



Intervention for retention through distance education: A comparison study

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Executive summary

To improve student retention in distance education, Simpson (2003) suggests that institutions analyse their own retention characteristics and ‘spot the leaks’. Such an approach need not be limited to large-scale distance education operations or even to complex interventions for real success to result. In 2008 the Laidlaw College Centre for Distance Learning (CDL) employed two part-time Academic Support Coordinators in an effort to improve student retention and success. This study quantitatively compares student outcomes across two semesters, one without and one with specific course retention interventions, and investigates the reasons for student dropout and retention across two semesters (Semester One, 2008 and Semester One, 2009). Results are benchmarked across national data.

Quantitative surveys (2008, n= 28; 2009, n= 23) followed by interviews with a smaller sample (2008, n=15; 2009, n=15) were conducted with Semester One students. The Semester One 2008 sample consisted of those CDL students who had withdrawn from or had not completed at least one of their courses that semester, in order to explore what lay behind the outcome. The Semester One 2009 sample consisted of those students who were first-year and potentially ‘at risk’ students who had successfully completed their courses, to investigate the reasons for their success. Response rates to the quantitative surveys were 55% (2008 sample) and 52% (2009 sample).

Across two comparable student groups the interventions of a compulsory student support survey, orientation course, general messages of support and personal contact with students requesting help improved the course retention of first-time distance students from 57% in 2008 to 81.7% in 2009. This improvement across the first-time student group translates to the retention of 9 EFTS for CDL. Across its entire student group, CDL retained approximately 14.5 EFTS as a direct result of the four interventions. From the Semester One, 2008 students it was found that there is no discernable pattern to student withdrawal however the Semester One, 2009 results demonstrate that support services make a demonstrable improvement in retention.

1.0 Introduction

In 2008 the Laidlaw College Centre for Distance Learning (CDL) employed two part-time Academic Support Coordinators in an effort to improve student retention and success. The College is in a unique position to compare first-time and repeating student outcomes across two semesters, one without and one with specific course retention interventions.

The objective of this study is to assess the extent to which purposeful interventions (in addition to normal online tutoring services) influence student retention and success in distance education, both for first-time and returning students. Pre-enrolment surveying, an orientation course, general messages of support offered during the semester, and personal contact with students identified as ‘at risk’ are all examples of the additional interventions provided by the College. Overseas experience (Simpson, 2003) indicates that proactive support in large-scale distance education contexts can significantly improve student retention; this study assesses the extent to which such gains are possible for small to medium tertiary institutions.

1.1 Distance education at Laidlaw College

Laidlaw College has offered degree and diploma students through its Centre for Distance Learning since 2000. Its degree programme has been Web-based¹ since that time. Online tutors are trained in-house, and course materials are especially designed for distance delivery by well qualified faculty.

Support for distance students across the decade has undergone considerable change. Initially, the small student numbers were adequately supported by a dedicated Centre registrar and administrator. As the tutoring function became better defined, first-line support was offered directly within courses alongside central office support. In 2005 to 2006, following the closure of seven regional campuses, four regional representatives were employed to visit and provide first-line contact with distance learners across New Zealand. These positions were disestablished at the end of 2007, as the costs of extensive travel were difficult to justify.

In early 2008 a new position of Academic Support Coordinator was established. The new role, based in the main office of the Centre for Distance Learning in Auckland, is currently shared by two people. The objective of the role is to provide dedicated, pro-active and targeted support for students studying at a distance. This support includes the development of programme plans for each student, and identifying and supporting students who either do not participate in online exercises or else do not perform well in assignments. Academic Support Coordinators provide telephone and email contact with distance students. The role requires close liaison with course tutors in addition to the Centre registrar, administrator, and director.

While the Academic Support Coordinator role was established early 2008 actual activity was, at first, somewhat ad hoc. During the second semester of 2008 the Academic Support role was planned as a series of strategic interventions to complement some further administrative changes planned for the 2009 year.

1.2 Support interventions through the Centre for Distance Learning, 2008-2009

At the end of Semester One 2008 there was some concern in the department about the high rates of student withdrawal and non-completion. In response to this concern a number of retention strategies were fully implemented in the first semester of 2009.

- **Student support survey.** Students were required to complete a 'readiness for distance study' questionnaire with their course selection forms. The survey questioned students about various factors relating to their ability to study well at a distance. Each survey was checked; students who, in our judgement, were likely to require special assistance or direction during the semester were noted. Some students were counselled into a lower number of courses.
- **Study @ Laidlaw orientation.** All new students were given the option to participate in an orientation course, designed as a one-week distance learning primer. While all first-time students were sent the materials, participation was optional. During the orientation students

1 In the Single Data Return for the Ministry of Education (2009, p.93), a 'Web-Based' course is defined as one "where a paper or course requires students to access the accompanying online materials and resource. Access is **required**, as online participation is **required**".

were given opportunity to learn the online skills required for study, had personal contact from support staff, and received helpful tips relating to time management and study technique.

- **General messages of support.** The Academic Support Coordinators generated a schedule for sending out general messages of support and advice, relating to such matters as essay writing and exam technique. These messages, sent by email, were timed to coincide with first year assignment due dates.
- **Personal contact.** From their analysis of student support surveys, experience with students during the orientation, tutor advice and contact from individual students seeking assistance, the Academic Support Coordinators developed a list of those students they would specifically contact over the phone. Frequently, personal contact was associated with a specific difficulty the student had; the Academic Support Coordinator ensured that the difficulty was addressed or else noted.

In addition to these direct interventions, no late enrolments would be accepted in 2009. Each intervention was designed to complement the already satisfactory academic direction given by course tutors. Because the interventions listed were anticipated to make a significant impact on student retention and success, it was decided to perform a comparison study on retention across Semester One, 2008 (before the interventions) and Semester One, 2009 (when all interventions would be fully implemented).

1.3 Academic changes across Laidlaw College 2008 to 2009

The period between 2008 and 2009 was one of major change across Laidlaw College. Shifts in curricula included moving to standard fifteen credit courses across the institution; previously, a plethora of two, three, five and ten credit courses made up Laidlaw programmes. Another change involved reducing the number of teaching weeks from fifteen to twelve.

