88% of first-year students who agree to attending campus events on campus in the first six weeks of the fall semester have higher retention rate.

There is a chicken or egg question - are students who are more involved more likely to stay, or does involvement appear to make them stay? Regardless, a students connection to engagement with campus seems to matter to retention.

RACHEL DEMOTTS, Politics & GOAL & EPDM

- Speaker series course: 0.25 academic unit
  - Topics in environmental justice
  - Talks given 8x per semester by someone in the community, open to all campus, but students in the class required to attend.
  - Write reflective piece after each talk (reflection, blog post), then final reflection about what they learned
- Projects where students did interviews with campus members about a sustainability issue on campus & then create something - a documentary, a proposal to change a program, etc.

LATOYA BRACKETT, African American Studies & RFL

- Giving students space to talk about something that matters is a huge part of getting students to engage. EX: photographer in residence
- Workshop w/ students to learn skills
- Dinner/lunch w/ speaker.
• once students do something, they are more likely to go again... so can you try to involve folks outside of your discipline.

• create space for students, not just to be talked out by speakers
  EX: Tan Lines (Vivie Nguyen)
  • Panel of women of color, faculty + students, talking together, not being talked at.

• Invest in students to help plan events, create programming (ex: Brave Series has a program asst.)

• Public scholarship class: part of what we do to engage is not only attend an event, but bring others with us to events!
• we also have to be willing to attend events + engage. We model this

PETER WIMBERGER

• Slater Museum
  • run by volunteer docents
  • informal science teaching: 3 times semester
  • do research
  • meet once a week as a team
  • Night at Museum events

• not just a community of biologists, but natural history needs across the disciplines. Find a community of like-minded people, offers a space even for some students who may not connect socially.
• created a community of people who are really invested in something "non-academic"
• I give students extra credit for attending campus talks + doing a write-up. Up to 3 events, 1% per talk. Can shift their grade.

• One thing that is really successful is actually having students plan the events in a substantive way... they pick the topics, they do the logistics.

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DISCUSSION

• One theme seems to be reflection—all these activities invites/requires students to reflect on & connect their learning.

• For students who are more introverted, this also seems to create community.
  - going as a part of class gives students an excuse to go to events! It means, if you’re more introverted.
  - can unite common interest in a context where students aren’t being evaluated.
  - can build rapport w/security — you have a connection or conversation with them, no one else gets to
    • Can make students feel special + seen.
  - can show expertise in front of class mates

• Students need to hear “this is why we’re doing this”! They need to hear it from us, we need to make it visible, but they need to be able/invited
to think about it themselves.