

Chapter 2

An Individualized Approach to Student Transition: Developing a Success Coaching Model

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the creation of a Success Coaching program at a midsized, urban research institution in the South. The purpose of this chapter is to offer a review of current literature, discuss the implementation, successes, and challenges of establishing a coaching program at a mid-sized institution in the South, review assessment data, and finally, conclude with implications and thoughts for moving forward. It is the authors' hope that you find this chapter to be beneficial to establishing your own success coaching model on your respective campus.

INTRODUCTION

Student retention is an on-going concern of many postsecondary institutions (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, Gonyea, 2008). As such, institutions have responded by taking a more student centered approach, offering programs and services to various student needs and identities (Datti, 2009). One such program, success coaching, is gaining

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traction in higher education. Success coaching can be described as an initiative that improves struggling students' academic success and engagement on campus by using a coaching framework of self-assessment, problem solving and goal setting.

Often, students come to college with high expectations and preconceived notions. Most attend institutions of higher education with aspirations of being academically successful and involved in the campus community. Coming to college, students also assume high school study habits will translate to college success. Unfortunately, this is not the case for many students. When difficulties arise in academic and/or social involvement, students are likely to leave the institution (Tinto, 1994).

Under our current model, students under 30 credit hours who participate in our program are paired with a professional staff member who has earned their Master's degree in higher education or a related field. They meet once every other week during the semester and work on college readiness and preparedness skills. These include but are not limited to time management, study skills, financial literacy, campus involvement and career development. During these coaching sessions, students are encouraged by coaches to reflect on their own experiences, assess their current situation, and create a plan of action moving forward.

Coaches support students by building a rapport and assisting in achievement of an action plan while holding them accountable to the goals they create. Research ties student engagement in educationally purposeful activities to such desired outcomes as grades and persistence (Astin, 1993; Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004; Kuh, 2001, 2003; Kuh et al., 2007, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a review of current literature, discuss the implementation, successes and challenges of establishing a coaching program at a mid-sized institution in the South, review assessment data and finally, conclude with implications and thoughts for moving forward. It is the authors' hope that you find this chapter to be beneficial to establishing your own success coaching model on your respective campus.

LITERATURE REVIEW

College retention has long been a focus of research in education and a frequent topic in the literature. The academic literature has identified several barriers that could potentially reduce graduation rates. For example, one direction of research has focused largely on financial constraints (Deming & Dynarski, 2010). In addition, academic preparation has been acknowledged as a contributing factor to retention (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Further research indicates that students enter institutions of higher education underprepared for the academic rigor required in coursework. A final set of related research focuses on students' feelings of separation and ex-

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