

Student Mental Health Innovative Approaches

Academic Policies Work Team Work Team Final Report Winter 2023



Work Team Introduction

In the fall of 2021, a team composed of staff, faculty, and students from across campus was constituted with the goal of helping to identify key academic policies that impact students and providing recommendations about ways in which the university and its academic units should alter its policies.

In this report, we describe the activities and findings of the Academic Policies Work Team (APWT), including our data gathering efforts, review processes, and final recommendations.

In order to better understand the current state of academic policies and to identify pain points for students and possible solutions, the APWT gathered information from a range of stakeholders, including administrators in the Financial Aid Office, the Registrar's Office, Student Life, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), and U-M's academic units; student advisors; faculty; and students. We have engaged in direct discussions with key individuals and have used surveys to gather information from the following groups: the Student Records, Curriculum, and Academic Advising (SRCAA) Advisory Group; the Advising Council at the University of Michigan (ACUM); and the LSA Faculty Directors. We also gathered information about peer institution practices and mental health initiatives and relevant research literature.

Our data gathering efforts suggested that academic policies are a significant source of stress for students. In particular, unnecessarily punitive policies, shifting policies, and unclear or inconsistent policies across academic units can create confusion and distress for students. For example, we have heard that restrictive policies (e.g., permanent retention of incomplete grades on transcripts) can make it difficult for students to make decisions that prioritize mental health. In addition, the fact that the policy differs across units is sometimes experienced by students as confusing and unfair. We have also learned that many academic policies and related practices are challenging to change. There is a long history of autonomy in unit-level decision making at University of Michigan. Even though this has been identified as a challenge by stakeholders, we most often hear that greater consistency in policies is both desirable and possible.

Our goal as a committee was to propose ways to shift policies to ease some of these pressures while sustaining our commitment to academic excellence and recognizing the history of unit-level autonomy in decision-making.

In this report, we detail a range of recommendations for specific policy changes, as well as the creation of resources and institutional structures to enhance support for students' academic success and wellbeing. Key recommendations include the following:

- The creation of a central university student success role and office to develop and monitor programs and policies to support student wellbeing and success.
- Changes to the processes for grading and registration, including campus-wide policies related to course withdrawals and incomplete course grading and changes to priority registration.

- The expansion of tools to guide faculty in creating course-level policies and practices that support student wellbeing and success.

Work Team Membership

Work Team Chair:

Gina Cervetti, Associate Professor of Education, School of Education

Work Team Members:

Christine Asidao, Associate Director for Community Engagement and Outreach, CAPS

Zarinah Aquil, Project Intermediate Manager, Office of the Provost

Norm Bishara, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Professor of Business Law, Ross

Peter Bodary, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education and Clinical Associate Professor of Kinesiology, School of Kinesiology

Sarah Daniels, Associate Dean of Students, Dean of Students

Daniel Efunwa, Student, College of Engineering

Veronica Falandino, Assistant Dean for Admissions and Student Services, Stamps School of Art and Design

RaShonda Flint, Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Education, LSA

Darlene Ray-Johnson, Student Affairs Director, Rackham Student Services

Anna Kilts, Student, College of Engineering

Mika LaVaque-Manty, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor and Associate Professor of Political Science; Director of the LSA Honors Program, LSA

Thomas Lehker, Ombudsman, Student Life

Brad Maki, Senior Associate Registrar, Registrar's Office

Malinda Matney, Managing Director at the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, CRLT

Feranmi Okanlami, Head of Disability Services, Assistant Professor of Family Medicine, SSD/SAAS

Judith Pennywell, International Center Director, International Center

Thomas Templin, Professor of Applied Exercise Science and Associate Dean for Undergraduate and Faculty Affairs, Kinesiology

Fred Terry, Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering, ECE

Karen Zaruba, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic and Budgetary Affairs, Office of the Provost

Work Team Research Assistant:

Marcela Ortiz-Guerrero, Doctoral Student in Educational Studies

Work Team Charge

The Academic Policies Impacting Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Work Team (APWT) was charged with helping to identify key academic policies that impact students and providing recommendations about ways in which the university and its academic units should alter its policies to reduce academic stress without compromising excellence.

Following initial stakeholder meetings and in consultation with program leadership, the work team extended its charge to include the academic policies and related practices inside classes.

The most common theme in surveys and conversations with campus stakeholders was the need for easier to navigate, more transparent, and more consistent policies. A second theme regarded the need for additional support from central campus to coordinate efforts to build a culture of care and support on campus through faculty development, policy coordination among academic units, and central resources for students who experience academic and associated mental health challenges.

Work Team Timeline

The work of the APWT has involved two distinct phases. Phase 1 focused on data gathering. Phase 2 focused on the formulation of recommendations.

Phase 1: December 2021-May 2022: The team defined its scope of work in consultation with stakeholders, academic research, and data from our own and other institutions.

We organized our work into three subgroups. The first subgroup focused on university- and college-level policies related to grading, registration and enrollment, and the academic calendar. The second subgroup focused on issues related to academic progress, including policies and procedures related to probation, suspension, leaves, and returns to campus. The third subgroup

focused on policies and practices inside coursework, including grading policies, testing practices, and syllabi.

In order to better understand the current state of these policies and to identify pain points for students, we gathered information from a range of stakeholders, including administrators in financial aid and the Registrar's Office, CAPS staff, associate deans, advisors, and students. We also engaged in direct discussions with key individuals and have used surveys to gather information from the following groups: Student Records, Curriculum, & Academic Advising (SRCAA) Advisory Group; Advising Council at the University of Michigan (ACUM); LSA Faculty Directors; and (forthcoming) Students.

Finally, we gathered information about peer institution practices and mental health initiatives and relevant research literature.

Phase 2: May-December 2022: The team developed a set of draft recommendations, gathered feedback from stakeholders, and revised the recommendations.

During the summer of 2022, each subgroup formulated recommendations based on the team's stakeholder conversations and data gathering efforts. Each subgroup presented recommendations to the entire team for an initial round of feedback.

In the fall of 2022, we conducted more than 15 meetings with stakeholder groups to receive feedback on the tentative recommendations. Each member of the team participated in at least one of these meetings. Notes were recorded and shared with the entire team.

In fall 2022 through winter 2023, the entire team and subgroups met to consider the feedback and make revisions to the recommendations. Team members also met with leaders of related initiatives to share key recommendations.

A full list of meetings is included in Appendix A of this report.

