

Retention Programs and Initiatives

Moraine Valley Community College

Updated 2009

Retention Efforts

Introduction

Student retention in higher education has become an issue of ever increasing concern. In fact, it has been examined by a number of researchers, to include, Tinto, Pascarella, Terrenzini, Astin, Hurtado, Rendon, Jalomo, and Nora. Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) has built upon the basic premise that social and academic integration are essential to student retention. This theory is described as an interactionalist approach that focuses on the student and the institution as well as the formal and informal interactions that take place. This approach suggests that the success of the student is dependent upon the degree to which they can successfully negotiate each stage and integrate into the various communities of an institution, which include inside and outside of classroom involvement. Along the same lines, Baird (1990) suggests that the lack of persistence among community college students is largely due to their multiple goals and aspiration for attending college, including: 1) an intent to transfer to four-year colleges before completing the program they are enrolled in, 2) enrollment in technical training and after a course or two, leave college, 3) attainment of the level of skill required by their employer or prospective employer, then leaving before completing the course, and 4) interest in self-development and then leave when their interests have been met. (Mohammadi, 1996).

Moraine Valley Community College (MVCC) has developed and initiated a number of programs and activities to address student retention issues and keep students at the college once they arrive, which is in line with our major focus on helping student succeed and reach their goals. In this case, student retention refers to the intentional action on the part of the institution that devotes college resources to increasing student persistence (Braxton, Hirschy and McClendon, 2004). The programs that have been created were designed to have a documented positive impact on student persistence both inside and outside of the classroom. Each effort embodies one or more of Tinto's (1993) three principles: 1) Institutions are

committed to the students they serve. The welfare of the student is primary, 2) Individuals at the institution are committed to the education of all students (not just some), and 3) Individuals at the institution are committed to the development of supportive social and academic communities in which all students are integrated as full members. It is our obligation (through our programs) to provide ways for students to integrate into our campus community. Research literature suggests that some of the factors that affect student persistence include: student adaptation to the college environment, social and academic integration, academic preparedness, motivation, student-faculty relationship, personal and academic obstacles, clear educational goal definition and overall student satisfaction based on student expectations (Astin, 1994; Baird, 1991; Bean and Eaton, 2000; Cabrera, A.F. and others, 1999; Mohammadi, 1996; Tinto, 1975, 1987). The retention efforts that Moraine Valley has undertaken are discussed in Part I-IV of this document.

PART I – MVCC Retention Task Force Group Activities **Past and Present**

Program Title: MVCC Strategic Action Retention Team (2002-2006); MVCC Student Retention Steering Committee (2007 to present)

Contact Person: Joann Wright, Dean Counseling and Advising, wright@morainevalley.edu; Dr. JoAnn Jenkins, Asst. Dean, New Student Retention, JenkinsJ52@morainevalley.edu.

Description: The Retention Team was charged with the responsibility to create a plan to retain the various communities of students at Moraine Valley with an emphasis on exploring effective strategies to increase student success and student retention. The team explored factors that affect student persistence and developed themes that reflect the reasons why students remain at the college as well as reasons for their departure, which are below.

Student Persistence and Attrition Themes

Factors affecting persistence and success:

- Clearly defined goal
- Understand strengths – strong sense of self
- Internally motivated
- Invest time in succeeding
- Family involvement/strong support network
- Class schedule that fits needs

- Knowledge of resources and willingness to access help by using the resources
- Ability to pay the costs
- Work situation that accommodates class schedule
- Adequate/comfortable child care
- Comfortable in the environment
- Positive perception of the college (facilities, services, faculty, class schedule, programs offered, image in the community)
- Interaction with Faculty and Staff
- Positive Learning Experiences, i.e., peer learning, active learning
- Family Support
- Inner Determination/Motivation
- Social and Academic Integration

Reasons for student departure/dropout/attrition/non-returning:

- Communication with faculty
- Course-related difficulties
- Finances
- Life circumstances (housing, changes in employment, family)
- Lack prerequisite
- Transportation changes or difficulties
- Lack a support system (parents, spouse, extended family, faculty, other college employees)
- Health related issues
- Lack of social connections
- Changes in child care services
- Class schedule no longer fits due to life changes
- Hostile Campus Climate – “chilly climate”
- Isolation inside and/or outside of classroom - lack sense of belonging
- Academic Failure
- Unmet Expectations of college life/campus environment
- Medical Emergencies/Care-giving
- Lack of “Ethic of Care” from college faculty and staff members
- Teaching Styles not matched with student learning styles

Another major project for the team was to identify strategies that MVCC faculty and staff employ both inside and outside of the classroom to retain students. The strategies that faculty use inside their classroom as well as strategies used by Student Development staff were collected and compiled by the group and are listed below.

