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Office of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services

Facilitating academic success and personal development of Nicholls students.

Commitment to Quality and Diversity

Nicholls State University
Enrollment 1992-2006
Commitment to Quality and Diversity

An analysis of enrollment data over a fourteen-year period through fall 2005, clearly underscores the commitment of Nicholls State University to enhance quality and diversity within the student body.

Fall 1992 enrollment at the University totaled 7,605 students. Minority student enrollment (students reporting race other than white) was 1,077 (14%). African-American students were 11% (843) of the total students enrolled. By fall 2004, University enrollment totaled 7,482, African American student enrollment equaled 18% (1,365) of the total student enrollment. Minority enrollment had increased to 25% of the student population.

Recruitment during the 2004-2005 school year was impacted by the implementation of selective admissions criteria, which became effective in August 2005. Literature reports that institutions implementing selective admissions standards usually see an overall reduction in enrollment as well as a significant reduction in minority enrollment. This was expected to be especially true in south central Louisiana, our primary service area, where a significant percentage of students are not prepared for college level work. In addition, the average ACT scores for the African-American applicant pool from our primary service region are significantly lower than that of comparable groups.

An additional enrollment management challenge has been the retention of students, especially African-American students. At Nicholls, retention rates for African-American students have typically been 12%-14% lower ([see attached table 1](#)) than that of white students. The literature indicates that these results are similar to those at open admissions state institutions.

When planning for the implementation of selective admissions, the University reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining a diverse student population. The commitment was addressed in two areas, recruitment and retention. The recruitment plan included specific pro-active strategies and significant commitment of resources. The University maintains a minority recruitment coordinator whose job is to create a qualified minority student applicant pool. The University also created a diversity leaders scholarship program. This program currently funds 51 scholarships. The University also increased funding for the C.J. James Scholarship Fund resulting in an increase from 5 to 19 scholarship students over a two year period.

Retention was addressed throughout the University community. It is clear that students vote with their feet. If the University recruits students and then does not provide sufficient support in and out of the classroom, students will leave. The University reorganized, redefined and centrally coordinated academic support services for students. The result was the establishment of University College, which focuses on the first-year experience but also works closely with advising and tutorial services at all levels. The programs and services offered by University College focus on pro-actively meeting the needs of individual students. This is accomplished in a number of ways, the most significant being the advising center and implementation of degree program specific university studies classes.

Over the past two years, the University has taken significant steps to improve student services and to make it easy for students to conduct business with the University. Examples include changes in the operations of student financial aid, fee payment and the scheduling of classes. Development of support services such as LaMaison, health services, the Colonel Card program, wireless access on campus, and the implementation of proactive intervention strategies in the residence halls, as well as numerous other programs and services across the campus have all had an impact on retention.

The University has made good progress on achieving recruitment and retention goals, including goals relative to maintaining a diverse student population. Two years into the selective admissions process, enrollment data indicates that the student population of Nicholls State University is more diverse now than at any time in the history of the University ([see attached table 2](#)). The fall 2006 African American enrollment was 18.55% of the total student body. The quality of the entering freshmen class has continued to improve. The fall 2006 average ACT score for the entering freshman class was 20.92 as compared to 19.33 for fall 2002 ([see attached table 3](#)). The African-American population average ACT score increased over 2 points during the same time period (16.24 fall 2002, 18.32 fall 2006).

Other quality measures include an increase in enrollment of scholarship students. This reflects the University's commitment to enroll highly qualified students. Between fall 2004 and fall 2006 the number of students accepting academic scholarships increased by 58, 32.68%. The number of African American scholarship students increased from 23 in 2004 to 63 for fall 2006, a 174% increase.

The most significant improvement has been in the retention of students. Fall 2001 freshmen returned at the rate of 54.92%, with there being a 14.29% disparity in the return rate for white students 58.39% as compared to African-American students 44.10%. The fall 2005 freshmen returned for fall 2006 at a rate of 63.41%, an 8.49% improvement. African-American student retention improved 18.35%. The difference in retention rates when comparing white students to African-American students was 1% down from 14.29% for fall 2001 ([see attached table 1](#)).

It is clear that Nicholls is reducing the "revolving door" effect for its students. Nicholls is achieving a better "goodness of fit" in the students it is recruiting and is clearly creating an environment, inside and outside the classroom that is more supportive and helpful to students. Students are responding to these changes by voting with their feet, that is, remaining enrolled in Nicholls State University.

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