Data Review & Collection

Stakeholder Meetings. The primary data sources were collected during meetings with individual stakeholders and stakeholder groups. APWT members collaborated to develop a list of invitations with the goal of eliciting a wide range of stakeholder perspectives on the impact of current academic policies and possible revisions. These meetings are listed in the meeting timeline in Appendix A. They included:

- Meeting with student groups, including the CAPS Student Advisory Board, the Dean of Students Advisory Board (SAB), LSA Student Government, and Central Student Government (CSG) University Council

- Meetings with institutional leaders, including Martino Harmon (Vice President, Student Life), Paul Robinson (Associate Vice Provost and University Registrar), and Tammie Durham Luis (Assistant Vice Provost of Enrollment Management and Executive Director of Financial Aid)
- Meetings with faculty groups, including the Associate Dean's Group (ADG), the All Chairs Meeting, SACUA, and the Student Relations Advisory Committee (SRAC)
- Meetings with staff members and groups from across U-M, including Student Records, Curriculum, & Academic Advising (SRCAA) group, the Advising Council (ACUM), Caitlin Hayward and Holly Deery from the Office of Academic Innovation (OAI), Student Life Assembly staff, the Student Affairs Leadership Collaborative (SALC), Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) staff, and the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Student Accessibility and Accommodation Services (SAAS) group.

Stakeholder Surveys: Additional stakeholder data were gathered using surveys administered to:

- Members of ACUM (44 respondents)
- LSA Faculty Directors (6 respondents)
- Members of SRCAA (4 respondents)

Additional Stakeholder Data: In addition to team conversations and surveys, we conducted a series of meetings with individuals whose work might be impacted by the policy recommendations (e.g., those who run summer programs that might be impacted by changes to the academic calendar) and received written feedback from others on campus with important perspectives and recommendations to share (e.g., Angela Saghar Farrehi, Director of the Michigan Engineering C.A.R.E. Center).

Institutional Data and Research. Other data sources included the following:

- U-M institutional information, particularly around existing policies and data related to grading, registration and enrollment, and CAPS counseling.
- Peer institution information, including information about academic policies (e.g., leave policies and academic probation policies) and reports on efforts to support student mental health and wellbeing.
- Research reports, particularly around factors impacting mental health and wellbeing and programs designed to support wellbeing and academic success, and journalistic reports

regarding the state of the mental health crisis, emerging research and best practices, and initiatives underway at other postsecondary institutions.

Recommendations

The APWT formulated recommendations for revising specific policies and creating resources to support a culture of care and wellbeing on campus. Below, we describe these recommendations.

Central University Student Success Role and Office

Student success and academic progress challenges, including related policies and procedures, are often contributing factors to a student's general mental health and well-being. Challenges with academic progress can lead to both academic stress and process-oriented stress, two of the four interrelated stresses identified by the original Student Mental Health Innovative Approaches Review Committee as impacting student mental health and well-being. As we strive to improve the student experience and support excellence, it is essential to identify and address ways to reduce or remove barriers to academic progress and success.

We begin this report with the recommendation that the university create an executive leader and associated office focused on student success. This recommendation is intended to ensure a comprehensive approach to supporting student success and a culture of care around academic policies and that the specific recommendations in this report are carried forward in a coordinated fashion with resources and oversight.

Conversations with university Associate Deans (ADG group), school and college leadership (All Chairs and Division Leadership meeting), academic advisors (ACUM executive board and member survey), and registrars (SRCAA group) about academic progress and student success consistently highlighted the need for:

- common standards and best practices,
- regular reviews and updates to policies and procedures,
- consistency where possible around policy and practice while maintaining unit independence,
- targeted systemic approaches to student support and academic challenges,
- collaborative conversations and knowledge sharing across units,
- enhanced awareness, understanding, and accessibility of policies and resources (staff support and self-help options), and
- better communication around student options and choices.

Realizing the vision of a responsive, wellbeing oriented campus will require cooperation and collaboration from academic and administrative units across campus.

Undergraduate student enrollment accounts for about two-thirds of the university's total student population. While the university has many coordinated units and services to support students outside of the classroom (e.g. those in Student Life), there remains a gap in organized academic initiatives, practices, and data-informed strategies to enhance undergraduate student success and ensure the seamless delivery of academic support across the university's academic units and programs.

The majority of undergraduate schools and colleges at U-M have an Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, who, along with a team of staff, is responsible for supporting undergraduate education and the undergraduate student experience within a particular academic unit. While these roles work to support undergraduate students within individual schools and colleges, there is a need for institutionally coordinated services and initiatives that drive high academic achievement and improve the retention and graduation rates of our diverse undergraduate student population. A central leader could identify opportunities, address gaps, leverage data analytics efforts, and assess outcomes of various initiatives and pilots across campus for undergraduate education. By comparison, cross-campus coordination regarding university graduate education and students at the university occurs through the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs - Graduate Studies role.

As we work as an institution to identify new or missed opportunities and launch services and supports to meet student needs, we also have to consider how all of these factors create a lack of ability to leverage high-quality data as a part of our decisions. Relevant data are currently difficult to access and interpret. For example, there are nearly 50 academic standing action and status codes across schools and colleges to indicate levels of academic standing and the resulting school or college action, which makes it difficult to effectively identify trends or use patterns and insights to develop strategies to support undergraduate student success.

U-M is an outlier compared to the majority of our peer public institutions, with most having a central leader and office that provides campus-wide leadership around undergraduate education, including setting the university strategic direction around undergraduate student success and the student experience (refer to Appendix B). All Big Ten member institutions, with the exception of U-M, have a similar leadership role. At institutions where there is a central leader and office, individual academic units retain autonomy around experiences and support for their undergraduate students with areas of focus for many of these central collaborative undergraduate education units including resources to support student success, learning, advising, undergraduate research, first year experience, student transition, and high impact experiential learning.

In order to ensure that all U-M undergraduate students, regardless of school or college affiliation, have a consistent educational experience that leads to enhanced student success, we are proposing a set of recommendations to build centralized support for student success.

Recommendations

1a. Create a senior position (open to a staff or faculty appointment) and university office of student success within the Office of the Provost. Under the leadership of the senior leader, the office of student success should a) develop undergraduate student success initiatives and efforts; b) collaborate with other executive leaders across the university to successfully plan and implement undergraduate student success strategies and support (e.g. Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, Vice President for Student Life, and Academic Unit Leaders); c) leverage data to drive strategy development, inform key decisions in coordination with key executive leaders, and advocate for shared resources amongst important student success stakeholders (e.g., advising, the Science Learning Center, and Student Accessibility and Accommodation Services); and d) promote a student- and service-focused culture across the university.¹

1b. Establish and appoint an advisory committee. The committee should be composed of staff, faculty, and administrators from all academic and key stakeholder units to provide the proposed senior leader above with advice and counsel based on their unique knowledge and perspectives as it relates to undergraduate education and students. The committee would serve to ensure coordination on key university efforts and initiatives, provide insights and information around distinctive school and college considerations, and make recommendations around shared policies and best practices.

