Indiana University Southeast
Academy for Student Persistence and Completion Application

One might fairly say that a major difficulty we face at Indiana university Southeast is the paradoxical fact that we know a great deal about our students, yet we don't always understand them. We survey students extensively, know the courses that can impede their progress, and seek to respond creatively and constructively to the changes in their lives, over time. However, our efforts sometimes seem uncoordinated, a few minutes or weeks late, or invisible to both students and other campus constituencies who might be helpful in making interventions successful.

Further, we have long had a culture of working groups of a few energetic and visionary people noticing a problem looming on the horizon, strategizing a plan to avert disaster, and then implementing it with as much buy-in as they can muster from other constituencies. Over recent years, we have realized that that we need to implement sustained and long-term strategies, harnessing the expertise of each member of our community (as opposed to heroic efforts by a few people of good will) in order to give each student who matriculates at Indiana University Southeast the best odds of graduation and access to the American Dream.

With that in mind, we apply to the Academy for Student Persistence and Completion with earnest hopes that, in the company of colleagues from other institutions, we might craft, implement, and execute a persistence and completion plan that makes use of the things we know about our students. A successful plan will enlist each member of our community, whether in academic, administrative, student, or advancement services, in making Indiana University Southeast a university that fulfills its promise to our region by graduating students who are ready for lives of responsible leadership in their homes, work places, communities, region, and nation.

1. IU Southeast's student population in Fall 2014 is just over 6,400 and most of those students are undergraduates (93%). More than half of all undergraduates (60%) attend full-time. Additionally, most undergraduates are Indiana residents (72%), while 27% are Kentucky residents from reciprocity counties who receive in-state tuition and fees. A large portion of our undergraduate students are non-traditional aged (28%) and even more are first-generation (35%), while still more would be the first in their families to earn a college degree. Students of underrepresented ethnicity make up over 10% of the population and nearly 60% of all students are female.

Fall 2014 Students by Degree Level and Demographic

	Undergraduate (5,989)		Graduate (453)		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Indiana Resident	4318	72.1%	165	36.4%	4483
Reciprocity	1600	26.7%	281	62.0%	1881
Other Non-resident	71	1.2%	7	1.5%	78
Traditional	4325	72.2%	48	10.6%	4373
Non-Traditional	1664	27.8%	405	89.4%	2069
First Generation	2095	35.0%	101	22.3%	2196
Females	3521	58.8%	292	64.5%	3813
Males	2468	41.2%	161	35.5%	2629
American Indian/Alaska Native	8	0.1%	3	0.7%	11
Asian	83	1.4%	9	2.0%	92

Black/African American	330	5.5%	42	9.3%	372
Hispanic/Latino	151	2.5%	9	2.0%	160
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	10	0.2%	1	0.2%	11
NR-Alien	21	0.4%	4	0.9%	25
Two or More Races	138	2.3%	7	1.5%	145
White	5040	84.2%	372	82.1%	5412
Race/Ethnicity Unknown	208	3.5%	6	1.3%	214

2. In 2010, the Chancellor appointed a taskforce to develop initiatives to improve student success and persistence to graduation. Members of the taskforce researched best practices at peer institutions, conducted an analysis of current practices on the IU Southeast campus, and collected ideas and feedback from the campus community. Based on those months of research, three primary and multiple secondary initiatives were recommended to campus leadership. Many of the initiatives below are tied to those recommendations. Over the past three years, efforts to improve student persistence and completion have included the following:

   a. While it can often be said that staff members in general, and members of the professional staff in particular are ahead of faculty in their awareness of the complexity of student needs, EVCAA Dufrene has acted upon his stated goal of increasing student persistence and success by making the issue "top of mind" for each of the units under his supervision. In addition to student persistence being one of the standing items on each of the agenda for groups such as the Deans and Academic Affairs Unit Heads and the Deans, his office hosted a full-day faculty retreat devoted to FLAGS the dissemination of persistence work and best practices, and practical ways in which faculty members can help students frame and address obstacles to their progress. In September, Academic Affairs also hosted the second Coordinator's Retreat since Dr. Dufrene assumed his position (2013). As with the faculty in-service day, one goal of the retreat was to give coordinators the tools necessary to support students, and to assist the faculty with whom they work in doing the same.

