

## Doctoral Universities Peer Group Report

### Executive Summary:

Doctoral Universities readily embraced this initiative to study and discuss the THECB Accountability System and measures related to success. As a result of meetings in August and November, in addition to email correspondence, this peer group selected three measures for focused attention with the objective of improving outcomes for the selected measures. Best practices for each measure were discussed in detail and shared, affording the different institutions opportunity to learn more about best practices that might be adopted by them. Select best practices identified by each institution for the select measures are included in this report as an addendum [see Attachment I].

The doctoral universities peer group selected the following measures because of their significance for helping the State of Texas meet targets identified in the Closing the Gaps initiative:

- No. 9. Number of degrees awarded by level (also ratio of enrollments of seniors to number of bachelor's degrees)
- No. 10. Graduation and Persistence rate: Percent of first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates who have graduated or are still enrolled in public higher education after six academic years (by total and race/ethnicity)
- No. 17. Persistence Rate: First-time degree-seeking undergraduate students who remain enrolled after one and two academic years (by total and race/ethnicity)

Furthermore, the institutions also seek to bring more attention to the increasing relevance and significance of ten-year graduation rates because of changing student demographics and student needs, including personal, family and financial constraints.

This peer group strongly endorses the idea that fundamentally best practices begin with a holistic approach to strengthen student engagement and consequently address the improvement of student retention and persistence to graduation, in addition to increasing the number of degrees ultimately awarded. Comprehensive bodies of overlapping and interactive strategies reflect this holistic approach, recognizing that students experience the comprehensive impact of these strategies that include features standard in many universities, mechanisms required of all public institutions in Texas, and various strategies custom-developed to meet specific needs of member institutions in their unique environments.

Doctoral universities are educational and cultural resource institutions. Like the research and emerging research university peer groups, doctoral universities are committed to the three-fold mission of teaching, research and service.

Doctoral universities are expected to:

- offer extensive educational programs that are directed to both applied and basic research in selected fields, teaching and scholarship, and creative activities.
- encourage faculty members to be active researchers in their respective disciplines and to involve both undergraduate and graduate students in research and creative pursuits.
- offer a wide range of excellent baccalaureate and master's programs
- demonstrate commitment to graduate education through the doctorate in targeted areas of excellence and/or regional need.
- award at least 10 doctoral degrees per year
- offer at least 5 doctoral programs, and/or enroll 150 doctoral students
- generally have research expenditures of at least \$2 million per year.

## Peer Group Membership:

The doctoral universities peer group includes 6 institutions.

Sam Houston State University  
 Texas A&M University-Commerce  
 Texas A&M University-Kingsville  
 Texas Southern University  
 Texas State University – San Marcos  
 Texas Woman's University

## Selected Success Measures for Group Focus

Doctoral peer group institutions selected several success measures for their focus. These included:

- No. 9. Number of degrees awarded by level (also ratio of enrollments of seniors to number of bachelor's degrees)
- No. 10. Graduation and Persistence rate: Percent of first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates who have graduated or are still enrolled in public higher education after six academic years (by total and race/ethnicity)
- No. 17. Persistence Rate: First-time degree-seeking undergraduate students who remain enrolled after one and two academic years (by total and race/ethnicity)

See Attachment II [Statistical Profile – Doctoral Universities]

### #9 Number of degrees awarded by level

Every institution in the peer group has substantially increased its number of baccalaureate degrees awarded, with the group realizing a 7.6% increase for FY 2007 over FY 2006.

The number of Master's degrees awarded to Hispanic students increased by 7.0% from 2006 to 2007.

The number of doctoral degrees awarded increased by 26.2% from 2006 to 2007.

Texas A&M University-Kingsville and Texas Southern University awarded the highest percentage of degrees to Hispanic and African-American students respectively in FY 2007.

### #10 Graduation and Persistence rate: Percent of first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates who have graduated or are still enrolled in public higher education after six academic years

Texas Woman's University and Texas A&M University-Commerce had the largest percentage increases in Six-Year graduation and persistence rates.

Texas State University – San Marcos had the highest rate at 75.4%.

### #17 Persistence Rate: First-time degree-seeking undergraduate students who remain enrolled after one and two academic years

For 2006 and 2007 and taking into account cohort size, the two-year persistence rate for the group increased slightly to 73.4%, whereas the group's one-year persistence rate fell from 83.4% to 81.4%.

Texas State University – San Marcos and Sam Houston State University had the highest rates respectively for 2007.

## ATTACHMENT I: DOCTORAL PEER GROUP BEST PRACTICES

### Success Accountability Measure #9 Best Practices for Improvement Doctoral Peer Group Sam Houston State University

- **No. 9. Number of degrees awarded by level [by total and race/ethnicity]**

A. **Institutional Comments on this Measure and Recommended Best Practice(s)**

Many of the same central, systematic support tactics that are used to uphold persistence and graduation rate also promote yearly graduation production. Those tactics have already been described in Accountability Measure #10. Strategies and tactics used at SHSU to promote student graduation that have not been described under other accountability measure discussions, include: *The Destination Graduation program; the Career Services Office and its programs; Mandatory Graduation Advisement; Online Degree Audit Program; transition to 120 SCH Degree Programs; Joint Admissions with partner community colleges; and Articulation Agreements with major community college feeders*. The last two of these programs, in particular, encourage productive community college transfers which contribute to shorter graduation times than FTF students and to higher numbers of graduates. The remaining tactics help keep students appropriately informed and focused upon degree completion and how to avoid problems and speed completion.

B. For each Recommended Best Practice: Description, History and Data [if available]

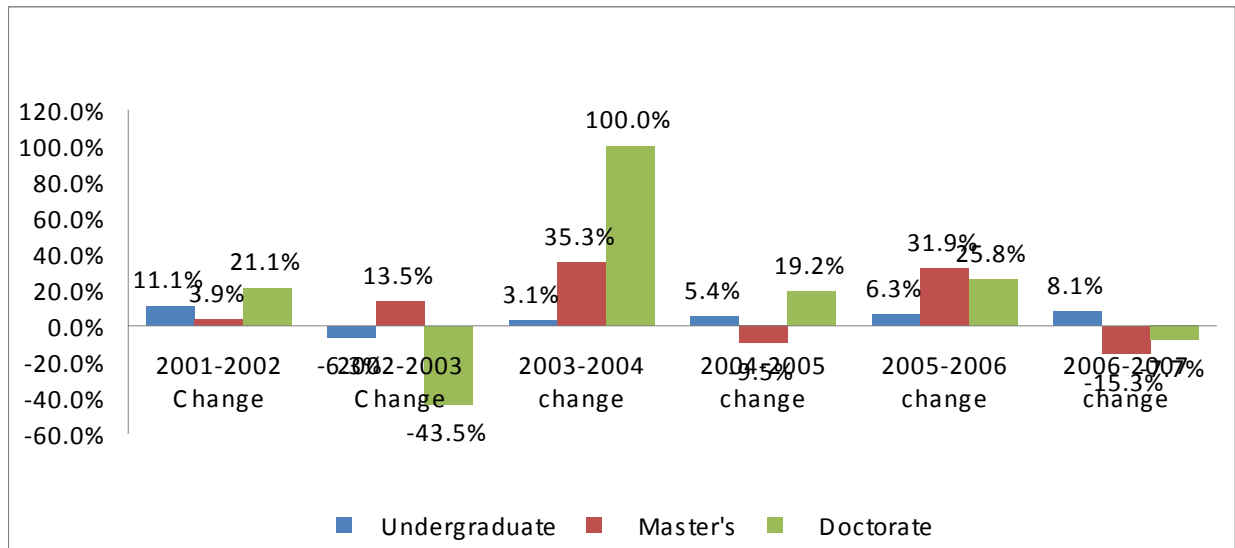
**To promote graduation** Sam Houston State University (SHSU) utilizes a variety of proactive and supportive tactics such as