Coordinated Student Support Team for Leaves of Absence

A common theme in surveys and conversations conducted by the APWT was the need for easier to navigate, more transparent, and more consistent leave policies. Lack of consistent tracking and data collection across campus makes it difficult to enumerate the number of students who take leaves each year. Yet, the ability to take leaves and return to campus can be important for some students' wellbeing. There is no universal policy that defines a leave of absence for all undergraduate students or outlines required steps or processes related to taking or returning from a leave of absence. In conversations with the APWT, many stakeholders called for the development of clear policies about how to apply for leave and how to return to campus. Currently, the process for a student taking a leave of absence is established at the school or college level, and in many cases is not documented. Students are often navigating challenging personal situations that are compounded by the lack of clear information and support. A

¹ Peer institutions offer models of student success offices. For example, The University of Maryland - College Park Office of Undergraduate Studies is an example of a unit that has worked to enhance academic progress processes through a [Student Success Office](#) that is responsible for providing support to undergraduate students as they complete their degree. This includes services such as information and connections to policies and resources to help students navigate various academic concerns and challenges (e.g. policies, learning support, finances, career), oversight of retention initiatives, as well as reenrollment coordination.

centralized office focused on student success, retention, and persistence, as outlined above, should include a team to support students requiring a leave of absence.

The Rackham Graduate School has a [leave of absence policy](#). This policy provides a framework that is worth further exploration as a model for undergraduate academic units. Additional research into current leave of absence policies in U-M professional schools/programs is necessary. For example, the Medical School outlines the implications on tuition and financial aid if a student takes a leave of absence but does not state the process by which a student would request a leave, types of leaves that are available, or the process for returning after a leave of absence.

The recommendations below focus on creation of policies specifically designed to support students needing a leave of absence, and includes the expectation that schools and colleges design and clearly communicate their individual leave of absence policies. These leave of absence policies should take into consideration legal implications of certain practices and the unique needs of their students prior and upon return from leaves of absence.

In our conversations and data gathering, stakeholders also noted the need for clarity and consistency in policies regarding academic probation, suspension, and dismissal. They described the existence of confusing policies, inconsistencies across academic units, and inequitable application of policies that exacerbate already stressful situations for students.

Recommendations

2a. Create clear policies for leaves of absence. In consultation with the university student success office recommended above, each school and college should create and document a leave of absence policy, including clear requirements and processes for going on and returning from a leave. The policy should also include the appeals process for students who are not approved to go on or return from leave.

The university student success office should refine and update existing best practice documents that provide guidance, including templates, examples, and checklists, to academic units around legalities and considerations. The office should also support units in taking into account unique needs in regard to specific guidance for various student populations—including international students for whom leaves of absence can be complicated by Visa implications—in addition to relevant laws, regulations, and guidelines. Documents should also provide guidance on communicating the University's support for students and creating balance between expectations of our students and support for their growth, development and academic achievement.

2b. Create a coordinated support team around leaves of absence. Establishing a coordinated team between Academic Affairs (university student success office; see above) and Student Life (Dean of Students Office) is needed to support and assist students navigating the leave of

absence process². Centralization of the co-leads for the team will allow for the implementation of clear guidance and appropriate processes and practices related to leaves of absence across all academic units, leveraging existing resources (e.g. advisors, case managers) that create continuity of support, and ensuring non-academic concerns and needs are addressed throughout the leave of absence process. The team of Academic Affairs, Student Life, and academic unit representatives should work in partnership with one another to communicate and clarify leave policies and relevant deadlines, support students as they consider their options, and facilitate a student's departure and return to campus. A cross-campus support approach allows for greater insight and attention regarding academic and non-academic considerations and addresses expectations and barriers that may impede a student's ability to leave or return to the university that are informed by relevant laws, regulations, and policies.

2c. Reconstitute the approach to academic probation, suspension, and dismissal. One function of the student success office should be to reconsider policies and practices related to disruptions in academic progress. Research documents that probation can have enduring negative consequences for students' academic persistence and success, but support and guidance during academic probation can help students recover their academic self-efficacy and persistence (Barouch-Gilbert, 2016; Bowman & Jang, 2022). See Appendix C for a summary of additional research on academic probation. Among the recommendations made by stakeholders was a rethinking of both the language that is used (less punitive, more supportive) around probation and suspension and revision of policies. The policies should be consistent and clearly communicated to students, and students should be offered significant resources (advising, mentoring, and programming) to get back on track and thrive academically.

Centralized Student Information Resources and Tools

There is a general lack of awareness among students, staff, and faculty about where to find information regarding academic policies for each school and college. Not only do students experience difficulty finding and accessing critical academic information in a timely manner, staff and faculty who are working to support students also experience challenges providing students with relevant and accurate information. An important step to advance broad student progress and success efforts will be to coordinate, centralize, and augment where and how all school and college academic policies and procedures are located and communicated.

Stakeholders offered many recommendations regarding tools to support student decision-making. There was broad sentiment that building on existing tools is preferable to developing new

² The Report of the Mental Health Task Force (2019) from Tufts University provides recommendations to improve administrative processes around leaves of absence. Regarding Personal leave of absences (PLOA), the recommendations aim to ensure students receive guidance and support prior and upon return from PLOA. They list a set of objectives for the new process, which includes enhancing student advising prior to taking personal leave, connecting students with resources and support, including alternatives to taking a leave of absence, and supporting students transitioning back to campus after a leave of absence.

platforms. A number of individuals recommended additions to Canvas and Wolverine Access, such as including messages and links to policies at key points in the term (e.g., when deadlines approach). They also recommended using department websites to offer accessible links to straightforward explanations of policies, access to advising appointments or chats for quick questions, video tutorials or quick Canvas courses on various processes, and FAQs.

As we work to increase a student's sense of self-agency and lessen student anxiety, the creation of user-friendly digital resources will allow students (in addition to staff and faculty) to effectively access critical policies and information, consider important questions regarding enrollment options, utilize practical tools such as decision trees, and connect to additional supports to aid in making informed decisions. In addition to facilitating student wayfaring around policies, these resources should emphasize the university's commitment to holistic student success.

Recommendations

3a. Develop a centralized information hub to support student decision-making and success.

In order to ensure the timely and continuous updating of information and resources, a website should be coordinated and housed centrally within the envisioned university office of student success. The website should include up-to-date information regarding academic policies and contact information for individuals who can help navigate policies and resources. This website should be designed to communicate and emphasize the culture of care we as a university intend for every student, including the appropriate rationale and clear articulation of processes and procedures. All units would be expected to contribute and maintain information, policies, webpage links, and contacts, utilizing common terminology and concepts as appropriate. We recommend that, where possible, the website include student voices and perspectives as we work to destigmatize academic challenges and showcase success stories following difficulties (e.g. deciding on a major, course withdrawal, academic probation).

