Listening to Students: Focus on Student Retention
Project Summary, Value, and Process Taken

"40 million Americans started college and then stopped. That means too much in higher ed doesn't work for too many people, both experts and average citizens agree," the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#) has noted.

"We have a college completion crisis in America. Higher education is supposed to serve as an engine of social mobility, but (when) just over half of students who start a postsecondary degree finish, it's clear the system isn't working for everyone," the [College Completion Fund](#) has warned.

The number of students who leave college has been called "higher education's dirty little secret, a dereliction of duty," by Goldman School of Public Policy of UC Berkely expert David L. Kirp, author of *The College Dropout Scandal*—making the case over five years ago, when the number was much lower than it is now.

Each year far too many students across the nation leave higher education without a degree—and in so many cases worse off for it in terms of the expenditure of money, time, and energy, and, potentially, costs to self-concept and self-esteem, loss of friendships and college life, and sense of unfulfilled potential or dreams.

Listening to Students Who Ever Thought About Leaving College or Did Leave College and Came Back focuses on student retention—the different factors in students' difficulty in enrollment and consideration of leaving or actually leaving and what gets them to stay or come back. A final section of this work also looks at the students who have left their college studies and haven't yet come back. From all of these students, we have much to learn and be reminded of how to serve them and the need to do more to cherish each one, every step of the way, through to college completion—and to welcome back the students who return to their higher education.

[*Listening to Students*](#) is the sharing of students' perspectives campuswide. It is work done in belief in the power of student voices, and for the purpose of helping to make higher education a better place for all.

How This Project Works

A message was sent out to undergraduate students here at Sacramento State University, inviting those who had ever thought about leaving college or did leave and came back to take an online survey regarding their reasons for wanting to or actually leaving and what got them to stay or come back. The students wrote about the many barriers experienced in trying to complete college classes and pursue a degree.

The student responses were then portioned into sections to share over an academic year with the institution. These sections were created in accordance with some of the key factors in students' decision or ability to stay in college, as the section titles show:

> "The Need for a Good First Year of College"
> "The Need for Belonging"
> "The Need to Do Well and Feel Confident in Coursework"
> "The Need to Manage Stress and Cope with Struggles"
> "The Need to Manage Costs and Financial Pressures"
> "The Need to Finish Each Semester as Strongly as Possible"
> "The Need to Return"
> "The Need to Be Engaged in Learning"
> "The Need for Greater Mental Health"
> "The Need for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice"
> "The Need to Find One's Path"
> "The Need for Support and Services"
> "The Need to Graduate"
> "The Need to Continue"

Each of those sections contains four parts:

1. The stated perspectives of students (from the survey responses)
2. Information regarding one type of challenge for students that may factor into their considerations of staying or leaving college (one of the specific needs stated in the section titles listed prior)
3. Suggestions for students for better overcoming that specific challenge
4. Suggestions for faculty and staff to help students to better overcome that specific challenge

A second online survey was also sent out to former students of this institution who had left before completion and not yet come back. These students shared their reasons for wanting to or needing to leave—and what would get them to return. These student perspectives were shared in one last section of this work:

"Our Need to Do More"

This last section contains two main parts:

1. The stated perspectives of students (from the survey responses)
2. Information regarding student college completion rates and research on the students who are more at risk of leaving, what college was like for them before they left, when and why they leave, what would help them to stay, and when they think they might come back

Then, one section every few weeks (of all of the sections listed on the prior page) was posted to the campus website given to this work and announced in the weekly campus news Briefing.

