This paper describes a program at Henderson State University, Arizona, that provides interventions for at-risk college students in an effort to keep them in higher education. The Office of Retention provides a wide range of academic assistance services including summer freshman orientation, assessment for non-traditional students, general education audits, career exploration, academic advising, absentee monitoring, and academic assistance for probation students. Students in the program submit weekly Academic Assistance Program Reports detailing activities the student has completed to be a more successful student. The student meets with the Counseling Center, the student's advisor, and with each current professor three times during the semester. The Individual Academic Assistance Work program includes activities designed to help the individual raise his or her grade point average. Self-assessment is encouraged through a personal record of efforts made to raise the student's grade point average. The document contains: (1) suggestions for academic assistance participants; (2) a weekly report sheet; (3) a statement of understanding for probation students; (4) a tracking sheet for the retention office; and (5) a form letter to the registrar's office requesting information about a student. (KS)
Retention of At-Risk Students in Higher Education
Retention of At-Risk Students in Higher Education

Literature addressing at-risk students abounds on the school level; we see concern for students staying in school. On the college level, similar concern has been expressed. What is of importance is to have implementation of retention concepts in place for at-risk students in higher education.

Students in higher education do benefit from retention efforts. What has been observed is that secondary school students who receive a solid core education are better prepared for higher education than secondary students who do not receive a solid core. Further, rural education often means that a complete college preparatory secondary education is not always possible. Many schools do not have the depth of facilities and faculty to fill out that solid core. Also many rural students become first generation college students who have to rely on university services rather than family experience for a sense of direction.

Specific retention concepts have been applied in programs for higher education students. This paper looks at specific interventions used in such a retention program.

The Office of Retention was established to provide a wide range of academic assistance services including summer freshman orientation, ASSET assessment for non-traditional students, general education audits, career exploration, academic advising, absentee monitoring, and academic assistance for probation
students. Students are encouraged to contact the office for information and assistance.

Academic Assistance Program Reports are sheets submitted on a weekly basis by the student that detail the activities the student does to be a more successful student. This contact with the Retention Office allows students a semester-long opportunity to stay in touch with the office as they work to raise their grade point. The Retention Office is a clearing house and contact point for the student/faculty interaction. The Academic Assistance Program has a number of interventions that are reported on the sheet.

The students schedule and keep three appointments during the semester with the Counseling Center to discuss matters such as careers, job prospects, and personal concerns. Choosing a major and finding a sense of purpose are motivational tools that help retain students.

The student has three conferences with each current professor. These conferences focus on the course content, note taking, assignments, and tests. The professor initials or signs the appropriate space on the weekly report sheet. The conferences are ideally conducted at the beginning, at six weeks, and toward the end of the semester. This is a very important opportunity to connect the professor with the student.

A minimum of three conferences per semester are scheduled and kept with the student's advisor at the beginning, at six weeks, and toward the end of the semester. Students with sophomore or higher standing take an unofficial copy of the most recent transcript to the advising session. Advisors sign in the appropriate place on the report sheet. This advisor conference offsets the problem where too often students do not make effective use of advisor skill and availability.

Individual Academic Assistance Work includes activities custom fit to help the individual raise his or her grade point. Students may use the University Library, computers centers and tutorial programs. Commuters especially record study times at home. Study
groups are encouraged as are professor-initiated activities.

Self-Assessment is encouraged through a personal record of efforts made to raise Grade Point Average such as tests taken, successes, problems. Students report on absences, and how they have made up the work. Students estimate grades in each class that they are taking as well as overall trends.

Questions are referred to The Retention Office, as well as requests for tutorial support. The office has an open door that allows all students an opportunity to discuss their academic careers. The opportunity is available; the student needs to make use of the opportunity.

This retention program can be transferred to other academic settings. Any Retention program could make use of this set of standard operating procedures that assist in retention. The whole purpose of the program is to increase the sophistication of the student and facilitate the student's best use of the educational experience.
I. Office of Retention:

Located on the first floor of Womack Hall room 103A, the Retention Office provides a wide range of academic assistance services including summer freshman orientation, asset assessment for non-traditional students, general education audits, career exploration, academic advising, absentee monitoring, and academic assistance for probation students. Students are encouraged to contact the office for information and assistance.