Retention Strategies of MVCC Faculty

- Promote faculty open-door policy to students
- Keep students engaged in class through discussion and inviting feedback
- Ask students questions concerning class projects such as: What did you like? What didn't you like? What advice would you give students next semester? What could I have done to make this better?
- Use Socratic Method; lecture and summation; guest speakers, movies that cover key topics and library visits
- Get feedback from students regarding what they found to be meaningful to

them, what they would like to see changed, added or deleted regarding the class format

- Call to find out what is happening if a student has been missing from class and encourage them to make an appointment to see instructor to discuss some options.
- Create assignments that are fun, but still very applicable to the course objectives.
- Use the student-centered approach that relies on the students' research and present material throughout the semester
- Ask the students to consult with his/her classmate; not the instructor to make up for missed work when the student has been absent.
- Allow students to grade their classmates on issues such as participation and cooperation
- Create folders for each student to place their assignments and sign in each day they are in class
- Create non-book material that students can only receive/understand by attending class.
- Develop relationships early on by: 1) calling on students by their first name, 2) remembering some personal facts they shared during an initial class; i.e. career interest and/or 3) remember a recent transfer situation or new event that can often be shared in class
- Assign students in groups of two's throughout the first half of the semester in order to help students form bonds with each other.
- Require students to record scores on exams and papers throughout the semester
- Periodically share instructor grade sheet with students so that they know exactly what their grade is throughout the semester.
- Call on students by name to encourage them to seek help from the instructor or the Academic Skills Center if they are experiencing difficulty in the course.
- Establish personal, caring relationships with as many students as possible
- Know students' first names as early as possible
- Send in-class reminders of due dates, etc.
- Ensure that the instructor is approachable
- Encourage students to seek instructor help to ask questions, or contest a grade in order to foster a sense of mentorship and collegiality
- Ensure that instructor is tolerant
- Do not show an emotional response, irritation, or bad attitude
- Make sure that students are aware of the lesson's goals, the strategy for the day and the way it relates to their upcoming assignments
- Take student input seriously
- Use examples in class that relate to student's lives...or at least alternate using examples from history, current events, with pop culture, their lives, college, television, etc.
- Do not allow your language to isolate students; every time you use a large vocabulary word, define it briefly.
- Make sure speaking and writing properly are a part of the lesson plan...something they are to develop
- Structure course content in a way that arouses student interest and curiosity

before introducing a concept, theory or strategy. Consider devising a way for students to find the answers.

- Take attendance; give credit where credit is due regarding attendance and participation.
- Provide students with positive reinforcement such as “good job,” “great answer,” and “excellent.”
- Walk around the classroom and make sure that instructor checks each student’s progress when they are working on an assignment
- Recognize students outside of the classroom
- Give students personal journal questions/assignments

Retention Strategies of MVCC Student Development Members

- Mentoring
- Identify by name
- Evaluation after meeting
- Communication between students and staff on daily basis
- Follow up with students (phone calls, e-mail, face-to-face, notes)
- Create environment for open communication
- Go above and beyond duties; outside college
- “Welcome Center” – Everyone is always welcome

Formal:

- Orientation
- COL 101
- Early Warning
- DREAM/DSS mentoring
- Student activities
- Leadership training
- Counseling and Advising
- Student Life center
- Special services for specific populations
- Testing/placement
- Academic Skills Center
- Student referral to resources
- Admissions/Recruitment
- Financial aid
- Transfer articulation/planning

Informal:

- High standards/expectations
- Campus Climate
- Safety and security
- Taking every opportunity to make moments with students teachable moments
- Consistently showing students the next step – another opportunity
- Welcoming, open
- Assisting students with goal setting/planning
- Making information accessible/usable
- Helping every student make connections
- Decisions based on student success and learning
- Saying hello to all you see

