# **Nichols Student Retention Challenge/Opportunity**

We have 134 students categorized as Q5 that began their journey this fall on our campus. In 2023 we had 108, the first year we ever had over 100. This is a significant increase over previous years. This is accompanied by the lowest total of Q1 students in our records, 30, compared to 36 in 2023 versus and an average of 73 Q1 students in the previous three years. Typically, we retain ~85-90% of Q5 students, last year it was 74%.

Most of this group has financial resources and academic skills making them well suited to succeed here. Because this group is more demanding of value in the near term,-next semester, we must offer a better experience to this group. From student life to the classroom, from work on campus to athletics. We will have to tap into our collective good ideas, that are ready for implementation or expansion next semester. Ideas that provide opportunities for student teamwork, a more engaging/challenging curriculum and community and personal development.

The entering class of 2024 is a class we should be able to retain at an 80% level. If we meet this challenge, this fundamental change in our student body, will then have fundamentally changed our academic and financial trajectory upward.

## ****Nichols Mission in a first-year context****

***Within a supportive community, Nichols College transforms today’s students into tomorrow’s leaders through a dynamic, career-focused business and professional education.***

**To meet this mission first-year success efforts, focus on.**

* Engaging students in a culture of learning, exposed to an array of experiential opportunities and a curriculum that builds key skills.
* Provide activities that cultivate teamwork, personal development and community building with peers/mentors.
* Emphasize positive accountable teamwork in the classroom, residence life, campus work, student leadership opportunities and athletics.

## Assessment Committee Best Activity/Event Project

**Describe that is the best Activity/Event/Training for student engagement, team building and/or personal development you have utilized?**

**Describe Event planning, who attended, what the experience was during and any longer term impact that you noticed. We are simply collecting these and then will share the collection with you. We will also look for shared characteristics. Feel free to include what if any support continuing or expanding this might require. Our main focus is on events/activities and trainings that included first year students but welcome any submission. An example is on the next page.**

***Best Activity: Cupcakes with Kris Leduc***

**Need Identified**:

Students not connecting with other students, developing, and or maintaining friendships. Many students, not just those with accommodations, struggle to feel like they belong on campus.

**Event Description**:

Cupcakes with Kris. Monday, November 11th. 1:30 – 3:30 pm

Students participated in decorating and eating cupcakes while engaging in conversation and forming friendships. A movie selected by students played in the background.

I baked cupcakes and prepared frosting in advance. Students were given supplies to color frosting, bag it in decorating bags with frosting tips, and create designs.

**Method:**

Individual conversations took place with 12 students. Most were chosen based on their lack of participation on campus and lack of involvement in student organizations. Students were considered to have similar personality traits and interests. 2 students (1 male and 1 female) were invited partly because of their outgoing nature in hopes they could “get the conversation started” and encourage students to connect.

**Potential problems:**

* Students may not attend.
* Students may attend but not enjoy the event.
* Selecting a time that was convenient for the majority of students to attend.
* Students who were not invited may feel left out.
* Students may attend but not engage in conversation or connect.

**Outcome:**

* Of the 12 students invited, 11 attended.
* Not all students stayed the entire time, 3 students had to leave for class.
* One student struggled with the event because it involved food, but stayed an hour.
* Students laughed, and connected, and all reported to having enjoyed the experience.
* Students agreed they wanted to form a club and continue to get together.
* Contact information was shared by passing a phone list around and then emailed list to all.