

**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
TESTIMONY**

July 22, 2010

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BIO FOR WILLIAM P. FLEMING

Dr. William Fleming earned his baccalaureate degree (BBA) and master's degree (MA) from Sam Houston State University and his doctoral degree (Ph.D.) from the University of Toledo (Ohio). He returned to SHSU in 1972 as a member of the English faculty and taught full-time for 30 years. In 1996 he received the Excellence in Service Award and in 1998 the Excellence in Teaching Award from SHSU. He served as Chair of the Faculty Senate in 1997-98, 1999-2000, and 2001-02. In fall 2002, he became Executive Director of the Student Advising and Mentoring Center (SAM Center). The creation of the SAM Center was due to the desire to centralize academic advising for undergraduate students and to create programs which would help all students succeed in their chosen academic programs. Along with mandatory advising each semester for certain populations of students, mandatory re-advising was started for all students placed on probation in order to aid retention. Intrusive mentoring programs were created to help students who were doing poorly in classes or not attending, suspended students who were re-admitted by the Deans, and students who had excessive grade point deficiencies. During the eight years of the SAM Center's existence, the one-year retention rates have increased 18 percentage points, and six-year graduation rates have increased 11 percentage points. Although the programs instituted by the SAM Center are not the sole reason for these increases, the Center has been recognized by local and national entities as an essential influence.

Dr. Fleming was recognized in 2004 as an "Outstanding Advising Administrator" by NACADA (National Academic Advising Association) and the SAM Center was recognized in 2005 as an "Outstanding Program." Dr. Fleming has one son and two granddaughters who live in Spring, Texas.

Overview

The establishment of a centralized academic advising and mentoring center at Sam Houston State University has been extremely successful in helping students succeed in their academic programs and has helped increased retention and graduation rates.

- The Student Advising and Mentoring Center is open year round and always has experienced academic advisors, both faculty and professional, and mentors available when needed by the students.
- Specific populations of students (those under 2.5, those with no SHSU GPA, and those who are subject to TSI requirement) are mandated to be advised each semester to insure they are on the correct path toward graduation. All students who have accumulated 90 hours must be advised to assure their progress towards graduation.
- All students placed on probation must confer with an academic advisor to determine the best course of action to return to good standing by the end of the next semester. After students have been cleared by advisors, they must meet with a mentor for counseling. Nearly 50% of students on probation return to good standing; many more increase their overall GPA's. (H.E.L.P. Program)
- All suspended students who are re-admitted by the Deans must participate in a monitoring program designed for them by a mentor. Over 2/3 of the students involved in this program improve their overall grade point averages. (MAP Program)
- Professors refer students to the SAM Center who are not attending or who are doing poorly in their classes. The students are contacted and requested to meet with a mentor. The professor is kept informed about the progress of the student and mentor. The success rate, measured by those who do not fail the course, is steady around 72%. (First Alert Program)
- Students who resign from the university are now being interviewed by the SAM Center as the first step in their resignation process to determine causes. Once there is adequate data, there could be programs or measures established which might reduce the number.
- The SAM Center offers a six-week Study Skills seminar for all students to improve their note-taking, textbook-reading, time management, stress management, and receive information about succeeding in classes. These seminars are facilitated by trained student assistants, who offer special insights into success in the classroom.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE TESTIMONY

Madam Chair and committee members, I have been asked to provide information and “make recommendations regarding the current accountability system and ways to measure student advising, [by examining] the quality of academic advising services to ensure that students are taking courses relevant to their degree program and are on path for graduation.”

Creation of the Student Advising and Mentoring Center

In the fall of 2001, Dr. James Gaertner, then the new president of Sam Houston State University, gave his vision of the university to the members of the Faculty Senate. Among these was his desire to establish a centralized advising center, believing that this was the most effective way to assure good advising for students, since the current process of decentralized faculty advising was not working as it should be. Also the university was transitioning into a more research-oriented institution and faculty was emphasizing research and scholarship to enhance their credentials and to earn tenure and promotions, thereby restricting their time.

In order to operate a centralized advising center, the decision was made to establish an advising fee with the condition that the fee be approved by the student body, represented by the Student Government. A committee was formed to investigate advising fees across the state, and after a two-month study it was determined to propose a \$50 per student, per semester advising fee (later to be specified as an advising center fee). This proposal was taken before the Student Government representatives for approval. After three weeks of discussion, questions and responses, and students relaying their advising experiences to the administrators who brought forth the proposal, the students overwhelmingly passed the measure. After that, Dr. Gaertner took the proposal to the Board of Regents which approved the fee; the fee would first be levied in the fall of 2002.

After an executive director was selected, there were discussions about the structure and organization of the center. Decisions included not only academic advising but also the creation of programs to help students succeed in their academic pursuits. An important component—the mentoring sector—of the SAM Center was created and a director was named. The advising center fee would be substantial to finance this entity, as long as there was a combination of faculty and professional advisors, for the cost of having solely professional advisors was prohibitive. A stipend for the faculty advisors was established and the selection process of faculty advisors was determined, based on departmental majors and the

ability of advisors to work with students. Faculty working on credentials was excluded. Therefore, most of the faculty chosen were either full professors, “permanent” adjunct faculty, and retired faculty. Each committed to fifteen hours per week, year round. We began the SAM Center with twelve faculty advisors and three professional advisors. The mentoring sector started with three full-time staff personnel. We had six student workers who were also trained to teach study skills workshops. In 2010 we have sixteen faculty advisors, six professional advisors, ten staff in the mentoring sector, three staff in the advising sector, and twelve student assistants.

Mandatory Advising

Initially there were three groups of students mandated to be advised: those with grade point averages under 2.5, those who do not have an established grade point average at SHSU, and those who are subject to TSI. This constitutes roughly 55% of our student body. The process of advising includes looking at a degree plan for each student, determining the courses needed for completion of the core curriculum, degree requirements, and departmental requirements, then plotting a proper sequence of courses that will assure the student will progress at an appropriate pace and graduate “on time,” barring any interruptions along the way. Each time a student sees an advisor, the courses recommended and any other information relevant to the completion of his/her program is recorded into the student’s cumulative advising history and a copy is given to the student and also kept on file at the advising center. The advising histories are not only for the benefit of the students but also for others who need to know the progress of the student, such as financial aid, the Deans’ offices, other advisors, mentoring personnel, etc. In 2008, another group of students—those with 90 or more hours—were added to the mandatory groups of students to be advised. This is to assure that the students are on the right track to graduation and are taking the correct classes. Although these four groups of students are compelled to be advised, we have found that most students come to be advised, which indicates they see importance in advising. For example, in the fall of 2009, 91% of all undergraduate students had advising sessions at the SAM Center (13,417 advising sessions; 14,666 undergraduates). Reasons for this impressive number include the availability of advising year round, the expertise and consistency of the advisors, the confidence of the advisors in giving correct information, and the desire of the student to stay “on course.”

Mandatory Re-Advisement

All students placed on probation at the end of the semester receive an email from the Registrar's Office stating that they must be re-advised at the SAM Center before the beginning of the next semester to assure their continuance. Therefore, over the Christmas break and those breaks between semesters, probationary students come to the SAM Center for re-advisement. At these sessions students are advised to repeat classes they have failed, to better balance their schedules, to take our student skills seminars, and/or to be mentored throughout the semester (H.E.L.P. program) in order to avoid suspension; it is emphasized to the student that he/she must return to good standing at the end of the next semester or suspension will take place. After meeting with the advisor, the student is cleared to re-register for the next semester and sent to see a mentor, who meets with him/her and suggests ways for success during the semester. While not all students can avoid suspension by the end of the next semester, we have found that if the students take the advice of the advisor, they will likely improve their overall grade point average; around 42% return to good standing, while 70% improve their grade point averages.

Advising Transfer and Transient Students

Transfer students can be advised at any time convenient for them. The advisors will spend the needed time with each transfer student to assure that they have the proper classes to progress toward the desired degree. Many times the advisor will have to contact other offices, such as the Registrar or Admissions, to determine if a particular class has properly transferred or if an unfamiliar course can be substituted for a course offered by SHSU. This decision is ultimately in the hands of the department offering the course or the department of the student's major.

Students at SHSU often go to community colleges in the summer and the advisors will also advise them which courses are the correct ones to take. We have a "Transfer Equivalency Guide" which is used to equate the proper course at SHSU with the course at the community college. The same procedure is used for transient students.

Intrusive Mentoring Programs

Help Eliminate Probation (HELP) Program Overview

Mission: A voluntary program offered to students on academic probation (below a 2.0 GPA), the HELP program is intended to aid them in improving their academic standing with the goal of preventing their suspension or, at the very least, reducing their negative grade points to a more manageable level from which they can recover after suspension.

Design Methodology: The HELP program will follow the same basic design structure as the Monitored Academic Progress (MAP) program:

Each student will be placed in an intervention level based on his or her grade point deficiency (GPD): the higher the deficiency, the greater the need. Requirements include a mandatory intake interview and the completion of a study skills series at the SAM Center for all levels as well as the use of grade check forms (GCF's) and meetings with a mentor, determined by the assessed need for intervention.

The chart below shows that the degree of intervention depends on the student's grade point average.

Intervention Level	GPA Range	Study Skills Mandated	Grade Check Forms Required	Number of Contacts with Mentor
High	-17+	Yes	2 during semester	Weekly
Medium	-9 to -16	Yes	2 during semester	Two
Low	-1 to -8	Yes	1 at mid-semester	One

Referral Sources:

Although voluntary, the program draws from several sources in order to increase its numbers, including but not limited to the following:

- Self
- Parents/Guardians
- Advisors
- Deans
- First Alert
- Faculty or Staff

Evaluation:

The HELP program's end goal is to return students to good academic standing and increase their respective GPA's and decrease the number of grade points they are deficient. The following will be evaluated/monitored:

- Pre- and post-semester grade point deficiencies
- Number of grade points earned

- Percentage of students who attained good standing by the end of the semester
- Effectiveness as determined by analyzing the actual participation of those students who complete some, all, or none of the requirements shown in the Design Methodology

Help ELiminate Probation (HELP) Program Results for the Spring Semester

Total Number of HELP Students	829
Total Number of HELP Students Enrolled*	756
Mean GPA before HELP	1.32
Mean GPA after HELP	1.72
Mean Grade Points Gained	3.01
Percent of HELP students who had previously taken Study Skills	4.8%
Percent of HELP students who attended required sessions of Study Skills	21.8%
Percent of HELP students who completed all required grade check forms	23.1%
Percent of HELP students who completed all meeting requirements	23.5%
Percent of HELP students who reduced grade point deficiency	58.1%
Percent off probation	39.8%