In 2009, all students across the College were required to access the Laidlaw College learning management system to upload their assignments electronically and maintain institutional email addresses. In addition, three new courses were introduced across all campuses and the Centre for Distance Learning. These new courses, termed 'hybrid courses', consisted of a series of self-instructional materials designed to complement on-campus lectures. These self-instructional materials also serve as course materials for distance students. These changes were College-wide, and so it is likely that these changes might also have influenced any changes in success and retention across the two semesters under consideration. Finally, 'Laidlaw College' was adopted as the new name for the Bible College of New Zealand in August, 2008.

2.0 Literature overview

Student retention is in the best interests of both the institution and the student, as the financial costs of dropout can be considerable (Barefoot, 2004; McGivney 2004). Ormond Simpson, in a 2008 presentation at Laidlaw College, also pointed out the very real emotional costs to students who dropout – some of whom experience a shattering of confidence that hinders them from considering further study. Funding bodies are also increasingly reluctant to pay for students who do not complete (Parker, 1999; Zepke et al, 2003).

2.1 The difficulties of measuring retention

Analysing student retention in tertiary education is universally regarded as a knotty activity. Woodley (2004) points out just how difficult it is to effectively identify reasons for dropout, and suggests that a certain amount of student withdrawal is actually normal. It is not an easy thing to model student withdrawal. Patterson & McFadden (2009) point out the complexity of dropout analysis and the extreme difficulty in establishing a comprehensive theory that fully explains dropout in all settings. Part of the problem is the nature of studies in the area. Woodley (2004) observes that many studies rely on students self-selecting and self-reporting, usually with a considerable time-lag between dropout and survey. McGivney (2004) adds that qualitative findings must be interpreted carefully, as it is possible that “the real reasons [for non-completion] are not expressed and students cite only those that do not threaten their self-esteem or that they perceive as ‘acceptable’” (ibid. p.37).

Complicating matters further is that some distance students do not study for the purpose of gaining a qualification, and subsequently may not actually complete assignments. Tait (2004) discusses Open University survey findings that indicate only 67% of students were studying to gain a qualification in 2003 (down from 69% in 2001). Tait (2004, pp.98-99) adds that

It is clear that the diversity of the open learning student body will tend to be problematic for neat retention statistics; they may choose to mix and match courses, take breaks in their study, opt not to sit examinations or participate in any summative assessment and simply end their relationship with the institution once they judge that their learning is complete or sufficient for their needs... One of the main problems with retention in an open access context... is that students may choose courses that are inappropriate or for which they are ill prepared.

So, the field of student retention in distance education is littered with various studies coming to tentative and contextualised conclusions drawing from self-selecting samples, unique contexts, and often suspect methodology.

Statistics gathered from student enrolment and completion data also tend to be either inadequate or of poor quality (McGivney, 2004). Simpson (2003, p.15) adds that quantitative and qualitative analysis of dropouts are such that “neither gives very decisive answers”. Simpson’s concern here can be illustrated from various statistics available from international studies. While such studies clearly identify online and first-year students as being particularly vulnerable to dropout, the numbers show considerable variance. Stanford-Bowers (2008) reports attrition for online learning courses between 30-50%. Pickar & Marshall (2008) cite evidence that attrition in e-learning courses ranges from 20-50%, and adds that online courses typically have 10-20% more attrition than traditional classroom learning (see also Berge & Huang, 2004; Wojciechowski & Palmer, 2005). Wojciechowski & Palmer (2005) cite studies indicating that online course dropout in the US average 50%.

2.2 General findings from retention studies

Despite the variance and uncertainty surrounding the results of retention studies, some generalisation is possible. Woodley (2004, p.53) states that “it seems reasonable to hypothesize that

a dropout rate is likely to be determined by both the nature of the student intake and the characteristics of the host course/institution". A high-risk course (identified by Woodley as containing a mathematical or technical component, small numbers and "a low average age") combined with a high-risk student population (low entry criteria, low average age), dropout will tend to be high. Terry (2001, in Angelino et al 2007) found that more technical classes such as business statistics and finance courses had higher attrition in their distance versions, whereas other business courses had comparable attrition rates. Other studies confirm that dropout rates are also influenced by the number of students on the course, whether the course has a residential, intensive or block course associated with it, and how long the course itself has been on offer (Woodley, 2004).

Ashby (2004) cites the most common reasons of withdrawal by distance students at the UK Open University as follows:

- I fell behind with my course work (43%)
- General personal/family or employment responsibilities (37%)
- Increase in personal/family or employment responsibilities (29%)

That these figures add up to more than 100% demonstrates that a number of reasons for withdrawal are usually given by students. Ashby (2004, p.71) cites Yorke's (2003) study as identifying "demands of employment, needs of dependants, workload, financial problems and organizational issues" as common reasons for student withdrawal. Wrong course choice (in terms of both subject and level of study) and poor support from family and friends are additional factors (McGivney, 2003 in Ashby, 2004). Some differences between retention rates for on-campus and distance education courses is expected by the very fact that distance students keep their own schedule and do not have the same social opportunities as their on-campus counterparts. Further, distance education tends to attract more part-time and second-chance learners (Ashby, 2004).

Yorke (2004) also reported that the age of the student was also significant when considered alongside some of these factors. For example, older students were less likely to make a wrong subject choice and are more committed to their study, but are more likely to cite financial difficulties (see also McGivney, 2004). Indeed, adults (those aged 25 or older in McGivney's 2004 study) tend to have more "external constraints arising from their work, domestic and financial commitments" (McGivney 2004, p.34) and are also far more likely to have not studied for some time. Given the high proportion of adult learners in distance higher education contexts, the need for special support services is clear (McGivney, 2004). Even the length of the course is a factor, with students of short courses more likely to dropout if they cannot participate for a time.

