RetainME – A Web Based Early-Warning and Retention System

Frequently Asked Questions

What is RetainME?
RetainME is a web based early-warning and retention system developed by and for faculty, and has been in use since the fall of 2007. RetainME is a research based system based on the Retainology model. The system is available to other academic institution through the Retainology Consortium.

Re-tain-o-logy: The cross section of sciences, methodologies, and technologies used to identify at-risk students, and help them succeed academically.

How does RetainME help my students?
When faculty are able to provide early warning indicators such as "excessive absence" or "poor performance" in assignments or tests, advisors can view that data and react in a timely fashion. Having risk indicators early in the semester gives advisors the opportunity to suggest appropriate course of action before the situation becomes more serious. Sometimes, the proper help is to direct the student to tutoring or counseling; at other times the proper help may be to encourage the student to withdraw from the course before the deadline.

How does RetainME help my campus retention efforts?
While one must recognize that some cases do not have simple solutions, a powerful early-warning system such as RetainME gives advisors and other campus personnel, the opportunity to suggest appropriate corrective action before the situation has progressed to the point where the student's GPA has been permanently damaged, or the student is placed on probation or dismissed.

Is RetainME easy to use? How long does it take to provide my feedback?
The faculty interface is extremely easy to use. It was designed and implemented by and for faculty, and it is very intuitive. It typically takes 3 minutes or less to provide feedback for a single class. The process involves the following four steps:

1) Login
2) Pick one of the sections you are teaching.
3) Pick the students that are at-risk in that section.
4) For each student selected in step 3, mark the risk indicators that apply. Done!

What kind of information is collected by the system?
The system allows faculty to easily identify students who may be at-risk. An at-risk student is defined as someone exhibiting one or more of the following risk conditions:

1) Poor attendance (never attending or excessive absence)
2) Poor performance in assignments
3) Poor performance in the lab
4) Poor performance in exams

How is the collected information used?
The collected information is typically used in three ways:

First, the student who are flagged as showing academic risk, are automatically notified by the system and encouraged to review their academic status. While viewing their status, they are offered the ability to easily communicate with their professors, advisor, or other resources such as tutoring, counseling, and financial aid services.

Second, the data faculty provide is aggregated and made available to academic advisor(s). Advisors can quickly and easily see which students are at-risk and for what reasons. Furthermore, advisors can see if a student has multiple risk indicators (possibly from more than one course). An academic advisor can then use the system to easily contact the students and help them take proper action to remedy the situation.

Third, the data is further aggregated into reports and provided to academic administrators such as department chairs and deans so that they can effectively target their unit’s retention efforts. For example, by knowing that 30% of student in a given course are at-risk, the department chair may decide to increase the tutoring hours for that course or establish supplemental instruction. Similarly, knowing that 50% of the students with three or more risk indicators do not return the following semester may prompt the administration to develop a more comprehensive and targeted outreach to those students, while they are still on campus.

In some of my classes, I don’t have any at-risk students. What should I do?
Well, that is good. All you have to do is to:

1) Login
2) Pick the section.
3) Scroll to the bottom of the page and click the button "I don’t have any at-risk students to report".