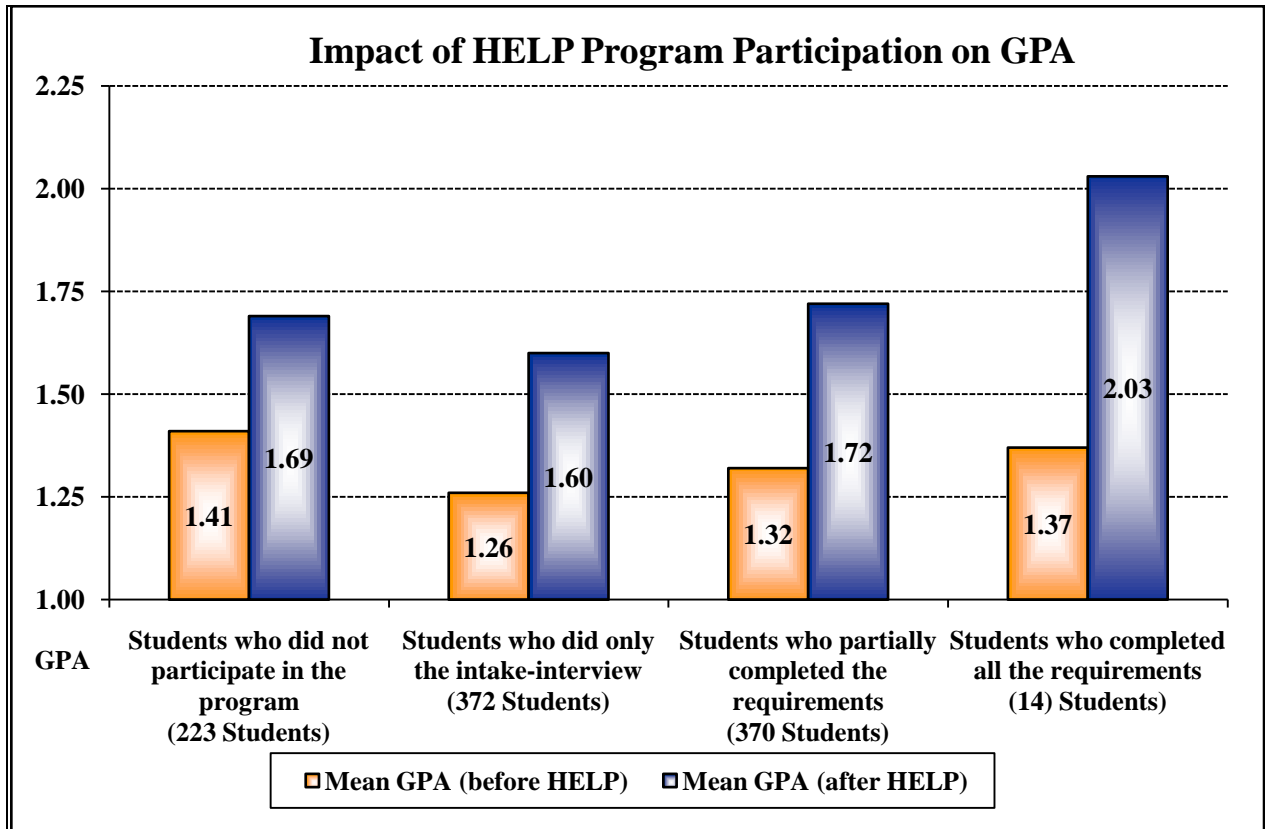
*This group includes students who were enrolled, who did not resign, and who did not receive X's for grades, but excludes five students who completed a five class study skills series instead of the standard six class series.

Total Number of Control Students	223
Mean GPA before Spring Semester	1.41
Mean GPA at the end of the Spring Semester	1.69
Mean Grade Points Gained	0.77
Percent of Control students who reduced grade point deficiency	53.4%
Percent off probation	34.5%

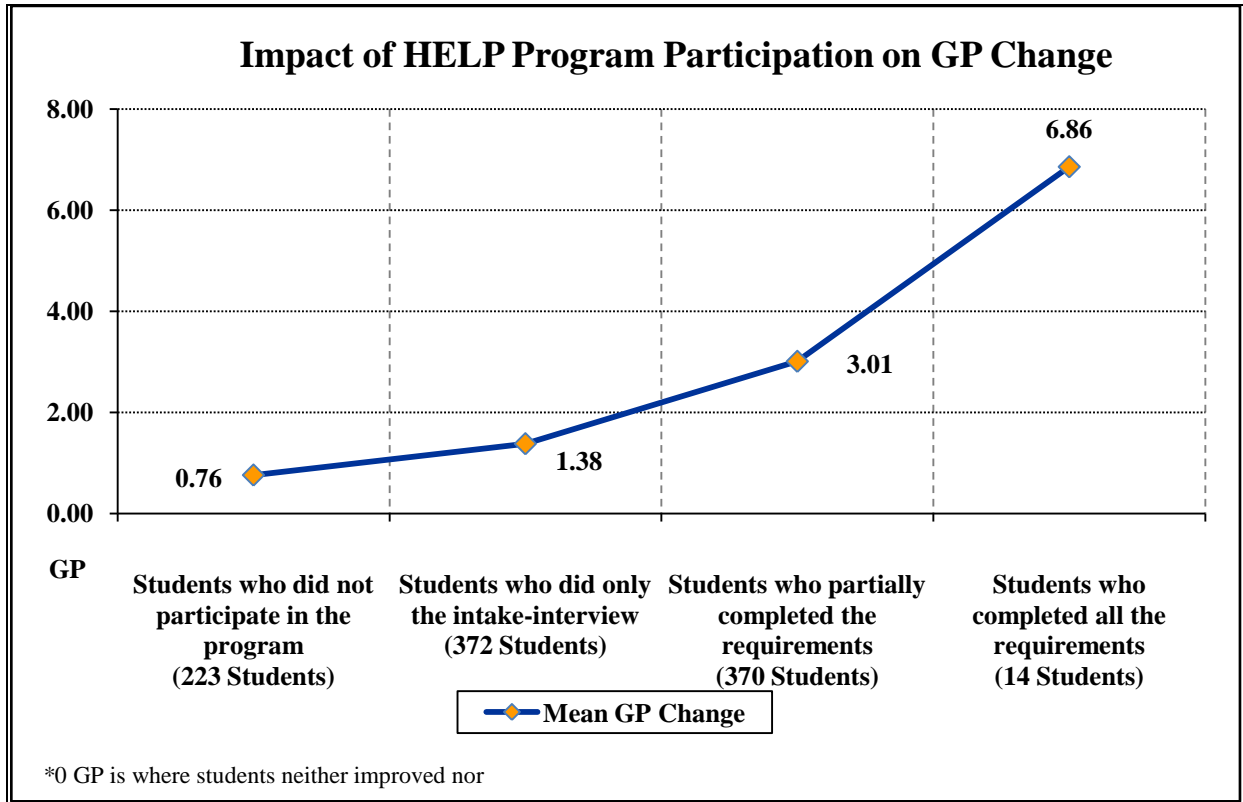
HELP PROGRAM BY INTERVENTION LEVEL	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Total Number of HELP Students Enrolled	82	194	479
Mean GPA before HELP	0.42	1.00	1.61
Mean GPA after HELP	0.97	1.49	1.93
Mean Grade Points Gained	2.88	2.19	3.36
Percent of HELP students who had previously taken Study Skills	2.4%	2.1%	6.3%
Percent of HELP students who attended required sessions of Study Skills	18.3%	16.5%	24.6%
Percent of HELP students who completed all required grade check forms	22.0%	20.6%	24.4%
Percent of HELP students who completed all meeting requirements	12.2%	26.3%	24.4%
Percent of HELP students who reduced grade point deficiency	45.1%	54.1%	61.9%
Percent off probation	8.5%	22.2%	52.3%

CONTROL STUDENTS BY INTERVENTION LEVEL	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Total Number of Control Students	26	56	141
Mean GPA before Spring Semester	0.84	1.10	1.63
Mean GPA after Spring Semester	0.98	1.54	1.87
Mean Grade Points Gained	-5.88	1.77	1.60
Percent of Control students who reduced grade point deficiency	23.1%	55.4%	58.2%
Percent off probation	3.8%	17.9%	46.8%

Impact of HELP Program Participation on Grade Point Average (GPA)



Impact of HELP Program Participation on Grade Point (GP) Change



First Alert

FIRST ALERT: A FACULTY REFERRAL SYSTEM

What Is First Alert?

An Academic Support Program of the Student Advising and Mentoring Center, First Alert is a referral source for faculty members (and others) who are concerned about students with low grades (especially after the first test of the semester), poor attendance, or both. For other concerns, e.g., plagiarism, it is best to call a mentor. If the student needs to be referred to another agency on campus, we will work with the faculty member to help find solutions.

How Does It Work?

When a concern arises, the faculty member contacts a First Alert mentor in one of the following ways:

1. Online at http://www.shsu.edu/~sam_www/form.html -- the quickest way to reach us and can be bookmarked for future use
2. A phone call to one of the mentors listed below
3. By campus mail using one of our paper forms, which can be obtained by calling us or by stopping by the SAM Center
4. By regular e-mail to the mentoring staff, using an individual's address below or sam_asp@shsu.edu

For a large group of referrals, the faculty member can send us a class roster with each person to be referred highlighted and marked with either an "A" for absences, "G" for grades, or "B" for both. We will take care of everything from that point on.

What Happens to the Student?

Every student is contacted by e-mail, telephone, and/or letter in an effort to speak with each one. After contact is made, the student's needs are assessed and help is provided in a variety of ways. For some students, referral to another campus agency may be the best course of action. These could include one or more of the following: Counseling Center, Financial Aid, the Writing Center, Math Lab, etc.

Will the Faculty Member Be Kept Informed?

First of all, receipt of the referral will be acknowledged right away. After a course of action is established for the student or if all efforts to reach the student fail, the faculty member is notified by e-mail or telephone about the disposition of the referral.

When Should One Make a Referral?

The best time to refer is early in a semester so students can receive the help they need before too much time passes. However, referrals later in the semester are accepted and encouraged because quite often we can still make a difference in their performance. Also, end-of-semester referrals give us a chance to track students and set up programs for them in the following semester. It is never too late to refer a student.

Who Is Using First Alert?

Over 7000 students have been sent to us from every college and most departments on campus since the 2002-2003 academic year. We welcome your referrals and will work hard to help your students succeed.

Report on First Alert for the Academic Year 2009-2010

The following year-end First Alert report covers the period from June 2009 through May 2010. The total number of referrals for this academic year came to 822, with 484 in Fall, 18 total in Summer I and II, and 320 in Spring.

The same procedures have been followed each year since the inception of the program in 2002:

- 1) Faculty members refer students with low grades, excessive absences, or both, as well as for other issues such as not turning in assignments in one or more of their classes.
- 2) Multiple attempts are made to contact the students—email, telephone calls, and letters.
- 3) Students who respond are assessed and, depending on the needs of each individual, given information about how to improve their academic performance. On occasion, some students are referred to other sources of help on campus, such as the Counseling Center, Career Services, the Health Center, or other agencies.
- 4) All faculty members who refer students are kept up to date on the work we are doing with them.
- 5) At the end of each semester, participating faculty are asked to fill out an evaluation form.

Demographics

The tables below show both numbers and percentages of students in each category. Comparisons of First Alert referrals to students in the general population are made for gender, classification, and ethnicity. Of those who were referred to First Alert, 55.4% were male and 44.6% female. They were classified as 43.8% freshmen, 23.5% sophomores, 17.8% juniors, and 15.0% seniors. With regard to ethnicity, White Non-Hispanic students constituted a majority at 57.1%, African-Americans made up 28.3%, Hispanics were 11.2% and Others (all ethnicities found at SHSU not already listed) comprised 3.4%. In terms of gender and ethnicity, male and African-American students were somewhat overrepresented in comparison to their numbers in the general university student body. Also, freshmen were referred more often than were students in any other classification.

Summer 2009 – Spring 2010 Population by Gender				
	Male		Female	
	Number in Population	Percent of Population	Number in Population	Percent of Population
First Alert Referrals	435	55.4%	369	44.6%
SHSU Student Body	15892	43.8%	20422	56.2%

Summer 2009 – Spring 2010 Population by Classification								
	Freshman		Sophomore		Junior		Senior	
	Number in Population	Percent of Population	Number in Population	Percent of Population	Number in Population	Percent of Population	Number in Population	Percent of Population
First Alert Referrals	360	43.8%	193	23.5%	146	17.8%	123	15.0%
SHSU Student Body	6266	17.3%	6908	19.0%	9438	26.0%	13702	37.7%

Summer 2009 - Spring 2010 Population by Ethnicity								
	White Non-Hispanic		African-American		Hispanic		Other*	
	Number in Population	Percent of Population	Number in Population	Percent of Population	Number in Population	Percent of Population	Number in Population	Percent of Population
First Alert Referrals	469	57.1%	233	28.3%	92	11.2%	28	3.4%
SHSU Student Body	24606	67.8%	5710	15.7%	4912	13.5%	1086	3%

*"Other" is defined as all ethnicities found at SHSU not already listed

Results

Success is defined for this program as passing the class for which a student was referred, dropping it, or resigning from school. When a student drops a class that he or she is failing, the likelihood of remaining in school might increase. If that one class is excluded from the grade point average and increased effort is focused on the remaining courses, the students' chances of facing suspension or probation may be lessened. The same could be said for resignation from school. Students who are failing all of their classes late in the semester and know they

cannot make any marked improvement, can get a fresh start by withdrawing and then returning the next semester. Again, the grade point average remains at a manageable level upon the student's return. The percentage of First Alert students who withdrew from all classes was small (9.1%). Three referred students (.2%) were given incompletes in their coursework because of emergency circumstances beyond their control. The incompletes were granted by the appropriate department chairs according to university policy.