Isolation and the need for distance students to be more self-directing are common themes in literature. Yorke (2004) states that there is empirical evidence that each of the following factors contribute to a student's decision not to continue studying:

- Self-belief.
- 'Fit' with the academic environment.
- Commitments to others (particularly dependants).
- Employment demands.
- Financial factors.

Lack of time or time management difficulties are often cited by students as an important reason for

dropout (Angelino et al, 2007). Herbert (2006) found that 61% of his sample of online students cited 'time commitments' as their reason for non-completion, with personal problems (15%) and instructor-related problems (12%) as second and third. However Nash (2005) points out that reasons offered by students for dropping out often conceal deeper reasons; 'lack of time', for example, might be the result of poor instructions, poor time management, the student trying to accomplish too much, or any combination of these three. Nash (2005) also found that students who dropped out of distance courses were more likely to believe that distance courses are easier than on-campus ones. Lack of timely feedback and isolation are also mentioned in literature (Angelino et al, 2007; Stanford-Bowers, 2008).

Berge & Huang (2004) propose personal, institutional and circumstantial variables as determining retention (in Herbert, 2006):

- Personal variables – demographics; academic skill and ability; motivation; commitment; locus of control
- Institutional variables – academic, bureaucratic and social variables (including institutional ethos)
- Circumstantial variables – socio-economic variables, academic interactions, social interactions, and life situation.

2.3 Interventions

Simpson (2003) suggests that institutions analyse their own retention characteristics and 'spot the leaks'. Analysis is likely to identify a cluster of student dropout at particular times. Once identified, problem areas can benefit from direct intervention. Above all, Simpson's (2003) advice is that institutions be intentional and strategic in their intervention.

Woodley (2004) points out that much work has been done in the area of predictors for success in higher education. Identifying at risk students based on their application data and offering them priority support is identified as an important intervention strategy (Parker 1999; Simpson, 2003). While identifying students with 'at-risk' profiles for deliberate follow-up is a useful strategy, it is important that those considered at little risk also have support clearly available (Barefoot, 2004).

Simpson (2003) is in favour of early intervention, citing one Open University course where some 38% of students did not complete the first assignment (a subsequent 10% dropped out later in the course). Simpson (2003) also points out the positive influence of 'motivational contact' by offering encouragement through a telephone call or postcard (Simpson speculates that email might serve the same purpose). In some studies, such contact did not even need to be personalised, though Simpson does suggest that it be brief, informal and appropriate. Having such contact across the period of study was also found beneficial for retention. Simpson outlines how such a contact system can be designed and implemented.

ACT (2004) suggests that institutions base their interventions on four points:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive set of support services that meet student needs.
2. Align the academic environment so that it is congruent with the academic and non-academic needs of students.
3. Implement a monitoring system looking at key student characteristics linked to likelihood of

- success, and continue to update profiles of students at risk of dropping out.
4. Determine the cost/benefit of retention activities to assist with decision-making relating to interventions.

Such an institutional approach helps to ensure a good return on intervention investment, focussing support activities where they are most needed and ensuring a long-term institutional commitment to funding retention strategies.

3.0 Methodology

This study does not seek to provide the sort of longitudinal or large-scale work that some argue is much-needed in the area of retention (Woodley, 2004; Yorke, 2004). Instead the objective is to draw from existing findings in order to improve local practice (Yorke, 2004).

How 'retention' is defined determines how it is measured and discussed (Ashby 2004), so it is vital that terms are clearly outlined. Nash (2005) observes that in distance education contexts it is usual to focus on course completion rates rather than qualification completion rates, as non-traditional learners may be more interested in individual subjects than in gaining a qualification (also Barefoot, 2004). Course completion is also more applicable for distance study, as analysing student retention may mask a number of course withdrawals where the student still passes other courses. This study specifically compares course completion in the first semester 2008, before the Academic Support Coordinators had established their interventions, with course completion in the first semester, 2009 following the implementation of support interventions. Active interventions consisted of student support survey filled out by the students as part of their application, an orientation for new students, general messages of support offered during the semester, and personal contact with those identified as being at-risk or who sought assistance.

Statistical data from the SDR (Single Data Return²) of Laidlaw College was analysed and compared with New Zealand-wide data, sourced from the Ministry of Education. This enabled Laidlaw College to identify its own retention and success trends, and benchmark the performance of its own distance education department. Levels 5, 6 and 7 of the National Qualifications Framework, those levels of study associated with undergraduate degrees, were isolated for the purposes of this study.³ Statistical data was used to identify retention trends across 2006 to 2008, and between Semester One, 2008 and Semester One, 2009. The retention characteristics for new students and those studying at Level 5 were isolated for particular analysis. Student characteristics were comparable across the two semesters, and overall the courses on offer were the same (but see 1.3 above).

So that some idea of the nature of withdrawals and non-completions in Laidlaw College's Centre for Distance Learning could be gained, students who had withdrawn from or not completed at least one course in Semester One of 2008 (n=51) were sent a survey (Appendix One). In the survey, students were asked to self-select for a follow-up interview. Twenty-eight students completed the survey, and fifteen were subsequently interviewed.

2 The SDR is a reporting mechanism used by the New Zealand Ministry of Education. The SDR is a standard reporting framework used by all New Zealand institutions.

3 The Centre for Distance Learning also offers courses at Level 4 however these courses use a different instructional approach. Level 4 courses were removed from analysis in case these instructional differences influenced results.

Finally, a survey was sent to first-year and potentially ‘at-risk’ students identified from the Semester One, 2009 student intake (Appendix Two). To be eligible for the survey, students had to have successfully completed their courses; ‘at-risk’ students were those identified by the Academic Support Coordinators as those who were given direct support intervention. The 2009 student sample (n=44) was asked about their study persistence, and whether they had considered withdrawing from their courses at any stage. Twenty-three students responded to the survey, including fifteen who self-nominated for a follow-up interview.

