

# University Implements ENGAGE to Increase Success of First-Semester College Students

## ENGAGE™ Case Study

### Grade point averages and number of students in good standing rise after one semester

The University of North Texas (UNT) is a four-year, public research institution enrolling nearly 35,000 students. UNT received a grant focused on improving student retention and decided to focus on first-semester students. Dale Tampke, Dean of Undergraduate Studies at UNT, had previously experienced success in using ENGAGE to help increase retention rates at Ohio University.

Based on his recommendation, UNT began administering ENGAGE to all first-year students during orientation for the 2009 fall semester. The goal of the project was to identify students with the highest risk of academic difficulties and then follow up with an immediate, individualized approach to help them succeed through their first semester and build a positive foundation for the rest of their college career.

ENGAGE was administered to large groups of students. Students were provided reports by the third week of class. Those identified as the highest risk were selected for interventions and were contacted by advisors or student affairs staff to have one-on-one conversations. These interventions were conducted in the first five to six weeks of the fall semester.

Dean Tampke explains, “We want to use ENGAGE and these interventions together as a vehicle around which first-year students can connect to the university, and a relationship between students and advisors can be formed.”

Advisors first focused on student strengths, then moved on to needs, and then directed students to resources that can help address needs. If a student had many needs, the advisor focused on those with which he/she was best equipped to help the student (e.g., residence hall directors focused on student involvement).

A “crosswalk” of campus resources was used to assist advisors in connecting students with appropriate resources (see table). This is a matrix of campus offices and organizations that can address issues associated with the different ENGAGE scores. The goal of the intervention was to increase student success.

### The Outcome

Following interventions, UNT tracked student progress. Seventy-three percent of students who received interventions remained in good standing at the end of the fall semester, compared to 63 percent of students who did not receive interventions. In addition, the average first semester GPA of students receiving interventions was 2.24, versus the average of 2.14 for students who did not receive interventions. Finally, the percentage of students who received interventions and returned for the spring semester was 93 percent, compared to 89 percent for those who did not receive interventions.

Based on the success of UNT's first year using ENGAGE, Dean Tampke and his colleague, Raifu Durodoye, a research analyst in the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, wrote and presented a research paper at the National Symposium on Student Retention, sponsored by the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange. Their paper was subsequently awarded the Institutional Research Leadership in Student Retention Award for its innovative approach to student retention research.

Table: Crosswalk of campus resources

Academic Discipline	Effort put into school work and the degree to which students see themselves as hardworking and conscientious.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning Center</li> <li>- Office of Exploring Majors</li> <li>- UNT Math Tutor Lab</li> <li>- UNT Student Writing Lab</li> <li>- Willis Library</li> </ul>
General Determination	Extent to which students follow through on their commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning Center</li> <li>- Counseling and Human Development Center</li> </ul>
Goal Striving	Strength of efforts to achieve objectives and end goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Career Center</li> <li>- Counseling and Testing</li> </ul>
Commitment to College	Commitment to staying in college and getting a degree.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Career Center</li> <li>- Financial Aid</li> <li>- Office of Exploring Majors</li> </ul>
Study Skills	Extent of knowing how to assess an academic problem, organize a solution, and successfully complete academic assignments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning Center</li> <li>- Willis Library</li> <li>- UNT Math Tutor Lab</li> <li>- UNT Student Writing Lab</li> <li>- Counseling and Testing</li> </ul>
Communication Skills	Attentiveness to others' feelings and flexibility in resolving conflicts with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Division of Institutional Equity and Diversity</li> <li>- Student Legal Services</li> <li>- Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities</li> </ul>
Social Connections	Feelings or connection and involvement with school and community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Off-Campus Student Services</li> <li>- Transfer Center</li> <li>- Residence Life</li> <li>- Recreation Center</li> </ul>
Social Activity	Degree of comfort meeting and interacting with other people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Office of Campus Life</li> <li>- Multicultural Center</li> <li>- Women's Center</li> <li>- Residence Life</li> <li>- Off-Campus Student Services</li> <li>- Transfer Center</li> </ul>
Academic Self-Confidence	Belief in ability to perform well in school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning Center</li> <li>- Counseling and Testing</li> <li>- Office of Exploring Majors</li> <li>- Counseling and Testing</li> </ul>
Steadiness	Response to strong feelings and how to manage those feelings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Counseling and Human Development Center</li> <li>- Residence Life</li> <li>- Student Health and Wellness Center</li> </ul>



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