- **Destination Graduation.** An event hosted each semester by the Office of the Registrar that allows prospective graduates to ensure that all necessary steps have been completed to earn their degree. Staff from departments such as the Office of the Registrar, Student Financial Aid, and Business Services are available to check a student's graduation status to assure students that everything is proceeding as planned or to identify potential problems with recommended solutions.  
[http://www.shsu.edu/~req\\_www/destination/](http://www.shsu.edu/~req_www/destination/)
- **Career Services.** SHSU provides its students a fully-staffed office with a career specialist to assist them in making the transition from college to career through a variety of programs, including career advising, resume development, workshops, career fairs, and employer recruiting. A clear goal of employment after graduation will encourage timely graduation.  
[http://www.shsu.edu/~ccp\\_www/](http://www.shsu.edu/~ccp_www/)
- **Mandatory Graduation Advisement.** To help students graduate in a timely fashion, all students, with at least 90 hours, must be advised each semester forthwith until graduation.
- **On-line Degree Audit Program.** This is an on-line degree audit program allowing students to view, which degree requirements have been met and which requirements have yet to be fulfilled. This is a valuable tool for both students and advisors to keep students on the right track for timely graduation.

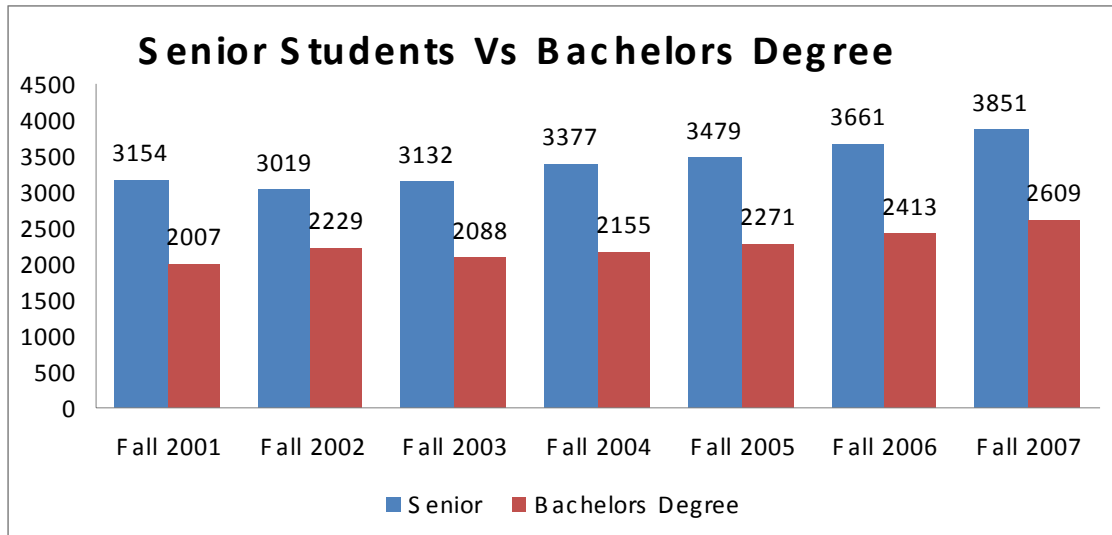
**In the future graduation numbers will also be supported by** a number of tactics that have recently been instituted at SHSU:

- **Transition to 120-hour degree programs.** SHSU modified the majority of its degree programs (effective fall 2008) to consist of 120 hours.

Undergraduate completions have fluctuated over the past six years, but not nearly as dramatically, as master's level and , especially, doctoral level completions. Deviations from growth trends cannot be entirely explained, at any level, by corresponding deviations in enrollment growth. Undergraduate enrollment has been experiencing a very smooth growth trend since 2000, partially accounting for the relatively small fluctuations in undergraduate completions. However, master's enrollment has been increasing with only a small dip between 2003 and 2004, and Post Baccalaureate enrollment has fluctuated between 20 and almost 100 people, up and down since 2000. Doctoral enrollees have been smoothly increasing since 2000, not accounting for the variability in numbers of doctoral completions from year to year.

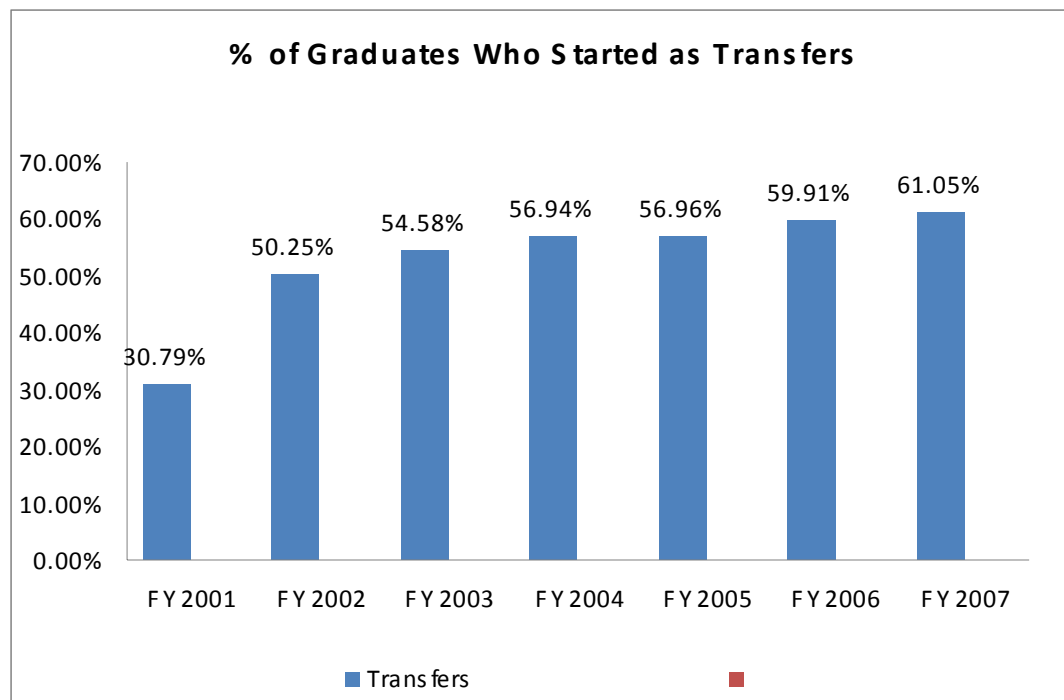


The proportion of seniors each year who complete undergraduate degrees ( 66%-68%) has been on a slight increase over the years