The Value of the Project

The more we know about why students leave or consider leaving, the better we can do our jobs. Who best to tell us what they need to stay and succeed in their education than the students themselves? *Student voices can reach us and teach us in ways unlike any other.*

The objectives of this work are to:

- *Enhance awareness of factors that impact a student's choice or ability to complete their college education and increase equity on campus and in the classroom.*
- *Provide useful information and concrete suggestions for students, faculty, and staff to help to better overcome student obstacles to staying and succeeding in college.*
- *Inspire students all the more to take the steps they need to maximize their college experience, fulfillment, and success in college and beyond.*
- *Inspire faculty and staff to appreciate all the more the students they serve and the value of the jobs they do in the fight for student success.*

In addition to informational purposes, **Listening to Students** work has been further used in a number of ways: Faculty and staff training, institutional reports, campus webpages, committee work, reform efforts, and student course readings and assignments. Students can tell you best what works and what doesn't in their educational journeys: Their perspectives can reaffirm and reinvigorate campus policies and practices that work, help to identify and improve those that don't, increase understanding and equity for the many different students we serve in the classroom and out on campus, and spark greater institutional dialogue and meaningful change for student success.

Last, but most certainly not least: *Student voices matter.* They have so much to say, and they deserve to be heard far more in higher education. **Listening to Students** gives students greater opportunity to be heard—and gives us greater opportunity to learn from them.

This is work to honor students, illuminate their journeys in college life, help in the fight for their success in higher education, and let the power of student voices shine.

How to Bring the Project to Your Own Institution or Campus Work

Given that earlier segments of this project have been done at both the two-year college and four-year university level, the project is entirely scalable to a variety of institutions across the country. The work may also be done in a variety of ways, in shorter or different formats, and by a range of campus employees.

For those wanting to bring the project to your institution, please see:

The Project—

The *[Listening to Students](#)* website provides each of the sections of this work, to look over for a better idea of how this project can look. The work discussed in this document, ***Listening to Students Who Ever Thought About Leaving College or Did Leave and Came Back*** is found toward the bottom left of this website.

In this document here, you will see the specific steps taken to do this work. To follow, you will find:

The Process Taken—

A description is given of the process taken for completing each of the four parts of the sections of ***Listening to Students Who Ever Thought About Leaving College or Did Leave and Came Back:***

> Part I: Student Perspectives
> Part II: Information Regarding One Key Challenge to Student Retention
> Part III: Suggestions for Students to Better Overcome that Challenge
> Part IV: Suggestions to Faculty/Staff to Help Students to Better Overcome that Challenge

A description is also given of the process taken for completing that last section of this work that shares the responses of students no longer enrolled at Sacramento State University (from the second survey, ***Listening to Students Who Left College).*** This last section of the series contains two main parts:

> Part I: Student Perspectives
> Part II: Information About Students Who Leave College

These descriptions are based on how this project was done here at Sacramento State University, with suggestions for doing the work in other ways also offered.

The Documents—

The surveys and other forms used in this process are provided, and you are welcome to adapt these to your own campus or work:

Appendix One:	Invitation to and the Survey for Students Who Ever Thought About Leaving College or Did Leave and Came Back
Appendix Two:	Invitation to and the Survey for Students Who Have Left College
Appendix Three:	University Direct Send Invitation to Students to Take Survey for Students Who Ever Thought about Leaving College or Did Leave and Came Back
Appendix Four:	University Social Media Posts and Campus Screen Savers Invitation to Students to Take Survey for Students Who Ever Thought about Leaving College or Did Leave and Came Back
Appendix Five:	Prompts for Brainstorming and Input from Others
Appendix Six:	Example of Campus News Briefing to Introduce Project and New Section
Appendix Seven:	Example of Email Out to Campus to Introduce the Project and Email to Announce New Section

<div align="center">**The Process:** *Completion of the Project Sections*</div>

Part I of Each Section: The Student Perspectives

How This Work Was Done:

