IBM Success Stories

By Tim Nelson and Seth Peterson
Initial Problems at South Carolina State University

- Difficulty retaining students
- Some had the attitude that some students would always fail
- "Like all universities in the U.S., we want to attract and retain students in a highly competitive playing field... We also realized that the higher our student retention rates, the less we would need to spend on recruitment, which is a much more difficult and expensive task."
First Year Experience

- Based on data that many students were first of their families to go to college
- It was designed to promote student engagement
- Improve performance
- Only space for 50% of students.
SCSU used IBM Watson Analytics to explore data gathered from surveys. The data showed that the First Year Experience improved student performance. Students' intentions make a big difference, e.g. students who "settled" for just passing were more likely to drop out or fail. Intervention at the right time could prevent this.
Course of action after Watson findings

- Data from Watson Analytics demonstrated financial factors which led to students leaving the University, and caused the creation of a new position, Coordinator of Student Financial Literacy and Advising.
- Cognitive analytics shows effects of changes almost immediately, allowing effective modification of programs.
- The ability to work with Watson Analytics greatly enriches our students' University experiences.
SELECT questions FROM students