The following are two strategies below focus upon making it easier for transfer students to come to SHSU with completed SCHs to assist their very timely progress towards degree completion:

- **Joint Admissions.** SHSU has initiated a program of joint admissions to assist students who qualify to attend to SHSU but opt to begin their program of study at a community college. The joint admission program provides for an easy transition into SHSU while affording these students access to SHSU's support services while they are still attending the community college. <http://www.shsu.edu/joint/>
- **Articulation Agreements.** To enable students to more easily transition from a community college to SHSU, the University has initiated articulation **agreements** with over 30 community colleges throughout the state that outlines the way community college work can be efficiently integrated into selected baccalaureate programs at SHSU. <http://www.shsu.edu/prospects/transfer/>



The proportion of baccalaureate graduates each academic year that started at SHSU as First time Transfers suggests the possible impact on completion productivity that these Transfer-focused strategies could wield.

**Success Accountability Measure #9  
Best Practices for Improvement  
Doctoral Peer Group  
Texas A&M University-Kingsville**

- No. 9. Number of degrees awarded by level [by total and race/ethnicity]
  - A. Institutional Comments on this Measure and Recommended Best Practice(s)
 

Number of degrees awarded has increased at each level, Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral and in each Academic College from 2000 to 2006. Largest increases by ethnicity were for Anglo and Hispanic student for doctoral degrees and African American and Hispanic students for undergraduate degrees

    1. Scholarship support
    2. Increased number of staff advisors and training of advisors
    3. Mandatory advising in some colleges
    4. All of the practices listed in Measures 10 and 17, in combination to those listed here, contribute to the increased graduation rates.

- B. For each Recommended Best Practice: Description, History and Data [if available]
1. Scholarship Support – A wide variety of scholarships are awarded by the university and by the academic colleges. At the University level, an average of \$300,000 has been awarded during each of the three most recent fiscal years from the Presidential Scholarship program.
  2. Professional Staff Advisors – Prior to Fall 2007, the number of professional staff advisors had already been increasing. The process was accelerated in Fall 2007 with the institution of an advising fee which is used to fund additional advisors and provide support for other advising-related activities.
  3. Mandatory Advising – Although practices differ from college to college, the degree of mandatory advising has been on the increase. In some colleges, the requirement is only for lower-division students, while in some colleges, mandatory advising is required at all levels.

**Success Accountability Measure #9  
Best Practices for Improvement  
Doctoral Peer Group  
[Texas State University – San Marcos]**

- No. 9. Number of degrees awarded by level [by total and race/ethnicity]

A. Institutional Comments on this Measure and Recommended Best Practice(s)

Texas State employs a wide variety and number of student-success strategies that attempt to strengthen students' educational experiences, solidify their engagement in the classroom, on campus and in our community, and enhance their academic success. In this holistic manner, we address retention and graduation issues. The creation of and continuing support for these strategies starts with the university's strategic planning process. The best practices selected here represent but a few of the initiatives currently undertaken at Texas State.

1. PASS Program
2. Financial Aid Programming
3. Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC) – Learning Lab

B. For each Recommended Best Practice: Description, History and Data [if available]

1. PASS Program (2006). Partners in Academic Student Success (PASS) is a collaborative effort to provide resources to students to assist with their academic success on campus. The program targets students on probation, especially those students on probation for the first time within their first year at Texas State. Academic Advising Centers provide one-on-one, tailored counseling about policies, learning strategies, and skill deficiencies. Student support services provide one-hour workshops to address a variety of topics which contribute to the success of students. Web-based information systems are used to provide academic advisors with student

profiles and other information that can address issues related to the student's probation status. For more information about this extensive and pro-active program, see <http://www.vpsa.txstate.edu/common/pass.html>. Initiated in the College of Applied Arts in 2006, the program has expanded to all the academic colleges.

2. Financial Aid Programming. Transfer Students – To improve our services, based on survey findings about transfer students, we developed a letter of welcome targeted to all newly enrolled spring semester transfer students. This e-mail was directed to all transfers and not just financial aid applicants; we identified our office [FA] and the services we provided. We provided answers to commonly asked questions and encouraged students to access our services. 1100-1300 students received this e-mail each spring semester. Several workshops were hosted, including:

PASS Workshop: In collaboration with the College of Applied Arts, for the past 2-3 years, we have provided financial aid workshops for students identified as “at risk” by the College of Applied Arts. This program has expanded and become a university-wide program for the 2007-2008 academic year. We continue to provide resources and workshops to this expanded endeavor. Prior to 2007-2008, we averaged about 15 students per workshop and conducted about 2 workshops per semester.

College of Education: We provide workshops targeted at undergraduates and graduate students entering the certification program in the College of Education. To encourage students to remain in the program, the intent is to educate these students on their various financial aid options at Texas State. We averaged about 30 students per workshop and conducted about 2-3 workshops per semester.

3. Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC) – Learning Lab. In part to address needs of transfer students, The Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC) learning lab at Texas State University provides tutoring by students specializing in accounting, science, writing, statistics, history, math, and more. SLAC's tutoring is given on a drop-in basis, so no appointment is required. The lab is equipped with an instructional computer lab staffed by peer tutors for help in CIS, computer science, and other subjects requiring computer-aided instruction. Online tutoring is also available for writing and math. Handouts on study skills development such as taking notes and tests, reducing procrastination, managing time, and utilizing textbooks are available in the lab as well as on SLAC's web site. The lab and its web site feature test preparation materials for the GSP, LSAT, GMAT, GRE, and THEA. Finally, the lab has a list of names and contact information of qualified persons who can be hired for additional tutoring.

