

UCCS Student Success Strategic Plan March, 2007

1. Introduction:

During August of 2006, the Leadership Team of the Student Success Division used their annual retreat to discuss the strategic goals for the division. Three years earlier the directors had developed a mission statement for the Student Success Division that would serve as the guide for strategic planning. That Student Success Division mission statement is:

The Student Success Division provides students of the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs with the financial, social, academic, and developmental support needed to achieve each student's educational goals. Understanding the complex demands of a student body comprised primarily of commuter students with a growing number of residential students, we provide the broad array of services that enable this diverse group of students to achieve academic and personal success. We work as a collaborative, creative consortium dedicated to meeting the needs of students, fostering an inclusive learning environment in the setting of a comprehensive, regional research university.

This mission statement follows directly from the vision statement that has been adopted as a strategic guide for the future of UCCS. That vision statement is:

The University of Colorado at Colorado Springs will provide unsurpassed, student-centered teaching and learning, and outstanding research and creative work that serve our community, state, and nation, and result in our recognition as the premier comprehensive, regional research university in the United States.

As a result of the discussions held by the leadership of the Student Success Division, four primary goals were adopted. They are:

- I. Recruitment
- II. Retention
- III. Diversity
- IV. Wellness

These goals are intimately related to the ability of UCCS to meet its stated vision. Because of UCCS' heavy dependence on tuition revenue, the ability to recruit and retain students plays a major role in the economic health of the University. More importantly, the

ability of UCCS to attract and retain students through graduation plays a vital role in increasing the proportion of Colorado's citizens who graduate from high school and continue on to complete a college degree. The 'Colorado Paradox' of having a high rate of college completion among its adult population but a very low rate of students who graduate from state high schools and continue on has an important impact on the health of the State's economy and social well being. Being able to recruit students for whom UCCS is a good fit and to retain those students should be a prime focus for UCCS. Of great concern is a recent statistic that reflects the impact that dropping out of UCCS can have on a student's life. Of the freshmen who attended UCCS for the first time in the fall of 2005, only 63% returned in the fall of 2006. Of those who did not return, 40% of those students did not enroll in another higher education institution. Thus the loss of human capital that results from this attrition is significant.

We believe that diversity plays a major role in our ability to provide **“students of the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs with the financial, social, academic, and developmental support needed to achieve each student's educational goals.”** Our community and state include a wonderful array of diversity, considered in its broadest sense. We feel strongly that we have an obligation to educate a diverse student population and to provide a learning environment that reflects our population.

Finally, we have a widespread concern that our recent past of severe budget cuts has led to stresses on our workforce, resulting in issues related to job performance, personal and professional relationship stresses, and physical and mental health concerns. UCCS has weathered the difficult financial environment by expecting more of each staff member when many open positions were not replaced. A limited number of new staff members have been added, but the workforce remains insufficient to support the programs necessary to retain and recruit more students. As is documented in the 7 Year Financial Plan, UCCS has an incredibly lean staff to faculty ratio, less than half of that of UNC, CSU-Ft. Collins, and CU-Boulder. While all members of the UCCS community are proud of the sacrifices made to avoid layoffs and look to the future during the budget crises, the reality is that many staff members are working under difficult conditions. The wellness of the staff is a major concern if we are to meet the needs of our student body. That student body is largely first generation and low income, requiring a high level of direct support and mentoring. Thus the well being of the staff directly impacts our ability to recruit students for whom UCCS is a good fit and retain our current students.

The directors brainstormed some strategies for achieving each of these goals. The goals with the associated suggested strategies were provided to staff members who report directly to a member of the Student Success Leadership Team. Those members of the division were asked to rate the proposed strategies and suggest others. The outcome of this survey was to provide the groundwork for an extensive discussion of the goals and strategies at a day-long retreat. Unfortunately, that retreat and a subsequent rescheduled half day retreat were cancelled as a result of campus closure due to inclement weather. An abbreviated retreat was held in February during which the goals and strategies were discussed with additional strategies offered. Using web based responses, staff ranked the strategies to achieve our four goals. Those responses, along with input from the Student Success Leadership Team, form the basis for this strategic plan. A copy of the responses is included as an appendix.

