



## Rethinking College Student Retention

By John M. Braxton, William R. Doyle, Harold V. Hartley III, Amy S. Hirsch, Willis A. Jones, Michael K. McLendon

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Drawing on studies funded by the Lumina Foundation, the nation's largest private foundation focused solely on increasing Americans' success in higher education, the authors revise current theories of college student departure, including Tinto's, making the important distinction between residential and commuter colleges and universities, and thereby taking into account the role of the external environment and the characteristics of social communities in student departure and retention. A unique feature of the authors' approach is that they also consider the role that the various characteristics of different states play in degree completion and first-year persistence.

First-year college student retention and degree completion is a multi-layered, multi-dimensional problem, and the book's recommendations for state- and institutional-level policy and practice will help policy-makers and planners at all levels as well as anyone concerned with institutional retention rates—and helping students reach their maximum potential for success—understand the complexities of the issue and develop policies and initiatives to increase student persistence.

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## **Editorial Review**

From the Back Cover

### **Rethinking College Student Retention**

Student departure can be a challenge for any institution. It demands an understanding of the key forces that influence student persistence and the development of policies and practices that will improve student retention rates. Increasingly, student retention is displacing recruitment of new students as the top priority for higher education institutions.

In *Rethinking College Student Retention*, the authors draw on studies funded by the Lumina Foundation, the nation's largest private foundation focused solely on increasing Americans' success in higher education, to revise current theories of college student departure, including Tinto's. They make the important distinction between residential and commuter colleges and universities, thereby taking into account the role of the external environment and the characteristics of social communities in student departure and retention. A unique feature of the authors' approach is that they also consider the role that the various characteristics of different states play in degree completion and first-year persistence.

First-year college student retention and degree completion is a multilayered, multi-dimensional problem, and the authors offer research-based recommendations for state- and institutional-level policy and practice, which will help policymakers and planners at all levels as well as anyone concerned with institutional retention rates—and helping students reach their maximum potential for success—understand the complexities of the issue and develop policies and initiatives to increase student persistence.

### **About the Author**

**John M. Braxton** is professor of education in the Higher Education Leadership and Policy Program in the Department of Leadership, Policy, and Organizations at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University. He is the editor of the *Journal of College Student Development* and a past president of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE).

**William R. Doyle** is associate professor of higher education and coordinator of the Higher Education Leadership Program at Vanderbilt University.

**Harold V. Hartley III** is senior vice president of the Council of Independent Colleges. His responsibilities includes oversight of CIC's research and assessment and vocation initiatives.

**Amy S. Hirschy** is assistant professor at the University of Louisville with a joint appointment in the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology, Counseling, and College Student Personnel and the Department of Educational Leadership, Foundations, and Human Resource Education.

**Willis A. Jones** is assistant professor of higher education at the University of Kentucky.

**Michael K. McLendon** is professor of higher education policy and leadership and the associate dean at the Simmons School of Education and Human Development at Southern Methodist University.

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