

Evaluating Academic Success Effectively with “EASE”:

A New Survey of Academic Engagement for Identifying and Intrusively Assisting At-Risk, First Year Students

NASPA International Assessment and Retention Conference

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Overview



- **Introductions**
- **Project Beginnings**
- **Related Research**
- **What is EASE?**
- **EASE Case Studies**
- **The Future of EASE**

Project Beginnings



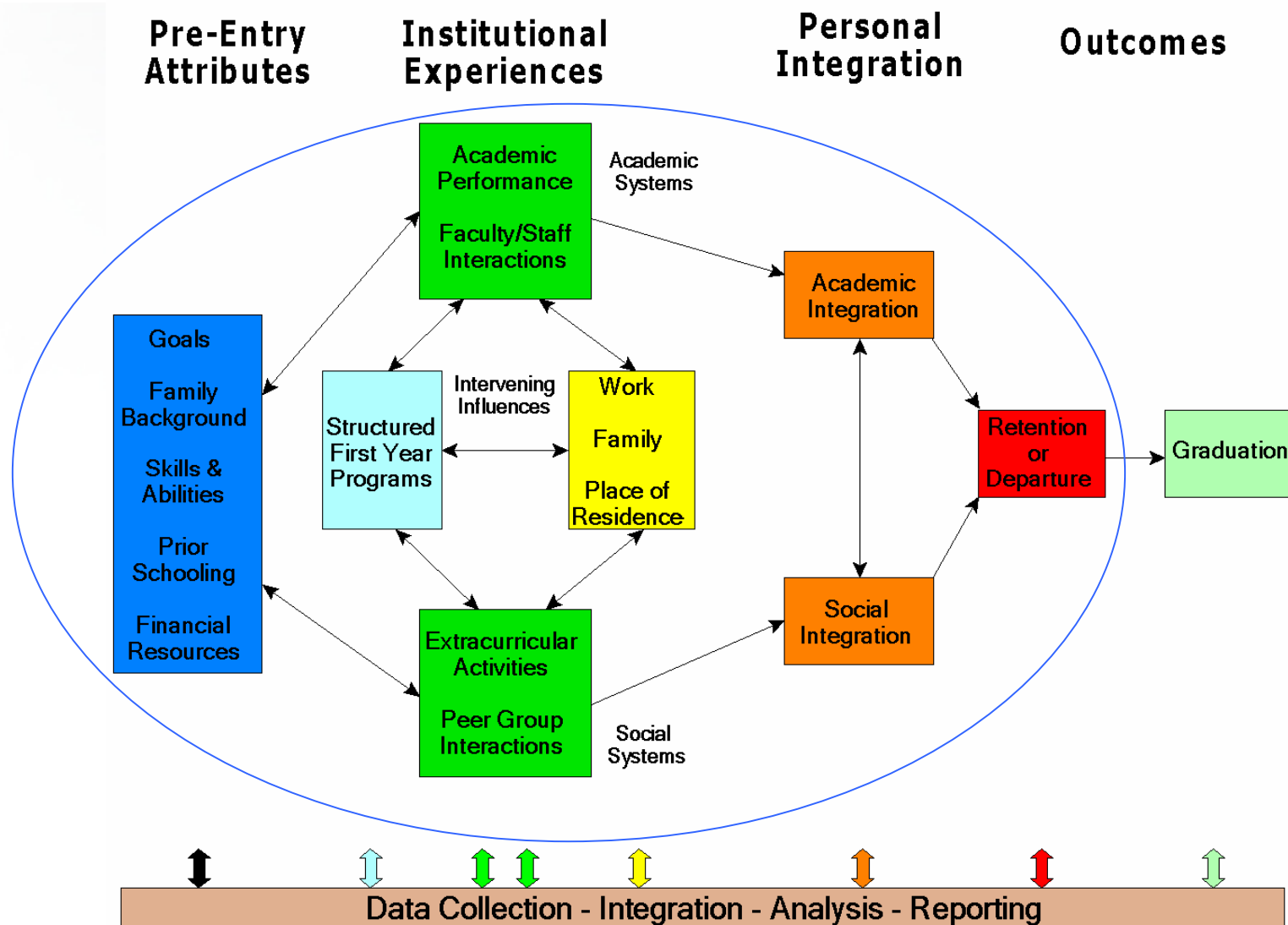
- **UNC Charlotte**
 - **2005 AASCU – Graduation Rate Outcomes Study**
 - **Internal Review of Support Services**
 - Loosely connected islands & data silos
 - Support often arrives too late for maximum benefit
 - **Need for better coordination of services & a process for early-alert/early intervention with at-risk students**
 - **Need to enable coordinated longitudinal research**
 - **Need to begin studying new transfer students**
- **StudentVoice**
 - **New student retention, measuring student success, and a need for earlier interventions with at-risk students were common themes among StudentVoice member campuses**
 - **Need for real-time reporting for immediate action**
 - **EASE is easily facilitated with StudentVoice technology**

