

Retention Services Program Review

Retention Services

A. Program Information

Program Mission Statement

1. Please enter your mission statement here.

The Office of Retention Services takes the lead in coordinating student retention efforts across campus. We work in collaboration with college services and individuals, community partners, and other stakeholders to help students manage the circumstances of academic life. Students are valued for their unique experiences and learning styles to empower them as drivers in their personal and academic journeys.

Program Level Student Area Outcomes

2. Please list the program-level student area outcomes.

1. Students who are referred through Foothill Connect, follow up and received services
2. Students will be able to stay in their class to completion after receiving a Foothill Connect tracking item (flag, referral, kudos)

B. Students Referred & Served

The chart below shows the number of students who received a flag, referral, or kudos through Foothill Connect.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Asian	368 (31%)	263 (27%)	260 (20%)	307 (23%)	233 (20%)
Black	65 (5.5%)	74 (7.7%)	77 (6%)	102 (7.7%)	58 (5%)
Filipinx	47 (4%)	31, 3.2%	69, 5.4%	61, 4.6%	53, 4.6%
Latinx	427 (36%)	357 (37%)	554 (44%)	472 (36%)	433 (37%)
Native American	6 (0.5%)	3 (0.3%)	4 (0.3%)	9 (0.7%)	3 (0.3%)
Pacific Islander	17 (1.4%)	20 (2.1%)	21 (1.7%)	20 (1.5%)	31 (3.7%)
Unknown Ethnicity	13 (1.1%)	4 (0.4%)	19 (1.5%)	52 (4%)	52 (4.5%)
White	240 (20%)	209 (22%)	271 (21%)	294 (22%)	295 (26%)
Total	1183	961	1275	1317	1158

The chart below shows the number of students who were referred for services through Foothill Connect.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Asian	155 (24%)	11 (21%)	90 (15%)	162 (23%)	95 (17%)
Black	48 (7%)	41 (7.6%)	50 (8.2%)	64 (9%)	37 (6.8%)
Filipinx	26 (4%)	18 (3.3%)	42 (7%)	32 (4.5%)	23 (4.2%)
Latinx	293 (45%)	260 (48%)	315 (52%)	283 (40%)	228 (42%)
Native American	4 (0.6%)	3 (0.6%)	2 (0.3%)	3 (0.4%)	3 (0.6%)
Pacific Islander	11 (1.7%)	14 (2.6%)	12 (2%)	10 (1.4%)	18 (3.3%)
Unknown Ethnicity	6 (1%)	3 (0.5%)	1 (0.2%)	29 (4%)	16 (3%)
White	114 (17%)	88 (16.4%)	96 (16%)	130 (18%)	122 (23%)
Total	657	538	608	713	542

The chart below shows the number of flagged or referred students who connected (communicated through any form of contact – phone call, email, text message, appointment, etc.) with Retention Services.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Asian	7 (8.4%)	4 (3.1%)	3 (1.3%)	9 (3.5%)	8 (2.6%)
Black	2 (2.4%)	3 (2.3%)	6 (2.7%)	5 (2%)	1 (0.3%)

Filipinx	1 (1.2%)	1 (0.8%)	3 (1.3%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.3%)
Latinx	7 (8.4%)	21 (16%)	24 (11%)	23 (9%)	28 (9.2%)
Native American	1 (1.2%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Pacific Islander	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.9%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.7%)
Unknown Ethnicity	62 (75%)	93 (73%)	175 (78%)	210 (82%)	254 (83%)
White	3 (3.6%)	6 (4.7%)	9 (4%)	8 (3.1%)	11 (3.6%)
Total	83	128	223	256	305

3. What do you observe in the data? What do you want the college to understand about your program?

The nature of our work as Retention Services is to work with students who are identified by their faculty as needing extra support. The data shows that Disproportionately Impacted (DI) groups, especially Latinx students, are more likely to be referred (via Foothill Connect Flag or referral) for needing assistance than Asian and White peers.

Chart 1 displays students who were referred through Foothill Connect, meaning they received either a flag, referral (needing assistance), or kudos (positive reinforcement). When compared with Chart 2, there is a measurable difference in the amount of Asian and White students that receive kudos from their instructors rather than Latinx students. This fact is reflected in the data by difference in headcounts in Chart 1 to Chart 2.

In chart 3, the bulk of contacts come through email which is reflected in the "unknown" category as it was not possible to collect the demographic data from these contacts.

4. Describe the proposed actions or next steps to maintain or improve the data by student group.

We will conduct focus groups with faculty to see how they are using Foothill Connect (FC), which we then will use to inform changes to our program moving forward.

Our office will work with the Office of Instruction to provide more workshops intended to teach FC best practices to faculty, as well as to train any new faculty, including adjuncts, on how to use FC. These actions will help provide insight and perhaps address as to why Latinx students are referred at a higher rate than their White and Asian peers.