2. Strategies for Achieving the Goals:

While each of the goals has unique and targeted strategies, one strategy emerged as key for each of the first three goals. Members of the Student Success Division ranked increasing financial aid as the top ranked strategy for diversity and retention, and the third rated strategy for recruitment. Members of the division recognized the essential need to support our low income student body. While there have been significant increases in institutional financial aid, the increases in tuition to offset cuts in state funding have risen faster than the financial aid resources required to meet the needs of our students. The Financial Aid Office estimates that UCCS would have had to increase financial aid by \$300,000 for 2006-07 to offset tuition increases. Thus we recommend the following:

Primary Strategy: Increase institutional financial aid to offset recent tuition increases and reduce the need for low income students to work excessive hours during the academic year.

Recruitment Strategies

The additional strategies deemed most important for recruitment focused on fiscal and human resources, marketing, connections to high schools, and connections to community colleges. All of these efforts are focused on reaching out to those students for whom UCCS will be a good fit. An important premise for all recruitment strategies is to clarify the UCCS identity, purpose, and mission to ensure that we recruit the students who will succeed at UCCS. The strategies that will allow us to increase the enrollments through recruitment are summarized as follows:

Recruitment Strategy 1: Increase resources for current offices and programs in the Student Success Division.

Recruitment Strategy 2: Clarify the UCCS identity, purpose, and mission.

Recruitment Strategy 3: Create a coordinated, strategic marketing effort that reflects the clarified UCCS identity, purpose and mission and results in consistent messages about UCCS.

Recruitment Strategy 4: Highlight campus activities and accomplishments through an aggressive PR campaign that is tied to the marketing plan.

Recruitment Strategy 5: Strengthen partnerships with high school counselors.

Recruitment Strategy 6: Coordinate with and promote UCCS to community colleges.

Retention Strategies

The retention rate for UCCS in recent years has declined to a level significantly below that of our peers and our target for our Performance Contract. The initiatives identified are based on our experience with programs that have produced high levels of retention. Among them are the programs for the students awarded Daniels scholarship funds and the Chancellor's Leadership Class. These include financial aid mentioned above, mentoring, and a sense of community. The retention strategies are:

Retention Strategy 1: Create a supportive, friendly, and welcoming environment.

Retention Strategy 2: Create community around campus that will provide student engagement outside of class. North Nevada renovation could play a prominent role in this strategy.

Retention Strategy 3: Provide more social spaces in buildings and gathering spaces outside including inviting grassy spaces.

Retention Strategy 4: Engage peer mentors for at risk students.

Retention Strategy 5: Enhance advising services.

Retention Strategy 6: Offer more courses to meet student scheduling demand and enhance ease of registration.

Retention Strategy 7: Create a more traditional schedule including Friday classes.

Diversity Strategies

While increasing financial aid received the greatest endorsement as the most important strategy for increasing diversity at UCCS, there was a strong preference that UCCS adopt and embrace an inclusive definition of diversity and engage in increasing diversity across our community. The role of our current programs such as the PreCollegiate program, CU Opportunity, and clubs and organizations was also recognized. The diversity strategies are:

Diversity Strategy 1: Utilize an inclusive definition of diversity that goes beyond ethnicity.

Diversity Strategy 2: Recruit a diverse pool for staff and student positions.

Diversity Strategy 3: Increase diversity among faculty, staff, and students using the inclusive definition.

Diversity Strategy 4: Support and expand PreCollegiate and CU Opportunity programs.

Diversity Strategy 5: Reach out to ethnically diverse student clubs and organizations.

Diversity Strategy 6: Provide diversity awareness training for staff and faculty.

Diversity Strategy 7: Increase study abroad and exchange opportunities.

Wellness Strategies

The strategies associated with wellness cover a broad range of initiatives that impact the overall health and job satisfaction of our staff. With the recent contributions that all of our staff members have made to sustain and advance UCCS in tough times, we strongly support the following initiatives to recognize the needs of our staff and the impact that investments in staff can have on student success:

Wellness Strategy 1: Encourage professional development.

Wellness Strategy 2: Provide manageable workloads and clarified responsibilities that can be accomplished within a reasonable work week.

Wellness Strategy 3: Allow flex schedules to meet a variety of needs from family obligations to avoidance of traffic construction.

Wellness Strategy 4: Provide promotional opportunities in all units.

Wellness Strategy 5: Foster a sense of community and connectedness.

Wellness Strategy 6: Promote increased physical activity of employees.

Wellness Strategy 7: Provide venues for supervisors to express appreciation of staff efforts.

Wellness Strategy 8: Make vacation/administrative leave a priority instead of having employees lose vacation time.

