

Early Intervention Task Force

Final Report

October 12, 2008

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Sam Cochran-University Counseling Service

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Report for Task Force on Early Intervention-Submitted to Committee for Review on October 12, 2008

Chair: Heather Stalling-Office of Residence Life, University Housing

Members: Andy Cinoman-Admissions/Orientation, Chris Clark-Academic Technologies, Sam Cochran-University Counseling Service, Lisa James-Student Health Services, Paula Kerezsi -Academic Advising Center, Jane Omann - Office of the Registrar, Kelly Proctor-Exam Services, Hallsie Reno-CLAS Faculty: Physics and Astronomy, and Mike Venzon-Student Disability Services.

Background, Committee Charge, and Process

The Early Intervention (EI) task force began its time together by meeting with Tom Rocklin and Elizabeth Whitt, and was charged to identify successful practices in comprehensive early intervention systems for student in difficulty (i.e. academic, social, judicial, personal); Identify and assess current early intervention practices and resources at the University of Iowa; Design and propose a plan to create and implement a comprehensive early intervention system for the University; and Design and propose a plan to assess the effectiveness of the system.

The committee met multiple times through fall 2007 into spring 2008. The committee is made up of 10 professionals and faculty members from across campus. Our one student representative Atul Nakhasi resigned from the committee due to conflict with academic work load. The committee did not add additional students and Kelly Proctor left the University mid-way through our progress.

The task force members asked for clarification from the SST Executive Committee regarding Early Intervention Systems, as research yields too many options to explore in a timely fashion. Specifically, the task force requested clarification on the target audience for such programs. Specifically, would the SST Executive Committee define the target audience as: a) identifying in advance those who are more likely to encounter difficulty and planning programs that attempt to prevent or minimize difficulty or as b) developing systems to identify and respond sooner to students who experience difficulty? The SST Executive Committee suggested looking at programs that would address the needs of the majority of students.

The first task for the committee was to research on the web and through any article information on various Early Intervention Programs (EIP).

The task force members then focused their energies on researching comprehensive Early Intervention systems. Using the Higher Education Commission list of peer institutions, each member initiated contact to search for successful practices. This task was difficult as Early Intervention programs are not widely advertised, and contact information is not always easily obtained. However, the practices that were reported to committee members are attached.

The Early Intervention Task Force contacted the following institutions: University of Arizona, Tucson; University of California, Los Angeles; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Indiana University, Bloomington; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; The Ohio State University, Main Campus; University of Texas at Austin; and University of Wisconsin, Madison. Information was also collected from various list serves and other institutions. Overall the information

that was collected was extremely limited. The task force members had difficulty in identifying early intervention programs, having calls returned, and gathering useful information. The members were extremely frustrated with the level of response and the lack of response to share information with the University of Iowa. It was determined after two months of trying to contact institutions that either many did not have complete early intervention programs or if an institution did have one, they were not interested in sharing the information with anyone. The task force member even went back in the spring semester and follow-up with the institutions to see if they would be willing to share their assessment plans for their EIP if they had one, and no one had assessment information that they were willing to share.

Additionally, the task force compiled a list of internal Early Intervention Programs at the University of Iowa. Athlete Student Services was contacted and met with the task force to share what the Gerdin Athletic Learning Center has in place for UI Athletes. Other programs that were examined included: Programs from Registrar's Office (Second-Week Attendance Report, Mid-semester Reports, and Exit Surveys); Student Health Services, Division of Student Services, The Academic Advising Center, The College Transitions course program, College Success Seminar, The Transfer Transition, Center for Diversity and Enrichment, and Iowa Link.

Below is a summary of some of the Early Alert/Intervention Programs that were found either on websites or through other communication.

Successful Practices at Other Institutions:

- Information was found on the NACADA website (<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/clearinghouse/Links/Early-Alert.htm>). The website listed various Early Alert Systems which the task force reviewed. It was interesting what various institutions defined as early alert/intervention programs.
- At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, they consider their TRIO Student Support Services Program an early alert program.
- The University of Arizona, Tucson has a website called SuccessNet which is a student referral service. It is a service for UA students during the first two months of classes and faculty use it to report students who are struggling in the classroom. It clearly states that SuccessNet referrals do not become a part of the student's permanent record. The person in charge of the website, who works at the University Learning Center, did not respond to requests for information. This type of program was found on various institutional websites for faculty members to report concerns.
- At the University of South Carolina, there is a Class Absence Reflection Group that exists for faculty members to refer a student who is missing class excessively due to a variety of reasons. The class is 1 ½ hours and conducted out of the Counseling and Human Development Center.
- Lynchburg College in Lynchburg, VA has an Academic Coaching Assistance Program (ACAP) that they consider part of an early intervention program. This program is set up for first year students to meet with an academic coach to discuss how the student is adjusting to college. They have found that

students that participate in ACAP finish their semesters with a higher average GPA and higher retention rate. Admittance to the program is based on student's high school profiles and invitations are sent to student's homes before they arrive on campus. Other students are admitted after midterm progress reports are issued and if the student has below a 1.8 GPA. The task force also found that many institutions consider their programs for students who are on academic probation to be EIPs.

- Lynchburg College also promotes Academic Recovery Program for students who are academic probation. Their program is voluntary.
- Andy Cinoman was able to attend the First Year Experience Conference and brought back some information from Abilene Christian University and The University of North Carolina Greensboro where they utilize a campus wide, web-based referral system to centralize student information for assistance, persistence, and crisis intervention. The program connected front-line personnel (faculty, staff, peers and parents) to address issues and gain support from resources (academic counseling, career counseling, medical centers, and other support services.) Abilene Christian calls their program S.O.S. Support Our Students, and uses software created by Gideon Resources, a commercial company.
- Indiana University had a variety of resources include their online website Hoosier Help Online. Hoosier Help Online (H2O) is a system that has organized the IU webpage in an easy-to-use format for students, using links and tables that are easy for students to understand and use. There is a way to e-mail questions to the system, and it will pull key words in the question and respond with information to get students to the help they need ASAP. www.h2o.iub.edu
- Arizona State offers a tracking system for faculty/advisors to report students concerns.
- New Mexico Highland University shared their Early Alert/Intervention plan with some screen shots (see below).
- Jane Omann shared two conversations she had with Minnesota and Iowa State. She stated that both institutions use formulas to pre-identify students before they begin classes at their institution. For Minnesota, their program is housed out of financial aid, examining if students pay their u-bill, and focus on some socio-economic indicators. They also try to employ as many students as possible on campus as they see that as a huge benefit and engagement piece for retention of students. Minnesota is not a confidential program and incorporates support for students from various areas. At ISU, at-risk students are assigned a student services staff member as a mentor. There is a workshop for the staff on what it means to be a mentor to these students. The admissions office manages the formula. ISU is confidential program and students are contacted by a letter and receiving a mentor.

Other resources:

- Some extremely helpful information was shared from Joe Cuseo, Professor of Psychology at Marymount College, CA. He is also an alumnus from the University of Iowa. Joe has done some extensive research on “Red Flags” and Early-Alert (Early-Warning) Systems. His correspondence also included an Exit form used for Marymount College to collect data.
- Additional information came from Noel-Levitz. We were sent a report that was conducted for Huston Baptist University. This report contained some valuable information and guidelines for consideration when constructing an Early Alert System. The main focus was to remember to include Pre-Enrollment to Post-Enrollment to Management.
- We also obtained a document from North Georgia College and State University Frequently Asked questions for their Early Alert/Early Intervention Program
- During the time that the task force was meeting there was also a listserv discussion on web-based early-alert systems (also included in this information).

University of Iowa specific Early Intervention/Early Alert programs and information:

- Jane Omann shared data from admissions and Office of the Registrars. She also stated we have a great deal of data including the Regents Admissions Index indicators, and the Persistence Report.
- Jane Omann talked about the Second-week Attendance Report, mid-term reporting, and mid-term attendance. 10 day attendance is sent out to the faculty members after the 10th day of classes. Faculty members are supposed to complete and submit attendance information; students who are not attending classes are sent an e-mail stating they need to talk with their instructor.
- Jane also shared, for the mid-term grades, all faculty members are supposed to report grades. Only grades with a D or F are considered delinquent. For each class an e-mail is sent to the student, their academic advisor, if they are in athletics or international student, another recipient is added. There is also a note put on ISIS. Academic Advisors follow up and they are ranked in order of priority (“F” is more of a priority than “D”, multiple “D” or “F”s are more severe, and Freshman versus Sophomore are more difficult. Advisors use phone call and e-mail combination. There was some discussion that the attendance sheets were not accurate especially for large lecture courses.
- Paula Kerezi discussed Iowa Link, based on a conversation with Brian Corkery, Coordinator of the IowaLink program. Iowa Link is a first year transition program for recruited students who do not meet the standard admission requirements. These 30-40 students include student athletes (although no more than half the participants can be athletes) students recruited based on talent in the fine or performing arts, and underrepresented minorities. The IowaLink program includes a program-specific Orientation, a fall and spring 3 s.h. Academic Seminar, and weekly Study Group meetings that are associated with a General Education course and led by peer Study Group Leaders who are trained in Supplemental

Instruction. There are also other seats held in various courses that teach skill building such as Information Handling. This is a very labor intensive program. The student graduation rates are very high. Iowa Link is housed in the Academic Advising Center. There was some discussion of what happens to the students their second year after such an intensive first year program. (See description below)

