



Work-in-Progress :

Using Email for Student Support and Retention

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Researchers in Asia often point to the high attrition rates from western distance education. In the Philippines, more local context relevance built into the courses has been advocated as a way to prevent attrition (Dalit, 2001). Similar comments have been made by Coomaraswamy (Tandon, 2002) in Sri Lanka, and by Vyas, Shama & Kumar (2003) in India. Clearly there is an interest in Asia to consider ways and means to retain more of their students.

In the University of Northern Colorado, a new technique is being tried out, to provide support to students in their transition to college life with a goal of improved retention. The university has a College Transition Center working in conjunction with Enrollment Services to increase student awareness and retention by weekly email reminders. Through a company called GoalQuest, specialized emails containing information on UNC time-sensitive deadlines and helpful social and academic tips are sent out to students and to their parents. Topics range from good fiscal management to guiding students in choosing a major. The emails sent to parents contain information about dealing with a student leaving for college, how to contact campus

resources and how to communicate with students about sensitive topics that might arise in campus life.

This is the first year UNC has used this programme. Students find the emails invaluable telling them where various academic and non-academic support resources are, and all these help to keep students on track.

GoalQuest specializes in communication technology for the education market. They design and use proprietary tools to help faculty and administrators cost-effectively impact application and enrollment yield, retention and other communications.

This email technique to support students in their selecting a course, helping with their transition to life as a student, and providing continuous guidance at low-cost may be effective in Asian open and distance education. Both students and their tutors in Asia might benefit from having a weekly email communications channel. Students could be kept informed of changes and updates in coursework and available resources, and their families or even the sponsoring employers could be kept up-to-date with the student's situation and progress.

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Comments

In this the first Issue of the Journal, there are no Comments. Readers are invited to send any comments they have about the points raised in any Article, Focus Report or Work-in-Progress to the Editors by email.

Also, there will be a Comments section on the website.