

Student Success Impact Report | 2024

Data-Activated Strategies: What Works to Advance Student Success



Table of Contents:

- 1. Introduction | **Welcome to the Civitas Learning Student Success Impact Report** 3
- 2. Three-Year Trends | **Traditional Strategies for Strengthening Persistence** 4
- 3. 2023 Highlights | **A Comprehensive Approach to Support** 6
- 4. Successful Initiatives by Student Population | **What Works & for Whom** 12
- 5. Methodology | **Enhancing Student Success Through Regular Efficacy Analysis** 18
- 6. Conclusion | **Build Student Success & Financial Stability** 20

Welcome to the Civitas Learning® Student Success Impact Report

This report is part of our annual series providing insights about student success initiatives and their impact on persistence at our partner institutions. For this installment, we analyzed the effectiveness of programs to uncover both long-term and recent trends.

Longitudinal findings in this impact report reveal what student success services supports proved to be effective over a multiyear timeframe, beginning in summer 2021. Recent top trends show what worked for our partner institutions during 2023.

To evaluate programs' effectiveness, our partners applied the Initiative Analysis capabilities in the Civitas Learning Student Impact Platform to understand which initiatives had a statistically significant impact on outcomes for specific student populations. This report shows the percentage-point (PP) impact that each type of initiative had on persistence, a leading indicator of student success.

Both long-term and short-term analyses are valuable for shaping student success planning. Consideration of these trends from the Civitas Learning community at large can be a critical part of planning, implementing, and maintaining initiatives that enhance an institution's student success and support its financial stability.

But if institutions want to avoid what we at Civitas Learning call the Student Impact Gap—or the disconnect between an investment in student success efforts and the outcomes they produce—then they also should analyze their own data. They should develop strategies that address the unique needs of their own various student populations. **And then, to build a viable student success approach, they should regularly assess the progress of those programs to determine:**

- What supports work for different student groups
- How to plan for future programs
- Where to allocate resources
- How to align efforts across teams and departments

By consistently analyzing the effectiveness of their student success initiatives, institutions can stay abreast of their students' changing needs—and retool programs as required to address them. **This focused and sustained approach can be powerful in establishing student success interventions that produce positive results for years to come.**

2

Supports with proven long-term effectiveness are the foundation for building a comprehensive set of student success initiatives.



Traditional Strategies for Strengthening Persistence

Our analysis of student success programs' impact on persistence between 2021 and 2023 shows that many tried-and-true supports, such as scholarships and smart class scheduling, continue to be among the most effective at increasing enrollment.

These traditional approaches to improving student persistence tend to be those that colleges and universities invest in and assess most frequently. As they develop their own strategies, institutions can use these supports with proven long-term effectiveness as the foundation for building a comprehensive set of student success initiatives.



3

A mix of both traditional & emerging practices yield the best results for students & the institutions that serve them.

A Comprehensive Approach to Support

An examination of persistence data during 2023 reveals that comprehensive support—emphasizing both traditional and emerging best practices—continues to yield the best results for students and the institutions that serve them.

