Using the Non-cognitive Factors of Beacon in Advising
Beacon is an **early alert** and **centralized notation** system that capitalizes on a myriad of data, including **non-cognitive factors**, to inform and coordinate **interventions** with **at-risk and success-oriented students**.
Non-cognitives

Non-cognitive attributes are those academically and occupationally relevant skills and traits that are not specifically intellectual or analytical in nature. They include a range of personality and motivational habits and attitudes that facilitate functioning well in school. Non-cognitive traits, skills, and characteristics include perseverance, motivation, self-control, and other aspects of conscientiousness (Borghans et al., 2008).
Student characteristics including **psychosocial factors influence retention** (Brown et al., 2008; Tinto 1975, 1993).

Influence of psychosocial factors on retention **extend to two-year institutions** (Napoli and Wortman, 1998)

Robbins, S., Lauver, K., Le, H., Davis, D., Langley, R., & Carlstrom, A. (2004) examined 109 studies and found that **psychosocial and study skill factor** (non-cognitives) were predictive beyond traditional factors.
Student Success

Non-cognitive Factors

High School GPA
+ Standardized Achievement Test
Student Strengths Inventory

• 48- item assessment
• Measures 6 non-cognitive factors (alphas range from .81 to .90)
• Provides two indices
  – Academic Success
  – Retention
• Additional Items may be added
• Provides recommendations
• Student and Advisors may access data
Student Strengths Inventory Origins

• Rational and factor analytic methods
• Homogeneous and objective measures of six factors
  • Academic engagement
  • Academic self-efficacy
  • Campus engagement
  • Social comfort
  • Resiliency
  • Educational commitment

• Initial pool of 243 items developed by team of 6 researchers
• Reduced to 81 and then 48 items through consensus and correlation analysis over 11 iterations
• 8 items for each construct
• 1 – 6 (strongly disagree – strongly agree)
The Six Factors of SSI
Academic Engagement

Definition
The value an individual places on academics and attentiveness to school work.

Sample Item
I turn my homework in on time.

Related Index
Academic Success
Academic Self-Efficacy

Definition
An individual’s confidence in his or her ability to achieve academically and succeed in college.

Sample Item
I will excel in my chosen major.

Related Index
Academic Success
Educational Commitment

Definition
An individual’s dedication to college and the value placed upon a college degree.

Sample Item
I see value in completing a college education.

Related Index
Retention
Resiliency

Definition
An individual’s approach to challenging situations and stressful events.

Sample Item
I manage stress well.

Related Index
Retention & Academic Success
Social Comfort

Definition
An individual’s comfort in social situations and ability to communicate with others.

Sample Item
I am comfortable in groups.

Related Index
Retention
Campus Engagement

Definition
An individual’s desire to be involved in campus activities and their attachment to the college/university.

Sample Item
Being active in extra-curricular activities in college is important to me.

Related Index
Retention
Intervention Activities
Preparation

• Become familiar with website and report data
• Develop comfort with 6 scales
  – Review student reports
• Develop scripts, practice interpreting
• Plan interpretation format
  – Classroom, small or large groups, individual
• Review reports ahead of time
  – All high or low scores
  – Discuss invalid reports
Prepare students for report

- Reason for the assessment
  - Do students remember taking the assessment?
  - Did the student take the assessment seriously?

- How information can/will be used

- What are the students’ expectations

- Self-assessment activity
Group Interpretation Session

• Group/classroom setting
  – Invite students to voluntarily share their scores/reactions with the class
  – Invite students with higher scores to share successes
  – Organize students in groups to identify possible action steps
  – Provide resources/guides
  – Enlist peer mentors in the conversations
    • Small group breakouts
The student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years.

Individual Interpretation Session

• High ability/strengths
  – Engage students in ideas to leverage strengths
  – Reinforce current behaviors
    • “What are you doing to be successful in this area?”

• Moderate ability
  – Wide range of scores
  – Percentile Ranks are not equivalent to grades
  – Build on existing behaviors
    • “What could you do more of to be successful?”
Individual Interpretation Session

• Low ability
  – Inquire about past success experiences
    • Everyone has had some success in each area, build upon
    • “What has worked in the past?”
  – Brainstorm possible action steps
  – Leverage moderate and high abilities

• Use the What’s Next statements

• Create a success plan
Common Concerns

This information seems very personal, I’m not trained in psychology/counseling.

Should I share the risk indices with students?

What if my conversation reveals an urgent issue?
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