

# Strengthening the Student Experience

## Supporting Student Persistence and Improving Institutional Retention

“Those who are least likely to succeed in the educational system will account for nearly half of the U.S. population by mid-century...The imperative for post-secondary educators is to identify and engage in practices and interventions that increase the likelihood of success.”

– Habley, W.R., Bloom, J.L., & Robbins, S. (2012).  
*Increasing Persistence: Research strategies for college student success.* (p. 61).  
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

### The Cost of Recruiting Students – Marketing, Admissions and Enrollment Management

M State cost per new student

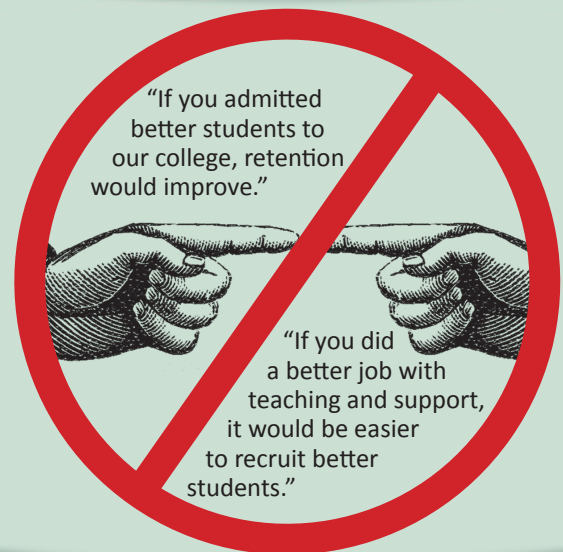
**\$735**

### The Cost of Students Leaving - Tuition and State Allocation

A loss of one student FTE after first term .....	<b>\$15,000</b>
A loss of 1% in leaving after first fall term .....	<b>\$225,000</b>
<b>The Fall 2015 loss of 26% in new student FTE....</b>	<b>\$5,850,000</b>
A loss of one student leaving after first year .....	<b>\$10,000</b>
A loss of 1% in leaving after first year.....	<b>\$148,500</b>
<b>The FY15 loss of 19% (in addition to the Fall 2014 loss of 29%) in new student FTE .....</b>	<b>\$2,850,000</b>

“The problem of student departure requires both an understanding of the key forces that influence student persistence and the development of policies and practices designed to improve student retention rates based on our understanding of such key forces of student persistence.”

– Braxton, J.M., Doyle, W.R., Hartley III, H.V.,  
Hirschy, A.S., Jones, W.A., and McLendon, M.K. (2014).  
*Rethinking College Student Retention.* (p. ix).  
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