   b. The formation of a Student Success Action Team (SSAT) coordinated by Dr. Annette Wyandotte, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, which is entering its final year. There are fifteen faculty members, administrators, and staff members on the SSAT, with an additional six faculty and staff members on the Web Review Team, which reviewed the Indiana University Southeast web site for accuracy, usefulness, and ease of use for students. The larger SSAT divided its energies and research into four directions over the past two years, in order to identify the traits of successful students, explore ways to foster non-cognitive strengths and habits in our students, seek high-impact practices, and offer faculty members resources to work still more effectively with the students we attract.

   c. The campus has restructured academic advising, integrated Degree Maps, piloted a residential learning community, as well as learning communities in anatomy and chemistry classes. We have entered the Student Success Collaborative, which provides data regarding student risk related to criteria as identified for each academic program. Advisors and program coordinators will use these data to target students who need additional assistance to successfully complete. The data will also be used to better engage middle and high level students.

   d. The FLAGS (Fostering Learning, Achievement, and Graduation Success) early alert system designed at the university level was implemented on our campus in 2012 to provide outreach to students identified as at-risk by faculty within the first few weeks of the semester. The goal is to assist these students early enough to help them succeed in the given semester rather than waiting until the end, thereby increasing the likelihood of retention and completion.

e. The Office of Financial Aid has created initiatives to make the Financial Aid process less daunting, and has provided limited book scholarships for students taking summer session (the tuition for which has been discounted 25% each summer since 2012). The Bursar's office has deployed a more flexible tuition payment schedule, and Academic Affairs is undertaking initiatives to posit Summer Sessions as a third semester, because the reality of many students' lives mitigates against them taking 15 credit hours per semester. Thus, attendance in summer session allows students the opportunity to take 12 or even 9 credit hours during spring and fall, while still having the opportunity to attain 30 credit hours at the end of an academic year. The university is "messaging" the concept of summer session as a means to four-year graduation to students, through signage, the web site, and social media.

f. In order better communicate with current students, as well as with those who have stopped attending without earning their degree, Enrollment Management has initiated a Talisma campaign designed to be in touch with such students without overwhelming them, or making them feel "spammed". As of this semester, constituencies from across the campus, from the divisions of Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Administrative Affairs are discussing the timing, the content, and even the forms (i.e. electronic versus through traditional mail) such communications will take.

g. The Career Development Center (CDC) has several programs and services that impact student retention and persistence to graduation.

The CDC has partnered with the Advising Center for Exploratory Students (ACES) since summer 2012 to engage career exploration with incoming first year "undeclared" students. Students are identified during the Orientation registration process, given a career assessment, and then required to attend a Major Exploration Workshop and meet with their academic advisor in ACES for fall advising.

The retention Rate for Fall 2012-Fall 2013 for all students was 55%. Meanwhile, the retention rate for first year exploratory students who completed the career assessment, attended the Major Exploration Workshop and met with their academic advisor was 68%--a 13 point increase from the campus average. Career and Academic Planning (COAS-S100), a 1-credit course, was established by the CDC in collaboration with ACES in the Spring of 2013 to further assist first year exploratory students in the career exploration process. 80% of the students who took the course in the Spring 2013 semester were enrolled in Fall 2014 as compared to the campus average of 58% for all first year students.

The current internship program has shown significant data to support student retention and persistence to graduation. Based on the information presented below in Appendix 3, the CDC discovered that, over the last two years, interns are graduating approximately a year sooner that students who do not complete internships. This continues to speak volumes to the value of internships – both to students and to the institution.

3. Indiana University Southeast utilizes a robust student information system as the basis for the collection and tracking of student data. While the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) is primarily responsible for the analysis and reporting of institutional data, many schools, departments and programs on our campus have access to student and program level data through the Indiana University Information Environment (IUIE), allowing those individual areas to track student progress and success in a variety of ways. Additionally, the institution uses the datasets described below to guide efforts to improve student persistence and completion.