Related Research



- **Theoretical origins of survey development**
 - **Tinto's model of student departure (1975; 1987; 1993)**
 - **Attrition occurs when students are not successfully integrated into the college environment.**
 - Academic
 - Social
 - **Astin's theory of student involvement (1984; 1996)**
 - **Student involvement – symbiotic forms**
 - Involvement in academics
 - Involvement with faculty
 - Involvement with peers
 - **Involvement leads to a variety of outcomes, including increased satisfaction and retention**

UNC Charlotte Modified Retention Model



*EASE
Survey with
Data
Integration*

EASE – A Survey & Data Integration Process



Three Goals

- 1) Identify and contact students who identify that they need help during their first term**
- 2) Combine survey information with first semester academic performance and retention information to develop a detailed comparison of students who perform at different levels academically**
- 3) Enable longitudinal research addressing issues of new student retention, academic performance and time to degree studies**

EASE - Question Architecture – 47 items



- Academic preparedness
- Place of initial residence
- Peer group interactions
- Interactions with faculty
- Interactions with staff
- Involvement in structured first year programs
- Academic goals
- Academic performance self-appraisal
- Academic effort
- Small class size involvement
- Academic integration
- Social integration
- Student employment
- Family support
- Financial resources

EASE - Who is using it?



- **What offices can benefit from EASE?**
 - New Student Programs/Orientation
 - Student Success Offices
 - First-year Programs
 - Learning Centers
 - Tutoring/Supplemental Instruction
 - Counseling/Health/Wellness
 - Residence Life
 - Judicial Affairs
 - Student Activities/Student Involvement Offices
 - Academic Departments
 - And many more....

EASE - Data Integration Elements



- **Pre-Survey**

- Student demographics
- College and major
- Predicted grade point average
- Financial aid data
- First year structured programs

- **Post-Survey**

- Unsatisfactory grades at mid-semester
- Grade point average
- Academic standing (probation status)
- Withdrawal codes
- Subsequent semester enrollment/attrition

UNC Wilmington: Organization of the Study



Purposing the Early Warning Survey as a Student Affairs Programmatic Intervention:

- Positioned to Student and Academic Affairs colleagues as *programmatic intervention*
- Team-based approach
 - Department of Student Life Assessment,
 - The Office of the Dean of Students,
 - The Department of Transition Programs, and
 - Academic Advising
- Formal introduction to study delivered by Director of Student Life Assessment at Division staff meeting in September 2005

UNC Wilmington: EASE Details



- Survey administered to all new first-year students and new transfer students in November 2005
 - Many questions were asked (most for statistical modeling)
 - We use two base questions for our intervention:
 1. Do you think you are coming back to this institution next semester?
 2. May we use your responses to contact you about programs or services that may be helpful to you?
- Survey response: 731 students
 - 487 New Freshman
 - 244 Transfer students

UNC Wilmington: Response Patterns to Base Questions



		May we use your responses to contact you about programs and services that may be helpful to you?	
Are you coming back next semester?		Yes	No
	Yes	440	192
	Haven't Decided	17	14
	No	8	9

- Intervention design based on response to these questions:
 - If yes (row) /yes (column), follow-up phone calls and semi-structured interviews by 21 student affairs administrators.
 - If haven't decided or no (row)/yes column, follow-up meeting with Dean of Students' Office.
 - Dean pulls Judicial files and academic files for 25 students in this category.

