The purpose of these funds is to:

Improve MSU’s freshman-to-sophomore retention rate from 72.2% to 76% over a three year period (FY11-FY14).

With a strategic investment in FY10, the university will realize a 0.8% increase in fall-to-fall student retention for FY10 by “saving” 14 students. In FY11, after the program has been refined, the retention rate will increase by another 0.7% to 1.3% by “saving” 25 students. The investment will increase the institution’s retention rate to 73.5% by FY12 (and if continued, 74.8% in FY13 and 76.1% in FY14). This effort will require a coordinated effort, resources, and a reasonable amount of time to develop mechanisms to support retention to attain this aggressive goal.

Method:

Four “cornerstones” of retention (student intervention, program assessment/data mining, engagement identification/rewards system, and targeted communication) will be central to advancing a comprehensive retention program. Program initiatives include, but are not limited to, the examples included in the table.

Priority:

Program priority (based upon budget allocation) is listed below. We realize there are numerous campus priorities and limited resources available, and will work within a budget provided by the UPBAC committee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Program Initiatives</th>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>Request</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Program Assessment/ Data Mining</td>
<td>Predictive Modeling Support Program Assessment</td>
<td>Identify at-risk students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Engagement Identification and Rewards System</td>
<td>“CatCash” Program – akin to a frequent flyer program to track student engagement while rewarding behavior</td>
<td>At-risk, non-engaged students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Targeted Communication</td>
<td>Coordinate targeted messages to students based upon risk profile and communication plan</td>
<td>Freshman class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Student Intervention</td>
<td>Academic “boot camp” fall-to-spring targeting students with GPA ranging from 1.25 to 1.99 – Subsequent follow-up by a retention specialist each week throughout the semester</td>
<td>102 university probation 179 college probation 30 suspended/reinstated (Based upon AY 08 data)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Student Intervention</td>
<td>Extended summer orientation program – virtual and on campus</td>
<td>2200 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Return on Investment from these expenditures will be:

With a $195,000 investment, the program is expected to yield a ROI of 49% with $291,184 in net revenues over a 2 year period, and a ROI of 242% with $668,810 in net revenues over a 6 year period (by “saving” an initial class of 39 students in FY10 and FY11). These figures are based upon the assumption of the current progression and retention of students through graduation, as referenced on the Office of Planning & Analysis webpage – *Retention and Graduation Rates*, and FY10 tuition and fees data. See spreadsheet for supporting calculations.

About the Proposal

This proposal represents a combination of “best practices” from other universities that have improved their freshman-to-sophomore retention rate and findings gleaned from an 18 month study relative to retention needs at MSU. The proposal is influenced by methods employed at several institutions including but not limited to University of Central Florida, Tulane, DePaul and Clemson (state land-grant institution).

A comprehensive program is needed to improve retention; piecemeal approaches have not yielded favorable results in the past. This proposal is not intended to replicate programs that currently exist on campus (i.e. Math Learning Center, English Writing Center) but will work in conjunction with existing programs to better utilize resources and assess impact. If funded, the initiative will develop mechanisms to communicate and track student engagement, and where necessary develop new interventions relative to both academic and psycho-social needs.

Carina Beck is the Special Assistant to the Vice President of Student Affairs for Retention, and will be responsible for the initiatives outlined in this proposal. In addition, the Student Progress Oversight Committee (SPOC) will inform the process and will serve in an advisory capacity. SPOC is comprised of membership from the Provost’s Office, faculty, and staff.

Brief Description of the Four Retention Cornerstones

1. Targeted Communication (examples)
   - **Transitional Communication** – targeted between the stages of prospective/enrolled student and freshman student
   - **Success Modeling** - messages outlining expectations and ideas for achieving success at MSU
   - **Positive Reinforcement** - messages providing positive reinforcement to students during key and challenging periods in the semester schedule
   - **Information Fluency** – messages relevant to understanding institutional timelines and procedures typically not known by new students

2. Program Assessment/Data Mining/Predicative Modeling
   - Process to predict those most prone to drop-out by modeling “at-risk” incoming variables
   - Assess efficacy of interventions based upon “at-risk profile”
   - Retention success (intervention efficacy) will be measured on engagement tracking and “saves” from interventions based upon risk profile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student Intervention</th>
<th>Extended spring orientation program</th>
<th>~133 in-state students ~31 out-of-state students</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Student Intervention</td>
<td>On-demand tutoring (group tutoring support)</td>
<td>Offered to students in “difficult” freshman courses</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Student Intervention</td>
<td>Transition advising support for at-risk students (transitional, academic, career advising)</td>
<td>At-risk students identified from the CatCash Rewards System</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Student Intervention</td>
<td>Return to MSU tele-a-thon program&quot;</td>
<td>Freshman students who withdraw from school – could be expanded beyond freshman class</td>
<td>$36,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Student Intervention</td>
<td>Faculty advising buy-out option</td>
<td>Two semester pilot program to “buyout” a course for three faculty to advise students in high impact/yield areas ($7,500 per buyout)</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Student Intervention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$195,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Success will also be based upon results from the College Persistence data published by the
Office of Planning & Analysis. Please note, interventions and outcomes from this proposal
are targeted toward all freshman students and not limited to full-time, first-time freshman (a
uniform measure of college persistence).

3. Engagement Identification and Rewards System
• Students who engage in a variety of events/services/activities are more likely to persist than
those who do not.
• Student engagement will be tracked through the CatCard and coupon rewards system
administered via the web.
• The data collected will be akin to a “real-time” assessment system developed to track student
engagement at MSU.
• Students who participate in activities/services/events (i.e. Math Center, Convocation,
Residence Hall events, ASMSU events, academic advising, career advising, etc.) would earn
points towards prizes auctioned at the end of the semester (MSU branded apparel,
electronics, outdoor apparel and recreational gear, etc.).
• The program is designed to reward engagement behavior while providing intervention
opportunities for those who are not “connected.”
• A dataset will also be created to identify students who are not engaging in academic, social
or ancillary services or support programs at the institution. Personal and targeted
interventions will occur with identified at-risk students.
• Based upon the predictive modeling outcomes, students who are identified “at-risk” will be
tracked more closely than those with a lower risk profile (although all MSU freshmen will be
eligible to participate in the program).

4. Student Intervention
• Student “socialization” occurs through a variety of interactions with the institution. The
process of successful socialization implies that the student has moved from outsider to
insider (a successful retention program should facilitate that process).
• The interventions offered in this proposal are examples of initiatives. The list is not
exhaustive as a retention intervention program must maintain flexibility based upon the needs
of the student and the services available from the institution.
• Student intervention activities will be informed by assessment, engagement tracking, and
predictive modeling.
• Students will be informed of affinity and engagement opportunities through a comprehensive
and targeted communication plan. Some opportunities currently exist on campus (i.e. Math
Learning Center) and where necessary, new services/events will be created to better retain
at-risk students (i.e. academic boot camp).
• Students will be rewarded with “CatCash” points by engaging in campus
events/services/activities.