a. A working group of the SSAT has studied sets of first-year student cohorts to see how traits that these students bring to their university studies might predict their success. The data indicated that students in the middle quartiles (based on admission criteria) are those who may benefit most from retention

initiatives. These datasets have been used by the Enrollment Management team, academic advisors, and program faculty to conduct outreach to students in the middle quartiles who have been identified in the FLAGS system. This outreach resulted in significantly higher fall-to-fall retention rates for students in the 2nd quartile compared to students in the same quartile in the previous year, during which no outreach occurred. Additionally, comparative data indicate that 2nd and 3rd quartile students targeted for outreach persisted longer than students in the same quartiles in the previous year. These early data suggest that this type of outreach aides in retention of our middle quartile students, particularly students in the upper-middle or 2nd quartile.

b. The Mentoring Center, Housing and Athletics Offices retain and disseminate information related to student success and persistence, and the evidence that programming and interventions that they provide are helpful to students. These datasets include minority, first-generation, low-income, and resident students, as well as those who participate in athletics. These datasets have been used to support requests for the expansion and restructuring of the mentoring program to include more students, increase participation in the summer program for new students, and more resources for athletics.

c. The university maintains retention and graduation rate information, organized by student demographic, admissions criteria, financial aid eligibility, and academic unit. Student retention is tracked across multiple semesters and years for entering cohorts and the overall student population. Cohort retention datasets and summaries are available in the form of fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention. The cohorts consist of all new, degree-seeking students including new full-time and part-time freshmen and new full-time and part-time transfer students. These datasets have been summarized in terms of residency, course load, gender, ethnicity, and financial need. Many other demographic variables are available in the datasets for summary, such as admission criteria, need for remediation, and veteran status.

d. Additionally, our campus tracks fall-to-fall population retention for undergraduate and graduate students. These data are summarized by student classification and have also been disaggregated by degree program. Graduation rates are currently tracked and reported for all full-time freshmen cohorts and include 4-year, 6-year, and 8-year rates. We participate in the Voluntary System of Accountability, which includes a success and progress measure that tracks successful transfer or completion at another institution and continued enrollment at any institution. This measure provides a more holistic view of student success, especially for a student population is more likely to attend part-time, take longer to complete, and take classes at multiple institutions. All of these data are shared with enrollment management, deans, and faculty to guide decisions about academic and student support programming.

e. Recently, the Budget Committee required 2014-15 that any funding requests include data related to how the ideas to be funded would enhance retention or student success. The Chancellor and Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs have also used these data to stress the importance of adapting our campus culture to better support student success and broaden our perspective on the responsibility and accountability for retention and completion to include all levels of the institution.

f. The FLAGS early alert system encourages faculty members to report academic and interpersonal behaviors that cause them to be concerned about student success. This information is then disseminated to advisors and other interested parties, and interventions are reported to OIE. Faculty members, advisors, and other institutional staff are asked to follow-up on those flags by offering students the support they need to get back on track. The institution is in the process of developing reporting mechanisms that will provide data to measure the consistency and success of this outreach.

g. In addition to the FLAGs early alert system, the university utilizes the Education Advisory Board's Student Success Collaborative (SSC) dashboard to track student progress in the degree program. This tool monitors student performance in courses and flags students according to their level of risk for completion—low, medium and high-risk. The dashboard allows academic advisors and program

coordinators to target groups of students for outreach. For example, advisors may develop a list of students who are at medium risk for completion to contact directly and discuss support options for getting back on track. Likewise, program coordinators may develop lists of low-risk students to encourage additional engagement in research and student organizations. The SSC dashboard is based on predictive workbooks developed using 10 years of student performance data.

h. The institution collects, summarizes and reports a wealth of data on the student experience. Students are surveyed multiple times throughout their careers to gauge their satisfaction and engagement. These surveys include an entering survey, continuing survey, graduating survey, alumni survey, and the National Survey of Student Engagement. These data are summarized and shared directly with the Academic Council, Enrollment Management, Student Affairs, and Alumni Services. These bodies use the data to guide changes in their programs to better meet the needs of students and promote persistence. In addition, the First-Year Seminar and Honors Program both provide OIE with information they derive from student surveys, as well as progress toward degree.

i. Because persistence is tied to successful learning in academic degree programs, the institution utilizes program assessment data to support student retention and completion. Academic programs consistently collect student learning data that are summarized and reported by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Program faculty and school level administrators review these data and make changes to program structure, curriculum design, and course content that directly influence student learning and thereby persistence.

