

Recruitment and retention challenges at a mid-size engineering college

The College of Engineering (COE) at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) can be classified as a mid-size engineering college with four engineering and one technology departments, sixty three faculty members, slightly over one thousand undergraduate, and about 450 graduate students. SIUC, being a state university with limited scholarship funds, and as a rural university away from major industries, there are great challenges in recruiting students well-prepared for engineering education. Retention of students who are not well prepared during high school years represents the second stage of the challenges. The retention problem becomes more complicated when students who are well-prepared but unable to make the transition from high school to college are added to the pool.

In this paper, recruitment programs for the freshmen, and retention programs for the freshmen and sophomores, developed at the College of Engineering during the last few years will be introduced. For recruitment, we will specifically present: 1) Scholarship Program, 2) High School Outreach Program, 3) Summer Introduction to Engineering Programs, and 4) Engineering Floor Program. For retention we will present: 1) Supplemental Instruction in Math Courses, 2) Dormitory Tutoring Program, and 3) Early Intervention Program.

For each program, statistics compiled and lessons learned will be presented. Evolution of the programs and future improvements will be discussed. In addition, a comparative study of freshmen versus transfer students' recruitment and retention issues will be presented.