**Minnesota State**  
Community and Technical College

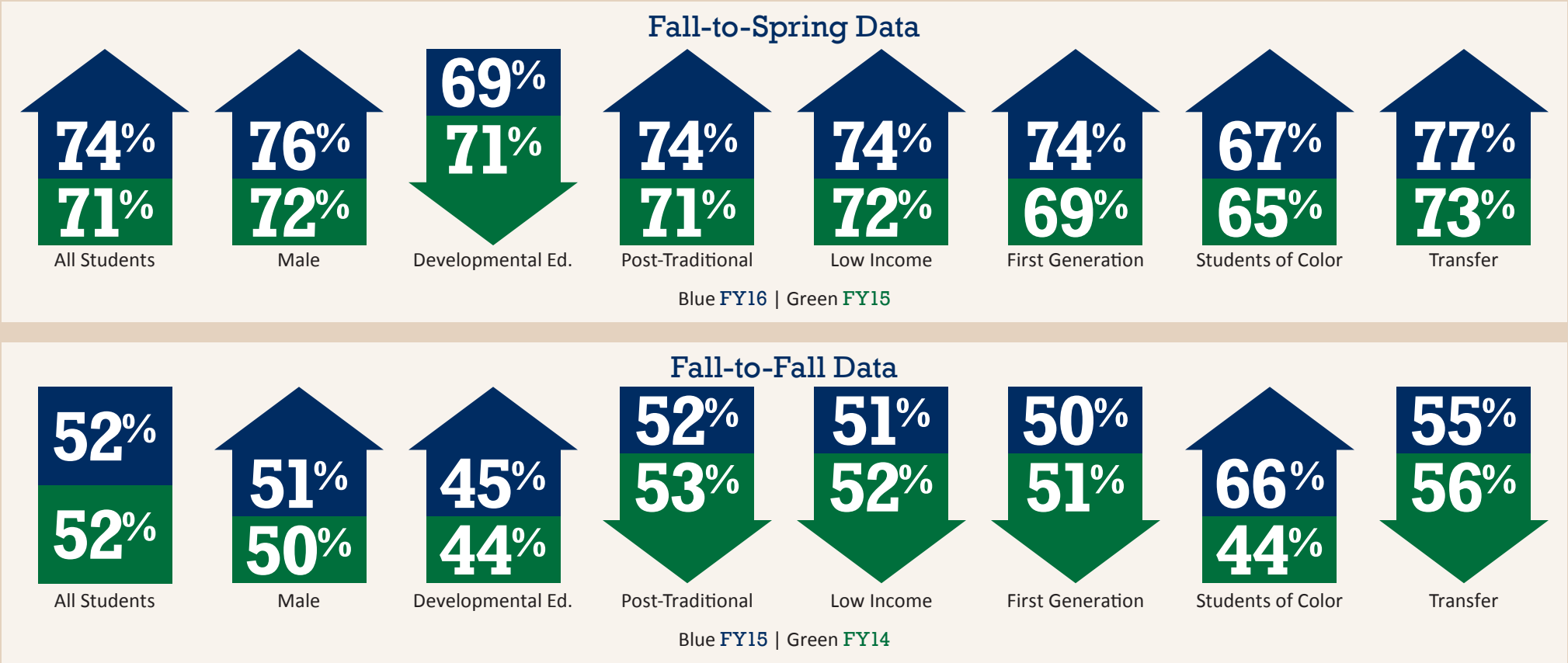
# Focus Is Key Part 1

(from Tom Green, PhD, Associate Executive Director of Consulting and SEM with AACRAO)

- Culture of egalitarianism conflicts with strong retention planning:
  - We are used to providing our opinion and having it “counted”
  - We value input and therefore tend to include everyone’s in our planning documents
- Evidence and experiences show that long lists of retention initiatives usually result in poor outcomes.
  - Limited funding and resources
  - Lack of focus on areas with the greatest potential to change results



# Collegewide Student Persistence Retention



## Goals:

- Increase FY17 fall-to-spring student retention rate by three percentage points from FY16.
- Increase Fall 2016-to-Fall 2017 student retention rate by two percentage points from Fall 2015-to-Fall 2016 rate.
- Increase first-term completion in good academic standing of First Time in College students (FTIC) by three percentage points from the FY16 rates.

## Strategies:

- Implement Ruffalo Noel Levitz College Student Indicator (CSI) as part of First-Term Check-In Advising initiative during the first four weeks of Fall 2016.
- Assemble a team in Fall 2016 to prepare for Spring 2017 entry into the Higher Learning Commission’s Persistence Academy.
- Institutionalize the academic bridge experience.
- Implement a robust and seamless process to use multiple measures for course placement.



