

Executive summary:

MySuccessCheck is a 15-item questionnaire for new GVSU undergraduate students, intended to provide an early indication of which students are at greatest risk for dropping out. The fall 2016 survey was open from Sep 19-25. Students in their first GVSU semester were invited via email to participate, and were also encouraged by Residence Life and advising staff. Of 5,950 invitees, 1,519 completed questionnaires, for a response rate of 25%.

The questionnaire is intentionally brief, and includes only two types of items: a few items required to create an effective diagnostic scale identifying students' risk of dropout; and other specific items that GVSU student-support staff indicated they would use in practical interventions with individual students expressing needs. The mySuccessCheck interface for staff members included a rudimentary means for staff members to log those contacts. Altogether, staff logged 932 contacts, affecting 765 different participating students.

The questionnaire was successful in differentiating students by their risk for attrition. Based on responses to 3 key items, each participant was assigned a risk level of low, medium, or high. Subsequent analysis shows that those assignments were strongly predictive of the proportion of students who returned to GVSU for the winter 2017 term.

Risk Category (computed)	Frequency	Percent of Respondents	Number Contacted	Percent Contacted	Fall-winter Retention
Low	1284	84.7	629	49.0	97%
Medium	123	8.1	79	64.2	84%
High	58	3.8	33	56.9	66%
Unclassified	54	3.5	24	44.4	90%
Total	1519	100.0	765	50.5	95%

Furthermore, high-risk students for whom a staff contact was logged were significantly more likely to persist than those who had no logged contact (76% vs 52%).

While these findings are highly encouraging, several aspects of the project will need to be improved in future iterations:

1. Participation should be promoted more strongly, so that a majority of invitees participate
2. Staff contacts with participants should be logged more comprehensively, and in a way that will allow us to assess the effectiveness of responses to individual risk indicators.
3. Contingent on better logging, we should continually review the questionnaire items for their ability to direct practical staff interventions.
4. We must evaluate the effectiveness of our interventions and continue to develop more effective ways to ameliorate the risks that the survey identifies.

Survey Item Breakdown:

I am confident in my choice of major

	Frequency	Percent	% Contacted
Agree Strongly	463	30.6	50.8
Agree	631	41.8	52.0
Neither Agree nor Disagree	241	16.0	48.1
Disagree	128	8.5	46.9
Disagree Strongly	48	3.2	50.5

Responses to this item are not significantly related to either fall-winter retention or fall GPA.

I would like an advisor to contact me to discuss my major or career goals

	Frequency	Percent	% contacted
Agree Strongly	331	22.0	73.1
Agree	562	37.4	64.8
Neither Agree nor Disagree	435	28.9	24.8
Disagree	151	10.0	28.5
Disagree Strongly	24	1.6	50.8

Students who responded "Disagree Strongly" had a significantly lower retention rate than others (83% vs 95% for all respondents). A logged contact had no statistical effect on retention among those "Disagree Strongly" students (rate was exactly 83.3 in either case). Responses to this item are statistically unrelated to fall semester GPAs.

I have spoken to one or more of my professors outside of class

	Frequency	Percent	% contacted
Agree Strongly	197	13.1	52.3
Agree	553	36.8	47.0
Neither Agree nor Disagree	173	11.5	54.3
Disagree	469	31.2	48.8
Disagree Strongly	112	7.5	63.4

Responses to this item are significantly related to term GPA. Students who responded "Agree Strongly" had significantly higher grades than those who indicated "Neither" or lower. Responses to this item were not significantly related to retention.

If I need extra help to be successful in my coursework, I know where to go at GVSU to receive academic support

	Frequency	Percent	% contacted
Agree Strongly	445	29.7	48.8
Agree	697	46.5	50.6
Neither Agree nor Disagree	175	11.7	46.9
Disagree	158	10.5	57.6
Disagree Strongly	24	1.6	62.5

Responses to this item were not related to fall-winter retention or semester GPA.

I have friends at GVSU who I enjoy spending time with

	Frequency	Percent	% contacted
Agree Strongly	651	43.7	49.5
Agree	539	36.2	48.1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	164	11.0	55.5
Disagree	103	6.9	59.2
Disagree Strongly	33	2.2	63.6

The retention rate for students who agreed (strongly or otherwise) was significantly higher than the rate for those who didn't agree. Among those who did not agree, a logged contact from a staff member had no discernable impact on retention. Students who responded "Agree" earned significantly higher grades than those who chose "Disagree" or "Disagree Strongly", and the grades of those who disagreed strongly were significantly lower than those for any other response category:

	Fall-winter Retention	Fall GPA
Agree Strongly	96%	3.18
Agree	96%	3.25
Neither Agree nor Disagree	90%	3.22
Disagree	89%	3.03
Disagree Strongly	91%	2.82

I am satisfied with my social life at GVSU

	Frequency	Percent	% contacted
Agree Strongly	373	25.1	48.8
Agree	587	39.5	46.2
Neither Agree nor Disagree	318	21.4	57.5
Disagree	167	11.2	52.7
Disagree Strongly	43	2.9	62.8

Responses to this item were not significantly related to retention. Students who answered "Disagree strongly" earned significantly lower grades than those who gave any other response (2.93 vs. 3.19 among all respondents). Logged contacts with "Disagree strongly" students were not associated with any change in GPA.