- Encourage balanced lifestyles to promote a variance in learning experiences
- Relate topics to current events or popular media
- Expand on cultural information and myths and truths
- Providing access to computers and technology
- Provide lifelong career planning
- Coordinate events for cultural awareness and sensitivity
- Extended testing flexibility
- Assure appropriate class placement for testing
- Provide concise information about transfer

- Encourage course and program completion
- Providing extracurricular activities/events that form connections with department services
- Providing mentoring programs
- Creating a bridge from high school to community college
- Provide resources for independent learning activities for ESL/IEL students
- Extend learning activities outside (primarily ESL) of English skills programs (ESL/IEL)

In 2007, the work of the Retention Team was taken over by a Student Success and Retention Website Steering Committee. Their primary goals have been to:

1. Finalize a college-wide “working definition” of retention that promotes student learning, student development and student success;
2. Communicate to college employees the definition of student success and retention to assist them with promoting student learning and student success at MVCC;
3. Provide college employees with resources related to retention best practices, research and effective strategies;
4. Encourage college employees to share their own student success strategies on a continuing basis.

These goals have implemented through the establishment of a Student Success and Retention Website: www.morainevalley.edu/Retention. To encourage ongoing use and participation of the website, the “Be a Star” campaign was implemented in fall 2008. Each month, two individuals who have submitted success strategies are selected and highlighted through a college-wide email and in the *Valley View*, the MVCC employee monthly newsletter.

PART II –MVCC Vanguard Learning College Initiatives

Program Title: Vanguard Learning College Initiative (2000-2005) Learning College Day and Learning Dialogues (2002 to present)

Contact Person: Dr. Sylvia Jenkins, Dean Academic Development and Learning Resources, Jenkins@morainevalley.edu

Description: Moraine Valley Community College was proud to be among the colleges selected to participate in the Learning College Project sponsored by the League for Innovation in Community College. The culture at Moraine Valley strongly emphasizes the philosophy of being student-centered. As a learning college Moraine Valley is focused on placing learning first; helping every student persist toward achieving their individual goal. To this end, the programs and initiatives that address the five Learning College objectives: Organizational Culture, Under-prepared Students, Technology, Selecting and Developing Staff and Learning Outcomes are described in this section.

Although the Vanguard Learning Initiatives formally ended in 2005, Learning College initiatives, such as our Annual Learning College Day and Learning Dialogues, remain today. These programs, along with the activities sponsored by the Center for Teaching and Learning,

provide employees with professional development opportunities to promote student learning and enhance their role as learning facilitators, regardless of their job title.

Program Title: First Year Experience

Contact Person: Dr. JoAnn Jenkins, Assistant Dean, New Student Retention,
JenkinsJ52@morainevalley.edu

Description: Recognizing that students' experiences during their first year are critical in determining their long-term academic success, the college established a comprehensive, intrusive approach to promoting the success of new students. Departments across campus have collaborated to integrate placement testing, new student orientation, the COL-101 student success course, and development of an individualized Master Academic Plan (MAP) – all of which are required for new full-time students.

Program Title: COL – 101, College: Changes, Challenges and Choices

Description: This is a course that assists students in making the initial transition to college by helping them develop the attitudes, behaviors and skills necessary for college success and by the critical first semester. A multidisciplinary team of faculty and staff developed the course and continues to be involved in recruiting, training and supporting other faculty and administrators to teach the course. Research has been positive; ongoing research has indicated that students who completed the course were more likely to continue their enrollment to the second semester and second year, they completed a higher percentage of the credit hours in which they enrolled, and they earned higher semester and cumulative grade point averages.

Program Title: New Student Orientation

Description: All new full-time students participate in a pre-semester Student Orientation and Registration (SOAR) program taught by academic advisors and counselors. SOAR focuses on preparing students for their first semester and includes informational sessions, small group discussions, review of placement test scores, and individualized assistance with course selection. In 2000, utilization of an individualized, interactive SOAR Website was added to the program, allowing students to access orientation resources online any time, any place, long after the pre-semester orientation.

Starting in 2009, an online orientation program has been offered to meet the needs of all students, including online and part-time students.