- Paula Kerezi also talked about College Success Seminar, a 1 s.h. academic course offered in the spring semester for first year students who have been placed on academic probation. Students self-select to participate in the course. It is offered the 1st eight weeks of the semester. CSS Instructors have concluded that course participants more frequently attribute their probationary status to complex social, emotional, and life issues than to their study skills or habits. The course uses self-reflection, concrete time management techniques, and problem solving. About 90% of the students that participate say they intend to return to UI the following fall; typically, 45-50% do so (most who do not return were dismissed.)
- Paula Kerezi shared that the Academic Advising Center recently tracked students who “no-showed” appointments and found a relationship between failing to keep appointments and a lower GPA. They have a systematic response and contact the student and then if the student falls into particular categories (like a student athlete or a student eligible for services from CDE) they contact their athletic advisor or their Multicultural Coordinator under the Center for Diversity and Enrichment.
- College Transition courses were discussed related to their impact on students. CT is able to focus more on social and academic concerns, specifically the social and affective issues related to student success. Andy Cinoman shared that CT courses had changed their course evaluation question to focus more specifically on why students might leave the university.
- There was also a discussion on how ICON use and ISIS log-ins could be monitored or be part of a tracking system to see which students were participating in technology and checking ICON materials for courses.
- A Parent Calling Project is conducted every other year under the supervision of Belinda Marner in conjunction with UI Parents Association. While this project is not a comprehensive Early Alert program, it does identify parent concerns and initiates follow-up with a variety of departments and services.
- The task force met with Fred Mims and Nancy Parker at the Gerdin Athletic Learning Center on January 29, 2008 to learn more about their comprehensive Early Intervention Program of Athlete Student Services, which uses both pre-arrival statistics and post-arrival performance in the classroom. Due to confidentiality, Athletics has asked the task force to limit the information in print on their system, which offers certain resources to certain students given their academic abilities.
- Discussion was held on what are some current points of contact with students at Iowa:
 - What are some current contacts on campus?
 - New student meetings with Academic Advising Center
 - 2 week absence reports

- Midterm grades
- Eyeball rosters with University Housing
- Floor meetings with RAs with University Housing
- Discipline infractions-contacts with University Housing
- Enrollment in CT courses
- Enrollment in College Success Seminar-required meeting with CLAS Academic Programs & Services
- Drops and adds after the semester starts require a face-to-face conversation for students who are advised at the Academic Advising Center
- The Pick One project
- MMR or student health holds on accounts forcing interactions
- Alcohol Edu
- Using ICON/ISIS log-ins
- Rhetoric for first-year students
- Taking a course that has less than 19 students

Challenges:

The task force took some time to identify some challenges to the development of an Early Alert/Intervention Program. These included:

1. Unwillingness of faculty and staff to participate
2. Failure to correctly identify high-risk students and ensure the student’s participation in the intervention program
3. Confidentiality across different departments (HIPPA/FERPA)
4. Lack of automated monitoring/tracking system
5. Ineffective intervention strategies
6. Stereotyping for students that are involved in particular early intervention programs

Recommendations for Design and Implementation (Short Term/Long Term):

Overall the task force recognized that this was a very daunting task and recommend that a design and implementation team be configured with support from Exam Services, Office of the Registrars, and Admissions as key players. Additionally, the task force was curious on the use of MAP Works as a viable tool for Early Alert/Intervention once student arrive on campus.

The Early Intervention Task Force would like to recommend the following actions be taken to move towards a comprehensive Early Intervention Program (EIP).

Short Term:

1. Before initiating an EIP, there must be a significant culture shift among faculty and staff to include graded work earlier in the semester, so that students can be informed of their progress before the sixth week of class.
2. Work with faculty and colleges to increase participation for mid-term grade reports and Second-week Attendance reporting.
3. Increase 1-on-1 peer interactions within the residence halls between Resident Assistants and residents to identify at-risk behaviors and provide resources and referrals for students.
4. Administer MAP-Works program in one residence hall for Fall 2008 to assess students who are at risk based on a week 5 survey assessing connections to campus, preparedness and participation in academic course work, financial security, and transitions to college. The survey information is collected and each student receives immediate feedback that is personalized with messages stressing solutions and on campus resources to be utilized. Information on high-risk students is also flagged for pre-identified staff to provide additional resources on campus. There is also a week 10 follow-up survey that is distributed to assess whether students feel more adjusted to college and if they are likely to return to the institution for a second semester.
 - a. MAP Works was implemented on Tuesday, September 16th with a 20 minute survey being distributed to the first-year residents who were over the age of 18 in Reinow Hall. MAP Works was approved through IRB and purchased by University Housing and supported by the Office of the Provost. Collaboration included membership on an oversight committee by Michelle Cohenour, MAP Works Campus Coordinator-Residence Life; Heather Stalling-Residence Life; Kathryn Stoltenberg and Tom Kruckeberg-Office of the Registrar; Pat Folsom-Academic Advising; Sarah Hansen and Lisa James-Health Iowa/Student Health; Paula Keeton-University Counseling Services; Nancy Parker and Andy Winkelman-Athletic Advising/Gerdin Athletic Learning Center; Brooke Paulsen-New Dimensions in Learning (CDE); Cathy Wilcox and Carmen Nugent-Financial Aid; Wolfgang Homolka-Residence Life; and Shelby Van Egdome-Residence Life.
 - b. The Response team consisted of Michelle Cohenour, Heather Stalling, Wolfgang Homolka, and Shelby Van Egdome.
 - c. Students took the survey and each question of the survey was divided into 5 factors. For each question the student was either in the red, yellow, or green as they responded. For each of the factors, they were given an overall rating of red, yellow, or green. The red students were contacted by the Response team to follow-up and offer campus resources. Students that were in the yellow or red were contacted during a Connections Call night by University Housing professionals.
 - d. 473 students were eligible for the survey. 260 participated, 213 did not participate, approximately 55% response rate.
 - e. A follow-up survey will be sent out late October. Assessment will be conducted by Michelle Cohenour and will be in the form of focus groups and possibly a final survey at the end of the semester.

5. Continue using exit interviews/forms when students leave The University of Iowa to learn the reasons behind their withdrawal, and track characteristics of those students.
6. Begin tracking mandatory points of contact with students (Alcohol Edu, orientation, academic advising, ICON/ISIS, etc.) to track involvement with students.

Long-term:

1. Create a comprehensive early intervention meta-database which combines data from a variety of sources to identify at risk students. Database combines information from ACT data, demographics, class attendance, ICON/ISIS usage, Pick One participation, midterm grades, information submitted from parents, peers, RAS, TAs, Faculty members, supervisors, and advisors. Discussion focused on the creation of a web-based system similar to UNC Greensboro or the purchase of a product like the one used at Abilene Christian University.
2. Create a First-Year programs office which includes an Early Intervention Program. Discussion centered on the creation of multiple personnel positions to manage interactions with students who are identified as high risk in the database.
3. Define what alerts (poor attendance, change in behavior, change in academic engagement, academic readiness for college, lack of engagement, lack of connections to campus, health issues, financial issues, and personal crisis) trigger what level of response, what the responses will be (referrals to campus resources, peer-to-peer follow-up, tutoring assistance, follow-up with staff or faculty), and who is responsible for appropriate follow-up.
4. Work closely with University Data Warehouse, existing data, and ACT information to create a formula that identifies students who may not be as successful as the masses, and determine an appropriate plan of interaction with and intervention for these students.
5. Consider using an instrument designed to identify “withdrawal-prone” students at college entry (see report from Joe Cuseo.)
6. Create and Implement a Peer Mentoring program to provide peer-to-peer mentoring as resources for students who are at-risk.
7. Create a faculty-student mentoring program to encourage academic connections to campus and faculty members.
8. Create multiple personnel positions to manage interactions with students who are identified as high risk in the database.
9. Develop an assessment tool to measure the level of effectiveness of levels of responses for intervention.

Members of the Task Force would like to thank the SST Executive Committee for this opportunity and look forward to the continued success of the SST Team.

Telephone Interview Template

Begin by confirming your understanding of the basic components of the program, e.g., size, format, collaborators, success record, etc.

Then ask for details....

Throughout, if they are willing to provide/forward samples of their materials it would be great.

LAST QUESTION FOR EVERYONE—MAY WE CONTACT YOU AGAIN AS WE BEGIN TO DEVELOP OUR PROPOSAL?

Early Intervention Questions: Please record who you talk to, their position, and contact information.

1. What are the key features of your program?
2. Size
 - a. Number of students that choose or are mandated to participate
 - b. Number of faculty or staff members that support the program
 - c. Number of students that are offered the opportunity to participate
3. Targeted student population beyond web site information. For example, do they require some students (i.e. at-risk students) to participate in the early intervention program?
4. What are the intended outcomes of your early intervention program? How do you assess whether you have met your outcomes? Are you willing to share the results of your outcomes? Assessment tools?
5. What are the trigger factors for your early intervention program?
6. When are students identified? Before they enter college, or once trigger factors arise?
7. What services are offered to students to aid them and impact their student success? (Tutoring, mandatory class, counseling, interaction with peer mentors, faculty contact, etc.)
8. What resources are necessary to develop and sustain an established early intervention program like yours (funding, cost, personnel, space, etc.)?
 - a. Personnel
 - b. Space
 - c. Budget/cost and funding source. Note; be sure to ask if they pay peers/staff/faculty associated with program.
9. How is the early intervention program governed? (e.g. reporting structure, coordinator/director, advisory boards and their roles)
10. What are the challenges in creating and maintaining such an early intervention program?
11. Who are the collaborators for your early intervention program? (Registrars, Student Health, University Housing, Tutoring Centers, Advising Center, etc.)