The first table below shows the 62.9% overall success rate of First Alert as defined by the above criteria. This compares with the previous year's success rate of 79.9% which may have been attributable to the late drop date that was instituted in the 2008-2009 academic year. We did, however, predict that the rate might decrease this year because of students using too many Q-drops and having to take whatever grade they earned.

Overall First Alert Success Rate		
	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population
Successful	528	62.9%
Not Successful	291	36.9%
Incomplete	3	0.2%

The three tables that follow indicate outcomes by ethnicity, classification, and gender. Interestingly, the success rate for all ethnicities was similar; and the same was true for gender. With regard to classification, the success rate of freshmen (55.6%) was lower than that of sophomores (60.5%), juniors (68.5%), and seniors (74.8%). This trend has been constant since the inception of the program.

First Alert Outcome by Ethnicity								
	White Non-Hispanic		African-American		Hispanic		Other*	
FA Referrals	469		233		92		28	
	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population
Successful	305	65.1%	141	60.5%	64	69.6%	18	64.3%
Not Successful	162	34.5%	92	39.5%	28	30.4%	9	32.1%
Incomplete	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%
*“Other” is defined as all ethnicities found at SHSU not already listed								

First Alert Outcome by Classification								
	Freshman		Sophomore		Junior		Senior	
FA Referrals	360		193		146		123	
	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population
Successful	200	55.6%	136	70.5%	100	68.5%	92	74.8%
Not Successful	159	44.2%	57	29.5%	44	30.1%	31	25.2%
Incomplete	1	0.3%	0	0.0%	2	1.4%	0	0.0%

First Alert Outcome by Gender				
	Male		Female	
FA Referrals	455		367	
	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population
Successful	242	65.9%	286	62.9%
Not Successful	123	33.5%	163	36.9%
Incomplete	2	0.5%	1	0.2%

The reasons that faculty refer students to First Alert can be seen on the first table below along with the success rate for each referral reason. While there was little difference among the reasons for referral, the success rate was higher for those sent for poor grades (74.5%) than those referred for frequent absences (59.4%)

Reason for Referral								
	Frequent Absences		Poor Grades		Both		Other*	
FA Referrals	271		278		242		31	
Percent of FA Population	33.0%		33.8%		29.4%		3.8%	
	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population
Successful	161	59.4%	207	74.5%	136	56.2%	27	77.4%
Not Successful	109	40.2%	70	25.2%	105	43.4%	7	22.6%
Incomplete	1	0.4%	1	0.4%	1	0.4%	0	0.0%

* "Other" contains all referrals of a nature not included in the above descriptors

Success was also measured by whether or not the students responded to our attempts to reach them and offer our assistance, as shown on the first table below. The second table shows our methods of trying to reach students and the success rate of each one. Despite that fact that we made a variety of attempts to contact every referred student, some did not respond at all. Those who did respond achieved a higher rate of success (69.2%) than did those whom we could not reach (43.8%).

Success Rate by Student Response						
	Responded		No Response		None Necessary*	
FA Referrals	533		277		12	
Percent of FA Population	64.8%		33.7%		1.5%	
	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population
Successful	369	69.2%	149	43.8%	10	83.3%
Not Successful	163	30.6%	126	45.5%	2	16.7%
Incomplete	1	0.2%	2	0.7%	0	0.0%
* "None Necessary" signifies that the referring professor either made contact outside of the FA program or the student was not required to respond due to non-enrollment, death, etc.						

Success Rate by Student Method of Response										
	E-Mail		Phone		Interview		No Response		None Necessary*	
FA Referrals	80		343		110		277		12	
Percent of FA Population	9.7%		41.7%		13.4%		33.7%		1.5%	
	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population	Number of Referrals	Percent of Population
Successful	56	70.0%	233	67.9%	80	72.7%	149	53.8%	10	83.3%
Not Successful	24	30.0%	109	31.8%	30	27.3%	126	45.5%	2	16.7%
Incomplete	0	0.0%	1	0.3%	0	0.0%	2	0.7%	0	0.0%
* "None Necessary" signifies that the referring professor either made contact outside of the FA program or the student was not required to respond due to non-enrollment, death, etc.										

Finally, the 59 different professors who referred students over the two semesters were asked to complete an online questionnaire evaluating the First Alert program; we received 35 responses. Although anonymity was assured, a number of people submitted very positive comments and signed the form. Five questions were asked to which the respondent was to assign a rating from 4 to 1, with 4 indicating “Strongly Agree,” 3 as “Agree,” 2 as “Disagree,” and 1 as “Strongly Disagree.” The table below shows a mean satisfaction rate with the program of slightly over 3.8. It seems evident that First Alert continues to be well received by the Sam Houston faculty who make use of it.

Faculty Evaluation of the First Alert Program	
Questions	Mean
Contacts or attempts to contact the student appeared to be prompt.	3.8
Initial feedback to me about my referral was timely.	3.8
I was updated about the student as needed.	3.8
I plan to use First Alert again.	3.8
I would recommend this program to other faculty members.	3.9

In order to provide our services to students with academic problems, whether they are failure to attend regularly, poor grades, or other concerns, it is best that they be referred as early as possible. This provides time for remediation that is otherwise lost when students are sent late in the semester. We therefore ask that department chairs and deans encourage their faculty to notify First Alert as soon as students show signs of failure or non-attendance. Although the First Alert program coordinator will try to make all faculty and graduate teaching assistants aware of the program, department chairs can be of great help by seeing to it that no one is overlooked.

Monitored Academic Progress (MAP)

The MAP program is designed to help suspended students who are re-admitted by his/her Dean to help improve their grade point averages and return them to good standing, thereby allowing them to progress toward graduation. Deans have the option of referring students to the MAP program. Once a student is referred, he/she has a one-on-one meeting with a mentor in the SAM Center, at which time they discuss the academic performance of the student and devise strategies for help in returning to good standing.

This report shows the final data on students from the university who were sent to the MAP program in Spring 2010, excluding those who were referred but either did not register for classes or chose to resign. Of the 316 students who enrolled, only 315 are included in this report because on May 18, the day of data disaggregation, grades were missing from the transcript of one student.

Beginning this semester, the mentoring staff decided to change the criteria for intervention level in order to reflect more accurately a student's academic standing. Thus, we focused on grade point deficiencies instead of grade point averages and were able to provide a more appropriate program for each one's needs. In the past, for example, a student with a fairly high GPA and many credit hours might have a grade point deficiency greater than 18 but not be required to see a mentor each week, while another student with a low GPA, few credit hours, and few deficient grade points might be placed in a high intervention level because of the low GPA. Now, with this change to grade point deficiencies, we are giving more assistance to those most in need of our services.

Even though it is the responsibility of students to contact us after seeing their Deans, we made several attempts to reach those who failed to contact us by the start of the spring semester. All students who responded to our offer of assistance were monitored and given a variety of resources geared toward improving their academic performance.

The three tables below detail the overall results of the MAP program for Spring 2010. Of the 398 students who were referred by their deans, 316 enrolled in the university and our data indicate that 38.1% came off probation by the end of the semester. As expected, the students who began the semester with a lower grade point deficiency came off probation in larger numbers than did those who started with a greater deficit. Even more important is the fact that 64.4% of the students enrolled in the program bettered their academic status.

These figures are slightly higher than those from Spring 2009 where 34.4% came off probation, and 61.7% improved.

Monitored Academic Progress (MAP) Program Results for the Spring Semester

Total Number of Students Referred	398
Total Number of MAP Students Enrolled	316*
Mean GPA before MAP	1.58
Mean GPA after MAP	1.78
Mean Grade Points Gained	+4.15
Percent of Referred MAP students who failed to participate in the program	6.3%
Percent of MAP students who had previously taken Study Skills	35.2%
Percent of MAP students who attended required sessions of Study Skills	77.1%
Percent of MAP students who completed all required grade check forms	53.0%
Percent of MAP students who completed all meeting requirements	54.3%
Percent of MAP students who reduced grade point deficiency	64.4%
Percent off probation	38.1%

*Due to missing grades, only 315 of the enrolled students were used for data.

INTERVENTION LEVEL	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Total Number of MAP Students Enrolled	82	100	133
Mean GPA before MAP	1.24	1.53	1.84
Mean GPA after MAP	1.47	1.74	2.0
Mean Grade Points Gained	+4.29	+3.41	+4.62
Percent of MAP students who failed to participate in the program	6.1%	4.0%	8.3%
Percent of MAP students who had previously taken Study Skills	29.3%	41.0%	34.6%
Percent of MAP students who attended required sessions of Study Skills	34.3%	34.0%	40.6%
Percent of MAP students who completed all required grade check forms	59.8%	51.0%	50.4%
Percent of MAP students who completed all meeting requirements	57.3%	55.0%	51.9%
Percent of MAP students who reduced grade point deficiency	54.9%	62.0%	72.2%
Percent off probation	4.9%	20%	58.6%

*The chart below shows that the degree of intervention depends on the student's grade point average.

Intervention Level	GPA Range	Study Skills Mandated	Grade Check Forms Required	Number of Contacts with Mentor
High	-17+	Yes	2 during semester	Weekly
Medium	-9 to -16	Yes	2 during semester	Two
Low	-1 to -8	Yes	1 at mid-semester	One

Figures 1 through 16 demonstrate key elements of the MAP program. The first four figures indicate that participation in study skills and other aspects of the program had a positive effect on GPA and reduction of grade point deficiency. Figures 5, 6, and 7 show the improvement and level of participation of suspended students by their college. Finally, figures 8 through 16 show improvement and participation by gender, ethnicity, and classification. Submitting grade check forms, attending required meetings with a mentor, and receiving guidance through the intake interview are key elements to success. In general, the higher the level of participation in the MAP program, the greater the improvement.

