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Chapter 5

STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC PROBATION

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Academic probation affects all members of the learning community. The institutional stakeholders, advisors, and students form a partnership to support the student's success by focusing on his or her efforts to change the probationary status. Stakeholders define an institutional response and commitment to the probationary population while the academic advisor provides the critical link between the partners. In this chapter, Gehrke and Wong explore academic probation, detail possible responses (by the student, the advisor, and the institution), and provide information regarding the implications of these responses.

Introduction

The academic advising process has been identified as the crucial link between students on probation and the institution (Cook, 2001; Habley, 1981; Muskat, 1979). The literature illustrates the positive effect of academic advisors on the collegiate success and retention of students on academic probation (Backhus, 1989; Glennen, Farren, & Vowell, 1996; Habley, 1981; Janasiewicz, 1987; Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001; Molina & Abelman, 2000; Ramirez & Evans, 1988). A student with an institutional contact, such as through an academic advisor, feels more integrated and connected with the institution when compared to those students without such relationships (Earl, 1987; Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Spanier, 2004). Tinto's (1975) foundational retention model shows that academic integration is a primary factor in preventing student attrition. Crockett (1985) concurred by stating that the academic advisement process is the cornerstone of student retention at institutions of higher education. The academic advisors who work with students on probation need to be aware of these beneficial connections and outcomes as well as understand the contributions of the institution, student, and advisor that create such positive relationships and results.

Academic Probation

As they pursue their undergraduate degrees, students encounter many challenges and struggles. Not only are the young adult years a time of personal development and growth, they are also a time of academic advancement and learning. Almost every student will experience occasional academic disappointment, and the frequency and severity of this academic difficulty can determine the student's probable success toward graduation.

Typically, students with significant academic difficulties are placed on academic probation. Academic probation is the result of a student's cumulative GPA falling below a set standard, usually 2.0 on a 4.0 scale. Once placed on academic probation, the student experiences a decreased chance of obtaining a degree (Glennen et al., 1996). How the student reacts and handles the probationary status is a major determinant in her or his future collegiate success (Kelley, 1996). Of course, the student's reaction is often closely connected with the causes of the poor academic performance; thus, each student on probation must be treated individually. In addition, the academic advisor must address the student's complete situation (Gehrke, 2006) and recognize that no single strategy will help all students in their academic pursuits.

At most higher education institutions, academic probation is an emphatic warning that the quality of the student's academic work has not met the institution's minimum standards and that the quality must improve during the probationary period for the student to continue studying at the institution (Higgins, 2003). Kelley (1996) found that academic probation is usually necessitated by a student's pattern of poor performance in a wide variety of classes rather than difficulty in a single course. Gehrke (2006) discovered that poor academic performance

is typically a result of multiple issues (see also Earl, 1988; Siena College, 2003) that are often interrelated and that have collectively contributed to the probationary standing.

When a student's cumulative GPA falls below the criteria, the student on academic probation is notified of the probationary academic standing and typically given conditions that she or he must meet during this specified probationary time. The key condition is improvement of the GPA. Tools, such as a contract or agreement, may be utilized to help the student take the necessary steps to succeed and avoid dismissal. Students understand academic probation to be a bittersweet wake-up call that allows them another chance at the institution (Gehrke, 2006).

Academic Dismissal

The academic dismissal policy differs by institution. A typical policy states that students who are placed on academic probation and do not improve their academic standing in the allowed timeframe will be dismissed from the institution. When the student is dismissed for the first time, the dismissal period may last for one semester (fall or spring). If the student is being dismissed for a second time, the dismissal period may be much longer, such as 3 full years. During the last semester of dismissal, the student may apply for re-enrollment for the subsequent semester. Depending on the institution's policy, the student may further his or her academic progress while on academic dismissal by enrolling in courses at different institutions or via correspondence at the home institution; however, to earn credit toward readmission the student must have completed those classes with a minimum GPA as set by the institution, such as earning a C or better. Failing grades obtained while attending other institutions can negatively affect the student's readmittance chances.

When working with students facing academic dismissal, advisors must be sure that advisees are fully aware of the institution's policies and procedures regarding readmittance and transferring courses. They should also encourage students to take the necessary steps during the dismissal semester(s) to resolve any issues that contributed to the poor academic performance. If needed, the advisor may provide guidance and resource suggestions to help the student with identifying the contributing factors.

The Partnership: The Institution and Advisor as Resources

The Institution

The response to students experiencing academic difficulties is undertaken by partners: the institutional stakeholders, advisors and staff within the advising unit, and the student. The institution typically makes available various college resources to help students, especially those on academic probation, to succeed academically. Most institutions provide academic learning centers, counseling and mental-health support personnel, financial aid assistance, and career exploration offices. These resources, along with institutional policies and a culture that promotes student success and retention, contribute to the academic recovery and achievement of students on probation.

The response to students experiencing academic difficulties is undertaken by partners: the institutional stakeholders, advisors and staff within the advising unit, and the student.

The Advisor

The primary institutional resource available to help students on academic probation is the academic advisor. Academic advisors can assist students in choosing appropriate classes to complete the degree requirements, navigating the institution and its policies and procedures, and locating necessary resources and assistance as needed as part of the effort to ensure that students enjoy a successful overall collegiate experience. Advisors are available to help students explore goals in relation to academic talents and options. In addition, advisors relay the lessons learned by previous undergraduates to help other students avoid the problems that their predecessors have faced. Their suggestions may keep a student from becoming overwhelmed and misguided.

Although advisors are accessible to all students, many do not utilize their advisor's knowledge and experience until a time of crisis, such as being placed on academic probation. Advisors must understand this dynamic and take full advantage of the initial appointments with students to develop the strong trusting relationships that culminate through frequent, regular contacts.

The Partnership: The Student in Academic Difficulty

By talking with a student on academic probation, an advisor may discover an entire host of reasons to explain the individual's academic struggle. Inexperience with navigating college and the lack of preparedness for college procedures and curriculum are problematic as are poor study skills, procrastina-

tion, and inattention to available campus resources. Students face the challenge of balancing life and school, and they find that college is very different than high school. In addition, an undergraduate's family and financial responsibilities change as does her or his personal responses to those potential stresses. In part because of the intensity of the collegiate instructional pace, when these or other interfering factors escalate and divert the student's attention to nonacademic priorities, the student is seldom able to regain the lost time and work necessary to catch up and succeed (Ramirez & Evans, 1988). Regardless of the specific causes or circumstances, the multiple struggles may be difficult to overcome and a student slides into academic probation.

Understanding the Student in Academic Jeopardy

Because they may be the first people to identify a person in academic jeopardy, academic advisors must realize that the population of students on probation is not comprised of any single type of student. Often students on probation are referred to as *at-risk* students; however the terminology *at-risk* can be problematic when used as a descriptor of that group. It is correct that the student on academic probation has a greater probability of attrition, (i.e., at risk of not graduating). However, the term *at-risk* is also used to reference other student populations that are not necessarily in academic jeopardy. Specific combinations of characteristics constitute a student profile that may describe an *at-risk student*: ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic background; parental education level; and performance in high school. For example, a student who graduates from a high school where the alumni typically do not matriculate into college may be categorized as at risk. Similarly, a first-generation college student may also be termed at risk because of his or her limited exposure to the culture and process of postsecondary education. The first-generation student may also have limited support from family members who have little or no knowledge or experience regarding higher education. These examples of student situations may lead students to be termed at risk because they are entering the academy with a limited support or knowledge base; however, they are not necessarily struggling academically.

Students on academic probation may be labeled at risk because their low GPA places them in jeopardy of leaving the institution before graduating.

Other characteristics such as race, culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, parental education level, and high school performance are not necessarily the predictors of a student falling into probationary status. Thus, academic advisors working with students on probation must identify the unique contributing factors for each individual's academic difficulty.

The Myth of the Self-reliant Student

Those who work with undergraduates must also be aware that many students who find themselves on academic probation are not necessarily engaged with the partners interested in their success. Many students are not self-reliant and do not identify the need for assistance until it is too late. This lack of student independence or self-reliance is often not realized by academic advisors or educators who believe that a student will follow through with referrals and recommendations.

When a student is struggling, academic advisors commonly provide her or him with a list of specific services, such as the writing center and tutoring facility, which may help with the student's academic success; however, to obtain the benefit of these resources, as well as any advice or strategy suggestion, the student must independently follow through with the recommendation (Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001). The student's action is voluntary and requires initiative (Heerman & Maleki, 1994) and a certain level of self-sufficiency. When he or she lacks self-reliance, the student may not take advantage of the recommended referrals and strategies, which is likely a significant contributor to the student's academic probation status and struggle.

Advisors who fall into the myth that struggling students can and will come for help and then follow the guidance offered to them will not be able to help struggling students effectively. Advisors and others undertaking institutional retention efforts must acknowledge the myth of self-reliance and be proactive in seeking out the students who will not come forth on their own for help (Earl, 1988; Himmelstein, 1992).

Student Characteristics Related to Academic Difficulties

Though no specific type of student is destined to have academic difficulties and end up on academic probation, some identifiable conditions can significantly impact a student's academic performance. A

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past compilation of research identified the three most frequently cited reasons for academic probation: a difficulty balancing class and work, insufficient financial aid, and inadequate student-faculty contact (Earl, 1988). Unfortunately, numerous other issues also contribute to a student falling into probationary status. For example, the student is

- not prepared for college-level academics.
- ready for only a minimal load of college-level classes (3 or 4 classes), not a full 12- to 15-credit hour load.
- ready for the classes but desperately needs better time-management and study skills.
- majoring in a subject that is not enjoyable or the best fit (possibly because of parental pressure).
- dealing with serious family or other nonacademic issues that interfere with studying.
- the only person holding the household or extended family together.
- working 30 or more hours a week to pay for school and living expenses while attending college full-time.
- struggling with emotional or psychological issues that interfere with academic performance and focus.
- partying too much.
- unmotivated.
- making common undergraduate errors in judgment. (Sienna College, 2003)

Underprepared students. Undergraduates are expected to possess various academic and developmental skills (e.g., prioritizing deadlines, evaluating choices, and accepting consequences) which allow them to negotiate the myriad of responsibilities and demands of college life. The academic skills were likely acquired through primary and secondary education, and the developmental skills may have materialized through multiple experiences and connections, such as those encountered at home, family, church, school, and work. Unfortunately for some students, their skill sets are not as advanced as those of their peers, which causes them to struggle while in college. Underprepared students may understand and acknowledge their lacking skills and labor to overcome the challenges. However, others may not understand or accept the reason for the struggles and consequently end up on academic probation.

Many variables determine whether the underprepared student will identify and compensate for skill deficits and resulting challenges. Successful students seek out appropriate resources and assis-

tance to help them overcome and gain the needed skills. They follow through with the referrals and strategies that are offered to them, and they understand and accept that they must do more than some other students to get closer to the preparation level of their peers.

Students who do not recognize or accept the reason for performing poorly in classes do not seek out available supports. Instead, an unsuccessful underprepared student may be in denial or may blame a poor background or professors for not providing adequate instruction. The individual may simply choose not to exert the extra effort required for success. Regardless of the reason, the underprepared student is at a severe disadvantage with a greater likelihood of falling into academic probation than are her or his peers.

Overextended students. Students who have multiple nonacademic responsibilities may also find themselves subject to academic probation. Work, family, children, church, and extracurricular organizations and activities are all possible contributors to an overextended student's difficult situation. Time management and prioritization can be difficult skills for any college student to master. Compounded with the other aspects of growth and development, distractions can easily lead students to become overextended.

Similar to underprepared peers who must face their deficits, overextended students must acknowledge and accept that multiple commitments are contributing to academic challenges. Once the advisee recognizes the problem, an academic advisor, personal counselor, or friend can help the student to prioritize and balance responsibilities while also creating an action plan with a focus on academics. In addition, overextended students may need to seek out supplementary resources to help eliminate some of their responsibilities. For example, a student who is working an excessive number of hours each week could contact the financial aid office to learn about assistance options. Students in extracurricular activities may need to contact the organizational officers and ask that tasks and responsibilities be delegated to other students. Finally, a mother of small children may contact area churches and day-care centers to explore economical child-care options. If the resources do not provide a viable option to responsibly alleviate some of the student's present commitments, the academic advisor may need to discuss other options, such as a course-load reduction.

The overextended student who is academically successful will stay dedicated to the action plan while prioritizing and balancing critical tasks and eliminating unnecessary activities. However, the

struggling student will not keep focused on academics nor prioritize other commitments. Academic advisors can assist in helping the overextended student balance and prioritize competing factors.

Students with nonacademic issues. Students do not attend college in a vacuum; hence, undergraduates are not only learning to adjust and transition to a new way of life with more freedom and less structure than before, they must also learn to manage, balance, and cope with all aspects of life inside and outside of the academy's walls. While researching the causes of academic probation, Gehrke (2006) identified four primary nonacademic issues as common contributors to a student's academic probation status: mental health challenges, family problems, financial struggles, and work demands. She found that in many cases the nonacademic issues intertwined and blurred as the students struggled with more than one issue at a time.

Numerous factors determine whether the nonacademic issues will cause the student to end up on academic probation. The severity or longevity of the nonacademic issues, the student's maturity and ability to cope and rebound, the support and resources that the student utilizes, and any additional situations that the student is experiencing (the big picture of the student's world) all impact the student's personal and academic success. Family, friends, roommates, professors, and advisors are all potential support mechanisms for students dealing with difficult nonacademic issues. However, the student must be willing and able to share personal information associated with the situation to acquire support. Embarrassment, shame, and apathy can keep the student from seeking help and can result in continued personal pain and struggles as well as academic probation.

First-year, first-generation, and transfer students. Any student may experience issues that challenge his or her academic focus and performance; however, first-year, first-generation, and transfer students may be particularly susceptible to being on academic probation. First-year and first-generation students are not only learning how to negotiate college and their new independence, but along with transfer students, they are also transitioning to a new and different environment where they must balance life and college simultaneously and independently.

First-year and first-generation students are learning about the college processes and policies as well as how to manage their life and all that can be thrown their way as young adults. For example, while a student is in college a family member may pass away or a relationship end, but the student may not know to request a postponement for tests or assignments during these difficult times. First-generation students may have little or no family with a higher education background; thus, they have greater learning and adapting curves than peers who can rely on knowledgeable family members for support and experienced-based knowledge.