> ***Listening to Students Who Ever Thought About Leaving College or Did Leave and Came Back***
> begins with an invitation emailed to undergraduate students to a survey, to be taken anonymously,
> that asks for students to answer open-ended questions about why they considered leaving college or
> did leave and what kept them here or got them to come back if they left. (Please see Appendix One:
> Invitation to and the Survey for Students Who Ever Thought About Leaving College or Did Leave
> and Came Back.) Later, this survey was also disseminated via university direct message to students,
> social media, and campus screen messaging. (Please see Appendix Three: University Direct Send
> Invitation to Students to Take Survey, Listening to Students Who Ever Thought about Leaving
> College or Did Leave and Came Back and Appendix Four: University Social Media Posts and
> Campus Screen Savers Invitation to Students to Take Survey for Students Who Ever Thought about
> Leaving College or Did Leave and Came Back.)
>
> All of the returned survey responses were then placed into one document, edited for any information
> explicitly identifying the student, as well as any specific reference to an individual or department on
> campus, when appropriate. The responses were put into different sections of the work so that most
> had a fairly equal amount. These sections were based on the different challenges to student retention
> listed earlier in this document (e.g., academics, cost, mental health), and so the first and last page of
> each of these sections sharing the student responses were given a few student perspectives that
> matched this specific focus of each section. The only exceptions to this were the sections, "The
> Need for Support and Services" and "The Need to Graduate" (which were given all excerpts from
> any of the total student responses that fit the theme of support/services or graduation, respectively),
> and the section, "Our Need to Do More" (which provides all of the student responses from a second
> survey administered, Students Who Left College). (Please see Appendix Two: Invitation to and the
> Survey for Students Who Have Left College.)
>
> For each of the sections of this work, the individual student responses were also arranged as much as
> possible in a way that was: (1) *meaningful* (e.g., beginning a section with student references to the
> first of the semester and ending with comments about the last of the semester) and (2) *inspirational*
> (e.g., balancing any more negative comments with positive ones on any one page of a section, and
> starting each section with some of the more typical types of student comments and building to a
> strong finish with the student perspectives that are especially powerful or inspirational).

Other Ways to Do the Work:

> With regard to surveying students: More or different questions might be asked in the survey (e.g.,
> "What advice would you give students who are considering leaving college?" or "What advice
> would you give to students who left college and may be considering coming back?"). Alternative
> response gathering methods for some student groups might also prove helpful (e.g., recorders that
> transcribe for interviewing students with sight, hand or arm, or other disabilities that might preclude
> full participation in survey responses otherwise).
>
> With regard to the different sections: The project website shows the specific student challenges
> sections completed for this work (also listed on the first page of this document), but other sections
> might be created instead or in addition (e.g., sections with a focus on the need to work while in
> college or the responsibilities of caregiving while being a student). Alternatively, some campuses
> may choose to focus on only one or a few specific student challenges (e.g., student challenges that
> are more prevalent for students at the campus and/or are the least known), rather than completing
> sections on a number of student challenges.
>
> With regard to the number of student responses in any one section: The more student voices the
> better, but even a few can be incredibly powerful! A smaller survey response rate can still be highly
> beneficial, as work done in this way has shown to be true.

Please note that just gathering and sharing the student perspectives (Part I described prior) can be transformative in and of itself, without completing any of the other sections described to follow (Part II, III, and IV).

For those wishing to simply share the student voices, please proceed to the next page on "Dissemination of Each Section."

Part II of Each Section: Information about That Type of Student Challenge

How This Work Was Done:

> The more general information regarding the student challenge chosen for each of the sections (e.g., academics, cost, mental health) was based on the writer's knowledge and/or research conducted.

Other Ways to Do the Work:

> Campus individuals/groups most knowledgeable about a type of student challenge might be asked to write this general information portion. Campus research departments might also be asked to provide campus facts and figures regarding some of the specific issues in sections (e.g., the number of students on academic probation or dismissal, the number of students on Pell grants and awarded scholarships, the number of student visits to campus counseling).

> Alternatively, this Part I on general information regarding a specific student challenge could be eliminated altogether or eliminated in favor of portions of the information adapted instead to Part III and/or Part IV (the suggestions for students and faculty and staff), in order to shorten the work.