We will also conduct a student survey to be sent out at the end of each quarter to students who received a tracking item, and for those who met directly with our office to see if the services provided met their needs.

5. What does your program need to execute this action plan?

Increased coordination and collaboration with instructional Deans and Department Chairs would be extremely helpful in encouraging faculty to utilize Foothill Connect and work with our office. The Office of Retention Services is already in communication with Dr. Gleixner, VP of Instruction to begin this process.

We would also like to partner with IR to make sure our survey instrument will be effective and provide useful data that can be applied to inform how better to serve our students.

A marketing push to make students more aware of Foothill Connect and Retention Services would be helpful as Foothill Connect also has a student facing aspect to it where students can "refer" themselves, a feature which to this point has gone underutilized.

Funding for more student ambassadors would also be helpful to improve student outreach and support.

C. Student Completion

The chart below shows the number of students who did not withdraw from the course.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Flag	407 (74%)	356 (78%)	351 (69%)	361 (68%)	274 (67%)
Referral	189 (76%)	107 (82%)	153 (65%)	231 (61%)	142 (61%)
Kudos	506 (97%)	552 (95%)	778 (93%)	790 (93%)	709 (92%)

6. What do you observe in the data? What do you want the college to understand about your program?

The chart above demonstrates the completion rate for students who received at least one of each separate tracking item (flag, referral, or kudos). It is possible that students received only one item, or multiple. For kudos, it is typical that this is the only tracking item the student would receive through Foothill Connect from their instructors

The completion rate for students referred to Retention Services is lower than the campus average (e.g. for AY 21-22, the campus-wide completion rate was 91% vs 67% and 61% for Retention Services students receiving a flag or referral). However, by definition, we are sent students who are identified as "struggling" and possibly in need of assistance. This is why our focus is on course completion and not course success as our office primarily helps with providing non-content specific assistance such as academic coaching and referrals for basic needs.

7. Describe the proposed actions or next steps to maintain or improve the data by student group.

We will collaborate more closely with campus resources such as the LRC, EOPS, and Athletics to ensure the referral process is more efficient and student centered. Our office already collaborates closely with the tutoring centers of the LRC, but this can always be improved upon.

The members of the Office of Retention Services are also working with our Dean to identify professional development opportunities to strengthen our craft to improve how we can better support students in our one-on-one appointments and contacts.

We also would like to collaborate with the newer support systems and programs on campus such as the Owl's Nest, BIPOC/Multicultural Center, and MESA program.

The other actions listed in part B relating to collaborating more closely with instruction should also help us improve in this area.

8. What does your program need to execute this action plan?

More intentional collaboration with campus resources to ensure that we are aware of all resources that are available to students. To identify and attend relevant professional development opportunities to enhance our own practices.

D. Service Area Objective Addendum

1. What are the service area outcomes & strategic objectives for the coming year?

1. The Office of Retention Services will increase the number of first-time appointments with referred students by 15% by June 30, 2024 through increased communication and follow-up with instructors.
2. Students who received a Foothill Connect tracking item (flag, referral, kudos) and who have been contacted by the Office of Retention Services will be able to stay in their class to completion, our is to raise the completion rate of Foothill Connect students to 70% by June 30, 2024
3. Increase utilization of Foothill Connect by faculty and students by 10% through increased marketing efforts and workshops by June 30, 2024.

2. What is your implementation plan for the above-mentioned objectives?

1. With a second person now in Retention Services, we are now more agile and should have more time to focus on intentional outreach to students to get them to schedule and attend an appointment. We will be more intentional with our outreach to tailor messages differently for students who have never scheduled an appointment with us versus those who have met with us in the past. We also have two student ambassadors for the 23-24 academic year that will assist in reaching out to students, primarily through phone calls to schedule student appointments with retention services and academic counseling.
2. We will be more intentional with how we communicate with instructors using Foothill Connect to make sure we are more aware of how students are progressing in their classes and to meet student's needs in a more timely matter. We will also collaborate more closely with campus resources to ensure we are up to date on what support systems are in place on campus. Our office also received a grant from the Los Altos Rotary Club and FHDA Foundation to provide book vouchers for students and we will continue to help purchase class materials for students in need.
3. Our Office will make a push to market the student facing aspect of Foothill Connect to students so they are aware it is a resource for them to get connected to services. We will work to partner with ASFC and student clubs to help increase awareness of Foothill Connect and increase a physical presence around campus with physical marketing materials to be more visible to students. For faculty, as already mentioned we will increase trainings and workshops around Foothill Connect and conduct focus groups with faculty who are both new and experienced users of the system.

