

Project: Academic Advancement Program – I Succeed

Start Date: January 5, 2011

Client: Indiana State University

Program Director: Dr. Stephanie Jefferson

Thesis: A retention program geared toward African American students who have been placed on academic probation will help increase the number of African American students who return for the second year as well as increase the student's sense of academic capability and persistence to graduation.

Abstract

Goal one of Indiana State University's strategic plan is to increase enrollment and student success and it has 11 initiatives. The African American Cultural Center (AACC) is leading Initiative 11: to develop a comprehensive retention program for the cultural center to assist both students and parents. The overall mission of the initiative is to increase the numbers of African American students who are retained, academically successful, persist until graduation and are on track to graduate within four years. The initiative will begin with the area that is most current in its needs, helping the African American freshmen AOP students who have been placed on academic probation. AACC is attempting to put in place the Academic Advancement Program-I Succeed. The program will help African American freshmen students who have been placed on academic probation to meet the terms of their probation and develop successful academic strategies that will help them persist throughout college.

This program is part of a four component initiative that concentrates on: preparation, support, development and refocusing.

Introduction

For Indiana State University, the 2010-2011 academic year brought an increase in our freshmen students. This increase included the largest number of African American new freshmen than have been enrolled in the university over the past 10 years. The number of African American freshmen have steadily increased from 225 in Fall 2000 to 586 in Fall 2010, with the greatest increase from fall 2009 with 359 full time, first time freshmen to Fall 2010 with 586. While the increase in African American students is good news in one respect, it brings with it some other problems not easily seen.

African American students, here at ISU, are not being retained, not graduating at the same rate as other students, nor are they on track to graduate on time at the same rate as other students. According to information from the Office of Institutional Research, ISU has been losing 40 – 45% of our African American freshmen cohort by the fall of their second year, each year since 2004. Further, by the end of the fourth year the numbers of African American students prepared to graduate is small and even more students have left the university. Complicating the issue is the fact that we do not know why so many students are leaving prior to obtaining their degree. For example, this academic year, ISU enrolled 586 African American full-time, first time freshmen. Of these 586 students, approximately one third (194) were admitted through the Academic Opportunity Program (AOP) and being served through the Student Academic Services Center. At mid-term, it was discovered that over half (n=107) of these students were facing serious academic trouble. Of the 194 students, 54 were failing almost all of their courses and another 53 were failing 1 or 2 courses. It is very likely that these students had not accessed the necessary services that could have assisted them with their academics and therefore, face the prospects of being placed on academic probation or being dismissed from the University at the end of the Fall 2010 semester.

Proposal

Retaining students is very important to the university's strategic mission. The Academic Advancement – I Succeed Program is geared to help retain students who are at risk of leaving the university due to academic underachievement. Through helping students understand academic policies such as probation and guiding them as they develop positive academic strategies and learn how to navigate the university, the AA-ISU program will help students remain in college.

Work Plan

We will use the final semester grades to identify the students who have been placed on academic probation. These students will receive letters informing them that they have been chosen for the AA-I Succeed program. The letters provide a description of the program and give information about the mandatory meetings.

Two meetings have been scheduled at different venues close to where the students live. The first meeting will be held on January 5, 2011 from 4:30pm – 7:00pm at Indiana University-Northwest, Gary, IN. The second meeting will be held on January 6, 2011 in the ISU Foundation office 20th floor conference room in Indianapolis, IN. Holding the meeting in locations close to where the students live will enable and encourage participation of students and parents. To ensure that the students are aware of the meetings, we will make phone calls to each of them over the semester break. Students who cannot attend the meeting will be able to contact the cultural center to learn about the program. The meetings will cover the academic probation policy and the mission and guidelines of the I Succeed program and will be conducted by Dr. Stephanie Jefferson and Valerie Craig. Following the meetings, a short survey will be given to each student and parent in attendance. This survey will allow us to assess the student's and parent's comprehension of the information and whether or not it is useful.

We anticipate that approximately 50 students will participate in the program and will be divided into two groups: those students who are above a 1.75 grade point average (gpa) and those who have less than a 1.75 gpa. Each student will receive either an undergraduate academic mentor (UAM) or a retention counselor (RC). Those students who have greater than a 1.75 gpa will be given an undergraduate academic mentor. An undergraduate academic mentor is an upper level undergraduate student who has at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average. UAMs will act as scholar role models and must meet with their I Succeed students bi-weekly. UAMs will share successful tips and strategies and help the students problem solve and navigate the university. Those students who have less than a 1.75 gpa will receive a retention counselor. A retention counselor is a graduate student or professional staff person who has the skills and knowledge to help students who may need more intensive support and guidance. I Succeed students who are given retention counselors must meet with them bi-weekly. Meetings with the undergraduate academic mentors and the retention counselors will begin the week of January 10th, the first week of classes for the Spring semester.

Additionally, both groups of students will be required to attend weekly academic seminars taught by Dr. Stephanie Jefferson. The seminars will include such topics as: time management, classroom etiquette, creating a study environment and engaging with the university. We will use the book, "College Rules!: How to Study and Succeed in College" by Sherri Nist-Olejnik and Jodi Patrick Holschuh. Each I Succeed student will also be required to sign a contract detailing specific actions they are required to follow. Prior to beginning the academic seminars, we will survey the students on their knowledge of academic study skills. Additionally, each student will undergo an academic assessment meeting at the third, sixth, and ninth week. Students who are on target to meet their probation grade point average will be allowed to continue with the program. Students who are not on target will be required to meet weekly with a

retention counselor and encouraged to meet with their academic advisors to make changes to their academic schedules prior to the drop deadline date. The academic seminars will begin the first week of classes on January 12th.

At the end of the semester, the students will be surveyed to ascertain their comments and opinions of the program and to obtain any suggested changes.

Reporting and Deliverable Schedule

Timeline

January 5 th -6 th - January 10 th	I SUcceed meetings in Gary and Indianapolis, Indiana. Begin I SUcceed program Have budget approved
January 24 th -28 th	3 rd week academic assessment meetings
February 14 th – 18 th	6 th week academic assessment meetings
March 14 – 18 th	9 th week academic assessment meetings

Budget

\$10,050 is requested for the implementation of the I SUcceed program for Spring 2011. This amount will include travel to Gary and Indianapolis, purchase of the books, salaries for the graduate hourly and for the undergraduate academic mentors.

Stakeholders and Management Plan

The African American Cultural Center (AACC) is responsible for the management of the I SUcceed program. AACC will work with the Student Academic Success Center (SASC) to ensure that the students meet their academic goals. Students will meet with their SASC academic advisors to select their classes for the Fall semester, as well as to add or drop classes from their schedules.

Outcome Assessment

Students in the I SUcceed program will be surveyed prior to the start of the program and assessed periodically (3rd, 6th, and 9th week) throughout the semester to find out if they are on track to meet their academic goals. Students will also be surveyed at the end of the semester to determine their opinions of the program. Finally, students will be surveyed about their knowledge and use of successful academic strategies.