

Resources Prepared for University of Maine

Gateway Courses

[Course Completion Playbook](#)

High failure rates in gateway courses represent one of the largest obstacles to student success at most colleges and universities. Large required courses with failure rates as high as 30-60 percent can create retention and time-to-degree issues for hundreds or even thousands of students at a single institution. While many faculty fear that nothing can be done without lowering academic standards, a growing body of research and practice demonstrates that with appropriate support, larger numbers of students can complete these courses and stay on track for a degree. This toolkit describes the four key steps and nine tools to increase course completion rates without reducing academic rigor.

[Promoting Timely Degree Completion](#)

This study explores 16 best practices to strike a better balance between academic exploration and timely degree completion to help more students graduate in four years. Three practices may be particularly instructive for gateway course redesigns. These practices, on **pages 22-33**, profile schools that offer core classes in summer bridge programs before students begin their first year. Summer bridge programs result in benefits ranging from drastically improved first-year retention rates to the elimination of curricular bottlenecks.

Onboarding, Advising, and Support

[Onboarding, engagement and the first-year experience](#)

Student success practitioners put considerable emphasis on supporting incoming students as they make the often difficult leap from high school to college. This resource center provides on the most innovative practices to support first-year students at both two- and four-year institutions.

[A Student-Centered Approach to Advising](#)

This study provides a blueprint for a student-centered advising model through two critical imperatives. First, advisor training and organizational models should enable students to remain with one dedicated contact throughout their academic career. Second, progressive institutions incorporate a wide variety of demographic, financial, and behavioral information into their analyses of student attrition to uncover the variables most closely correlated with student success and identify the best support strategy for each student.

[Defining the Faculty Role in Student Success](#)

No one unit, office, or individual can "own" student success efforts, but without engagement from faculty, top-down initiatives are doomed to failure. Faculty-student interaction is key to student success. This study details 16 best practices for engaging faculty members and academic units in campus-wide student success initiatives.

Academic and Student Affairs Collaboration

[Reimagining Experiential Learning](#)

This study explores opportunities for student affairs departments to help students develop workforce skills outside the classroom. The study addresses the importance of breaking down silos between Student Affairs and other departments, including Academic Affairs. For example, **pages 31-35** discuss **Co-curricular Capstone Experiences**. At **UNC Wilmington**, Student Affairs staff developed a capstone curriculum, taken as a class by students, which helps students prepare for their career. In addition, **page 61** profiles **Structured Employee Reflections**. At, **University of Iowa's** the Vice President for Student Life Assessments worked with other staff to help students make connections between their job and their academic learning.

[Consolidating Student Development Services Within One-Stop Shops](#)

Though older, this report addresses relevant considerations such as which services one-stop student development centers offer, how institutions staff these centers, and how staff share student information. The report also details how one-stop shops organize their space and design their budgets.

Financial Aid and Retention

[Incentivizing Behavioral Change with Aid Dollars \(attached\)](#)

Merit aid and graduation rebate or guarantee programs are intended to incentivize students to graduate faster. In reality, much of this aid functions as a reward for existing high performers who are disproportionately affluent. Newer, more effective performance-based scholarships target students more likely to benefit from explicit behavioral incentives. This study documents perspective and best practices on how EMs across public and private institutions are linking financial aid to student success.