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 **LEARNING LOG**
Aligning Institutional Policy with Completion

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DETAILS

MAKING IT WORK, UNDERSTANDING WHAT WORKS, AND SHARING WHAT WORKS

TITLE

Aligning Institutional Policy with Completion


SOLUTION

Redesigned Planning Advising and Student Services

CAPACITIES

Strategic Finance;Policy;Leadership & Culture;Information Technology;Institutional Research

Owner

 [Susan Mayer \(/education/s/profile/005360000047G5cAAE/\)](/education/s/profile/005360000047G5cAAE/)



Record Type

Monthly-Current 2017



INSTITUTION

Miami Dade College

REFLECTION

SITE INITIATIVE

In our first Learning Log for May, we discussed alerts and interventions that provide equitable support for student success by recognizing those students who need different/incremental/targeted cognitive and/or non-cognitive reinforcement. Our new course repeater policy is a good example of this type of intervention.

Until the new policy was implemented in spring 2017, students were allowed to enroll in the same course for up to 4 times with no intervention until the 4th attempt. Every year thousands of students repeat a course at least once, and more than 1000 of them repeat a course twice because they failed or withdrew from it in prior semesters.

PROGRESS TOWARD STUDENT SUCCESS

Last year, a Student Achievement Initiatives (SAI) team of faculty and staff reviewed institutional policies to determine if any of them were impeding student progress towards completion. This analysis identified the course repeater policy because it assumed (perhaps unintentionally) that students would ultimately become more successful in passing a course the more times they enrolled in it, even though there was no intervention leading them to change the way they approached, prepared or completed the course material.

The team recommended pro-active interventions for all course repeaters that provide tools and support to change behavior and outcomes. However, an analysis of the the data on 2nd attempters indicated that there were thousands of students in this category, outstripping current resources to provide effective interventions. The SAI team, working collaboratively with the academic and student deans, crafted a compromise that provides an automatic alert at the second attempt at enrollment. The alert encourages students to meet with professors, advisors and/or seek support from tutors.

A new policy was developed for 3rd and 4th attempters that prohibits them from enrolling without a SMART plan intervention. When a student attempts to enroll, there is a "hold" and a message that directs the student to a SMART plan website. The website (www.mdc.edu/smart (<http://www.mdc.edu/smart>)) includes an explanation of the nw policy a SMART Plan template and instructions for completing it and getting it approved. Students complete the template, which prompts the student to identify prior obstacles to success and strategies to overcome these challenges. The student identifies specifically what s/he will do, when s/he will do it, and how to assess the effectiveness of the new approach to course success. Each student meets with a department chair, advisor or mentor to discuss and review the SMART plan. The chair, advisor or mentor or provides feedback and approves re-enrollment when the appropriate plan is completed. The chair, advisor or mentor and the student also meet at least once during the

semester to review progress and make modifications to the plan if necessary.

Academic department chairs, assistants to the chairs, department advisors, college mentors and other academic administrators received 3 hours of training about the new policy and the SMART plan intervention. Developed and delivered by SAI team members, the training is very hands-on and includes the completion and critique of a SMART plan so participants understand what an effective plan comprises.

The new policy was implemented several weeks ago, effective for Fall term 2017. Approximately 1300 students who had failed or withdrawn from a course two or more times were identified. Each student received a personalized email notifying them of the change in policy and encouraging them to complete the SMART plan and re-enroll in the course. Academic departments also were notified so they could follow up with students to reinforce the message.

IMPACT

The SMART plan implementation was piloted in several sections of a Student Life Skills course for students on academic probation before it was introduced for all course repeaters. The pilot confirmed the ease of use and value of the intervention. Students commented that they wished they had had access to this intervention earlier and several indicated that they referred to the improvement strategies on a frequent basis to reinforce their new approach to course success.

Several faculty also piloted the use of the SMART plan proactively in their courses at the start of the last semester and reported that it is an effective tool to facilitate more intentional student planning and time commitments.

The College is evaluating adding an academic warning alert in advance of academic probation status, and will use a SMART plan intervention as part of that process, if adopted.

INTERNAL/EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Most of the hard work was done by the 5 person SAI team, including analysis of institutional policies, development of new repeater policy, adaptation of SMART plan best practice to MDC, creation and delivery of training materials and face to face training, and development/execution of a communications plan. Faculty also participated in the various pilots of the SMART plan prior to college-wide implementation.

NEXT CRITICAL STEPS

Assessment in fall 2017, including quantitative (number of SMART plans created, pass rate for students who completed SMART plan intervention vs historical pass rates in course at third attempt) and qualitative (ease of use, fidelity of implementation, areas for improvement).

Broader implementation as pro-active early semester tool for increasing course pass rates, especially in high failure/withdrawal rate courses.

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

Opportunity to leverage success of SMART plan into even more proactive inclusion/reinforcement of good study skills and time management in all courses

QUESTIONS/REQUESTS

STATUS

Final

Completion Date 

5/31/2017

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