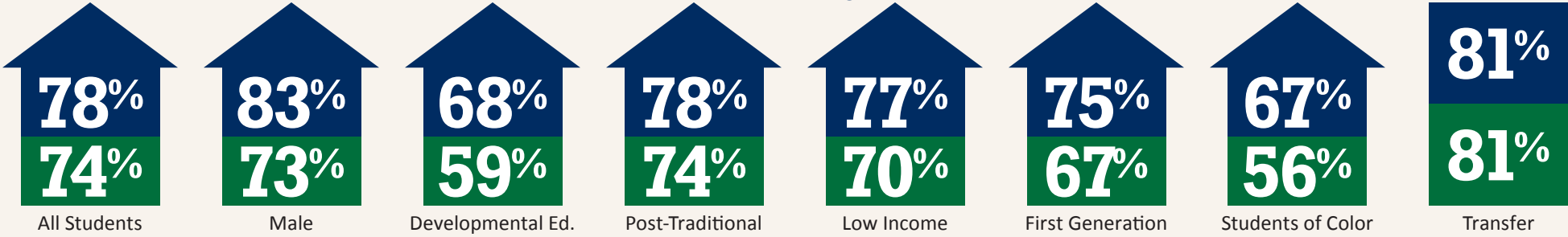
# Focus is Key Part 2

(from Tom Green, PhD, Associate Executive Director of Consulting and SEM with AACRAO)

- Limit retention goals to THREE major areas where the institution will place its resources (the target groups for receipt of retention/ completion/success initiatives)
- Goals MUST be supported by strategies (major initiatives) and detailed tactical work plans
  - Criterion One: The strategy must have the potential to impact the greatest number of students
  - Criterion Two: The strategy must have the greatest potential to produce positive results

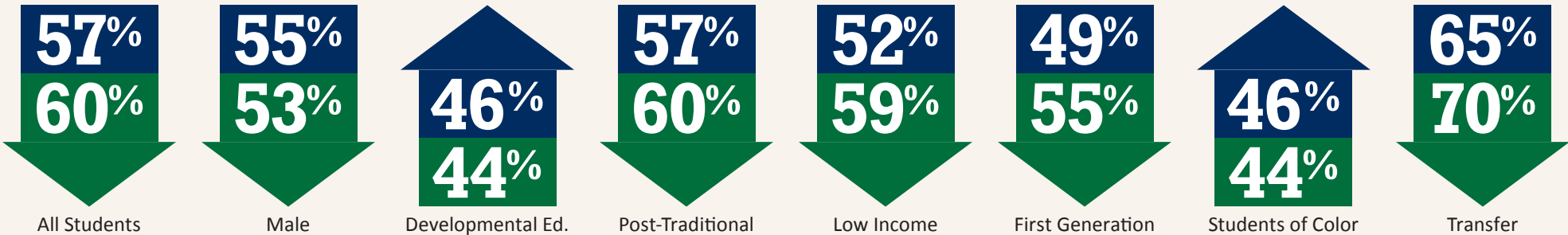
# Detroit Lakes Campus

## Fall-to-Spring Data



Blue FY16 | Green FY15

## Fall-to-Fall Data



Blue FY15 | Green FY14

### Greatest opportunities:

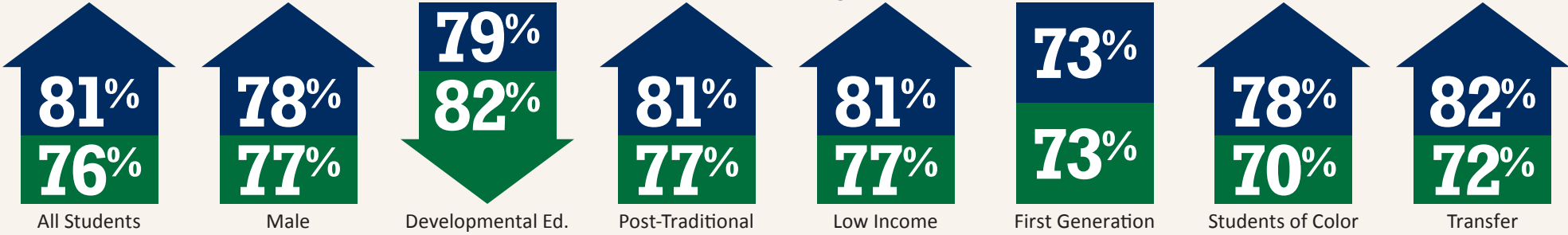
While all above categories show a downturn for the Detroit Lakes campus in FY15 fall-to-fall from that of FY14 fall-to-fall, the mid-year fall-to-spring show improvements in all categories. Low-income students remain the single largest group; focusing on bringing the fall-to-fall rates of low-income to that of all students would result in the success of nine additional students and \$100,000 in additional revenue. The next largest opportunities are found in attending to the fall-to-spring persistence of developmental education students and students of color, which would result in the success of 10 additional students and \$150,000 in additional revenue.