Part III and Part IV of Each Section: Suggestions for Students to Better Overcome that Type of Challenge and *Suggestions for Faculty and Staff to Help Students Better Overcome that Type of Challenge*

How This Work Was Done:

> The suggestions for students, faculty, and staff were formulated based on the writer's knowledge and experience and/or any research conducted. At the start of the project before the sections were written, as well, a student who also worked on campus as a colleague to this writer and had helped to administer the surveys was asked for thoughts regarding the broad areas of struggles for students. (Please see the form used, Appendix Five: Prompts for Brainstorming and Input from Others.)

Other Ways to Do the Work:

> More students might be asked to provide input and/or campus individuals/groups most knowledgeable about the specific type of student challenge for a section might be asked to provide suggestions for students and/or faculty and staff. (Please see again Appendix Five: Prompts for Brainstorming and Input from Others.)

> Alternatively, campus individuals/groups most knowledgeable about a type of student challenge might be asked to write Part III and Part IV (the suggestions for students, faculty, and staff), either as a longer-length discussion or shortened by asking those folks to share the top things they think students and faculty and staff most need to understand about a specific student challenge [e.g., "Key Things to Know and Do for This Student Challenge," "Top Three Suggestions to Help with (Specific Student Challenge)"].

Dissemination of Each Section – The Sharing of the Sections

How This Work Was Done:

> One section every few weeks was shared with the campus: The sections were posted one by one to the campus website given for the project and announced in the weekly online employee news Briefing over an academic year. (Please see Appendix Six: Example of Campus News Briefing to Introduce the Project and New Section.)

Other Ways to Do the Work:

> A section could be emailed directly to all faculty and staff in installments over a period of time, with the new section attached. (Please see Appendix Seven: Example Email Out to Campus to Introduce the Project and Email to Announce New Section.) This was how an earlier segment of the *Listening to Students* project was done at another institution, where there wasn't a campus website for the project.

> A combination of the two methods above may prove ideal: A direct send-out via email or messaging over time to all campus employees that announces a new section and the type of student challenge featured—and then a link to a campus website given for the project provided, as well, where all of the other sections thus far shared may be found.

> It would also maximize the value of the project to have some direct sharing with students. As currently done, the project is shared with faculty and staff, who certainly may and some do use the work in different ways in their work with students. A direct send to students, perhaps shortened to just the student perspectives (Part I) and suggestions for students to help overcome a challenge (Part II), may prove helpful. Students could see that they aren't alone in their struggles by reading the perspectives of other students with struggles and considerations of leaving, and would also be given concrete suggestions and much inspiration for student success.

Considerations Before Beginning the Project

Institutions may need the project leader(s) to lay some groundwork in terms of introducing the project to key campus organizations or individuals prior to commencement of it. The first two pages of this document provide a short summary of the work and discussion of its use and value, and this may be helpful in sharing with others to lay that groundwork. The ***Listening to Students website*** shows the full work (all of the different sections), a Project Introduction, and an Invitation to Others Wanting to Do This Work.

Institutions may also have in place an Institutional Review Board process for research projects to receive approval prior to commencement of it.

Inspiration for Taking On This Project

As those who work at an institution of higher education, we have one of the most impactful of jobs! The students who come to us are here on the path to a college degree that will transform their lives and the lives of their families now and to come, and make our communities and country better and stronger. And each of us in our campus roles contributes in countless different ways to our students' college experience and outcomes, including their degree of college success and ability and decision to stay through to graduation.

Yet the low college completion rates across the nation make it incumbent upon us to do more, to do better, to try ever harder to support our students in their journey through higher education to degree achievement. There are many ways to do so, but here is one:

Listening to Students Who Ever Thought About Leaving College or Did Leave and Came Back is a special project and wonderful way to do more in the fight for greater student retention and success in higher education.

Appendix One:
Invitation to and the Survey for
Listening to Students Who Ever Thought about Leaving College or Did Leave College and Came Back

Listening to Students
Who Have Ever Thought about Leaving College
or Did Leave College and Came Back

If you have ever considered dropping out of college or did, in fact, stop coming to college for a time but returned, please take some time to take this short survey asking for your perspective.

