

## ABSTRACT

### EFFECT OF A BRIEF, STRUCTURED INTERVENTION ON COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCING ACADEMIC DIFFICULTY

This study examined the effect of a brief, structured group intervention on the academic performance and retention of a cohort of academically disqualified-readmitted students at a mid-sized, western, public university. A comparison was made of students who attended a two hour intervention and those who did not attend during the spring 2004 semester.

Both quantitative and qualitative measures were employed in order to gain a richer picture of the student population. Historical data were examined at the end of the semester in which the intervention occurred, and for assessing retention, the immediate semester following the intervention. Examined were term grade point averages, rates of removal from disqualification, retention through fall 2004, and positive academic behaviors as measured by fewer failing grades and withdrawals plus increased repetition to repeat courses for grade substitutions. Students from the intervention cohort participated in a focus group interview. A focus group was attempted and unsuccessful with students from the non-intervention cohort. In order to gain information on the experience of non-intervention students, interviews were conducted.

Both qualitative and quantitative data collected suggest that students attending a brief, structured intervention are more academically successful, as measured by term GPA and fewer failing grades; are retained in greater numbers and attain probation or good standing status more frequently than students who do not attend; and are more likely to seek advising from someone in their major

department. Students in the intervention cohort were knowledgeable of campus resources and policies more often than students in the non-intervention cohort. Frustration was expressed by students from both cohorts regarding confusing information from the study campus on policies, procedures, and where to obtain information. During both focus group and individual student interviews, story telling regarding events happening within their personal lives illustrated the complexities of events impacting on their academic success. Many students shared how campus policy and procedure did not make this time in their lives easier. Academic performance of these students was a complicated mixture of personal events out of balance with the demands of academic life ultimately having a negative affect.

Research methods utilized in this study do not permit the implication that the intervention workshop caused students to be more successful but only that a relationship exists between attendance at an intervention workshop and academic success. Student motivation or some other factor may have influenced these results. Even so, this relationship merits further study and evaluation.

Sonya Lynn Carter Hildreth  
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