughter on track to graduation.

Our staff, Dr. Tiffany Beth McMillan, Director, Sarah D. Adams, Retention Specialist, Dr. Denicia Fowler, Retention Specialist, Diane Wise, Administrative Assistant, and the retention specialists in each of the schools and colleges are committed to providing you with the information that you need to support and assist your matriculating student. In a recent interview, Dr. McMillan reiterated our mantra "...at Morgan, we love our students, and we do **everything** that we can to ensure student success and achievement". This special retention issue will give parents an idea of what we do to ensure the success of your daughter or son.

As always, we look forward to receiving your comments and suggestions!

UNDERSTANDING RETENTION

Some of you may be wondering what "retention" is and what is a retention specialist? What do they really do and why????

And, most importantly, what difference do they make in the academic lives of your sons and daughters? Quite simply, we are advisors, teachers, coaches and sometimes "cheerleaders" providing needed words of support and encouragement. As Dr. McMillan says "...we do everything that we can to ensure student success and achievement". Sometimes, outside forces unrelated to campus life, can create stress and problems that make studying all but impossible. Some students respond to stress by dropping out or losing focus in their work. Often, capable students are lost in the maze of difficulty that comes with succeeding in college. Sometimes, just having someone to "coach" them through a difficult time can mean the difference between failing or passing; "dropping out" or persisting to graduation.

One semester, I advised a young lady who started out well, but found by mid-term that some of her courses were more difficult than she had expected. Then, there was a death in her family and she was ready to leave Morgan. She said she just could not focus. We sat and talked about her family, her priorities, and her career aspirations. I encouraged her to stay. Although it was not easy for her to continue, after a brief absence, she came back that same semester. With the help of her professors and advisors, she was successful! She left me a note one day saying, "**I don't think I could have made it through without**

having someone to consult with. I truly am thankful..." She is now a senior who will graduate this year. **That's what we do!**

Morgan has an excellent reputation for offering a nurturing environment to students. In recent years, the University has increased its efforts to retain students, who may have been lost in the past. The Office of Student Retention (OSR) ensures improvement in student retention and increased persistence to graduation by focusing on academic success and achievement through early intervention and systematic tracking of all undergraduate students.

The OSR collaborates with the Office of Financial Aid to reduce attrition related to students' ability to pay for college and maintain their funding. This is a serious issue, considering that 95% of Morgan's students receive some type of financial assistance. The OSR also sponsors and coordinates various campus-wide programs and works in collaboration with the six academic units of the university: the College of Liberal Arts; School of Engineering; School of Computer, Mathematical and Natural Sciences; School of Business and Management; School of Education and Urban Studies; and, Institute of Architecture and Planning. The schools' retention programs are coordinated centrally to ensure that campus-wide goals are met. But, beyond that, each school develops unique retention strategies. Some of those programs and strategies are discussed in this issue.

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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND URBAN STUDIES (SEUS) CREATES STUDENT RESOURCE HUB – THE “P.I.T.”

The Student Development and Retention Program in the School of Education & Urban Studies (SEUS), recently developed an academic study zone that is convenient for both commuter and residential students who sometimes need a place to study or complete homework assignments between classes. An underutilized location was chosen to bring in furniture, SEUS-related magazines and periodicals, and resource tables. They created a study and networking area for SEUS students called “the P.I.T.” (Positive Influence Territory).

“The P.I.T. helps to overcome any feelings of isolation SEUS commuter students might have by creating a richer, learning-centered environment,” stated Dr. Patricia Welch, Dean of the School of Education and Urban Studies. The new area affords busy students a “pit stop” to refresh and energize themselves. “This once unused space” observed Dr. Don Brunson, Director of the University Honors Program, “has now suddenly changed from one that was a purely social environment to a useful, purposeful academic environment. “.... The P.I.T. has provided ... an area with current research references to use for my homework assignments” said Adrienne Tucker, a Freshman computer science major. Additionally, “the P.I.T.” is in keeping with recent goals in higher learning that promote innovative collaborative campus learning environments.

The School of Education and Urban Studies (SEUS) has a tutorial program in Math and English where students teach and help each other; several workshops such as, PRAXIS (for education majors) and “What’s Your Style?” (a career development primer) are also conducted.

According to Michael James, SEUS Retention Coordinator, “Basically, we do everything we can to help students discover their career passion and to follow it successfully. The retention staff here at Morgan are here ‘to meet and solve’ not just ‘to meet and dialogue’. Again our mantra, “We do everything we can to ensure student success and achievement.... “SEUS CARES”

THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS IS ALL “E.A.R.S.”

The College of Liberal Arts, Office of Student Development and Retention (OSDR) is comprised of three highly motivated individuals – Retention Coordinator- Keith R. Hicks and two Retention Counselors, Ivori V. Lipscomb-Warren and Romulus McNeill. A significant portion of their time is devoted to serving “at-risk” students (students performing below a 2.0 or “C” grade point average) who are referred to them by faculty through the Early Alert and Response System (E.A.R.S.). The College of Liberal Arts, which has one of the largest student populations on campus, initiated this system which has subsequently been incorporated into the campus-wide Retention Program.

