When external agencies inquire about student retention rates, they are typically referring to "first-time, full-time, undergraduate" students who are entering college directly from high school. Only 50% of the students who entered the Women's College during Fall 2017 returned for Fall 2018. We believe this relatively low retention rate is an anomaly, and our typical Women's College retention rate is around 67% (71% for Women's College students who reside on-campus). Indicating that our fall-to-fall retention rate within the Women's College hovers around 70% is a fair statement in my opinion.

The overall women's college persistence rate (all women's college students, not just first-time, full-time, undergraduates) is 78%; hence, if we can retain students to their sophomore year, they are very likely to persist and graduate. Our retention efforts, therefore, are focusing on persistence between the first- and second-year. Similarly, the persistence rate of adult learners "on-ground" is 78%, while the persistence rate of students online is 73%.

College ranking schemes tend to weigh the six-year graduation rate and the fall-to-fall persistence rate heavily. We have at least three separate groups working on the student retention/persistence initiative. Emily Zank coordinates the efforts of the student retention task force (Women's College) with guidance from me. Dr. Crystal Toombs coordinates the efforts of the "student persistence" committee that focuses on adult learners on-ground (with guidance from Dr. Lammers). Ray Tatum coordinates a "Strategic Enrollment Management" (SEM) committee that discusses retention issues university-wide. Dr. Lammers and I also serve on the SEM committee. Emily and I are frequently discussing retention efforts online with our colleagues at Helix.