



Academic Engagement Program

Student Success Leadership Institute

Engaging and Supporting Intervention through a Trauma-Informed Lens

Presented by Elecia Spain and Michael Key

Presenters



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Agenda

- Challenges
- Trauma-Informed Practice & Funding
- Barriers & Improvements
- Academic Engagement Program
- Removing Barriers
- Reflections
- Resources

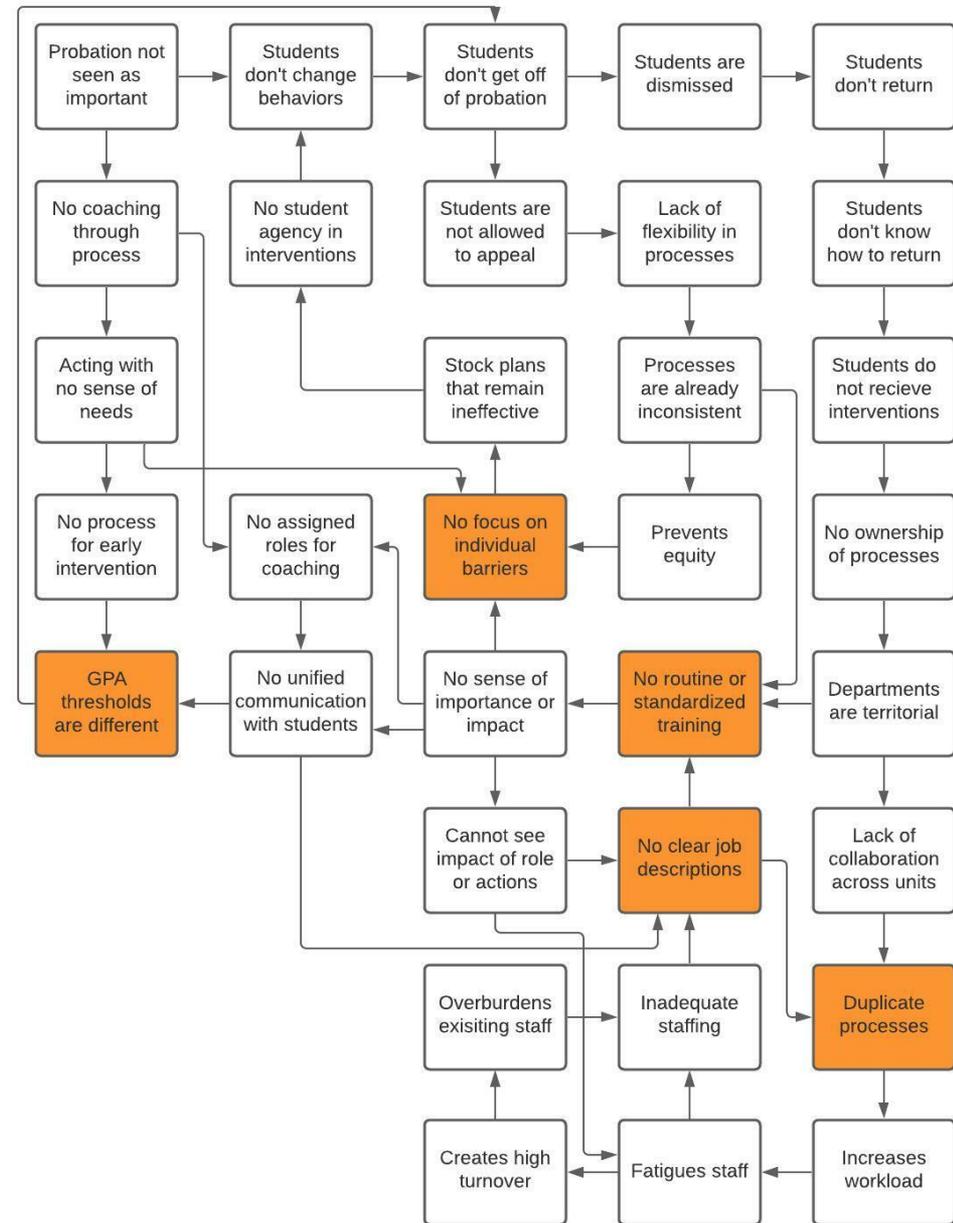
As we begin this presentation, **please write in the chat what your current challenges are and what you hope to learn from this session.** Questions will be taken at the end if time permits.

Challenges

Based on an early high-level meeting and feedback from nine individuals*, the following were identified as root causes to challenges with academic probation/dismissal:

- GPA thresholds are different
- No focus on individual barriers
- No clear job descriptions
- No routine or standardized training for students and employees
- Duplication of processes

* Five advisors, two Deans, one Financial Aid Counselor, and one probationary student.





Trauma-informed practice in education recognizes that...

“as schools maintain their critical focus on education and achievement, they must also acknowledge that mental health and wellness are innately connected to students’ success in the classroom and to a thriving school environment... which **affects staff, students, families, communities, and systems**. Thus organizational support, partnerships, and capacity-building are essential.”