Transfer students arrive at their new campus already possessing personal college experiences. However, one institution of higher education can be significantly different from another, and unsuspecting transfer students (particularly those who come to a more academically rigorous institution than the previous school) can often be overly confident because of previous college successes elsewhere. In addition to not recognizing the new challenges before them, transfer students may believe that the policies and procedures of all institutions of higher education are the same. This inaccurate perception can create unintentional negative situations for the student. Finally, without close connections, the transfer student may feel isolated at the new institution. Social integration is important for a student's collegiate success and ultimately affects the student's retention (Tinto, 1975).

Student scholars. As previously illustrated, no single type of student is on academic probation. Even those with exceptional academic backgrounds, such as students with high SAT or IQ test scores, as well as those with strong study skills can find themselves on probation if their GPA falls below the designated level. As Garnett (1990) pointed out, even the brightest students can fail. Despite their great ability, intelligent students may be struggling with any number of aforementioned issues, growing bored with academics, or rebelling against societal or family expectations. They may experience incongruence (lack of fit) with the institution (Tinto, 1987) because it may not offer the challenges or appeal that the student wants or needs. Exploring options that include academic majors and career goals is important in helping these students on

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probation (Cruise, 2002) as is acknowledging the student's unique development, intellectual abilities, and desires.

Students making judgment mistakes. While many circumstances can contribute to academic difficulties, sometimes the problems are due to basic errors on the part of the individual student. Students err from a lack of understanding of the institution's policies and procedures or the failure to grasp the best ways to handle difficult situations. Lack of maturity, experience, and information also lead students to make errors. Russell (1981, p. 56–57) outlined some common mistakes in judgment that students make:

- enrolling in too many classes, especially while in academic danger;
- not repeating courses in which D or F grades were earned;
- neglecting to drop a troublesome course prior to the deadline;
- failing to resolve incomplete grades before the cut-off date;
- taking advanced courses when not yet prepared;
- taking courses based on the advice of friends;
- taking all early morning courses when they are not “morning people”;
- meeting with academic or personal helpers too late.

Because mistakes in judgments are typically committed by uninformed students, nearly all the resulting outcomes could have been avoided or rectified if the student had consulted with an academic advisor. Thus, often students who delay meeting with their academic advisor can find themselves in unfortunate situations such as academic probation.

Consequences of Academic Probation

A student placed on academic probation suffers many negative consequences. These consequences directly impact the student and are related to personal opportunities, finances, self-esteem, and degree attainment. Students on probation who receive financial aid, scholarships, or funding through special programs (such as ROTC) or who play sports are in danger of losing eligibility to receive funding or participate in competitions. Federal and state financial aid is in jeopardy when a student is on academic probation as are most scholarships and other funding sources.

Students who perform below minimum academic standards may need to repeat classes at additional expense and time for them and the institution. When she or he must repeat sequential classes, semesters

may be added to the student's degree pursuit. In addition, some students on probation cannot avail themselves of the semesters needed for educational exploration because of the financial and time-related costs of the additional terms needed to address their probationary status.

Those who leave the institution before graduating continue to face consequences. Without an undergraduate degree, the student does not have the benefits that the degree provides. For example, a student may have school loans to repay, but not have the extra earning power that an undergraduate degree can offer.

Other consequences of academic probation are related to the student as a person, a human being (Gehrke, 2006). In addition to coping with a poor academic standing, possible financial and time losses, and missed opportunities, students on academic probation struggle with a sense of poor self-worth. They often feel isolated, as if they are the only ones dealing with the academic probationary status. They have lowered self-confidence and self-esteem as they struggle with the embarrassment, disappointment, and pressure prompted by their academic probation status. They may also feel a loss of integrity and personal pride, which provokes additional stress. Students on probation often believe that their academic status prompts a change in other people's perceptions and reactions toward them. They believe they experience greater levels of judgment from peers, faculty members, staff, and family members. These negative feelings and perceptions greatly impact the student's ability to rebound from academic probation. Students can get caught in a cycle regarding their poor performance, and their ability to recover determines whether their situation will or will not improve (Gehrke, 2006).

Approaches to Intervention

How can academic advisors who understand the complexities of students on academic probation respond to their needs? What are possible consequences and results of these responses?

Responses can be couched in theoretical, philosophical, and practical terms. If they are undertaken at the unit and institutional levels, a commitment beyond the individual academic advisor's efforts will be required. An institution's intervention policies, if any, that relate to students on academic probation influence the partnership between the student and advisor. These defined institutional policies can also shape the actions and plans for academic success and also influence the mission of the various departments, offices, and per-

sonnel. Institutional programs can also create the opportunities for student responses. The effectiveness of individual, unit, and institutional efforts will be affected by the degree to which the student on probation engages in a partnership with the advisor; without student engagement, the feasibility of permanent student success is significantly lowered (Tinto, 1975).

Theoretical Considerations

The continuum: Prescriptive and developmental advising styles. Much has been written regarding two particular advising approaches: prescriptive and developmental (Broadbridge, 1996; Crockett, 1985; Crookston, 1972; Frost, 1993; Garnett, 1990; Gordon, 1992; Gordon & Habley, 2000; O'Banion, 1972). Both approaches have student success as an ultimate goal, but practitioners of each differ in presentation and style of the means toward the goal. Much like other professional relationships (e.g., doctor-patient, teacher-student, lawyer-client), an effective advising partnership requires a balance of trust, responsibility, and assessment on the part of all participants. This balance can fluctuate and be influenced by the current perceptions, needs, and abilities of the partners. An advising relationship is defined by the roles taken by both partners in promoting and developing the self-identity as well as the critical-thinking and decision-making skills of the student on academic probation.

No matter which stylistic label is used to describe the dominate method, both approaches are used in any advising partnership. The levels of prescriptive and developmental qualities in the advising blend will vary by the situation and the student's response. For example, an advisor's work with an incoming student who is quickly approaching a registration deadline might be more prescriptive than that with a first-semester junior who is requesting information about study abroad programs. A knowledgeable advisor functions as an experienced educator—assessing the student's current abilities, devising means to develop the student's potential, and factoring in elements of time and resources.

At one end of the continuum is the prescriptive advising approach. This style of advising can be described as

- quick,
- expedient,
- focused on the matter at hand, and
- structured.

It is based on an advisor revealing, or prescribing,

to a student the basic, specific information that is requested. While this may be the most expedient method of information dissemination, it neither encourages opportunities for student development nor promotes the advising partnership as a more personalized relationship. For students on academic probation, the benefits of prescriptive advising can be limited by its potential to be

- standardized (or one-size-fits-all),
- impersonal (or not focused on the student's individual situation), and
- hierarchical (creating a relationship in which the advisor is authoritarian).

In a prescriptive advising model, the students have fewer opportunities to determine for themselves the causes, effects, and responsibilities of their probationary status.

Developmental advising was defined in O'Banion's (1972) landmark article, which focused on the advising process as a teaching activity. Much like a teacher presenting a complex subject matter, the advisor using the developmental approach is deliberately mindful of using the advising encounter to guide the student through appropriate and sequential stages:

1. defining life goals,
2. understanding vocational goals,
3. determining program choices,
4. selecting appropriate courses, and
5. determining scheduling options.

In this model, students on academic probation maximize their learning by understanding their life and vocational goals before decisions are made regarding programs, courses, and scheduling. Without this foundational exploration, they run the risk of overlooking fundamental reasons for their difficulties, and they are susceptible to addressing the symptoms of their problems without dealing with the causes. With the awareness of O'Banion's research, academic advisors are able to guide students on academic probation into understanding the means for effecting permanent changes.

Developmental advising has real implications for both the student and the advisor. For developmental advising to be successful, the student should have adequate motivation and experience to assume responsibility for and ownership of success. The urgency of any current problems and probationary issues impacts these characteristics of responsibility. A student may have limited time to remove a pro-

bationary status but need more time to develop appropriate skills to effect permanent academic success.

For the advisor, developmental advising requires being engaged with the student on academic probation and having a delivery style that focuses on the student more than on either the information to be conveyed or the efficiency of conveying that information. An engaged advisor acknowledges that a successful advising partnership is determined by the student's responses and not exclusively on how well the advisor provides information.

O'Banion's (1972) model is linear. However, Burton and Wellington (1998) presented the premise that although some require more attention at any given time, all of O'Banion's stages should be considered concurrently in a typical advising session. In the Burton and Wellington version, the long-term stages (the definition of life and vocational goals) are interwoven with the intermediate and short-term ones (program, course, and scheduling options). Within this model, the student's decisions are impacted by a revisit to the first two stages. A constant awareness of the student's life and vocational goals will allow opportunity to refine decisions about programs, courses, and schedules. By referencing all of O'Banion's stages, the advisor allows for the decisions at hand to reflect the student's current goals and values.

Beyond the continuum: Intrusive advising. As stakeholders at postsecondary institutions and academic advisors continue to refine support strategies and programs for students on academic probation, developmental advising can be expanded into a model of intrusive advising. If the latter advising format is chosen, the institution, the unit, and the advisor focus on actions that emphasize student learning, integrate cocurricular with academic efforts, and include contracts, mandatory meetings, workshops, and self-assessment efforts (Glennen, Farren, Vowell, & Black, 1989). Intrusive advising requires the advisor to initiate the relationship constantly and keep it active, even to the point of intrusion. Designed to lead to maximum student success, this advising style creates a mandatory relationship between the student on academic probation and the academic advisor.

Intrusive practices are very effective on students in academic jeopardy and on campuses that foster a more traditional collegiate community. Advisors and institutions may conclude that students in academic jeopardy would benefit from implementation of intrusive programs and that the accepted teacher-student, mentor-intern pairings lend themselves easily to it.

While some may presume that intrusive practices would be offensive to students and their sense of self

and independence, research does not support the conjecture (Jeschke, Johnson, & Williams, 2001; Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001). This research illustrates that students have reported a great deal of satisfaction and connection when participating in obligatory, intrusive, advising activities. In addition, other research delineates the different impacts that various levels of intrusiveness have on the students on academic probation. For example, Molina and Abelman (2000) discovered that the students with whom advisors had used strong intrusive actions had higher GPA gains than those advisees for whom they had provided partial or no intrusive advising techniques. In addition, those students who participated in consistent intrusive activities were able to identify controllable factors (i.e., elements that the student can change, such as the amount of weekly work hours or the major chosen) that contributed to their academic progress.

Advising Approach and Assessment

No matter what style of advising or what balance of prescriptive, developmental, and intrusive approaches is used, the success of an advising program is based on a respectful and trusting partnership that develops the student's autonomy. In addition, the student, the advisor, and the institution have roles and responsibilities in the process. Students must eschew being a passive participant and embrace the critical role of one engaged in the achievement of goals, such as satisfactory academic status, graduation, and so forth. Students can help themselves by identifying their individual learning styles, understanding motivation triggers, and developing skills to assess the factors within their control that promote academic success. At the point in which they take responsibility, students become true partners with advisors who can identify strategies and appropriate campus resources that can be utilized to meet the student's needs.

For the advisor, key attributes include the flexibility to respond effectively to each student's needs and the skill to match the institution's resources to these needs. Effective advisors

- respect and assess the students' needs,
- present information in formats that are compatible with students' learning styles,
- provide resources for exploration and decision making, and
- promote student responsibility.

Advisors can play a key role in helping students develop discernment, self-assessment, and validation.

In addition, advisors can provide affirmation of the student as he or she builds a sense of academic achievement, which can be especially beneficial to students who have not yet experienced a great deal of academic success in higher education.

As a third partner, an institution joins with the advisor and the student on academic probation in creating an environment that promotes the student's success. Because success is best accomplished with a campus-wide effort for the student, the institution is instrumental in creating a community in which all components of the academy support the struggling student. A commitment of resources, such as personnel, physical space, and financial support of programs, and a development of probationary policies, such as those that define the entering, experiencing, and exiting of academic probation, are needed to support students who are developing their understanding of the actions that lead to academic success.

To identify the effectiveness of the resources that are intended to help students on probation succeed, institutions must develop assessment policies. Assessment can range from a fiscal balance sheet in which the costs of supportive resources are measured against the level of retention of students on probation to an evaluation of individually changed student behaviors, such as appropriate motivation and demonstrated academic skills. Graduation rates are another measure commonly used in assessment. However, graduation rates may not be the best indicator of student success at all institutions because some schools are designed to generate successful students who will matriculate and graduate from other institutions. For example, the Hamilton and Middletown campuses of Miami University of Ohio are 2-year, public institutions with open enrollment, so they define success by the retention of students with a minimum GPA and by the number of students on probation who regain satisfactory academic standing. At the end of this chapter, see the Exemplary Practice for the Miami University Academic Recovery Program.

In general, the balance sheet, or quantitative approach, is perhaps the easiest (albeit more tedious) to implement. The behavioral, or qualitative, evaluation is the more fluid approach and can be extended by assessors who want to measure the success of students beyond their collegiate years. When the roles and responsibilities of all partners are understood, the various pieces of the assessment can come together and a complete picture of the institutional impact on students on probation can emerge.

Developing a Plan for Academic Success

With the involvement of each partner, a com-

prehensive plan to support the student on academic probation can be devised. The key is the commitment of each member (institution, unit and advisor, and student) and the acknowledgment that all must participate for the goal(s) to be achieved. Also important is an agreement of the proportion of support that each partner provides to the program.

Institutional Programs

Institutional involvement is shaped by stakeholders' commitment to support the probationary population. By identifying struggling students before they are in academic trouble, institutional stakeholders can encourage a responsible personal decision on the part of the student as well as determine the needs of their probationary population and designate resources to fulfill those needs. They can identify students through policies and procedures in which the following processes are undertaken:

- evaluation of pre-collegiate test scores,
- determination of appropriate GPA minimum achievements, and
- definition of satisfactory progress through a curriculum.

Stakeholders who understand these identifiers can shape an infrastructure and program processes to address the needs of an institution's probationary population.

Infrastructure

In support of the partnership, an infrastructure of appropriate resources must be provided and maintained by the institution. These resources range from primary offices, such as the Office of Student Success, the Study Skills Center, and Career and Counseling Centers, to other centers of information, such as those for financial aid and the registrar, that play critical roles in creating a supportive environment for students on academic probation. Some institutions coordinate these services through a single office, providing a one-stop information center.