The Early Alert and Response System is designed to assist faculty with intervention for students who are performing below expectations in an effort to prevent the students from earning grades of “D” or “F”. The College of Liberal Arts faculty issues early warnings to the students, their Department Chairpersons, and OSDR when students show signs of academic difficulty like failing to turn in assignments, failing to attend classes, or failing to take scheduled quizzes or exams. A collaborative effort is then made to provide the student with the advisement, tutoring or other resources needed to improve performance and assist your son or daughter in being successful.

The OSDR offers three workshops each semester - “Learning Styles & Strategies”, “Memory & Concentration Skills”, and “Preparing for and Taking Final Exams”. The Retention Counselors visit freshman

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MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
RETENTION STAFF – SPRING, 2006

PARENTS' 411 EDITOR - Sarah D. Adams

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COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS CONT' D

orientation classes and lead discussions on transitioning from high school to college. To further expand its support and academic assistance to students, the OSDR implemented two new programs – The College of Liberal Arts Serving Students (C.L.A.S.S.) Mentoring Program and Supplemental Instruction, an intensive and extended tutorial effort. The OSDR strongly encourages all liberal arts majors to visit their offices (Holmes Hall - rooms 229 and G-18) to take advantage of the many resources available to them!



Student's working for retention. From left to right: Brendan D. Jackson, Sophomore, Marketing Major; Virginia R. Williams, Junior, English Major; Karima Al-Bari, Junior, Civil Engineering Major; Olga D. Riley, Junior, Accounting Major; Jakita M. Hamilton, Junior, Accounting Major; Jason R. Sanders, Junior, Business Administration Major.

STRAIGHT FROM THE STUDENTS

By Tamyamonic Thomas, MSU Junior

WHAT HAS THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND URBAN STUDIES (SEUS) RETENTION PROGRAM DONE FOR ME?

I found out about the SEUS’ Retention Program in January of 2005. I was about to withdraw from school for the second time because I was unable to pay for tuition or housing. In my process of completing the mandatory withdrawal forms, I went to my Dean’s office to sign the forms and Ms. Whittaker

noticed how “blue” I was. Before Ms. Whittaker completed the forms, she told me to go home and relax. During this time she looked up my GPA (grade point average), which was higher than a 3.0, and contacted Mr. James, who is the Coordinator of the Retention Program for the School of Education and Urban Studies. Long story short, Mr. James and Ms. Whittaker figured out a way for my bill to be cleared and found money to pay for my housing as well. From that moment on, I have been in close contact with Mr. James and the Office of Retention at SEUS. Every single issue that I have had, even those not school-related, the SEUS’ Retention Program has helped me... Mr. James and the Office of Retention have even helped my friends on their quest for Higher Education. So, for the Retention Program to ask their students for at least a 2.5 GPA, is not a lot ask. After all, they work extremely hard to meet the needs of the students at Morgan State University. Without the Retention Program and Mr. James, I would probably be back in Rochester doing nothing along the lines of being in college. I want to say thanks to Mr. James and the Office of Retention at SEUS for believing in me when everyone else at Morgan said that they could not help me. You gave me strength to keep going.

MSU STUDENTS HAVE OFFICIAL EMAIL ACCOUNTS

All undergraduate students at Morgan are assigned email accounts. The student email account is used by administrators, faculty, and staff to communicate official University information to your sons and daughters. Their email accounts provide information such as the status of financial aid and bills that may be owed, refunds due to your student, mid-term and final grades, class schedule changes, and school closings. Additionally, the Office of Residence Life, the offices of your student’s school/college Dean and Department Chairperson, the Honors Program, and the Counseling Center may use University email accounts to communicate important information.

Your students should activate their email accounts and access them routinely so that they are informed about important matters that affect their college life.

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT SID’ S AND PIN’ s?

For the convenience of your daughter or son and to protect her or his social security number (SSN), the University has assigned each student an alternative student identification number (SID). These SID’s appear on all of the student’s official University documents, not their SSN’s. Students are also assigned personal identification numbers (PIN’s) which enable them to register for classes on-line, review class schedules and access their grades. PIN’s are changed every semester for students with less than 24 credits (generally freshmen) and for any student with less than a 2.5 grade point average. Students must get their new PIN from their academic advisor. At that time, they discuss their academic performance and program.

IMPORTANT 2006 SPRING SEMESTER DATES!!!

March 1
Deadline to file FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). FAFSA forms may be filed on-line at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Students who file FAFSA forms after March 1st may not be eligible to receive all types of financial aid.

March 13-18
Mid-Semester Exams

March 20-25
Spring Break

March 27-April 15
ADVISEMENT DAYS (Students must meet with academic advisors to review progress and prepare FALL 2006 schedule)

April 24-29
Final Exams for Prospective May Graduates

May 8-June 30
Rolling Registration for FALL 2006 semester

APRIL 29
Last Day to Drop Undergraduate Classes

May 12-19
Final Exams for Non-graduates

MAY 24
SPRING SEMESTER ENDS