Program Title: Mandatory Computerized Placement Testing

Description: Since 1993, the college has required reading, writing, and mathematics placement testing for all students registering for 12 or more credit hours or a composition or mathematics course. Students are required to register for reading, composition and mathematics courses based on the results of their placement tests. Students may be exempt from placements tests based on ACT scores or previous college credit. Beginning in 2000, students were able to complete placement tests in a computerized assessment lab, allowing them to complete testing on a walk-in basis year-round. In 2008, as an outreach effort, MVCC

began offering online web-based placement testing at local district high schools.

Program Title: Career and Educational Planning Lab

Contact Person: Joann Wright, Dean, Counseling and Advising,
Wright@morainevalley.edu

Description: The college dedicated a 13-computer lab to support student use of online career and educational planning resources. The lab is centrally located near the offices of Academic Advising, Counseling and Career Development, and Multicultural Student Affairs. Each computer in the lab provides access to numerous Internet career-based resources, including ACT DISCOVER and College Source. Advisors and counselors utilize the lab to work with students individually or in small groups. The lab is open approximately 50 hours per week and available for individual student use.

Program Title: Online Student Support Services

Contact Person: Joann Wright, Dean, Counseling and Advising,
Wright@morainevalley.edu

Description: With grant support through the Illinois Virtual Campus, the college developed an online student support center to support students enrolled in Internet courses. The support center introduces students to the demands and opportunities of online learning, allows them to complete several assessments to determine if online learning is for them, provides tips for success, previews sample online course syllabi, and provides links to several online and campus support services.

Program Title: Student Life/Student Union

Contact Person: Chet Shaw, Assistant Dean Student Life and Judicial Affairs,
ShawC6@morainevalley.edu

Description: Campus renovations in 2002 and again in 2009-2010 have included the development of student life areas and new Student Union building. The Student Union includes dining (formal, main and café dining areas), a social/cultural lounge with a cyber café with 15 computers, entertainment, and programming activities, a game room, a quiet room, a student newspaper/literary magazine office, reflection rooms, a media room, and office and workroom spaces for student government and student clubs and organizations.

Program Title: Student Life Clubs and Organizations

Contact Person: Chet Shaw, Assistant Dean Student Life and Judicial Affairs,
ShawC6@morainevalley.edu and Demetrius Robinson, Coordinator, Student Life,
RobinsonD63@morainevalley.edu

Description: The Student Life Office at Moraine Valley Community College offers a wide variety of clubs and organizations for students to participate in. Being a member of a club or organization allows students to get involved in college life, and develop leadership and interpersonal skills, as well as meet other students and feel connected to the campus environment. There are approximately 35 student clubs and organizations.

Program Title: Multicultural Student Affairs (MSA)

Contact Person: Adrienne Stewart, Director, Multicultural Student Affairs,
StewartA@morainevalley.edu

Description: Multicultural Student Affairs takes an active role in promoting respect for diversity and exploration and learning from the myriad of cultures that our increasingly diverse student body presents. MSA works to foster a community in which the reality of cultural diversity is recognized and celebrated. The director of MSA and Asst. Dean of Student Life and Judicial Affairs lead a college-wide Celebrating Diversity Committee, which sponsors diversity programs for students, staff, and community members throughout the year, such as: Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month Celebrations, Arab Heritage Month Celebrations, Women's History Month, Taste of Moraine, Italian Heritage Day and Greek Heritage Day. In collaboration with the Student Life Office, MSA actively supports student organizations such as Alliance of African American Students, Alliance of Latin American Students, Arab Student Union, Muslim Student Association, and Indian and Pakistani Student Union. MSA assists student organizations to coordinate educational, cultural, and social activities, as well as offers guidance on issues related to diversity. The various student clubs that are available at the college help to hone students' leadership skills and assist them with feeling welcome and apart of the campus environment.

Program Title: DREAM Mentoring Program

Description: Directing Results through Educational and Academic Mentoring (DREAM) is a faculty and staff/student mentoring program designed to help students reach educational and career goals as well as to provide social and personal direction. The DREAM program helps students to overcome obstacles, share experiences and make new friends. The program gives students a chance to develop relationships with their mentors and other students with similar backgrounds and interests. The interaction provides students with ideas and knowledge about college and enhances their abilities to make wise choices.

Program Title: Peer Mentoring Program

Description: This program consists of student leaders belonging to at least one MVCC student club who are paired off with incoming freshman students to offer assistance. The student leaders connect students with the resources available within the Multicultural Student Affairs Department as well as with other resources on campus in order to ensure student success.

