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FEB 08 2008

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Report on First Alert for Fall 2007

This report covers First Alert referrals for the Fall semester of 2007. An additional report encompassing the entire academic year will be sent to you at the end of the Spring semester. In all, we received 911 referrals, the second highest semester total since the program's inception almost six years ago. The following procedures were used for all referrals:

1. Faculty members referred students with low grades or excessive absences in one or more of their classes.
2. Multiple attempts were made to contact the students—email, telephone calls, and letters.
3. Students who responded were assessed and given information about how to improve their academic performance. Depending on individual needs, this included signing them up for study skills sessions, informing them about free tutoring on campus, explaining university policies that affect their academic standing, and referring them to other campus agencies, as needed.
4. All faculty members who made referrals were kept up to date on the work we were doing with their student(s).
5. At the end of each semester, participating faculty were asked to fill out an evaluation form.

This report focuses on the students who were sent to First Alert during the Fall 2006 semester.

Demographics

The tables below show both numbers and percentage of students in each category. Comparisons of First Alert referrals to those in the general university population are made for Gender and Classification. Of the students referred to First Alert, 48.5% were males and 51.5% female. They were classified as 41.5% freshmen, 22.7% sophomores, 19.0% juniors, and 16.8% seniors. With regard to ethnicity, White Non-Hispanic students constituted a majority at 59.7%, African-Americans were 26.8%, Hispanics were 11.9%, and Other (Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, and International) comprised 1.6%. 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 for help far more often than were students in any other classification.

Gender		
	Male (442)	Female (469)
First Alert	48.5%	51.5%
SHSU Student Body	43.0%	57.0%

Classification				
	Freshman (378)	Sophomore (207)	Junior (173)	Senior (153)
First Alert	41.5%	22.7%	19.0%	16.8%
SHSU Student Body	26.5%	22.6%	23.7%	27.2%

Ethnicity				
	White – Non Hispanic (544)	African-American (244)	Hispanic (108)	Other* (15)
First Alert	59.7%	26.8%	11.9%	1.6%
SHSU Student Body	70.2%	14.7%	12.4%	2.7%

*"Other" is defined as Native-American, Asian, Pacific Islander, and International

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 is increased. If that failing class is excluded from the grade point average and increased effort can be focused on the remaining courses, the student is less likely to be suspended or placed on probation. The same may 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 withdraw from all classes is small.

The first table below indicates the overall success rate (68.3%) of First Alert as defined by the above criteria. This one-semester success rate compares fairly closely to that of Fall 2006 (64.4%) which brought more students to the program (1150) than were sent this Fall (911).

Overall Success Rate		
Successful*	622	68.3%
Not Successful**	289	31.7%

Successful* = Passed, dropped, or resigned. Not successful** = Grade of F

The three tables that follow break down the outcomes by classification, gender, and ethnicity.

First Alert Outcome by Classification								
	Freshman		Sophomore		Junior		Senior	
Referrals	378		207		173		153	
Percent	41.5%		22.7%		19.0%		16.8%	
Successful*	218	57.7%	154	74.4%	132	76.3%	118	77.1%
Not Successful*	160	42.3%	53	25.6%	41	23.7%	35	22.9%

First Alert Outcome by Gender				
	Male		Female	
Referrals	442		469	
Percent	48.5%		51.5%	
Successful*	271	61.3%	351	74.8%
Not Successful*	171	38.7%	118	25.2%

First Alert Outcome by Ethnicity

	White-Non Hispanic		African American		Hispanic		Other		Total	
Referrals	544		244		108		15		911	
Percent	59.7%		26.8%		11.9%		1.6%		100.0%	
Successful*	373	68.6%	163	66.8%	78	72.2%	8	53.3%	622	68.3%
Not Successful*	171	31.4%	81	33.2%	30	27.8%	7	46.7%	289	31.7%

The next two tables indicate the importance of early referral to the program.

Success Rate by Month Referred

Month	August		September		October		November		December	
Referrals	23		574		251		58		5	
Percent	2.5%		63.0%		27.6%		6.4%		0.5%	
Successful*	10	43.5%	414	72.1%	165	65.7%	29	50.0%	5	100.0%
Not Successful*	13	56.5%	160	27.9%	86	34.3%	29	50.0%	0	0.0%

Success Rate by Referral within the Drop Date

	Before Drop Date		After Drop Date	
Referrals	725		186	
Percent	79.6%		20.4%	
Successful*	504	69.5%	118	63.4%
Not Successful*	221	30.5%	68	36.6%

The reasons that faculty refer students can be seen on the first table immediately below, and the difference in success for students who do respond to our attempts to reach them compared with the lower degree of success for those who do not respond is shown on the subsequent table.

Reason for Referral

	Frequent Absences		Poor Grades		Both		Other	
Referrals	214		463		228		6	
Percent	23.5%		50.8%		25.0%		0.7%	
Successful*	142	66.4%	358	77.3%	118	51.8%	4	66.7%
Not Successful**	72	33.6%	105	22.7%	110	48.2%	2	33.3%

Success Rate by Student Response

	Responded		No Response	
Referrals	594		317	
Percent	65.2%		34.8%	
Successful*	436	73.4%	186	58.7%
Not Successful**	158	26.6%	131	41.3%

Finally, faculty members who referred students were asked to complete a questionnaire evaluating the First Alert program. This was available on-line, and anonymity was an option for all participants. Forty-nine faculty members (41.8%) returned the questionnaire.

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 Faculty Evaluation of the First Alert Program table below indicates a mean satisfaction rate at or above 3.6 on each of the five questions, with faculty ratings of 3.9 on two of the five criteria. It seems evident that this program continues to be popular with the Sam Houston faculty and will continue to be used by them. Their willingness to send students, to evaluate the service, and to respond so positively indicates their satisfaction.

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.	3.7
I was updated about the student as needed.	3.6
I plan to use First Alert again.	3.9
I would recommend this program to other faculty members.	3.9

Early intervention is still one of the most significant aspects of the First Alert program. The data show that students who are sent to the program early have a better chance of improving their academic performance. Therefore, faculty should continue to be encouraged by their department chairs and deans to notify First Alert as soon as a student shows signs of failure or non-attendance. In addition, faculty should be made aware of the drop and resignation dates for each semester so they can put them in their syllabi as well as point them out to their students at the beginning of each semester. Although the First Alert program coordinator will continue to make all faculty and graduate teaching assistants aware of the program, department chairs can be most helpful in seeing to it that no one is overlooked.



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