The institutional administration, of course, views infrastructure with a fiscal eye. The complexity and expense of the infrastructure is balanced with retention benefits. Not only should the retention of students be considered, but also the retention of qualified and trained staff and faculty members. If the infrastructure is intended to be a supportive environment for institutional personnel, then issues of workload, professional obligations, and expectations need to be addressed as do the appropriate means of recognizing and rewarding accomplishments.

An institution's infrastructure tangibly demonstrates its intrusive programs and practices for students. However, designers must understand students' responsibilities and communicate them effectively. A substantial basis of support may not be cost-effective if students are not held responsible for utilizing the support. Keeping in mind that students are not always self-reliant, stakeholders can answer a few questions to address issues of infrastructure design or improvement:

- Is the infrastructure set up for students to use proactively and successfully?
- Will the majority of the students use the resources only at moments of crisis and demand?
- If typically used only during crisis, how should the institutional programs be altered so that they are more proactive and intrusive?

Stakeholders who recognize their institution's strengths and resources can also impact the design of an infrastructure. For example, Ferris State University (FSU) incorporates a partnership with the Michigan Optometry College, which is located on its campus, to provide a required vision screening to students on academic probation. By utilizing optometry professors, students, and grant writers, FSU administrators incorporate specific campus assets and resources in the quest to support students in need. For more information about the FSU program, see the Exemplary Practice at the end of this chapter.

Campus Attitudes

Supporting student success often requires a commitment to the development of an appropriate campus mind-set. The infrastructure creates a means in which the efforts of the members of the partnership are expressed; the mind-set creates an ease of entering and moving within the infrastructure.

All students experience transition upon entering college: They are separated from the familiar, experience an intellectual makeover as vistas are expanded, and feel a need to reidentify themselves to a new academic community. The student on academic probation is no different and perhaps has more intense experiences—especially if the transitions include the change in academic status such as that experienced when one goes from being a successful student in previous academic settings to being one with academic challenges at the collegiate level. A supportive culture allows for easement into these transitions and allows those involved to recognize these transitions as possible factors that

lead to probation.

An institutional culture of support should extend from office to office across the entire campus. For students on academic probation, whose difficulties often extend beyond the academic realm, this network is particularly helpful. Staff in a coordinating office might identify key personnel who could serve as mentors and advocates for students on academic probation. These supportive personnel provide guidance in areas that relate to academics (tutors, faculty members, advisors, peers), student life (residence directors and other student affairs personnel), and university policy (administrators who devise policies for specific needs). Often, a student's pre-collegiate achievements are supported by mentors, but with the transition to a university, these mentors might not be available or influential. New mentors and advocates need to be quickly identified and provided, and the institution's culture can facilitate or hinder the formation of those new relationships.

A network of supportive office personnel and policies sends a strong message of support to students on academic probation. It demonstrates that institutional stakeholders believe in the students' values, acknowledge their prior achievements, and recognize their academic potential. At institutions with selective enrollment, students on academic probation are deemed to have academic abilities and promise, as evidenced by their acceptance into the academy. These attributes are independent from their academic skills, which might need refinement, as evidenced by a probationary status. Even on campuses without a traditional community, such as those in which most students commute, support can be built for the student in need. Even though the cocurricular opportunities may be limited, the academic experience is common to all students and can be an excellent foundation on which to build a supportive culture.

If the institution identifies student success and retention as the responsibility of all members of the community, then all entities work together to connect the students to their institution and its resources. When this campus network is established, the students become partners with necessary campus participants in achieving their academic goals. Rutgers College at the New Brunswick Campus of Rutgers (The State University of New Jersey) shifted its energies from the reactive mode of managing attrition to focusing on proactive practices to retain its students on probation. With this new philosophy, retention became the charge and responsibility of all members of the university community, rather than that of only one office. The institution makes a full commitment of its resources and personnel to the

retention of students on probation. In return, Rutgers challenges and expects students to participate fully themselves. See the Exemplary Practice for Rutgers College at the end of this chapter.

Policies

The institutional policies that impact students on academic probation are of equal importance to supportive office persons and mentors. The means by which an institution defines probation, and perhaps more important, the removal from academic probation, will dictate the goals, and perhaps the behavior, of all involved.

A clear and encompassing definition of elements that constitute satisfactory academic progress focuses the student's journey through academic probation. Considerations on which to base progress include the following:

- the transitory stages through which students move on their way to a probationary status. At some institutions, students are given a warning that a probationary status is imminent if their academic work does not improve. This warning may also entail restrictions on course load, work hours, and other elements of student life to mandate attention to academic responsibilities.
- the comparable stages when students move away from probation. For example, when improving her or his academic records, the student may be allowed to take a heavier course load than a student on probation, but fewer units than a student not in academic jeopardy. This policy is based on an acknowledgment that the student is developing academic skills, and it provides pacing for the student's return to good standing.
- the means of determining satisfactory academic work. Some policies express satisfaction in terms of GPA, but in other cases, the student needs to demonstrate progress toward degree completion, such as by repeating previously failed classes. The university might develop policies to allow some flexibility in these requirements.
- the impact of the policy on the student's finances. If a student is restricted in study load (units, credits), financial aid status may also change, which could lead to debt accumulation. The university policy makers might allow students to receive aid even if only a minimum number of units are finished each academic year. If a student is not a good fit with

the academic standards of the university, the financial aid counselors could discuss with the student and parents the real concerns of debt accumulation.

As institutional administrators define and clarify probationary policies, they will be able to shape the purpose and overview of offices, personnel, and programs designed to support the student on academic probation.

Academic Skills Curricula

Students on academic probation are often offered specific course work or programming intended to address the improvement of academic skills. Such curricula can be a focal point of an institution's infrastructure and policies for helping students who struggle academically. These offerings often include credit and noncredit courses, workshops, or informational sessions that are presented in various formats, such as stand-alone sessions or sequential seminars. This programming is scheduled at different times, including summers, orientation periods, and full semesters, and the mandates to attend vary; some are required, recommended, or optional for the student on probation.

As stated earlier, all students engage in their academic responsibilities with different abilities and motivations. A tailored curriculum can be formulated by considering the individual reasons for a probationary status and understanding the motivation of the student. A student could be an underachiever, demonstrated by high test scores but low GPA, an overachiever with low test scores and a high GPA, or a low achiever with low test scores and a low GPA. Simmons, Wallins, and George (1995) conducted research to see how different types of students react to the traditional academic skills courses. When the variables of achievement and motivation were considered, Simmons et al. found that the academic skills curricula often taught in first-year seminars benefited the low achievers the most. Overachievers may benefit more by selecting appropriate courses and study loads that match their test scores than by attending mandated skills classes. Simmons et al. also found underachievers who had enrolled in the traditional skills courses did not show a significant improvement in academic achievement. By understanding motivation of students on academic probation, program designers may develop more effective skills-development curricula than the generic one-size-fits-all format.

FSU has taken a broad approach in using academic skills curricula to address student needs. In

2005, its probationary support programs were expanded to include honors students whose academic achievements were in jeopardy of dropping below accepted honors minimums. For a fuller description of the program, see the Exemplary Practice at the end of this chapter. The findings from FSU research show that students, no matter their academic situation, benefit from workshops that support those who are not maintaining their academic potential.

Advisor Strategies for Student Success

Academic advisors are invaluable in students' navigation of institutional resources. They possess a thorough understanding of campus policies and resources and can match appropriate programs with students' needs. They are positioned to provide referrals or other necessary information as warranted. They listen to students on academic probation, and then by hearing and understanding the immediate issues and needs, they address the individual situation based on the student's goals and values.

The advisor functions as a link between the official institutional support offerings and the specific needs of the student on academic probation. Advisors have multiple roles in supporting the student on academic probation, and depending on the style of advising used (prescriptive, developmental, intrusive), the advisor's personal and professional involvement in these roles will vary. For example, if institutional policies and resources demonstrate a developmental or intrusive approach, then the role of the advisor is expanded beyond that of simply providing policy and procedural information: A relationship is forged and the academic advisor creates a safe and encouraging space, allowing for mutual trust and student empowerment, that is intended to lead to the student's realization of opportunities.

A developmental or intrusive academic advisor can also require accountability from the students on academic probation. Although mandatory meetings, contracts, and other similar requirements may seem elementary to students, policy makers might consider their benefit in identifying and developing successful habits and behavioral patterns. Skills such as accountability, maturity, and motivation are complementary to the specific skills that promote academic achievement.

When a student on academic probation is working with an academic advisor, the offered tips and

strategies for success are designed to lead to another outcome: a student's understanding of consequences for decisions and actions. This outcome is one of the most direct demonstrations of advising as teaching and provides parallels to the academic skills being developed in the classroom. The advisor, in this role of teacher, connects the cocurricular with the academic programs designed to assist the student on academic probation. The partnering of academic and cocurricular learning results in developed skills that become viable resources as the student faces future challenges.

Student Strategies for Academic Success

Even with the most comprehensive programs, the success of a student on probation ultimately hinges on his or her own efforts. Students are provided with institutional resources and an advisor to help them navigate and assess the available opportunities. Institutional and advisor reactions to substandard academic performance are intended to address the causes of academic probation, and with appropriate subsequent actions from the student, to provide opportunities in which the student can devise and choose appropriate means that support academic success.

Understanding Causes and Consequences

To effect lasting change, the struggling student must act as a conscious member in the advisor-student-institution partnership. A student's success is impacted by more than study habits; appropriate choices in goals, programs, and classes; and the prioritization of these factors. The student must look at the big picture and assess issues that cause a probationary status.

Background factors such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic class may factor into the evaluation because each shape how individuals learn, think, and react in various situations. In addition, issues related to finances, work, health (physical and mental), and family responsibilities also impact the student's situation. After identifying the causes of probation, the advisor can help the student identify effective strategies that lead to structured goals, assessed options, and opportunities for self-growth.

An advisor can facilitate the student's identification of factors that are controllable, such as major selection and time-management decisions, as well as those that are beyond her or his control, such as

When a student on academic probation is working with an academic advisor, the offered tips and strategies for success are designed to lead to another outcome: a student's understanding of consequences for decisions and actions.

learning style and family obligations. Awareness of these controllable and uncontrollable factors helps the student on academic probation have a fuller understanding of his or her situation. Institutions and advising units can partner with students on academic probation to provide opportunities for self-evaluation.

FSU provides an example of a partnership in which student self-evaluation of learning style is integrated into advising. After educating students on various learning styles, advisors encourage discussions about the strengths that can be called upon from this knowledge. Informational sheets, such as those used by FSU, provide practical suggestions for the auditory, visual, and tactile learner. See the FSU Exemplary Practice at the end of this chapter.

Students often focus solely on the consequences of their probationary status, such as poor grades, the embarrassing label of academic probation, and possible dismissal. However, if they are able to participate in self-assessment, goal setting, and determination of accountability, their understanding and ownership of the situation will enable them to move closer to their goals of academic achievement. With this heightened awareness and empowerment, students on academic probation develop tools to achieve academic success. Understanding, articulating, and acting create an emerging maturity and sophistication that lead to practical responses to the probationary status.

Practical Actions

Whether driven by the institution's mandate or by an internal desire to change, students must take certain constructive actions if they wish to be removed from a probationary standing. This engagement involves the utilization of available resources in an effective manner. Maximizing campus resources requires that students respect specific timelines, such as add-drop dates and office hours, and instructions given, such as those for completing assignments. Students must also consider their own past experiences. By owning both the successes and failures, students are less likely to shift the responsibility to others, and the dreaded phrase "My advisor didn't tell me..." does not enter the conversation.

The establishment of a supportive community is vital to any student's success. Members of the community include the institutional stakeholders, fac-

ulty members, and advisors, and it can also include supportive family and friends. Students who have successfully navigated through a probationary status can also be members of this supportive community. Students benefit from the examples of their peers, and knowing this, the designers of the Partnership for the Academic Commitment to Excellence (PACE) program of Ball State University scheduled student panels composed of former program participants. These panelists provide inspiration and information to current students on academic probation. Within this community, the student's practical actions have support and context. For information about the PACE Panel forum of peers, see the

Exemplary Practice for Ball State University at the end of this chapter.

Accountability must be established on both external and internal levels. The student is accountable to external demands and must therefore attend meetings, participate in required activities, and observe appropriate instructions and deadlines. The student is accountable to her or himself as she or he prioritizes and manages strategies in time management, effective study habits, the truthful assessment of effort and work, and decision making. Ideally, these external and internal actions lead to a form of resiliency upon which the student can draw to navigate successfully through academic experiences in and out of the classroom.

Of these strategies imparted by partners for student success, choosing ownership of the consequences of his or her actions and accepting appropriate accountability are critical student actions. To some degree, ownership can be encouraged or mandated through obligatory or consequential requirements such as registra-

tion holds. However, the student's personal ownership impacts the degree and permanence of success.

Implications for Academic Advisors

Though the partnership encompasses the three involved and contributing entities—the student, the academic advisor, and the institution—the academic advisor must be aware of the specific circumstances involved when working with students on academic probation. They need to be cognizant of the time and money that students on probation may lose, and they also need to remember that the student is more than just a subject of the job. The student is a person who may be feeling embarrassed, disap-

... if they are able to participate in self-assessment, goal setting, and determination of accountability, their understanding and ownership of the situation will enable them to move closer to their goals of academic achievement.

pointed, very vulnerable, and judged.

This individual has a unique set of circumstances that has prompted the poor academic performance. The multiple circumstances that affect the student are brought into the advising sessions, thus impacting the student's disposition and the connection between the student and the academic advisor. Academic advisors who are aware of the multiple factors influencing the student on probation may provide a more effective and positive impact on the advising experience. Advisors need to be willing and ready to explore circumstances and provide needed help and referrals for students to succeed.

Advisors also need to be aware that they can have a negative impact on vulnerable students, which could then affect the students' success and all their future communications and expectations regarding academic advisors. Advisors need to be aware that the consequences caused by the student's basic shortcomings in time management and academic skills are often compounded by multiple other concerns; students are often managing much more than just academic challenges and bad grades. In addition, negative stereotyping and judgment do not help the student's self-perception, academic standing, and ultimate retention. Therefore, advisors should not fall into stereotyping, such as thinking that all students on probation are struggling with their poor academic status because of too much partying and oversleeping. The advisor who takes the time to learn about each individual student and the causes of his or her probation can be a more personal resource and a greater benefit to the student and the institution (Gehrke, 2006).