Figure 1. MAP Mean GPA by Study Skill Participation

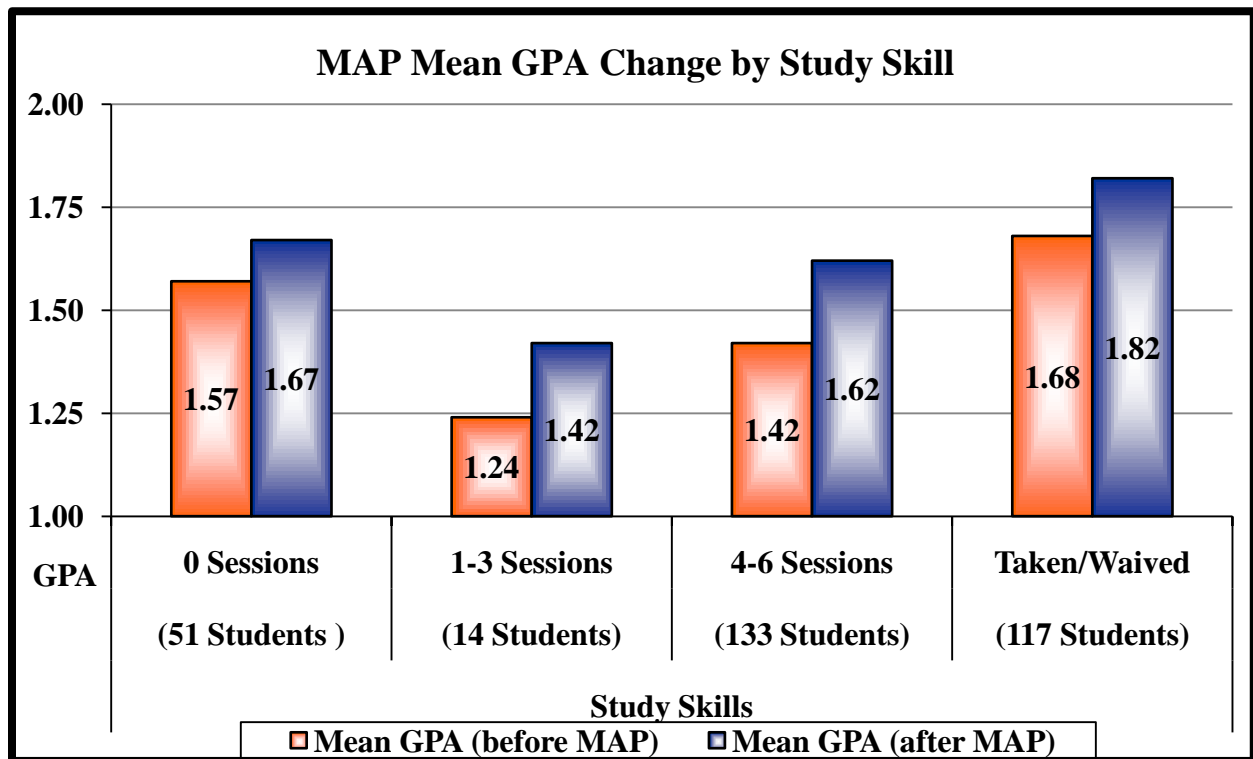


Figure 2. MAP Mean GP Change By Study Skill Participation

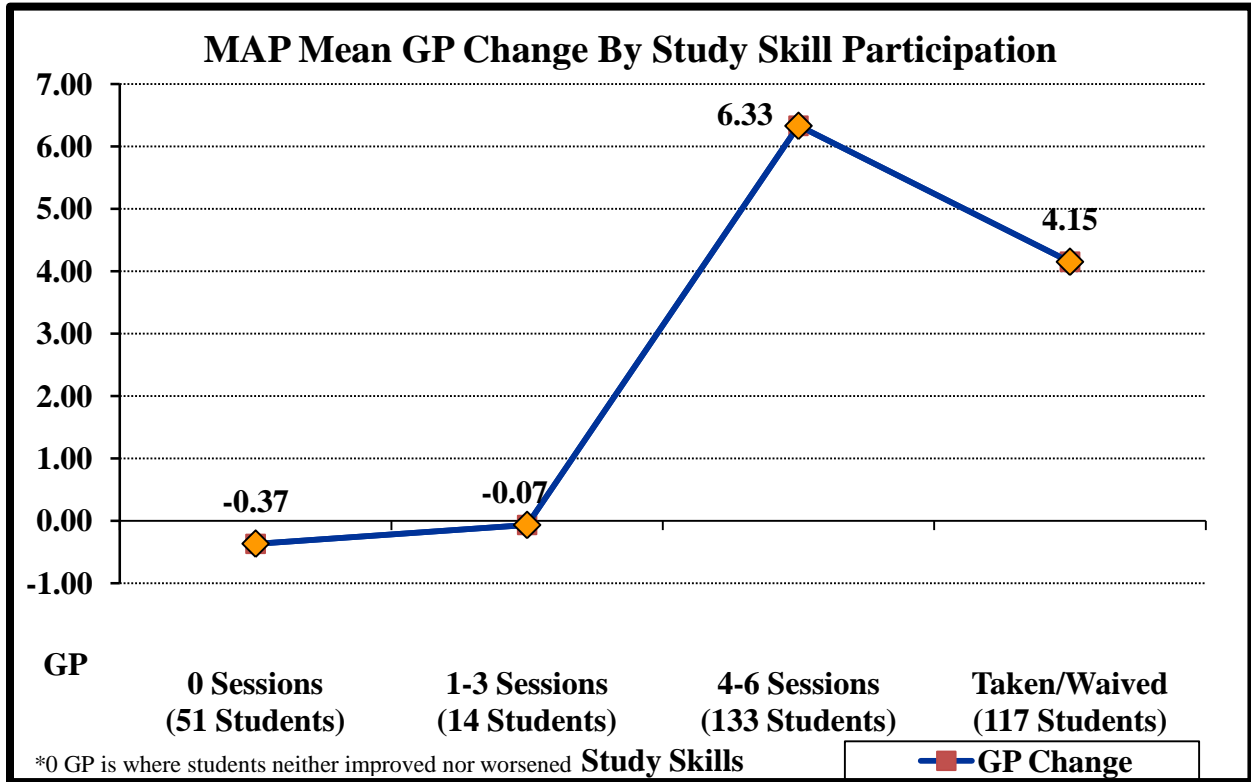


Figure 3. Impact of MAP Program Participation on GPA

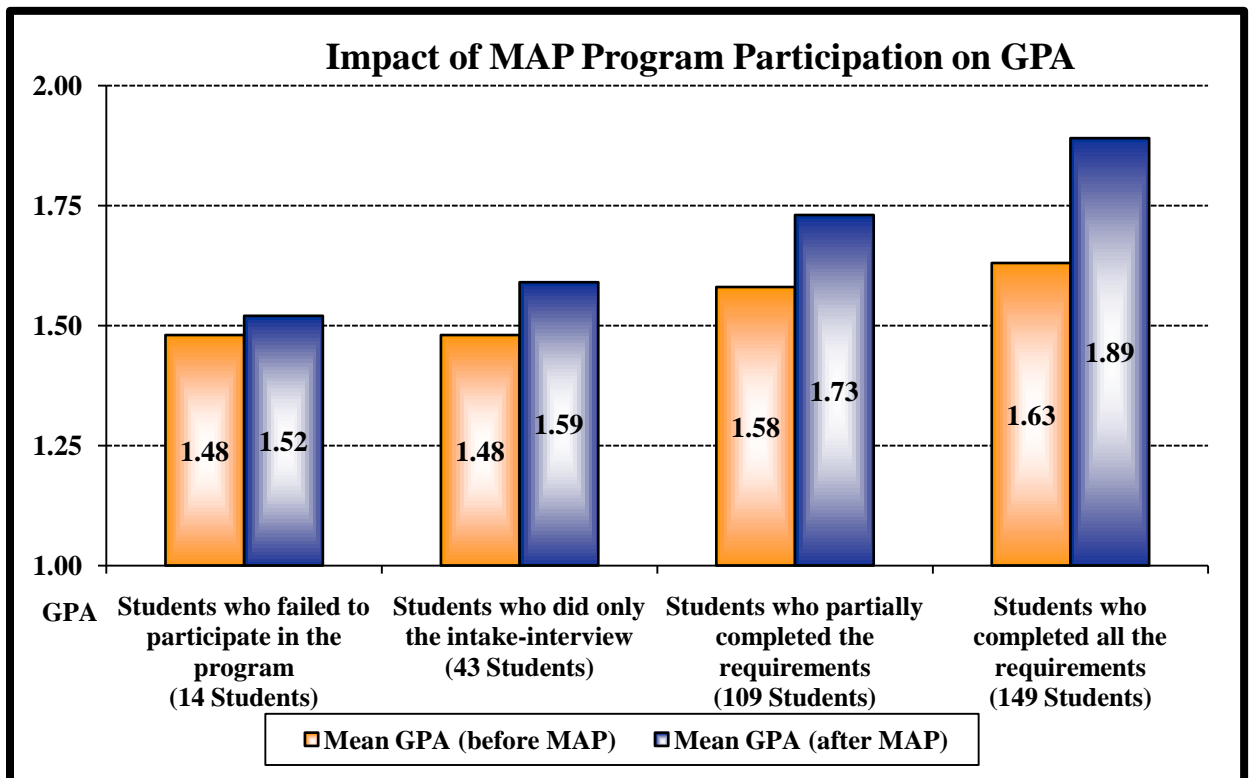


Figure 4. Impact of MAP Program Participation on GP Change

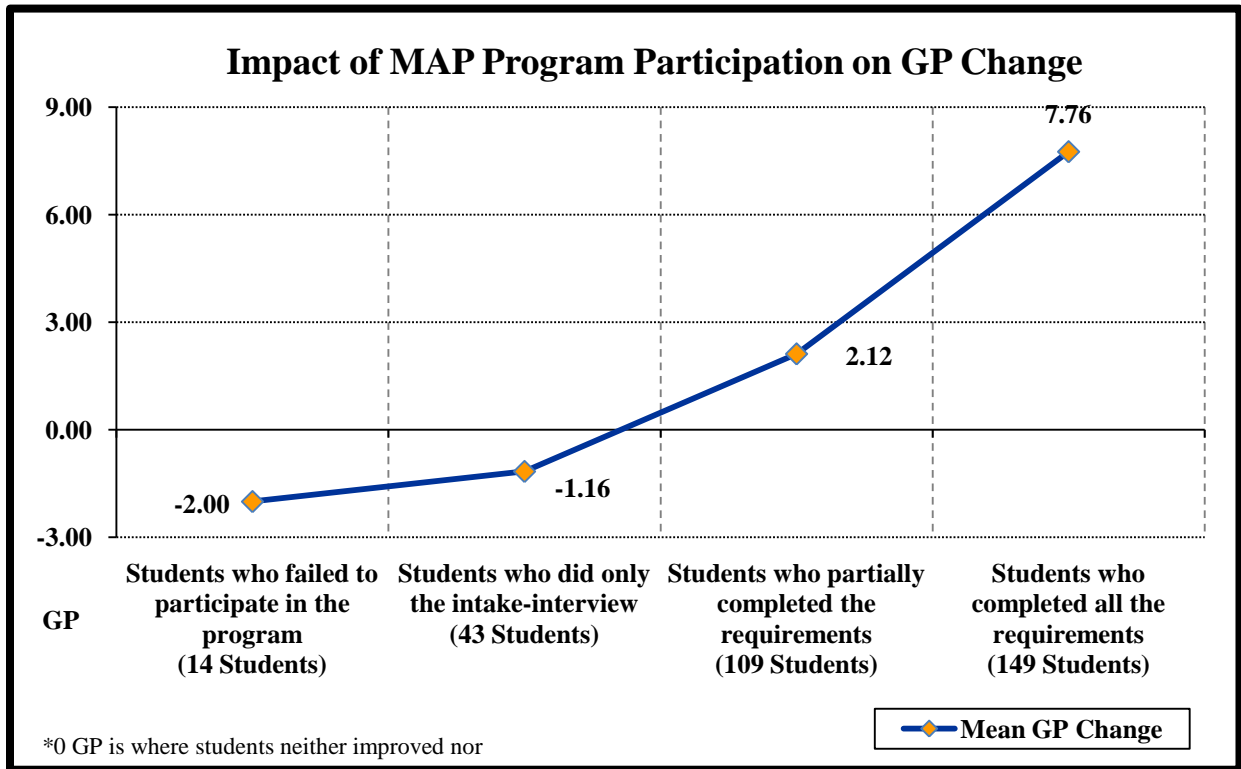


Figure 5. MAP Mean GPA Improvement by College

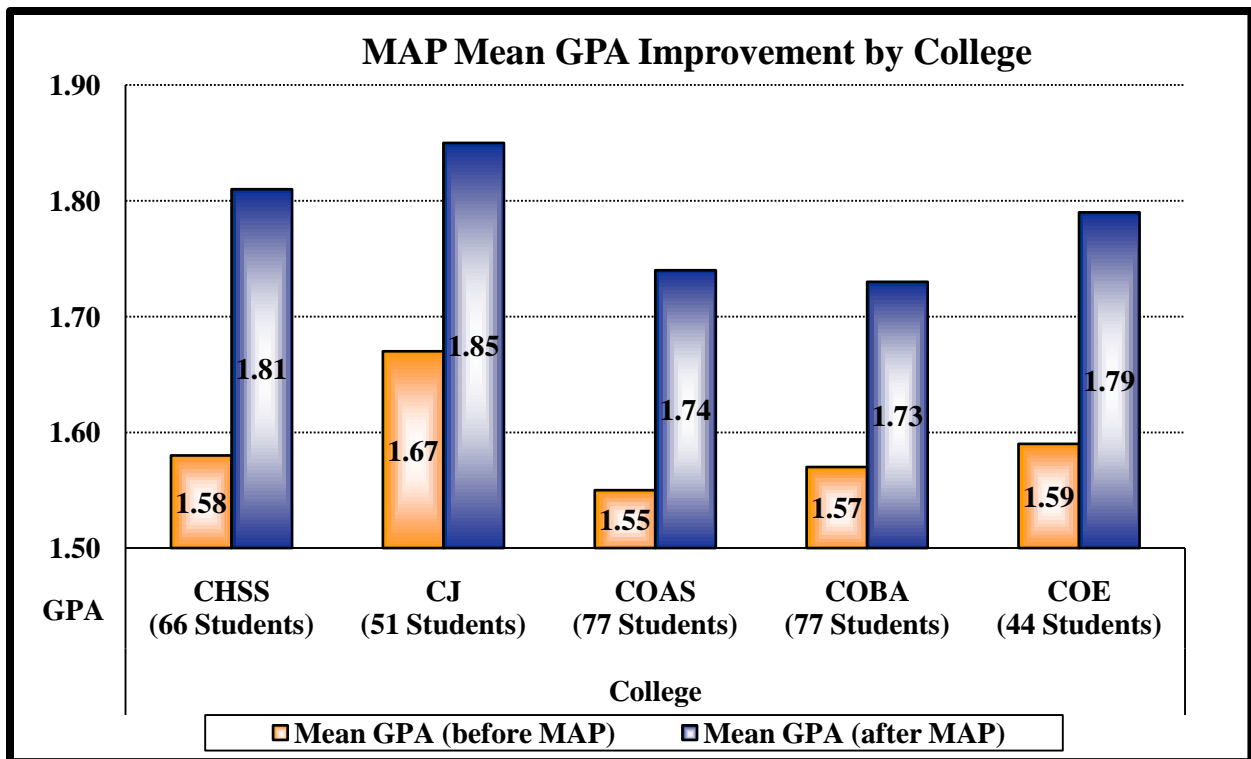


Figure 6. MAP Mean GP Change by College

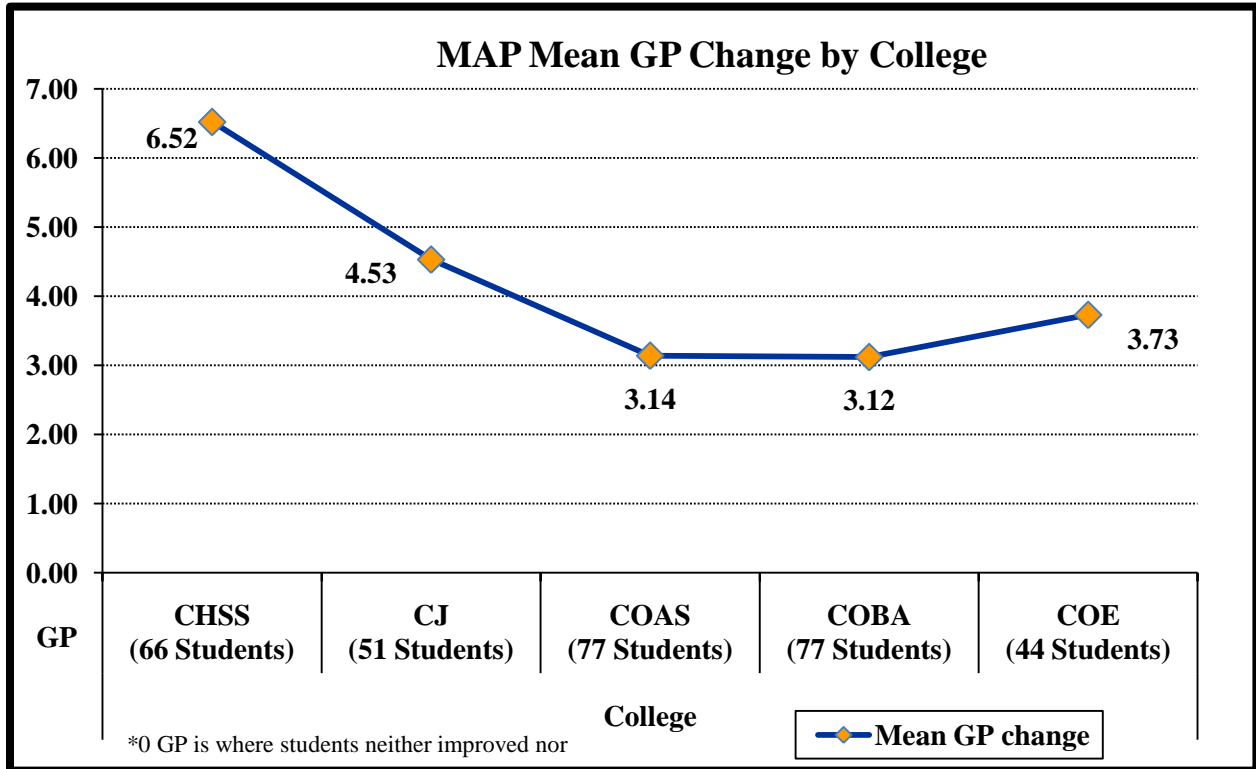


Figure 7. MAP Program Participation by College

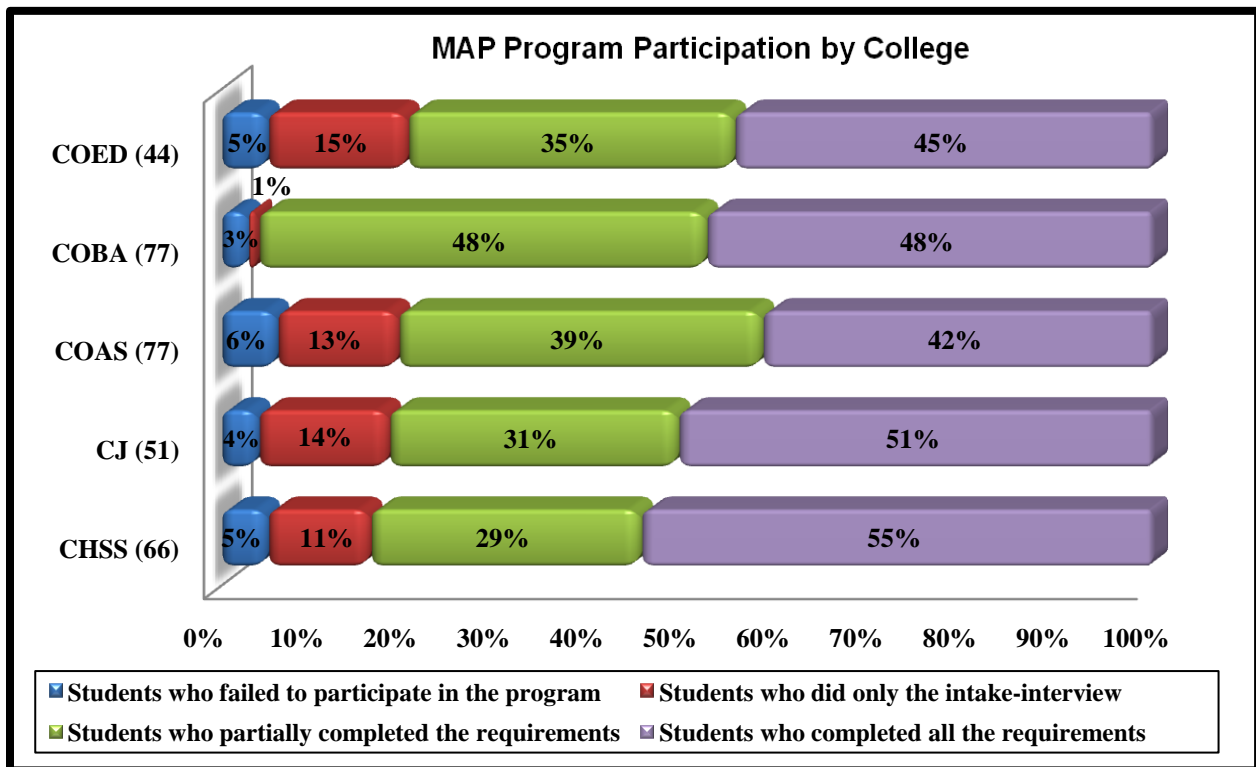


Figure 8. MAP Mean GPA Change by Gender

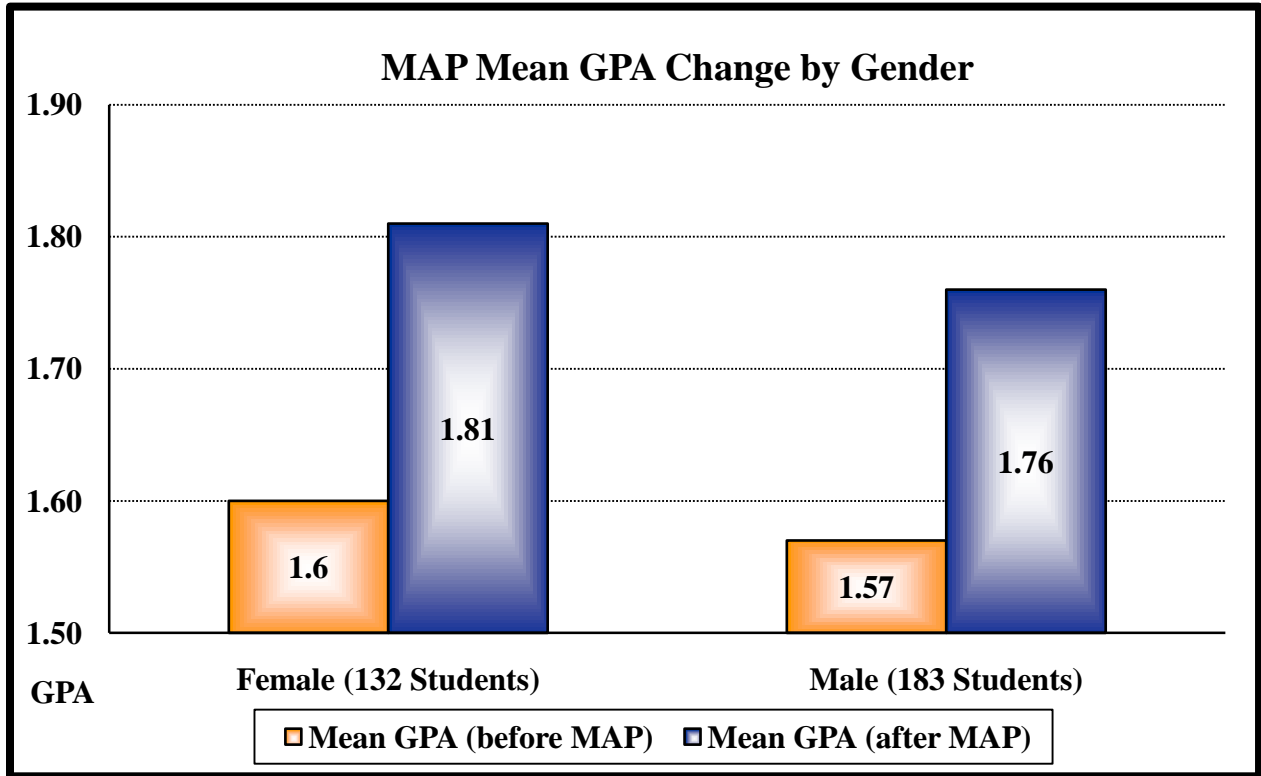