This study differentiates student outcomes based on whether they succeeded (‘S’, that is, passed the course), were unsuccessful (‘U’, in that they completed the course requirements but did not succeed), or withdrew (‘WDN’, purposefully withdrew from their course) or did not complete (‘DNC’, in that they did not pass the course because they did not complete its requirements). ‘WDN’ and ‘DNC’ results were combined; such students are considered non-completers. The relationship between terms is as follows:

- All students = ‘S’ + ‘U’ + (‘WDN’ + ‘DNC’)
- Success = ‘S’
- Retention = ‘S’ + ‘U’
- Non-completion (also known as ‘attrition’) = (‘WDN’ + ‘DNC’)

For the purposes of this study ‘WDN’ students are only counted if they withdraw after the cut-off date for a fee refund, that is, students who formally enrol but withdraw before the course starts (or in the first week of the course itself) are not counted at all in this analysis.⁴

4.0 Findings

In this section a benchmarking of the Laidlaw College Centre for Distance Learning to national statistics from 2006 to 2008 is followed by more detailed a comparison of Semester One 2008 and Semester One 2009, drawing on SDR data and survey and interview results. All SDR results in this section have had ‘in progress’ or ‘completion data not available’ results removed from analysis. Further, national extramural results are not differentiated in terms of Web access even though Laidlaw College’s extramural activity is ‘Web-based’.

4.1 Retention statistics

Comparing national SDR results with those for the Centre for Distance Learning from 2006 to 2008 reveals a steadily declining performance for Laidlaw College. While CDL was comparable to the national average in 2006 for successful course completion, by 2008 it was 2 points below (Table One).

Success	2006	2007	2008
New Zealand Extramural	74.8%	73.4%	75.5%
Centre for Distance Learning	75.7%	72.5%	73.4%

⁴ Students who withdraw (or are withdrawn for non-attendance) during the semester *but after funding is legitimately received for them* are typically reported as ‘DNC’ in the SDR.

Table One – Course success in distance learning study, 2006 to 2008.

The Centre for Distance Learning had better success with Level 5 course outcomes when compared to the national average across 2006 to 2008. However CDL's performance with first-time enrolments was worse but improving between 2006 and 2008, 14.5 points lower in 2006, 8.8 in 2007, and 4.6 in 2008 (Table Two).

Success	2006	2007	2008
Level 5 – NZ Extramural	66.0%	63.1%	66.1%
Level 5 – CDL	67.7%	69.3%	71.2%
New students – NZ Extramural	74.8%	72.3%	74.2%
New students – CDL	60.3%	63.5%	69.6%

Table Two – Course success for Level 5 and new enrolments, 2006 to 2008.

Analysis of unsuccessful ('U') and attrition ('WDN' + 'DNC') outcomes across 2006 to 2008 indicates that CDL students were more likely to *complete* a course unsuccessfully than the national average. So, CDL students tended to persist but not succeed (higher instances of 'U' and 'DNC'), whereas nationally students were more likely to not complete (higher instances of 'W').

This brief analysis of the period 2006 to 2008 shows a department improving in its new student and level 5 successes, but declining overall compared to the national average.

4.2 Semester One, 2008

In Semester One of 2008, student support systems in the Centre for Distance Learning were in a period of transition. Regional representative roles had been disestablished, and new Academic Support Coordinators were setting up systems for their role.

4.2.1 Laidlaw College – comparison with national SDR

Comparison in Table Three is between SDR results for CDL in first semester, and the overall 2008 national SDR.

2008 SDR comparison	Success	Unsuccess	DNC and WDN
Overall – NZ Extramural	75.5%	5.5%	19.0%
Overall – CDL (Semester One)	71.3%	9.9%	18.8%
First-time – NZ Extramural	74.2%	5.9%	19.9%
First-time – CDL (Semester One)	57.0%	12.6%	30.4%
Level 5 – NZ Extramural	66.1%	8.0%	25.9%
Level 5 – CDL(Semester One)	68.9%	11.7%	19.4%

Level 6 – NZ Extramural	81.4%	3.4%	15.1%
Level 6 – CDL (Semester One)	68.8%	8.0%	23.2%
Level 7 – NZ Extramural	84.7%	3.9%	11.4%
Level 7 – CDL (Semester One)	84.6%	5.1%	10.3%

Table Three – 2008 results, CDL (Semester One SDR) and New Zealand Extramural SDR (full year)

In the first semester of 2008, only 57% of courses taken by first-time students were successfully completed compared to the national 74.2%. Some 30.4% of all courses formally enrolled in by first-time students were not completed, compared to the national 19.9%. Level 6 outcomes were also much worse in CDL, with 68.8% course success compared with the national 81.4%. The results indicate that students find it difficult to embark on distance study, and that the transition to Level 6 study is especially difficult. As comparison of CDL's results between Table Three (Semester One only) and the 2008 columns in Tables One and Two show, Semester One was a semester of particularly poor course outcomes.

4.2.2 Survey analysis of WDNs and DNCs in Semester One, 2008

All students who withdrew from or did not complete ('WDN' and 'DNC') at least one paper in Semester One of 2008 were surveyed (n=51) to learn of their reasons and to ascertain whether any action from the Centre for Distance Learning might have helped them to persevere. Twenty-eight surveys were returned, a 55% response rate.

The survey instrument (see Appendix One) asked respondents to indicate the extent to which various factors drawn from literature played a part in their decision to not continue. For purposes of analysis, items that were 'fully true' were coded as '1', 'not true at all' as '4'. Of the factors listed, the average number of items that were fully, mostly or partly true for each student numbered seven. In order, the main five reasons given for non-completion were as follows:

- Life got too busy (2.82 average, SD of 0.98)
- Life changed during the semester, and study had to go (2.88 average, SD of 1.21)
- The course workload was just too much (2.96 average, SD of 1.17)
- I had to withdraw for family reasons (3.18 average, SD of 1.19)
- I found it difficult to manage my time (3.21 average, SD of 0.79).

Over half (n=18) of the respondents listed three or more of these particular factors as being at least partly behind their non-completion. One student stated that their best friend had died, and they had to be there; this particular student cited 'family reasons' and 'life change' as their two major reasons for non-completion. Another found that the workload "seemed to triple" during the semester however they also listed 'not having the computer skills they needed', 'the subject was too difficult' and 'it was confusing trying to work out what was expected of me' as additional reasons ('mostly true'). One student cited 15 of the factors as being at least a 'partly true' in their decision to not complete ('life change' and 'family reasons' were the two main reasons).