When advising is done through an individual, caring, and informed basis, a thorough, judgment-free, and personal advising experience should positively affect the levels of student success and retention (Gehrke, 2006). Such a positive advising experience promotes a trusting partnership that leads to more frequent contacts and a positive impact on students' academic success. To establish this relationship, the student needs to be able to meet frequently with the same advisor and not be subjected to an advisor lottery (Gehrke, 2006).

To create this positive, trusting partnership, academic advisors also need to utilize an intrusive advising style because it engages the student on academic probation better than either developmental or prescriptive approaches alone (or combined). Being intrusive does not mean being hostile or overly

aggressive. Instead, it means being engaging and personal such that the relationship produces student motivation and accountability. The newly motivated student on probation feels a sense of accountability to the academic advisor, who provides continued encouragement and assistance.

Students on probation struggle with balance, structure, and prioritization. Having a stronger relationship with an academic advisor allows the student to benefit from a university contact who helps negotiate those issues. With an institutional contact, a student feels more integrated and connected to the institution (Earl, 1987; Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Spanier, 2004).

To maximize the benefits for students, they need to remember that preparation and knowledge are keys to a student's academic success; when one or the other is diminished, the student may struggle.

In addition, as students build connections with their advisors, they understand a greater benefit to utilizing the advisor as an institutional resource. Academic advisors are not only useful for planning and scheduling classes; they facilitate students in their academic goals and pursuits with the intent of maximizing the advisee's chances for degree attainment and graduation. To maximize the benefits for students, they need to remember that preparation and knowledge are keys to a student's academic success; when one or the other is diminished, the student may struggle.

Implications for the Institution

For the academic advisor to be more aware and capable when working with students on probation, institutional policy makers must also understand their part in helping the student on probation become successful. They need to provide an encouraging, supportive, and progressive environment for the advising process. Appropriate training and professional development opportunities should be available for advisors who work with students on probation. In addition, stakeholders need to be aware that this unique population of students can require more attention and specific assistance than students who are not in academic jeopardy. Advisors who work with students on probation need to be allowed additional time to work with these students, smaller caseloads, and specific training on effective utilization of their time with students. Institutions vested in the tools, time, and knowledge required by advisors impact retention (Gehrke, 2006).

Evaluation is key to the success and effectiveness of any advising program, and institutional stakeholders need to measure the effectiveness of their

advisor training programs and their academic advisors. They should ensure ongoing evaluation of the instruction and material offered for academic advisors working with unique populations, such as students on probation. The specific measurements of the advisor assessment will vary based on the institution's mission. However, all institutions of higher education should be concerned with the overall academic success and achievement of individuals. Therefore, the evaluation should not be strictly based on numbers, such as the percentage of students retained. The qualitative aspects must also be considered for a true and efficient assessment of the institution's and the advisor's effectiveness when working with students on probation.

Conclusion

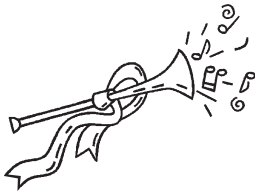
The students on probation constitute a population with common needs created by individual situations. The individuals are similar only in their mutually unsatisfactory academic GPAs and their need for resources and support to recover and obtain success in their academic endeavors. By understanding, acknowledging, and addressing these personalized experiences and histories, the possibility for academic success is maximized; however, this awareness and recovery are not undertaken solely by the student. They require a partnership of the student, the institution, and the advisor and advising unit. Because academic probation affects all members of the learning community, the roles, responsibilities, and chosen involvement of each member impact the partnership.

All parties must focus attention on the student and her or his efforts to change a probationary status, but the institutional policy maker outlines that focus through a holistic response and commitment to the probationary population. Resources such as personnel staffing, student programming, staff development and training, physical space allotment, and fiscal resources must be afforded. These resources should be appropriate for the development, as well as the sustainability, of academic support systems.

While the probationary status demands an immediate response from the partners, with solutions presented as quickly as possible, time must be allowed for working with struggling students. Moving from academic probation to a good academic standing is potentially an involved, lengthy process. Except for specific situations, such as a student becoming probationary because of a specific nonacademic event in his or her life (for example, the death of a parent), the causes of a probationary status often are deep rooted and not easily changed in a sin-

gle semester. Lifelong habits that were sufficient in the past may need to be revised or eliminated, and student development requires time for the acquisition of new skills and behaviors.

Institutional stakeholders, advisors, and students must continually work together in the pursuit of the student's academic recovery and success. Each partner's contribution to student success is impacted by the contributions of the other entities. If the goal of fully supporting the student on probation is met, then there are many positive outcomes for the entire academic community. The student successfully accomplishes her or his academic pursuit, and the institution and advisors contribute to student retention rates and an educated populace.



EXEMPLARY PRACTICES

Program:

Academic Recovery Program

Institution:

Miami University, Hamilton and Middletown Campuses

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Institutional Information:

- 2-year, public, open enrollment institution with students completing most 4-year degrees on other campuses or at other schools
- Set in an urban setting in the Midwest
- Offers associate's degrees and certificates
- Core curriculum classes are foundation for bachelor's level programs
- 3,300 Hamilton students and 2,700 Middletown students (these numbers include students registered on all three Miami University Campuses, so they reflect some overlap)

Advising Delivery, Hamilton Campus:

The job for those in the Office of Academic Advising and Retention Services consists not only of advising students but also retaining them. However, graduation rates cannot be truly measured in an environment like the Hamilton campus, where students are expected or required to complete their degree elsewhere. Therefore, at Hamilton, retention is a measure of students who continue in good academic standing with at least a 2.0 GPA and probationary students who avoid suspension or dismissal.

Two full-time and one half-time academic advi-

sor as well as occasional volunteer help (about 10 hours per week) from a practicum graduate student make up the staff. The advisors are all generalists who are trained to work with all populations. Therefore, students can meet with whomever is available or they can request a particular academic advisor with whom they have previously worked. The typical case load is technically 1,100:1. While these numbers may seem high, and they are, not all students seek advising and a number of students receive advising through faculty advisors in their technical programs. Between October 1, 2005 and October 1, 2006, a total of 4,718 different students (5,263 individual interactions) came for advising. This means that each advisor saw approximately 700 students. During a 1-year period, students register for three semesters (fall, spring, and summer); many of these student appointments were with individuals returning to register for a subsequent term.

Program History:

As a regional campus where most degree-seeking students complete a degree elsewhere and some other students do not desire a degree, Hamilton is always searching for a way to measure student retention. Hamilton is an open enrollment campus, so a large number of students are either unprepared or underprepared for the rigors of college studies. Therefore, the percentage of students in good academic standing is a reasonable measure of retention.

In the past, intrusive advising was used with probation students. At the beginning of each semester advisors would examine every probation student's schedule and personally call each to suggest changes the student should make to his or her schedule before certain deadlines. Advisors look for intense course combinations or unmet course prerequisites in regard to their current schedule and then cautioned the students accordingly. However, advisors had wrong numbers on file, and students were not returning calls and were scrambling to make changes after first-choice classes were full. In the midst of this intensive time spent making phone calls, the advisors recognized the need to implement a program that could hold students accountable. Based on previous success with implementing registration holds on athletes and high school students taking college

classes, Hamilton advisors decided to force a face-to-face conversation about schedules via registration holds for students on probation. With the goal of assisting students better and in return increase retention of students on probation, the Academic Recovery Program, or ARP, was born.

ARP is the product of collaboration between offices and campuses. Academic advisors and learning specialists at Hamilton's sister campus in Middletown, Ohio, were facing similar challenges with probation students, so during the spring semester of 2005 the two sets of advisors joined together to create a program to benefit all of the students, including those who enroll in classes on both regional campuses during any given semester.

One tool useful in this partnership is the electronic software for note keeping that is available on both campuses. A student who meets with an academic advisor in Middletown can also meet with an academic advisor in Hamilton and receive consistent messages. The software also allows academic advisors to view records of all of the previous advising conversations with a particular student.

Program Description:

Step One

Once students are placed on academic probation, the registration hold is placed on a student's account by the Records Office. The hold prevents students from scheduling classes or independently making changes to their schedules. They receive a mailing containing a participation agreement, which informs them of the steps involved with ARP, and a learning contract, which guides them to the needed campus resources. Through this mailing, students are asked to make an appointment with an academic advisor and to bring with them the signed participation agreement and a one-page essay in which they examine both the reasons why they are on probation and their plan to be more successful the following semester.

Step Two

During their first meeting, an academic advisor reviews the student's essay to determine the barriers that are potentially keeping her or him from being academically successful. The advisor uses the information contained in these essays to then make specific referrals such as disability services, financial aid, or the counseling center.

The advisor calculates the projected GPA and informs the student of the semester GPA needed to avoid suspension (a 2.0 minimum in most cases) and the semester GPA needed to raise his or her cumulative GPA to a 2.0 (and therefore be off pro-

bation). Advisors also examine the student's intended major. Certain majors, such as education, business, and nursing are competitive enrollment programs and have much higher entrance GPA requirements than the other programs. Some students on probation may mean need a 3.0 average GPA for 3 subsequent semesters to raise their cumulative GPAs to the minimum to apply for a competitive-enrollment major. For others with low cumulative GPAs and a high number of attempted hours, successful entry into these majors may be mathematically impossible. When faced with students who cannot reach the needed GPA for their intended major, advisors discuss other options regarding an academic path and often refer students to career counseling.

In the final step of this meeting, the advisor and advisee create a course schedule. As a requirement of ARP, a student can enroll in a maximum of 14 credit hours a semester. Advisors also strongly suggest that students on probation enroll in a 2-credit-hour study-skills course.

Step Three

In the second meeting, usually between the 3rd and 7th weeks of the term, the advisee meets with a learning specialist (which is the academic advisor in Middletown and a separate staff member in Hamilton). The timing of this meeting is designed to give students an opportunity to obtain test grades and get a feel for how they are progressing in their courses. However, this meeting must take place before the 9th week, which is the deadline to drop classes. During this meeting the student discusses study skills and time management strategies in addition to any specific course concerns. Necessary referrals and schedule adjustments are again made.

Step Four

The registration holds are removed once the student is no longer on academic probation. However, if students on probation receive a semester GPA below a 2.0, they are suspended and must sit out of classes at Miami University for 2 terms. If students fail to achieve higher than a 2.0 GPA on their return semester, they are dismissed from the university for at least 2 calendar years and must petition to return. Course work taken elsewhere during the time of suspension will not be accepted as transfer credit. Therefore, advisors must reach students at the first sign of academic trouble.

Program Evaluation:

The first round of probation holds went into effect following spring grades posted in May 2005.

The ARP program, now in the 5th semester, is working as illustrated by hard data and the anecdotal evidence of success.

Data were collected on probationary students who are continuing either because of regaining good academic standing or remaining on probation. Data collected pre-ARP retention and that collected after ARP implementation are shown in Table 12 and are compared in Figure 15.

The thoughtful, reflective essays that the students have written are impressive. The essays include comments such as “This is the first time I have actually thought about WHY I am on probation.” Such statements are anecdotal evidence for the importance of the program. Many of first-generation and other at-risk college students do not recognize that they are in trouble until they receive the ARP letter. Advisors have known that many students had rarely thought about how they got on probation and what they can do to rectify the situation. Students who are initially frustrated by the hold often admit that they need help and even thank the advisor once they start this process. ARP helps to establish a relationship and many students come in for meetings more often than required.

Program Strengths and Challenges:

Strengths:

- Students reflect in writing on the causes of their academic probation and actively participate in creating an action plan.
- Registration holds prevent probation students from independently making changes to their schedules that could result in their suspension or academic dismissal.
- Lower suspension and dismissal rates: a near 50% reduction from spring 2005 to spring 2006.
- Reduced number of advisor phone calls to students on probation who have high-risk course schedules.

Challenges:

- Academic advisors have extremely large case loads, which include an average of over 100 students who are on probation per each academic advisor.
- Students with probation holds sometimes must wait 2 or more weeks to see an advisor to make schedule adjustments (emergencies are always given priority).

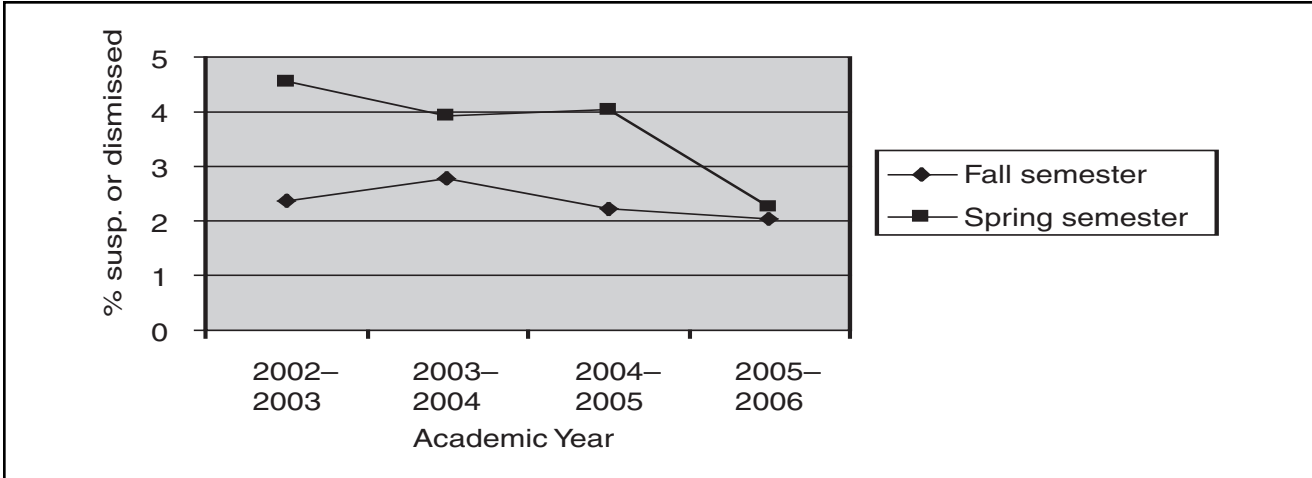
Table 12 Unsuccessful students, 2002–2005, and first ARP cohort, 2006

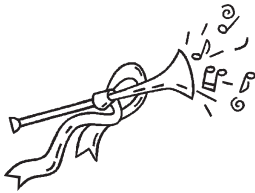
Fall Term					
Academic Standing	2002	2003	2004	2005	
Academic Dismissal	9	8	6	11	
Academic Suspension	46	58	48	38	
Academic Probation	223	222	193	168	
Continued on Probation	87	108	109	104	
Good Standing	1,938	1,991	2,061	2,069	
Total Undergraduates	2,303	2,387	2,417	2,390	
Not successful	55	66	54	49	
% not successful	2	3	2	2	
Spring Term					
Academic Standing	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
Academic Dismissal	9	10	13	18	9
Academic Suspension	57	90	76	76	40
Academic Probation	148	192	167	161	166
Continued on Probation	104	103	138	121	137
Good Standing	1,722	1,792	1,869	1,944	1,813
Total Undergraduates	2,040	2,187	2,263	2,320	2,165
Not successful	66	100	89	94	49
% not successful	3	5	4	4	2

Note. *First ARP cohort

- The break between fall and spring semesters is only 3 weeks (from mid-December to early January), so a large number of students new to probation show up the first week of class trying to make schedule adjustments.
- Students can register for classes for the following term, before final grades are earned, so some holds are posted after the students have already registered.