### Recommended goals:

- Increase fall-to-spring retention rates of developmental education students from 68 percent to 76 percent by FY19.
- Increase fall-to-spring retention rates of students of color from 67 percent to 76 percent by FY19.
- Increase fall-to-fall retention rates of low-income students from 52 percent to 57 percent by FY19.

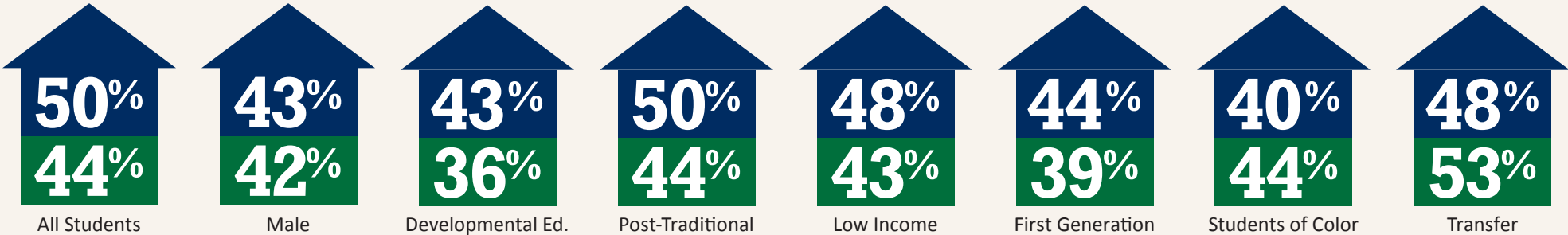
# Fergus Falls Campus

## Fall-to-Spring Data



Blue FY16 | Green FY15

## Fall-to-Fall Data



Blue FY15 | Green FY14

### Greatest opportunities:

The Fergus Falls campus may do well to strengthen fall-to-spring persistence efforts among first-generation students. Closing the gap in performance between all students and first-generation students would mean that an additional 14 students would persist and generate an additional \$210,000 in revenue. Fall-to-fall data indicate the most benefit from intervening with low-income students and students of color. Retention of an additional 12 students would generate an additional \$120,000 in revenue.

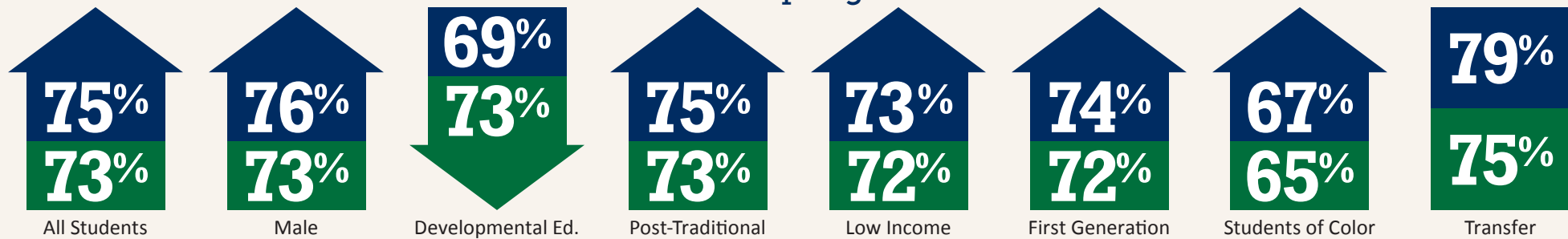
### Recommended goals:

- Increase fall-to-spring retention rates of first-generation students from 73percent to 81 percent by FY19.
- Increase fall-to-fall retention rates of low-income students from 48percent to 50 percent by FY19.
- Increase fall-to-fall retention rates of students of color from 40percent to 50 percent by FY19.