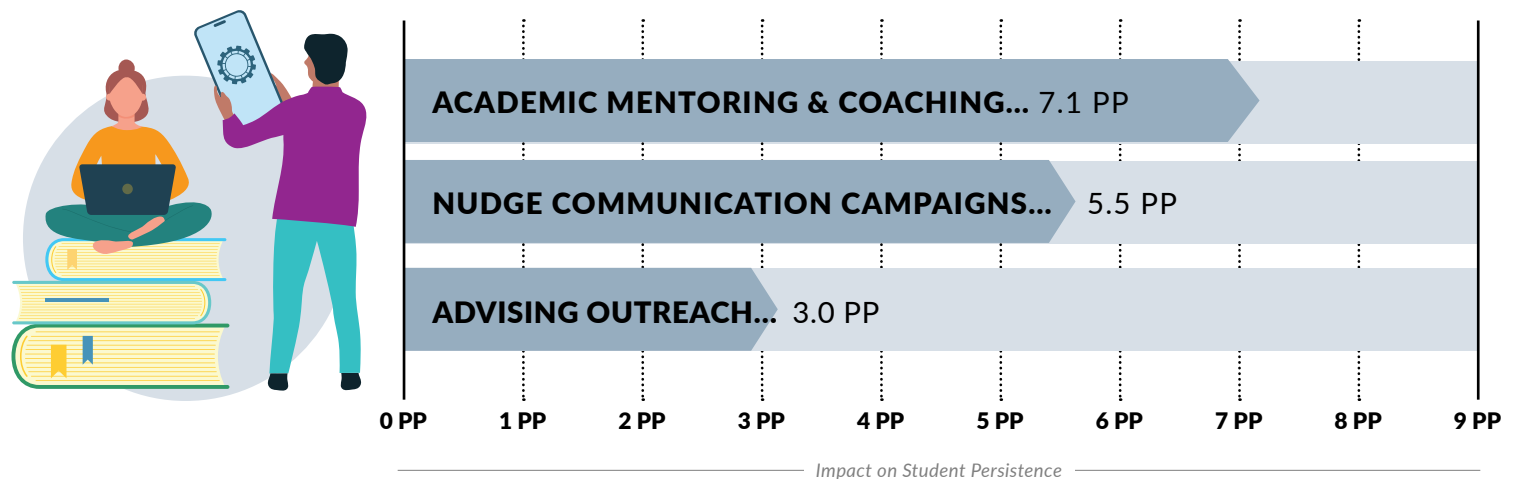
FIVE TYPES OF PROGRAMS EMERGED AS KEY TO STUDENT SUCCESS:

1 Proactive Engagement & Communication

Understanding the importance of proactive engagement with students is nothing new. In 2018, a study from The Center of Generational Kinetics revealed that most students are most confident when they get support from academic advisors. But they also expect proactive outreach from those advisors.¹

Analysis of 2023 data from our partner institutions shows that this advisor-initiated outreach continues to be a critical factor in student persistence. Institutions can more easily focus these proactive outreach efforts and resources by gathering student data about which students are most likely to benefit, and then develop strategies that target these populations.

Outcomes of the recent analysis include:

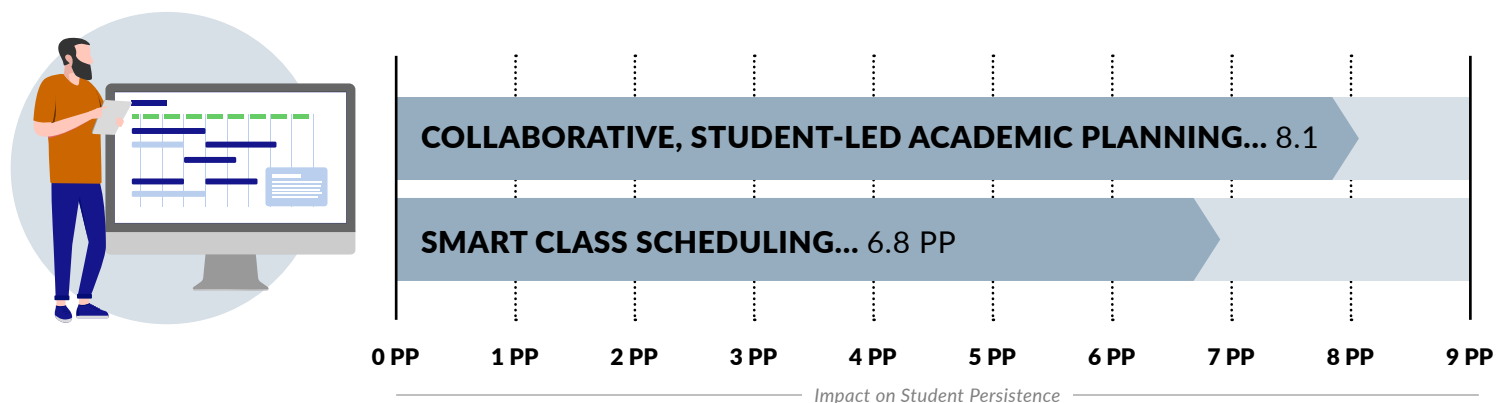


2 Simplified Registration Experience

Scheduling and registering for classes are among the most important steps a student takes to starting and persisting in the pursuit of a degree or credential. **Unfortunately, they also can be among the most frustrating steps. Too often, students must contend with:**