3b. Develop resources and tools to provide students useful guidance around enrollment decisions. The university office of student success should explore the development of robust and user-centric technology to support accurate information, transparency, and communication. Such tools could help students make decisions regarding things like leaves and course withdrawals using relevant information regarding each student's academic programs, financial aid status, visa status, academic status, and so forth. Resources and tools that supplement the general information discussed above with clarity around the importance of various support services and guided decision-making pathways ensure that students are able to navigate and own their academic journeys, and that staff and faculty are able to provide guidance and consultation as needed. These resources should be widely publicized and easy to find and navigate.

Grading and Course Withdrawal Policies

Grading policies currently present significant challenges for students, both because policies differ between academic units and courses and because the policies have implications for students' academic progress and academic records. In particular, the APWT heard in conversations with stakeholders that unnecessarily punitive policies, shifting policies, and inconsistent policies across academic units create confusion and distress for students.

Some academic units have made recent changes to grading policies, revealing potential benefits and challenges. One significant change took place in fall 2021, when LSA shifted the deadline for when students must make the decision to designate courses as Pass/Fail from the third week of the semester to the last day of classes. Although there is much value in giving students more time to decide how they want to report their performance in a course (as opposed to forcing them to decide early how they are taking a course), LSA's quasi-natural experiment has revealed challenges with having the deadline for the grade conversion be the last day of classes. In particular, when students make decisions on the final day of the term, they have too little opportunity to seek guidance from instructors and advisors about the implications and limits of these decisions (e.g., courses that may not be converted and impacts on academic progress).

Similarly, during part of the COVID-19 pandemic in AY 2021-22, all U-M schools and colleges agreed to move the class withdrawal date to the last day of classes each semester (e.g., [LSA guidance](#)). This policy allowed students to withdraw from a course for any reason up to the last day of class (with a "W" on their transcripts). This effort was done, in part, to allow students greater flexibility to make curricular choices. Although there is value in flexibility, discussions with stakeholders surfaced significant concerns related to last day withdrawal deadlines, including potential harms to students and their classmates that result from late withdrawals. For example, delaying decisions can heighten stress for students who continue to invest in classes for the length of the term only to withdraw at the end. Late withdrawals can also be disruptive for other students, particularly in classes that involve group projects. Students who withdraw late in the term may not be aware of implications for academic progress and financial aid, scholarships, or visas (for international students). Moreover, course withdrawals have been associated with damage to academic engagement and retention and do not appear to be a viable strategy for student success (Akos & James, 2020).

One goal of the recommendations below is to reduce students' anxiety around grading in order to foster a focus on learning and a willingness to take risks in course selection that will allow them to explore different areas of knowledge and take advantage of the extensive course offerings available at the university. A second goal is to allow students more agency in deciding how their grades are recorded. While the general orientation toward grading policies should be providing students some degree of choice, students should also be supported in making decisions that maintain academic progress in their chosen programs.

Recommendations

4a. Create greater consistency, transparency, and support around the process of designating courses as pass/fail. Elements of these policies should include: a) a clear policy regarding courses that can and cannot be transitioned to pass/fail grading, with particular emphasis on providing this option for introductory or entry-level courses, which are often taken by students as they are transitioning to college-level coursework and to campus life or exploring new fields of study; b) a university-wide deadline at week 9 of the semester for choosing a pass/fail grading option that corresponds with the course withdrawal deadline.

4b. Create a uniform policy for repeated courses. Implement a policy that allows repeated classes to be factored into the GPA so that the academic record reflects both the initial grade for the class and the following re-attempts. The current policy for undergraduates counts the first attempt in the GPA only. Including all attempts in the GPA should ensure that students strive to do their best work in all attempts. Counting only the last attempt or the highest attempt has the potential to encourage students to curate their GPA to be artificially high and would largely benefit those who have the financial resources to take additional coursework.

4c. Create a university-wide policy regarding incompletes that reduces penalties for students. Possible elements of that policy include: a) when a course is completed, the designation of I is removed from the student's transcript and replaced with the final grade assigned by the instructor; b) for courses that are not completed, an I remains on the student's record but is not calculated as part of the grade point average; that is, incomplete grades can remain indefinitely on transcripts rather than being converted to F/E; c) units should have a clearly stated deadline for the resolution of incomplete grades, preferably within a year of the conclusion of the course. Extensions to the deadline could be granted on a case-by-case basis in coordination with the instructor and unit-level administrators. Because students often seek incompletes due to challenges with workload and life events that compromise mental health and wellbeing, creating clear and supportive policies is an important part of creating a culture of care on campus.

4d. Create a consistent university-wide policy for a course withdrawal deadline at week 9 of each semester. Establishing a withdrawal deadline at week 9 allows students to receive substantive feedback from faculty in the first two months of class, including things like midterm exams, to gauge their performance and interest in the course, and still have time to focus on their other courses and find alternative credit options if needed. This timing for the withdrawal also alleviates some of the other concerns with the last day withdrawal process. In addition to establishing a university-wide deadline for withdrawals, a default should be established within Wolverine Access Student Center, creating a request for an advising appointment to discuss the withdrawal. While the default would be to meet with an advisor, students should be able to proceed with the withdrawal without such a meeting, as students who wait until the deadline day

to drop a course may not be able to meet with an advisor due to the short notice. Students should also have the option to petition for a late withdrawal through a restructured process that eases access to late withdrawal for legitimate requests. The late drop system currently requires several layers of approval, depending on the student's school or college requirements.

Registration Policies

In conversations with stakeholders, the APWT heard that many aspects of registration and enrollment are unclear and inconsistent across units. Stakeholders reported that nearly every aspect of registration—e.g., restrictions, reserved seat and waitlist procedures, and registration restrictions—differs across units and that much of the information that would be needed to navigate these differences is challenging to locate. This creates a landscape in which students find themselves unable to register for classes they want to take and unclear about the nature of the obstacle.

Currently, students are assigned to registration appointment blocks based on their total credit hours toward program completion with certain adjustments. This means that some students have access to many of their preferred courses, while other students have access to fewer. It also encourages students who have high priority to over-enroll in classes with the intention of dropping some at a later time. In addition, selected groups of students are assigned to first-day registration due to unusually restrictive schedules (e.g., student athletes and some students who are registered with OSSD). These systems create anxiety for some students when they feel disadvantaged by their placement in the process. The recommendations described below are intended to create greater transparency and more equitable access to preferred courses.

Recommendations

5a. Review course availability to better meet demand. Schools and colleges should be encouraged to review their course scheduling and enrollment management procedures (reserved capacities, opening new sections, etc.) and ensure that sufficient numbers of seats are available in classes to match demand. Units should clarify and communicate procedures and timelines to their majors and minors.

5b. Eliminate split registration appointments. The present system causes some students stress when their appointment block splits over multiple days due to weekends or holidays. This creates a perception that students with the same number of credits are given preference over others for no valid reason. This situation could be remedied by not allowing appointments to split between multiple days.