Any additional questions you want to add.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Early Alert/Early Intervention Program?

This program enhances student success by identifying at-risk students early and providing them with appropriate assistance so that they can get back on track and accomplish their academic goals.

Why has North Georgia developed this program?

After reviewing institutional data on student success, North Georgia's retention committee determined that intervention methods were needed to help at-risk students. Similar programs have proven to be successful at other institutions in terms of helping Students academically and increasing student retention. NGCSU is committed to student success and this program is an essential part of that commitment.

When will the program be implemented?

The program will begin in fall, 2006.

Who will be referred to the Early Intervention Program?

Students who have earned 0-60 credit hours and who are showing signs of being at-risk of not succeeding academically should be referred by their instructors to their advisors as soon as possible.

Who will make the referrals?

Instructors are asked to utilize this system to refer students who exhibit signs of being at risk of academic probation, suspension, or expulsion. Such signs include the following:

- missing several class meetings during the first month of the semester;
- repeated attempts to submit assigned work late;
- inappropriate behavior in class;
- frequent referrals to the Writing Lab or to the Math Tutorial Center with no performance improvement by the student;
- apparent danger of not passing the course.
- Instructors can also use the box marked "Other" to elaborate or to add a behavior not included on the list.

Referrals should be made early so that students can receive the assistance they need to do well in their courses and adapt to the University's learning environment.

How are referrals made?

Instructors can easily access the Early Intervention system much as they do other services on Banner. They will be able to locate lists of students with less than 60 hours who are enrolled in each of their courses. From these lists, instructors can select the student(s) they want to refer as well as the reason(s) for referral. The latter appears in a drop down menu listing the most commonly used at-risk triggers plus a blank space for "Other". Once the instructor completes the process and clicks "Send," an email message goes to the following: the student, asking him/her to contact the advisor within three days; the advisor, saying that the student has been referred and stating the reason; and a central location where the process will be monitored.

What happens after a referral is made?

Students are directed to contact their advisor within three days and make an appointment to get the advisor's help in designing an individualized improvement plan. This plan may include tutoring, seeing

someone in Student Counseling, talking with the RA, and utilizing other campus resources. Advisors and students are expected to set up further meetings until referred students are back on track. Students are also told that they should contact Ms. Ramona Robinson, Division of Academic Support Programs, if they have been unsuccessful in contacting their advisor. Advisors should contact referred students by email if they have not heard from them within three days, and copy the message to the instructor who made the initial referral, as well as to Ramona Robinson (academicreferrals@ngcsu.edu).

How will students be informed about this program?

Students will receive information through different venues. Instructors are asked to announce the program in their classes and to insert a paragraph about the program in future syllabi. Example paragraphs include these:

I am committed to your success in this course and at this university. I may, therefore, refer you to other persons and/or services available to help you achieve academic success. In turn, if you are referred, you will be expected to comply with the referrals. Please understand that such referrals are not a form of punishment, rather, they are intended to help you.

NGCSU has implemented an Early Alert/Early Intervention program. I am a participating faculty member in the program. I may, then, refer you to other persons and/or services at the university designed to help you achieve your academic goals. You, in turn, will be expected to take advantage of the help offered to you.

As your teacher I am committed to your academic success, not only in this class, but at this university. If I feel you would benefit from some of the special services available to students, I will make the appropriate referral. I will, further, expect you to comply with the referral and take advantage of the services offered.

What are the expected outcomes of the program?

The most important outcome is student success. An additional benefit to the institution is the positive impact this program will have on student retention and improved graduation rates.

How will faculty benefit from participating in this program?

The Early Alert/Early Intervention system should promote a higher level of student engagement, with more motivated students who make better decisions related to their academic life. Engaged students are more likely to meet the course expectations set by instructors. Teaching students who demonstrate a genuine desire to learn and to be active members of the University community should produce a more satisfying and highly stimulating classroom environment for students and instructors alike.

How can the success of the program be ensured?

Faculty and students can ensure success by their immediate and continued participation in the program.

Joe Cuseo

“Red Flags”:

BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS OF POTENTIAL STUDENT ATTRITION

Probably the best warning sign that a student is at risk for attrition is if s/he exhibits *poor academic progress* or *intention to withdraw*. For example, the following behaviors could serve as signals for detecting students who are at risk for academic failure or who intend to withdraw from the institution: (a) poor academic performance in more than one class, (b) delay or failure to pre-register for next-term classes; (c) delay or failure to renew housing agreements; (d) delay or failure to reapply for financial aid or work-study, (e) failure to declare a major by the end of their sophomore year, or (f) request copies of transcripts before eligibility to graduate.

Early-Alert (Early-Warning) Systems

An early-alert system may be defined as a formal, proactive, feedback system through which students and student-support agents are alerted to early manifestations of poor academic performance (e.g., low in-progress grades) or academic disengagement (high rates of absenteeism). Early-alert systems have been implemented in different forms, including the following procedures.

Midterm-Grade Reports

One national survey reveals that more than 60% of postsecondary institutions report midterm grades to first-year students for the purpose of providing them with early feedback on their academic performance. Approximately 10% of these institutions obtain student right-to-privacy waivers that enable them to report midterm grades to both first-year students and their *parents* (Barefoot, 2001). Students with dangerously low midterm grade reports are typically notified by letter to speak with an institutional representative (e.g., academic advisor or academic dean) who, in turn, refers the notified student to the appropriate support service. At some institutions, such as New York University, academic advisors make follow-up phone calls to students who fail to respond to their letter of notification (Early Intervention Programs, 1992). At Brooklyn College (NY), faculty notifies peer tutors when students are having academic difficulties, and the tutors initiate contact with the student (Levitz, 1991).

Use of midterm grades as an “early alert” or “early warning” system has a long history in higher education. Unfortunately, however, there also have been perennial problems associated with successful implementation of this procedure. Some of the major problems are listed below, followed by potential solution strategies.

- 1) *Lack of faculty compliance*—i.e., faculty have neither the time for, nor the interest in, calculating and reporting midterm grades for all their students.

Faculty compliance rates may be increased if instructors are not asked to submit midterm grades for all students, but only for students who are in academic jeopardy (e.g., students whose grades are C- or below). Compliance rates may also be increased by increasing the convenience of the grade-reporting procedure (e.g., easy-to-complete grade forms or on-line grade submission). Lastly, instructors may be expected to show higher rates of compliance if they are recognized or rewarded for doing so by college administrators. (For example, if department chairs and the academic dean “count” their record of compliance in promotion-and-tenure decisions).

- 2) Reporting only a grade at midterm, by itself, does not specify the *source (cause)* of the poor performance and fails to suggest the specific *intervention* strategy needed to

rectify the problem.

Rather than merely reporting a letter grade, some colleges issue early-alert forms that request additional information from the instructor, which is used to help diagnose the specific nature of the problem and facilitate intervention that is tailored or customized to its particular cause. Again, to increase compliance with this request, the report form should be “user friendly,” i.e., completing it should neither be time-consuming nor labor-intensive. For instance, at Adelphi University (NY), early-warning rosters are released during the fourth week of class and faculty report students who are experiencing academic difficulty, using an efficient abbreviation code to identify the specific area(s) of weak performance: AP = Assignment Performance, CP = Class Participation, EX = Examination Performance, IA = Intermittent Attendance, NA = Never Attended, NC = Non-Completed assignments, and WE = Weak Expository skills (Carlson, 2000).

Students’ midterm grades for one course in particular—the *first-year seminar*—may have the potential to serve as a vehicle for *early identification* of first-term students who may be at risk for academic failure and attrition. Empirical support for the diagnostic-assessment potential of FYS grades is provided by institutional research conducted on four consecutive cohorts of first-year students at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, which revealed that first-year seminar grade can predict students’ overall first-year academic performance better than high school grades or college-entry SAT/ACT scores (Hyers & Joslin, 1998). Similarly, at Floyd College—a public community college in Georgia, institutional research indicates that a significant correlation exists between first-year seminar grade and subsequent GPA (Green, 1996). Other campus-specific studies have shown that the specific *grade* earned by students in its first-year seminar correlates significantly with student *retention* (Raymond & Napoli, 1998; Starke, Harth, & Sirianni, 2001). These findings suggest that the course can serve as an accurate diagnostic tool for identifying first-term students who may be academically at-risk and in need of academic assistance or psychosocial intervention.

Such findings suggest that students’ academic performance in the seminar may be predictive of their general academic performance and persistence in their first year of college. If this is the case, then institutions could target intervention procedures that are tailored specifically for beginning students who perform poorly in the seminar, allowing the course to function as a prognostic and diagnostic assessment tool for early identification and interception of academic problems (and potential attrition) during the first year of college. The seminar could perform this diagnostic function in a particularly *proactive* manner if the course concluded before the end of the term, allowing students’ grades to be formally recorded and made accessible to advisors and other student-support or intervention agents while students are still enrolled in other classes. This strategy is used at The Ohio State University, Wooster Campus, where the seminar is offered during the first five-weeks of the semester. Institutional research on this campus demonstrates that student grades in the course are better predictors of their success at the college than high school rank or ACT score; and since these grades are known after the fifth week of the term, early identification and intervention is possible (Zimmerman, 2000).