Only three respondents did not select any one of the main five reasons for non-completion listed above; of these, one faced health issues and could not continue, one had achieved what they wanted (and also found they lacked the required computer skills), and one had to withdraw for financial and

employment reasons.

The five least contributing factors were as follows:

- I achieved what I wanted to from the course (3.76 average, SD of 0.66)
- I lost interest in studying (3.86 average, SD of 0.45)
- The College let me down (3.86 average, SD of 0.59)
- The subject area was not interesting (3.89 average, SD of 0.31)
- I did not get the family support I was expecting (3.96 average, SD of 0.19)

One student withdrew citing they did not feel a part of the Centre for Distance Learning as the main reason, with a feeling of isolation and workload as additional factors. From this analysis it seems that most students withdrew from study for extrinsic reasons. Analysis using Pearson's correlation found no significant correlations that were not the result of specific outliers.

4.2.3 Interview analysis of WDNs and DNCs in Semester One, 2008

Interviews revealed that each student had their own unique story to tell. Those students who were otherwise well experienced with distance education study found it impossible to continue when their health, family or employment situations changed. Many respondents indicated that they led extremely busy lives, so it does not take much to upset their equilibrium:

I'm a GP full time, and my wife is a full time doctor as well. We've got two kids, and I am running a farm so I've got so many things to do and this sort of occupies any spare time I have.

Another student, a busy pastor, shared:

I was offered a sabbatical... and would be overseas. Study was a pressure on my family and my wife was recovering from cancer. Non paid church work had increased and I had a full time job.

Still another:

I could not manage to find time on the top of my full time work and unwell wife.

Sickness was a common theme. One interviewee said that:

When I am well I have no problem in studying, but at the moment I can't concentrate because I have hemispheric migraines that quite literally paralyse one side of my body and interfere with my cognitive thought, and actually impact on my ability to work, and write, and walk, and talk, and balance. We are still trying to get that one under control. That is why I withdrew from the College.

One student, who was studying at a distance with some reluctance, found an on-campus provider close to her and transferred to that provider (the same student, in her 60s, struggled with the computer requirements for distance study as well). Another student who had difficulty with computer skills was also overwhelmed by the workload, following success in a more traditional distance learning format:

I was probably spending 20 hours and still not getting through it. There was a immense amount of reading and I was struggling. I actually invested and bought the book we needed because obviously

you can only get it out the library for two weeks at the time, and there is no way you can do the reading for a course in two weeks.... I mean I literally just couldn't keep it up. It was something I was really keen to do and I am still doing my own study... but the time limit that given for the amount of work I found was way more than 10 hours a week.

At least one student shared that their withdrawal was only temporary:

I just finished doing chemotherapy, so the brain is bit foggy so I am not sure what the answer is. The aim is to do two papers a semester, and next year go back to full time. So that would be the plan. I spend one day a week for study at the moment and I didn't study last semester.

Not many students indicated that the Centre for Distance Learning might have done anything to change their mind about non completion. However some comments were made that indicated support could be improved:

I know [staff member] used to be doing that [support] with me, but maybe, I just want a bit of regular chasing up to see how I am going. Phone calls are good because even though you do the course and online discussion, I found it's actually better to talk to someone by phone.

Another stated that

A phone call near the start [would have been helpful] so I could speak to someone about the difficulties I was experiencing... The last straw for me was failing to grasp exactly what was expected in the assignment and not getting started on it soon enough.

This same student found the requirement for online discourse frustrating. The benefit of a phone call was mentioned by more than one student:

Probably the thing that made me withdraw was the fact that that I had not grasped what they needed for this assignment. I thought it was something, but it turned out that it was actually something quite different. By the time I worked out what they wanted for the assignment, it was too late. But it sounds obvious now and I really should have been earlier in my time... [What would have helped is] probably just a personal phone call. It would be that easier if there is a local person that you can go to see and say "Look I am struggling with this, what do I do here?" I think the personal touch is what is missing, I did not really expect it because I knew it was all going to be online and virtual, but I did think it would hopefully go all right.

Most interviewees indicated that study was more demanding than they had anticipated. One student, studying at a distance and with the College for the first time, indicated that they were spending about six hours per week studying – well short of the recommended ten hours per course per week (this same student withdrew for employment reasons, as life got too busy). Another common theme from the interviews was a preference for on-campus study:

My expectation was that I was going to get all my work done without too much effort at all and without the interaction with other people face to face. And it was a bit harder than what I thought it was going to be. Like here if you sit in a three-hour lecture, you actually can have conversations with other students although it is some work do this on Moodle. Often it is the whole face to face thing. I go have a coffee and talk it whole through and that makes a big difference of how I learn. Where with distance studies there was no real opportunity to have those face to face discussions with someone. Using Moodle means you can post a question or thought but you do not get an instant response so it's not like actually having a conversation.

Many interviewees (n=5) indicated that they were over 50, and expressed desire for a more personal touch (usually contact by phone) and less computer requirements. One put it succinctly:

I think there will probably a group of students like myself who are more mature and who are returning to study, who may need different care from your average younger students who maybe in their 18 or their early 20s. My suggestions would be to sit down maybe on the phone to discuss the expectations and get a better understanding of the student's personal environment... I think [the College] needs to have a good understanding of whether [students] can manage it, and find out what they actually want to achieve and explain things left to the handbook... You get an idea of the time requirement for the study but people are not academic and they are going to need a little bit more coaching and help... when you pick up people who are in workforce already or people involved as volunteers and in church work just grounding themselves, I think they may potentially need a little bit more support and explanation about what is actually involved. That would be my suggestion.

In Semester One of 2009 the level of support suggested by this last student was fully in place.

