A weakened economy and projected inability to meet future workforce needs have brought attention to higher education institutions across the nation. High levels of student attrition have led to increasing demands to enhance student achievement and boost the number of individuals with a post-secondary credential. Louisiana’s response to this demand was the Granting Resources and Autonomy for Diplomas (GRAD) Act.

In 2010, lawmakers enacted legislation granting institutions the autonomy to raise tuition (among other incentives) in exchange for entering into 6-year performance agreements designed to increase student success, articulation and transfer, workforce and economic development, and accountability and efficiency. The law requires institutions to report their progress annually to the Louisiana Board of Regents. In 2011, the law was amended to make the attainment of targeted and tracked goals in the student success measure a requirement for a passing score. The first four items in Element a. of the
student success measures performance objective are: (a) first to second year retention, (b) first to third year retention, (c) fall to spring retention, and (d) same institution graduation rate.

This dissertation used mixed methods, including descriptive and statistical analyses of the annual reports submitted by each institution, to determine the relationship between student retention strategies and student success measures achieved by the participating institutions. Quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics were used to identify commonalities in student outcomes. Content analysis was used to identify commonalities in retention strategies used. The commonalities in strategies employed and outcomes experienced were further analyzed to determine the relationship with research based retention strategies and results experienced by the participating institutions included in this study.