

Chapter 2

The Factual Knowledge Elements and Components of Outstanding Retention and Student Success Coaching

ABSTRACT

The research presented throughout this chapter and in Chapters 3 and 4 comes from a 2015-16 study of a US-based for-profit coaching company that was conducted as part of the author's dissertation and doctoral studies. The research was designed to examine, understand, and explain why students assigned to receive retention and success coaching were significantly more likely to remain enrolled at their institutions than students who did not receive coaching. One of the main elements of the research was to understand and evaluate the coaches' performance in the retention of students in online degree completion programs and to inform the larger, related problem of online course and program retention. As a further focus, the study was designed to inform and improve retention of the most difficult community of students, the non-first-time student enrolled in an online degree completion program. This chapter looks at the knowledge elements and components of highly impactful coaching.

OVERVIEW OF 2015-16 DISSERTATION STUDY OF COACHING

This chapter and chapters three and four draw heavily on a 2015-16 study of the coaching company, InsideTrack, that was conducted as part of my dissertation and doctoral studies. The study was designed to examine, understand and explain why students assigned to receive coaching were significantly more likely to remain enrolled at their institutions than students who do not receive coaching. One of the main elements of the study was to understand and evaluate the coaches' performance in the retention of students in online degree completion programs and to inform the larger, related problem of online course and program retention. As a further focus, the study was designed to inform and improve retention of the most difficult community of students, the non-first-time student enrolled in an online degree completion program. Through interviews and focus groups of elite coaches as well as observations at two coaching centers and a document review, the study assessed the knowledge, motivation, and organizational resources of the coaches in support of individual students in their quest to finish their baccalaureate degree. This chapter focuses on the knowledge elements and components of highly impactful and successful coaching.

This chapter presents the knowledge component research and findings from the dissertation study. The data and findings are presented as a set of instruments and methods for understanding what outstanding retention and student success coaches need to know to be effective. Or, put another way, what knowledge assets do they need in order to be outstanding retention and student success coaches. The intent of the chapter is to inform best practices and strategies for designing and deploying outstanding coaching services through either an outsourced or an internal coaching department model. The research and findings are curated to have broad significance to coaching in a variety of contexts at a wide range of post-secondary institutions or educational organizations.

The study utilized the Clark and Estes (2008) Knowledge, Motivation and Organization (KMO) framework to organize, articulate and build the information necessary to understand, evaluate and explain coaching as a promising retention practice and strategy. This chapter focuses only on the first element of the KMO analysis, knowledge. The knowledge element of the study explores the what, why, how, and when of the coaches' knowledge.

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