

November 19, 2002

TO: Carrie Towns
FROM: Michele Eodice and Robert Page, co-chairs, University Retention Committee
RE: Project DEEP

Thanks for the opportunity to provide you with information from the retention committee for your upcoming report to **The National Study of Student Engagement**. The commitment to retention on this campus is significant and we welcome the opportunity to share our data and reports for this particular study: if we have learned even one thing about retention, especially as it relates to our focus on first year students, it is that *engagement* is key.

Some background on how our retention committee has operated: first, there have been several versions of the retention committee in recent years. Initially, the committee was tiered to allow a study group level and an implementation level. The study groups conducted research – mainly comparison studies with peer institutions—and provided recommendations on best practices in retention efforts. The implementation group reviewed ideas for possible program implementation. Many solid ideas, policies, and proposals for programs have come from these efforts. In general, the retention committee made it their business to know about and support campus retention efforts and to disseminate retention related reports, such as the report on the freshman orientation course, PRE 101.

The second phase of the retention committee work called for more focus and research on our own campus efforts. In this way we learned more about existing support programs at KU, began tracking and assessing these programs, and developed plans to implement a living/learning communities pilot based on an earlier retention committee report recommendation.

Currently, the committee has evolved to function as an oversight committee, providing guidance to the many retention and student support programs and efforts found across the campus. Currently we are informally involved with advising and monitoring several important initiatives and research projects, such as the development of an exit survey for students who leave KU, and the tracking of students currently at KU with a conditional admissions status.

We believe the committee's efforts to pay close attention to factors that impact retention has resulted in an increased awareness and a more coordinated retention initiative on the part of campus faculty and student support services staff. We welcome any questions you and the Project DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practices) research team members may have.