Figure 9. MAP Mean GP Change by Gender

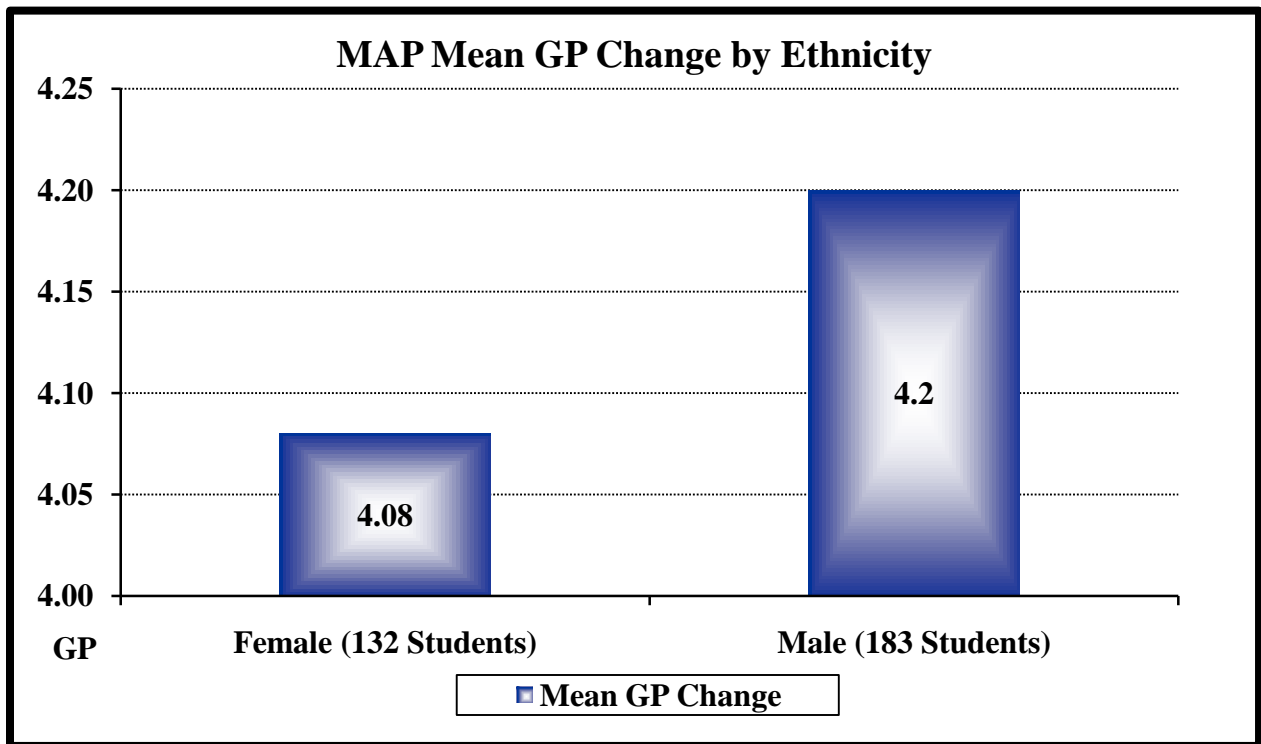


Figure 10. MAP Program Participation by Gender

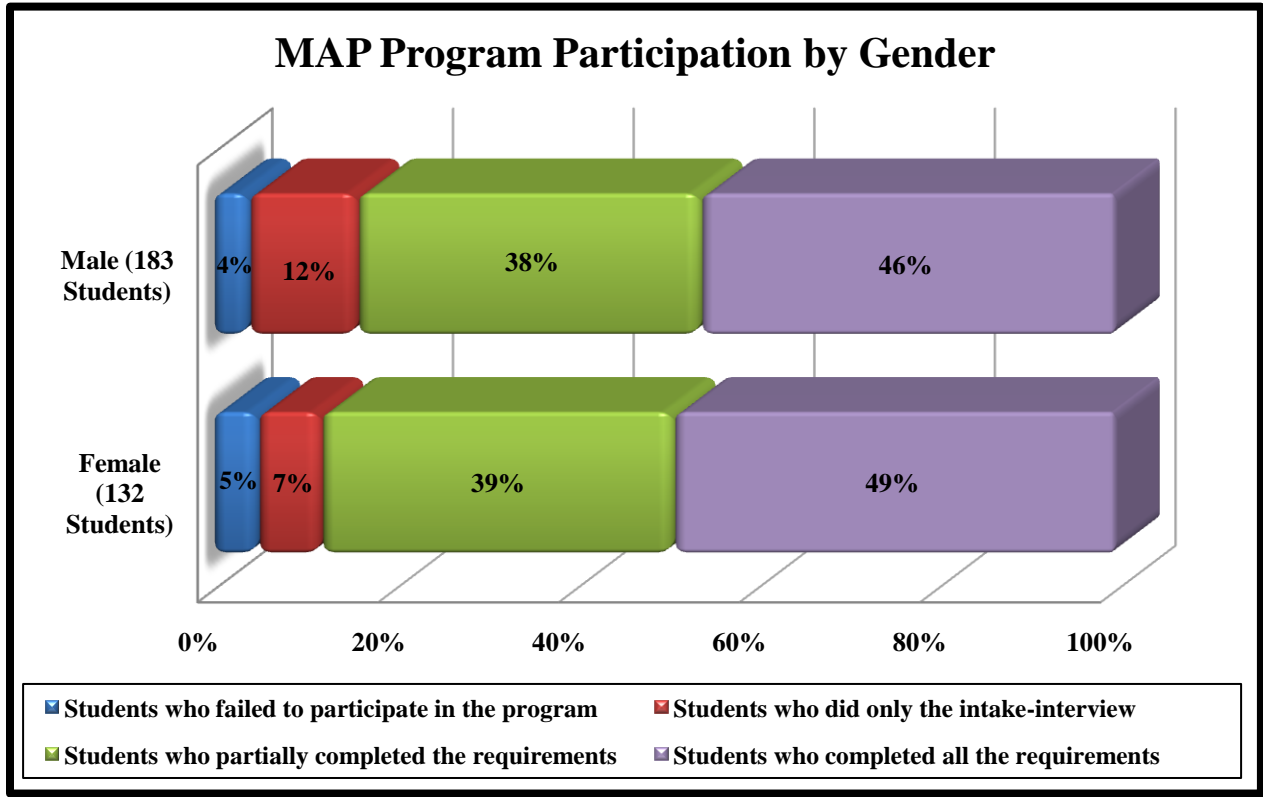


Figure 11. MAP Mean GPA Change by Ethnicity

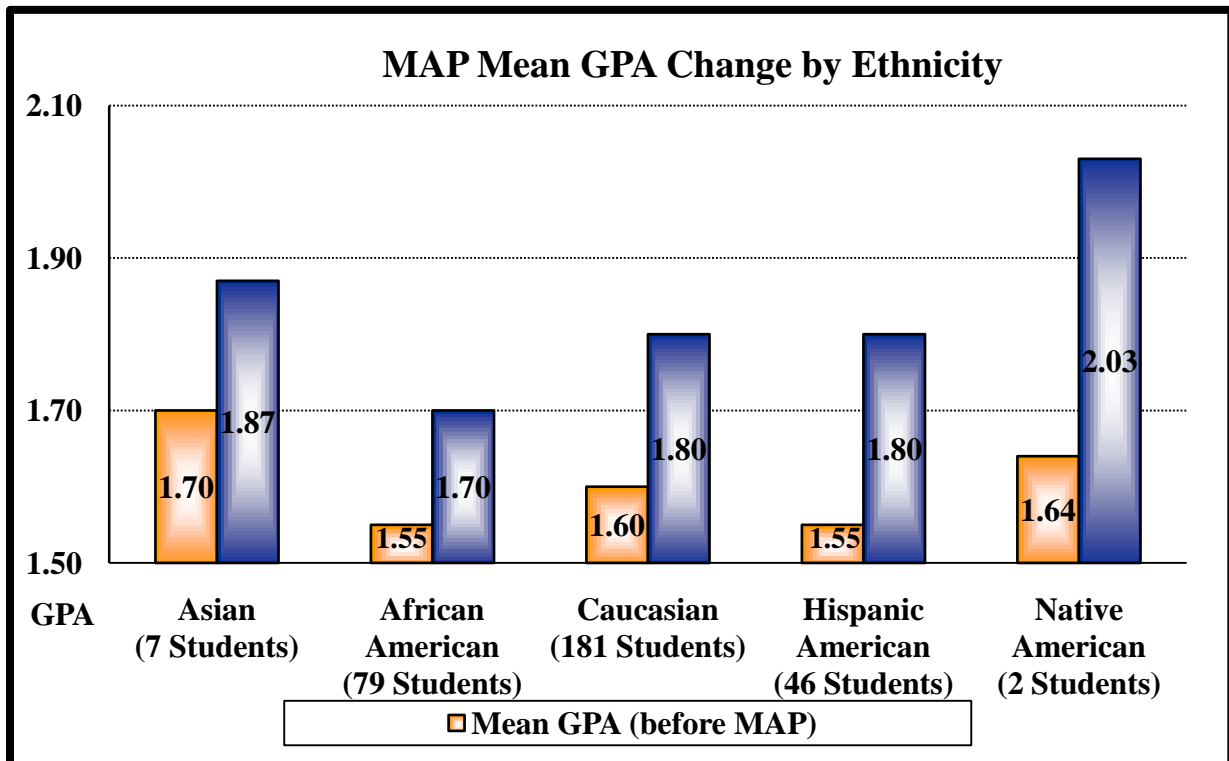


Figure 12. MAP Mean GP Change by Ethnicity

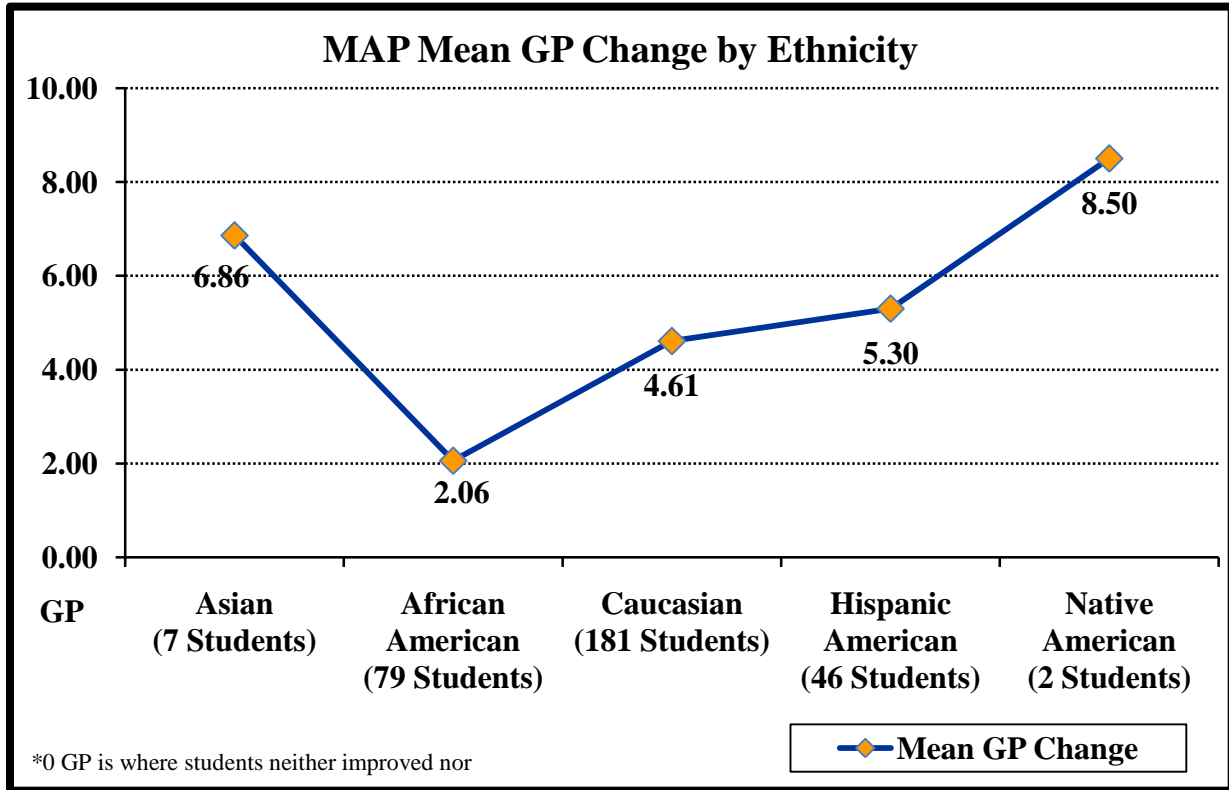


Figure 13. MAP Program Participation by Ethnicity

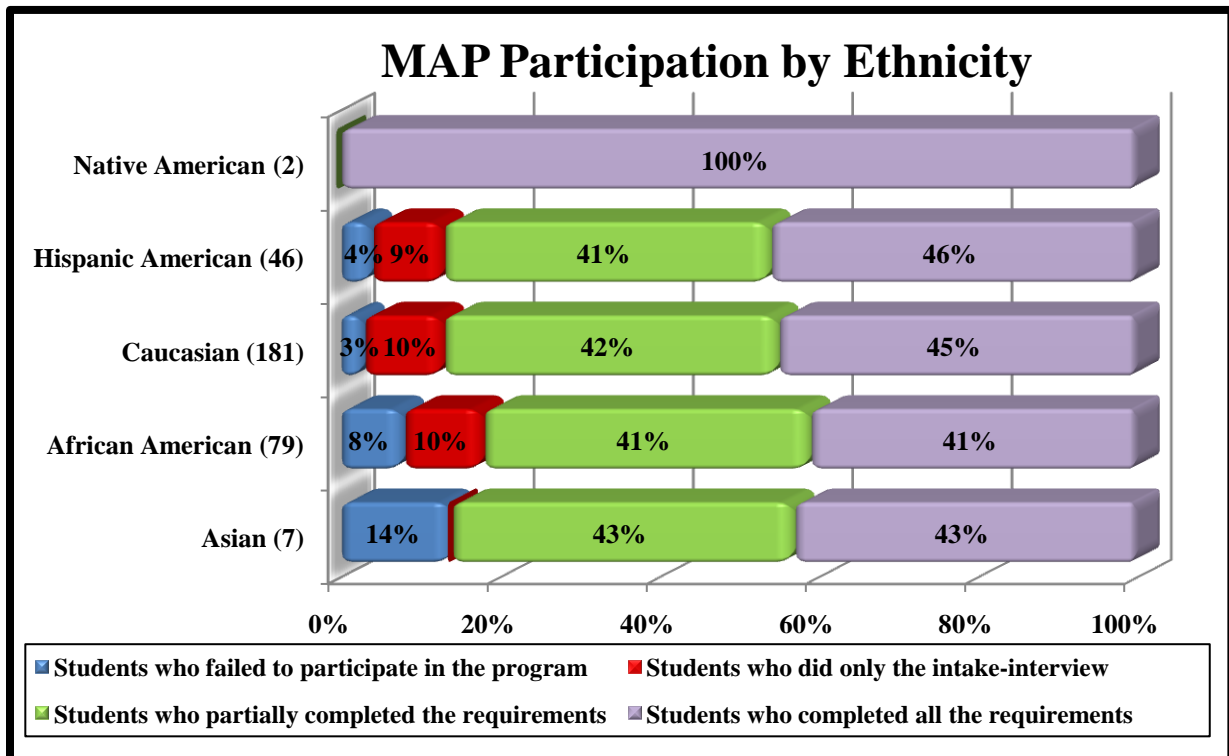


Figure 14. MAP Mean GPA by Classification

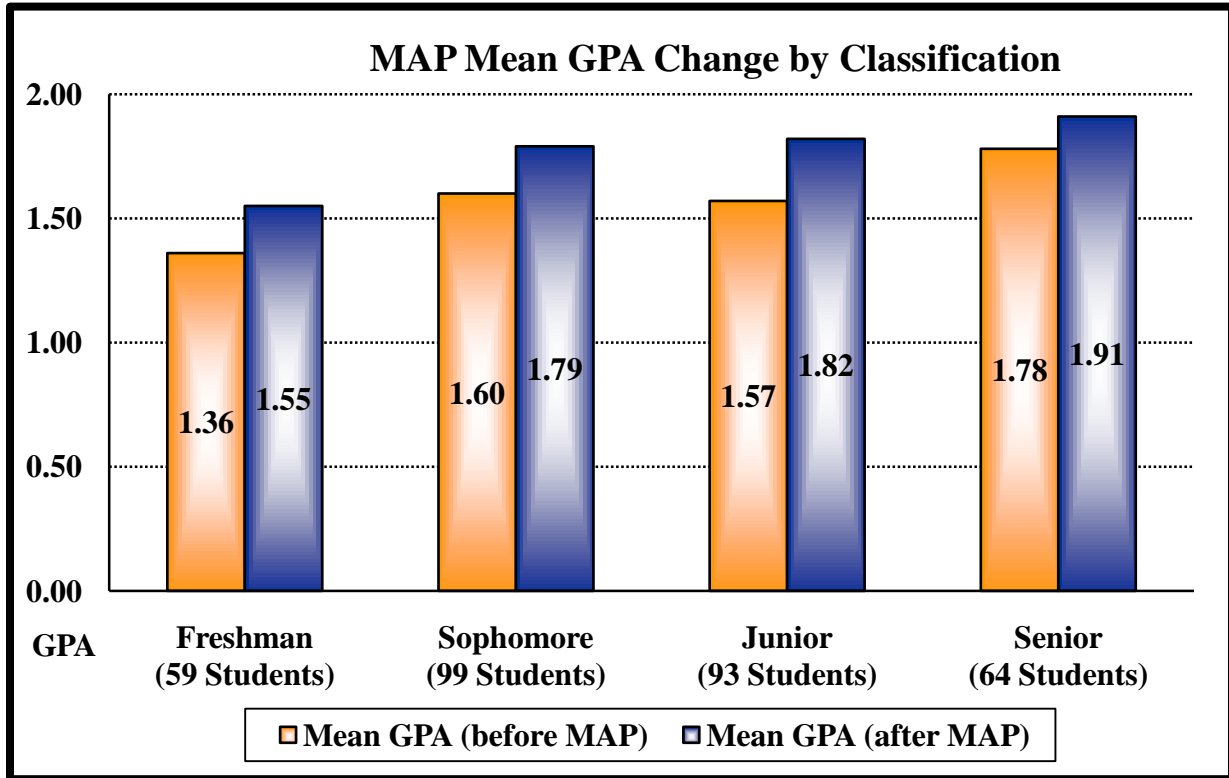


Figure 15. MAP Mean GP Change by Classification

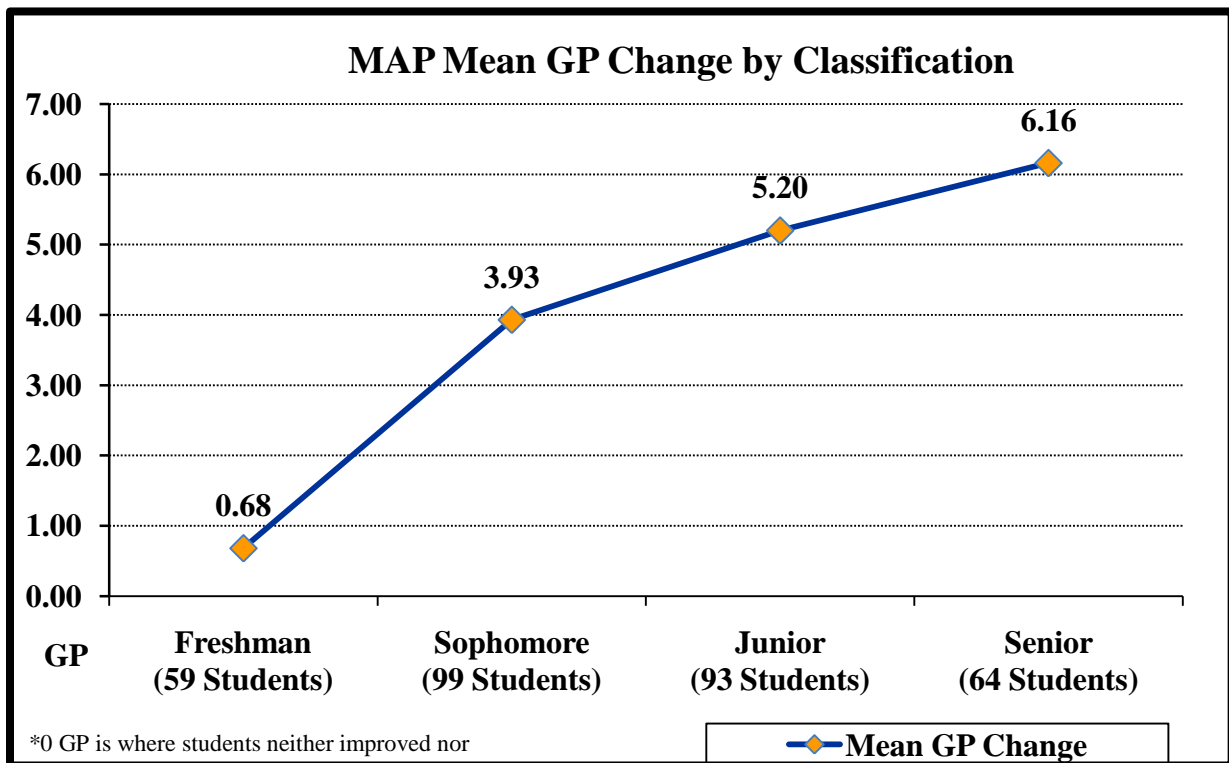
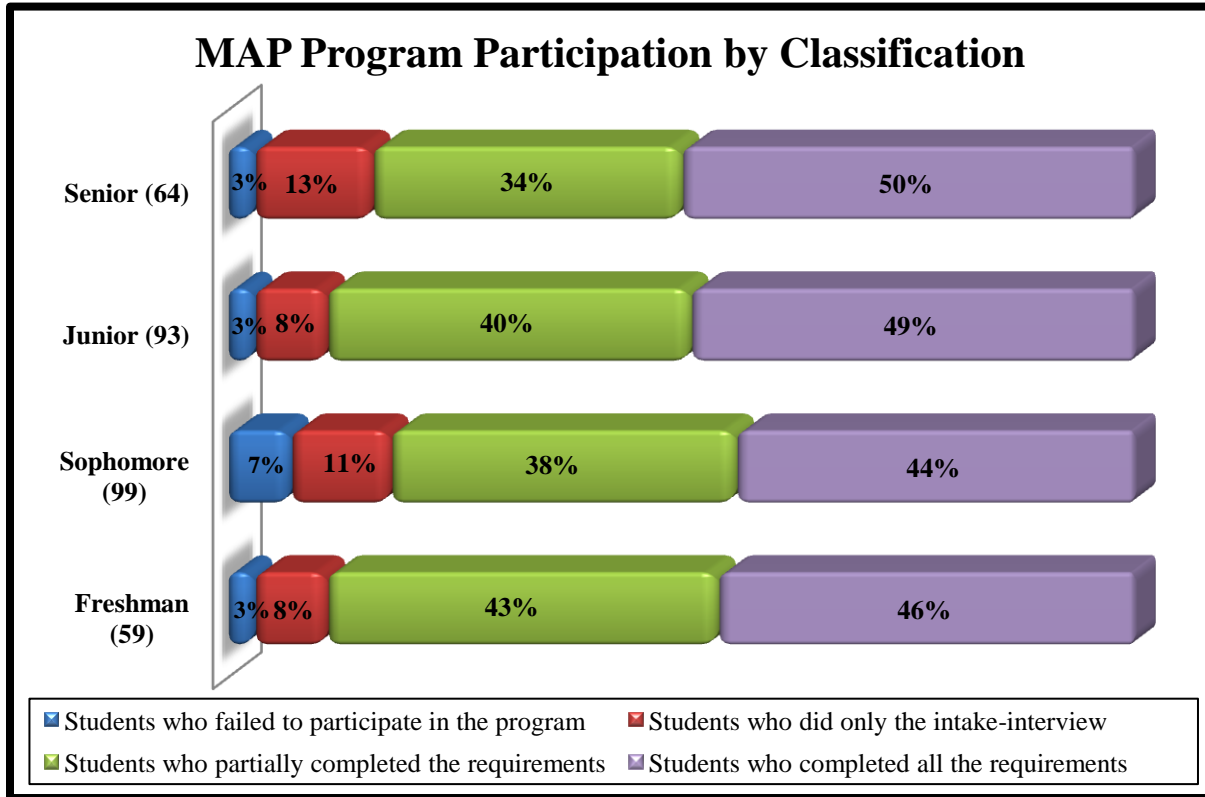


Figure 16. MAP Program Participation by Classification



Every college referred students to the MAP program this spring; in addition, more students were sent in Spring 2010 (398) than in Spring 2009 (322), with four of the five colleges increasing their number of referrals this year. All five colleges are represented in the data below; however, the numbers do not include those who either did not attend or resigned.

<u>College</u>	<u>Number of Referrals</u>
Arts and Sciences	77
Humanities and Social Sciences	66
Education	44
Criminal Justice	51
Business Administration	77

In addition to the tables and charts that we sent to each college, we also included detailed lists of their students and how they performed according to the criteria below. If you would like a copy of this student information, please let me know.

We greatly appreciate the participation of the five colleges in the MAP program. We feel that it is of help to a number of our students and promotes a higher retention level at the university.

Study Skills Seminars

Study skills seminars have been part of the SAM Center's program since its inception. Taught by our trained student assistants (who must have at least a 3.0 to work at the SAM Center), one-hour classes are held for a six-week period. Topics covered in these seminars are procrastination, time management, textbook reading, note-taking, and stress management. Each student is give a Lassi test at the beginning of the classes and at the end to show the progress made. Seminars are offered at many times during the week and students choose a time that best fits their schedules.

