From AAA to World Series Champion: Winning Strategies for Working with Students on Academic Probation

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Session Outcomes

• Review the relevant research regarding successful advising approaches for students on academic probation/dismissal

• Explore the proactive and appreciative advising approaches that have assisted students in their return to good standing

• Hear students’ reflections on what contributed to their successful return to good standing

• See connections between proactive and appreciative advising, students’ experiences and retention rates
Supervisory, Probation, and Dismissal Statuses (PD)

**Supervisory**
- Less than 2.0 semester GPA, but above 2.0 cumulative GPA

**Probation**
- Less than 2.0 cumulative GPA

**Dismissal**
- Less than 2.0 cumulative GPA for two or more semesters OR more than 15 deficiency points [Quality Points – 2(GPA Hours)]
Parks College by the Numbers

769 Undergraduates
29% female; 71% male
40 FT Faculty = 1/19 Faculty to Student Ratio
3.21 Average Undergraduate GPA
41 US States; 23 countries
88 International Students
21 Transfer Students
34 Veteran Students
90.4% Retention Rate (FR to SO)
100% Individualized

Averages per Semester
33 students on supervisory
21 students on academic probation (for first, second or third time)
4 students reaching dismissal (option to appeal)
2 students fully dismissed from College and University (no appeal)
2 semesters on PD
= 8% are landing on PD
## Top Causes of PD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research shows:</th>
<th>Our data – over the past four years – show:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of readiness for school</td>
<td>Lack of effective study skills</td>
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<td>Lack of effective study behavior</td>
<td>Difficulty forming learning strategies (learning how to learn)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time management and prioritization</td>
<td>Time management</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive functioning (e.g. organization, prioritization)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial, personal, and/or family concerns</td>
<td>Financial stability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wellness (e.g. sleeping, eating, fitness)</td>
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Advisor Competencies: Research Shows...

**Advisors should have the following skills:**
- Communication, listening, questioning and referral

**Advising meetings could focus on:**
- Reasoning skills
- Understanding the curriculum
- Organization and personal skills
- Study skills
- Follow-through
- Strategies to develop confidence (or harness over-confidence) and self-efficacy
- Collaborative goal setting
- Celebrating accomplishments
Successful Student Practices (Theory to Practice)

• Commit to **honest, open dialogue** with Academic Advisor

• Have a **support system** outside of the Academic Advisor

• **Track their progress/grades** in every class to maintain realism and share with Academic Advisor

• Develop and utilize **system for organization** - planner, calendar, etc.

• Set and achieve **small goals**

• Other examples of successful practices for PD students?
Academic Success Strategies

Discussed and given to every PD student; also in our Academic Advising Handbook

1. Attend class regularly
2. Talk with other students about class materials and join a study group
3. Talk with each professor early in the semester
4. Establish a study schedule
5. Utilize campus services
6. Master mathematics
7. Reassess course plan and course registration
Proactive & Appreciative Advising Resources

Download the Undergraduate Academic Advising Handbook

Parks College of Engineering, Aviation and Technology
Academic Performance Contract

This contract, made between (STUDENT NAME) and Parks College of Engineering, Aviation and Technology entered into on ___/___/___, contains the following restrictions and provisions during the ___-___ semester, as follows:

STUDENT SHOULD READ EACH ITEM AND THEN INITIAL EACH BOX

☐ I will not hold office in any University or College organization.

☐ I will limit my academic load to ___ credit hours.

☐ My goal is to reach a (Typically 12-18) GPA at the end of the semester.

☐ I will abide by the following additional conditions and restrictions:
   □ Complete assignments as assigned by academic advisor.
   □ Meet with advisor weekly/ever other week/monthly.
   □ Other, e.g., appointments with career, academic success, counseling, etc.

☐ I will meet with my Academic Advisor at midterms no later than ___/___/___.

☐ Spring: within one week after spring break.
☐ Fall: no later than the Friday immediately following fall break.

☐ I have received the Academic Success Strategies & Resource sheet.

By signing below, I certify that I will abide by the terms of this contract and do withdraw into this academic performance contract and that I will meet any of the conditions of this contract and result in my being dismissed from Parks College of Engineering, Aviation and Technology.

First Meeting:

STUDENT SIGNATURE: ___/___/___

ACADEMIC ADVISOR SIGNATURE: ___/___/___

Midterm Meeting:

STUDENT SIGNATURE: ___/___/___

ACADEMIC ADVISOR SIGNATURE: ___/___/___

By signing below, I certify that I will abide by the terms of this contract and do withdraw into this academic performance contract and that I will meet any of the conditions of the contract and result in my being dismissed from Parks College of Engineering, Aviation and Technology.