3. What barriers has the program faced in implementing improvements?

The primary barrier to implementing improvements has been a lack of widespread support for Foothill Connect amongst Instructional Deans and Faculty. While Foothill Connect and our

Office certainly does have support from certain departments, this support has largely been grown from "grass-roots" efforts to sell the benefits of the system to end users. The common push back from faculty on using Foothill Connect is that it can be seen as redundant in that the instructors themselves already do outreach to students, and that completing referrals through Foothill Connect is a time consuming process. (Faculty can reach out directly)

To address these barriers, it would be very helpful to have more support amongst Deans and Department Chairs to serve as advocates to help influence more faculty to utilize Foothill Connect and Retention Services, and to also serve as another resource for faculty to utilize when there are questions about the system.

E. Summary

Use this opportunity to reflect on your discussions above and include any closing thoughts.

The Office of Retention Services was initially called The Early Alert/Owl Scholars Program, which was created in 2015 to address the equity gap by offering wraparound support (examples: tutoring, academic coaching, connection to mental health counseling, financial aid, etc.) in the foundational classes in Math, English, and ESLL. Early Alert/Owl Scholars was only made available to the students and faculty in the foundational classes in these departments, and referrals by faculty to the Owl Scholars team were made via Excel spreadsheets and email communication. Once a student is referred, our office then follows a process to make sure the student is either connected to a support system to which they are already connected with (e.g. support program/Learning community) or handles the outreach efforts for those students who do not belong to such as support system. If we do connect with a student, we meet with them one-on-one and provide support through academic coaching such as helping them with time management, organization, and/or accountability support, or by helping them connect with a support service such as tutoring or the Disability Resource Center.

Just prior to Fall 2017, Foothill was invited to participate in the second phase of a statewide initiative implemented by the State Chancellor's office to adopt the Starfish (Foothill Connect) software platform to assist in our referral and retention efforts. Foothill joined this initiative, and Starfish was implemented at Foothill in Fall 2017 and became the primary form of referral and retention services reporting for the Owl Scholars program.

When AB 705 was implemented in the 2018-19 academic year, Owl Scholars then moved into the college-level classes in Math, English, and ESLL instead of focusing solely on the foundational classes, but again, only these specific classes had access to Starfish and Early Alert/Owl Scholars services. Starting in Fall 2019, the Starfish platform was then made available to all Foothill classes in the active term, but Owl Scholars/Early Alert continued to operate primarily in Math, English, and ESLL, and very few faculty outside of these departments were made aware of this change and therefore did not know it was available to them and were not trained to use the system.

Starting in Spring 2022, Owl Scholars was rebranded as "The Office of Retention Services" and Starfish was rebranded as "Foothill Connect," and a pilot program to increase the integration of Instruction and Retention Services through an increased utilization of Foothill Connect by faculty in all programs was conducted. This pilot was very helpful in informing the

practices of the Office of Retention Services and highlighted the need for increased communication between Retention Services and instructors who utilize Foothill Connect in their classes. An Opening day workshop was held in Fall 22 where faculty participants of the pilot spoke about their experiences with Foothill Connect and how using the system and collaborating with Retention Services staff benefited their students. The Spring 22 Pilot was very successful and helped increased faculty utilization of Foothill Connect by 36% from AY 21-22 to AY 22-23.

While faculty are the primary users of Foothill Connect, many services including the WLC, STEM Center, Pass the Torch, and Financial Aid have all utilized Starfish/Foothill Connect, and it is their preferred referral system as it makes it easier for them to receive referrals from the campus community.

Foothill Connect also helps special populations such as Athletics, EOPS, Puente, and UMOJA to help track their students and they have expressed interest in expanding the use of Starfish in their programs. Foothill Connect provides the functionality for when a student receives a flag or referral, we are able to see if the student belongs to a support program/learning community and we then "assign" those items over to the respective point person for that support system so the student is connected to the service for which they belong. The Office of Retention Services then handles the outreach and support efforts for all other students not connected to one of these support systems.

The Owl Scholars Program/Office of Retention Services experienced a number of changes during the program review period of 2017-21. Along with the change in focus mentioned about, there was also a reduction of full time staff associated with this program from 3 classified staff members and 1 dedicated counselor, to only 1 classified staff member. Despite these challenges, we have remained resilient and committed to supporting students. A Student Success Specialist was recently added to our office and was instrumental in allowing us to be more ambitious with our service area outcomes and strategic objectives for the coming year.

The nature of our work is challenging as we engage with students who are already identified as "struggling" in their class. Our service area outcomes and strategic objective for this year are focused on how we can be more proactive in our approach so we can reach students before it is "too late." A proactive approach is especially necessary in the quarter system as even reaching out to a student but week 6 or 7 might be too late in the term to affect a meaningful intervention. Our goals are to increase collaboration with instruction to improve the faculty referral process, and to be more visible to students and understanding of their needs to best improve our office. We are also focused on our own professional growth so we can be more effective in supporting students in our one-on-one appointments. We are committed to working with faculty, staff and students around campus to make sure students are provided with the support they need such as help getting connected to services and providing one-on-one direct support which is vital in supporting them on their academic journeys.

F. Rubric

Click on the link below to view the Retention Services Rubric.

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