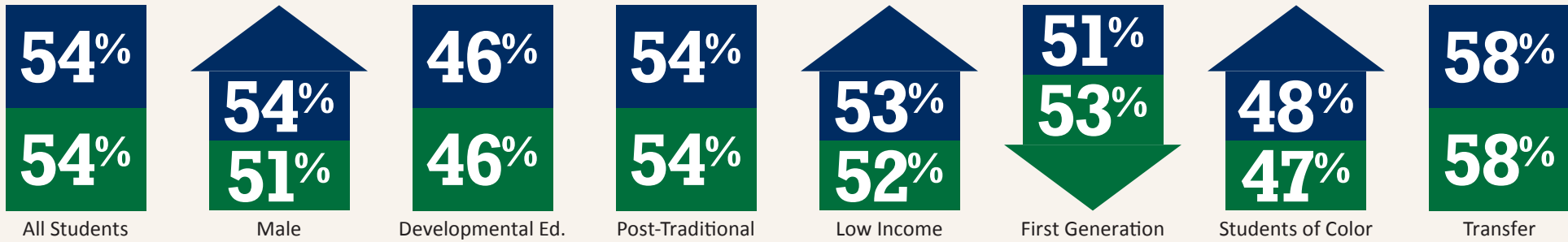
## Moorhead Campus

### Fall-to-Spring Data



Blue FY16 | Green FY15

### Fall-to-Fall Data



Blue FY15 | Green FY14

### Greatest opportunities:

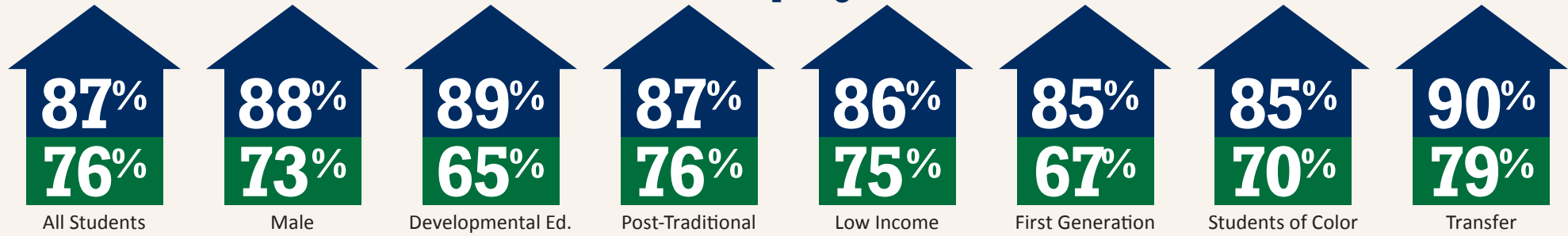
The Moorhead campus teams may want to consider opportunities in closing the fall-to-spring persistence gap between all students and two specific groups – developmental education students and students of color. Closing this gap would mean that 61 more students would persist, resulting in additional revenue of \$915,000. As these two groups prominently display in both the fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall data, no additional groups are cited at this time.

### Recommended goals:

- Increase fall-to-spring retention rates of developmental education students from 69 percent to 75 percent by FY19.
- Increase fall-to-spring retention rates of students of color from 67 percent to 75 percent by FY19.

