

The University of Montana--Missoula
First Year Report:
Summer Program for Suspended Students

In May 2007, the Board of Regents granted a temporary exception to the policy that requires suspended students to sit out for one semester before being granted reinstatement.¹

At the close of Spring Semester, 480 students were notified that they had been academically suspended. Included with the suspension letter was a flyer inviting participation in the newly developed summer program. Following is the response:

- 30 mountain campus students chose to seek immediate reinstatement. This constitutes 6.3% of the total suspended student population.
- 5 mountain campus students who were reinstated did not register for summer courses and essentially dropped out of the program.
- 2 College of Technology students sought reinstatement but neither of them registered for classes.

Members of the planning team originally envisioned offering math courses specifically designed for students struggling with math requirements, and special courses and workshops for students needing assistance with time management, test taking, and career planning. However, this vision proved unworkable. First, since most math courses span the entire 10-week session, they were beyond the reach of students being readmitted for second session only. In addition, the needs of the students who took advantage of the program were varied, so no single set of courses or workshops was appropriate.

Therefore, the initial pilot program required students to develop a reinstatement plan with the Retention Coordinator (or an assistant) and to report back at least three times during summer session. One-on-one counseling thus became the centerpiece of the summer program for suspended students.

Attached are four tables that provide data on student demographics, program outcomes, and recommendations.

¹ Following suspension, students will not be considered for reinstatement until at least one semester or the entire summer term has passed. In order to be reinstated, students must receive the approval of the dean of the school or college in which they intend to enroll. Reinstatements are never automatic, and students' requests for reinstatement are unlikely to be approved unless the students offer carefully prepared plans which indicate how their academic performance will be improved.

Table 1--Profile of Participants

Total Number: 25

Count by Class Standing (based on number of credits earned) of Participants

Freshmen	8
Sophomores	4
Juniors	8
Seniors	5

Count by Academic Major

Undeclared	6
Business Administration	3
Biology	3
Geography	2
Pre-Journalism	2
Liberal Studies	1
Pre-English	1
Health & Human Performance	1
Pre-Communication	1
BioChemistry	1
Anthropology	1
Psychology	1
Pre-Psychology	1
Pre-Pharmacy	1

Count by Gender

Male	16
Female	9

Other Characteristics (more than one may apply to each student)

Students with D's or F's in math courses	15
Transfer students	8
Students with children (single parents)	2
Students w/ registered/suspected disabilities	4
Minorities	2
Non-traditional students	2
International students	1

*** Table 2--Student-cited Reason for Academic Suspension**

No. of Students

<i>Freshman transition problems (e.g., lack of maturity, preparedness)</i>	3
<i>Lack of academic focus/poor study habits (e.g. time management, attendance, pre-requisite skills)</i>	8
<i>Health issues (e.g., illness, accidents, mental health problems)</i>	5
<i>Personal/Family issues (e.g., death or illness in family, caretaking responsibilities, housing)</i>	6
<i>Work-related and financial issues (e.g., working too many hours)</i>	3

(Based on student interviews conducted by the Retention Coordinator)

Table 3--Program Participation Outcomes

Participants by Session	No. of Students
First 5-week session only	3
Second 5-week session only	13
Both Sessions	9

Student Credit Outcomes: Attempted and Completed

# of Credits	# of Students who Attempted	# of Students who Completed
0	-	3
1-3	9	10
4-6	10	8
7-9	3	1
8-12	2	3
>12	1	0

Academic Plan Follow Through	No. of Students
Met with counselor 3 or more times	10
Met with counselor less than 3 times	7
Never met with counselor	8

Change in Academic Standing	No. of Students
Returned to Good Standing	6
Improved GPA but remained on Academic Probation	15
Returned to Academic Suspension	3
Withdrew and remains reinstated for Fall	1

Change in Cumulative GPA	No. of Students
Improved by ½ to 1 grade point	4
Improved by more than 1 grade point	16
Failed to improve by at least ½ grade point	5

Average cumulative GPA for all participants

Through end of Spring 07	1.64
Through end of Summer 07	1.76

All Participants: Spring-to Summer GPA Comparison

Average GPA for Spring 07	1.39
Average GPA for Summer 07	2.73

Table 4—**Student Progress through Autumn 2007**

Update: End of Autumn Semester 2007 (January 4, 2008)

Academic Progress

Average cumulative GPA for participants:

Through end of Spring 07: 1.64 n=25

Through end of Summer 07 1.76 n=25

Through end of Autumn 07: 1.80 n=22

Academic Standing

Good standing at end of Summer 07: 6/25 (24%)

Good standing at end of Autumn 07: 11/22 (50%)

Probationary standing at end of Summer 07: 15/25 (60%)

Probationary standing at end of Autumn 07: 6/22 (27%)

Suspended at end of Summer 07: 3/25 (12%)

Suspended at end of Autumn 07: 5/22 (23%)

Cumulative Retention

Returned for Autumn semester 07: 22/25 (88%)

Good/Probationary status at end of Autumn: 17/25 (68%)

Conclusions

1. Participating students benefited from the Summer Program for Suspended Students.

Cumulative GPAs for the 25 participants as a group increased from 1.64 at the end of Spring Semester to 1.76 at the end of Summer Semester. The average GPA for Spring semester was 1.39, for Summer 2.73.

2. Earlier and more extensive outreach is necessary to the success of a Summer Program for Suspended Students.

The number of participants in the first year of the summer program was too small to support special classes or workshops aimed at their specific needs. Higher rates of participation are necessary in order to deliver special courses and workshops, such as a math booster experience (given that 60% of the participants had received Ds and Fs in math).

3. The academic standing of reinstated students remains precarious. Only 6 students (24%) returned to Good Standing at the end of Summer semester, whereas 15 (60%) remained on Academic Probation.² For these 15, failure to obtain a 2.0 GPA during Fall Semester will result in Academic Suspension. [Five of these 15 were in fact suspended at the end of Fall 07]

4. The Summer Program for Suspended Students was cost effective in the first year.

The first year of this program was relatively inexpensive, given the size of the cohort and the services offered. Tuition revenue was more than adequate (25 students, average SCH = 5.5). An increase in the number of participants should offset costs of special classes and workshops.

² The number of credits taken during summer is necessarily small, which limits the overall impact on GPA.

Recommendations

1. Commit to delivering the Summer Program for Suspended Students again in 2008, as authorized by the Board of Regents.
2. Track the academic performance of the 2007 participants to assess the possible effects of summer program participation on subsequent academic success and degree completion.
3. Continue to require students to make use of one-on-one counseling.
4. Continue discussions with the Mathematics department about the feasibility of delivering courses during second session (rather than the full 10-week session) and/or offering special short courses to help prepare students for their fall semester math courses.
5. Investigate additional sources of financial assistance to support students interested in the summer program.
6. Conduct a follow-up student survey to determine perceived program effectiveness and solicit recommendations from the students who took advantage of this program.
7. Improve communications about the program and identify potential participants earlier in the semester, if possible.