II. Academic Assistance Program Reports:

Each week the student delivers to Womack Hall 103A a report sheet detailing the activities that have been completed. This contact with the Retention Office allows the student a semester-long opportunity to raise their grade point.

III. Academic Assistance Program Activities:

A. The student should schedule and keep two appointments during the semester with the Counseling Center, Womack Hall room 111, to discuss matters such as careers, job prospects, and personal concerns.

B. The student should have two conferences with each current professor. These conferences should focus on the course content, note taking, assignments, and tests. The professor should initial or sign the appropriate space on the weekly report sheet. The conferences would ideally be at the beginning, at six weeks, and toward the end of the semester.

C. A minimum of three conferences per semester should be scheduled and kept with the student's advisor at the beginning, at six weeks, and toward the end of the semester. Students with sophomore or higher standing should take an unofficial copy of the most recent transcript to the advising session. Advisors should sign in the appropriate place on the report sheet.

D. Individual Academic Assistance Work:
Students should do a variety of activities all custom fit to help the individual raise his or her grade point: Huie Library, computers in Evans 114, tutorial programs, etc. Commuters may record study times at home.

E. Self-Assessment:
Personal record of efforts made to raise Grade Point Average: Tests taken, successes, problems.

IV. Refer questions to our office, as well as requests for tutorial support: Henderson state University, Retention Office, Womack Hall 103A, extension 3136,
REPORT# __________________
ID# __________________________

HENDERSON STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF RETENTION
ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
WEEKLY REPORT SHEET

(Return one report sheet to Womack Hall 103A every week of the semester.)

Name ___________________________ Date of Report _________

Need conference with Dr. Steinmiller
Do not need a conference at this time

Activities:

A. Visit Counseling center Womack Hall regarding motivation, personal, career for a total of two visits per semester.

   Session ________ Signature of Counselor ________

B. Conference with Professor in ____________________________ (subject)

   1. Beginning of semester. Signature of Professor ________
   2. 6 weeks grade report. Signature of Professor ________
   3. End of term. Signature of Professor ________

   (minimum of three conferences for each course)

c. Advisor conference (minimum of three per semester)

   1. Beginning of semester. Signature of Advisor _________ Signature ______
   2. 6 weeks grade report. Signature of Advisor _________
   3. End of term.

D. Individual academic assistance programs: Huie Library, Evans 114, Tutorial programs, etc.

   date ______ time in ______ time out ______

E. Self-Assessment: Use this space to specify success or problems you have experienced this week.
STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

ID# __________________________

NAME _______________________________________________________

ADDRESS _____________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

TELEPHONE _________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

MAJOR _______________________________________________________

ADVISOR _____________________________________________________

As a student on probation, I understand that I must participate in an Academic Assistance Program as set forth in the University catalog. Accordingly, I affirm my willingness to participate in this program designed to improve my chances of academic success. I will comply with the academic program prescribed for me by the Director of the Office of Retention; attend all classes; work in the Learning Lab and/or any other activities appropriate to help me reach my goal of academic independence.

_____________________________________________________________

Signature

_____________________________________________________________

Date
I. RESEARCH

_____ Student Name:
_____ Social Security Number:
_____ How did name come to office attention?
_____ Date
_____ Current Schedule
   Working Transcript
_____ Get address, phone etc data from computer/student book
_____ Check to see if on probation
      ____ Yes
      ____ No
_____ Student Support services
      ____ Yes
      ____ No
_____ Housing
_____ Financial Aid

I. ACTION:

_____ Send see-me letter
_____ Contact Advisor
_____ Contact Professors
      ____ Grades
      ____ Attendance
_____ Contact Registrar
_____ Contact Dr. Clark
_____ Contact Dr. Anderson

III. REPORT

_____ To person initiating
_____ Advisor
_____ Professors
_____ Dr. Clark
_____ Dr. Anderson
_____ Tom Gattin
TO: Registrar's Office
FROM: Office of Retention
DATE: ______________________
RE: ______________________

Name: ______________________
ss#: ______________________

We are working with the above named student and request your assistance regarding the following:

___ Transcript (We need a working copy for counseling.)

___ Entrance Test Grades (current ACT, SAT, ASSET)

___ Needs Review of Transcript by Registrar in reference to the following:

___ Grade Point Average
___ Probation
___ Suspension
___ Repeated course /60-90 rule
___ Graduation

___ Correct Advisor

___ Change Advisor

___ New Advising Folder