**Academic Mentor Program Evaluation**

James Madison University invites first year students placed on academic probation upon the completion of their first Fall semester to participate in a mentoring program. JMU’s Academic Mentor Program matches two to three students with a peer mentor from the Office of Residence Life. During mentoring sessions, both mentor and mentored meet on an individual basis to discuss academic goals and means to achieve them. The mentor remains in contact with his/her mentees throughout the semester to ask how they are doing and refer students to available campus services as needed.

We evaluated the academic performance of JMU first year students placed on academic probation for the following Fall semesters, 2004 to 2008; those who participated in the Academic Mentor Program were compared to those first year students placed on academic probation that did not participate in the program. A student is placed on academic probation when their cumulative grade point average falls below a 2.0. The first year students placed on academic probation after their first fall semester are offered a chance to participate in JMU’s Academic Mentor Program. It was hypothesized that those students placed on academic probation in the Fall who participated in the Academic Mentor Program would be more likely to increase their GPA, avoid decrease in GPA, and rise to *good academic standing* (cumulative 2.0 GPA or above) by the end of the following Spring semester than those that did not participate in the program. In order to evaluate the differences in increase in GPA, decrease in GPA, and increase in GPA to good standing, between those that participated in the program and those that did not, we calculated percentages of students in both groups who experienced an increase in GPA, decrease in GPA, and increase in GPA to achieve good academic standing. The same first year students evaluated could be counted in both GPA increase and rising to good standing percentage calculations if they met both requirements. After these calculations, we conducted Chi Square analyses in order to establish if there was a statistically significant difference in percentages across GPA increase, decrease, and increase to good standing between the two groups of students.

The chi square statistics calculated for Spring 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 indicated whether there were statistically significant differences in the percentages of students that experienced GPA increase, GPA decrease, and those students that rose to good academic standing across groups (those that participated in the program and those that did not). In Spring 2005 and Spring 2009, there were no statistically significant differences in percentages of GPA increase for those that participated in the program versus those that did not. Fall 2008 seemed to be the least effective year evaluated for those students that participated in the Academic Mentor Program. Differences were not found to be statistically significant among those that participated in the program versus those that did not in percentages of GPA increase, GPA decrease, and those who rose to good standing. However, Fall 2006 to Spring 2008 established a significant difference between percentages in GPA increase, GPA decrease, and rising to good academic standing across groups. The chi square statistics calculated for these academic years establish statistically significant differences in percentages of first years experiencing GPA increase, GPA decrease, and rising to good academic standing between groups. As hypothesized, a greater percentage of those that did not participate in the program experienced a decrease in GPA and did not rise to good academic standing in comparison to those that did participate in the program. With exception to Fall 2008, over the course of all five academic years evaluated, the chi square statistics established a statistically significant difference in percentages of those students that rose to good academic standing between those students that participated in the Academic Mentor Program in comparison to those that did not. During the four years evaluated, the percentages of students rising to good academic standing by the end of the corresponding Spring semester was determined to be significantly greater than the percentages of those who rose to good academic standing that did not participate in the program.

**Table 1.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Program** | | **Not Program** | **Chi Square** | |
| **Fall 2004**  **Spring 2005** | **GPA increase** | 37/46 (80%) | | 147/207 (71%) | 1.25 | |
| **GPA decrease** | 6/46 (13%) | | 58/207 (28%) | 8.00\* | |
| **To Good Standing** | 26/46 (57%) | | 90/207 (43%) | 3.91\* | |
| **Fall 2005**  **Spring 2006** | **GPA increase** | 37/45 (82%) | | 212/303 (70%) | 2.15 | |
| **GPA decrease** | 8/45 (18%) | | 80/303 (26%) | 2.82 | |
| **To Good Standing** | 31/45 (69%) | | 123/303 (41%) | 19.72\* | |
| **Fall 2006**  **Spring 2007** | **GPA increase** | 40/45 (89%) | | 160/234 (68%) | 6.15\* | |
| **GPA decrease** | 3/45 (7%) | | 68/234 (29%) | 17.26\* | |
| **To Good Standing** | 35/45 (78%) | | 92/234 (39%) | 37.63\* | |
| **Fall 2007**  **Spring 2008** | **GPA increase** | 21/21 (100%) | | 198/282 (70%) | 12.64\* | |
| **GPA decrease** | 0/21 (0%) | | 79/282 (28%) | 28.01\* | |
| **To Good Standing** | 15/21 (71%) | | 104/282 (36%) | 32.37\* | |
| **Fall 2008**  **Spring 2009** | **GPA increase** | | 28/33 (84%) | 207/251 (82%) | | 0.07 |
| **GPA decrease** | | 4/33 (12%) | 43/251 (17%) | | 1.46 |
| **To Good**  **Standing** | | 17/33 (51%) | 120/251 (47%) | | 0.29 |

**Alpha level of .05**

**Note: \* indicates statistically significant Chi Square statistic**

(Jaccard, J. & Becker, M. A. (2002). *Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences 4.* Belmont: Wadsworth.)