The SLAC learning lab serves approximately 2,300 clients in 7,000-8,000 visits each long semester. In April 2006, the 473 SLAC learning lab clients formally surveyed indicated that 53% had visited more than 6 times during that particular semester, and 92% indicated that they were “performing better on homework, paper(s) or exam(s) as a result of using the SLAC Lab.” The Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC) learning lab clearly plays a key role in academic success and student retention. See <http://www.txstate.edu/slac/tutoring/slac-lab.html>

**Success Accountability Measure #10**  
**Best Practices for Improvement**  
**Doctoral Peer Group**  
**[Sam Houston State University]**

- **No. 10. Graduation and Persistence rate: Percent of first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates who have graduated or are still enrolled in public higher education after six academic years [by total and race/ethnicity]**

**A. Institutional Comments on this Measure and Recommended Best Practice(s)**

Sam Houston State University (SHSU) approaches **the promotion of graduation and persistence**, through several sets of complementary and interactive tactics, cooperatively developed, implemented and monitored across several departments within the divisions of Enrollment Management and Academic Affairs. Together these tactics , contribute to a comprehensive, systemic approach to informing, empowering, supporting, and rehabilitating students so that they may persist and graduate:

- Information and awareness are provided and encouraged by *Mandatory New Student Advisement: Registration Reminders*; and *Mandatory Graduation Advisement*.
- Empowerment and access are provided by the availability of *Scholarships*, and by *Expanded Access to Classes*.
- Support is provided through *Math, Reading and Writing Centers* & through *Academic Survival Skills* programs.
- Rehabilitation for students at academic risk is provided through *First Alert, Mandatory Advisement; Monitored Academic Progress* and *Academic Survival Skills*.

**B. For each Recommended Best Practice: Description, History and Data [if available]**

Information and awareness are provided through..

- **Mandatory New Student Advisement.** All SHSU students without an established SHSU GPA must be advised by the Sam Center prior to registration
- **Registration Reminders.** The catalog includes a list of factors that students should consider when registering. Factors include: financial aid eligibility, excessive hours, third attempt penalties, and Q-drop limitations. It is the University's intent to provide pertinent information to students in as many formats as possible. Information is provided in the catalog and on-line when the student(s) register. Very specific reminders and warning are provided to students regarding change of Schedule (adding and dropping courses). SHSU catalogs have provided reminders for many years and as online registration has become more pervasive, programmed reminders, and warnings have been added.
- **Mandatory Graduation Advisement.** To help students graduate in a timely fashion, all students, with at least 90 hours, must be advised each semester forthwith until graduation. Mandatory graduation advisement has been in effect for many years

Empowerment and access are provided through..

- **Scholarships.** To help offset the rising cost of higher education as well as to attract and reward quality students, the University has created a fund for scholarships. A comprehensive listing of available scholarships is maintained on a web page easily accessed by current and prospective students. Additionally, a scholarship office is conveniently located near the Sam Center to assist students in the application process.
- **Expanded Access to Classes.** To provide for students who may not be able to attend classes at the SHSU Huntsville campus the following options are offered:
  - **Correspondence Courses.** Flexibly scheduled core and elective courses are offered to supplement regular scheduled classes. Correspondence courses have been available for many years.

- **On-line courses.** A broad array of on-line courses are provided for non-traditional students as well as students with travel constraints. On-line courses have increased steadily every year over the past few years
- **University Center.** The University Center (TUC), located in The Woodlands, is a multi-institution teaching center, shared by seven institutions of higher education including SHSU. It benefits Houston-area students and non-traditional working students not able to commute to Huntsville. SHSU has played a prominent role in the University Center for more than a decade .

#### Support is provided by

- **Academic Support Services.** At no charge to students, SHSU offers a variety of tutorial and consultation centers to include:
  - **Math Lab.** The University provides free personal tutoring services to all students enrolled in freshman or sophomore mathematics and statistics courses.
  - **Reading Center.** The Reading Center assists students, faculty, and staff with professional and academic endeavors. The primary goal of the instructors is to empower all students with effective reading strategies and the confidence to excel in their expository reading. To this end, the Reading Center tutors provide students with one-on-one and small group reading instruction. One-session workshops on various reading strategies are offered throughout the school year. In addition to serving undergraduates to develop reading strategies and/or prepare for the THEA, the SHSU Reading Center can also be used by those whose first language is not English to prepare for the TOEFL.
  - **Writing Center.** The Writing Center at Sam Houston State University helps all University students, staff, faculty and community members. The Writing Center was created to help individuals become better writers and develop more confidence in their writing abilities. To this end, the Writing Center tutors provide one-on-one and small group writing instruction. One-session workshops on various topics relating to writing are offered throughout the school year. Students may seek assistance for any type of writing needs ranging from English composition essays to science lab reports, résumés, scholarship and job application letters, even theses and dissertations. Writing Center tutors do not merely correct a student's writing, but rather help students learn prewriting, revising, and editing skills

The Math, Reading and Writing Centers have been in operation between 5-8 years and have regularly improved and expanded their operations.

#### Rehabilitation for students at academic risk.

- **The SAM Center is** a centralized location that offers accurate and intrusive academic advising and a variety of study enhancement programs. Recently the SAM Center was recognized by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) as one of the country's top six advising centers. Programs offered by the SAM Center include:
  - **Mandatory Advisement.** All SHSU students without an established SHSU GPA or SHSU students with a SHSU GPA below 2.5 must be advised prior to registration.
  - **Monitored Academic Progress (MAP).** The program is designed to monitor the academic progress of students on probation. There are three levels of intrusive monitoring to include required study skill sessions, mandatory one-on-one meetings with an advisor, and periodic grade checks during the semester.
  - **Academic Survival Skills.** The SAM Center and the Counseling Center offer short courses in a variety a self-help areas to include: time management, reading skills, note taking, stress management, critical thinking, and self assessment.
  - **First Alert.** This initiative is an intrusive advising program based on referrals from faculty members who are concerned about a student's lack of academic progress

based on attendance and grade checks. The SAM Center staff will contact the referred students and offer opportunities to improve student performance.

While the specific and direct impacts of individual tactics require more extended study, the above initiatives focusing upon students who become academically endangered have increased the number of students who have been able to overcome probationary status and persist. Tactics aimed at students who have fallen into academic suspension have reduced the number of students who have repeated suspensions and have decreased the number of repeated probationary periods among students.

General trends in graduation rates and persistence rates within the past decade, indirectly suggest the positive effects of the coordinated, systemic tactics described above. SHSU's First Time Freshman (FTF) Six-Yr graduation rates have been generally improving over the past ten academic years during which the above tactics became established. (F'97-2'03,33%; F'98-2'04,40%; F'99-2'05,41%; F'00-2'06,44%;F'01-2'07,41%). First Time transfers from Community Colleges who transferred to SHSU after Fall 2000, with at least their freshman year completed (>29 SCHs) have had generally increasing 1-yr, 3-yr and 4-yr graduation rates over the years.

CC Transfers (FTTs) w >29 SCHs % Graduating: 00-05						
cohort	Grad AY 01	Grad AY 02	Grad AY 03	Grad AY 04	Grad AY 05	Grad AY 06
Fall 2000	14%	44%	58%	61%	63%	66%
Fall 2001		14%	42%	55%	58%	62%
Fall 2002			13%	43%	57%	65%
Fall 2003				12%	41%	58%
Fall 2004					17%	31%
Fall 2005						18%

One and two-yr persistence rates of FTF cohorts who have entered SHSU since 2000 have also increased over the intervening years. One and two-yr persistence rates of FTT cohorts who have entered SHSU since 2000 have fluctuated, but have tended to increase over the intervening years.