Figure 15 Percentage of unsuccessful students, fall 2002 to spring 2006





EXEMPLARY PRACTICES

Program:

Strategies for Your Educational Success (Strategies)

Institution:

Ferris State University (FSU)

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www.ferris.edu/htmls/colleges/university/eccc/strategies.htm

Institutional Information:

- 4-year, career-oriented, public institution
- Located in rural area in Midwest
- Offers a variety of degrees and certificates up to a master's
- 12,575 (11,409 undergraduates and 1,166 graduate students)
- Most undergraduates are first-generation students from Michigan

Advising Delivery:

In 1997, the Educational and Career Counseling

Department at Ferris State University (FSU) was established to serve all of the students on campus. This department has one counselor in each of the five undergraduate colleges: Allied Health Services, Arts and Sciences, Business, Education and Human Services, and Technology. Four counselors also serve in the Educational and Career Counseling Center (ECCC). These counselors conduct the Strategies for Your Educational Success (Strategies) workshops and meet with the individual students for one-on-one follow-up appointments.

Program History:

Students placed on probation had always been urged to go for academic support services; however, most students did not go, and academic recidivism was common. In 2001, the ECCC developed the Strategies program aimed at students with the following characteristics:

- had received multiple academic warnings;
- a GPA that fell below 2.0 (one semester);
- had been readmitted on probation; and
- a GPA that had fallen below the program requirement.

Students are referred to Strategies by their college counselor. Students who are not in academic peril may choose to attend just because they want to improve their grades.

In 2004, the vision screening component was added at the suggestion of the faculty of the Michigan College of Optometry (MCO) located at FSU. The faculty believed that some of the academic problems of students might be related to their vision. Optometry students, under the supervision of their professors, screened the Strategies population over a 3-year period and found that an average of 60% of these students experienced visual problems (as compared to 13% of the general population).

The Strategies program proved so successful with students on probation that in winter 2006 it was expanded to include students in the Honors program. Those students whose GPA had fallen below the Honors program requirement of 3.25 were required to take part in the Strategies workshop.

The basic operational premises for the Strategies

program are as follows:

- Students experience academic difficulty for many different reasons and need individual diagnostics.
- Whatever assistance students need to succeed, they need immediately.
- Most of the resources students need are already available on campus.
- Counselors are not enforcers or deliverers of negative consequences.

Program Description:

Strategies workshops, for administration of learning style and study skills assessments, are held during the first 3 weeks of the semester and immediately after midterm grades have been issued. Before leaving the 50-minute workshop, the students make a one-on-one appointment with a counselor to review and discuss the results of the assessments. The assessments used in the workshop are the *Barsch Learning Style Inventory* (http://ericae.net/faqs/Cognitive_Styles/ericbib_testdescriptions.htm; www.psychtest.com/curr01/CATLG046.HTM), which identifies how a student learns best, and the *Learning Attitude & Study Skills Inventory* (www.hhpublishing.com/_assessments/LASSI/), which measures 10 areas that influence academic success. See also Figures 16, 17, and 18 for help sheets for auditory, kinesthetic, and visual learners.

Follow-up one-on-one appointments are made with an ECCC counselor to discuss outcomes of the assessments and prior course-work challenges. The advisor and advisee develop an individual plan for academic success, which consists of formal referrals to appropriate campus resources or continuing counselor intervention. Additional appointments are scheduled as needed.

Concern for Strategies students who demon-

strate avoidance of visual learning, as measured by the assessments administered in the workshops, led to collaboration with the MCO to provide vision screenings to all Strategies participants and free follow-up exams for those who fail the screening. In 2003, the ECCC and MCO cowrote and received a \$5,000 grant from the Ferris Foundation Gifts and Grants Committee to provide supplemental eye therapy or eyeglass prescriptions for these students. As a result, all patients who fail the screening are now offered \$90 toward a new prescription as well as the free eye exam.

The Strategies intervention has recently been offered to students who find themselves on honors probation. Honors students whose GPAs fell below 3.25 may be ineligible to continue in the Honors program if they do not return to good standing by the end of the following semester. However, even if they cannot stay in the Honors program, those who fail to maintain a 3.25 GPA can return to FSU to study; therefore, the students on honors probation are at a different level of risk than students on academic probation.

Program Evaluation:

For the 10th consecutive semester, outcomes data demonstrate academic success for students in academic peril who participate in Strategies. As shown in Table 13, one half or more Strategies students achieved cumulative GPAs of 2.00 or greater at the end of their semester of participation. This level of success has enabled Strategies students to remain enrolled at FSU, acquire eligibility to enter the degree programs of their choice, and maintain eligibility for financial aid or athletics.

Data collected on Strategies students indicate that since the inception of the program in 2001 an average of 45% of all Strategies students were still at FSU in good standing one year after their probationary term ended. See Table 14.

Table 13 Strategies students' academic outcomes: percentages of Strategies students by GPA and percentages of Strategies students who completed the probationary semester, 2003-2006

Semester	% Raised Semester GPA	% Earned Semester GPA >2.00	% Earned Cumulative GPA > 2.00	% Completed Semester
Winter 2003	63	59	58	100
Fall 2003	59	51	54	91
Winter 2004	70	54	49	89
Fall 2004	73	49	47	97
Winter 2005	70	63	63	96
Fall 2005	87	64	79	100
Winter 2006	85	62	60	99

Student reactions to the Strategies workshop have been extremely positive: 96% said that they would recommend the Strategies program to other students. The strength of the program, based upon student comments, is the individual approach and the one-on-one meetings between the student and counselor. Other comments on student surveys include the following:

- “I wish I’d had access to this info when I was a freshman.”
- “Good program to help and inspire students.”
- “Really helped me bring up my grades and study effectively.”
- “Please keep helping other students who need it.”
- “I feel like more doors have opened for me.”

Data demonstrate that Strategies can help high ability students overcome initial academic problems. Nearly one half of the students on honors probation who participated in the program achieved the 3.25 GPA required to remain in the Honors program; 12% of the students who had not participated were retained in the Honors program.

As can be seen in Table 15 over 50% of Strategy participants have failed the MCO-given eye screening. During the initial period of the program, among the 14 students who followed through with free eye

exams, 12 (86%) received prescriptive corrections, but probably because of lack of insurance, only 2 students bought glasses. Because of the grant monies received in 2003, students who need glasses will now be able to afford them.

Program Strengths and Challenges:

Strengths:

The Strategies program, along with other academic support-service programs, is contributing considerably to FSU’s student retention goals. Honors students also benefit from the Strategies program. We have learned that the following have been important to the success of the program:

- Individual meetings with counselors are highly valued by students.
- Students need and receive an individual diagnostic approach.
- Most support resources are already available on campus; Strategy counselors identify the student’s specific need.
- Many students who are on probation fail the vision screening and receive free eye care and funds to fulfill prescriptions.

Challenges:

A major challenge is getting the Strategy students to come to the initial workshop. When the col-

Table 14 Follow-up data on Strategies students after probationary period: percentages by GPA after first semester and status after first year

Semester	% Returned to FSU	% Semester GPA > 2.00	% Semester GPA > 3.00	% in good standing after 1 year
Winter 2003	51	2	10	37
Fall 2003	67	54	49	49
Winter 2004	52	31	8	46
Fall 2004	63	83	31	38
Winter 2005	41	69	13	27
Fall 2005	60	89	22	63
Winter 2006	65	42	14	Not available

Table 15 Outcomes of MCO screening of Strategies students, 2003-2006

Semester	Screened	Passed	Failed
Winter 2003 (N = 30)	30	14 (47%)	16 (53%)
Fall 2003 (N = 56)	56	18 (32%)	38 (68%)
Winter 2004 (N = 75)	75	35 (47%)	40 (53%)
Fall 2004 (N = 31)	31	11 (35%)	20 (65%)
Winter 2005 (N = 63)	63	19 (30%)	44 (70%)
Fall 2005 (N = 10)	10	3 (30%)	7 (70%)
Winter 2006 (N = 80)	80	38 (47%)	42 (53%)

lege counselor issues the referral, more students attend. Students arrive and see that the workshop does not take on a punitive nature and that the facilitators demonstrate an interest in them personally, which encourages them to return. To meet the challenges, Strategies advisors have learned the following:

- Full participation is important; students must keep follow-up appointments.
- Required participation is important; the college must make it mandatory.

Future Initiatives:

Since the continued success of the Strategies program, the program staff has begun planning with the FSU Financial Aid Department to extend the program to students who are on financial aid probation (i.e., students identified as not making satisfactory academic progress, as defined by the federal government, due to repeating or dropping classes) in an effort to maintain their required GPA. These students would be referred to Strategies by the Financial Aid Department.

Furthermore, the Athletic Department has expressed interest in referring athletes who, while not on university academic probation, may be in danger of falling below the academic requirements needed to remain eligible to participate in their sport or to maintain their athletic scholarships.

Figure 16 Study techniques for auditory learners (Ferris State University)

STUDY TECHNIQUES FOR AUDITORY LEARNERS

“I hear what you’re saying”

VISUAL “Pictures”	AUDITORY “Sounds”	TACTILE/KINESTHETIC “Touch/Activity”
Overheads	Lectures	Hands-on
Handouts	Tapes	Labs
Films	Read Aloud	Act Out
Notes	Study Groups	Field Trips
Reading	Music	Internships
Underlining (see)	“Ask” yourself questions	Underlining (act/touch)

In class

- ☞ Listen very carefully and pay attention to the speaker’s tone of voice, pitch, speed
- ☞ Read aloud. In class ask for verbal clarification of parts of the text you didn’t understand. Tape the explanation.
- ☞ Participate in class discussions.
- ☞ Tape record the lectures so you can hear the information again.

Study Environment

- ☞ **MUSIC!!** For some auditory learners sound activates learning. Use instrumental music with a regular rhythm. Words from songs can interfere with the words you are studying.
- ☞ Find a quiet place! For some auditory learners noise can be distracting.
- ☞ TV as very soft “white” noise might help, but be careful of the temptation to watch.
- ☞ Join study groups: information is discussed and explained verbally.

Auditory Strategies

- ☞ Listen to the taped lecture. Say information aloud as you write notes.
- ☞ Organize your notes on cards. Talk as you write. Read cards onto a cassette.
- ☞ Think out loud as you organize a project. Talk as you write your goals and steps.
- ☞ Verbalize what you highlight in your textbooks. Then summarize out loud.
- ☞ Explain the material to someone else.
- ☞ Make up rhymes and songs to remember names, dates, and facts.
- ☞ For math and technical information talk through the steps with a study-partner.
- ☞ Use graph paper to keep math problems in line.

Figure 16 Study techniques for auditory learners (Ferris State University) (continued)

Tips For Everyone!

- ☞ Go to class! No study tip works if you do not go to class.
- ☞ Prepare for class. Read your textbook, or review your notes, ahead of time.
- ☞ Find the most productive time of day for you to study and learn.
- ☞ Prioritize the information; not all information is equally important.
- ☞ Study/read for about 25-30 minutes, highlighting or take notes as you do. Take a 1-5 minute break. Stretch, breathe deeply, use the restroom, make a telephone call, anything brief that will give your brain an opportunity to “shift” from the studying/reading you were just doing. Return on time. Review the highlighted/noted [sic] from the beginning, and then proceed for another 25-30 minutes. Continue this process until you have finished.
- ☞ No matter what technique you use to input information, REPETITION is necessary to securely plant information in the long-term memory.

Goal Setting

As a result of today’s session, write down three specific goals for the semester. Keep in mind your goals need to be **S.M.A.R.T.** (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-specific):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



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Figure 17 Study techniques for kinesthetic learners (Ferris State University)

STUDY TECHNIQUES FOR KINESTHETIC/TACTILE LEARNERS

“Let me try it”

VISUAL “Pictures”	AUDITORY “Sounds”	TACTILE/KINESTHETIC “Touch/Activity”
Overheads	Lectures	Hands-on
Handouts	Tapes	Labs
Films	Read Aloud	Act Out
Notes	Study Groups	Field Trips
Reading	Music	Internships
Underlining (see)	“Ask” yourself questions	Underlining (act/touch)

In class

- As much as possible choose classes with labs.
- Sit in the front of the room. You love movement but other movement distracts you.
- Squeeze a “stress ball” in class.
- Write while listening even during class discussion.
- If you become distracted, write down the distracting thoughts. Return your attention to class topic.
- Doodle or draw pictures of the information presented in the lecture.

Study Environment

- Find a spot where you can play music loudly enough to drown out any other noises. Play it as loudly as comfortable for you but doesn’t disturb others.
- Have a space big enough to walk around in and where pacing won’t disturb others.
- Have a work surface big enough to make models or use manipulative materials.

Kinesthetic/Tactile Strategies

- Pick up your textbook while you read; highlight important information.
- Ride an exercise bike or walk on a treadmill while you read.
- Write information on 3x5 cards.
- Move the cards around on a tabletop. Put them in piles according to relationship.
- Make a card for each step in a sequence. Put them in order until the sequence becomes automatic.
- Walk around while you study with the cards.
- Draw diagrams and charts.