- Degree planning that doesn't incorporate input from the student
- Scheduling that doesn't accommodate responsibilities outside the classroom

By removing these barriers through collaborative degree planning and smart schedule building, our partner institutions saw significant gains in student persistence during 2023. **The results include:**

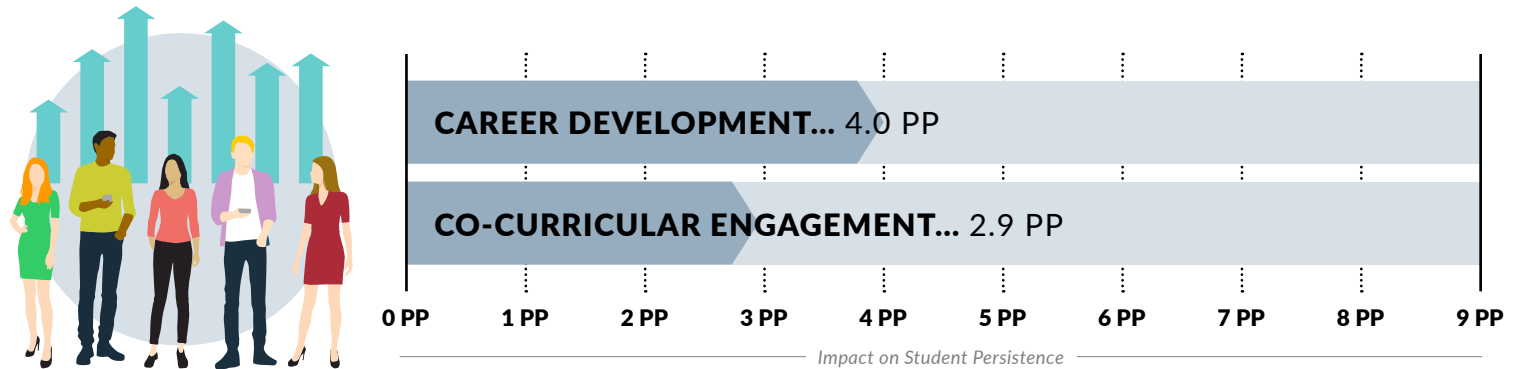


3 Student Involvement & Development

There is growing evidence that fostering students' sense of belonging plays a critical role in encouraging persistence², and our partner institutions have taken note. Through programs ranging from leadership programs to Greek life options, colleges and universities are leaning into services and supports that enhance the student experience. **They're providing opportunities for engagement and interaction that:**

- Strengthen academic and intellectual development
- Provide social/emotional activities, welfare, and support
- Build personal connections

The positive impact of these efforts is clear. The following are among the impacts these initiatives had on persistence:

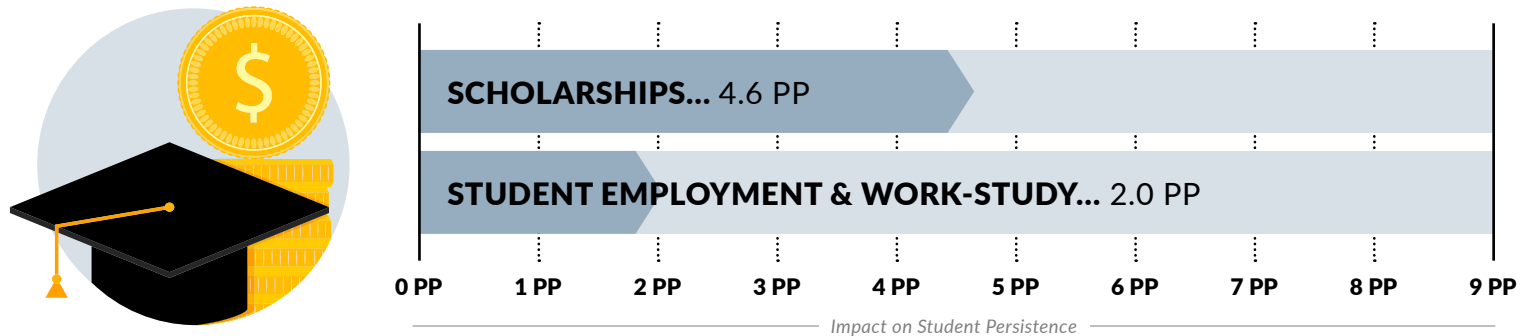


4 Financial Support

Providing financial support is another practice with a long history of increasing student persistence.³ Our analysis reveals that assistance such as scholarships and employment opportunities continued to make a difference in 2023. The benefit of defraying students' costs is significant. **But when the financial support comes in the form of employment, it offers additional benefits for students and institutions:**

