Academic Services Center

Middle States Self Study

INTRODUCTION

Retention is a multifaceted issue addressed in a number of ways at Trinity. Academic Services aims to increase retention using academic support programs that focus on helping students maintain good academic standing and helping students who are not in good academic standing increase their grade point averages. Academic Services Center (ASC) achieves these via support programs in the Tutoring/Math Center, academic workshops, and individual consultations to students. Additionally, Academic Services staff provide testing services for the Trinity community.

Similar to complicated retention issues, Trinity's students have many dimensions that make them unique and may even make their goals to earn a degree seem unlikely. One of the greatest challenges which seems common to a number of Trinity women is the struggle to balance multiple roles including: student, parent, care taker, financial provider, employee, daughter, spouse, sister and more. Evidence of the demands students face is seen in a student who expressed determination to thrive in the academic community despite her underdeveloped English language skills and the need to for her financially contribute to the family so her parents would not condemn her for choosing to attend college. Another student also exemplifies how some persist despite challenges when she apologized for wearing dark glasses during a meeting, but refused to apologize for her personal situation or to suggest that it might deter her from her goal. She explained she would have better emotional support and focus after leaving her husband and returning to her parents' home with her young son. Neither student thought it appropriate to excuse their academic performance because of personal situations, but each one strategized to develop plans to improve their grades so they could realize their goal to earn a bachelor's degree.

Taking into account learning differences, academic deficits and individual challenges, Trinity works to provide wrap around services to sustain its students academically and where possible emotionally and socially. ASC, in consultation with the collegiate units, launched a Math/Tutoring Center in 2011 that saw immediate use and that continues to be in relative demand, thus facilitating student success. Tutoring targets general education courses and prerequisite courses to support CAS and SPS students. The Center also incorporates technology that includes Pearson's My Math Lab and My Stat Lab. The goals of tutoring are to help students attain and improve content knowledge and gain confidence in their ability while developing independent learners. In turn, student performance increases which impacts course grades, GPA and retention. (Strategic Goal 1)

Moreover, this initiative complements others in Academic Services, including Disability Services, the Writing Center, and Career Services. Located in the Library, these Services have the value-added attraction of direct access to information literacy resources and thus enhance the Library's visibility and support services. (Strategic Goals 4 and 8)

The workshop topics address skills needed for academic success, information which is crucial for first-year and at-risk students; however, these workshops are open to all. Students may also seek individual consultations regarding their academic development when needed. (Strategic Goals 1 and 8)

During the past three years (2012 – 2015), there have been a total of 1333 students on probation/watch/warning (Prob Stdts) and 38% of them used the services (Prob Users) of ASC. During the same period there were 1999 students who visited ASC for support (ASC Users). Thus, probation students make up 25% of the students served by the unit. Because the status of these students impacts retention and persistence rates, it is important to assess whether the services provided contributed to the retention of students at Trinity.

Table1: Student Usage by Semester

	ASC Users	Prob Students	Prob Users
Spring 2015	288	251	134
Fall 2014	321	224	71
Spring 2014	357	265	71
Fall 2013	419	187	69
Spring 2013	372	208	105
Fall 2012	242	198	56
TOTAL	**1999**	**1333**	**506**

During the same time frame, 2012 – 2015, there were 1501 graduates from Trinity and 191 of these students (13%) were ASC users. ASC impacts a number of

Table 2: Percentage of Trinity Graduates Using ASC

	Graduates	ASC Users	Percentage
Spring 2015	258	33	13%
Summer 2014	35	0	0%
Fall 2014	154	11	7%
Spring 2014	332	59	18%
Summer 2013	52	0	0%
Fall 2013	222	15	7%
Spring 2013	240	41	17%
Summer 2012	50	3	6%
Fall 2012	157	29	18%
TOTAL	**1500**	**191**	**13%**

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

In effort to determine if probation students who used ASC more fare better than students who do not use ASC, staff recorded the number of times each student visited the ASC for tutoring, seminars, or consultations. Then students were categorized by the number of times they made contact ranging from 0 – 4+ visits. ANOVA analyses were conducted each year to determine if the mean GPA differed for students based upon the number of times they visited. Analysis for each year revealed mean GPA did not differ based upon the category. However when comparing the Fall GPA to Spring GPA, one notices that GPA increased more for students who had more contacts with ASC in most cases.