Figure 17 Study techniques for kinesthetic learners (Ferris State University) (continued)

- ✎ Make models, graphs, or charts to represent information.
- ✎ Use toothpicks, small candy, and pieces of paper to represent facts. Move them around as you learn. Eat candy when the lesson is mastered.
- ✎ Write key concepts on a large white board or easel.
- ✎ Write information several times to organize and/or memorize it.
- ✎ Tape record information. Listen to it on a “Walkman” while you exercise.
- ✎ Spend extra time in labs or field experiences.
- ✎ Ask to do class projects that help you understand, remember, and illustrate that you have mastered the material.

Tips For Everyone!

- ✎ Go to class! No study tip works if you do not go to class.
- ✎ Prepare for class. Read your textbook, or review your notes, ahead of time.
- ✎ Find the most productive time of day for you to study and learn.
- ✎ Prioritize the information; not all information is equally important.
- ✎ Study/read for about 25-30 minutes, highlighting or take notes as you do. Take a 1-5 minute break. Stretch, breathe deeply, use the restroom, make a telephone call, anything brief that will give your brain an opportunity to “shift” from the studying/reading you were just doing. Return on time. Review the highlighted/noted [sic] from the beginning, and then proceed for another 25-30 minutes. Continue this process until you have finished.
- ✎ No matter what technique you use to input information, REPETITION is necessary to securely plant information in the long-term memory.

Goal Setting

As a result of today’s session, write down three specific goals for the semester. Keep in mind your goals need to be **S.M.A.R.T.** (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-specific):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



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Figure 18 Study techniques for visual learners (Ferris State University)

STUDY TECHNIQUES FOR VISUAL LEARNERS		
<i>“I see what you mean”</i>		
VISUAL	AUDITORY	TACTILE/KINESTHETIC
“Pictures”	“Sounds”	“Touch/Activity”
Overheads	Lectures	Hands-on
Handouts	Tapes	Labs
Films	Read Aloud	Act Out
Notes	Study Groups	Field Trips
Reading	Music	Internships
Underlining (see)	“Ask” yourself questions	Underlining (act/touch)

In class

- ☞ Sit at the front of the room to avoid distractions.
- ☞ Look at the professor when s/he speaks; take in their body language.
- ☞ Get handouts, before class if available; this will give you something to “see” while you listen.
- ☞ Take notes carefully.
- ☞ Tape record the lecture for later review; make notes and graphic aids.
- ☞ Picture the information in your mind; then, put that “picture” into your notes along with the written explanation.
- ☞ Pay special attention to graphs and charts on the board or overheads.

Study Environment

- ☞ Study alone. Group discussions may distract the visual learner.
- ☞ Clear your study space of distracting items; make it visually attractive to you.

Visual Strategies

- ☞ Reading textbooks are [sic] very appealing to visual learner; make the best of time spent reading them.
- ☞ Highlight or underline the main ideas.
- ☞ Number the supporting details within the paragraph.
- ☞ Color-code ideas and concepts that go together.
- ☞ Rewrite your class notes.
- ☞ Summarize information from your notes, textbooks, and tapes in your own words.
- ☞ Write information on 3x5 cards. Color-code them; keep them simple.

Figure 18 Study techniques for visual learners (Ferris State University) (continued)

- 👁️ Post sticky-notes with information or information in visible places such as on your mirror or dashboard.
- 👁️ To learn math or technical information list steps and write out your understanding of key facts.
- 👁️ Create charts and diagrams to organize material and show relationships. Use graph paper if that helps.
- 👁️ Pay particular attention to the pictures and graphic material in your textbooks.
- 👁️ Try to visualize the information.
- 👁️ Draw pictures with the main point as a body and supporting detail as feet.
- 👁️ Make up acronyms and mnemonics to organize and remember information.
- 👁️ Use a computer to make charts and diagrams from written information or to reword your notes and look at them again.

Tips For Everyone!

- 👁️ Go to class! No study tip works if you do not go to class.
- 👁️ Prepare for class. Read your textbook, or review your notes, ahead of time.
- 👁️ Find the most productive time of day for you to study and learn.
- 👁️ Prioritize the information; not all information is equally important.
- 👁️ Study/read for about 25-30 minutes, highlighting or take notes as you do. Take a 1-5 minute break. Stretch, breathe deeply, use the restroom, make a telephone call, anything brief that will give your brain an opportunity to “shift” from the studying/reading you were just doing. Return on time. Review the highlighted/noted [sic] from the beginning, and then proceed for another 25-30 minutes. Continue this process until you have finished.
- 👁️ No matter what technique you use to input information, REPETITION is necessary to securely plant information in the long-term memory.

Goal Setting

As a result of today’s session, write down three specific goals for the semester. Keep in mind your goals need to be **S.M.A.R.T.** (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-specific):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



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EXEMPLARY PRACTICES

Program:

The Freshman Withdrawal Retention Program

Institution:

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey,
New Brunswick Campus (Rutgers College)

Contact Information:

Erica Anderson
Assistant Dean for Retention & Readmission
Office of Academic Services
Milledoler Hall
Room 103
520 George Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
(732) 932-7731 ext. 137

Institutional Information:

- 4-year, public, research institution
- Located in suburban central New Jersey
- Grants doctorate degrees
- 26,713 total undergraduates

Advising Delivery:

The Freshman Withdrawal Program employs both a total-intake and a supplemental model that are intentionally intrusive. Based upon the results of a standardized assessment, participating students are assigned supplemental advisors in units other than Academic Services for the duration of the probation period. Upon the restoration of good academic standing students are free to relinquish these transitional advising assignments.

Program History:

Responsibility for retention cannot reside with one person in a single advising unit. In response to a lack of advising services for students on probation, in 2000, Rutgers College developed the Freshman Withdrawal Retention Program, in which advising for students on probation became the shared responsibility of a university-wide Rutgers College Retention Advising Board. This board was created to provide systematic and comprehensive transitional support based on each student's individual advising needs rather than the one-size-fits-all approach previously used.

Program Description:*Program Objectives*

Students end up on probation for many academic and nonacademic reasons. To promote a more successful first-year transition, the staff of the Freshman Withdrawal Retention Program helps students to identify, examine, and resolve the underlying causes of academic difficulty through assessment, reorientation, education, advising, and evaluation.

The primary objectives of the program are

- to minimize the impact of students' current academic difficulty through early intervention.
- to tailor individual service plans for students based upon student self-identified needs, attitudes, and motivations (Stratil & Schreiner, 1993).
- to assist students' navigation of the larger support network at Rutgers University.
- to intervene in the first-year transition and help students learn how to achieve their own successes.
- to facilitate academic and social integration by focusing on the affective as well as cognitive dimensions of the college experience (Stratil & Schreiner, 1993).

Advising Delivery Methods

Program requirements and student-staff advising interactions are strategically coordinated; intervention begins prior to the new term and continues for the duration of the term. Although managed by Academic Services, support services are provided by a cooperative collective referred to as the Rutgers College Retention Advising Board. With 30 actively participating members, the advising board consists of staff from almost every college and university support unit. Members include staff from Academic Services, Health & Substance Abuse Services, Athletic Academic Support, Career Services, Counseling Services, Educational Opportunity Fund Program, the Honors Program, the Learning Center, Student Leadership & Involvement, Student Services, faculty (when available), and graduate students (when appropriate). Advisors are required to attend an annual advisor-training session, are responsible for an average load of three students, and contribute to

ongoing policy and program development.

Student compliance and program evaluation are monitored by the program coordinator through the use of Web-based contact reports, Web-based program evaluation, and enforced registration holds. Registration privileges are suspended until all program requirements are satisfied. The reinstatement of registration privileges is presented as a positive consequence for program compliance, an approach that de-emphasizes the registration hold as a negative consequence for failure to comply. Students failing to participate in the program remain ineligible for registration until July 1st or January 1st.

The Freshman Withdrawal Retention Program is an intrusive advising program constructed around formal needs assessment and designed to provide structured transitional support to students granted dismissal amnesty upon completion of the first term. In particular, the program targets freshmen with term averages lower than 1.00 after one term of attendance. Identified students must complete five mandatory program components necessary for continuing registration eligibility.

Formal Needs Assessment

Students complete the *Noel Levitz College Student Inventory* (CSI-B) on-line assessment, which is then used to match students' needs to advisors' expertise. All students sign an informed consent prior to taking the inventory.

Pre-semester Advising Session

For the purpose of early intervention, advising sessions are held on the last Friday prior to the first day of the spring term. One-on-one meetings with academic advisors are used to address factors affecting a student's personal and academic transition. Most important, advisors review and revise students' schedules where necessary, ensuring appropriate registrations to optimize academic success.

Academic Conference

All students attend a large group meeting held the first or second Friday of the new term. During this session, the program coordinator reviews degree, probation, and academic requirements to gain good standing. While the conference is designed to connect students with their assigned advisor for the first time during a smaller break-out session, the presence of representatives from all units at a keynote address exposes them to the larger framework of support services at Rutgers, reinforcing the message that Rutgers staff is committed to students' success. In

addition, the large group format helps students understand that they are not alone in experiencing transition difficulty.

Individual Advising Sessions

Students meet with their assigned advisor three times during the semester, including an initial, follow-up, and exit session. During the initial advising session the CSI-B is reviewed and goals are established. Meetings continue every 3 to 4 weeks and are scheduled to precede semester withdrawal and registration deadlines, maximizing student options if they experience persistent difficulties during the semester. Advising contacts are communicated to the program coordinator via Web-based advising contact reports.

On-line Program Evaluation

Upon the completion of the exit advising session, students are E-mailed a Web link address for an evaluation. Once the evaluation is received by the program coordinator, student registration privileges are reinstated.

Compliance Supports

Because students experiencing academic difficulty are among the most difficult with whom to establish contact, several monitoring supports are routinely employed to maximize student utilization of advising services. While registration holds are the primary means by which students' compliance is enforced in the Freshman Withdrawal Retention Program, other monitoring supports are also used.

Course and credit restrictions. Contingent upon their level of academic difficulty, students on probation are limited to a maximum number of courses and credits. Students in the Freshman Withdrawal Retention Program are limited to 5 courses and 16 credits. Student compliance is enforced during the 3rd week of each semester when their registrations are reviewed. Students exceeding their limit are notified via campus mail and E-mail to amend their schedules by the deadline for course withdrawal. Registrations are reviewed again after the withdrawal deadline. Thereafter, students failing to comply with the established restrictions are withdrawn from courses and credits at the discretion of the program coordinator. Students are notified about their registration adjustment(s) by mail or E-mail.

Exceptions to course and credits restriction. Only seniors and scholarship students may appeal for an exception to the course and credit restriction. Students may appeal by completing an application for credit and course restriction waiver. Seniors are

required to meet with a advisor in their major and minor departments as well as the senior class advisor before the appeal will be reviewed. Scholarship students must provide a progress report of grades, including verification from faculty, and an academic plan before the appeal will be reviewed.

Warning notice advising. Faculty warnings are issued by the registrar each term. Academic Services reinforces the importance of these warnings by mailing an additional notice via E-mail to students with two or more warnings. In particular, students with three or more warnings and students on probation are required to meet with an advisor. Such proactive measures are designed to intervene before the situation can escalate to the point of additional probation or dismissal.

Generally, these outreach efforts have received positive feedback from students, with response being particularly favorable among freshmen. As of fall 2006 all freshmen receiving two or more warnings are required to come in for advising or are subject to a registration hold prohibiting access to make changes to their registration.

Registration holds. Students required to participate in advising or a specific retention program such as the Freshman Withdrawal Retention Program are subject to registration holds. Holds are applied prior to the first day of the registration period. By prohibiting students' ability to complete a registration for the next term, advisors motivate them to follow through with advising appointments. Students may have a hold removed by completing program requirements or by appealing for removal of the hold if the program has concluded. All students are notified by mail that a registration hold has been applied. Students are informed about the reason for the hold and process for getting the hold removed. The potential for an academic hold is discussed in the original letter of probation and as a part of each retention program.

Students may appeal by submitting a review by faculty that verifies academic progress and a written academic plan. Depending upon the date of the appeal, the student may need to submit both the faculty verification and the academic plan. Students failing to file an appeal by the last day of classes remain ineligible for registration until January 1st or July 1st. Registration holds have proven to be the most effective measure in leveraging contact with students.

Remove probation letters. Letters notifying students that they have been removed from probation are issued in recognition of students' efforts to overcome their academic difficulties. These letters serve to strengthen students' weakened academic confi-

dence by providing a tangible incentive for their hard work as well as communicating that Rutgers administrators are as proud of students who overcome academic adversity as they are of those who achieve a position on the dean's list.

Program Evaluation:

Since 2000 the program has been very successful, serving a combined 850 students, with 55% of them persisting to the next semester in good standing, on continued probation, or eligible for continued study because they withdrew or did not register during the probation term. Prior to the inception of the program, only 45% of students had persisted. Furthermore, comparison of outcomes for student participation in the Freshman Withdrawal Retention Program since the spring 2000 shows a consistent increase in the number of students removed from probation and a consistent decrease in the number of students dismissed after a second term.

Evaluation has also shown a marked increase in the number of students choosing to take a leave of absence by withdrawing or deferring registration, effectively maximizing the opportunity for successful continuation of study in a later term. The overall number of students in the freshman withdrawal probation category (term GPA < 1.0) has steadily decreased from 192 in 2000 to 99 in 2006. See Figure 19.

Program Strengths and Challenges:

Strengths:

- Through early intervention, the intrusive nature of the program effectively addresses those most vulnerable to dismissal.
- By assuming a one-size-does-not-fit-all approach, the program foregrounds students' self-identified needs and motivations, thus fostering greater student investment.
- The use of formal assessment highlights areas of competence and deficiency and thus improves the quality of developmental advising.
- Because each program requirement represents a point of contact with students, continuity in the advising relationship is ensured by the program structure.
- Through the cooperative advising efforts of the Rutgers College Retention Advising Board, the expertise and resources of the university are brought to vulnerable students. As a result, students need not research and access them independently. Consequently, student confidence in the college support system is bolstered and students better understand how

to navigate the larger support network effectively when future concerns arise.