5c. Form an exploratory committee of faculty, staff, and students to consider establishing a wave system for undergraduate registration. In a wave system, students would be able to register for three or four of their highest-priority classes in the first wave of registration, keeping

more seats open for other students to register for their high-priority classes. After all students have had an opportunity to register in the first wave, students would then be able to fill out their schedule with additional classes in a second wave. A wave system would also prevent students from initially over enrolling in classes that they intend to later drop. An exploratory committee could investigate the potential and challenges of such a system, including the challenges of transitioning to new enrollment processes for more advanced students.

5d. Hold registration one week earlier in the fall term. The current timeline for winter registration overlaps significantly with end-of-term pressures for students as well as the Thanksgiving holiday break. Additionally, units are often not able to resolve waitlists and overrides until just before winter break, sometimes extending until the first day of classes. This uncertainty of registration is challenging to both majors and non-majors alike. Moving registration one week earlier would allow for more time to resolve enrollment issues, and would not overlap as significantly with end-of-term preparations.

5e. Create a stronger support system to help students resolve financial holds. To better support students who have financial holds and who therefore may need more time to resolve their accounts, academic units should work in closer partnership with Student Financial Services with a particular emphasis on earlier identification of the students. Student Financials will provide schools and colleges with the list of their students with financial holds at key times of the year so that the staff within the schools and colleges can play a supportive role in the communication and resource referrals for these students.

5f. Make the priority registration process transparent. Information about the process of priority registration, the rationale for determining priority groups, and the number of students associated with each priority group (e.g., “Athletes - 876”) should be published prior to each registration period along with information about the block date and time breakdowns by credit hour ranges (e.g., Block 10, 86-90 credits, Appointment Numbers 011-014 Nov. 15 10:30-11:15 a.m.). This level of transparency could alleviate some anxiety that students sometimes express when they believe they have been assigned an incorrect or disadvantageous appointment.

5g. Establish a Priority Registration Advisory Committee through the Registrar’s Office. The committee should include individuals from the Office of Enrollment Management, Student Life, Academic Affairs, Student Government, and other community members. Initially, the Priority Registration Advisory Committee should review the current priority groups and make recommendations for changes. This could involve removal or reduction of current priority groups or the addition of new groups (e.g., student parents or commuting students). The committee could also establish a maximum percentage of the student body that can receive priority registration and a process by which groups can request priority registration. Following these initial processes, the committee should meet annually to review summary data of the previous year’s registration outcomes, consider further changes in priority group status and

numbers, and ensure transparency in reporting (see recommendation 5f above). The committee should present an annual report that will be published on the Registrar website.

Transfer Credits and the Transfer Student Experience

A significant proportion of U-M's undergraduate students join us through transfer from other higher education institutions. New transfer students represent 18% of the incoming Fall 2022 undergraduate cohort. They are admitted at a higher rate than first year applicants (37% vs. 16% selectivity), and yield at a significantly higher rate than first year applicants (77% vs. 46% yield).

Prospective transfer students are often faced with uneven, incomplete information on transfer credit equivalencies. Complete information is typically not provided before an admitted student makes the decision to matriculate. Navigating this process can be challenging, which is often reinforced by a lack of a clear point of contact for advising. The concerns of a prospective transfer student often need the expertise of an academic advisor, but due to capacity issues, an academic advisor may not be available until after matriculation.

Once transfer students arrive on campus, they receive some, but not all of the attention and resources that first year (our relatively recent term for freshman) students receive. This contributes to feelings of being othered, and can have a negative impact on retention. Even if a student enters with the maximum allowed transfer credits, they may find completion of the degree takes longer than expected, or that based on coursework completed, they are entering off-cycle with the required curriculum of their school or college.

Recommendations

6a. Take steps to ease the transition and create a welcoming environment for transfer students. Develop initiatives that contribute to an easier transition and more welcoming environment for these students. Lessons can be drawn from existing programs, initiatives, and events at U-M in order to create university-wide practices that foster transfer-receptive cultures. Examples are LSA's transfer-specific recruitment as well as the "Transfer Bridges" collaboration with Henry Ford College and Grand Rapids Community College as well as specific transfer-student focused events at School of Information or Stamps. In addition, peer institutions offer models of support services. For example, the [Transfer Student Center](#) at the University of California at Berkeley offers tailored activities and support services for transfer students. Their program and services include:

- Transition Courses to build students' knowledge of the research university and its resources, develop key academic skills, and help students make connections on campus,
- Transfer Success Workshop to introduce students to various campus resources, opportunities, and academic strategies,

- Transfer Mentorship Program to connect students with a fellow transfer student who has had a year of experience in the same major,
- Leadership Opportunities,
- Academic Counseling,
- Transfer Community, a community space for transfer students,
- Transfer Volunteer Program.

While working for a more welcoming environment for transfer students, consider a shift in language from first years and transfer students to “first-year at Michigan” (FAM) students.

6b. Create flexibility around start dates for transfer students. If not already offered at the unit level, consider admissions for a fall or winter start. For units with both fall and winter starts, allow deferral of admission for either one term or one full year (currently restricted by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions to one full year).

6c. Facilitate transfer credits through more robust systems and policies. Initial transfer credit evaluations provided centrally should include any class that has been evaluated in the [transfer equivalency database](#), and then implement the secondary process of units providing departmental evaluations. Resource the transfer credit evaluation team to be able to proactively assess all courses at key community colleges, starting in the state of Michigan.

Academic Calendar

The academic calendar has typically commenced the winter semester on the first Wednesday following January 1. In recent years, this has meant a start date as early as January 3 (2018) and a winter break of two weeks or less.

The brevity of winter break presents several challenges related to student mental health and wellbeing. Students have limited time for rest and travel over the break. In addition, the administrative challenges associated with processing students’ fall academic records means that students are often notified about issues related to academic progress, such as probations and suspensions, just before the start of winter term.

In initial conversations with APWT, stakeholders expressed support for shifting the academic calendar to allow for a longer winter break. For example, of the 44 members of ACUM who responded to a survey, more than half (53%) indicated that the brevity of winter break has a negative impact on students' mental health and wellbeing (rating it 4 or 5 on a five point scale from positive to negative impact). Only 7% indicated that a shorter break has a positive impact (1 or 2 on the scale). Respondents explained that the break provides too little time to rest and prepare for the winter term. Although some stakeholders expressed concerns that the longer summer break has advantages for work, internship, and travel opportunities, students expressed

broad support for the shift to a longer winter break and shorter summer term. Other stakeholders suggested that a start date one to two weeks later in January would be beneficial for student wellbeing, in general, and would benefit students in a number of particular roles and situations (e.g., students who have issues related to academic standing and those who work as housing staff).