Program Title: Minority Student Transfer Center

Description: Multicultural Student Affairs services are available to all students; however, primary constituents are individuals of color and English language learners. Through student services, MSA supports academic excellence and stimulates positive social and cultural interaction. The Center staff provides personalized follow-up to the minority students and English language learners and by contacting students at the end of each registration period to ensure that students register for the next semester. Students are also provided with information to assist them with successfully transferring to four-year schools.

Program Title: Access and Success in Higher Education (ASHE)

Contact Person: Arlene de la Paz-Kane, Coordinator, ASHE, DeLaPaz-Kane@morainevalley.edu

Description: The Access and Success in Higher Education Program (ASHE) is designed to retain and promote degree completion of students with limited English proficiency who are English language learners. Students are provided with direct student support services to promote integration into the college environment and academic success.

Program Title: Student Success Interventions

Contact Person: Martha Mazeika, Director, Student Success Interventions, mazeikam2@morainevalley.edu

The purpose of the Student Success Interventions program to strengthen the college's infrastructure (e.g. systems, processes) with the goal of enhancing retention and success of "at-risk" students defined as adult students, developmental education students, online students, and part-time students. The program staff works to understand, design, pilot, and evaluate success strategies to assist at-risk students; maintain and enhance well-designed, coordinated, and pro-active student support services; recommend, implement, and evaluate a new student tracking system; and continue to look for opportunities to maximize and contain costs.

With the support of the Title III Steering Committee, the program has been assigned the task of creating an inventory of current systems and processes related to enhancing student retention success, followed by piloting of new practices to help students be successful. The second part of the program is to recommend, implement, and evaluate a new student tracking system with a focus being the college's Early Warning Support System (EWSS) and the Standard of Academic Progress (SOAP) processes.

Program Title: Student Success Workshops

Description: Training workshops are offered by a number of student development departments, including Counseling and Career Development, the Academic Advising Center, the Center for Disability Services, and the Student Life Office to assist students with achieving their educational goals. Some of the workshops that are offered include: Time Management, Test Taking Anxiety and Career Exploration: Using the Discover Software Program, Intercultural Communications, Stress Management and How Not to Lose Your Financial Aid.

Program Title: Early Warning System

Contact Person: Joann Wright, Dean, Counseling and Advising, Wright@morainevalley.edu

Description: This program is designed to intervene with students early in the semester to promote student success within the classroom setting. Faculty provide names of students who are in need of academic and student support services, and contact is made through the Counseling and Career Development Department.

PART III
Center for Teaching and Learning

Program Title: Center for Teaching and Learning

Contact Person: Sylvia Jenkins, Dean Academic Development and Learning Resources, jenkins@morainevalley.edu; Misha Turner, Assistant Dean, Center for Teaching and Learning, turnerm@morainevalley.edu

Description: The center provides learning opportunities related to all aspects of teaching and learning, including designing material for the classroom incorporating the use of technology and implementing effective teaching methods. The center offers various professional development programs for faculty and college staff, ranging from workshops and seminars to credit courses. The center also provides space for faculty and staff to meet and work one-to-one with center staff on various projects.

Program Title: Staff Development Days

Contact Person: Sylvia Jenkins

Description: Staff Development Days are held to provide faculty and staff from across college divisions with opportunities to explore topics on various themes in support of the college's strategic priorities. Learning College Day is a unique part of staff development days that is held yearly, where the college set aside time for both faculty and staff to come together to learn and participate in a broad range of activities and topics. The day is divided into two sessions, the first is a series of three, forty-minute sessions where faculty and staff participate and the second is an afternoon session for faculty members. The afternoon session usually focuses on a current trend or matter of interest in higher education. The day also provides an opportunity for staff and faculty members to present on a topic that highlights their department or personal interest.

Program Title: Technology Training and Staff Development

Contact Person: Lola Oshinowo, oshinowo@morainevalley.edu

Description: MVCC invites staff to take advantage of the many workshops, seminars and certificate programs that are made available each semester. Some of the workshop topics include: Technology Training in the areas of Microsoft Office 2007 Suite, Navigating Office 2007, College Business Software Training (JSchool) and Microsoft One-Note. Other professional development opportunities include topics such as: Emotional Intelligence at Work, Leadership Workshop Series, Business Soft Skills Training, Customized and One-on-One Training.