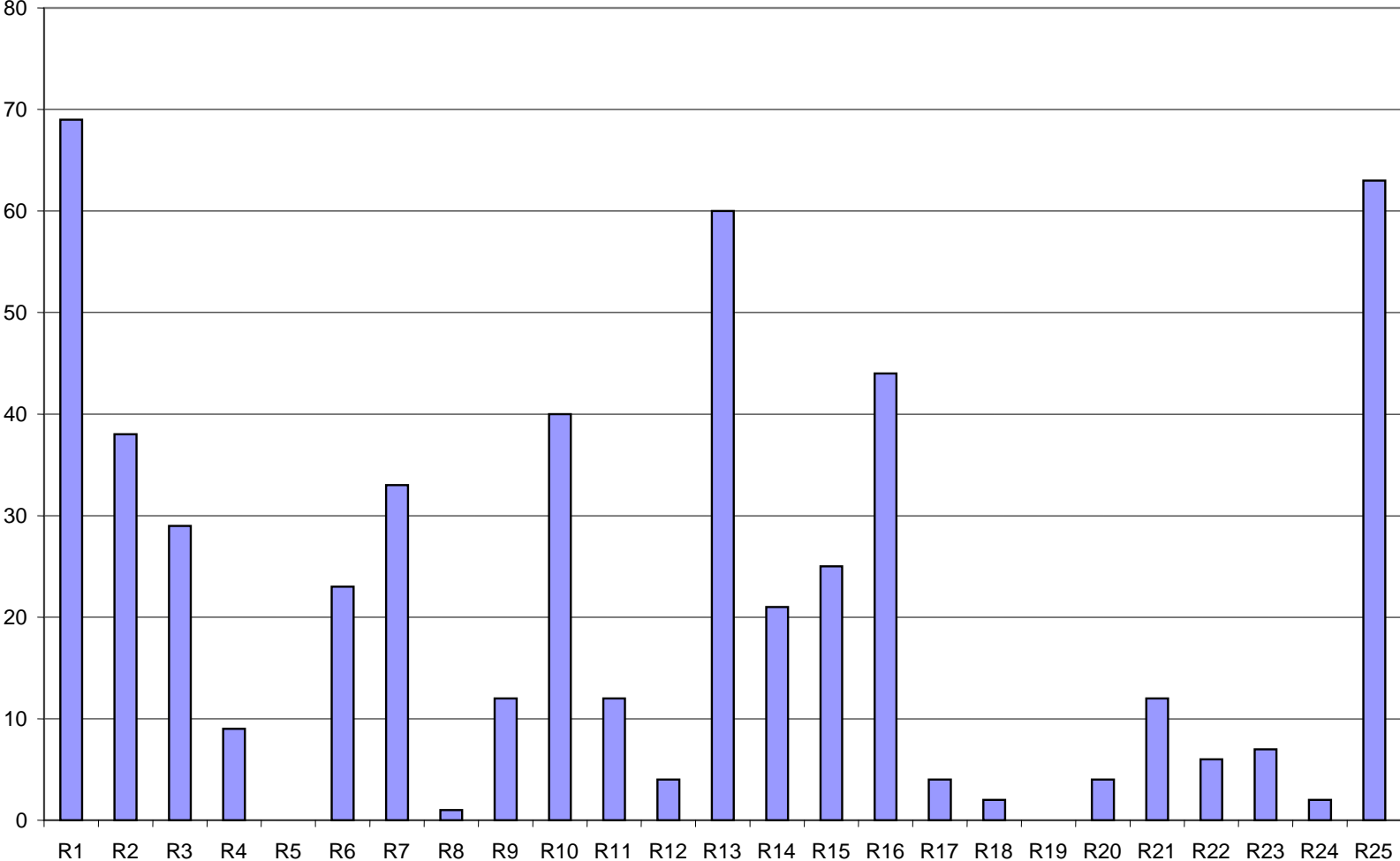
APPENDIX

Final Rankings of Student Success Initiatives

Complete List of Recruitment Initiatives:

- R1.** Increase resources for current offices and programs.
- R2.** Coordinate with and promote UCCS to community colleges.
- R3.** Support Recruitment Office efforts.
- R4.** Expand out of state recruiting to key states.
- R5.** Promote exciting new developments at UCCS.
- R6.** Connect prospective students w/current students.
- R7.** Continue to clarify UCCS identity, purpose, and mission.
- R8.** Create marketing materials for entire CU System.
- R9.** Broaden community outreach.
- R10.** Strengthen partnerships with high school counselors.
- R11.** Continue improvements in the following: orientation, website, marketing materials.
- R12.** Provide customer service and recruitment training to staff, faculty, & students.
- R13.** Continue to improve resources for prospective students through Financial Aid.
- R14.** Offer more courses and make registration earlier.
- R15.** Emphasize the academic excellence and unique aspects of UCCS.
- R16.** Increase campus visibility by highlighting campus activities and accomplishments and utilizing an aggressive PR effort.
- R17.** Make informational publications more accessible, such as having material ready to hand out at the Information Desk in the University Center.
- R18.** Create small informational brochure on UCCS for distribution.
- R19.** Continually update the photos to be used in promotional material.
- R20.** Focus on increased service to prospective students.
- R21.** Use faculty more in recruiting outreach.
- R22.** Track contacts with prospective students.
- R23.** Create a concise list of needed information for prospective students on a single webpage.
- R24.** Partner with the community in showcasing the talent at UCCS.
- R25.** Create a coordinated marketing effort with a consistent message about UCCS.