4.3 Semester One, 2009

By Semester One 2009, the Academic Support Coordinators had strategised their interventions and changes were made to the enrolment process. Students were required to complete a 'readiness for distance study' questionnaire with their course selection forms, and an orientation course introducing new students to study skills and online interaction was implemented.

The number of EFTS was consistent across the two semesters under comparison, and the average number of courses taken per student was likewise similar.

4.3.1 Laidlaw College – comparison with national SDR

Comparison in Table Four is between SDR results for CDL in the first semesters of 2008 and 2009, and the Semester One 2009 national SDR.

2008 and 2009 Sem 1 comparison	CDL 2008 S1	CDL 2009 S1	National SDR S1 2009
Successful students (Extramural)	71.3%	83.3%	78.3%
Unsuccessful students (Extramural)	9.9%	10.1%	8.3%
<i>Retained (successful + unsuccessful)</i>	<i>81.2%</i>	<i>93.4%</i>	<i>86.6%</i>
DNC and WDN students (Extramural)	18.8%	5.5%	13.5%
Level 5 success (Extramural)	68.9%	78.3%	69.3%
New students success (Extramural)	57%	81.7%	77.5%

Table Four – 2008 and 2009 first semester comparisons with national SDR, Semester One 2009.⁵

A dramatic change has taken place within CDLs results, and there is no apparent trend in the

⁵ Results not adding up to 100% (Successful + Unsuccessful + DNC and WDN) is the result of rounding error, though a small proportion of Sem 1 CDL students also had an incomplete status at the time of SDR extraction.

national SDR results that would indicate the shift might be attributable to a change in reporting or any obvious external factor. Comparison with Laidlaw College's on-campus retention rates from the same period suggest that about 4% of the improvement in student success might be attributable to institution-wide factors such as the reduction of teaching weeks from fifteen to twelve, the shift to fifteen credit papers, the adoption of hybrid courses and the change of name to Laidlaw College. The appointment of some new on-campus faculty and the shift to full online assignment submission might have also influenced on-campus results.

The greatest improvement visible in Table Four is in course completion for new student enrolments, up 24.7% from the 57% result in Semester One, 2008. The improvement in new student performance can also be seen in the Level 5 success results, up to 78.3% in Semester One 2009 from 68.9% the previous year. Much of the improvement is attributable to a reduction in the DNC and WDN rates, at 18.8% of all CDL course enrolments in Semester One 2008 but only 5.5% in Semester One 2009. The level of unsuccessful students has remained consistent across the two semesters, at 9.9% and 10.1% respectively.

4.3.2 Survey analysis of 'at risk' students in Semester One, 2009

First-year and potentially 'at risk' students who successfully completed their courses (n=44) were surveyed to determine their impressions of the four retention interventions and those factors that contributed to their persistence, and to ascertain whether they had considered withdrawing at any stage of the semester. 'At-risk' students were identified based on the extent to which Academic Support Coordinators interacted with them on a direct and personal basis. Twenty-three surveys were returned, a response rate of 52%. The survey instrument is attached as Appendix Two. For the purposes of analysis, items that were 'fully true' were coded as '1', 'not true at all' as '4'. Any student indicating that they had, at some stage, considered withdrawing or not completing their studies was asked to indicate the circumstances, using an instrument similar to that used for the Semester One, 2008 sample.

The four main contributors to persistence were as follows:

- I was determined to complete and pass (1.45 average, SD of 0.74)
- Not completing the course never occurred to me (1.5 average, SD of 0.74)
- The course itself helped me to persist with my studies (1.81 average, SD of 0.75)
- Contact with my course tutor(s) encouraged me to continue (1.91 average, SD of 0.87)

The 'Study @ Laidlaw' orientation and personal contact from the Academic Support Coordinators were fifth equal, with an average of 2.0 and SD of 1 and 0.93 respectively. Of the other specific interventions, the 'student support survey' and 'general messages from the Academic Support Coordinators' averaged 2.7 and 2.5 respectively, with SD results of 1.01 and 0.96.

Of the twenty-three respondents, all but ten indicated that they had considered withdrawing at some stage during the semester with one indicating that the statement 'There were times during the semester when I felt like withdrawing from study' was fully true for them. The reasons cited by this student were 'Life got too busy' and 'Life changed during the semester, and study had to go' because 'I faced some health issues'; the reason the student gave for persistence was "Student support was excellent and a real blessing to me in this difficult time".

'Life got too busy' was by far the number one reason why students had considered withdrawing (average 2.61 and SD of 1.12) however it is difficult to draw significant conclusions from this analysis because of the small number (n=13) who had considered withdrawing at some stage during the semester. The responses to the question asking about the most important factors for successful completion revealed considerable divergence:

- "I didn't want to see wasted dollars in terms of fees paid; wanted to continue learning; wanted to learn hence why enrolled in the paper; [Academic Support Coordinator] was helpful in helping me to decide to pursue another paper in second semester. Tutor was encouraging."
- "I had chosen to do the course and I intended to complete it. The course proved valuable, interesting, and largely well organised, so was worth continuing with to completion."
- "As an adult distance learner it is extremely important to maintain the 'interest factor'. The course materials did this."
- "Personal determination (pride if you like!) after not studying at this level for many years."
- "The orientation course was a great help in preparing me for the course. I would have found it difficult without this course. The online interaction with my tutors and fellow students encouraged me to keep pressing on!"
- "Support from my family, support from my classmates."
- "Phone calls from Auckland, and encouraging emails from enquires. The friendliness and helpfulness of the CDL office."

While some of these statements were repeated across different respondents, and it is likely that all students would have agreed with most of these statements in addition to their personal response, it is clear that the 'most important factors' of success were perceived differently by the respondents. This diversity was also reflected in some of the additional comments made:

- "The orientation 'Study @ Laidlaw' was possibly helpful but felt like a chore."
- "Almost without exception I found the student support marvellous, in attitude-excellent, hearts-warm and loving, totally encouraging."
- "Personally, I don't need much student support. As a former university professor I am rather familiar with the practicalities of academic study."
- "I have made very little use of the support services."
- "It was a great support knowing I could contact the Centre for Distance Learning for help. The encouragement and comments I received from my tutors and support staff were very helpful and encouraging."
- "I appreciated the personal emails from [Academic Support Coordinators]."
- "I was impressed with quick fellow through with requests and queries and am pleased with how quickly information was handed on."