That is, students who made 4 or more contacts with ASC had higher GPAs than students who had fewer contacts (Table 3a). It is worth noting that all the groups increased had an increase in GPA from fall to spring semester except once. in 2013 – 2014 Students with 3 contacts has a decrease in GPA (-.038). Overall, the gains students made in 2013 – 2014 were less than the gains made in other years. However, the increase of students with 3 and 4 or more ASC contacts in 2013 – 2014 and 2014 -2015 had the greatest GPA increases. In fact students with 3 contacts gained .532 points in GPA in 2013 – 2014 and.722 points in GPA in 2014 – 2015. This seems to suggest that students benefit from participating in ASC programming; however, statistical analyses do not indicate a significant relationship between the number of visits and GPA. Additional research is needed to determine what contributed to the increased GPA and what programs are likely to increase GPA and future retention.

Table 3a: Students on Academic Probation: GPA Details by Number of Contacts 2014 - 2015

	n (%)	GPA Range	Fall GPA	Spring GPA	Difference
0 contacts	205 (83)	0 – 1.99	1.766	1.897	.131
1 contacts	15 (6)	.5 – 1.918	1.836	2.141	.305
2 contacts	7 (3)	0 – 1.96	1.672	2.134	.462
3 contacts	7 (3)	1.546 – 1.976	2.329	2.132	-.197
4 or more	12 (5)	.761 – 1.995	1.664	2.386	.722
Total/Overall*	**246 (100)**	**0 – 1.99**	**1.801**	**2.009**	**.208**

Table 3b: Students on Academic Probation: GPA Details by Number of Contacts 2013 – 2014

	n (%)	GPA Range	Fall GPA	Spring GPA	Difference
0 contacts	66 (47)	0 – 1.995	1.615	1.756	.141
1 contacts	22 (16.5)	.795 – 1.968	1.511	1.685	.174
2 contacts	11 (8)	.666 – 1.9	2.087	2.433	.346
3 contacts	10 (7.5)	.712 – 1.9	1.803	1.765	-.038
4 or more	25 (19)	0 – 1.925	2.440	2.496	.056
Total/Overall*	**133 (100)**	**0 – 1.995**	**1.813**	**1.968**	**.155**

Table 3c: Students on Academic Probation: GPA Details by Number of Contacts 2012 – 2013

	n (%)	GPA Range	Fall GPA	Spring GPA	Difference
0 contacts	107 (51%)	0.0 – 1.979	1.234	1.370	.136
1 contacts	17 (8%)	0.0 – 1.999	0.558	0.653	.095
2 contacts	24 (12%)	0.0 – 1.997	1.007	1.210	.203
3 contacts	20 (10%)	0.0 – 1.936	0.868	1.400	.532
4 or more	40 (19%)	0.0 – 1.982	1.221	1.652	.431
Total/Overall*	208 (100)	0.0 – 1.999	1.115	1.350	NA

*Total/overall data was computed using all cases (not an average of the categories)

DISCUSSION

The results of the current study were revealing. Although the data does not indicate that students were more likely to have higher GPAs when they had more contact with ASC, there seems to be some relationship because GPA increased as the number of contacts increased. Perhaps students could benefit from more targeted assistance such as tutoring. The findings of this assessment will be used to make decisions about future programming and services. For example, administrators may prescribe a number of contacts for students with lower GPAs. Despite the outcomes of the current assessment, it is important to examine the benefits of support services and the impact each service has on student retention and grade point averages. Do services provided combined to produce a greater effect on outcomes? Do some services have a greater impact than others?

In an effort to address retention at Trinity, it is important to understand the needs of the students and the barriers which hinder their success. Addressing these issues poses a number of challenges due to resources and the number of problems which confound students' decisions to persist. Personal challenges also distract students from focusing on course work and attaining the knowledge needed for academic success as measured by grades. Again, retention like Trinity's students has many dimensions.