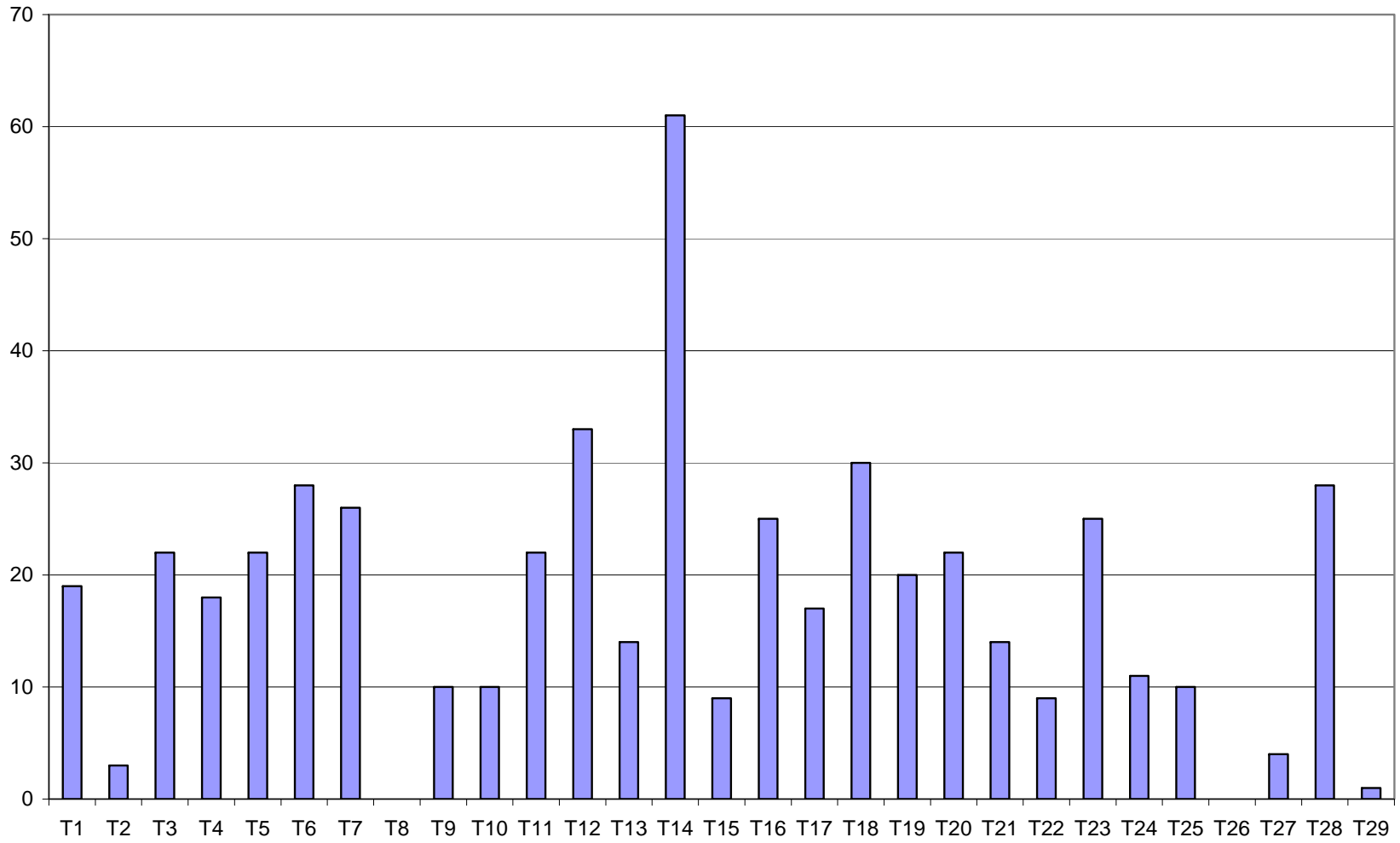
Recruitment Rankings



Complete List of Retention Initiatives:

- T1.** Work with FODO (Flunk Out Drop Out) classes to decrease numbers of unsuccessful students.
- T2.** Work with honors/high achieving students.
- T3.** Work with undeclared students.
- T4.** Communicate effectively with students, faculty, & parents.
- T5.** Collect and analyze data to better understand retention issues.
- T6.** Engage peer mentors.
- T7.** Enhance advising services.
- T8.** Increase Study Abroad Opportunities/Support.
- T9.** Support efforts of faculty & staff to work together to support students.
- T10.** Extend academic support beyond Project Excels.
- T11.** Invite and encourage student participation in campus activities and services.
- T12.** Create supportive, friendly, and welcoming environment.
- T13.** Reach out to at risk populations (military, students of color, first year students, & students with disabilities).
- T14.** Continue to improve resources for current students through Financial Aid.
- T15.** Educate campus about services provided by the Student Success Division.
- T16.** Offer more courses and make registration earlier.
- T17.** Establish long term planning of class offerings.
- T18.** Create a community around the campus (i.e. Cragmor neighborhood; North Nevada, etc.). We need more places that keep students here on the weekend.
- T19.** Increase interaction between students and faculty/staff.
- T20.** Encourage Faculty in advising of students, especially in majors.
- T21.** Continue to support and expand the Freshman Seminar courses/participation.
- T22.** Ensure that window admits are capable of succeeding at UCCS.
- T23.** Address class schedule to create a more traditional schedule, including Friday classes so that student stay on campus.
- T24.** Develop a well supported team sport (i.e. football) that has weekend games to keep students around on the weekend.
- T25.** Create Living/Learning communities in the residence halls.
- T26.** Make course selection during registration easy.
- T27.** Promote work-study for student employees.
- T28.** Change campus image from that of a commuter college by providing more social spaces in buildings and usable outdoor spaces including inviting grass areas.
- T29.** Provide recognition for student centered activities by staff and faculty.