4. We would like to clarify our institutional sense of the students we serve, and of the best ways to serve them. What does it mean to be a first-generation college student in Southeast Indiana now? While many of our faculty members and staff members are themselves first-generation college students, we have become increasingly aware that many of our students face challenges we and most members of our own cohorts have not. Thus, we propose to look more deeply at our student demographic as a way to design actions plans that will be effective for the students we attract and seek to retain.

In addition to our ethical concern for the well-being of our students and region, we are motivated to greater understanding by the following: enrollment decline; low graduation rates; increased institutional pressure, in the form of performance-based funding models; an increase in our graduates' student loan default rates; the effect that low graduation rates are having on the region and community. In the Louisville metro-area, increasing college attainment has been identified as a key objective for economic development. In Southern Indiana, the Education Matters initiative has been established to increase college attainment for working adults with some college credit, but no degree. We need to contribute to both initiatives, creating an educated workforce that will help drive the regional economy. Indiana University Southeast is a founding partner in the 55,000 Degrees initiative, and hopes to make good on its promise to increase the number of bachelor's degrees it awards by 3 percent yearly, through 2020. Successful participation in the Persistence Academy would help drive us past that goal, by allowing us to envision and enact policies and strategies that meaningfully address the needs of the students we serve.

Among other strategies to deploy, we intend to make use of our recent SSAT explorations of how non-cognitive characteristics, such as grit and growth mindsets, can be developed and encouraged in students.

5. Our goals for participating in the Academy and the intended impact on the institution as a whole.
    a. We will disseminate everything we learn to each of the constituencies involved, and assure that the findings are not only reported and filed, but are offered to colleagues with context and suggestions about how it might most effectively be deployed on behalf of our students.
    b. We will increase our five-year graduation rate from 32 % to 55 % by 2020, starting with the class that entered in 2013.
    c. We will increase the one-year retention of our incoming first-generation students from 54% to 60%, the level of all incoming freshmen.
    d. We will refine our support system for all students, but most specifically for first-generation students by enhancing our advising, mentoring, Supplemental Instruction, personal counseling and other resources.
    e. We will pursue stronger enrollments, better meet performance metrics, and have increased success in preparing our students to succeed at successively more difficult courses and challenges.

6. How the goals align with current academic or strategic priorities.
   Student success and persistence are two of the priorities of the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, who is undertaking culture change in our university by taking the challenge to every constituency within the community, by both introducing and defining the issues and seeking conversations about best practices, successes, and difficulties in better serving our students and moving them toward graduation and successful entry into the working world.

   Indiana University Southeast's Strategic Plan (2010-2015) includes the following commitments:
   GOAL 1 – EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE
   Indiana University Southeast will offer students excellent undergraduate and graduate education that is student-centered, responsive to changing regional and societal needs, and based on high academic standards.
   GOAL 2 – EFFECTIVE ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT
   IU Southeast will maintain an up-to-date, data-driven, strategic enrollment management program, which will provide a sustainable enrollment base and enhance student persistence to graduation.
   In the spirit of these commitments, we propose for our Student Persistence initiative be tied to up-to-date research, a data-driven strategic enrollment management plan, and a laser focus upon the needs and characteristics of the students we attract and enroll.

7. Increased graduation rates and improved student success (including in terms of job placement and faithful repayment of student loans) are the outcomes to which we are wedded.

   Although we hope that a more granular and precise understanding of our student population will result in a more academically and personally nurturing environment for all of our students, we are specifically looking at first-generation students, whose lack of cultural capital upon entry into the university is often a decisive factor in their success and retention.

8. We face a challenging budgetary environment, including the fiscal consequence of an almost 3 % enrollment drop at the start of the 2014-15 academic year. In addition, we face difficulties communicating with busy, working students who often have family commitments. In the 2013 Continuing Student Survey, the percentage of students who identified as "students who work" was 63.5%, as "full-time student" was 20.2% and as "worker who also takes classes" was 16.4%. Thus, we see that almost 80 percent of our students are not, or do not perceive themselves as, full-time students whose almost sole focus is in attaining their university education and degree. With that in mind, various offices are working on creative messaging, as well as on exploring the capacities of our CRM to help time communications in streamlined and effective ways.