A review of the academic calendars at our peer institutions suggests that a more typical calendar begins the winter term in mid-January, leading to a close of term about two weeks into May. For example, in 2022, the following institutions ended their winter/spring terms on May 12 or 13: University of Wisconsin Madison; University of California Berkeley; Harvard University; Columbia University; and University of Illinois. Among institutions in the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA), more than half of the universities have a post-MLK Day start, pushing the end of the term to mid-May.

Recommendations

7a. Shift the academic calendar so the winter semester begins on the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday. The celebrations scheduled for holiday and week offer an opportunity to refocus on our community's commitment to diversity and social justice as we commence winter term. Strategies for incentivizing participation, including course integration, should be developed. While the proposed calendar change has many benefits for students, some existing spring and summer programs will have difficulty accommodating the change. As such, we recommend that:

- The change be implemented over at least two academic years in order to give spring and summer programs time to adapt,
- Administrative and financial resources be provided to programs that are disrupted by the change, and
- Scheduling flexibility be provided for spring and summer offerings, particularly those that serve a distinct group of students as part of a special program,

7b. Provide accommodations for students during winter break. Accommodations should be made for students who need to remain on campus over the winter break.

7c. Reduce the length of the Spring/Summer semester to 12 weeks. Reducing the number of weeks will require schools and colleges to adjust weekly meeting time to meet requirements for credit hours. Schools and colleges should have flexibility to offer shorter courses that occur within the 12-week term (e.g., 6-week and 4-week courses).

The Development of Faculty Resources

Class-level policies and practices vary across courses and academic units. Students can experience these differences as confusing and stressful. Moreover, students report that

course-level policies are often unclear and that their inability to understand and navigate the policies, monitor their performance in courses, and access support from instructors can create stress and anxiety. This is particularly true for students who are bound by financial aid and scholarship restrictions related to grades and course load.

Academic stress is significantly correlated with psychological well-being (Barbayannis et al., 2022). A growing body of scholarship and best practices literature suggests strategies for developing policies and practices that support student mental health, wellbeing, and learning. The purpose of the recommendations below is to create classroom climates that build students' academic self-efficacy and achievement motivation, both of which predict academic success (Robbins et al., 2004). The set of recommendations will focus on offering resources to support university instructors in applying these understandings in their courses.

Recommendations

8a. Develop a comprehensive Faculty Toolkit. This expanded toolkit will include suggestions for creating a more inclusive classroom environment, implementing course policies that support student wellbeing, and additional faculty resources for student support (see Appendix C). The toolkit could incorporate other resources that have already been established (e.g., [CAPS Faculty Toolkit](#), specific School/College resources created by CRLT, [First Day Toolkit](#)). Specific recommendations for course policies may include the following:

- Implement clear and transparent grading policies. Grades are an obvious source of stress for students. Clear grading policies reduce uncertainty and make it possible for students to seek support and advising. Grading policies should be clearly articulated on the syllabus. Any changes made necessary during the class should be explained to the students and should not disadvantage the student's progress and grade standing. To the extent possible, students should be able to easily obtain an estimate of their current course grade based on work to date. Moreover, straight-scale grading should be used if at all possible. Predetermined grade distributions (a set curve) should be used cautiously since this introduces student stress and unhealthy competition.
- Implement clear and supportive policies regarding late and missed assignments. Policies regarding late work should be made clear on the syllabus. It is normal for students to sometimes experience challenges in meeting deadlines for coursework. In order to offer accommodations for late work without promoting procrastination, we recommend that the guiding principle should be "[flexibility with guardrails](#)." Instructors should openly discuss with students when and how to use flexibility in a productive manner. The mechanisms for flexibility will vary depending on the nature of the class. Some examples include allowing late assignments with clear and reasonable grade penalties based and offering alternative assignments for missed/late work.

- Implement policies that encourage a culture of learning from mistakes. Offer students opportunities to revise their work in response to feedback with the goal of developing mastery by the end of a class. Practical considerations may limit the number of revisions that are possible for instructors to manage in a course. However, reducing the grade stakes of some assignments, using more formative assessments, and allowing a “try-fail-improve” learning model may improve student learning outcomes and could lower student stress and anxiety. One mechanism is to allow students to regain some lost credit by correcting and resubmitting work after feedback (e.g. after solutions are released or grading is completed). Another mechanism is use of mastery grading (e.g., Math 105, 115) which allows multiple attempts to demonstrate mastery of content at multiple points in the class.
- Take additional steps to create a culture of care inside courses. For example, including a statement regarding mental health and wellness on syllabi and ensuring student have access to office hours (e.g., be clear and specific about when and where they are held, how students might use office hours, and the availability of virtual options), and renaming office hours “student success hours” can communicate an interest in student wellbeing and support their success. In addition, the use of current and new tools, such as the pilot check in tool from the Foundational Course Initiative courses and the LSA Honors Program, can be used to check in with students about academic or mental health concerns.

8b. Improve instructor awareness of student mental health concerns. Class instructors may be the first to notice when a student is in distress and may be the first point of contact for resources. It is important that faculty and GSIs are aware of the types of mental health concerns affecting students in their specific school/college and are able to take appropriate referral steps. Instructors are encouraged to participate in QPR suicide prevention training offered by CAPS. It is recommended that CAPS provide an annual embedded report to each school/college in order to have a better understanding of what challenges students face. See the [Fall 2021](#) report as an example.

A report of the Mental Health Task Force (2019) from Tufts University recommends that schools enhance training opportunities for faculty and staff to deepen their knowledge about student mental health including strategies such as adopting evidence-based online training tools; expanding gatekeeper training opportunities; enhancing professional development training for PIs on managing research settings and mentorship; and improving online resources for faculty and staff to ensure easy access, consistency, and accurate information on campus resources, policies, and practices to support students with mental health concerns.

8c. Offer and incentivize instructor training related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. A student’s feelings of belonging and their belief that they have an equitable chance to succeed in a class are critical to their actual success. U-M is committed to DEI and has an extensive number

of professional learning opportunities available at the university, including existing programs available through CRLT. Academic units should incentivize instructor participation in these and offer professional additional opportunities for development. Incentives could include the incorporation of DEI-related expectations into the merit review process, service credit, or other forms of compensation.

8d. Provide tools to support instructor course planning. Academic units can support instructor planning to ensure better distribution of coursework for students and clearer expectations for courses. For example:

- Academic units should ensure syllabi are shared among instructors of the same courses and can encourage and monitor for consistency. Although instructors should have freedom in the content and pedagogy, large variations in the degree of difficulty, the hours of work, the major content, and the grade distributions can make it difficult for students to plan their semesters and lead to increased anxiety. To the extent possible, syllabi should be available for reference before registration.
- Academic units should use strategies to understand patterns of student course enrollment and share information about the distribution of work in courses that are commonly taken together. For example, Atlas can be used to gather and communicate data about the most common classes taken at the same time with the instructors in those overlapping classes. Data mining tools associated with Canvas can be used to make instructors aware of the scheduling of exams and major due dates across overlap courses.

