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The Phoenix Project: An Intrusive Retention Initiative for At-Risk Students

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The Phoenix Project: An Intrusive Retention Initiative for At-Risk Students

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Introduction

• Universities competing for a smaller pool of students; need to retain them once we admit them
• More Support services and programs are needed
• The Phoenix Project targets dismissed/readmitted students and students on probation after their first semester.
• Pilot Year: 2013 – 2014

Objectives

• Assess results of intrusive advising initiative
• Avoid dismissal and increase retention
• Change status back to good standing within three semesters
• Increase graduation rates of at-risk students within five years
• Prepare graduates to launch satisfying careers

Methods

Sophomores, juniors and seniors on probation
• Registration hold placed until they meet with advisor and sign contract
• Required 3 meetings with advisor throughout semester

Readmitted students
• Mandatory 1 credit UNIV 1030 Academic Recovery Course first semester back

Freshmen probation students
• Revised academic schedules after fall grades posted
• Enrolled in recommended 2 credit UNIV 1030 Academic Recovery Course for spring 2014

The Academic Recovery Class

Classroom Instruction
• Study skills, time management, test taking
• Reflection papers
• Study skills assessment (LASSI)
• Group work on success topics

One-on-One Coaching
• Intrusive academic advising
• Career and life coaching

Mandatory Study Lab
• Two hours in supervised study lab
• Two hours of their choice at approved locations

LASSI (Learning and Study Strategies Inventory)

0 – 50 = Needs improvement
50 – 75 = Consider Improvement
75 – 100 = Not a high priority for improvement

Students’ perception of their skills is considerably higher in the second administration, indicated by much less red in the second chart

Fall Results

• 89% retention rate
• 74% reached Good Standing (2.0 CGPA)
• 17% made Dean’s List and invited to join Lee Honors College
• 67% who were BBA eligible (2.5 CGPA) gained admission
• Positive anecdotal feedback
• Improved study skills (see LASSI chart)

Two Examples

Gabe: Dismissed with a 1.86 CGPA
Fall 2013 made Dean’s List with a 3.65!
Admitted to BBA

Adam: Dismissed with a 1.43 CGPA
Fall 2013 earned 3.46
Admitted to BBA

Going Forward

• Assistant Director position charged with directing and further developing the Phoenix Program has been created
• Provost is encouraging other Colleges to develop and expand similar programs
• More collaboration is taking place across University
• Vision to create WMU Study Lab

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