



# Overview and Uses of *Hobsons Retain* Communications for Academic Readiness, Retention, and Academic Alerts

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**see blue.**  
*in everything we do.*



# About UK (Fall 2008)

- 17, 324 Full-time undergraduate students
- 26,913 Total FT/PT all students
- 5,460 Freshmen
- 24.4 ACT Mean





# Challenge Before Us

- Provost's War on Attrition  
(e.g., one goal is to raise graduation rates to 64% in 3 years)
- KY Administrative Regulations  
requires UK to remediate students with ACT sub-scores  
below: 20 in reading 19 in math 18 in English
- UK 1st- to 2nd-year retention rate  
~75% for Fall '06 entering cohort;  
record high ~81% in Fall '07





# Target Population at UK

- 25% - 30% students in UK's last five entering cohorts fall below KY standard for readiness
- Past 3 entering cohorts show 700-1000 students admitted with deficiencies identified by ACT
- ~50 students deficit in all 3 content areas





# Target Communications for At-Risk Students Based on Needs

- Academic
- Financial
- Social





# Incoming Students with **Academic** Deficiencies

- Use *Retain* filter to sort students with low ACT/SAT scores
- Letter providing instructions for student is merged with home address and test scores and action needed
- If student doesn't take action, a follow-up email is sent (using *Retain* filter)





# *Retain* Academic Cues

- Watched attributes
  - Changing majors
  - Dropping needed courses
  - Changing status FT to PT
- Failing mid-term grades
- Non-priority registered student





# Academic Communications

- Targeted emails to student providing specific instructions / action to take
  - Referral to academic advisor
  - Instructions for dropping class if failing
  - Information about campus study resources





# Email Example

Hello { #FirstName# },

We have passed the midpoint of the semester and your professors are posting the midterm grades for the fall 2009 semester. You are receiving this email because you have received a grade of D or E in one or more courses. In some cases there is still time to improve your grade(s).

**NOW** is the time to meet with your instructor and advisor and discuss your options.

{ #FirstName# }, here are things you need to do before the deadline to withdraw (Nov. 6):

1. GO TALK TO YOUR INSTRUCTOR! Your instructor can review the syllabus with you and help you evaluate your options to improve your grade in the course.
2. SPEAK WITH YOUR ADVISOR: Call or email your advisor between 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Your advisor is listed on the myInfo page in [myUK](#).
3. DO YOU NEED TO WITHDRAW? Ultimately, if you want to pass you need to use all available resources. The peer tutoring program at *The Study* provides tutoring for *selected* first year courses—check the schedule at . . .



# Email Tips

- Best results occur when specific groups are targeted
- In UK's experience, bulk e-mailings tend to be ignored
- Make the subject line very descriptive of the message content



# Financial Communications

- Target specific needs with emails
  - Students w/out FAFSA
  - Students who've applied for financial aid - file incomplete
  - Students w/ FAFSA, but unmet need or no remaining need





# Financial Email Results

- 3000+ targeted emails sent Fall 2009
  - 1850 paid their accounts in full and have pre-registered for spring
  - 622 students worked out payments and registered for spring
  - 240 students paid their accounts in full but did **not** pre-register for spring



# Social Indicators of Risk

- Survey sent to incoming freshman during first week
  - Questions concerning at-risk behavior
    - To what degree do you feel stressed...
    - How many hours do you plan to work...
  - Targeted emails sent back to students with specific replies from survey





# Other Communications

- Withdrawal survey
- Re-recruitment campaign using letters, postcards, email, and phone calls
- Invitation to use study resources
- Social network for freshmen
  - **BIG BLUE NETWORK**



# Successful Results

- Fall to Spring retention rate for the Fall 2009 cohort is a record 94.6%,
  - beating our previous best by 2.3%
- 3887 of our original 4111 students returned
  - a record absolute number of returning students.





# Data Stored in Retain

- UK ID
- Student demographics
- Test scores (ACT, SAT, COMPASS)
- Courses enrolled and dropped
- Communications (email, letters)
- Other as needed, different views possible



# Using Retain

- Worked with UK Business Intelligence to get student, courses, instructor, and advisor data regularly into *Retain*
- Other data such as student groups, scholarships, first generation, ACT survey data, etc. will be entered



# Future Plans

- Importing UK's Academic Alerts into *Retain* using the new import tool
- Automate Academic Alert emails
- Create a "Learning Plan" for the student and advisor using the VIP page feature
- Create more views for staff to use *Retain*
- Train academic advisors to use *Retain*





# Questions?

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