

Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition

Student attrition is a major problem in higher education. In the United States, for example, more than 40% of college students drop out before completing their degrees. This has a significant impact on both students and institutions. Students who drop out are less likely to earn higher incomes and have better jobs, and they are more likely to experience poverty and other social problems. Institutions that experience high attrition rates lose revenue and reputation, and they may find it difficult to attract and retain high-quality faculty and staff.

There are many factors that can contribute to student attrition, including academic difficulties, financial problems, personal problems, and a lack of support from faculty and staff. However, there are also a number of things that institutions can do to reduce attrition rates. These include providing students with academic support, financial aid, and counseling services, and creating a more supportive and welcoming campus environment.



Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition by Vincent Tinto

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In this article, we will explore the causes and cures of student attrition in more detail. We will discuss the different factors that can contribute to student dropout, and we will provide a number of evidence-based strategies that institutions can use to reduce attrition rates.

The Causes of Student Attrition

There are many different factors that can contribute to student attrition. Some of the most common factors include:

1. **Academic difficulties:** Students who struggle academically are more likely to drop out of college. This is often due to a lack of preparation for college-level work, or to difficulty adjusting to the pace and rigor of college coursework.
2. **Financial problems:** Students who are unable to pay for college expenses are more likely to drop out. This includes tuition, fees, books, and living expenses. Financial problems can also lead to stress and anxiety, which can make it difficult for students to focus on their studies.
3. **Personal problems:** Students who experience personal problems, such as family problems, relationship problems, or mental health problems, are more likely to drop out of college. These problems can make it difficult for students to concentrate on their studies and to attend class regularly.
4. **A lack of support from faculty and staff:** Students who do not feel supported by their faculty and staff are more likely to drop out of college. This can be due to a lack of communication, a lack of understanding, or a lack of respect. A lack of support can make it

difficult for students to feel like they belong at college, and it can make them less likely to seek help when they need it.

The Cures of Student Attrition

There are a number of evidence-based strategies that institutions can use to reduce student attrition rates. These include:

1. **Providing students with academic support:** Institutions can provide students with academic support in a number of ways, including tutoring, supplemental instruction, and academic advising. Academic support can help students to improve their academic skills, to learn more effectively, and to overcome academic challenges.
2. **Providing students with financial aid:** Institutions can provide students with financial aid in a number of ways, including scholarships, grants, and loans. Financial aid can help students to pay for college expenses, and it can reduce the stress and anxiety that can lead to student dropout.
3. **Providing students with counseling services:** Institutions can provide students with counseling services to help them cope with personal problems. Counseling services can help students to develop coping mechanisms, to manage stress, and to overcome mental health problems. Counseling services can also help students to connect with resources on campus and in the community.
4. **Creating a more supportive and welcoming campus environment:** Institutions can create a more supportive and welcoming campus environment in a number of ways, including providing students with opportunities to get involved on campus, creating a sense of community, and promoting diversity and inclusion. A supportive and

welcoming campus environment can help students to feel like they belong at college, and it can make them more likely to seek help when they need it.

Student attrition is a complex problem with a variety of causes. However, there are a number of evidence-based strategies that institutions can use to reduce attrition rates. By providing students with academic support, financial aid, and counseling services, and by creating a more supportive and welcome campus environment, institutions can help students to succeed in college and to achieve their goals.



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