Continuity Assessment

The following members of the Work Team would be willing to continue this effort.

Pete Bodary, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education, School of Kinesiology

Gina Cervetti, Associate Professor of Educational Studies, School of Education

Veronica Falandino, Assistant Dean for Admissions and Student Services, Stamps School of Art and Design

Thomas Lehker, University Student Ombuds

Brad Maki, Senior Associate Registrar, University Registrar's Office

Malinda Matney, Managing Director for Educational Development and Assessment Services, CRLT

Fred Terry, Professor, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, College of Engineering

Karen Zaruba, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic and Budgetary Affairs, Office of the Provost

Conclusion

The Academic Policies Work Team (APWT) was constituted in the fall of 2021 with the goal of identifying key academic policies that impact students' mental health and wellbeing and providing recommendations for policy changes. Through extensive data gathering efforts involving direct discussions with stakeholders, surveys, reviews of academic research, and consultation of institutional data, we identified policies and practices that create stress for students and undermine U-M's goal of creating a culture of care on campus. We have proposed specific policy changes, as well as the creation of resources and institutional structures, to enhance support for students' wellbeing and academic success.

The most ambitious recommendation—the creation of a central university student success role and office—is also the most significant, because it would become the organizer and driver of many of the other recommendations. In particular, that office would house initiatives related to leaves of absence (recommendations 2a, 2b, and 2c), the creation of central student resources (recommendations 3a and 3b) and would work collaboratively with other university units and offices on the implementation of additional recommendations related to registration and grading (Registrar's Office), transfer student services (Student Life), and faculty development (e.g., CRLT). Although peer institutions have advanced some related initiatives, U-M has the opportunity to serve as a model of a coordinated and holistic approach to support a culture of care through academic policies and practices.

Taken together, the recommendations discussed in this report have the potential to ease many pressures faced by students while sustaining U-M's commitment to academic excellence.

Appendix A: Team and Stakeholder Meetings

	Team Meetings	Other Stakeholder Meetings
December 13, 2021	Introductions and getting started	
January 7, 2022	Subgroup work on identifying policies and practices that are worthy of consideration and the resources that are needed to support inquiries about these practices. Visit with Amy Dittmar about our charge	
January 14, 2022	Subgroup work on identifying policies and practices that are worthy of consideration and the resources that are needed to support inquiries about these practices. Preparation for upcoming stakeholder meetings.	
January 21, 2022	Discussion with Paul Robinson, Associate Vice Provost and University Registrar	
January 28, 2022	Discussion with Tammie Durham Luis, Assistant Vice Provost of Enrollment Management and Executive Director of Financial Aid	
February 4, 2022	Development of a plan for gathering information from advising staff, registrars, student affairs leaders and advisory staff.	

February 11, 2022	Preparation for the February 16 meeting with SRCAA.	
February 16, 2022		Visit with SRCAA to gather input on our charge and specific policy recommendations under consideration
February 18, 2022	<p>Debrief of meeting with SRCAA</p> <p>Discussion of questions for student survey</p> <p>Discussion of Tom Lehker's proposal regarding student-parent registration</p>	
February 25, 2022	<p>Development of followup questions for SRCAA.</p> <p>Identification of additional stakeholder groups</p> <p>Check in about the team's process and progress.</p>	
March 11, 2022		Visit with ADG (led by RaShonda Flint and Brad Maki).
March 11, 2022	<p>Debrief of ADG meeting.</p> <p>Presentation by Brad Maki about how enrollment appointments currently work including the allocation of priority registration.</p>	
March 18, 2022	Development of survey questions for ACUM members.	

March 25, 2022	<p>Presentation by Christine Asidao regarding contextual factors that impact students' experiences in their classes (and labs and studio experiences) and the kinds of tools and cultural considerations that can be used to support them.</p> <p>Discussion of survey items for LSA Faculty Directors.</p>	
March 31, 2022	<p>Presentation and table discussions at All Chairs Meeting</p>	All Chairs Meeting
March 31, 2022		<p>Discussion with Joanne Millunchick about the work of the Covid grading policies team</p>
April 1, 2022	<p>Discussion with Lisa Emery from the Registrar's Office regarding the academic calendar</p> <p>Report from the All Chairs meeting</p>	
April 8, 2022	<p>Discussion with ACUM Co-Chairs, Denise Guillo and Kerri Wakefield</p>	
April 14, 2022		<p>Meeting with Tim McKay regarding the academic calendar</p>
April 15, 2022	<p>Discussion with Annette Sieg about institutional data resources and our data needs.</p>	
April 22, 2022	<p>Team sensemaking and looking ahead</p>	
April 29, 2022	<p>Discussion of summer plans and proposals</p> <p>Review of course withdrawal process led by Brad Maki</p>	

May, 2022		Meeting with Annette Sieg to further discuss data possibilities.
May 6, 2022		Meeting with Kierra Trotter regarding Summer Bridge and the academic calendar
May 6, 2022	Small group work on the formulation of recommendations	
May 13, 2022	Meeting with Amy Dittmar about the team's work moving ahead.	
May 20, 2022	Meeting with Caitlin Hayward and Holly Deery from OAI.	
May 27, 2022	Developing recommendations	
June 8, 2022		
June 22, 2022	Meeting with Martino Harmon, Connie Tingson Gatuz, and Laura Blake Jones to discuss possible recommendations.	
July 6, 2022		
July 20, 2022	Discussion of subgroup 1 recommendations	
July 28, 2022	Discussion of subgroup 2 recommendations	
August 3, 2022	Discussion of subgroup 3 recommendations	
August 17, 2022	Revising recommendations based on feedback from team	

August 29, 2022	Preparing for stakeholder feedback meetings	
September 26, 2022		Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with leaders from the Registrar’s Office and Financial Aid to discuss draft recommendations
September 27, 2022		Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with Advising Council (ACUM) to discuss draft recommendations
October 7, 2022		Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with CAPS Student Advisory Board to discuss draft recommendations
October 12, 2022		Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with Student Advisory Board in Student Life to discuss draft recommendations
October 12 and 21, 2022		Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with Student Life Assembly Staff to discuss draft recommendations
October 13, 2022		Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with Student Affairs Leadership Collaborative (SALC) to discuss draft recommendations
October 19, 2022		Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with Student Records, Curriculum, & Academic Advising (SRCAA) (Paul Robinson and Tammie Durham Luis) to discuss draft recommendations

<p>October 24, 2022</p>		<p>Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) Staff to discuss draft recommendations</p>
<p>October 26, 2022</p>		<p>Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with Dean of Students Advisory Board (SAB) to discuss draft recommendations</p>
<p>October 27, 2022</p>		<p>Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Student Accessibility and Accommodation Services (SAAS) meeting to discuss draft recommendations</p>
<p>November 4, 2022</p>		<p>Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with Central Student Government (CSG) University Council</p>
<p>November 8, 2022</p>		<p>Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with LSA Student Government to discuss draft recommendations</p>
<p>November 11, 2022</p>		<p>Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with Associate Deans Group (ADG) to discuss draft recommendations</p>
<p>November 16, 2022</p>	<p>Addressing and incorporating stakeholder feedback</p>	
<p>December 16, 2022</p>		<p>Stakeholder feedback meeting: Meeting with Student Relations Advisory Committee (SRAC) to discuss draft recommendations</p>

January 27, 2023		Meeting with the Initiative Planning Group on Student Academic Success
---------------------	--	--

* Does not include subgroup meetings, which took place throughout the summer and fall of 2022.