For seminars that do not conclude before the end of the term, FYS instructors could generate *midterm grades* (or *pre-midterm progress reports*) to students experiencing these problems, which could be circulated to academic advisors or academic-support professionals. First-term students receiving grades below a certain threshold or cutoff point in the seminar may then be contacted for consultation and possible intervention. To determine this cutoff point, assessment could be conducted on grade distributions in the FYS to identify the grade below which a relationship begins to emerge between poor performance in the course and poor first-year academic performance or attrition. For instance, at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, it was found that students who earned a grade of C+ or lower in

the seminar had a significantly higher rate of first-year attrition ($p < .001$) than students who earned a grade of B- or higher in the course (Hyers & Joslin, 1998).

As previously mentioned, use of midterm grades as an “early alert” or “early warning” system is nothing new to higher education. However, a perennial problem with successful implementation of this procedure is lack of compliance—faculty teaching traditional introductory courses may have neither the time for, nor the interest in, calculating and reporting midterm grades for all their students. However, if the first-year seminar grade proves to be an accurate proxy for first-year academic performance in general, then the midterm grade in this single course may serve as an effective and efficient early-warning signal. Moreover, given that first-year seminar instructors often self-select into the program because of their interest in, and concern for promoting the success of first-year students, they should display a high rate of compliance or reliability with respect to submitting students’ midterm grades in an accurate and timely manner.

3) *Lack of student compliance*, i.e., students who receive negative midterm-grade reports do not contact the support person or service recommended to them.

To combat this problem, strong incentives or sanctions may be needed to increase the likelihood that students will connect with and follow through on the recommended intervention. (For example, alerted students may not register for next-term classes until they have seen the person to whom they have been referred).

4) Midterm grade reports may *not be sufficiently proactive*, i.e., they may come too late for the intervention to be effective.

To redress this shortcoming, strategies contained in the following section are recommended. While issuing midterm-grade reports to struggling students is a laudable practice, Tinto (1993) warns that, by the time midterm grades are recorded and disseminated, feedback may come too late in the term to be optimally useful.

Pre-Midterm Alert Systems

Identifying and connecting with students who exhibit disengagement very early in the term—before midterms grades are calculated, processed, and disseminated—represents a more proactive alert system. Some institutions are resorting to an earlier feedback mechanism, based on student *behavior* during the first 4-6 weeks of class (e.g., students who miss class regularly, who are chronically tardy, who consistently fail to turn-in their assignments, or who rarely are prepared for planned class activities). At New Mexico State University, attendance-problem requests are sent to instructors during the second week and sixth week of the term. Students demonstrating attendance irregularities who fall into any of the following categories receive a phone call from the Office of Advisement Services: (a) first-semester students, (b) students on academic probation, and (c) students with multiple early-alert reports (Thompson, 2001).

At Marymount College (CA), the offices of Academic Affairs and Student Development Services collaborate to identify and intercept academic problems during the early weeks of the term through a program titled, “R.E.T.A.I.N.,” an acronym standing for: **Re-Engagement Through Academic Intervention Now**. Easy-to-complete forms are placed in faculty mailboxes that may be used to identify students exhibiting early behavioral signs of disengagement. Faculty are given the option of sending these forms to the Assistant Academic Dean, or contacting the Dean by electronic/voice mail to report students exhibiting early “red flag” behavior. Particular attention is paid to students for whom more than

one R.E.T.A.I.N form has been submitted. The Dean contacts the student's academic advisor to discuss the situation and the two of them decide what intervention strategy to employ. For example, students needing academic support with their class work are referred to the Learning Assistance Center, whereas students whose disengagement stems from "non-academic" (i.e., psychosocial) issues are referred to the Counseling Center. If the Assistant Academic Dean and academic advisor are unable to connect with the student to resolve the problem(s), the Director of Residential Life is contacted to determine whether the student is living in a college residence and may be reached there.

At North Central State College (OH), the COCO information system is used to facilitate the early-alert process. Through this computer system, faculty access their class rosters through the website and the faculty portal. If faculty want to send an early alert to any student at any time during the term (first week through the last), they simply check a box next to the student's name on the website roster. This takes the faculty member to another page where s/he checks the problem (non attendance, poor homework, poor tests, other), types in notes if needed, and sends it. The electronic message goes to three places: (1) to the student's e-mail, (2) to the college's Student Success Center, and (3) back to the faculty member who originally sent it. An advisor in the Student Success Center then follows up with a phone call, email, or letter to the student to discuss options. The system was initially intended for use only during the first half of the term; however, faculty liked it so well, they asked for it to be available throughout the term (Walker, 2005).

Empirical evidence for the effectiveness of an earlier-than-midterm alert system is provided by institutional research conducted at Vincennes University Junior College (Indiana). When a student begins to miss class at this institution, course instructors tear off one part of a computer-generated ticket whose keystroke input generates two postcards containing messages of concern about non-attendance, one of which is addressed to the student's local residence and one to the student's permanent address. Additional absences generate a second, more strongly worded postcard indicating that the student is in danger of being dropped from the course. The system also generates lists for academic advisors, alerting them of students majoring in their academic field who have received attendance notifications. Following institutional implementation of this early-alert system, the number of students receiving grades of D, F, or W was substantially reduced. The beneficial effect of the early-alert system was particularly pronounced in developmental mathematics classes, for which there was a 17% drop in D and F grades and a concomitant 14% increase in A, B, and C grades (Budig, Koenig, & Weaver, 1991). At the University of Mississippi, faculty reported absences electronically for students in different sections of a first-year English course. Students with multiple absences were identified for personal or telephonic intervention. The results of this pilot study revealed that (a) there was a direct correlation between students' class attendance and their academic success (GPA), and (b) students with multiple absences who received intervention demonstrated greater academic success (higher GPA) than students who did not receive intervention (Anderson & Gates, 2002).

Evidence for the positive impact of a pre-midterm alert system on student *retention* is provided by local research conducted at the University of Wisconsin–Oskosh. After the third of week of the semester, early-alert forms are sent to instructors teaching preparatory and basic-skill courses populated by previously identified "high-risk" students. Forms are sent to the Office of Academic Development Services, which initiates intrusive intervention by contacting and meeting with each student to provide academic counseling, referral to a peer tutor program, and suggestions for other forms of assistance. Since the program was initiated, retention rates for at-risk students have risen steadily, reaching a level of more than 70 percent (Green, 1989).

INSTRUMENTS DESIGNED TO IDENTIFY “WITHDRAWAL-PRONE” STUDENTS AT COLLEGE ENTRY

This may be considered to be the most proactive of all approaches to early intervention for at-risk students, because an attempt is made to identify these students by assessing their self-reported attitudes and behaviors at *college entry* (e.g., at orientation or during the first week of class).

Listed below is a sample of some of the major instruments that have been used to identify students who may be at risk for college attrition or academic failure.

- College Student Inventory (CSI) (Noel-Levitz)

Intended for administration during new-student orientation or the first week(s) of class, this instrument asks students to respond on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from “not at all true” to “completely true,” to a series of statements that purportedly tap key cognitive and affective indicators of potential attrition (e.g., “I am very strongly dedicated to finishing college—no matter what obstacles get in my way.” “I plan to transfer to another school sometime before completing my degree at this college or university.”) The inventory is available in two forms—short (30 minutes) and comprehensive (60 minutes), and three reports are generated to facilitate individualized interventions. (www.noellevitz.com/rms)

- The College Success Factors Index (CSFI) (Hallberg & Davis)

Contains 80 self-scoring statements designed to assess college readiness during the early weeks of college by measuring eight factors that are purportedly related to “academic aptitude,” namely: (a) responsibility/control, (b) competition, (c) task precision, (d) expectations, (e) wellness, (f) time management, (g) college/school involvement, and (h) family involvement. The test is self-scored and same-day printouts can be generated that include individual students’ total and subtest scores, plus a “watchline” or danger zone indicator for scores falling below the statistical average. (www.csfi-wadsworth.com)

- Anticipated Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (ASACQ) (Baker & Schultz).

This inventory asks students to rank their experience in college by using statements in four subsets: (a) social adjustment, (b) academic adjustment, (c) personal adjustment, and (d) institutional & goal commitment. An “intent-to-persist” score is generated by computing a student’s average score for eight particular statements that have been embedded in the instrument.

Baker, R. W., & Schultz, K. L. (1992). Measuring expectations about college adjustment. *NACADA Journal*, 12(2), 23-32.

INSTRUMENTS DESIGNED TO IDENTIFY AT-RISK STUDENTS’ LEARNING HABITS, ATTITUDES, & MOTIVATION

- Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI); also available in electronic form (E-LASSI) (Weinstein).

A 77-item instrument that takes about 20 minutes to complete and contains subscales relating to attitude, motivation, time management, anxiety, concentration, information processing, selecting main ideas, study aids, self-testing, and test-taking.

(A free sample packet is available upon request from the publisher: hhservice@hhpublishing.com, which includes a self-scoring form, user's manual, and pricing information. For further info about the instrument, you can review the Web version, or you could download a copy of the User's Manual (PDF) from the following link: <http://www.hhpublishing.com/assessments/LASSI/samples.html>)

- Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich & McKeachie)

Similar to the LASSI, the MSLQ is a self-report questionnaire that takes about 25 minutes to complete. It's based on the same general information processing model as the LASSI, but there are a few differences: (1) The motivational scales are based on a general social-cognitive approach to motivation that includes three key components: values, expectancy, and affect. (2) It organizes its cognitive scales into general cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies (a.k.a., "executive processes" that plan and direct learning. (3) Its last general category of scales includes resource management factors.

(For further information about this instrument, contact the Department of Psychology, University of Michigan.)