Freshman (FTF) Retention % Overview: 2000- 2006							
FTF Cohort	Original Population	Retained F 2001	Retained: F2002	Retained2 003	RetainedF 2004	Retained F2005	Retained: F2006
2000	1680	0.67	0.51	0.50	0.27	0.13	0.07
2001	1773	--	0.62	0.54	0.48	0.32	0.12

1							
200 2	1673	--		0.64	0.54	0.49	0.31
200 3	1832	--	--	--	0.67	0.58	0.51
200 4	2144					0.70	0.59
200 5	2217	--	--	--	--	--	0.72

CC Transfers (FTTs) w >29 SCHs % Retained: 00-05							
cohort	1yr ret %	2yr ret %	3yr ret %	4yr ret %	5yr ret %	6yr ret %	7yr ret %
Fall 2000	74%	56%	25%	12%	6%	4%	2%
Fall 2001	73%	53%	24%	9%	5%	0%	
Fall 2002	64%	55%	49%	12%	5%		
Fall 2003	67%	58%	28%	11%			
Fall 2004	71%	56%	26%				
Fall 2005	80%	57%					

**Success Accountability Measure #10  
Best Practices for Improvement  
Doctoral Peer Group  
[Texas A&M University-Commerce]**

- No. 10. Graduation and Persistence rate: Percent of first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates who have graduated or are still enrolled in public higher education after six academic years (by total and race/ethnicity)

**Graduation Strategy:** Mayo College (residential learning community).

Mayo College, named after the founder of the University, is a first year residential learning community. Housed in a dedicated residential facility on the Commerce Campus, Mayo College students take block classes (based upon major or major area), and are immersed in the campus culture. Graduation rates for students accepted into the program average approximately 10% higher than the comparable general student population. The number of students in the program, which began seven years ago, ranges from 75 to 150 per year.

**Graduation Strategy:** Trio Programs.

A&M-Commerce has traditionally served relatively large populations of first-generation students, traditionally underrepresented minority students, and economically disadvantaged students (especially in the first-time, full-time cohort). In order to best serve these populations, A&M-Commerce has leveraged Trio Programs to the fullest extent. While students going through these programs often take six or more years to graduate, the graduation and persistence rates for these at-risk students usually equal, and often are better than, the comparable general student population at A&M-Commerce.

**Graduation Strategy:** Honors College (residential learning community, based on academic criteria).

The Honors College began this year, and is a residential learning community of students who meet high academic and leadership criteria. Students are housed on one floor of a new apartment building immediately adjacent to the Commerce campus – program administrative offices are housed on the same floor. Highly selective, only 50 students will be accepted per year. Each student is guaranteed a full scholarship for four years, if they maintain a specified level of performance. Graduation rates will not be known for several years, but are expected to be significantly higher than the general population, and students in the program are expected to graduate in a shorter timeframe.

**Success Accountability Measure #10  
Best Practices for Improvement  
Doctoral Peer Group  
Texas A&M University-Kingsville**

- No. 10. Graduation and Persistence rate: Percent of first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates who have graduated or are still enrolled in public higher education after six academic years [by total and race/ethnicity]
  - A. Institutional Comments on this Measure and Recommended Best Practice(s)
    - 1. Additional funding for student engagement activities has been allocated to the colleges for the past three years.
    - 2. 37 QEP courses have been offered from Spring 2005 through Spring 2008.
    - 3. Participation in student organizations is encouraged.
    - 4. Many factors listed for Measures 9 and 17 also contribute to this factor.
  - B. For each Recommended Best Practice: Description, History and Data [if available]
    - 1. Student Engagement Activities – Beginning in Fall 2005 each of the colleges have been allocated funds to be used for student engagement activities. The funding is somewhat directed to lower-division students but can be used for upper-division students as well. The additional funds have been used in a wide variety of ways, for example, purchasing registrations for students to participate in an on-line financial simulation or travel to professional conferences emphasizing career development. It should be noted that in addition to these funds, some colleges use private gift to fund similar activities. Faculty expending

student engagement funds must file a brief report to the Provost about the activities and the outcomes achieved.

2. QEP Courses – Consistent with the Quality Enhancement Plan developed as part of the SACS re-affirmation process, 37 “QEP” courses have been offered since Spring 2005. The overall goal of these courses is to improve student success through discipline-based engagement. The objectives in support of this goal are: (1) provide and evaluate discipline-based civic, professional or research engagement courses; and (2) provide faculty development in support of student engagement. Twenty-three of the QEP courses were lower division and the remainder were upper division courses. Each spring, faculty submit proposals for teaching QEP courses during the following academic year. A committee evaluates the proposals and makes the selections of the courses that will be taught.
3. Participation in Student Organizations – In addition to the usual university-wide organizations such as the Student Government Association, all colleges have a wide variety of student organizations that are closely associated with the various academic majors. Most of these organizations do not require a student to have a specific major. Students are encouraged to join organizations beginning with the high school recruitment process and throughout their first semester. Some colleges collect assessment information about the level of participation as well student perception of their respective organizations through a formal process such as the Educational Benchmarking, Inc. (EBI) surveys.

**Success Accountability Measure #10  
Best Practices for Improvement  
Doctoral Peer Group  
[Texas State University – San Marcos]**

- No. 10. Graduation and Persistence rate: Percent of first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates who have graduated or are still enrolled in public higher education after six academic years [by total and race/ethnicity]

A. Institutional Comments on this Measure and Recommended Best Practice(s)

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1. Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC) – Learning Lab
2. African American Leadership Conference

B. For each Recommended Best Practice: Description, History and Data [if available]

1. Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC) – Learning Lab. The Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC) learning lab at Texas State University provides tutoring by students specializing in accounting, science, writing, statistics, history, math, and more. SLAC's tutoring is given on a drop-in basis, so no appointment is required. The lab is equipped with an instructional computer lab staffed by peer tutors for help in CIS, computer science, and other subjects requiring computer-aided instruction. Online tutoring is also available for writing and math. Handouts on study skills development such as taking notes and tests, reducing procrastination, managing time, and utilizing textbooks are available in the lab as well as on SLAC's web site. The lab and its web site feature test preparation materials for the GSP, LSAT, GMAT, GRE, and THEA. Finally, the lab has a list of names and contact information of qualified persons who can be hired for additional tutoring.