Appendix B: Peer Public Institution Job Role Benchmarking

INSTITUTION	ROLE	AREAS OF OVERSIGHT	REPORTING LINE (who role reports to)
Ohio State University	Vice Provost for Student Academic Success and Dean of Undergraduate Education	Office of Student Academic Success	Executive Vice President and Provost
University of California - Berkeley	Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education	Berkeley Undergraduate Education	Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost
University of California - Los Angeles	Dean and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education	Division of Undergraduate Education	Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost
University of Illinois - Urbana/Champaign	Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education	Office of the Provost - Education	Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost
University of Maryland - College Park	Associate Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Studies	Office of Undergraduate Studies	Senior Vice President and Provost
University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill	-	-	-

<p>University of Texas - Austin</p>	<p>Senior Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of the School of Undergraduate Studies</p>	<p>TEXAS Undergraduate Studies</p>	<p>Executive Vice President and Provost</p>
<p>University of Virginia - Charlottesville</p>	<p>Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education</p>	<p>Office of Undergraduate Education</p>	<p>Vice Provost for Academic Affairs</p>
<p>University of Washington - Seattle</p>	<p>Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Academic Affairs</p>	<p>Undergraduate Academic Affairs</p>	<p>Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs</p>
<p>University of Wisconsin - Madison</p>	<p>Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning</p>	<p>Teaching and Learning *includes some centralized undergraduate education areas of focus</p>	<p>Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs</p>

Appendix C: Summary of Research on Academic Probation

Research suggests that academic probation as currently implemented may not have the outcomes intended by the institution. Students who are placed on academic probation are less likely to be retained (Sneyers & De Witte, 2018). In addition, probation has been shown to have a substantial negative impact on the likelihood that a student will graduate (Bowman & Jang, 2022).

College administrators and students often have different ideas about the purposes of probation (Brady, 2017). While administrators often view probation as helpful, students report negative emotions from being placed on academic probation. Students placed on probation often report feeling discouraged, embarrassed, and fearful (Barough-Gilbert, 2015; Lindo, Sanders, & Oreopoulos, 2010). In one study, Students placed on probation reported that they were unclear about institutional expectations and criteria in advance of being placed on probation.

Existing research offers guidance about the kinds of programs that help students overcome academic challenges. Interventions aimed at developing the academic skills of students placed on probation have shown promise for retention and graduation. For example, at University of Indiana Bloomington, students placed on academic probation are required to enroll in a credit-bearing class focusing on study and life management skills, identifying students' interests, and exploring the purposes of higher education.

León, Guest-Scott, Koke, Fiorini, and Rangazas (2019) examine the impact of the program on student retention across five academic years. While students were required to take the class, delayed registration was the only consequence for not enrolling in the class. Students who took the class had significantly higher retention and graduation rates compared with those who did not.

Other studies have reported similarly positive impacts of goal-setting and study skills classes on students' academic success (Bowman, Jang, Kivlighan, Schneider, & Ye, 2020; Renzulli, 2015).

Improving academic probation policies, including changes as simple as editing the notification letter to be psychologically attuned to students, can improve outcomes (Brady, Kroeper, Ozier, Henderson, Walton, & the College Transition Collaborative, 2018). Attuned letters:

- Frame probation as a process of learning and growth—not a label
- Communicate that it is not uncommon to experience difficulties
- Acknowledge a variety of specific reasons for academic difficulty
- Offer hope of returning to good standing

References

- Akos, P., & James, S. (2020). Are course withdrawals a useful student success strategy? *NACADA Journal*, 40(1), 80-93.
- Barbayannis G, Bandari M, Zheng X, Baquerizo H, Pecor K. W, Ming X. (2022). Academic stress and mental well-being in college students: Correlations, affected groups, and COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1-10.
- Barouch-Gilbert, A. (2015). Academic deficiency: Student experiences of institutional labeling. *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, 27(2), 101-111.
- Barouch-Gilbert, A. (2016). Academic probation: Student experiences and academic probation: Student experiences and self-efficacy enhancement. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, 10(3), 153–164.
- Bowman, N. A., & Jang, N. (2022). What is the purpose of academic probation? its substantial negative effects on four-year graduation. *Research in Higher Education*, 63(8), 1285-1311.
- Bowman, N. A., Jang, N., Kivlighan, D. M., Schneider, N., & Ye, X. (2020). The impact of a goal-setting intervention for engineering students on academic probation. *Research in Higher Education*, 61(1), 142-166.
- Brady, S. T., Kroeper, K. M., Ozier, E. M., Henderson, A. G., Walton, G. M. & the College Transition Collaborative (2018). *Academic probation and the role of notification letters* [Research Brief]. Retrieved from: <https://collegetransitioncollaborative.org/>
- Brady, S. (2017). *A scarlet letter? Institutional messaging about academic probation can, but need not, elicit shame and stigma*. [Doctoral Dissertation, Stanford University]. Searchworks Catalog.

Hanger, M. A., Goldenson, J., Weinberg, M., Schmitz-Sciborski, A., & Monzon, R. (2012). The bounce back retention program: One-year follow-up study. *Research, Theory & Practice, 13*(2), 205-227.

León, M. B., Guest-Scott, A., Koke, A., Fiorini, S., & Rangazas, A. (2019). Claiming their education: The impact of a required course for academic probation students with a focus on purpose and motivation. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 19*(4), 43-57.

Mental Health Task Force of Tufts University (2019). *Report of the Mental Health Task Force*.

Downloaded from:

<https://president.tufts.edu/wp-content/uploads/Report-of-the-Mental-Health-Task-Force-October-2019.pdf>

Renzulli, S. J. (2015). Using learning strategies to improve the academic performance of university students on academic probation. *NACADA Journal, 35*(1), 29-41.

Robbins, S. B., Lauver, K., Le, H., Davis, D., Langley, R., Carlstrom, A.. (2004). Do psychosocial and study skill factors predict college outcomes?: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 130*(2), 281-288.

Sneyers, E., & De Witte, K. (2018). Interventions in higher education and their effect on student success: A meta-analysis. *Educational Review, 70*(2), 208-228.