- Study Behavior Inventory (SBI)

This instrument is designed to efficiently evaluate students' learning skills and attitudes, as well as refer them to campus-specific personnel and programs that can be of help. It can be completed in less than 15 minutes and consists of 46 self-report items relating to (a) academic confidence (e.g., self-esteem & locus of control), (b) short-term study behaviors (e.g., note-taking & reading), and (c) long-term study behaviors (e.g., exam preparation and writing research papers). It also provides "proficiency statements" on students' performance in specific areas relating to student success, namely: time-management, study-reading, general study habits, listening/note-taking, writing, test-anxiety, test-taking, and faculty relations.

(To access more extensive info on this instrument, go to the following website:

www.sbi4windows.com.) (Information on this instrument also appeared in the *Journal of Developmental Education*, 21[2] [Winter], 1997.)

- Achievement Motivation Profile (AMP) (Mandel, Friedland, & Marcus)

A less well-known instrument that has been designed to assess academic motivation, and to detect "academic underachievers." Its content derives primarily from research reported in the book, *Psychology of Underachievement* by Mandel & Marcus. It was originally developed for use with high school students but users claim it is equally applicable to college students.

The instrument is said to be available from WPS (Western Psychological Society), or contact Peter Walsh, who works in learning support services at Ryerson Polytechnic University in Toronto, Canada (pwalsh@acs.ryerson.ca)

- Behavioral and Attitudinal Predictors of Academic Success Scale (BAPASS)

(Wilkie & Redondo)

This is an instrument designed to identify first-year students who are likely to be placed on academic probation, which was developed by Carolyn Wilkie and Brian Redondo at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. This instrument is called the,

and consists of 48 items with four subscales: (a) academic behaviors & motivators, (b) stressors, (c) goals, and (d) alcohol & parties. [For information on this instrument, see the following reference:

Wilkie, C., & Redondo, B. (1996). Predictors of academic success and failure of first-year college students. *Journal of The Freshman Year Experience*, 8(2), 17-32.]

- Freshman Survey (Pickering, Calliotte, & McAuliffe)

This is an extensive survey that has been designed to assess “noncognitive” variables among freshmen, such as attitudes, opinions, and self-ratings. These noncognitive variables are designed to yield a “probation score” and are assessed via items that measure whether students’: (a) have well-defined career plans, (b) plan to obtain a degree, (c) consider the university to be the major focus of their lives, and (d) plan to work 11 or more hours per week during the first semester.

When compared with the traditional cognitive measures used in the college-admission process (i.e., standardized test scores and high school academic performance) with respect to their ability to predict academic problems and attrition during the first year of college, the noncognitive predictors alone resulted in higher “hit” rates (accurate predictions of academic or retention problems) than did use of cognitive predictors alone. In fact, the cognitive predictors alone could not correctly identify any first-year students in academic difficulty, nor could they correctly identify any freshmen who did not return for their second year.

For information on this instrument, see: Pickering, J. W., Calliotte, J. A., & McAuliffe, G. J. (1992). The effect of noncognitive factors on freshman academic performance and retention. *Journal of The Freshman Year Experience*, 4(2), 7-30.

More recent information on the nature and purpose of this instrument may be found at:
www.brevard.edu/fyc/listserv/remarks/piceringandcalliotte.htm

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Exit Interview Form

Please help us assess the quality of your experience here. If you would take a few moments to respond to the following items, the information you provide may help us improve the Marymount experience for future students. Your written comments, in particular, would be especially helpful. Thanks.

(Note: To receive the most honest answers during the withdrawal process, ideally, this form should be administered by someone with whom the student feels comfortable—e.g., a trusted teacher, advisor, or peer—such as a peer leader who may be trained for this purpose.)

For which *reason(s)* are you leaving Marymount?

Please read the options below and circle the appropriate answer(s).

Academic reasons Yes No
If yes, please explain:

Financial reasons Yes No
If yes, please explain:

Concerns about *student life* at Marymount Yes No
If yes, please comment:

Personal reasons other than those listed above. Yes No
If yes, please comment:

Are you *transferring* to another institution? Yes No
If yes, which institution?

Is there anything else about your experience at Marymount (positive or negative) that you think we should know about, which might improve the experience of future students?

Is there anything we can do to help your transition to what you will be doing next (e.g., transfer to another school; obtain a job)?

(Note: This question is suggested, not only because it is the altruistic thing to do, but also because it allows one question that asks what the college could do for the student—in midst of an interview that is otherwise flooded with institution-centered questions designed to obtain information that will benefit the college. Perhaps, inclusion of a question such as this may also serve to increase the cooperation and self-disclosure of the respondent.)

Do you think there is a possibility that you might *re-enroll* at Marymount in the future? Yes No
Maybe

If yes, or maybe, would you like us to send you registration information in the future? Yes No

(Note: You may return without reapplying for admission, if you miss only one semester.)

Address we should keep in our records as your permanent address:

Thanks for coming to Marymount and for your feedback.

Recruit-back Program as shared by Charles Schroeder from Noel-Levitz Retention Consulting: Visit Four Report for Houston Baptist University December 6, 2007.

There is considerable potential in intervening in the decision to dropout or transfer. Consider the following components in the development of a system to prevent some attrition.

1. Flags

- The following indicators target the population:
 - Not pre-registered
 - No housing deposit
 - Transcript request
 - Notification from faculty
 - Notification from residential life
 - Poor academic performance

Process

- The director of retention or advising coordinates receiving feedback from advisors, residential life, financial aid, bursar, registrar, and faculty.
- The director of retention/advising uses the university database to create a list of at-risk students determined from the information above. Further data for each – such as SAT/ACT scores, semester GPA, cumulative GPA, EFC, financial aid, balance, payment plan, and social violations will be helpful in determining the level and type of intervention. The university may decide that it is inappropriate to attempt proactively to retain some of these students (due to social violations, poor academic performance, inability to pay, etc.).

Intervention

- The director coordinates personal intervention from the appropriate person: advisor, residential director, financial aid director, or comptroller/bursar.
- The process should occur three times a year while students are on campus. The process of flagging the at-risk students should take place approximately one week after pre-registration.
- The procedure should also be used after July 1 via telephone calls.

Outreach for re-admits

- Send a letter (with a reapplication form) and/or conduct a telephone campaign during the summer to attract students back to the university who were enrolled in academic years 2005-06 and 2006-07 and who left in good standing.

At-risk Students and Early-alert Systems

Successful student retention initiatives include identification, monitoring/tracking, and intervention system designed to identify, in advance of enrollment, high-risk or dropout-prone students who could benefit from institutional intervention and to identify enrolled students experiencing academic and/or personal problems that might be ameliorated by institutional intervention. Such systems are commonly referred to as early-alert systems.

Early-alert systems are based on the following assumptions:

- Most decisions to drop out occur early in a student's interaction with an institution.
- Many dropout-prone students do not voluntarily seek out institutional support services to assist them with problems that may ultimately lead to attrition behavior.
- It is easier to anticipate a problem than to solve it.
- Faculty and staff are the best referral agents.
- Many student problems are treatable if identified early.
- Time and resources should be focused on the most dropout-prone students.
- Most students respond positively to direct contact in which potential or actual problems are identified and a resource of help is offered.
- There is evidence that such programs are successful in reducing dropout rates.

The goals for a comprehensive early-alert system are:

- To enhance institutional effectiveness and student success by proactively matching student needs with institutional resources.
- To reduce unnecessary student attrition by identifying as early as possible those students who are most dropout-prone.
- To implement a systematic student monitoring/tracking system and an ongoing retention/attrition research database.

We recommend that the university review and modify, as necessary, their ensuing early-alert system. The following generic description of an early-alert system is intended to assist institutions in designing a system appropriate to their special needs and situation.

Identification of At-risk Students

Definition of a High-Risk Student

A student who possesses one or more attributes or characteristics that traditionally have been associated institutionally with higher rates of attrition is a high-risk student.

Using assessment or other sources of information, high-risk students should be identified prior to enrollment and appropriate prescriptive actions recommended on an individual basis. One or more of the following risk factors may qualify a student for special intervention:

- Low standardized test scores;
- Poor high school/other college record;

- Weak study skills;
- Low socioeconomic status;
- Low level of educational aspiration;
- Uncertainty about program of study/reasons for attending college;
- Physical or learning disability;
- First-generation college student;
- Late applicant;
- English as a second language;
- Lack of support system;
- Self-reported need of help;
- Rural residence;
- Out of formal education for several years;
- College not his/her first choice;
- Low predicted college grade point average (PGPA); and
- Student athlete.

Enrolled Students Experiencing Academic or Personal Difficulties

Early-alert systems evaluate a student's academic progress, attendance, and behavior and provide information about problem areas to a central office where students can seek help and the office can proactively reach out to flagged students. Following are some common triggers for faculty or staff referral:

- Excessive number of absences or habitual tardiness;
- Failure on two or more tests;
- Grade point average below a "C";
- Statements about dropping out or transferring to another institution;
- Lack of socialization on campus;
- Non-involvement in student activities;
- Manifestation of adjustment problems;
- Expression of concern about grades;
- Problems with an instructor;
- Behavior that appears to be depressed or apathetic or lacks interest/motivation in becoming involved academically or socially;
- Evidence of need of assistance with study skills; and
- Expression of personal or family problems.