- Helping schools fill open positions
- Connecting students to the institution and its faculty and staff
- Encouraging students to focus on education as their main priority
- Building students' professional skill set

Among the effects that financial support had on persistence are:

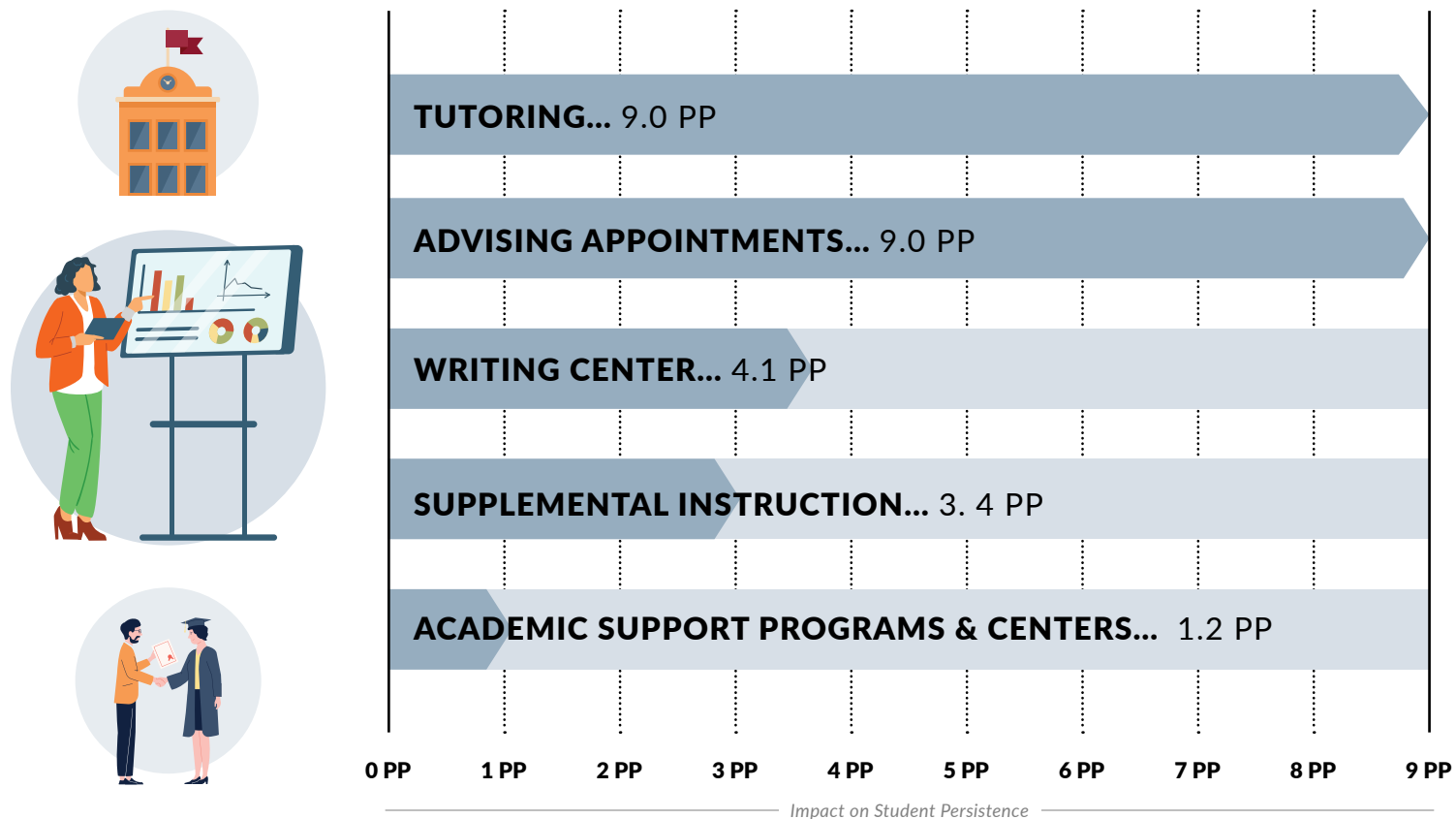


5 Academic Support Services

From supplemental instruction to writing center assistance, academic support services have stood the test of time as effective methods for enhancing student success. But there's a caveat: The results of these programs can vary significantly depending on the population they're serving.

For this reason, institutions that intend to make academic support services the foundation of their student success models should use data-informed strategies to create these programs. Then, they should regularly collect and analyze this population-specific persistence data and adjust programming as needed.

Overall, academic support services had these impacts in 2023:





8%
**improvement in
student retention
between 2016 & 2021**



80%
**overall retention
rate from fall 2021
to fall 2022**

PARTNER EXAMPLE:

Holistic Efforts Boost Retention, Build Data-Driven Culture

Northwest Missouri State University is fulfilling its mission to ensure every student succeeds by committing to a holistic student success model that yields impressive retention results. Now, leaders are expanding their efforts by uncovering the impact of student success initiatives ranging from marching band to career services.

Northwest began its journey toward data-driven student success strategies by ensuring that frontline staff had the most complete and up-to-date picture of students. Using this holistic approach to advising, facilitated through the use of the Civitas Learning Student Impact Platform, Northwest saw an 8% improvement in student retention between 2016 and 2021, achieving an 80% overall retention rate from fall 2021 to fall 2022.

But it hasn't stopped there. In fall of 2023, Northwest began a university-wide efficacy assessment campaign using Civitas Learning's Initiative Analysis capabilities. This work helps to uncover the impact of programs and services across the student experience, including areas such as:

- Individual student organizations
- Campus Recreation
- Career services