I plan to return to GVSU for the Winter term

	Frequency	Percent	% contacted
Agree Strongly	1029	69.4	51.5
Agree	395	26.6	49.6
Neither Agree nor Disagree	34	2.3	55.9
Disagree	17	1.2	17.6
Disagree Strongly	8	0.5	12.5

Predictably, responses to this item are strongly associated with fall-winter retention:

	Fall-winter Retention	Fall GPA
Agree Strongly	97%	3.21
Agree	94%	3.16
Neither Agree nor Disagree	85%	3.15
Disagree	12%	3.29
Disagree Strongly	6%	3.32

The rate for those who indicated "Strongly agree" was significantly better than those for students who didn't agree, and students who disagreed (strongly or not) had significantly lower retention than any other response-level groups. Logged contacts were not associated with a difference in retention within any of the response levels. There is no significant association between this item's responses and fall GPA.

I plan to continue at GVSU next year (Fall 2017)

	Frequency	Percent	% contacted
Agree Strongly	924	62.1	51.0
Agree	407	27.3	50.9
Neither Agree nor Disagree	116	7.8	55.2
Disagree	24	1.6	33.3
Disagree Strongly	18	1.2	27.8

This annual retention question was also highly predictive of fall-winter retention:

	Fall-winter Retention	Fall GPA
Agree Strongly	98%	3.21
Agree	96%	3.18
Neither Agree nor Disagree	83%	3.08
Disagree	50%	3.34
Disagree Strongly	42%	2.83

Other than the 2 degrees of agreement, each response level was associated with a significantly higher retention rate than each of the levels below it.

Among those who disagreed (strongly or not), logged contacts were associated with significantly higher fall-winter retention. There is no significant association between responses to this item and fall GPA.

I feel like I belong at GVSU

	Frequency	Percent	% contacted
Agree Strongly	581	39.1	49.2
Agree	605	40.7	51.6
Neither Agree nor Disagree	226	15.2	50.4
Disagree	59	4.0	45.8
Disagree Strongly	14	0.9	71.4

Students who indicated "Agree strongly" or "Agree" had significantly higher retention rates (96%) than those who disagreed (strongly or not; 83%). Grades were not related to this item's responses.

In an average week (so far) how many hours do you spend studying and preparing for your courses?

	Frequency	Percent	% contacted
Less than 1	8	0.5	100.0
1 to 5	269	17.8	100.0
6 to 10	471	31.2	41.0
11 to 15	302	20.0	37.7
16 to 20	198	13.1	36.4
21 to 25	114	7.6	40.4
26 to 30	77	5.1	42.9
31 to 35	30	2.0	40.0
36 to 40	24	1.6	45.8
More than 40	15	1.0	40.0

Reported study time was not related to retention, but there is a clear and unsurprising association with fall grades, with each 5-hour increase in study time corresponding to an average GPA increase of 0.08 points. In particular, the GPA difference between those who indicated 10 study hours or less (3.06) and those who indicated at least 11 hours (3.32) appears to be the most salient gap.

How many of your scheduled classes have you missed?

	Frequency	Percent	% contacted
None of them	1092	73.0	46.8
One	238	15.9	52.9
Two	106	7.1	54.7
3 to 5	49	3.3	100.0
6 or More	5	0.3	100.0
I Don't Know	6	0.4	100.0

Responses to this item were not significantly related to fall-winter retention. Students who responded "None of them" or "One" earned significantly higher grades (3.26) than those who gave any other response (2.61).

Many new students report feeling homesick in the initial weeks of college. Do you feel like homesickness is affecting your daily life at GVSU? (Choose the answer that is closest to how you feel.)

	Frequency	Percent	% contacted
I'm not homesick	664	44.1	52.1
Homesickness is not really bothering me much	538	35.7	46.7
I feel homesick most days but it's getting better	255	16.9	51.0
Homesickness is making it difficult to do my class work	25	1.7	76.0
I regret moving away from home	24	1.6	58.3

Responses were significantly related to fall-winter retention. Students who indicated regret over leaving home were significantly more likely to leave than those with any other response, and those responding with the second-highest level of homesickness also had significantly lower retention than those who said homesickness wasn't bothering them. Among those who indicated the greatest levels of homesickness, retention did not differ according to whether a staff contact was logged.

	Fall-winter Retention	Fall GPA
I'm not homesick	95%	3.15
Homesickness is not really bothering me much	96%	3.23
I feel homesick most days but it's getting better	94%	3.23
Homesickness is making it difficult to do my class work	88%	3.25
I regret moving away from home	71%	2.99

Responses to this item were not significantly associated with GPAs.

Do you still need to purchase textbooks for any of your classes this semester?

	Frequency	Percent	% contacted
No	1393	94.1	67.0
Yes	88	5.9	48.9

Students who responded "Yes" earned significantly lower grades (2.80) than those who responded "No" (3.22). Among those who said "yes", a logged staff contact was not associated with better grades.

Responses to this item were not significantly related to retention.

Would you like someone from the Disability Support Resources office to contact you to discuss accommodations and resources related to a disability?

	Frequency	Percent	% contacted
No	1425	96.6	68.0
Yes	50	3.4	49.4

Students who responded "Yes" earned significantly lower grades (2.85) than those who responded "No" (3.20). Among those who said "yes", a logged staff contact was not associated with higher grades.

Responses to this item were not significantly related to retention