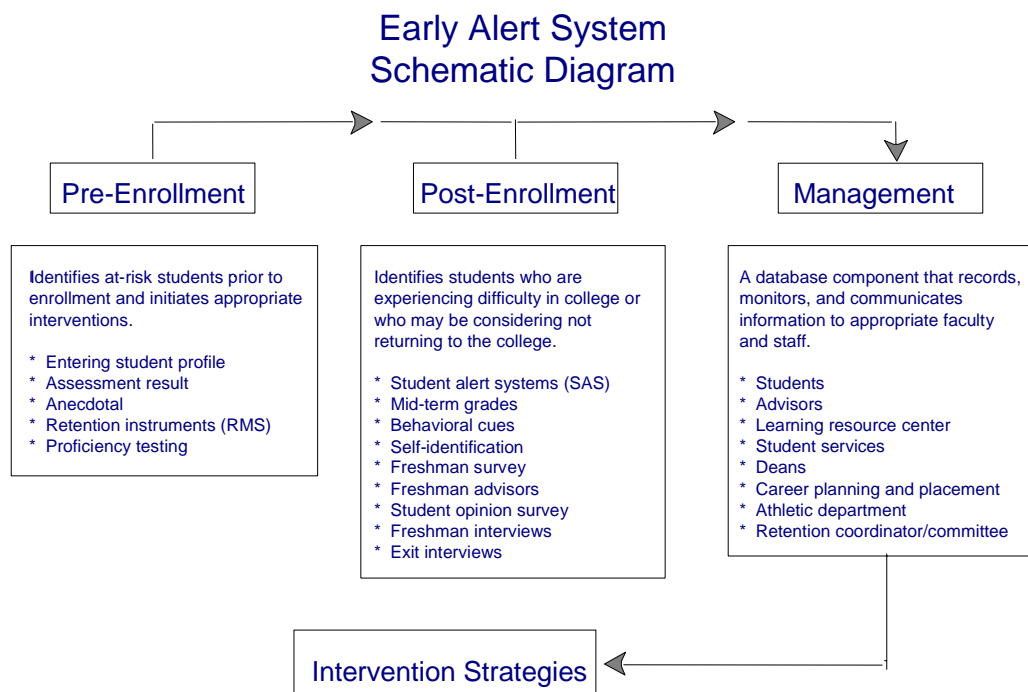
The success of a monitoring and intervention system is based on accurately identifying dropout-prone students and being able to provide immediate attention and assistance that focuses on teaching needed skills or leads to changes in student behaviors. Effective implementation requires a coordinated and cooperative effort by both instructional and student services staff into a single system that promotes student success and retention.

Components of the Early-alert System

Early-alert systems should include the following three components:

1. Pre-enrollment subsystem;
2. Post-enrollment subsystem; and
3. Management subsystem.

Following is a brief description of each major component of the proposed system:



Characteristics of an Effective Retention Management System

- User-friendliness;
 - Ease of data entry;
 - Development of a flexible individual student record in which data are updated, corrected, or deleted instantly;
 - Ability to create information in a variety of formats (e.g., list reports or individual reports) for ease of dissemination to individuals and offices;
 - Provision for tracking the number of contacts a student has with the early-alert system;
 - Ability to track the enrollment behaviors of individuals and groups of students; and
 - Source of information that will assist in the ongoing planning and management of the retention program.
- Some examples are:
- Profiles characterizing selected student populations (e.g., persisters versus dropouts);

- Analysis of at-risk profiles;
- Documentation of contacts with referral resources; and
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of various intervention strategies.

Intervention Strategies

The ultimate success of an early-alert system resides less in its ability to identify dropout-prone students correctly than in the effectiveness of specific interventions with specific students. It is not within the scope of this generic design to identify the specific character of the most appropriate interventions. These will be determined following finalization of the design, further discussion of the various strategies available, review of current strategies, and input from campus personnel and resources. However, a preliminary shopping list might include:

- Conditional admissions;
- Freshman advising/mentoring program;
- Freshman seminar/extended orientation;
- Learning resource center;
- Peer tutoring/advising;
- Supplemental instruction;
- Career/life planning workshop/course;
- Financial aid counseling;
- Faculty friend program;
- Personal counseling;
- Special topic workshops/seminars (e.g., test-taking, financial aid, and helping undecided or exploratory students);
- Student skills workshop/course;
- Developmental/remedial courses;
- Enriched/honors courses;
- Assessment (abilities, values, and interests);
- Computerized career exploration programs;
- Drug/alcohol counseling;
- Student success center;
- Writing, reading, and mathematics labs;
- Special programs for adult learners;
- Freshman interviews;
- Summer bridge programs;
- Proactive/intrusive advising program; and

- Programs targeted for high-risk students.

Designing and Evaluating an Early-Alert System

The proposed early-alert system ensures that the institution is doing everything possible to identify high-risk or dropout-prone students and to intervene in a timely and effective manner. In determining the final system design, it will be necessary to keep in mind the five criteria for system success proposed by George Baker in his work, *Toward Mastery Leadership: Strategies for Student Success*.

- Simplicity;
- Flexibility;
- Reliability;
- Economy; and
- Acceptability.

It is also important to acknowledge the potential problems or obstacles to implementing a successful early-alert system. The following issues may need to be considered in the final design decisions:

- Unwillingness of faculty and staff to cooperate;
- Failure to identify correctly high-risk students and to ensure their participation in the appropriate intervention strategies;
- Failure to respect the confidentiality and privacy of students in a system highly dependent on communication and proactive intervention;
- Lack of an adequate automated system for monitoring/tracking individual students;
- Ineffectiveness of the intervention strategies; and
- Awareness of the tendency for any system to encourage unintentional stereotyping or self-fulfilling prophecies.

Ultimately, the success of the system is based on being able to accurately identify dropout-prone students and to provide immediate attention and assistance that matches student needs with institutional resources.

University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill Notes

UNC-CH does not have a retention problem. Approximately 95% of their first year students return for their sophomore year. The entering class is about 3800 students, with 76% in the top 10% of their high school class. The avg. SAT score was 1293 for the class of 2010, with 22% scoring at least 1400. The graduation rates of freshmen enrolled in 1999 were 70.5% within 4 years, 82.2% within 5 years, 83.7% within 6 years.

[Comparison, one year retention rates at UI 83.3%, the six year graduation rate is 65.5%. The equivalency of 1293 is about an ACT composite of 29. UI's middle 50% composite scores are 22-27 for CLAS. A range of 1360-1400 in SAT scores is about a 31 on the ACT.]

UNC-Chapel Hill has a web page studentsuccess.unc.edu which has information on “What to do if I’m on probation,” frequently asked questions, and descriptions of university resources with links.

On that web page, there is a link to a PowerPoint “Online Student Success Seminar.” All students on academic probation must complete the seminar (and sign a contract to that effect). It is primarily a presentation, but it has several points where the student is quizzed on the content. It emphasizes taking responsibility for learning, and setting goals. It covers time management, work and financial responsibilities, tips for student success, academic advising, choosing a major and university resources.

There is a Retention Coordinator listed on the student success web page, Cynthia Demtriou, who I emailed today.

UNC-CH sends out an Early Warning Roll for freshmen at the beginning of the third week of classes (this year, Sept. 17), due 10 days later. There is also a freshman midterm grade roll in the fall semester (this year, October 8), sent out at the beginning of the 6th week, due 10 days later. Verification class rolls are distributed later (this year, October 22).

“Bounce Back” is a program which is a semester long, with a weekly meeting for an hour for students on academic probation.

The North Carolina system has a web page on student retention and graduate initiative that seems to have stalled in about 2006.

<http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/aa/planning/retention/initiativesetal.htm>

Listserve request from University of Colorado-Colorado Springs:

We are looking at implementing a web-based early alert system rather than the paper-based system we are currently using. Are you using a web-based system, and if so, how do you like it? Was cost a factor in your decision to use the system you chose?

Any advice you can give will be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Barbara

Barbara Gaddis, Ph.D.
Director of Student Retention
UCCS
1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway
Colorado Springs, CO 80918
719-262-3688

Responses:

Elon University uses an email account called "e-warning" that is maintained by a staff member in our academic advising center. Faculty may submit a student's name because of poor academic performance -- usually excessive absences or failing grades. We ask for this information early in the term, but faculty can use it all semester. At the beginning of each term, I send out reminders to all faculty about the system. The e-warning information is then forwarded to the student and his/her academic advisor. All e-warning notices are kept in a file and processed at the end of each semester for reporting. It is expected that the advisor will follow up with the student regarding the notice, but there are no checks there. This is not web-based, but it is electronic and quicker than paper. Of course, not all faculty choose to use this system.

Becky Olive-Taylor, Ph.D.
Associate Dean of Academic Support
Elon University
Elon, NC 27244

Here at Adirondack Community College we use a system very similar to Elon's, only the referrals are submitted via a web form that was created in-house. This web form is available through our Faculty Portal and is password protected. The benefit of the web form is that each referral is automatically dumped into an Access database to help with reporting. It might be worth asking your IT department if this is a possibility on your campus. Feel free to contact me directly if you have any other questions. Hope this helps!

Regards,

Mike

Michael J. Prutsman

Director of the Office for Advisement and Student Instructional Support Adirondack Community College 640 Bay Road Queensbury, NY 12804

Phone: (518) 832-7707

Here at Gannon University we use an early alert system called EARS (Early Alert Referral System). This system permits faculty and/or staff members to refer students on to the appropriate support services department for assistance. Over 80% of these referrals are academic related. However, for those referrals that require mental/emotional counseling, they are referred to our counseling center.

Once the referral is made, my office will contact the student to schedule an appointment. We also contact the student's faculty advisor to gain further insight on this student. Assistance provided for the student may require them to work with Tutorial Services for the semester. It may mean working with our staff in learning better study skills. Once this takes place, we contact the faculty or staff member who made the referral, as well as the student's faculty advisor, to let them know what type of assistance took place.