The SLAC learning lab serves approximately 2,300 clients in 7,000-8,000 visits each long semester. In April 2006, the 473 SLAC learning lab clients formally surveyed indicated that 53% had visited more than 6 times during that particular semester, and 92% indicated that they were "performing better on homework, paper(s) or exam(s) as a result of using the SLAC Lab." The Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC) learning lab clearly plays a key role in academic success and student retention. See <http://www.txstate.edu/slac/tutoring/slac-lab.html>

2. African American Leadership Conference (1992). The mission of the African American Leadership Conference (AALC) is to lay a foundation for educational success of incoming and returning African American students by providing the opportunity for networking and learning. The AALC originated in 1992 at Texas State University when ambitious upperclassmen set out to revive and encourage leadership on and off campus. The upperclassmen had a great focus for the conference: preparing students for success at Texas State and assisting incoming students with the sometimes-difficult transition from home to college. The conference is held during September and consists of educational workshops, an organization/career fair, guest speakers, entertainment, and an alumni panel for open discussion. Although no formal study has been conducted linking this program to African-American students' success, it should be noted that for FY 2007 Texas State ranks #1 in the state in the six-year graduation+persistence rate of African-American students; we believe this leadership program contributes significantly to this measure of student success.

**Success Accountability Measure #10  
Best Practices for Improvement  
Doctoral Peer Group  
[Texas Woman's University]**

- No. 10. Graduation and Persistence rate: Percent of first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates who have graduated or are still enrolled in public higher education after six academic years (by total and race/ethnicity)

**NET (Learning Community) Program combined with our freshman seminar course (UNIV 1011)**– Students living together and taking classes together are retained and graduated at higher rates. Neighbors Educated Together (NET) offers first year students the opportunity to take courses together while residing in a clustered living environment in the residence hall. Upper class students, who are NET alumna, serve as the RAs (resident assistants) and PAs (peer advisors) for the communities. The RAs and PAs live on the floors with NET students in Stark or Guinn Hall, providing valuable resources and assistance to the residents in the

community.

Premiere faculty from English, History and Government, Sociology, Psychology, Math and Women's Studies work directly with NET students--both residential and commuter--inside and outside the classroom. Participants in NET enroll in the same classes and participate in social and academic groups.

For the 2000-2006 class of TWU students, the NET students' graduation rate was 9% higher than non-NET students. Also in this program had approximately 10% higher freshman to sophomore retention rates than students living in dorms but not in the program (76% v. 66%; 72% to 84%). The advantage for living together is also shown by the greater success rates of those living in the dorms and participating in NET than the success rates of students not living in dorms (up to 15% higher success rates in some years).

Enrollment in this program was limited in 2000 to approximately half of entering FTIC students. Since that time, the number of students and learning communities has been increased. In fall 2007 a commuter learning community was established to reach students living off campus.

**Peer Tutoring** – in Writing, Mathematics, Computer Science, and Sciences. Three tutoring centers provide peer tutoring for students seeking assistance in these academic areas. Following assessment of passing rates in first-year courses, a new mathematics center opened in 2005 and additional resources were assigned to the science tutoring center to address the high failure rates in these disciplines. As a result, attendance in tutoring sessions has greatly increased; each center has 1200- 2000 visits per semester (largely undergraduate students from an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 6,000 students). Data from the science center shows that students who attend the center frequently (3 or more times per semester) tend to achieve 10% higher science grades than students who do not. In Spring 2007 additional tutoring sessions were begun in residence halls in the week prior to final exams; student participation was high. In Fall 2007 we are adding electronic equipment that reads student ID cards so that we will be able to track students' use of the centers by name, ethnicity, and other variables as well as track the purposes of visits, enabling us to further tailor the tutoring centers to student needs.

**Success Accountability Measure #17  
Best Practices for Improvement  
Doctoral Peer Group  
Sam Houston State University (SHSU)**

- **No. 17. Persistence Rate: First-time degree-seeking undergraduate students who remain enrolled after one and two academic years [by total and race/ethnicity]**

**A. Institutional Comments on this Measure and Recommended Best Practice(s)**

Retention, at, Sam Houston State University (SHSU) is supported by the coordinated sets of tactics that attempt to promote **graduation and persistence** through information and awareness, empowerment and access, support and rehabilitation. These are described in

Success Accountability Measure #10. In addition, SHSU offers several programs that specifically target freshmen and other new students, helping to secure their initial toehold in university life in order to strengthen their likelihood of surviving and succeeding in their first year at SHSU and continuing into their second year. As with previously described tactics addressing persistence and graduation rates, these programs are largely developed and coordinated by Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management. These programs include: *New Student Summer Orientation*; *Sam Center's Mandatory New Student Advisement*; *Sam Center's Bearkat Learning Community*; *First Year Experience's SAM 136*; *First Year Experience's First Year Learning Communities*; *FYE Newsletter*; *SAM Center's Study Skills Program*; *Academic Developmental Program*; and *Academic Tutoring Services*;

**B. For each Recommended Best Practice: Description, History and Data [if available]**

Descriptions of these new-student retention programs Sam Houston State University follow:

- **New Student Summer Orientation.** The New Student Orientation Program hosts organized, introduction sessions for all new SHSU students and their families to acquaint them with services and programs vital to their successful transition as full and active members of the SHSU community.
- **SAM Center's Mandatory New Student Advisement.** All SHSU students without an established SHSU GPA must be advised by the Sam Center prior to registration
- **SAM Center's Bearkat Learning Community (BKLC)** - a program which provides incoming freshmen students the opportunity to take common classes with students living in the same residence hall. This group of students has a planned program of activities designed to enhance academics as well as provide a positive social atmosphere. Other non-residential learning communities are centered on academic disciplines to include criminal justice, business, and education.

The Bearkat LC has been regularly assessed each semester over the past three years. Results have regularly indicated that the program generally attracts a higher percentage of minority participants than other LC programs and a higher proportion of minorities than the proportion represented in the university population and the population of non-LC participants. BKLC students generally achieve higher end-of-semester GPAs than non-participants, and often have a positive impact on semester-to-semester retention. Taken across several years, in aggregate, a recent Bayesian study revealed that BKLC participants appear to have higher probabilities of being retained, having a higher final cumulative GPA and higher graduation rate. (Li, Xiaohong and Caso, M Rita; 2008; "Applying Bayesian Belief Networks to the Examination of Student Outcomes," Presented at TAIR 2008 Conference, 2/6/08.) Most recent BKLC assessment results indicate that this program had statistically significant impact upon fall 2007 semester GPA for African American participants, compared with African American non-LC participants and with African American FYLC participants)

- **First Year Experience (FYE).** Proceeding from Studies indicating that a successful first year experience increases the chances of timely graduation, a variety of courses and support services have been designed to help first-year students make a successful transition to the demands of university life.

- **SAM 136.** A three-hour, elective freshman seminar concentrating on enhancing reading, writing, and communication skills needed to succeed in an academic program. Additionally, the course raises awareness about common experiences and challenges that are common among first-year students.
- **Freshman Learning Communities (FLC).** Enhanced non-residential educational experience specifically designed to foster the intellectual development of students through increased interaction with fellow students, faculty and staff. The FLC cohorts offer first-year college students a unique opportunity to become familiar with the necessary academic and social skills leading to retention and successful performance.

Annual assessment of the FLC over the past two and a half years, has yielded results indicating that FLC participants tend to be retained from fall to Spring and to have higher Fall GPAs than students who do not participate in any freshman level LC program.