Hi—
My name is Donna Knifong, and I teach here at California State University, Sacramento. I work with a great colleague named Elijah Martin, a student who just graduated and works here at Sac State, too. We are also working with the Student Academic Success and Educational Equity Programs Unit and the DEGREES Project under the leadership of Dr. Marcellene Watson-Derbigny and Ruth Williams. We are inviting you to participate in a study that we are conducting on the reasons students have for wanting or needing to leave college—and what keeps those students here or brings them back.

Sharing your perspective or story is powerful. The purpose of this study is to help faculty and staff learn more about the students they serve and what they can do to keep students progressing through college—and to help other students to continue on in their coursework or come back to the university after they have left.

Below you will find a link to a short survey asking for your perspective. The survey is to be taken anonymously; you will not be asked for your name so that you may feel free to share your thoughts. Survey responses will be shared with the educational community here, to spread awareness about why students may be thinking about or actually stopping out (leaving college temporarily) or dropping out (not planning on returning to the campus). The survey responses may also be used at a later date to bring greater light to this issue.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Students are welcome to share their thoughts, but are never required to do so.

If you would like to take this survey, then please click on the link (Survey Link) or scan the QR code and answer any of the three questions that you would like:

Completion of this survey implies your informed consent, meaning you were given information regarding the purpose and nature of this study (provided for you above). Any questions or comments about this study may be directed to us at the contact information provided below.

Thank you so much for any feedback that you may provide.

Listening to Students
Who Have Ever Thought about Leaving College
or Did Leave College and Came Back

Survey

Please look over the following questionnaire and then complete any of the questions that you would like. The survey is to be taken anonymously so that you can feel free to share your thoughts. You may answer with one word, one sentence, one paragraph, or more.

We can learn so much from you. Our university has so much to gain from all you might say! Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts. Your feedback is sincerely valued.

From the perspective of a student who is: _____

Please provide below here any demographic or other information about yourself you would like to share, such as your age, race or culture, year in school, that you are first generation college student, veteran, parent, multilingual learner, for example, or anything else.

Now, think of a time or times, past or present, when you considered leaving college for any reason, or you actually left college and came back.

Then, please answer these three questions:

1. What made you or is making you want or need to leave college?

2. What kept you here or is keeping you here taking classes (if you stayed or are staying)—or what got you to come back (if you did leave college)?

3. What can Sacramento State University do better for you?

Thank you again for sharing your thoughts.

If you would ever like to reach out to get support for your journey here at Sac State, please reach out—the DEGREES Project would be most pleased to assist: https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/degrees-project/.

Listening to Students
Who Left College

Hi—

My name is Donna Knifong, and I teach here at California State University, Sacramento. I, along with my great colleague, Elijah Martin, work with the Student Academic Success and Educational Equity Programs Unit and the DEGREES Project under the leadership of Dr. Marcellene Watson-Derbigny and Ruth Williams.

We are inviting you to participate in a short survey that we are conducting on why students leave college—and what might help to bring them back to their higher education.

Sharing your perspective or story is powerful. The purpose of this study is to help campus leadership, faculty, and staff learn more about our students and the obstacles they face in trying to complete their higher education—and to help students struggling in their college journeys. We hope from this work to make every student's return to Sac State the best possible and to better serve students in their college education here through to graduation.

Below you will find a link to a short survey asking for your perspective. The survey is to be taken anonymously; you will not be asked for your name so that you may feel free to share your thoughts. Survey responses will be shared with the educational community here, to spread awareness about why students leave college. The survey responses may also be used at a later date to bring greater light to this issue.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Students are welcome to share their thoughts, but are never required to do so.

If you would like to take this survey, then please click on the link [(Survey Link)](Survey Link) or scan the QR code and answer any of the three questions that you would like:

Completion of this survey implies your informed consent, meaning you were given information regarding the purpose and nature of this study (provided for you above). Any questions or comments about this study may be directed to us at the contact information provided below.

Thank you so much for any feedback that you may provide.