- The program improves advisor competencies by establishing a network of colleagues across support service units. By building collaborative relationships, the program improves the quality and accuracy of advisor referrals to other colleagues.

Challenges:

- Consistently high student program participation response rates require significant investment of time and human resources. Students are called prior to the pre-semester advising session and prior to the academic conference. For students who have not completed the assessment by the first day of school, E-mail reminders are issued.
- Long-term monitoring and support of students are limited by lack of human resources. While advising students in the Freshman Withdrawal Retention Program is a shared staff responsibility, tracking program outcomes and persistence resides solely with the program coordinator. Although program outcomes and persistence rates from freshman to sophomore year are routinely tracked, without committed human resources, consistent cohort-graduation data are considerably difficult to produce for this program.
- Because the majority of advisors are from other units and volunteer their time, maintaining professional advising investment and representation across campus can be challenging.
- Although consistency in advising is addressed with annual training, maintaining consistency among professional advisors from other units has proven difficult.
- Volunteer advisors have taken a hiatus from participation and start advising students referred to their units without having completed the current annual-training session.

Figure 19 Rutgers College retention evaluation

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Rutgers College Retention Evaluation 2005-2006

Since the year 2000 retention management for students experiencing academic difficulty has been defined by the ongoing development of programming including assessment, advising, monitoring supports and student persistence outcomes for each semester. While these initiatives are coordinated through Academic Services, the delivery of services through advising is a shared responsibility provided by a cooperative collective referred to as the Rutgers College Retention Advising Board. This collective consists of Rutgers College professionals from almost every available college and university support unit. Participants include: Academic Services, Alcohol Drug and Substance Abuse Program, Aresty Research Center, Athletic Academic Support, Career Services, Counseling Services, Educational Opportunity Fund Program, Educational Success Program, the Honors Program, the Learning Center, Student Leadership & Involvement, Student Services, Trio-Student Services, faculty (when available), and students (when appropriate.) Participating board members serve as advisers to students in the programs, as well as contribute to on-going policy development.

As a result of these ongoing cooperative efforts, several retention programs and monitoring strategies have been implemented with positive results since 1999. These initiatives have largely contributed to an observed shift in the retention culture for students in academic difficulty that can be inferred from the progressive decrease in the total number of students listed in the scholastic standing reports for each semester. While the significance of the specific factors influencing this downward trend are not clear, support for these observations can be found in the following evaluation of the Freshman Withdrawal Retention Program for the 2005-2006 academic year.

Figure 19 Rutgers College retention evaluation (continued)

Scholastic Standing Key	
Continue Probation—	Category of scholastic standing assigned when a student on probation earns a second consecutive term average lower than 2.0. Typically referred to as a CP.
Drop or Dismissal—	Category of scholastic standing assigned when a student earns a term average lower than 1.35. Students earning a term average less than 1.35 are dismissed from matriculation and are subject to an appeal and readmission process in order to continue matriculation. If students are readmitted they are assigned to a second level probation with a mandatory term grade point average requirement of 2.0 and typically referred to as a P2. Readmission is not guaranteed.
Freshmen Withdrawal—	Category of scholastic standing assigned to freshmen earning a term grade point average less than 1.00 for the first term of attendance. The label, withdrawal, is used as it is typically most academically prudent for these students to take a voluntary leave of absence.
Good Standing—	Category of scholastic standing assigned when a student earns a term average higher than 2.0.
No Registration—	A previously matriculating student does not re-enroll to continue matriculation.
Probation—	Category of scholastic standing assigned when a student previously in good standing earns a term average lower than 2.00. Typically referred to as a P1.
Remove Probation—	Category of scholastic standing assigned when a student previously on probation earns a term grade point average higher than 2.0.
Scholastic Standing Docket—	A summary report of grades generated each semester for students with grade point averages below the set standard for good academic standing.
Withdrawal—	An official discontinuation of matriculation occurring while a semester is in progress.

Figure 19 Rutgers College retention evaluation (continued)

**Fall Semester Grade Report Comparison
1999-2005**

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Drop	523	465	454	373	353	262	175
Continue Probation	68	55	57	73	56	54	32
Probation	804	755	632	647	591	531	530
Freshman Withdrawal	192	139	123	95	93	107	99
Remove Probation	566	617	554	517	480	428	620

Table 1.

**Spring Semester Grade Report Comparison
2000-2006**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Drop	619	589	603	435	409	366	369
Continue Probation	115	113	105	109	86	86	84
Probation	445	433	444	336	321	304	281
Freshman Withdrawal	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Remove Probation	579	584	589	527	502	453	397

Table 2.

Tables 1. & 2. represent data from the scholastic standing reports for each semester since January 2000. Each table indicates the categories of scholastic standing as reported in the registrar's semester grade report and specifies the total number of students recorded in each of the given categories for the noted term. Fall term grade reports determine a student's spring term scholastic standing. Respectively, spring term grade reports determine a student's fall term scholastic standing. While the total number of students listed with scholastic standing actions across all categories during a spring term is typically lower than the total number of students reported during any fall term, it should be noted that regardless of the term, since 2000 the number of students with scholastic standing issues in all categories combined continues to decrease with the exception of some notable fluctuations for the spring 2006 term (tables 3 and 4).

Specifically, the number of dismissals in spring 2006 has increased and a small but notable decrease can be observed in the numbers of students on continued probation, probation and removed from probation. Although dismissals have increased and remove probation has decreased, proportional to the total number of students dismissed, on continued probation or probation, dismissed students account for approximately 50% of the combined total number of students across categories exclusive of remove probation. However, compared to years previous, this percentage reflects that the number of dismissals for spring 2006 remains consistent with that of recent years. (2000-2002 dismissed students accounted for 52% of the combined categories, respectively 49% in 2003, 50% in 2004, and 48% in 2005.)

Figure 19 Rutgers College retention evaluation (continued)

Freshmen vs. Non-Freshmen Scholastic Standing Comparison

Fall Semester Grade Reports							
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total students on probation	1064	949	812	815	740	692	661
Non-freshmen on probation (All categories)	465	435	434	426	384	302	270
Freshmen on probation (All categories)	599	514	378	389	356	390	391
Percentage of Freshmen on probation in all categories	56	54	47	48	48	56	59

Table 3.

Spring Semester Grade Reports							
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Total students on probation in all categories	560	546	549	445	407	390	365
Non-freshmen on probation (All categories)	345	311	354	267	265	236	200
Freshmen on probation (All categories)	215	235	195	178	142	154	165
Percentage of Freshmen on probation in all categories	38	43	35	40	35	39	45

Table 4.

Though the total number of students on probation does not include students assigned to the drop category of the scholastic standing report it should be noted that of the 365 students dismissed in spring 2006, approximately 46% or 171 of these students were freshmen and 47% or 81 of these students sought and earned readmission for the fall 2006 term. Thus, 47% of all freshmen dismissed at the end of spring 2006 are currently re-enrolled and matriculating on probation.

Though the total number of students on probation for both fall and spring grade reports continues to decrease, the number of freshmen on probation according to grade reports for fall 2004 and fall 2005 shows that freshmen on probation once again account for more than half of all students on probation. While factors contributing to this increase remain unclear, that the population of students on probation across all class years continues to shrink is of considerable encouragement. In fact it might be inferred that as a result of the probation monitoring interventions, that students are making self-management gains beyond the freshmen year.

Figure 19 Rutgers College retention evaluation (continued)

Freshmen Withdrawal Retention Program Results:

**Scholastic Standing Outcome Comparison for
Freshman Retention Program
1999-2005**

Scholastic Standing	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Students Monitored	N=146	N=192	N=139	N=123	N=95	N=93	N=107	N=99
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Did Not Re-enroll (NR)	21	12.50	15	20	20	13	17	19.0
Withdrew	3	8.85	10	14	7	13	7	6.1
Remove Probation	18	22.90	25	17	21	28	27	28.3
Continued Probation	3	3.60	2	6	8	2	2	7.0
Dismissed	54	49.50	48	43	43	44	47	39.4

Table 5.

Except for 1999, table 5 represents Scholastic Standing Outcomes for each year that the Freshman Withdrawal Retention Program has been conducted in its current form. The year 1999 represents scholastic standing outcomes for students who received programming in the form of a mandatory one-time large group meeting.

Although the number of dismissals has consistently declined until spring 2005, spring 2006 shows a remarkable decrease in dismissals for students in the freshman withdrawal category. (Forty-two percent of these students sought and earned readmission for the fall 2006 term.) Additionally, notable increases were observed among Not Re-enrolled, Remove Probation and Continued Probation outcome categories, yet again reinforcing the effectiveness of this programming initiative. For a second consecutive year the data reflects that an increasing number of students in the freshman withdrawal category are opting against re-enrolling for the spring term, while the number of students withdrawing during the semester has decreased marginally.

Students in the “Not Registered” or Withdrawn” now account for 25% of all students in the freshman withdrawal category. Although, this is the recommended option for these students, some follow-up inquiry will be necessary to determine how many of these students are re-enrolling with Rutgers to make good on this strategy.

Figure 19 Rutgers College retention evaluation (continued)

**Comparison of Participation for Each Program Component
2004-2006**

Program Components	2004		2005		2006	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
N of Students Required to Participate	81		81		84	
Assessment (CSI)	75	92.6	75	92.5	79	94.0
Pre-Semester Advising	52	64.1	69	85.1	70	83.3
Academic Conference	41	50.6	55	67.9	57	67.8
3/3 Advising Appointments	35	43.2	24	29.6	58	69.0
2/3 Advising Appointments	11	13.5	19	2.3	11	13.0
1/3 Advising Appointments	8	9.8	16	19.7	5	5.9
0/3 Advising Appointments	21	25.9	22	27.1	6	7.1

Table 6.

Table 6 reports the numbers and percentages for student participation in each of the required program components for students in the Freshmen Retention Program during the spring terms of 2004, 2005 and 2006. Although response rates for the CSI assessment have been somewhat consistent over time, 2006 results show an increase in the CSI completion response rate, while participation in pre-semester advising and the academic conference show small percentage decreases even though raw numbers reflect greater student participation. However, where there was a marked decrease in the percentage of students following through with the individual advising component for the spring 2005 term, data for spring 2006 shows a remarkable increase in the number of students following through with the advising component of the program. This is significant in that the completion rate for the advising component is the highest it has been since these components have been monitored. (2004) Moreover, these results provide good support for the program modifications implemented during the 2006 term.

In particular, based upon the significant decrease in participation for the individual advising component during the spring 2005 term, it was concluded that greater emphasis should be given to keeping these most vulnerable students engaged and on track with the program. In response to this concern the program was modified to increase student incentive for completion of advising as well as to improve program evaluation response. Rather than “prohibiting registration” eligibility with a hold as a negative consequence of poor participation, the program was modified to include “restoring registration” eligibility by releasing a hold as a positive consequence for completing the program. While a bit more intrusive it seems to have had a significant impact that may also account for the marked decrease in the number of dismissals, once again confirming the relationship between student participation and dismissal vs. remove from probation.

Figure 19 Rutgers College retention evaluation (continued)

Five-Year Comparison of Scholastic Standing Outcomes by Individual Level of Participation

Full Participation: Student completed all 4 components of program.

Incomplete Participation: Student participated in all 4 components of program but failed to satisfy the final appointment.

Since a student's participation is considered incomplete upon failing to complete the final advising appointment, incomplete participation has been included in the N of each year for Full Participation.

Scholastic Standing	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	N=26		N=43		N=40		N=37		N=58	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Remove Probation	9	35	13	30	18	45	11+9	54	17+8	43.0
Continued Probation	3	11	9	21	2	5	0+1	3	6+0	10.0
Dismissals	14	54	18	42	15	37	5+11	43	15+12	46.5
Withdrawal	na	na	na	na	5	13	na	na	na	na

Table 7a.

Partial Participation: Student participated in 3 or fewer program components.

Participation for students in this group often excludes major program components, i.e. the CSI, pre-semester advising, and/or typically omits the individual advising component altogether.

Scholastic Standing	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	N=46		N=26		N=27		N=37		N=14	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Remove Probation	10	22	6	23	5	19	8	22	3	21.4
Continued Probation	4	9	1	4	0	0	1	2	0	0.0
Dismissals	32	69	16	62	18	66	28	76	11	78.6
Withdrawal	na	na	3	11	4	15	na	na	na	na

Table 7b.

No Participation: Student completed the CSI only and/or failed to complete all other program components.

Scholastic Standing	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	N=9		N=5		N=11		N=7		N=2	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Remove Probation	2	22	1	20	3	27	1	14	0	0
Continued Probation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	50
Dismissals	7	78	4	80	7	64	6	86	1	50
Withdrawal	na	na	na	na	1	9	na	na	na	na

Table 7c.

Figure 19 Rutgers College retention evaluation (continued)**Five-Year Comparison of Scholastic Standing Outcomes by Individual Level of Participation cont'**

A review of tables 7a and 7b respectively indicate that since 2002 the percentage of students being removed from probation continues to increase while the percentage of students earning an outcome of dismissal continues to decrease until 2005, where the actual number of students dismissed in 2005 (table 7a) is consistent with the actual number of students dismissed in 2004. However, 2006 represents the first semester in which dismissals out number those students removed from probation in the full participation category since spring 2003. Similarly though, the number of students on continued probation in the full participation category is the highest it has been since 2003 as well. This data may account in part for why the number of dismissals exceeds the number of remove probation. Particularly in that a given student may have improved their performance it was not significantly improved enough to be removed from probation. Given the relationship between participation and scholastic standing outcomes it is reasonable to surmise that were it not for the full participation of those who were continued on probation it is highly probable that those students would have been dismissed.

However, comparison of tables 7a, 7b and 7c respectively provide the most noteworthy indicators. Higher levels of participation seem to be positively related to student's scholastic standing outcomes. While students participating at every level are both removed from probation and dismissed, those with the highest level of participation appear to be removed from probation at higher percentages than those with lower levels of participation. Conversely, those with the lowest level of participation appear to be dismissed at greater percentages. The implications of such results can provide important direction to necessary areas for program development and staff training. In particular, these results demonstrate that by implementing structured positive consequences that safeguarded student contact with staff, student program completion and outcomes improved.