Students who Resign

A new program that we have instituted in the Spring 2010 semester is to interview all students who resign from the university. This is done in order to determine the reasons why students resign and if there needs to be either programs created to help them stay in school or if the student might need further counseling. We are going to follow up on these students to see if they return. While the data received is based on only one semester, we plan to continue this process to determine if we need to create ways to retain these students.

RESIGNATION REPORT SPRING 2010

In an effort to understand and address the needs of the students who resign from Sam Houston State University, the Student Advising and Mentoring Center was asked to coordinate the resignation process. Working closely in collaboration with Kelli Leaf, Assistant Registrar, we designed a process wherein each student resigning met individually with a mentor. The program at the SAM Center was coordinated by Margaret Ferguson who was also responsible for data entry. Each of the Sam Center Staff was assigned to conduct resignation interviews based on their availability. During the interview process, data was collected and resources outlined. We believe that the personal interview with a mentor filled a dual

purpose. This strategy enabled us to collect meaningful data. It also guaranteed that each student was able to receive information about the range of student support services available on campus. As a result, all resigning students would be better equipped to manage problems that inhibited their academic performance.

The following report is preliminary, based on analysis compiled by Institutional Research and Assessment. With information for only one semester recommendations are premature. Nonetheless, the following descriptive information will allow us to begin a process which will help us understand who these students are. Understanding our target population will ultimately enable us to serve them better.

A total of 213 undergraduate students chose to resign. Their gender, race, and classification is as follows:

Demographics of Students Who Resign: Gender, Race and Classification

Gender	
Male	97
Female	116
Race	
Unknown	1
Asian	2
Black	44
Caucasian	144
Hispanic	19
Native American	2
White Non Hispanic	1
Classification	
Freshmen	56
Sophomore	52
Junior	58
Senior	47

In general these preliminary figures are not completely surprising. As women outnumber men on the SHSU campus we would expect that a greater number of women resign. In respect to race, 67.6% of students who resign are Caucasian, 20% are African American and 9% are Hispanic. It is interesting to note that resignations are almost equally distributed across classification with only a slightly smaller number of seniors resigning.

Number of Resignations by Classification and Gender:

Classification	Male	Female
Freshmen	23	33
Sophomore	27	25
Junior	22	36
Senior	25	22

Resignations by Race and Gender:

Race	Male	Female
Unknown	1	0
Asian	2	0
Black	16	28
Caucasian	71	73
Hispanic	6	13
Native American	1	1
White Non Hispanic	0	1

Age of Students Who Resign:

Students who resign range in age from 17 to 63 years of age. The vast majority are traditional students between the ages of 18 to 25. (We were unable to identify the ages of a small number of our population).

Age	Number Who Resign
17 yrs.	1
18-25yrs.	154
26-35yrs.	35
36-46yrs.	10
47-63yrs.	7

Transfer Students:

Type	Count
Returning students	179
Transferring seniors*	7
Transferring juniors**	16
New freshmen	5
Unknown	6

* Transferring seniors means transferred from 4 year universities

** Transferring juniors means transferred from 2 year community college

First Generation Status:

First Generation	Non First Generation	Unknown
54 (37%)	144 (65%)	15 (7%)

Resignation by Month:

Month	Count
Jan.	35
Feb.	31
March	32
April	49
May	66

The first three months of the semester seem fairly evenly distributed. However, there is a significant increase in April and again in May.

Classification:

Percentage of Students who Resign by Classification

Classification	No. of Students in Classification	Number of Students who Resigned	Percentage of Total who Resigned
Freshman	2,324	56	2.41%
Sophomore	2,912	52	1.79%
Junior	3,586	58	1.62%
Senior	4,490	47	1.05%

Reason for Resignation:

Only 177 of the students who resigned provided a reason. If we look at the identified reasons, it may help formulate a profile of student resignation. Students reported work as a problem if the demand for the number of hours made it difficult to make school a priority. It may be that there is a correlation between identifying work as the problem and a low GPA. Issues identified as personal included health problems that the student was experiencing, legal problems, pregnancy, etc. Many students used the category of “other” to identify similar problems, health problems for themselves or family members. Some identified transferring to another school in the same “other” category.

Reason	Number
Grades	33
Work	20
Personal	74
Finances	8
Other	42

If we look at the reasons for resignation identified by classification and we combine the categories of “personal” and “other” (see table below) we can see that across classifications students most frequently report challenging life situations, health, etc., as the reasons they are resigning. Grades are the second largest reason for resignation and finances is the issue cited least often. As part of the resignation interview, mentors outline options such as counseling at the Counseling Center to address personal issues. Although this may not impact resignation at that point in time, students who return have a better understanding of the range of student services available to support their success. If we were to assume that poor grades and work are correlated and we combine these two categories for a total of 53 resignees, this number is still less than half of those that identify “personal” and “other.”

Reason for Resignation by Classification:

Reason	Freshmen	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Total
Grades	10	9	9	5	33
Work	0	6	7	7	20
Personal/Other	37	30	33	16	116
Finances	4	8	1	1	14

GPA of Students Who Resign:

Many of us who work with students make the assumption that grades are the determining factor in the resignation process. It is interesting to note that the mean GPA of those resigning was a 1.94. Twenty-five percent had a GPA lower than 1.49. Fifty percent had a GPA lower than 2.08 and seventy-five percent had a GPA lower than 2.63.

GPA of Students Who Resign		
Mean	1.94	
Median	2.08	
Standard Deviation	1.07	
Percentiles	25 percentile	1.49
	50 percentile	2.08
	75 percentile	2.63

Mean GPA by College:

College	Mean GPA
COAS	1.81
CHSS	2.22
CJ	2.15
COBA	1.58
COED	2.27

Percentage of Resignations by College:

College	No. of Students in Col	No. Resigned	Percent Resigned
COAS	3,656	64	1.75%
CHSS	2,768	48	1.73%
COBA	2,660	51	1.92%
COED	2,304	31	1.35%
CJ	1,924	19	0.99%

Beneficial Campus Services:

Students were asked to identify campus services that they found beneficial (although not all did).

Campus Service	Count
SAM Center	75
Financial Aid	24
Counseling Center	20
Health Center	9
Student Services	1
Other	29

In the “other” category students mentioned the Writing Center, the Math Lab, the Library and computer labs. They also mentioned study halls in the Athletics Department and Military Science.

During the resignation interview students were asked if there was anything that might have improved their experience here at SHSU. Students mention issues with faculty, Financial Aid, Advising, no child-care on campus, rigid attendance policy, etc.

Summary:

It is obvious that a picture of one semester is only a beginning. Although the information gathered is interesting, but it is difficult, with only one semester, to analyze or speculate. However, tracking students who resign is an important part of a comprehensive retention strategy. It is interesting to note that the median GPA for the 213 students who withdrew was 2.08, so half of the distribution was students who were in good standing at the point of resignation. It is also noteworthy that such a significant number of students identified life stressors outside of the university realm as main reason for resignation.

In the future it will be important to know how our resignation rate compares to other universities our size. Furthermore, it is important to know how many of those who resigned return either in the Summer or Fall semester and we will provide this information in our next report.

Outcomes

The combination of academic advising and mentoring in a centralized location on the Sam Houston State University campus has proved to benefit our students in many ways. There is now a place students can come at any time during the year to receive help with their academic program and aid in their classes. Students can voluntarily put themselves into a mentoring program as well as be referred to our programs by their professors, their advisors, or their Deans. The programs devised by the SAM Center have been instrumental in increasing the retention rates and have impacted graduation rates.

Data below present one-year retention rates, overall, for all Sam Houston State first-time freshmen community college transfers and university transfers. The data indicate that, over time, retention rates have been improving for community college transfer students just as they have for the University's first-time freshmen, and that community college transfer students have higher overall one-year retention rates than Sam Houston State first-time freshmen.

Overall One-Year Retention Rates

Cohort	All SHSU 1st-Time Freshmen	All Community College 1st-Time Transfers	All University 1st-Time Transfers
Fall 2004	70%	76%	73%
Fall 2005	72%	76%	71%
Fall 2006	70%	76%	75%
Fall 2007	72%	79%	73%
Fall 2008	75%	78%	72%

One-Year Retention Rates Earned by Credits Transferred at Entry

Cohort	SHSU 1st-Time Frsh (0 trans credits)	SHSU 1st-Time Freshmen (dual credits less than 30)	SHSU 1st-Time Frsh (dual credits 30 or greater)	Comm College 1st-Time Trans (credits trans less than 30)	Comm College 1st-Time Trans (credits trans 30 or greater)	University 1st-Time Trans (credits trans less than 30)	University 1st-Time Trans (credits trans 30 or greater)
Fall 2004	68%	77%	71%	63%	71%	69%	74%
Fall 2005	70%	75%	93%	64%	80%	65%	74%
Fall 2006	69%	72%	84%	64%	78%	72%	77%
Fall 2007	69%	77%	78%	67%	81%	68%	76%
Fall 2008	72%	79%	77%	70%	80%	63%	77%

Data above presents one-year retention rates for first-time freshman students who have taken dual credit courses prior to entering Sam Houston (Column 2—less than 30 hours and Column 3—30 hours or greater). These data may not exclusively represent dual-credit students, as we have not as yet been able to distinguish these from other students who took summer courses before entering in the fall semester; nevertheless, it is evident that these students are being retained at a higher rate than our first-time freshman students who enter with no dual credit courses (Column 1).

The table also displays one-year retention rates for students who transfer to Sam Houston State from other universities (Column 6—less than 30 hours and Column 7—30 or more hours). In past years, students transferring to Sam Houston State with less than 30 hours from another university were often retained at a higher rate than students transferring from community colleges with comparable credits. However, the one-year retention rate for the most recent (2008) university transfer cohort entering with fewer than 30 credits is the lowest of all transfer or first-time freshman groups. Columns 4 and 5 of the above table display data for students transferring to Sam Houston State from community colleges, broken down by those with less than 30 hours to transfer and those with 30 hours or more. Those transferring with 30 hours or more consistently have a higher retention rate.

At Sam Houston State University, graduation rates have been increasing for students who enter as first-time freshmen and those who enter as first-time community college transfers. Data below illustrate that the three-year graduation rate for community college transfer students (Column 2) approximates the six-year graduation rate of first-time freshmen (Column 7). The data also indicate that community college transfer students have moved from being less successful than university transfer students to being slightly more successful over the past six years.

Overall 3-Year, 4-Year, and 6-Year Graduate Rates

Cohort Year	3-Year Graduation Rate			4-Year Graduation Rate			6-Year Graduation Rate		
	SHSU FTFs	Comm Coll FTTs	Univ FTTs	SHSU FTFs	Comm Coll FTTs	Univ FTTs	SHSU FTFs	Comm Coll FTTs	Univ FTTs
Fall 2001	1.6%	35.0%	39.5%	17.8%	49.1%	50.4%	40.7%	55.8%	54.9%
Fall 2002	1.8%	34.5%	36.1%	20.4%	49.9%	52.0%	42.6%	59.4%	58.9%
Fall 2003	1.9%	35.0%	39.3%	21.3%	51.9%	49.5%	44.3%	60.0%	56.0%
Fall 2004	1.7%	40.0%	39.9%	21.1%	55.0%	54.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Fall 2005	2.2%	41.8%	33.2%	26.0%	56.0%	48.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Fall 2006	2.7%	42.4%	40.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Summary

The creation of a centralized advising and mentoring center has been an important step for Sam Houston State University. Academic advising is crucial to all students to assure that they are on track to graduate “on time.” Keeping accurate and timely advising histories on all students indicate the academic paths taken by students. While all students do not graduate in the time frame they had expected, there are several factors which influence this, including changing majors (many times more than twice), receiving low grade leading to probation and suspension and causing the repeat of classes, working, and experiencing unexpected problems in their lives causing them to lay out for a semester or longer. However, when a university shows that it cares about its students and has created

programs to help the students, then there are rewards for the university and the students. Students will participate in programs when they know that someone cares about them, that there are others who will congratulate them on their successes and will help them if they falter. The most satisfying aspect of being part of the SAM Center at Sam Houston State is that everyone—and I mean everyone—who leaves your office thanks you for helping them. Can there be a better reward than this?