This systemic approach to efficacy assessment provides departmental leaders insight into the effects of their programs and services on persistence overall and for specific student populations.

Departmental leaders' response to the effort has been swift and positive, with the data making it easier for them to:

- Illustrate the value their efforts provide
- Inform advisors' guidance to students
- Plan activities to make the greatest impact on persistence
- Benchmark progress toward enhancing student success
- Adjust services to achieve a greater return on investment (ROI)

The goal is to continue this regular assessment, strengthening Northwest's data-driven culture while seeking new opportunities to establish and maintain effective student success efforts throughout the institution.

4

A tailored approach that connects students to the best intervention for them is the most effective way to encourage persistence to graduation.



What Works & for Whom

Academic support services aren't the only student success initiatives whose results can differ depending on the population of students who are using them. That's why a tailored approach that connects students to the best intervention for them is the most effective way to encourage persistence to graduation.

By targeting their student success services and supports through focused planning, marketing, and engagement, institutions can:

- Avoid one-size-fits-all approaches that dilute programs' impact on persistence outcomes
- Maximize their ROI with interventions that reach the right students
- Realize cumulative benefits through evaluations that regularly reveal the most effective combination of programs

Our analysis of the student success efforts our partner institutions in 2023 uncovered the following high-performing initiatives by population:



By Gender

MALE-IDENTIFIED

- Academic Advising... 7.3 PP
- Student-Led Academic Planning... 6.6 PP
- Advising Notes... 3.9 PP
- Academic Mentoring & Coaching... 3.9 PP

FEMALE-IDENTIFIED

- Email Outreach... 7.7 PP
- Student-Led Academic Planning... 7.2 PP
- Academic Mentoring & Tutoring... 6.8 PP
- Academic Advising... 6.2 PP



By Course Modality

ONLINE

- Email Outreach... 6.7 PP
- Academic Advising... 6.6 PP
- Orientation Programming... 5.6 PP
- Smart Class Scheduling... 5.4 PP

BLENDED

- Tutoring... 7.5 PP
- Academic Advising... 6.5 PP
- Student-Led Academic Planning... 6.2 PP
- Smart Scheduling... 4.5 PP