Second Meeting:

STUDENT SIGNATURE: ___/___/___

ACADEMIC ADVISOR SIGNATURE: ___/___/___

Third Meeting:

STUDENT SIGNATURE: ___/___/___

ACADEMIC ADVISOR SIGNATURE: ___/___/___

Success Strategies

1. Attend class regularly and if unavoidable absences occur, contact the professor and make up the work quickly. Regular class attendance is the quickest path to academic success.

2. Talk with other students about class materials and join a study group. If a study group is not established, start one and invite other students to study with you on a regular basis.

3. Talk with each professor early in the semester. Instead of bringing to help a student salvage a grade at the end of the semester, a professor will be better able to assist you at the beginning of a course when there is ample time to learn the material. Professors are also an invaluable resource for additional materials and study group contacts of which a student, on their own, might not be aware.

4. Establish a study schedule. Similar to a class or work schedule, study schedules allot a period of time each day and a minimum number of hours each week dedicated to studying for each class. Additional study time should be included for papers, tests and class projects, etc. and is sure to include time for study groups. A summer calendar, social schedule or other app will be useful in creating and maintaining a schedule.

5. Utilize campus services such as tutoring, writing and reading assistance, counseling, and career services. You will find details about these resources on the back of this booklet. These people are paid to help you succeed and they love their job! Don't hesitate to call.

6. Master mathematics. If you did not receive the minimum grade required to move into the next level math course, you should not attempt to the higher level course. Students may need to retake College Algebra or Pre-Calculus in order to fully develop the skills and knowledge to move further ahead. It might delay graduation, but the alternative may involve continued failure in calculus, ultimately delaying graduation and putting you at risk for academic dismissal.
   - The Math Help Center provides assistance for SLU math classes from Elementary Algebra to Calculus III. Visit them in Blume Hall 111.
   - ALEKS.com provides testing and practice exams at a cost of approximately $20 per month.
   - Students complete an assessment of their math skills and the system recommends learning modules for areas needing improvement.
   - Free online courses are available through websites such as Khan Academy at KhanAcademy.org and MIT's OpenCourseWare at ocw.mit.edu. The Khan Academy provides an innovative format for learning mathematics skills and has garnered significant support for its success in helping students learn difficult concepts. MIT's OpenCourseWare provides free video instruction, class handouts, exercises and exams for a wide range of technical courses including mathematics.
   - Chegg.com offers Chegg Study where students can get step-by-step solutions to their textbook problems in Math, Science, Engineering, Business and more. Also, students can receive quick answers from experts and submit questions all semester long.

7. Reassess your registration. You will not be able to take courses for which you have not met prerequisites. These courses have prerequisites because they are important to your success in the course. If you did not meet the prerequisite grade requirement, you should meet with your Academic Advisor to discuss your registration.

Above all else, Ask for help! You have come to Saint Louis University to start on a path toward your life goals and every member of the faculty and staff are here to assist you in that.
Advising Practices: Research Also Shows…

For students continuing on PD, Advising Offices should consider:

• Providing developmental workshops and/or one-on-one meetings
• Better referral to resources with follow-up
• Better training and preparation for academic advisors
• Determining appropriate course loads, when to repeat/withdraw from classes, and effective use of general course requirements
• Using proactive and appreciative advising strategies
Advising Approaches for Students on PD

**Proactive Advising**  (Earl, 1988)

Also identified as *intrusive advising* or *high involvement advising*

“deliberate structured student intervention at the first indication of academic difficulty in order to motivate a student to seek help”

“includes personal contact, generating student responsibility for problem solving and decision making, assisting students in identifying resolvable causes of poor academic performance, and offering negotiated agreements for future actions.”

**Appreciative Advising**  (Bloom, Hutson, He, 2008)

“the intentional collaborative practice of asking positive, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals, and potentials”
Proactive & Appreciative Advising Strategies for Students on PD

**PROACTIVE**

Develop **meaningful** and **authentic** relationships (get to know them beyond their coursework)

Assess **student needs** (what went well, what didn’t, what strategies have worked, what haven’t?)

Co-develop an **individualized academic performance contract** to facilitate student success (i.e. GPA goal, prioritizing time, organization strategies, campus resources, etc.)

