

INFORMATION ITEM #2

WSU System-Wide Retention Update

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Below are the key points for each slide regarding WSU's system-wide retention efforts, which will be presented during the January 2025 Board of Regents Meeting.

Slide 2

- All data is at the System level for undergraduate (1st time/1st year) and transfers.
- 21000+ applications received as of January 12, 2025 is a record for the WSU System.
- Admitted students are 27.5% ahead of this same time last year. The total number of admitted students is higher than in the previous seven years.
- Confirmations for Fall 2025 (as of January 12, 2025) have surpassed confirmations for the years in which WSU enrolled record 1st year/1st-time students (Fall 2018: 5164 and Fall 2019: 4812).
- In Spring 2025, the focus shifts to confirming admitted students, expanding Instant Decision Days (IDD) both in-state and virtually for out-of-state schools, ramping up registration for Spring Admitted Student events to boost yield, and preparing for New Cougar Orientation (NCO), which dominates the term, as typically 80% of confirmed students enroll in the fall.

Slide 3

- We are only discussing the retention of new first-time, first-year students at WSU from their first to second year. While retention in later years (second to third; third to fourth) is also important, annual student losses in later years are half of those in Year 1.
- To understand the retention of first-time, first-year students at WSU, we need to benchmark our success against other institutions. The eight institutions we'll use today are a peer set of four-year public research universities that are also members of NWCCU. These are institutions that have student populations, finances, and other qualities similar to WSU.
- WSU's first to second-year retention rates are at the mean of the peer set, and they have been for the last five years of available data. Therefore, we are doing a lot of things right compared to other institutions, but we have room for improvement.
- Our 6-year graduation rates are nearly identical to the 6-year graduation rate from our peer set.

Slide 4

- First to second-year retention at WSU has been at 80% +/- 2% for well over a decade. Due to year-to-year fluctuations, we need to take a long-term view of retention and watch multi-year trends.
- While the enrollment of first-generation students has been steady at around 35-40% since 2012, we have a persistent and long-running first-year opportunity gap between students who are First Generation as compared to students who are not First Generation. Most recently, first-generation students are 10% less likely to continue into year two. The origins and solutions to this problem are currently a focus.

- While not shown, similar opportunity gaps exist for Pell-eligible students and Cougs of Color.

Slide 5

- First constituted in 2023, the Retention Council is charged with developing actionable principles and methods to improve retention.
- Council membership has been broadened and focused to enable it to serve as an action-oriented team that will better align the good work that is currently taking place and implement new system-based opportunities to further improve retention from a holistic student college career perspective.

Slide 6

- The Council has identified four key areas of focus that will help us move the needle from a retention perspective: Academic Advising, Sense of Belonging, Fiscal Support, and Early Warning Systems/Basic Needs.
- Each of these areas is key to the WSU students' experience and pathway towards completion of their degree.
- The four areas are interconnected and offer the opportunity for WSU to build a collaborative shared vision that brings all areas of the WSU community to the table and coordinate our efforts as one large entity.