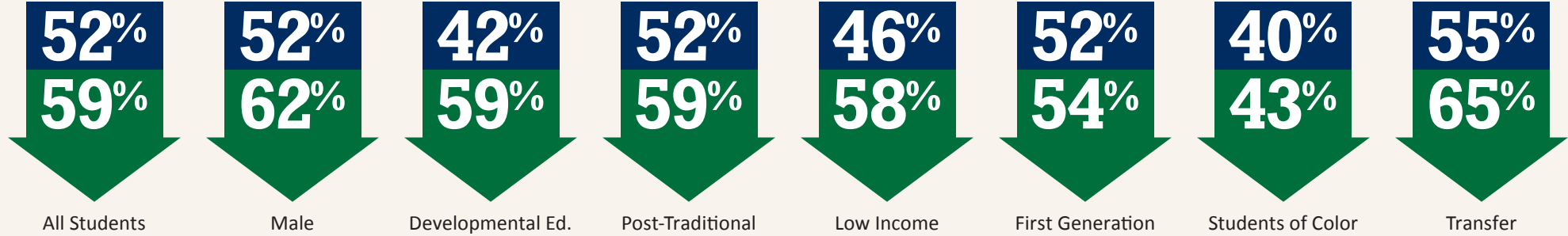
## Wadena Campus

### Fall-to-Spring Data



Blue FY16 | Green FY15

### Fall-to-Fall Data



Blue FY15 | Green FY14

### Greatest opportunities:

The Wadena campus currently posts very high fall-to-spring retention rates, but there still is opportunity to improve further by focusing on first-term developmental education and first-term low-income students. While not reflected in the “all Wadena” student data listed above, there are 22 percentage point gaps with developmental education students and 17 percentage point gaps with low-income students, that, if closed, would mean the success of ten additional students and an additional \$150,000 in revenue. The campus also would do well to consider strategies to improve the fall-to-fall retention rates of low-income students, which would mean success for an additional nine students and another \$90,000 in revenue.

### Recommended goals:

- Increase fall-to-spring retention rates of first-term developmental education students from 61 percent to 83 percent by FY19.
- Increase fall-to-spring retention rates of first-term low-income students from 66 percent to 83 percent by FY19.
- Increase fall-to-fall retention rates of low-income students from 46 percent to 52 percent by FY19.

# Strengthening the Student Experience

The following list of 10 Best Practices has been promoted through the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) publications series, *A Matter of Degrees* (2012, 2013, 2014).



## **Academic goal setting and planning.**

This type of advising creates a clear path to help students reach their educational goals. Defining this path is the work of academic goal setting and planning.



## **Accelerated or fast-track developmental education.**

Accelerated or fast-track programs in developmental education are learning experiences designed to help students move more quickly through developmental coursework in order to move on to college-level work.



## **Alert, intervention and proactive (intrusive) advising.**

Academic alert and intervention is a systematic process whereby instructors alert someone at the college when students in their classes are struggling academically, and that person contacts the students in an effort to get them the assistance they need. Proactive advising mandates advising contacts for students who might not otherwise seek advising.



## **Assessment and placement.**

Assessment and placement includes placement test preparation experiences, academic skills assessment and proper course placement.



## **Class attendance.**

Class attendance is instructors' stating a policy that requires students to attend every scheduled class session for the courses in which they are enrolled that has consequences for not attending.



## **Orientation.**

Orientation may be a single event or an extended structured experience to familiarize students with one or more of the following: college resources, services, policies and organizations; building a network of support; and developing an academic plan and individual goals.



## **Registration before classes begin.**

Registration before classes begin is being registered for all courses prior to the first class day.



## **Review of Data Related to Retention.**

Promote the review of institutional data sets on persistence and completion and enhance institutional capacity to engage in campus-wide data analysis and future planning.



## **Supplemental instruction.**

Supplemental instruction typically involves a regularly scheduled, supplemental class for a portion of students enrolled in a larger course section. Supplemental instruction may be taught by the class instructor or a trained assistant, often a former student who was successful in the class.



## **Tutoring.**

Tutoring is academic assistance that is provided outside of class, either in a one-on-one setting, in a group setting, or via technology.



**Minnesota State**  
Community and Technical College