

- studying the topic of retention who are offering excellent ideas
11. Involve and support faculty—they are at the front lines of the retention issue

Certainly, not all students will be retained, and just as obviously, not all should. With that said, the advantages of distance education can also be drawbacks. The solitary learner can feel alone, and this often leads to isolation and drop outs.

And finally, the issue of retention is an area of contention—especially by those

who do not support teaching and learning at a distance. It is critical that distance educators face problems—real and mythical—and study them. Retention of the online learner is an issue that warrants close scrutiny, even research, by distance educators.

REFERENCE

Hill, C. (2010). *11 tips for improving retention of distance learning students. Strategies for increasing online student retention and satisfaction*. Retrieved from www.facultyfocus.com

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Retention

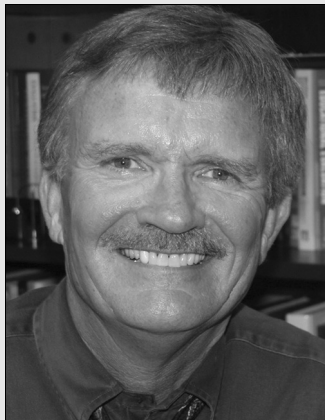
Michael Simonson

There is an assumption about distance education that many students drop out—do not complete a course or a program—and that this drop-out rate is significantly higher than what is reported for traditional instruction. Certainly, while it is possible to argue that assumptions about student drop outs in online education are really myths, it is more useful to talk about student retention—what distance educators can do to increase the likelihood that online students, learning at a distance, will

persevere and continue the course, certification, or degree program to completion.

Actually, the topic of student retention is a major one. Articles dealing with retention of online learners can be found throughout the literature of the field, and some of these papers offer important suggestions that can be readily used by instructors and leaders. Christopher Hill (2010) offered 11 tips for improving retention of online learners:

1. Establish an early alert program to identify students who are not participating
2. Offer, even require an online tutoring program
3. Continue to offer tutoring throughout the program
4. Develop a student success course that gives learners needed skills that help them become better online learners
5. Establish learning communities—real or virtual
6. Develop peer tutoring options
7. Clearly and succinctly orient learners to distance education
8. Measure what is happening—retention, successes, problems, barriers
9. Make the individual course the center of interest to promote retention
10. Read and apply the research and literature—there are many scientists



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