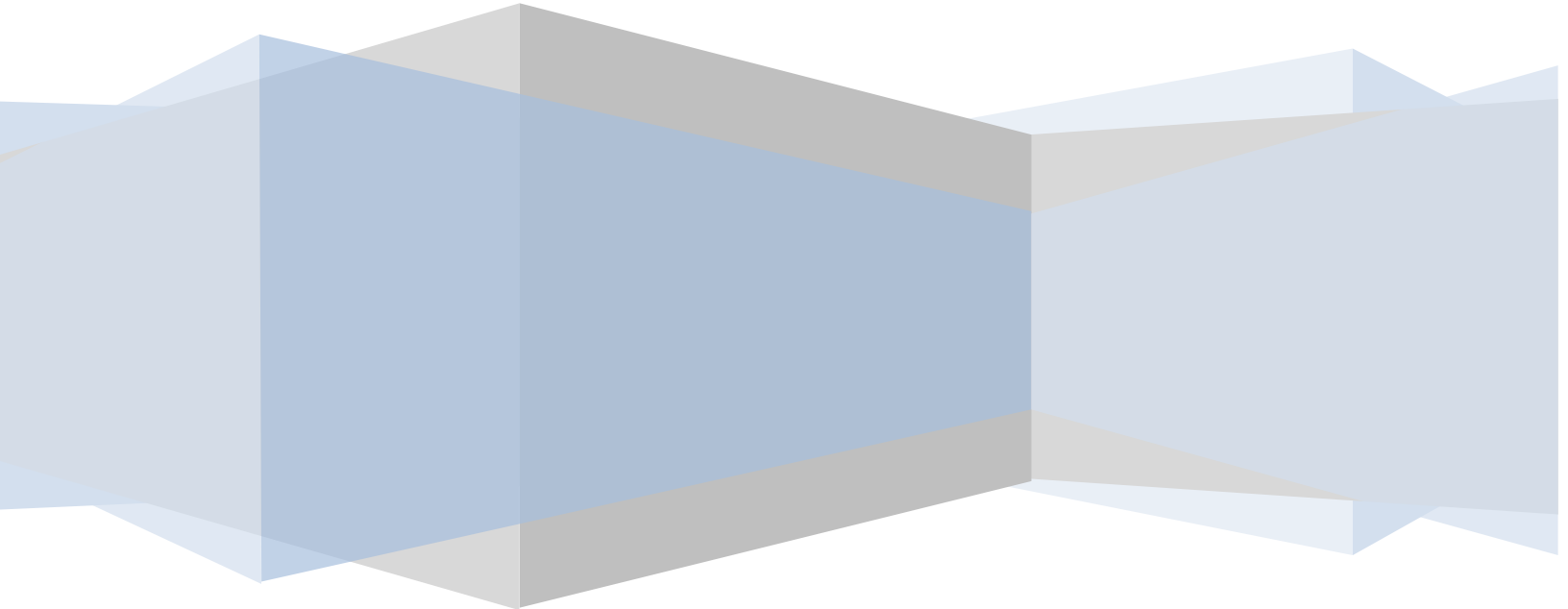


# Foundations of Excellence<sup>®</sup> in the First College Year

2010 Retention Analysis

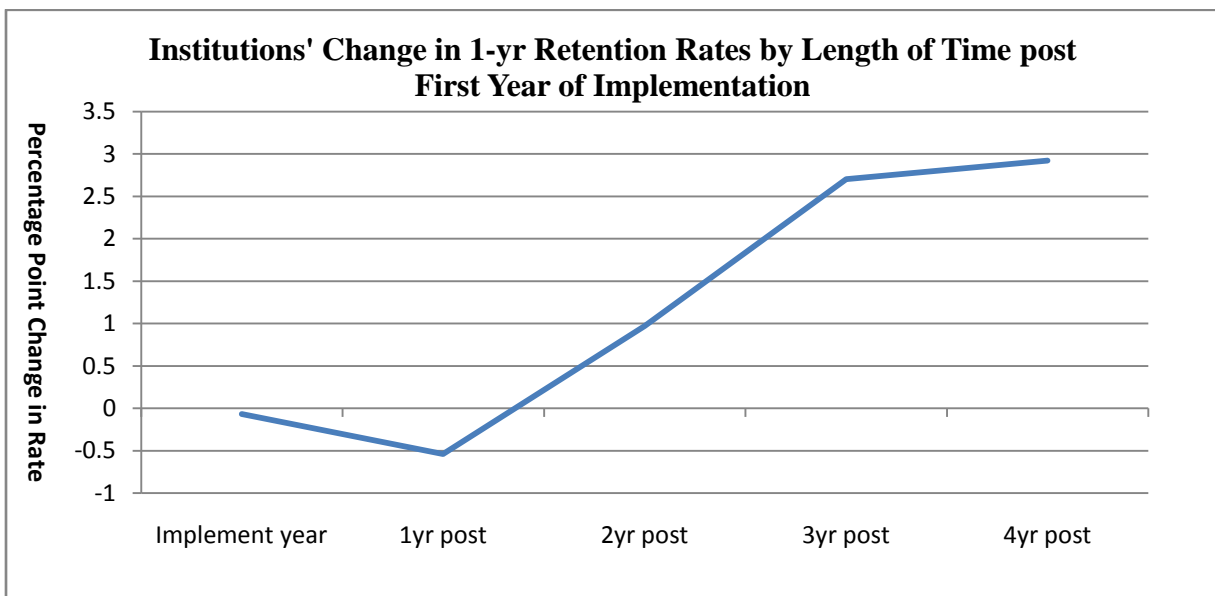
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Gardner Institute

## Executive Summary

This study is an analysis of first-year retention rates for the 132 institutions that participated in the Foundations of Excellence<sup>®</sup> (FoE) self-study process from 2003 through 2008. Retention rates were split by demographic variables provided from a brief “Survey of Foundations of Excellence Impact” conducted in March 2010. Surveys were sent electronically to the individual on each of the 132 campuses who served as leader (liaison) for the FoE self-study process. The results indicate that implementation of an FoE action plan is significantly positively related to increased first-year retention rates over time.



A mitigating factor of the relationship between FoE action plan implementation and growth in first-year retention rates is the level of implementation as reported by the project liaison at each institution. Colleges and universities that reported implementation of their FoE action plans at a “high degree” demonstrate dramatically higher retention rates, with a 5.62 average percentage point increase (8.2% increase) in first-year retention rates four years after they began implementing their action plan. This growth is compared to institutions that

implemented their action plans to a lesser degree; these institutions show a decrease in first-year retention rates four years after their initial implementation. It should be noted that specific action plans were developed by each institution and included institution-specific initiatives recommended as the part of the FoE self-study process. These initiatives were wide-ranging and included many changes in first-year courses, activities, and policies.

