

Major Issues Placing Students “At Risk” for Attrition

Joe Cuseo
jcuseo@earthlink.net

1. ACADEMIC ISSUES

1.1 Not feeling adequately *prepared* to meet the academic demands of college coursework.

1.1a Inadequate basic academic *skills*--e.g., reading, writing, mathematics, processing oral information-processing (e.g., international students having difficulty understanding lectures)

1.1b Inadequate academic *strategies*—e.g., not knowing how to take lecture notes, read college textbooks, or study effectively

1.2 *Disinterest in/boredom with the content of courses or their method of delivery.*

1.2a Low level of *interest* in academic subject matter

1.2b Low level of *engagement* with the lecture method of instruction

2. MOTIVATIONAL ISSUES

2.1 Low level of *commitment to college in general or to specific college attended.*

2.1a Lack of will to graduate from college or thrill about being in *college* (at risk for dropping out of higher education)

2.1b Lack of will or thrill about graduating from their *particular college* (at risk for transferring out of the college)

2.2 *Perceived irrelevance of the college experience.*

2.2a Doesn't see the connection between college and “*real life*”

2.2b Doesn't see the connection between college and *personal (future) goals*

3. PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES

3.1 *Social factors:*

3.1a Doesn't feel *connected* to the college community (lack of social integration)

3.1b Feeling pulled away from college by *competing* social forces or commitments *outside* the college community

3.2 *Emotional issues*

3.2a Experiencing personal adjustment issues making the *transition to college*

3.2b Experiencing *mental health* issues (e.g., depression or anxiety)

4. **FINANCIAL** ISSUES

4.1 ***Inability (or perceived inability) to afford the cost of college***

4.1a Worried about *loan* payback and mounting *debt*

4.1b Concerned that time spent *working* (for money) is subtracting from time needed to do academic work and maintain good grades

4.2 ***Perception that the cost of college outweighs its benefits.***

4.2a Doesn't think the *long-term benefits* of college outweigh its *short-term costs*

4.2b Having trouble postponing *immediate material needs (or gratification)*

5. **ORGANIZATIONAL (ADMINISTRATIVE)** ISSUES

5.1 Doesn't believe that s/he is provided with *accurate information* by the college or that there are *clear lines of communication* about institutional purposes, policies, and procedures

5.2 Perceives the college as having many layers of *institutional bureaucracy* that retard rather than promote student progress

5.3 Feels that there is a lack of structures or processes that allow students to become *actively involved* or *participate fairly (democratically)* in college *decision-making*, particularly with respect to issues involving student life.