Program Title: Nontraditional Learning

Contact Person: Tracey Stuckey-Mickell, Director NonTraditional Learning, stuckeyT2@morainevalley.edu

Description: The Non-Traditional Learning Team, which is comprised of the Instructional Designer, Instructional Technologist and User Support Services Specialist, and housed in the

Center for Teaching and Learning, is responsible for supporting technology-integrated teaching and learning in non-traditional instructional modes, such as Internet courses, hybrid models, and telecourses. The team specializes in supporting teaching and learning via the Internet and access of learning resources (materials, activities, or people) via technology. The team also supports faculty as they teach in other nontraditional formats that may not involve technology, such as FastTrack (5- or 8-week courses), weekend classes, or independent study courses. Additionally, the team promotes best practices in teaching and learning in both traditional and non-traditional delivery formats, whether technology-enhanced or not. We assist with classroom assessment techniques, student engagement strategies, and other instructional topics related to teaching excellence in all delivery modes. The team supports the work of Moraine Valley faculty through online, hybrid, and on-ground training workshops, informational resources, phone/e-mail consultations, face-to-face appointments, walk-in assistance in our Creative Technology Lab.

Program Title: Faculty Development Committee

Contact Person: Kristine Christensen, Director of Faculty Development,
christensen@morainevalley.edu

Description: The Faculty Development Committee provides professional training and development opportunities to faculty in order to enhance their teaching techniques and retool their skill sets. As part of the professional development opportunities that faculty are provided, two days are set aside in the fall and spring of each academic year for faculty to interact with one another and share the teaching methods that they use in their classroom with one another. Faculty members are also introduced to new innovative and teaching methods through professional growth workshops and seminars both on and off campus.

Program Title: The Moraine Valley Learning Academy

Contact Person: Joe Chaloka, chaloka@morainevalley.edu

Description: The purpose of the Moraine Valley Learning Academy (MVLA) is to enhance knowledge and understanding of the teaching and learning process, discover and introduce the Moraine Valley faculty to best practices, and promote innovation and experimentation aimed at increasing student success.

Part IV – Student Development Division

Program Title: Student Development Process Improvement and Student Milestone Approach

Contact Person: Dr. Nancy Bentley, Vice President of Student Development,
Bentley@morainevalley.edu; and Yolanda Isaacs, Dean of Student Services;
Isaacysy@morainevalley.edu

Description: The Student Development leadership has developed a model entitled, *The*

Milestone Approach to Student Transition and Success to promote student learning, student development and student success and to continuously assess and improve student services. The Milestone Approach, based on Learning College principles and student development theory and best practices, emphasizes the needs of individual learners at every milestone phase that they transition through here at the college. The approach has been defined in seven student milestone phases: 1) prospective students; 2) applicants; 3) first semester registrants; 4) first year students; 5) continuing students; 6) graduates; and 7) lifelong learners. Both student learning outcomes and process outcomes are identified for each of the seven phases to help the students achieve success. The student milestone goals and outcomes were revised in 2008 to relate to the current student profile and best practices. Each department within the division has identified student milestone goals and outcomes aligned with their specific departmental mission and core functions, which provide focus and direction for their services and programs and subsequent annual assessment and evaluation plans.

Program Title: Professional Development/Student Development Learning Dialogue Workshops

Contact Person: Dr. Nancy Bentley, Vice President of Student Development,
Bentley@morainevalley.edu

Description: Considering that professional development opportunities have been used throughout the college to enhance faculty and staff members' knowledge and skills, *Student Development Learning Dialogues* are designed on an annual basis. Six major themes were identified for the initial series and are broadly used today. They included: 1) Understanding our Students; 2) Understanding our Student Development Role; 3) Using Technology Effectively; 4) Student Learning, Student Development and Student Success; 5) Assessment and Continuous Improvement and 6) Valuing and Celebrating Diversity. Learning Dialogue participants evaluate each session that they attend and their feedback regarding their training needs is used in planning future workshop sessions. Professional development goals for the Learning Dialogue workshops have been developed and are based upon the six themes, the MVCC President's Eight Expectations, the Student Development Division Mission and MVCC Strategic Planning Priorities.

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