- **FYE Newsletter.** The FYE Newsletter is distributed campus wide and, upon request, to students' parents. It keeps students alert to important events, and provides helpful hints for developing positive study skills and relationships with the faculty and other university staff.
- **SAM Center's Study Skills Program-** The SAM Center offers short courses in a variety a self-help areas to include: time management, reading skills, note taking, stress management, critical thinking, and self assessment.

Repeated routine semester assessments of the Study Skills Program have consistently revealed that the program succeeds in elevating student pre-to-post scores on all dimensions of the LASSI. In addition, the Study Skills program has positive effects upon end of semester GPA, when compared with students who did not participate. Study Skills participants have tended to have lower SAT/ACT entering scores than program non-participants.

- **In addition to the Reading, Writing and Math Center, SHSU offers Academic remediation and co-curricular support**
  - **Developmental classes.** The University offers four developmental classes (two in mathematics, one in reading and a writing course) designed to help students develop necessary skills to succeed in university-level courses. These classes must be completed when students first enter the university.
  - **Tutoring services.** Many academic departments offer academic tutoring at no additional cost. The SAM Center serves as a clearinghouse for all tutorial opportunities outside of math, reading and writing.

**Success Accountability Measure #17**  
**Best Practices for Improvement**  
**Doctoral Peer Group**  
**[Texas A&M University-Commerce]**

- No. 17. Persistence Rate: First-time degree-seeking undergraduate students who remain enrolled after one and two academic years (by total and race/ethnicity)

**Retention Strategy:** Mayo College (residential learning community).

Mayo College, named after the founder of the University, is a first year residential learning community. Housed in a dedicated residential facility on the Commerce Campus, Mayo College students take block classes (based upon major or major area), and are immersed in the campus culture. Retention rates for students accepted into the program range from 5% to 10% higher than the general student population. The number of students in the program, which began seven years ago, ranges from 75 to 150 per year.

**Retention Strategy:** Trio Programs

A&M-Commerce has traditionally served relatively large populations of first-generation students, traditionally underrepresented minority students, and economically disadvantaged students (especially in the first-time, full-time cohort). In order to best serve these populations, A&M-Commerce has leveraged Trio Programs to the fullest extent, with resulting improved retention rates for students going through the programs.

**Retention Strategy:** Honors College (residential learning community, based on academic criteria).

The Honors College began this year, and is a residential learning community of students who meet high academic and leadership criteria. Students are housed on one floor of a new apartment building immediately adjacent to the Commerce campus – program administrative offices are housed on the same floor. Highly selective, only 50 students will be accepted per year. Each student is guaranteed a full scholarship for four years, if they maintain a specified level of performance. Retention rates have not been demonstrated, but are expected to be significantly higher than the general population.

**Retention Strategy:** Freshman Success Seminars (mandatory course for all first-time students)

Freshman Success Seminars, a course which focuses on techniques, behaviors and attitudes for academic success, has been optional for most first-time students for several years (it has been mandatory for Mayo College students). This year, as a strategy to improve retention, it is mandatory for all first-time students. Courses are offered by departments for students either majoring in their area, or interested in majoring in the area.

**Success Accountability Measure #17  
Best Practices for Improvement  
Doctoral Peer Group  
Texas A&M University-Kingsville**

- No. 17. Persistence Rate: First-time degree-seeking undergraduate students who remain enrolled after one and two academic years [by total and race/ethnicity]

A. Institutional Comments on this Measure and Recommended Best Practice(s)

1. Supplemental instruction has been used in selected classes since Fall 1999.
2. University Success course (1201) is required for all new freshman students.
3. Learning Assistance Center, in operation since Spring 2005, provides tutoring in mathematics, reading and writing.
4. Early grade reporting in all lower-division courses allows advisors and faculty to work with students to improve their chances for success.

B. For each Recommended Best Practice: Description, History and Data [if available]

1. Supplemental Instruction – Beginning in 1999, supplemental instruction has been used in various freshman courses. Each SI section is guided by an undergraduate student who has taken the course and received proper training. The overall results for each semester are given in the table below. As can be seen, the percent of SI students passing the courses has exceeded the percent of Non-SI students passing for each semester.

**SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION OVERALL RESULTS  
PARTICIPATION/PASS RATE – FALL 1999 to FALL 2007**

Sem	#Sec	Total #	#SIP	%SIP	#Non-SIP	%Non-SIP	Number / Percent Passing					
							# SI	%SI	#Non-SI	%Non-SI	Total #	Total %
99F	16	566	234	41.3%	332	58.7%	153	65.4%	145	43.7%	298	52.7%
00S	16	506	146	28.9%	360	71.1%	80	54.8%	163	45.3%	243	48.0%
00F	12	420	178	42.4%	242	57.6%	99	55.6%	98	40.5%	197	46.9%
01S	12	358	81	22.6%	277	77.4%	50	61.7%	111	40.1%	161	45.0%
01F	12	436	201	46.1%	235	53.9%	122	60.7%	95	40.4%	217	49.8%
02S	18	401	149	37.2%	252	62.8%	123	82.6%	160	63.5%	283	70.6%
02F	24	753	420	55.8%	333	44.2%	263	62.6%	161	48.3%	424	56.3%
03S	16	477	217	45.5%	260	54.5%	129	59.4%	106	40.8%	235	49.3%
03F	21	624	363	58.2%	261	41.8%	251	69.1%	127	48.7%	378	60.6%
04S	16	431	216	50.1%	215	49.9%	157	72.7%	104	48.4%	261	60.6%
04F	14	386	190	49.2%	196	50.8%	154	81.1%	99	50.5%	253	65.5%
05S	13	308	145	47.1%	163	52.9%	112	77.2%	97	59.5%	209	67.9%
05F	13	333	144	43.2%	189	56.8%	111	77.1%	116	61.4%	227	68.2%
06S	11	276	117	42.4%	159	57.6%	93	79.5%	76	48.7%	169	61.2%
06F	12	388	198	51.0%	190	49.0%	141	71.2%	91	47.9%	232	59.8%
07S	14	334	154	46.1%	180	53.9%	102	66.2%	98	54.4%	200	59.9%
07F	11	284	149	52.5%	135	47.5%	104	69.8%	78	62.4%	182	64.1%
	<b>251</b>	<b>7281</b>	<b>3302</b>	<b>45.4%</b>	<b>3979</b>	<b>54.6%</b>	<b>2244</b>	<b>68.0%</b>	<b>1925</b>	<b>48.4%</b>	<b>4169</b>	<b>57.3%</b>

2. University Success Course – The university success course (1201) has evolved considerably over the past fifteen years. Some of the more recent improvements have been the coordination of a portion of the content across the academic colleges, centralized training of instructors, better selection of instructors and insuring that the 1201 course is taken during the first semester..
3. Learning Assistance Center – The Learning Assistance Center (LAC) was established in Spring 2005. The following assessment data has been collected:
  - o From Fall 2006 to Fall 2007, 67.6% of freshman students using LAC services were retained compared to 46.7% who did not use LAC.