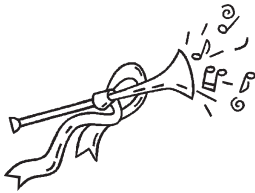
Figure 19 Rutgers College retention evaluation (continued)**Student Program Evaluation:**

All students required to participate in the freshman withdrawal retention program are asked to complete an evaluation of the overall program including an evaluation of the assigned adviser. Despite attempts to secure evaluations from students in the program response rates have been poor. Prior to spring 2006 evaluations were typically issued by advisers upon completion of the final advising appointment. This method proved challenging for several reasons including participation attrition, poor incentive, lack of anonymity and at times adviser oversight. Respectively, as the semester progressed many students failed to complete the final appointment, thus making it impossible to deliver the evaluation. Moreover, beyond the prompting provided by advisers, many students did not have an incentive to stay committed to the program through the exit advising session. For students who followed through with the exit advising session, it is reasonable to expect that responses about the adviser may have been tainted since the student was asked to respond in the presence of the adviser. Last, at times caught up in the process of exit counseling, some advisers would forget to give the evaluation to the student.

In an effort to resolve these challenges and increase the evaluation response rate, some key changes were implemented into the process. Addressing the issues of participation attrition, incentive, anonymity and adviser oversight, the program was modified to include completion of the evaluation as the final program requirement. Upon explaining the program requirements to participants, students are informed that they must complete the program in full including a web-based program evaluation before they will be eligible for a fall term registration. Students are informed that upon receiving their exit contact report they will receive an email acknowledgment with a web address for the evaluation. Upon receiving the evaluation by email registration privileges are restored and an email verifying registration eligibility is issued to student.

Outcomes:

Although the Freshman Withdrawal Retention Program and the monitoring supports that accompany it require a great deal of time and tracking, a positive result over time has become manifest in the student culture. In addition to a numerical decrease of students in academic difficulty, students in general seem to express an increased knowledge about scholastic standing policies and seem to be more open to asking for help. While this decrease in the numbers of students with poor scholastic standing may well be attributed to the deterrent effect of the aforementioned program and monitoring supports, one might conclude that Rutgers College intervening with these students at all continues to send the positive message to our students that our institution cares about our students' success. It is a message that Rutgers continues to send by actively supporting the weakest students as much as we support the strongest through outreach and programming.



EXEMPLARY PRACTICES

Program:

Partnership for Academic Commitment to Excellence (PACE)

Institution:

Ball State University

Contact Information:

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Institutional Information:

- 4-year public institution
- Located in a small city in the Midwest
- Offers liberal arts and professional degree programs from the associate's through doctorate
- Approximately 18,000 students (16,000 undergraduates and 2,000 graduates)
- Enrolls 3,550 freshmen each year
- 13–14% (450–500) of freshmen are on probation after first semester

Advising Delivery:

Ball State attempts to meet the academic, transitional, and special needs of every freshman by maintaining a full-time, central advising office established as part of its University College. Each of the 14 full-time professional academic advisors is responsible for contact and communication with, on average, 350 freshmen. Students are most often seen through appointments; however, advisors adjust their schedules as needed and as desired to accommodate walk-in appointments and create special forums for group advising opportunities, especially during periods in a semester when the student demand for assistance is relatively great. Students are automatically transferred to advising centers and faculty advisors in their majors when they achieve sophomore standing with a declared major. Throughout their freshman semesters, however, each student has a consistent one-to-one contact opportunity with a professional advisor.

Advisors also select special assignments to focus on specific areas of advising and special populations of the freshman class. One of these areas is assisting students who have been placed on academic probation following their first semester. This special population of students is served by advisors who follow specific procedures laid out in a program entitled Partnership for Academic Commitment to Excellence (PACE).

Program History:

In the late 1980s, the Freshman Year Experience (FYE) Committee took up the topic of freshmen on academic probation following their first semester. The committee members' concerns included:

- the large number of freshmen who did not make satisfactory progress toward meeting the minimum requirements for graduation or entering into professional fields of study;
- the absence of procedures for implementing active steps to improve the performance of freshmen on academic probation;
- the conversion to a semester system, which shortened the time to meet the minimum requirements; and
- Ball State University's commitment to comprehensive and personal advising.

The FYE Committee gave University College the charge of developing a program designed to assist these students. A committee was formed with the Assistant Dean of University College as its chair and representatives from academic advising, the learning center, registration and academic progress, counseling and psychological services, and housing and residential programs. The result of its work is the PACE Program, which has been operating continuously since the 1990-1991 academic year. The program was originally administered by the Assistant Dean of University College. Since 1994 it has been administered by a committee of academic advisors with Cynthia Marini, Assistant Director of Academic Advising, as its chair.

Program Description:*Objectives*

The PACE Program supports freshmen on pro-

bation by

- increasing advisor interaction with students;
- assessing reasons for academic difficulty;
- developing a plan for academic recovery, including setting goals and identifying appropriate campus resources; and
- monitoring student progress toward earning a minimum semester GPA of 2.00.

PACE Students

The requirement that students meet with their advisors three times is a primary feature of the PACE Program as is the program's scope: PACE is a campus-wide collaborative effort. Many departments on campus provide services ranging from individual tutoring, workshops, assessment of study skills, and personal counseling. Once students on probation are identified, advisors send a postcard notifying them of the expectation that they attend the Academic Progress Workshop the Sunday before classes begin to learn about the PACE Program. The student is also instructed to make an appointment with his or her advisor. See Figures 20 and 21.

First Advising Appointment

During the first week of classes, students complete the *PACE Student Survey* (see Figure 22). This survey gives them the opportunity to identify reasons for their poor academic performance. Based on his or her responses, the student and advisor may decide to modify the student's spring schedule and also begin to establish an individualized improvement plan. Educational goals and campus resources are identified. Together, students and their advisors review the list of academic support services to determine which services are most appropriate, thus customizing each improvement plan.

Second Advising Appointment

During the second appointment, held 2 to 3 weeks after the initial one, students and their advisors discuss the students' progress to date. They also review and refine improvement plans as needed.

Third Advising Appointment

At midterm and prior to the withdrawal deadline, students and their advisors use the midterm grade report to evaluate progress. If necessary, further modifications of the students' improvement plans are made. Students are also asked to complete a brief evaluation of the PACE Program. Finally,

students and their advisors plan a schedule of classes for the next semester.

Program Evaluation:

From 1999 to 2005, the most tangible measure of PACE Program success has come from the 55 to 62% retention rate of students on probation who remain eligible to return for their third semester. Data show that students on probation who participated in PACE consistently outperformed those who did not participate. For example, in 2005, the majority of the students (68%) participated by meeting with their advisor at least twice. Of these participants, 72% were retained, whereas only 55% of the non-participants (zero or one advising appointment) were retained. In addition, over the 7-year period, the mean second semester GPA for the participating students was 0.5 higher than it was for the non-participants.

Data gathered from the *PACE Student Survey* identify the most common reasons students report for being on probation and the most popular strategies for success. Due to the large number of students involved, a scantron form is the most efficient and potentially accurate means of collecting this information. The results enabled PACE advisors to assess, revise, and plan appropriate support services.

Student responses on the *PACE Program Evaluation*, another scantron form, further demonstrate the strengths of the program. Students who complete the evaluation consistently identify four success strategies as most valuable: regularly attending class (96%), meeting with their advisor (95%), studying more (94%), and managing their time more effectively (89%).

The retention rate and student satisfaction with the program are strong indications of PACE Program success. Students appreciate the support they receive from their individual advisor and their testimonies along with their increased motivation and behavior modification (often in combination with academic support services) provide evidence of program strengths.

Program Strengths and Challenges:

Strengths:

The PACE Program is not static. New features and activities are periodically introduced to better meet the needs of today's students.

PACE Panel: Forum on Success. The Pace Panel was added in January 2003. The panels are composed of five or six PACE Program participants from the previous year. The panelists were much more successful during their second semester and continue

to be successful students, generally earning at least a 3.00 GPA each term. The panelists have always been quite open about their situation and make many useful suggestions. The audience consists of students who are currently in the PACE Program. The audience responds well to the panelists because they can identify with them. Audience members are asked to evaluate the panel at its conclusion, and the comments are very positive. See Figure 23.

The event begins with the students checking in and an introduction of the panelists. Panelists then engage the audience in approximately 50 minutes of unscripted dialogue. In addition to questions from the audience, panelists reflect on their experiences and the reasons for their own academic difficulty. They also talk about the learning habits they have changed, the resources they have used, and how they achieved better GPAs.

Welcome Back Workshops. In January 2006, three advisors presented workshops aimed specifically at the freshmen on probation. Like the PACE Panel: Forum on Success, these workshops were appreciated by those who attended. The topics included the following:

- *On an Academic Journey:* Equipping you with the skills needed for college-level academics;
- *Say What You Mean:* Empowering you to engage in and facilitate positive communication outcomes in academic circumstances;
- *The First Test:* Helping you approach your tests with confidence.

Challenges:

Advisors continue to face decreasing student participation throughout the PACE Program. The overwhelming majority come to their first appointment. With each subsequent appointment, fewer students attend. In addition, despite the advisors' efforts, some students never respond to requests to participate. Advisors send those students who fail to make an initial appointment a flyer with a graph indicating the importance of participation in the program. The PACE Committee continues to strive for increased participation.

Figure 20 PACE Students Checklist at Ball State University

PACE STUDENTS CHECKLIST SPRING 2006				
Name	BSU ID#	Adv		
Academic Index				
FALL GPA				
FIRST APPOINTMENT - by January 13		Date	_____	
_____	1. Schedule Modification			
_____	2. Complete and Discuss Pace Student Survey			
_____	3. Selection of Academic Support Services			
_____	4. Schedule 2nd Appointment			
_____	5. Other _____			
SECOND APPOINTMENT - by February 9		Date	_____	
_____	1. Review Academic Support Services			
_____	2. Predict GPA			
_____	3. Discuss and Review Syllabi			
_____	4. Review Time Management Tools			
_____	5. Schedule 3rd Appointment			
_____	6. Other _____			
THIRD APPOINTMENT - by March 20		Date	_____	
_____	1. Discuss Mid-semester Grades			
_____	2. Review Academic Support Services			
_____	3. Modification of Program (where appropriate)			
_____	4. Fall Class Schedule			
_____	5. PACE Evaluation			
_____	6. Other _____			
SPRING 2006 GPA _____				
Accumulative GPA _____				
Action (Check): <input type="checkbox"/> Disqualified <input type="checkbox"/> Retained On Probation <input type="checkbox"/> Retained Off Probation <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrew <input type="checkbox"/> Not Registered				

Figure 22 Questions on the *PACE Student Survey* to students on probation at Ball State University

PACE STUDENT SURVEY*

1. WHY DO YOU THINK YOU ARE ON PROBATION?

- I took too many classes.
- My classes were too difficult.
- I selected the wrong major.
- One or more of my classes were too large.
- I had trouble managing my time.
- I frequently left assignments until the last minute.
- When I take a test, I often “forget” what I studied.
- I have difficulty remembering textbook information.
- I get very nervous before taking an exam.
- My tests were too difficult.
- I wasn't very good at taking tests.
- I have trouble taking good notes.
- I didn't spend enough time studying.
- I didn't have a good place to study.
- I missed my classes too often.
- Some of my professors were unfair.
- I didn't get along with my roommate.
- I have/may have a learning disability.
- I had health problems.
- I had personal problems.
- I had an outside job which conflicted with my studies.
- I got involved in too many extracurricular activities.
- My social life interfered with my studies.
- I wasn't prepared for the demands of college work.
- I didn't take college seriously.
- I didn't want to go to college.
- I didn't want to go to Ball State.
- I spent too much time playing on the computer.
- None of the above

2. WHAT KINDS OF THINGS COULD HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER STUDENT?

- Free tutoring at the Learning Center.
- Free counseling for academic problems (e.g., test anxiety).
- Free counseling for personal problems.
- Become more motivated and apply myself more.
- Attend class consistently.
- Make more time for studying.
- Develop better study skills.
- Make out a weekly study schedule.
- Explore a new major.
- Consider whether Ball State best meets my career goals.
- Seek help early in the semester, not as a “last ditch” effort.
- Work to resolve problems I have in my residence hall.
- Improve communications with my instructor(s).
- None of the above

*PACE Student Survey prompts and questions listed here appear in a scantron format used by advisors and their students at BSU. With the form as a scantron tool, students are instructed to darken spaces beside all statements pertaining to their first semester experiences. The scantron form allows program facilitators to collect student responses into a database from which statistical information can be drawn for data analysis.

Figure 23 Schedule of a Ball State University, PACE Program, Forum on Success

Program	<p>A Forum on Success! Hosted by Academic Advising</p> <p>NQ 324 285-1161 Please sign in and be seated following usher's instructions. Relax, and enjoy the program.</p>	<p>P.A.C.E. (Partnership for Academic Commitment to Excellence)</p> <p>P.A.C.E., a program designed to assist freshmen who have been placed on academic probation, is intended to provide guidance to help students strive for and achieve academic success at Ball State University!</p>	Academic Advising at Ball State—your partner for success!
	<p>Part I</p> <hr/> <p><i>"Been there!" "Done that!"</i> Panelists reflect on their experience as PACE participants and what they feel caused them to be in academic distress.</p>	<p>This program requires students to be very pro-active as they restructure their academic discipline.</p> <p>Through the efforts of your academic advisors and peers, you will have opportunities to talk about what works, what doesn't work, what resources are available, etc.</p>	
	<p>Part II</p> <hr/> <p><i>"Making changes!"</i> Panelists talk about the learning habits they changed, the resources they used, and how they achieved better GPAs.</p>	<p>We're here to help you achieve the academic success you desire and are capable of achieving! The commitment is up to you!</p> <p>You're taking an important step by participating in this event, and we hope you'll continue to meet with your academic advisor and make use of the many resources available.</p>	
	<p>Part III</p> <hr/> <p><i>Questions, Answers & Discussion</i></p> <p><i>Dot down a couple of questions you would like to ask the panelists:</i></p> <p>(1) _____ _____ _____</p> <p>(2) _____ _____ _____</p>	<p>You're taking an important step by participating in this event, and we hope you'll continue to meet with your academic advisor and make use of the many resources available.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> Make the commitment to yourself to succeed! YOU CAN DO IT! </p> <hr/> <p>Produced by: Academic Advising Ball State University</p>	