

Creating an Academic Alert Program

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and the
Achieving the Dream Colleges
at the
Achieving the Dream Strategy Institute

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This program was developed at the Achieving the Dream Strategy Institute in Tampa, Florida during the Advisement and Support Workshop presented by Michael Poindexter, Consultant.

Representatives from twenty-seven community colleges helped develop the framework for implementing the program outlined below.

Creating an Academic Alert Program

- These ideas and concepts will assist colleges interested in developing initiatives to address retention during the first month of the semester.

Goals


- Alert students who are in academic trouble
- Acknowledge students in good standing
- Provide and introduce academic and out of class support programs for students
- Use data and technology to support the program from beginning to end

Outcomes

- Informed students who are aware of their academic progress during the first month of classes
- Students engaged in activities that provide information to assess their progress
- Students who know where to receive assistance
- Increased retention rates

How To Begin

- Use data to identify populations that are in need of help
- Use first time freshmen who are enrolled in six or more credits hours, all freshmen, or students in a particular major/program

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- Introduce the academic alert program in a workshop and present the data that supports such a program to key departments
 - Involve faculty and staff in identifying concerns, issues and roles they wish to play in this initiative


How will students be assessed?

- Pre-test
- Quizzes
- Attendance
- Behavior in class
- Classroom participation
- Assignments

Who should be involved?


Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and their respective offices and departments:

- Faculty
- Registrar
- Tutoring
- Student Government

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- Financial Aid
 - Student Success Centers
 - Retired Staff and Faculty Associations
 - Phi Theta Kappa
 - Others

How will information be collected?

- Use technology whenever possible
- Make the process simple
- Create a check-off application of what the college wishes to assess
- Compile findings
- Technologically generate letters to students with findings

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- Dedicate a non-teaching day to the program
 - Develop a faculty and staff training guide for the program that can be distributed in workshop format, online and hard copy

Evaluation


- Evaluate Program
- Did it Work?
- Did Students come in?
- What did we learn?
- Present the information to the college
- Improve the program

Reward Staff and Faculty


- Celebrate
- Send thank you letters that include a college pen/pencil or recruitment gadget
- Sponsor social activities, such as a pizza party or informal reception to show appreciation
- Remember it's the thought that counts

Things to Remember

- Educate the college on the benefits of a retention program
- Begin with a pilot program - start out small
- Always use data when discussing and developing retention initiatives
- Emphasize the importance of team work: The college is working as a team to implement this program

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- Keep everyone informed
 - Always try to make students feel better
 - Try to improve students' self esteem...
 - Be mindful that it is less expensive to retain students than to recruit new students
 - Make the process easy for everyone involved

- Be concise and specific
- Don't just send alert letters signaling trouble
- Tell students what they must do to improve
- Identify all students that are involved in academic alert by placing an asterisk by their names on class rosters
- Provide multiple avenues for students to receive help

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- Inform students what is available to them
 - Reallocate resources for important programs
 - Remember: Late registration hurts students
 - Evidence (data) provides a roadmap for change
 - Make sure you have all the facts before you make a recommendation to a student
 - Solicit feed back from students to improve learning or services