4.3.3 Interview analysis of 'at risk' students in Semester One, 2009

The surveys provided a reasonably opaque picture of student appreciation of the new support services however the interviews proved much more revealing. Students clearly appreciated the interventions of the Academic Support Coordinators, but seemed to perceive them as being only a part of multiple persistence factors. One respondent, who considered withdrawing at one stage because of busyness, shared that his persistence was related to a number of factors:

I don't think the College could have done more to help me out and I think they have done as much as they could. It is just more my own timetable... [the main reason for my persistence relates to] the encouragement from my classmates. They post their experiences and questions in Moodle, and I

found it was quite helpful. I also benefited from the support of family and the prompt feedback from my tutor. The support services did a pretty good job [as well].

Many students also commented positively on the documentation available through the Centre, which made expectations clear. In some cases it is likely that the orientation course, which requires students to become familiar with various aspects of the documentation, assisted with this impression. The orientation course received mixed views from those students that commented on it; one suggested it was 'boring', while another shared that

...the orientation course [was] really helpful. It helped me to understand what was required and explained how to do essays, and it gave me ideas of what was going to happen in the real courses.

More than one student cited the course experience as being the primary reason for their persistence in study:

The ongoing contact with the tutors and the online contact with other class members [were the particular contributors to my persistence]. [I don't suggest any further support services are necessary because] from my experience I got heaps of support through the technical help and the additional feedback from the tutor.

This was echoed in another's response:

Probably the main reason for [my success was] my own approach. That is probably the primary reason. The course work has been interesting, so that's obviously been helpful. In terms of support, I tend to just get on with things and I don't ask for a lot of support, so I probably don't get a lot of support. I am sure that is there if you want it but as I'm not asking for a lot of support, it didn't really mean a lot to me.

The tutor was cited by another student as the reason for her persistence:

I was not confident because I was doing an exegesis paper... [and although I had done an introductory one beforehand] I found that the level had really gone up. I had asked the tutor, she's given four books, 'which is the easiest to read?' Then she recommended one and I really just hooked into that book. That's the only way I could hold myself firm and steady.

One student stated that "I would say I would've succeeded without support. It's just my attitude of life". Similarly, another student shared that her persistence was "Probably more to do with my own motivation I would say" however in a later response she admitted that the support services enhanced her success:

I sort of did not know where I should go and what I was doing. I just took one paper for interest, and [the Academic Support Coordinator] was able to suggest to me that might be a good idea because of my situation. She gave me advice on what course of study to pursue, and helped me to look at other papers.

In this case, the student's personal motivation was no doubt high enough for persistence within a course however here the Academic Support Coordinator was instrumental in encouraging further study and a long-term view of success. Some students were more direct with their praise:

Laidlaw [College] has done a fantastic job with the administrative staff and you've got access to everybody. They've been really falling over backward to help you.

Another responded in this way:

Yes, I probably would have. But I think it was helpful that the support was available... I enjoyed the occasional email from them. They quite understand what my situation is. It was pretty good.

Revealing here is the statement, "They quite understand what my situation is". It is unlikely that a student would have been able to get this impression had centralised support services not been available.

5.0 Discussion

In the literature review it was pointed out that it is very difficult to accurately determine why students dropout, and the notorious difficulties of attempting to research retention behaviours. This study is further evidence that determining student retention is a very difficult exercise. Despite good survey return rates, there is no discernible picture of the 'typical' dropout. While the survey instrument used was able to capture much of the complexity for student dropout, the follow-up interviews revealed far more about each particular circumstance. All that can be stated about dropout behaviour with confidence from this study is that student reasons for dropout are as complex as they are numerous, and that personal reasons tend to be reported as the most significant reasons for dropout.

This study has drawn on a small population of students, and also describes activity within a particular distance education context. However this does not discount the exceptional gains in course completion that can only be attributable to identifiable support interventions. Analysis of SDR data demonstrates that the four interventions of 'readiness for distance study' survey, orientation course, general messages of support and personal contact have made a compelling difference to student retention in the Centre for Distance Learning, particularly with first-time and Level 5 students. However it is apparent that students do not perceive these interventions as being determinative of their persistence in study.

Some respondents in the 2008 Semester One survey indicated that they would like support services to be improved, and it is clear that the withdrawal and non-completion choices made by some students in Semester One, 2008 were not the same choices made by students in similar situations in Semester One, 2009. Those students most likely to withdraw, that is, those represented by the 24% of additional courses passed in Semester One 2009, were more likely to attribute their persistence to course-related factors and their own motivation rather than to the support they received from the Academic Support Coordinators.

It is possible that student support services in distance education might be described in terms of Herzberg's (1968) two-factor theory, which suggests that something being absent has a different effect from that same thing being present. In Herzberg's study, for example, a salary considered not enough was demotivating for an employee however increases to salary beyond what *was* considered appropriate did not motivate the employee further. From the analysis in this study, it can be hypothesised that the absence of direct and centralised student support services leads to student anxiety in that students do not feel supported. However, once effective support systems are put in place, they are not directly appreciated. The anxiety is removed however conscious assurance does not follow. In other words, based on the analysis of this study, it seems that students are sensitive to a lack of support services but not to the presence of support services – even where those support services have made a demonstrable difference to student outcomes. Regardless of student attribution, student support services based on sound interventions undeniably make a positive and measurable contribution to student retention.

Another lesson from this exercise is that benchmarking institutional performance with regards retention provides a useful point of comparison, and can give clear direction of where intervention and investment will be most beneficial. Obvious gains have been made by Laidlaw College's Centre for Distance Learning with first-time and Level 5 students, thanks to dedicated support efforts targeted specifically at these students. During the benchmarking analysis it also became clear that

Level 6 retention is of concern for the Centre, as course success is lower here than the national average. This indicates that further targeted work is necessary to help students make the transition from study at Level 5 to study at Level 6 of the National Qualifications Framework.