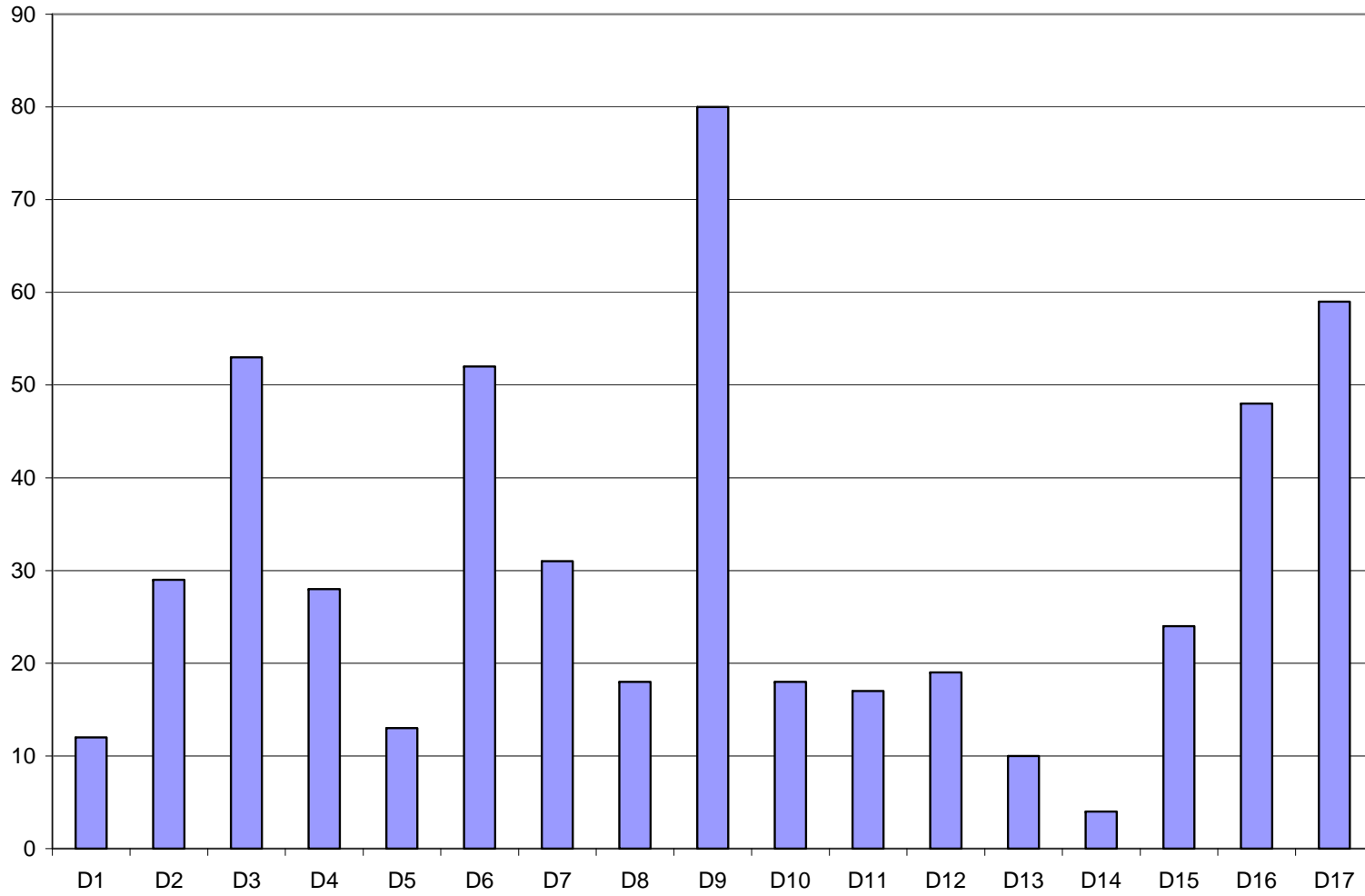
Retention Rankings



Complete Listing of Diversity Initiatives:

- D1.** Continue to improve and support activities for international students.
- D2.** Reach out to ethnically diverse student clubs and organizations.
- D3.** Recruit diverse pools for staff and student positions.
- D4.** Provide diversity awareness training for staff & faculty.
- D5.** Explore feasibility of International Education Office.
- D6.** Increase diversity of students recruited.
- D7.** Support and expand Pre-Collegiate and CUOP Programs.
- D8.** Staff input on diversity plans.
- D9.** Increase financial aid.
- D10.** Support and expand Disability Services Programs.
- D11.** Be more aggressive with minority students in recruiting, and place more of an emphasis on sports.
- D12.** Partner more between Pre-Collegiate, CUOP, and Student Multicultural Affairs.
- D13.** Recruit more international students.
- D14.** Provide more funding for students/staff to attend local cultural events.
- D15.** Increase study abroad opportunities.
- D16.** Increase diversity among faculty and staff.
- D17.** Utilize an inclusive definition of diversity that goes beyond ethnicity.

Diversity Rankings



Complete Listing of Wellness Initiatives:

- W1.** Encourage professional development.
- W2.** Foster sense of community and connectedness.
- W3.** Make vacation time/administrative leave a priority.
- W4.** Clarify responsibilities and prioritize our duties.
- W5.** Provide venues for staff to share best practices & learn.
- W6.** Provide/manage workloads to what can be effectively done in a 40 hour work week...vs. needing 50-60 hours to get all the essentials done.
- W7.** Promote increased physical activities of employees at no cost/low cost with flex schedules to attend.
- W8.** Allow flex schedules for various employee needs/desires--i.e. to attend children's sporting events.
- W9.** Encourage additional interaction and cooperation between departments.
- W10.** Promote sports for wellness, recruiting, and retention.
- W11.** Provide promotion opportunities within departments if none already exists.
- W12.** Provide mentoring of junior staff by senior staff.
- W13.** Support regular lunch breaks.
- W14.** Provide venues for supervisors to express appreciation of staff efforts.

Wellness Rankings