Our office tracks all referrals made during the semester, and year. We generally will follow-up at the end of a semester with the student, faculty advisor, and the faculty or staff member who made the referral. As you can imagine, 90% of those students who are referred through this system are those who end up leaving the university. Therefore if we can identify these students early in the semester, we can get them the assistance they need, and hopefully prevent them from leaving the university.

This system is not web-based, but electronic and our faculty and staff seem to like this system, and therefore it is utilized frequently. Hope this helps!

Marc

Marc S. Adkins, M.Ed.

Director, Advising & Retention

Gannon University

109 University Square

Erie, PA 16541

814-871-7398 PHONE

814-871-7652 FAX

adkins002@gannon.edu

Last semester, we implemented a new early alert system which targeted math and English classes. Teachers can report multiple students at one time through a spreadsheet that I've created. They fill in the necessary information and email the spreadsheet to me. We then contact the student mainly through telephone; we've tried sending emails to their student account, but they have a bad habit of not checking their student accounts. Our issue here is attendance. I can receive between 50 to 100 students a day who are being reported to first alert due to attendance issues. How effective are your programs in reaching these students? How many students are being reported on a daily basis? What is the process that you follow when a student is referred to

Las Vegas, NM 87701
(505) 454-3319
leahwolff@nmhu.edu

What is Early Alert at New Mexico Highland University?

Student success depends largely upon the early identification and support of those students experiencing difficulties. Because of this, faculty members are greatly encouraged to participate in the Early Alert program. Early Alert is an intervention program geared towards identifying students who are experiencing poor academic performance and excessive absences in the classroom. Early Alert runs during the fourth week of every fall and spring semester. Faculty who teach 100 and 200 level courses are encouraged to participate by posting to Banner Web under Faculty Services tab.

The program depends upon faculty conducting the following activities:

- Faculty teaching 100 and 200 level courses must take attendance in their classes.
- Faculty teaching 100 and 200 level courses **must** include graded assignments in the first three weeks of classes in order to provide students with an early assessment of their performance.
- Faculty teaching 100 and 200 level courses **must** participate in posting to Banner Early Alert during the fourth week of the academic fall and spring semester.

All faculty who teach 100 and 200 level courses are required to post to Early Alert regardless of whether or not they have students to report. Early Alert includes the option to click on “No Students to Report for Class” button. Please **DO NOT** report students who are doing well in class. Early Alert is accessible via Banner Web and can be accessed under the ‘Quick Links’ option on the university homepage, and proceeding to ‘Banner’ on the pull down options. A computer and Internet access is all that is needed to post. Early Alert begins on Monday, February 4th and runs until Friday, February 8th at midnight.

APPENDIX

A. Early Alert Screen Shots:

The screenshot shows the 'First Early Alert' page in a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser. The page title is 'First Early Alert' and the URL is 'https://barweb.nmhu.edu:4443/pls/pord/wwikflea.P_FacFirstEryAirtPost'. The page features a navigation menu with tabs for 'Personal Information', 'Alumni and Friends', 'Student and Financial Aid', 'Faculty Services', and 'Employee'. A search bar is located at the top left, and a 'RETURN TO MENU SITE MAP HELP EXIT' link is at the top right. The main content area is titled 'First Early Alert' and includes a confirmation message: 'The changes you made were saved successfully.' with a checked checkbox. Below this is a warning: 'Enter Never Attended, Many Absences, Poor Academic, Behavior Problems, Regularly Late and Inappropriately Placed indicators and comment. If Confidential appears next to a student's name, the personal information is to be kept confidential.' The 'Course Information' section shows 'College Algebra - MATH 140 001' with CRN '2796'. A warning icon indicates a 10-minute time limit starting at 04:22 pm on Aug 14, 2006. Record sets are listed as '1 - 5', '6 - 10', '11 - 15', '16 - 20', and '21 - 25'. The main table has columns for 'Record Number', 'Student Name', 'ID', 'Never attended class', '3 or more absences', 'Poor Academic Performance', 'Behavior Problems', 'Regularly late', and 'Inappropriately placed or needs Basic Skills'. The table contains four rows of data, with the last row showing 'Valdez, @00047082 Upper'. The taskbar at the bottom shows the start button and several open applications: Microsoft Office, Internet Explorer, and Core Curriculum Guid...

Keep Track of changes when you click on submit!!!

Course Information

TIME Limit!! Submit often!!

Five (5) Records per page!!

Record Number	Student Name	ID	Never attended class	3 or more absences	Poor Academic Performance	Behavior Problems	Regularly late	Inappropriately placed or needs Basic Skills
21	[Redacted]	@00177473	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None
22	[Redacted]	@00177988	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None
23	[Redacted]	@00143409	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None
24	Valdez,	@00047082 Upper						

B. Early Alert Screen Shot (cont.)

First Early Alert - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Address: https://banweb.nmhu.edu:4443/pls/pprd/wwlkflea.P_FacFrstErlyAlrtPost

College Algebra - MATH 140 001
CRN: 2796

Please submit the responses often. There is a 10 minute time limit starting at 04:22 pm on Aug 14, 2006 for this page.

Record Sets: 1 - 5 6 - 10 11 - 15 16 - 20 21 - 25

First Early Alert

Record Number	Student Name	ID	Never attended class	3 or more absences	Poor Academic Performance	Behavior Problems	Regularly late	Inappropriately placed or needs Basic Skills
21	<input type="text"/>	@00177473	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None
Comment	<input type="text"/>							
22	<input type="text"/>	@00177988	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None
Comment	<input type="text"/>							
23	<input type="text"/>	@00143409	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None
Comment	<input type="text"/>							
24	<input type="text"/>	@00047082 Upper Class - not eligible						
25	<input type="text"/>	@00175781	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None
Comment	<input type="text"/>							
General Class Comment	<input type="text"/>							

Record Sets: 1 - 5 6 - 10 11 - 15 16 - 20 21 - 25

Submit Nothing to Report Reset

Please submit responses often. There is a 10 minute time limit on this page.

[Return to Previous](#)

[Term Selection | CRN Selection | Class List | Faculty Detail Schedule | Student Menu | Summary Class List | Contact Information]

RELEASE: 7.1

start Microsoft Office O... 5 Internet Explorer Core Curriculum Guid... Document14 - Micros... 5:29 PM

Executable options:
Submit, No Report, or
Reset!!

Click on boxes to "flag"
student for Early Alert.
Comments are
welcomed and
encouraged.

C: Example of Early Alert e-mail:

-----Original Message-----

From: noreply@nmhu.edu [mailto:noreply@nmhu.edu]

Sent: Monday, February 04, 2008 2:02 PM

To: Martinez, Elisa J

Cc: Woods, Raymond Eugene

Subject: First Early Alert - Student

Instructor Name: Salvarezza, Naomi

Instructor ID: @00107163

Instructor Email: nsalvarezza@nmhu.edu

Term Description: Spring Semester 2008

Course Title: Reading & Writing for College

Subject Code: ENGL

Course Number: 100

CRN: 3405

Advisor Name: Elisa Martinez

Advisor ID: @00028907

Advisor Email: ejmartinez@nmhu.edu

Advisor Phone: 505-4543478

Student Name: Doe, John

Student ID: @009904606

SSGP Code(s): EAPL, SSS1

Phone(s): Mailing Primary: 323-2993800

Parents Primary: 323-2993800

Permanent Primary: 323-2993800

Eaddress(es): Highlands Student JDoe@student.nmhu.edu

Student has never attended class: N

Student has 3 or more absences: Y

Poor Academic Performance: N

Behavior Problems: N

Student is regularly late: N

Student may be inappropriately placed or maybe needs Basic Skills: None

Comment:

Student attends class late and is disruptive during class sessions.

Thank you, Lacey.

We get a lot of students reported because of attendance issues (or lack thereof :), students who haven't gone to class since the first two weeks but have not dropped the class. We also get students who miss quizzes or exams, don't turn in homework, etc. We email, telephone, and send letters, depending upon the circumstances. We hope that the web-based system will let us identify these students earlier. I estimate that we connect (either by

email, phone, or meeting in person) with 1/3 - 1/2 of the students. We also schedule some group activities (biology tutoring, study skills workshop, etc.) but these are attended only by about half of the students (or fewer) who indicated they wanted to attend.

The web-based system we are looking at allows advisors to refer student to various services so we can better track the students. We're hoping this helps.

I, too, would love ideas for helping students.

Barbara

Our First Year Initiative (FYI) office initiates the "DF List" at the middle of each semester. We encourage instructors to go to their class roll site and there has simply been a new option added where instructors can "Submit a DF list" to the FYI office. This option presents all freshmen in their sections and they simply check a box next to a student that is struggling and my provide a comment about the circumstance, whether it's "Student needs to see instructor/drop," or "Student is missing a lot of tests." This is our most substantial intervention with over 100 instructors submitting. We were able to work with our IT department to do this.

On our end of things, the FYI coordinator goes in and periodically goes into the DF list and pulls out the entries in an excel format. The IT people (bless their hearts) have made it so that it will pull the student's ID, full name, campus address, phone number, university email, major, course, submission dates, any comments, and the instructor's info. Our office then contacts the students via email, mail, or phone calls to have them come in and meet with an advisor.

We also have this form for submissions not during the designated "DF" time. This can be found at <http://www.montana.edu/freshman/referral.html>. Anything submitted on this form goes to our office email account, checked by advisors.