ON-GROUND

- Academic Mentoring & Coaching... 7.7 PP
- Student-Led Academic Planning... 6.6 PP
- Tutoring... 5.7 PP
- Academic Advising... 5.3 PP



By Student Type

FIRST TIME IN COLLEGE

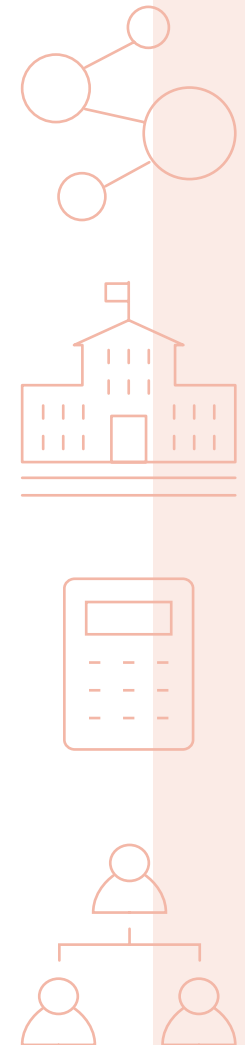
- Tutoring... 9.7 PP
- Student-Led Academic Planning... 8.0 PP
- Academic Mentoring & Coaching... 6.2 PP
- Advising Appointments... 6.2 PP

TRANSFER

- Tutoring... 8.4 PP
- Advising Appointments... 6.4 PP
- Student Employment... 4.5 PP
- Email Outreach... 4.1 PP

RE-ADMITTED

- Academic Standing-Based Outreach... 8.2 PP
- Student-Led Academic Planning... 5.5 PP
- Academic Advising... 3.8 PP
- Academic Mentoring & Coaching... 3.0 PP





By Persistence Likelihood

VERY LOW LIKELIHOOD TO PERSIST

- Advising Notes... 12.3 PP
- Academic Mentoring & Coaching... 9.0 PP
- Academic Advising... 6.3 PP
- Orientation Programming... 6.1 PP

LOW LIKELIHOOD TO PERSIST

- Academic Advising... 6.1 PP
- Career Engagement... 5.5 PP
- Student-Led Academic Planning... 5.4 PP
- Scholarships... 2.6 PP

MODERATE LIKELIHOOD TO PERSIST

- Academic Advising... 5.6 PP
- Academic Mentoring & Coaching... 4.9 PP
- Scholarships... 4.1 PP

HIGH LIKELIHOOD TO PERSIST

- Academic Advising... 2.7 PP
- Advising Notes... 2.7 PP
- Academic Mentoring & Coaching... 2.3 PP
- Academic Planning... 2.2 PP
- Student-Led Academic Planning... 6.9 PP



By Race

HISPANIC/LATINO

- Academic Advising... 5.5 PP
- Academic Mentoring & Coaching... 3.7 PP
- Student-Led Academic Planning... 3.6 PP
- Scholarships... 3.5 PP

BLACK

- Student-Led Academic Planning... 8.5 PP
- Academic Mentoring & Coaching... 5.2 PP
- Supplemental Instruction... 4.4 PP
- Tutoring... 4.1 PP

ASIAN

- Academic Advising... 5.8 PP
- Advising Outreach... 4.8 PP
- Nudge Communication Campaigns... 4.0 PP
- Academic Mentoring & Coaching... 3.8 PP

WHITE

- Tutoring... 7.4 PP
- Student-Led Academic Planning... 7.2 PP
- Email Outreach... 7.1 PP
- Academic Advising... 5.7 PP



16 PP
lift in first-year
retention rate



14 PP
increase in overall four-
year graduation rate

PARTNER EXAMPLE:

Analytics Signals What Works to Drive Increased Student Success

A public research university, the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) has used student success analytics to inform institutional decision-making for over a decade. Using actionable insights found within the Civitas Learning Student Impact Platform, leaders have developed a wide array of programs, from proactive advising outreach to targeted institutional aid, that have led to outstanding results for student persistence. Between 2012 and 2022, UTSA achieved outcomes such as a 16 PP lift in first-year retention rate and a 14 PP increase in overall four-year graduation rate.

A key element of UTSA's student success work is regularly using Civitas Learning's Initiative Analysis capabilities to determine how student success initiatives impact student persistence.