What UNC Wilmington Learned



- Prevented 3 of the undecided students from dropping out
 - Linked students with departments (Tutoring, Housing) most suitable to meet these students' needs
- Gathered critical data from those students who remained firm in their commitment to leave UNCW
- Increased visibility and commitment of student affairs staff among and to students
 - Students were pleasantly surprised that we cared so much to follow-up!
- Increased collaboration between academic and student affairs and among departments within student affairs
- Motivates campus to discuss retention in a new way

EASE Outcomes - UNC Charlotte - Fall 2005




- **Immediately after survey**
 - Early alert notifications to at-risk students
 - Discussions with faculty
 - Importance of early course feedback
 - Unsatisfactory grade notification after mid-terms
- **End of first semester**
 - Enabling retention & academic performance research
 - Simple messages to students, faculty, and parents
 - Importance of structured first year programs
 - Student grade estimates versus actual performance
 - Influence of library study hour program on Greek student performance
 - Differences between new freshmen and transfer students
 - Identify factors influencing academic performance & retention
 - Presentations to Board of Trustees, Deans, Department Chairs & Support Units
 - Presentation to faculty teaching large section classes for freshmen

Simple Messages




- **Go To Class!**
 - **Implications: Orientation & Parent Communication**
 - **Ask Early & Often!**

UNC Charlotte - Academic Engagement Survey - Fall 2005				
Analysis By Class Attendance				
		All AES Freshmen	% On Acad. Probation	Mean Fall Sem. GPA
#	Question	n = 866		
Q35	How often each week do you miss class?			
	Never	54%	3%	3.01
	Sometimes	37%	17%	2.67
	Often	8%	44%	2.38
	Very Often	1%	36%	1.88

Simple Messages




- **Freshmen Know When They Are In Academic Difficulty**
 - **Implications: Reaching Out Early!**

UNC Charlotte - Academic Engagement Survey - Fall 2005 Analysis By Experiencing Academic Difficulty		 UNCC [®] HARLOTTE		
		All AES Freshmen	% On Acad. Probation	Mean Fall Sem. GPA
#	Question	n = 866		
Q28	Please indicate the number of classes in which you are experiencing academic difficulty			
	0	20%	4%	3.36
	1	36%	11%	2.95
	2	33%	20%	2.56
	3	8%	33%	2.39
	4	2%	47%	2.07

Enabling Research: Data Integration



- The Power of Structured First-Year Programs!**

UNC Charlotte - Academic Engagement Survey - Fall 2005 Analysis By Structured Program Participation		 UNC CHARLOTTE		
		All Fall Freshmen n = 2889	% Retained Spring 06	Mean Fall Sem. GPA
#	Question			
Calc	Number of Structured First Year Programs Attended - Fall 2005			
	0	67	76%	2.37
	1	254	87%	2.39
	2	1652	92%	2.60
	3	601	94%	2.74
	4	298	96%	2.82
	5	17	100%	2.80
Structured First Year Programs for Freshmen:				
June-July SOAR				
Get Connected to UNC Charlotte Survey Program				
Learning Communities				
Freshmen Seminar				
SAFE (Student Advising for Freshmen Excellence)				

Enabling Research: Grade Influences



Multiple Regression – First Semester GPA (dep. var.)

- Predicted GPA
 - How frequently they miss classes per week **
 - **Working more than 15 hours per week**
 - How well they think they will do at the end of the term **
 - The number of classes they report having academic difficulty in **
-
- Variance explained by model
 - Adjusted squared multiple R = 43%

**** Factors that may be monitored by faculty**

EASE - Going Beyond the Survey



- **Identifying & Contacting At-Risk Populations**
 - Real time data means immediate action!
- **Enabling Campus Wide Research**
 - On-line access to de-identified dataset
 - Colleges-Departments-Support Programs
- **Assessing Effectiveness of 1st Year Programs**
 - “What works” and “How it works”
 - Intervening influences
 - Describing between-group characteristic differences
- **Evaluating the Effectiveness of University Policies**
 - Midterm grade notices
- **Coordinated communication to at-risk groups**
 - Essential to avoid overly intrusive contact with students

Administration Calendar



- **Spring**
 - Build local EASE team & Coordinate with StudentVoice
- **Summer**
 - Build communication and incentive plans
 - Develop IRB proposal if required
 - Finalize survey
- **Early First Term**
 - Deploy survey communication plan
- **Survey Administration Period**
 - Monitor survey & begin end-user training
- **Post Administration**
 - Build integrated dataset & begin data deployment per communication plan
- **End of First Term - Beginning of Second Term**
 - Integrate dataset with academic performance and retention data

The Future of EASE



- Fall 2006, EASE Take 2
- Continued review of instrument
 - Social & academic integration questions?
- Continued enhancement/refinement of the process and technology supporting EASE
- Increased understanding of how EASE complements other existing data sets or other national studies
- Case studies of the institutions that piloted EASE in 2005

Questions?



- For more information, contact:

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