Assist students in developing appropriate levels of **self-awareness, confidence, motivation, accountability** and **self-efficacy**

Participate in **collaborative goal-setting** (*small and achievable*)

Provide **accountability**, but also **encouragement, support**, and **celebrate** goal achievement

**APPRECIATIVE**

**Disarm**: Greet the student in the lobby and begin the conversation with non-academic topics (*College Transition Collaborative; probation letter changes*)

**Discover**: Pinpoint their strengths first and then navigate to resources

**Dream**: Allow students to discuss their goals and collaborate on how to achieve them

**Design**: Link student’s improvement areas to appropriate support offices

**Deliver**: Execute an achieveable plan of action leading to student confidence

**Don’t settle**: Remind students of the hard work that got them into college and the successes they’ve had thus far!
While administrators intend for probation to be a helpful process, students who read standard probation letters interpret several key purposes of probation quite differently from what administrators intend:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Purpose of Probation</th>
<th>Administrator Rating</th>
<th>Student Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connect students with helpful resources</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let students know staff/faculty are concerned and care about them</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punish students</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.38</td>
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Students surveyed by CTC researchers describe being placed on probation as a stressful, negative experience. When asked to think back to when they were first placed on probation:

**Students said they felt:**
- motivated
- calm
- embarrassed
- ashamed
- sad

**Students said they DID NOT feel:**
- hopeful
- respected
- like they knew what to do next
- supported by their school

While most schools want students to feel supported and informed after being placed on probation, students often feel the opposite. This disconnect results in worse outcomes for both students and schools.

In recent studies, CTC researchers revised the probation notification letters at partner schools to be more attuned to students’ experiences, especially feelings of shame and concerns about stigmatization. We then surveyed students to compare the “psychologically attuned” letter to their school’s existing notification letter. Students reported that the attuned letter made them feel:

- more hopeful, respected, motivated, optimistic, and supported.
- more like they knew what to do, and that advisors and professors wanted to help them.
- less ashamed, discouraged, badly about themselves, anxious, and guilty.
- less likely to skip class and consider dropping out.

College Transition Collaborative (2017).
Surveying Students/Alumni

*We identified students who were on PD for at least 1 semester between the end of Fall 2013 to the end of Spring 2017*

- 60 total students/alumni identified
- 11 female, 49 male
- 8 alumni; 52 current students
- 13 Students of Color, 11 International, 36 White
- Number on PD: 1 semester (28); 2 semesters (10); 3 semesters (16); 4 semesters (4); 5 semesters (2)
- Overall average of 2 semesters on PD
- 42 continued in their Parks College major; 18 changed majors
- 36% response rate - sent two emails; no incentives (first cohort, 2013-2015)
- 8% response rate - sent two emails; no incentives (second cohort, 2015-2017)
1. Think about the time when you transitioned from academic probation (below 2.0 cum GPA) to good standing (2.0 or higher cum GPA). Of the items listed on the left below, which did you use/do?

2. What else do you think would have been helpful that you DID NOT use/do?

3. Do you have any other comments about what contributed to your successful return to good academic standing (above 2.0 cum GPA)?

4-7. Parks College Major, Graduation Month and Year, Gender
Student/Alumni Reflections

Top Strategies They Used/Did (Self-Reported)

1. Set Academic, Personal or Professional Goals with Academic Advisor or Faculty Mentor (50%)
2. Registered for Fewer Credit Hours (42%)
3. Increased Outside-of-Class Study Time (42%)
4. Set a GPA Goal (34%)
5. Attended Professors’ Office Hours (33%)
6. Increased Class Attendance (33%)
7. Practiced Better Time Management/Prioritization (33%)
8. Met more than once with Academic Advisor (27%)
9. Practiced Better Personal Health (better eating, sleeping, fitness) (25%)
Student/Alumni Reflections

What else do you think would have been helpful that you DID NOT use/do?

There were assignments that could have been done for a better grade

Communicate with instructors more frequently

Utilize studying at the library more frequently

Learning how I learn earlier on
Student/Alumni Reflections

What else do you think would have been helpful that you DID NOT use/do?

Possibly math tutoring, or other forms of subject help sessions

Having an academic advisor outside of Parks College work with me

If I could have, I would have quit my job completely

Not having to live on campus EVER
Student/Alumni Reflections

Do you have any other comments about what contributed to your successful return to good academic standing?

Going to class!

I do not like to wake up early, so I chose all late classes and that was very helpful

Support from my husband and friends

The probation fear factor helped
Do you have any other comments about what contributed to your successful return to good academic standing?

The kindness of some of the Deans, faculty and staff members (including advisors) at Parks

Some self-reflection and a re-purposing of my commitments to ensure that I was able to fulfill the demands of school
Student/Alumni Reflections

Do you have any other comments about what contributed to your successful return to good academic standing?

I was given the chance and that is what made it possible. If I would have not been given the ability to have semester-based reviews instead of cumulative, I would not have graduated. Also, it took me one year to adjust to college and hit my stride.


College Transition Collaborate (2017). [Administrator & Student Perspectives on Academic Standing] [Infographic]. Retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B19kvdMYDwYGUFNzVDVfRVI2ME0/view


Thank You For Attending!

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