2013

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Intensive Follow-Up of WMU Probation Students to Increase Retention and Academic Success

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Introduction

The purpose of this project was to increase retention within the College of Arts and Sciences. Students on probation with a 1.99 or lower and less than 56 credits were identified for intensive intervention to develop appropriate student learning objectives in keeping with the mission and strategic goals of the University.

This proposal aligned with the first goal of WMU’s strategic plan: Ensure a distinctive university—by fostering the success of our students by identifying the barriers to retention and graduation, and create services to meet the needs of our students.

The University is losing the majority of students in the first year of college. The belief that probation students just do not study enough or they have far more emotional or non-cognitive factors to predict student success.

In recent years, more focus has been placed on non-cognitive factors and how those factors can affect academic success. For example, students with high self-esteem, self-awareness, mastery goal orientation and high locus of control tend to be more successful than peers deficient in those skills.

The purpose of this program was to help students identify and increase their non-cognitive skills in order to be academically successful, retained, and graduate.

Methods

Once the HSIRP Protocol was submitted and approved, a graduate student was hired from the WMU counseling program to meet with students Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 for a minimum of five meetings.

Students were asked to take the following inventories in their first meeting after signing a consent form agreeing to participate:

- Anxiety Inventory
- Authentic Happiness Inventory
- Locus of Control Inventory
- Learning Styles Inventory
- Personality Inventory
- Strengths Based Inventory

The following three inventories were administered again during the final meeting:

- Anxiety Inventory
- Authentic Happiness Inventory
- Locus of Control Inventory

In addition to meeting with the graduate student and taking the inventories listed, students were also asked to do the following:

- Create a calendar or day planner for use during the semester
- See their general education, major, and/or minor advisors
- Develop an understanding about academically planning out their future semesters

Targeted students were:

- Sent a letter by U.S. Mail
- E-mailed a minimum of 3 times
- Called at least 2 times

105 students were targeted for Spring 2012.

Spring 2012 Semester As of Spring Break

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Targeted</th>
<th>Participated</th>
<th>Did Not Participate</th>
<th>Declined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Probation</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS Freshmen/Sophomores</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some Fall 2012 Findings

- 61% of participants scored as extraverted types versus introverted types.
- 61% of participants scored as sensing types versus perceiving types.

Issues students faced during Fall 2012 Semester:

- Abortion
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Domestic Violence
- Gender Issues
- Legal/Court Issues
- Loss: Death of a Parent/Grandparent/Aunt
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Relationship Issues
- Suicidal Ideation
- Suicide Attempt
- Sexual Addiction

19 Retained
15 of the 19 Off probation 80%
7 of the 14 Dismissed 50%

Conclusion

- Many students today work too many hours, do not study enough, and/or just are not ready for college. However, many more students have far more emotional or non-cognitive factors impacting their academic success.
- The belief that probation students just do not study enough or lack the ability to succeed academically is a myth. In order to start helping probation students, or any student struggling, we need to understand the deeper non-cognitive or emotional issues they are facing.

References


Acknowledgements

The Assessment Fellows Grant Committee for seeing value in working with probation students on non-cognitive factors.

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Patricia Hinckley for her commitment to this project and her tireless effort to help the students once they agreed to be part of the study.

All the probation students that agreed to participate and found value in being part of the study.

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