Because of the comprehensive nature of the analysis, university officials can find trends showing what initiatives are making an impact and determine which students see the greatest increase in persistence. **A few examples from recent reviews at UTSA:**

- **Academic tutoring** provided a 2 PP lift in persistence, but for male-identified students of color, the increase in persistence reached as high as 4 PP or 5 PP.
- **Academic advising** had a significantly greater impact on persistence for first-year students than for others.
- **Success coaching** positively affected persistence for honors students, but the impact tripled for lower-performing students.

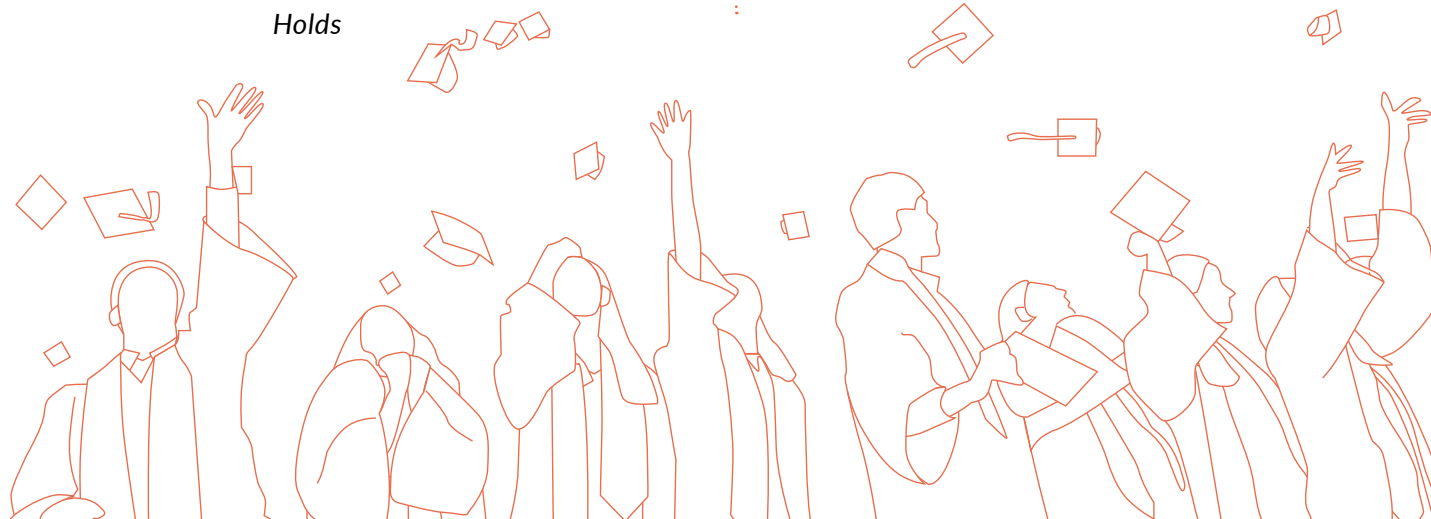
UTSA continues to adjust its student success programs according to these regular reviews.

For example, Success coaches shifted from almost exclusively serving honors students who self-selected into their services to proactively encouraging students with a 2.5 GPA or lower to schedule a coaching session. Additionally, insight into the impact of tutoring on specific populations enabled the tutoring team to tailor its marketing efforts to those students who would benefit most.

Initiative Types Evaluated in this Report's Analysis

AI Chatbots
Academic Mentoring/Coaching
Academic Standing Outreach
Access Program
Accommodations
Admission Requirements
Advising Appointments
Advising Notes
Advising Outreach
Career Engagement
Co-Curricular Engagement
Course Analysis
Course Comparison
Courses with Student Resource Component
Decentralized Advising
DegreeMAP Usage (Advisor Only)
Early Alerts
Faculty Advising
Greek Life
Holds

Learning Commons
Library Resources (Online/In-Person)
Mobile App Usage
Nudge Campaigns
Orientation Events
Professional Advising
Recreation
Registration
SMS, Email, & Phone Outreach
Scholarships
Sense of Belonging Engagement
Smart Class Scheduling
Student Employment/Work- Study
Student Organizations
Student-Led Academic Planning
Supplemental Instruction
Support Centers
Tutoring (Online/In-Person)
Writing Center



5




To gain the most meaningful insights into the effectiveness of student success initiatives, institutions should regularly assess a broad range of activities.