6.0 Conclusion

Distance providers performing below national benchmark statistics are able to improve their performance through an analysis of their outcomes and subsequent interventions. In the case of the Centre for Distance Learning, first-time student course completion rose by 24.7 points across a single semester, with at least 20 points attributable to changes made within the department's own operations. Given that the only changes unique to the department between Semester One, 2008 and Semester One, 2009 was the introduction of four support interventions, the link between these interventions and the improved retention is beyond question.

An improvement of 24.7 points in overall course completion across all new students (n=214 courses) translates to around 9 EFTS (Equivalent Full Time Students), for new students alone. These successful students are also more likely to persist with their studies, generating further enrolments across their course of study. The overall improvement of CDL retention of 12% across the two semesters means that the Centre has retained about 14.5 EFTS it otherwise may not have. While such actual gains may not be of much interest to larger providers, small and medium-sized institutions have much to gain from simple interventions that target those students particularly at risk. Likewise, larger institutions will find that smaller percentage gains across a larger EFTS base will result in significant returns. This study confirms that Simpson's (2003) advice to 'spot the leaks' in student achievement is achievable and rewarding for students as well as providers.

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Appendix One – Survey on withdrawal (2008)

We would appreciate you completing all of the items in this survey.

1. Students withdraw from study for a number of reasons. Please indicate the extent to which your withdrawal was the result of the following. Please indicate the extent to which each of the factors below was true in your case. Please choose one only from ‘fully true’ to ‘not true at all’.				
(a) I did not feel a part of the Centre for Distance Learning.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(b) I was returning to study, and found getting into it difficult.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(c) Studying at a distance was an isolating experience.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(d) I had to withdraw for family reasons.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(e) I had to withdraw for financial reasons.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(f) I had to withdraw for employment reasons.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(g) Life got too busy.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(h) The subject area was not interesting.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(i) The subject was too difficult.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(j) I achieved what I wanted to from the course.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(k) I did not have the computer skills I needed.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(l) It was confusing trying to work out what was expected of me.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(m) I found it difficult to manage my time.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(n) I lost interest in studying.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(o) Life changed during the semester, and study had to go.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(p) I faced some health issues and could not continue.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(q) The course workload was just too much.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(r) I did not get the family support I was expecting.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(s) The College let me down.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(t) The course was not well written.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all

(u) I did not withdraw from all courses and successfully completed some.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
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2	What made you enrol for study with Laidlaw College (then known as The Bible College of New Zealand)?
3	In your own words, please briefly describe why you withdrew from study.
4	What might have been done by the Centre for Distance Learning to make it easier for you to remain in the course?

I am happy to participate in a follow-up phone call.

Name:

Phone:

Best evening to call (Monday through Friday):

If you would rather remain anonymous and not receive a phone call, please do not include your name and number above.

Please return this survey by 10 July in the envelope provided.

Appendix Two – Survey on support services & retention (2009)

We would appreciate you completing all of the items in this survey.

Question 1:				
Students persist with their studies for all sorts of reasons. Please indicate the extent to which the following were true for you during your Semester One, 2009 studies with the Centre for Distance Learning. Please choose one only from 'fully true' to 'not true at all'.				
(a) Filling in the "Student support survey" with my course selection/enrolment form (this survey provided feedback on how you might find distance study) made me think seriously about my commitment to study.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(b) The 'Study @ Laidlaw' orientation helped set me up for the semester.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(c) General messages from Academic Support Coordinators encouraged me to continue.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(d) Personal contact from Academic Support Coordinators encouraged me to continue.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(e) Contact with my course tutor(s) encouraged me to continue.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(f) The feedback on my assignments encouraged me to continue.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(g) Online discussion interaction with other students encouraged me to continue.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(h) Not completing the course never seriously occurred to me.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(i) I have studied at this level before, and this gave me confidence to persist.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(j) I was determined to complete and pass.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(k) I faced unanticipated personal circumstances during the semester that made my studies difficult.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(l) The course itself helped me to persist with my studies.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(m) I knew I was going to succeed in my course(s) in Semester One.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(n) The workload was about right for my circumstances.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(o) There were times during the semester when I felt like withdrawing from study.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all

If you answered 'Partly', 'Mostly' or 'Fully' true for question 'o' above ("There were times when I felt like withdrawing from study"), please complete question 2. below. Otherwise please go straight to question 3.

Question 2:

Students can feel like withdrawing or even partly like withdrawing from study for a number of reasons. Please indicate the extent to which your potential withdrawal was the result of the following. Please choose one only from 'fully true' to 'not true at all'.

(a) I did not feel a part of the Centre for Distance Learning.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(b) I was returning to study, and found getting into it difficult.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(c) Studying at a distance was an isolating experience.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(d) I felt like withdrawing for family reasons.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(e) I felt like withdrawing for financial reasons.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(f) I felt like withdrawing for employment reasons.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(g) Life got too busy.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(h) The subject area was not interesting.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(i) The subject was too difficult.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(j) I achieved what I wanted to from the course.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(k) I did not have the computer skills I needed.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(l) It was confusing trying to work out what was expected of me.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(m) I found it difficult to manage my time.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(n) I lost interest in studying.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(o) Life changed during the semester, and study had to go.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(p) I faced some health issues.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(q) The course workload was just too much.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(r) I did not get the family support I was expecting.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(s) The College let me down.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all
(t) The course was not well written.	Fully true	Mostly true	Partly true	Not true at all

2. (u) At what stage of the course did you most feel like withdrawing?

Please continue to Question 3.

Question 3:

Please describe, in your own words, which factors you think were most important for your successful completion of your Semester One course(s).

Question 4:

Please provide any comments relating to the student support you have experienced or would like to experience through the Centre for Distance Learning.

I am happy to participate in a follow-up phone call.

Name:

Phone:

Best evening to call (Monday through Friday):

If you would rather remain anonymous and not receive a phone call, please do not include your name and number above.

Please return this survey by 28 August in the envelope provided.