- o From Fall 2006 to Fall 2007, 77% of transfer students using LAC services were retained compared to 67% who did not use LAC.
- o From Fall 2005 to Fall 2006, 83% of freshman students using LAC services were retained compared to 43% who did not use LAC.
- o From Fall 2005 to Fall 2006, 80% of sophomore students using LAC services were retained compared to 74% who did not use LAC.

4. Early Grade Reporting in Lower-Division Courses – Early grade reporting was first implemented with mid-semester grades. After some experience with the process, it was decided that intervention should occur earlier and so the early grade reporting was moved up to the 5-week mark (earlier in the semester). At that point some faculty thought that the 5-week mark was too early to have an actual numeric grade, but the advantages of being able to supply early feedback were recognized. Consequently, we have retained the 5-week early grade reporting but allow a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grade to be given. In many cases, it is poor attendance that is creating the potential for poor performance and the S/U grading scheme allows that to be communicated to the student in an official manner.

**Success Accountability Measure #17  
Best Practices for Improvement  
Doctoral Peer Group  
[Texas State University – San Marcos]**

- No. 17. Persistence Rate: First-time degree-seeking undergraduate students who remain enrolled after one and two academic years [by total and race/ethnicity]

A. Institutional Comments on this Measure and Recommended Best Practice(s)

Texas State employs a wide variety and number of student-success strategies that attempt to strengthen students' educational experiences, solidify their engagement in the classroom, on campus and in our community, and enhance their academic success. In this holistic manner, we address retention and graduation issues. The creation of and continuing support for these strategies starts with the university's strategic planning process. The best practices selected here represent but a few of the initiatives currently undertaken at Texas State.

1. PASS Program
2. PAWS Alert and Academic Early Alert
3. Student Learning Assistance Center – Supplemental Instruction
4. Texas State Student Success Plan

B. For each Recommended Best Practice: Description, History and Data [if available]

1. PASS Program (2006). Partners in Academic Student Success (PASS) is a collaborative effort to provide resources to students to assist with their academic success on campus. The program targets students on probation, especially those students on probation for the first time within their first year at Texas State. Academic Advising Centers provide one-on-one, tailored counseling about policies, learning strategies, and skill deficiencies. Student support services provide one-hour workshops to address a variety of topics which contribute to the success of

students. Web-based information systems are used to provide academic advisors with student profiles and other information that can address issues related to the student's probation status. For more information about this extensive and pro-active program, see <http://www.vpsa.txstate.edu/common/pass.html>. Initiated in the College of Applied Arts in 2006, the program has expanded to all the academic colleges.

2. PAWS Alert and Academic Early Alert (1998). Faculty, staff and students can use the PAWS Alert Personal Alert Warning System to relate any concern they may have about a student. Concerns in areas such as academics [poor academic performance, not attending class, etc.], academic skills deficiencies [reading skills, writing skills, etc.] and careers [choosing a major, trouble with work/school balance, etc.] may be noted. Student Affairs staff members then contact the student to assess the matter and address any issues as necessary. The Academic Early Alert System targets first-year freshmen who are showing early evidence of academic difficulty. Faculty identify these students by indicating whether first-year freshmen in their classes are performing below the standard needed to satisfactorily pass the course, and/or are not attending regularly, using a on-line data entry system. This information will be transmitted to the student's University Seminar instructor, the appropriate College Advising Center and Residence Hall Directors.

3. Student Learning Assistance Center – Supplemental Instruction. (1994) Supplemental Instruction (SI) is a nontraditional form of tutoring that focuses on collaboration, group study, and interaction for assisting students in undertaking "traditionally difficult" courses. SI targets courses with a minimum 30% rate of students that drop, withdraw, or fail, and then provides a trained peer who has successfully negotiated the course to assist its future students. This peer, called the SI Leader, attends a section of the course, participates as any normal student (takes notes, exams, etc.), and then facilitates 3 one-hour study sessions per week for group study. SI Leaders are trained to help students improve their study skills and model the types of behaviors that make students successful in hopes that they will be better prepared for other difficult courses they will encounter.

Texas State University offers SI in courses ranging from the liberal arts, such as History 1310 and 1320, to math and science-based courses, including Chemistry 1341 and 1342. During FY07, over 3,000 students attended 13,000+ SI sessions. Fall 2006 SI participants earned mean course grades of 2.36 compared to 1.97 for non-SI participants in the same course sections. Spring 2007 participants earned mean course grades of 2.55 compared to 1.99 for non-SI participants in the same course sections. These data indicate that the Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC) Supplemental Instruction (SI) program is making a definitive difference in the academic success and retention rate of Texas State students. See <http://www.txstate.edu/slac/suppinst.html>

4. Texas State Student Success Plan. The Texas State Student Success Plan is a web-based resource to guide freshmen through the first year of college and establish an expectation of engagement to increase probability of success. The success plan sets high expectations for students to complete the majority of the recommended activities. It covers general topics [academic success, leadership success, career success, financial success, social/engagement success, personal success, interest inventory, transfer resources] and then allows the student to customize the experience. The suggested action for each success topic was designed by faculty and staff most familiar with student issues relating to the topic. See <http://www.studentaffairs.txstate.edu/studentsuccess/>.

**Success Accountability Measure #17**  
**Best Practices for Improvement**  
**Doctoral Peer Group**  
**[Texas Woman's University]**

**No. 17. Persistence Rate:** First-time degree-seeking undergraduate students who remain enrolled after one and two academic years (by total and race/ethnicity)

- **First Year Orientation Programs:**
  - Two day parent and student orientation program in the summer answers students' and parents' questions about college life, provides academic advising and registers students for classes.
  - Five-day Pioneer Camp is the second part of your orientation experience at Texas Woman's University held the week before classes begin. Pioneer Camp is a fun-filled introduction to the services and opportunities that TWU offers. It consists of group meetings with Orientation Leaders, recreational activities, volunteer opportunities, informational sessions, and social gatherings. Pioneer Camp provides new students with time to establish new friendships, learn about on-campus life, meet student leaders, and become familiar with TWU and its traditions.
  - Freshman Seminar course (1 credit hour) enables students to identify their individual learning styles and to develop the skills necessary to learn and succeed in their academic programs. The course emphasizes effective integration of learning style with academic skills, personal management and resource utilization. This course is beneficial to all students who are interested in maximizing their academic success, and is required for all students with provisional admission. Also, some sections of the course have been set aside for special populations such as NET participants and International students.
- **First Year Student Advising**
  - Managed by professional advisors in consultation with academic departments.
  - Includes individualized advising and "Freshman Forums" group meetings required for first year students to assist them in navigating academic rules and course work.

Includes a "Pick a Major Fair" for undecided students to meet with Career Services staff and academic advisors from many departments to explore options for degree programs and careers.