Enhancing Student Success through Regular Efficacy Analysis

Persistence provides a more actionable portrayal of student success initiatives' effectiveness than lagging indicators, such as retention and graduation rates, can offer. The Civitas Learning Student Impact Platform measures this dynamic indicator—likelihood to persist—to help institutions identify which student success efforts are working, which are not, and which students they benefit most. These findings also can help schools uncover trends to guide planning for future student success efforts.

We use prediction-based propensity score matching (PPSM) to determine student success outcomes for various academic and non-academic activities. The Civitas Learning PPSM approach combines real-time data on students' propensity to participate in activities and programs with data showing students' likelihood of persisting in their studies. PPSM meets the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse standards for evaluation of quasi-experimental designs. It enables institutions to achieve the benefits of randomized control trials while also working within the limits of existing, observational student data.

Our software integrates data from across an institution and its student populations to calculate the impact different practices and programs have on persistence. **By relying on these real-time glimpses of student success outcomes, institutions can:**

-  **Pinpoint** which interventions are making the greatest impact institution-wide—and which students are benefiting most
-  **Pivot** to focus on different programs and practices as needed, according to the results of their data analyses
-  **Optimize** their investment in student success programming

Data Sources | Three-Year Highlights

The longitudinal trends reflect data from 54 institutions:

- 43 public and private four-year schools
- 11 public two-year schools
- 214 student success initiatives, based on each institution's unique set of programs it chose to evaluate
- More than 5 million student participants

Data Sources | 2023 Trends

The 2023 trends are based on data from 36 institutions:

- 27 public and private four-year schools
- Nine public two-year schools
- 200 student success initiatives, based on each institution's unique set of programs it chose to evaluate
- 1.1 million student participants

For each analysis, we excluded findings if the p-value was less than 0.05.

Build Student Success and Financial Stability

Learning from trends in the Civitas Learning community can be an important step in developing institution-specific student success strategies. But colleges and universities that want to establish—and maintain—programs that have the best effect on the success of their students and the financial stability of their institutions should also:

- Analyze their own persistence data
- Use those findings to inform student success strategies
- Assess outcomes regularly through data collection and review

Civitas Learning can help.

The Civitas Learning Student Impact Platform and its Leadership Analytics solution help college and university executives make decisions about student success interventions. The tool allows leaders to use actionable analytics to determine what set of programs works to encourage persistence for their students. Using this data, institutions can create and adjust student success programs that make the most of their investment in time, staffing, and funding by:

- Identifying student success risks faster
- Removing barriers to academic success
- Intervening more quickly to address student concerns
- Closing the Student Impact Gap by achieving sustained results

Do you know which combination of initiatives are increasing persistence for your students? Get in touch to discover the proactive steps you can take to achieve sustained student success at your institution.

Publications Cited

¹ Civitas Learning and The Center for General Kinetics, *State of Students* (2018).

² The Chronicle of Higher Education, *Reimagining the Student Experience: How College Can Help Students Connect, Belong, and Engage* (2022).

³ Pepperdine University Graphic, “Dual Responsibilities: Students Balance Work and Studies.”

³ Homeroom, the Official Blog of the U.S. Department of Education, “*The Importance of Academic Advising in Higher Education.*”

About Civitas Learning

Civitas Learning helps higher education institutions improve student outcomes through data-activated decision-making and collaboration. Intelligent student success software equips teams with real-time insights and workflow solutions to support the entire student lifecycle, enabling leaders to implement strategies that improve retention and graduation rates and promote their institutions' financial health.

It is possible for higher education institutions to provide tailored support to each student, but doing so requires implementing strategies and initiatives that deliver the right support, not the same support. Today, success requires a multi-faceted, data-activated approach that allows institutions to precisely respond to the needs of students when they need it most throughout their college experience.

At Civitas Learning, we seek to help your team achieve exceptional levels of student success and build sustainable institutions for generations. Visit <https://www.civitaslearning.com/> for more information.





www.civitaslearning.com