And, should you ever need support for your return to Sac State—whether you take this survey or not—please reach out at any time. We here at the DEGREES Project would be happy to assist: https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/degrees-project/.

Listening to Students
Who Left College

Survey

Please look over the following questionnaire and then complete any of the questions that you would like. The survey is to be taken anonymously so that you can feel free to share your thoughts. You may answer with one word, one sentence, one paragraph, or more.

We can learn so much from you. Our university has so much to gain from all you might say! Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts. Your feedback is sincerely valued.

From the perspective of a student who is: _____

Please provide below here any demographic or other information about yourself you would like to share, such as your age, race or culture, year in school, that you are first generation college student, veteran, parent, multilingual learner, for example, or anything else.

Then, please answer these three questions:

1. What made you want or need to leave college?

2. What would need to happen for you to want to or be able to return to college?

3. What can Sacramento State University do to help you to return to campus and complete your education?

Thank you again for sharing your thoughts.

If you would ever like to reach out to get support to return to Sac State, please reach out—the DEGREES Project would be most pleased to assist: https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/degrees-project/.

Appendix Three:
University Direct Send Invitation to Students to Take Survey,
Listening to Students Who Ever Thought about Leaving College or Did Leave and Came Back

This is the shorter adaptation of the first invitation out to students to take the survey, complete with a link to this survey and QR code.

Listening to Students Who Have Ever Thought About Leaving College or Did Leave College and Came Back

Dear (Name of Student),

We are inviting you to participate in a short survey regarding reasons students want or need to leave college—and what keeps those students here or brings them back.

Sharing your perspective or story is powerful. The purpose of this study is to help faculty and staff learn more about the students they serve and what they can do to keep students progressing through college—and to help other students to continue on in their coursework or come back to the university after they have left.

The survey is entirely anonymous so that you may feel free to share your thoughts. Survey responses will be shared with the educational community at Sacramento State to spread awareness about why students may be thinking about leaving, stopping out (leaving college temporarily) or dropping out (not planning on returning to the campus). The survey responses may also be used at a later date to bring greater light to this issue.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Students are welcome to share their thoughts, but are never required to do so.

Take the Survey

Appendix Four:
University Social Media Posts and Campus Screen Savers Invitation to Students to Take Survey,
Listening to Students Who Ever Thought about Leaving College or Did Leave and Came Back

This is a very short adaptation of the first invitation out to enrolled students to take the survey, complete with QR code to take the survey.

The image above reads:

Listening to Students Who Have Ever Thought About Leaving or did Leave College and Came Back

Sharing your story is powerful. If you have ever considered stopping your studies or did stop but then returned to college, **please participate in this short survey** to help contribute to the improvement of the campus! Survey responses will be shared with the educational community to increase awareness and change.

Brainstorming Points

Please put in any ***Advice/Tips/Suggestions/Comments/Thoughts*** for each of the following, from the perspective of student, staff member, instructor. Feel free to offer impressions, stories, etc., of the situation/prompt—anything you would like. Your perspective as (a student, instructor, staff member) is especially helpful. And please don't worry if your answers are the same/similar to other prompts or what you say is the same/similar for students/faculty/staff within one prompt or with the other prompts.

Helping to Ensure a Good First Semester/First Year for Incoming Freshmen

- ***What Students Can Do—***

- ***What Staff Can Do—***

- ***What Faculty Can Do—***

Helping to Increase a Sense of Belonging

- ***What Students Can Do—***

- ***What Staff Can Do—***

- ***What Faculty Can Do—***

Helping to Increase Student Academic Success

- ***What Students Can Do—***

- ***What Staff Can Do—***

- ***What Faculty Can Do—***

Helping to Increase Engagement in Class Learning (Not Bored/Unmotivated in Class/Doing Coursework)

- ***What Students Can Do—***

- ***What Staff Can Do—***

- ***What Faculty Can Do—***

Helping Students to Find the Right Major/Career Path for Them

- *What Students Can Do—*

- *What Staff Can Do—*

- *What Faculty Can Do—*

Helping Students with Stress/Mental Health Struggles

- *What Students Can Do—*

- *What Staff Can Do—*

- *What Faculty Can Do—*

Helping Students to Finish the Semester Strong or Salvage a Semester Where They Struggled