9. The university's Chancellor and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs are fully supportive of Academy participation, and see it as a crucial component for succeeding in the goals they have set for the institution. Faculty and staff members express strong support for increasing student success and persistence, and often seek concrete ways that they might direct their energies toward this outcome.   In addition, after a discussion with an Academic Affairs representative in August, the FACET Leadership Team decided to make the focus of its work this year the ways faculty might more fully understand and effectively teach and support our first-generation students.

10. The Academic Affairs Office, the Accreditation Planning Committee, the FACET Leadership Team, the SSAT group, Enrollment Management, Dr. Uric Dufrene, Dr. Annette Wyandotte, Dr. Tanlee Wasson, Dr. Angela M. Salas and other constituents.

11. In addition to the many faculty and staff members serving on committees and task forces related to student persistence and success, the university's human resources commitments include:
Dr. Annette Wyandotte, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, whose work spearheading the Student Success Action Team, working with advisors, envisioning faculty workshops, and sharing EAB results are among her responsibilities in her position.
Dr. Tanlee Wasson, Director of Institutional Effectiveness, who with her colleagues in that office accept, provide, and contextualize information pertaining to the life cycle of our students. Recent undertakings on behalf of student persistence include a study of bottleneck courses and an examination of electives.
Dr. Angela M. Salas, Director of the Honors Program, is also Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. In that capacity, one of her responsibilities is marshalling information pertaining to student persistence and success and helping to disseminate it. In addition, as Chair of the Accreditation Planning Committee, she is tasked with finding places where we might best serve our students, and suggesting how energies might be deployed in that direction.

The First-Year Study Program, helmed by Dr. Donna Dahlgren and a committee of volunteers, is a long-term commitment on the part of the university, and has proven over time to encourage student success. For example, 88.8% of first year students who attended FYS in Fall, 2013 returned for the Spring 2014 semester, compared to 77.5% of students who had not taken FYS. These students returned to Indiana University Southeast in Fall 2014 at a 61.3% rate, compared to only 52.6% of those students who had not taken FYS. The results were even starker for those students who entered in Fall 2012, with 60.9% of FYS completers returning in 2013, compared to 37.8% of those who had not availed themselves of this opportunity.

Financially, the university has committed to administer the Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory to each incoming undergraduate (the timing of this survey has not precisely been established), with a follow up administration of the Mid-Year Student Assessment. The rollout of this project would be fall of 2015, and the balance of this academic year (2014-15) will be spent attending to logistics, including how we will best make use of the information provided by the surveys. The financial investment in the Noel-Levitz products is likely to cost approximately $ 12,000; clearly, other resources, including training advisors and other stakeholders in interpreting the reports and interacting with students, will be needed, and have been committed. One intention is that students identified as being at-risk will be offered enhanced mentoring to meet their particular needs.

Indiana University Southeast avails itself of the Student Success Collaborative, which is paid for through the central administration's Office of Completion and Success.

In addition, as was mentioned earlier, the university is one of the founding members of 55,000 Degrees, a Louisville-based non-profit organization with the purpose of harnessing stakeholder energy to produce 55,000 college degrees by the year 2020.

The university commenced a three year membership in the Education Advisory Board Academic Affairs Forum. The Academic Affairs Forum serves as a valuable resource on best practices on retention and other important issues to academic affairs.

Conclusion:

Indiana University Southeast is intensely aware of its ethical and financial responsibility to serve its students and the region effectively. We gather and disseminate data about our students, in efforts to serve them well, and to encourage their success in achieving their educational and economic goals, providing numerous interventions and opportunities for students to enhance their possibilities for success.

Despite these efforts, we aren't making the progress we ought, given the exertions we've made. This is why we ask for admittance to the Academy for Student Persistence and Completion: we hope that the company of other colleague institutions embarked upon the task of promoting student completion will help us to revise (that is, re-see) our task, to make data-informed plans, and to implement those plans more comprehensively than we have been able to thus far.

Inclusion in the Academy would offer Indiana University Southeast the opportunity to see other institutions' work, and to gain perspective from having done so. We anticipate, as well, that we may have some best practices, ideas, and initiatives that would be useful to other members of cohort 4, and therefore hope that our potential to both enrich conversations as well as benefit from them might mitigate in our favor as you consider the various applications you have received.

Many thanks for your kind consideration of these materials.