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Title III Grant: Trauma-Informed Practices

Clark State found, applied for, and secured the \$1.5 million Title III grant by:

- The Executive Director of our Foundation identified the Title III Strengthening Institutions (SIP) grant, which helps expand services for low-income students to improve academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability.
- Trauma-Informed Practices were already in discussion in response to the opioid crisis.
- 24 members of Clark State met to discuss how to integrate Trauma-Informed Practices with support from the grant.
- The idea for the Academic Engagement Program came from this meeting.
- The application cycle is every two years. We applied in 2017 and 2019. Once the application was released, we had 30 days to submit the final request.

Barriers to Trauma-Informed Practices

Traumatizing Factors	Expressed Barriers
Continually retelling their story	Decentralized communication, duplicated processes, GPA thresholds are different, unidentified subject-matter experts, lack of committee
Being treated as a number or label	Intervention is based solely on GPA, ignores non-academic barriers, unable to appeal
No choice in intervention	Lack of interventions, unassigned advisors, staff fatigue and turnover, no focus on individual barriers
Unable to give feedback	No student advisory board, students unable to report on themselves, no feedback requested, no knowledge about how to return
Creating of codependence	Limited access to other resources due to required interventions, inefficient attempts to proactively prevent distress, unclear job descriptions, insufficient staffing
Motivation through fear and shame	Terminology is based on punishment and shame, loss of aid or readmittance causes fear

Terminology Improvements

Students will judge and criticize themselves without us helping them do so. Therefore, trauma-informed language aims to help change the student's internal dialogue about the situation without them shutting down. **Growth only exists with a growth mindset.**

We've implemented recommendations made by students for the following trauma-informed terminology and titling this initiative as the **Academic Engagement Program**.

Traumatizing Terminology	Trauma-Informed Alternatives
Academic Probation	Academic Intervention
Academic Probation Letter	Academic Intervention Letter
Dismissal	Academic Pause
Dismissal Letter	Academic Pause Letter
Success Plan	Engagement Plan
Petition for Readmittance	Academic Pause Appeal Form

Academic Engagement Program

Students in the Academic Engagement Program will work with their Retention Specialist to create and complete engagement plans. Students are expected to complete five (5) engagements throughout the semester.

The following activities are potential opportunities for engagement:

- Meeting with their Advisor
- Meeting with an instructor
- Using Tutoring
- Completing a Career Assessment
- YOU@ClarkState Self-Checks
- Meeting with Financial Aid
- Meeting with a Counselor
- Meeting with Accessibility Services
- Office of Student Support visit
- Attending a college-hosted event
- Meeting with their Retention Specialist
- Attending a peer support group
- Submitting a paper for review
- Casual, informal check-ins

Additionally, an appeal process is required to ensure we are reviewing a student's entire story, not just their GPA. Lastly, Retention Specialists will be assigned to student cohorts to serve as a coach and advocate through the process.

Removing Barriers

Expressed Challenges	Improvements
Decentralized communication, duplicated processes, GPA thresholds are different, unidentified subject-matter experts, lack of committee	Retention inbox, new letters, flat GPA limit, creation of Retention Specialists, appeal committee created
Intervention is based solely on GPA, ignores non-academic barriers, unable to appeal	Created appeal process, close partnership with Office of Student Support, new emphasis on holistic engagement plans
Lack of interventions, unassigned advisors, staff fatigue and turnover, no focus on individual barriers	Enrolled in program, self-created engagement plans, assigned Retention Specialists
No student advisory board, students unable to report on themselves, no feedback requested, no knowledge about how to return	Recruit Back campaign, creation of exit interviews, exploring progress reports and self-inventories in Slate
Restricting access to other resources by forcing specific interventions, inefficient attempts to proactively prevent distress, unclear job descriptions, insufficient staffing, territorial mentalities	Self-selected interventions, Advisor training, additional Academic Progress Coordinator, integration of TRIO, Student Services Portal, YOU@ClarkState
Terminology is based on punishment and shame, loss of aid or readmittance causes fear	New Academic Standing policy and letters created with new terminology, referrals to Ohio DOHE opportunities

Reflections and Improvements

Reflections	Improvements
Students who engaged at least 5 times had an increase in term-to-term GPA of +0.49 whereas those who did not engage had a decrease of -0.18.	Changed required engagement threshold to 5 or more. Scheduled social events alongside sports games and college-wide celebrations.
Students were confused by the purpose of the program and any repercussions for not participating.	Created an in-person orientation to answer questions, normalize the circumstances, and introduce them to Retention Specialists.
Largest economic barriers students faced were textbooks, childcare, computer, food, internet, and transportation.	Secured additional grant funding to offset financial hardships and worked closely with Job & Family Services to apply for benefits.
Response to communication was low and hard to maintain through the semester.	Created topical “Did You Know” emails with relevant tips and an open-ended question.
Student usage of relevant resources was inconsistent.	Used a CRM to customize emails with direct information about services based on their responses to a needs assessment.

Resources

Cuseo, J., Thompson, A., Campagna, M., & Fecas, V. S. (2008). *Thriving in College and Beyond*. Kendall Hunt.

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Kamphoff, C. S. (2007). A Motivational/Empowerment Model Applied to Students on Academic Probation. *Journal of College Student Retention : Research, Theory & Practice.*, 8(4), 397–412.

Pickering, J.D., Lazarus, M. & Hallam, J. A Practitioner's Guide to Performing a Holistic Evaluation of Technology-Enhanced Learning in Medical Education. *Med.Sci.Educ.* 29, 1095–1102 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40670-019-00781-7>

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Thank you.