- *What Students Can Do—*

- *What Staff Can Do—*

- *What Faculty Can Do—*

Helping Students Who Are Caregivers (Parents, Taking Care of Young Siblings or Other Family)

- *What Students Can Do—*

- *What Staff Can Do—*

- *What Faculty Can Do—*

Helping Students Who Are Struggling Financially and/or Struggling to Pay for College

- *What Students Can Do—*

- *What Staff Can Do—*

- *What Faculty Can Do—*

'Listening to Students'

Please see "Listening to Students Who Ever Thought About Leaving College or Did Leave College and Came Back," a project sharing survey responses from students this year, centering on the different factors in their difficulty in enrollment and consideration of leaving or actually leaving, and what gets them to stay or come back. Each section of the project unfolding this year will focus on one key aspect of keeping students on track and successful in college through to completion. The first section is titled "The Pivotal First Year of College," and there you will find information and steps to take for greater student success.

Appendix Seven:
Example Email Out to Campus to Introduce the Project
and
Example of Email to Announce New Section

Email Out to Campus to Introduce the Project and First New Section:

We can learn so much about our students *from our students….*

Over the next (time frame), I/we will be sharing a project done to better understand the factors in students' consideration of leaving or decision to leave college—and what helps them to stay or come back.

Specifically, every (week/few weeks/month/etc.—the time frame given for sharing each section) you will see the stated perspectives of students surveyed who ever thought about leaving college or did leave and came back.

These student perspectives will be shared in sections that each feature a different key challenge to student retention—and suggestions for students, faculty, and staff, to help to overcome that challenge.

If no project website has been created—

> Attached you will find this first section, "Title of Section." *(You can also add a short summary of it, if you'd like.)* You will also find attached a Project Introduction, if you would like to know more about how this work was done.

If a project website has been created—

> Please see the first section of ***Listening to Students Who Thought About Leaving College or Did Leave and Came Back,*** "Title of Section." *(You can also add a short summary of it, if you'd like.)* To see more of the work and an introductory overview of it, please see (link to project website).

I think that what you will find, in the sections of the work over the weeks to come, is this: Some of the students say things that we most likely already know, but perhaps need reminding. Some offer perspectives that may help us to better appreciate and empathize with all that students experience in their education. And some voice perspectives that may be entirely new and powerfully illuminating, and these insights will benefit greatly our work with students.

We are a campus community serving students. The better our understanding of the challenges students face in their education and the reasons they choose to stay, go, or come back, the better our ability to assist, support, teach, and encourage them on in their college education.

This work is called ***Listening to Students*** in the hope that we each truly listen and take to heart what our students have chosen to share with us.

Sincerely yours,

Name of Individual/Group Doing the Project
Contact Information

Excerpted Student Quote

Excerpted Student Quote

Excerpted Student Quote

(I recommend beginning with two or three student quotes to capture interest. You can also choose student quotes that match the specific focus of each section (for example, choosing student perspectives that share financial struggles in an email or message like this announcing a section with a focus on the student challenge of college costs).

If no project website has been created—

Here is the newest section of *Listening to Students Who Thought About Leaving College or Did Leave and Came Back.*

In the attachments you will find:
1. "Title of Section" *(You can also add a short summary of it, if you'd like.)*
2. Project Introduction (if you would like to know more about this project).

If a project website has been created—

Please see the next section of *Listening to Students Who Thought About Leaving College or Did Leave and Came Back,* "Title of Section." *(You can also add a short summary of it, if you'd like.)* To see more of the work and an introductory overview of it, please see (link to project website).

This work is called *Listening to Students* in the hope that we each truly listen and take to heart what our students have chosen to share with us.

Sincerely yours,

Name of Individual/Group Doing the Project
Contact Information