Erika M. Swanson
Assistant Dean of Students
First Year Initiative (FYI) Coordinator
erika.swanson@montana.edu
406.994.2826
Montana State University
120 Strand Union Building
Bozeman, MT 59717
<http://www.montana.edu>

What is the name of the web based system you're looking at? We've been looking at something called GradesFirst. It is mainly used with athletic advising but can also be incorporated into our First Alert program. When the teacher would report a student through GradesFirst, the student and advisor would be automatically notified. I'm also curious to know if you have any specific consequences in place for students who continue to be absent from class but who have no intention of dropping. We have implemented a three strikes you're out

system in our Math 101 class only. If they miss three times, the teacher has the option to administratively drop that student. Does your school have a similar policy?

Lacey

Lacey Melancon, M.Ed.
Professional Advisor
Academic Advising Center
Nicholls State University
lacey.melancon@nicholls.edu
985-448-4113 (phone)
985-449-7027 (fax)

Our campus uses the campus website. Faculty complete the Early Alert form on-line and submit it on-line. However, my program (Title V Developmental Studies Learning Communities) finds that this is too slow to save students who do not attend classes in the first two weeks of the semester. So our faculty sends attendance messages directly to the advisors. Faculty are also encouraged to call missing students themselves. The rest of the campus uses the Early Alert forms mentioned above.

Rosa M. Auletta
Manager, Developmental Studies Learning Communities UNM Valencia Campus
(505) 925-8546
(505) 925-8924 fax

Here at North Central State College (2-year), our web-based system was also home-grown. We are in the process of converting to Datatel, however, and are looking at Advisor Trac to not only make appointments, but to also use as an Early Alert System. Our advisors try to follow up with all the alerts but we probably only get to contact about 10% because of a variety of reasons. We do find that the students often contact the instructors, though.

Beverly Walker
Director of Retention Services
Student Success Center
North Central State College
Mansfield, OH
bwalker@ncstatecollege.edu
419-755-4786

We have been using AdvisorTrac for about 3 years now but for appointment and documentation purposes. How do you plan to use it for First Alert?

Lacey

Lacey Melancon, M.Ed.

Professional Advisor
Academic Advising Center
Nicholls State University
lacey.melancon@nicholls.edu
985-448-4113 (phone)
985-449-7027 (fax)

Unrelated message:

We are piloting a program this spring targeting students who have not had much success in their first few semesters at our institution (students on probation with fewer than 30 earned hours, students on conditional admission who earned between a 1.5-2.0, students who successfully appealed suspension or are returning from suspension, students academically alerted in their first semester, etc.). Right now if a student is placed on probation or suspended, the next semester they are enrolled we really do not do anything for them (we basically say to them, just keep doing what you were doing because clearly that was working for you). So, at least now we are piloting a program utilizing mentors, tailored tutoring, academic skill building workshops and strengths based programming (StrengthsQuest).

Although we will have some preliminary data from the pilot, to secure future funding I need to provide examples of programs that have worked for this population of students. We are also eventually going to develop a course so any materials, data, examples anyone could provide would be greatly appreciated. If you need more information about our program and the demographics of our students to see if what you do is comparable, feel free to contact me directly at gomez@apsu.edu or call me at 931-221-7045.

Thanks in advance for your help!

Correspondence from an additional listserv:

Duke University:

Within Duke's liberal arts college, we have an "Early Alert" system that is designed to identify first-year students who are struggling at midterm time. Often, we are already aware of some of these students as they have self-identified as having academic difficulties or their professors have notified the academic deans that they are underperforming and/or having attendance issues.

The Early Alert system is based on the requirement of all instructors that they submit midterm grades for *all* first-year students enrolled in their courses (the deadline is the end of the seventh week of the semester). The academic deans of first-year students run queries to identify those first-years with D and F grades. If a student has one F, 2 Ds, or some worse combination, (s)he is required to meet with his/her academic advisor to discuss what is going on. The advisor fills out a midterm assessment form (see attached) and then faxes it back to the academic dean. Students who fail to meet with their advisor to discuss low midterm grades are blocked from spring semester course registration.

Often, as a result of the required midterm meeting with the advisor, the student will also have a conversation with the academic dean that can result in referrals to Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Student Health or the Academic Resource Center. The advisor can make these referrals, too. We have a fairly complex system for following up with CAPS to ensure that referred students make it over there.

All "Early Alert" first-year students are tagged in our student database (we use PeopleSoft at Duke) and are tracked through the end of the semester. Basically, we want to know how many of the Early Alert students receive help from the Academic Resource Center and what the outcome is, ie, do they receive low final course grades? Because we tag individual students, we can also evaluate the midterm/final course grade patterns based on certain attributes, such as gender, ethnicity and athlete status. Obviously, the pattern we want to see through this assessment is one that shows that students who receive assistance from the Academic Resource Center following low midterm grades end up with satisfactory final course grades.

Although upperclass students with low midterm grades are not tagged in PeopleSoft, they are identified by faculty who are instructed to submit midterm grades for all sophs, juniors and seniors earning a D or F grade at midterm time. Instructors are generally good about doing this, so we are typically aware of upperclassmen who are struggling and can take appropriate measures. (Duke University, NC)

Ohio State University:

During the first week of both the winter and spring quarters, residence hall professional staff send letters to students who have not performed to their potential during the previous quarter. Typically this would include only those students who have received under a 2.0 GPA for the quarter. This intervention provides students with the opportunity to discuss factors that may have contributed to their lack of academic success. Goal setting for the quarter, academic support referral, and guided self-reflection are the outcomes of this process.

Although these meetings are not mandatory, students are strongly encouraged to attend this 45-minute meeting. Throughout the years the program has modified the format and structure. In the earlier years of the program the Learning and Study Skills Inventory (LASSI) was administered to the student prior to the session, and the meeting with the professional staff member used the results of the inventory to guide the discussion. In recent years the LASSI has not been used because some staff members became restrained by the structure of the instrument and focus shifted at times away from the student.

In addition to these academic meetings, one additional way that at-risk students encounter university resources is through the "Winterviews." [At least] all first year students in the resident's halls meet with their students during the first month of winter quarter for a 30-minute interview. There is a "script" for the staff to refer to for these sessions, but the content considers how the student encountered the four goal areas of University Housing during the preceding quarter: diversity, involvement, alcohol awareness, and academic success. The conclusion of the meeting involves scaffolded goal setting for each resident (that will be reviewed as the quarter progresses). (Ohio State University, OH)

IowaLink

IowaLink is a year-long academic support program for recruited first-year students admitted under the IowaLink Program Admission Option in the University's Policy on the Admission of Recruited Students. The program targets recruited students who show potential for academic success but who do not meet the University of Iowa's admission standards. Any University department can recruit students through IowaLink, including Athletics. Students eligible for EOP are considered a recruited group for IowaLink purposes as well. Though its primary target is recruited students, because students who qualify for EOP are considered a recruited group, IowaLink serves a diverse student population and contributes to the University's efforts to increase diversity among undergraduate students.

Instructional and Academic Support Components

IowaLink helps students develop the knowledge and skills essential for academic success at the college level. The program is delivered through instructional and academic support components designed to provide social support as well.

Instructional Component

Each semester, IowaLink students enroll in two *required* credit bearing courses:

- **Academic Seminar (10S:20-21).** Academic Seminar combines the elements of a traditional first-year experience course with the reading, writing and critical thinking skills associated with the University's standard Rhetoric course(s). IowaLink students enroll in Academic Seminar in addition to their Rhetoric course.
- **A study group course.** A large lecture, General Education Program class to which a required Supplemental Instruction (SI) study group is attached. SI integrates study skills with content mastery—"how to learn" with "what to learn." Study groups are led by Honors undergraduates who attend the lectures, read course materials and decide what study techniques and strategies will help Link students master course content. Study groups serve as a "link" between Academic Seminar and the GEP course; a portion of students' grades in Academic Seminar is based on their participation in study group.

IowaLink supports one optional class as well--**Information Handling (21:90)** a basic research course. Many IowaLink students enroll in Informational Handling during their first year.

Academic Support Component

Each student works with an academic support team. For example, a student athlete works with an AAC advisor, their Academic Seminar instructor, their study group leader, and the retention specialist in Athletic Student Services. A non-student athlete works an AAC advisor, their Academic Seminar instructor, their study group leader and a Support Service Programs academic counselor. Other support team members may include departmental faculty and Student Disability Services personnel. The IowaLink Coordinator serves on all academic teams and facilitates the flow of information to all parties. Members of a student's academic support team maintain frequent contact with the student. They also maintain frequent contact with each other, working collaboratively to ensure that students get the help they need.

The academic support component includes early intervention and monitoring systems. IowaLink students attend a special two-day orientation program. During the program, students complete a learning history which they review in an individual conference with program personnel. Students whose learning histories indicated the potential for undiagnosed learning disabilities are referred for further testing. Each semester, support teams receive two formal performance reports from each class, a mid-semester delinquency report (as applicable), and bi-weekly attendance/performance reports from the Academic Seminar instructors and study group leaders. Informal comments regarding student performance is continuous among support team members.

IowaLink is designed to help students build a support system at the University—with other students as well as with program personnel. Academic Seminar and study groups give students the opportunity to work closely in small group settings, encouraging the development of relationships that go beyond the classroom. Students associated with Support Services Programs interact with non-Link students through peer mentors and NDIL tutorial groups; student-athletes have the support of their team members as well as the opportunity to develop relationships through the Athletic Student Services Learning Center. And the academic support teams give students several adult figures to which they can turn when they encounter problems or need assistance.