ACADEMIC SUCCESS PROGRAM

Background

Loyola’s Academic Success Program began in the spring of 2008. At that time, Dean Bromberger asked me to work with students who fell below a 2.0 GPA after their first fall semester. That spring I worked with approximately 22 students on an individual and/or small group basis. The students were required to meet with me once a week for an hour. Our work together included learning how to properly brief a case and how to outline effectively. We reviewed coursework on a weekly basis so that I could somewhat track the student’s understanding of the course material. We also worked on study schedules, reviewed old exams, and toward the end of the semester, I held mini study sessions with small groups of students. Of those 22 students, 18 brought their cumulative GPA above a 2.0. The students who saw the most improvement in GPA were those who met with me on a consistent weekly basis. (Graduation GPA and bar passage rates attached).

In the fall of 2008, approximately 19 first year students fell below a 2.0 GPA. Those students were referred to the academic success program. 11 of those students actively participated in the academic success program on a weekly basis. Each of those 11 students increased their cumulative GPA above a 2.0 for the spring semester. (Graduation GPA and bar passage rates attached).

In the fall of 2009, the administration sought to reach more students who would benefit from participation in the program. David Normann and I worked together with a group of approximately 43 students. These were first year students whom the administration considered “at risk” because of low entering credentials. Of those 43 students, all but three achieved a GPA above a 2.0 after their fall semester. (These students have not graduated yet).

In the spring 2010, the faculty voted to expand the academic success program to include a guided curriculum and the institution of two courses in legal analysis. The first course, Principles of Legal Analysis was scheduled to be taught in the spring 2011 to first year students who after their first semester grades ended up in the bottom quartile of the class. The second course, Consolidated Legal Analysis, was scheduled to be taught in the fall 2012 to third year students who were in the bottom quartile of the class.

In the fall of 2010, David and I worked with approximately 28 first year students with low entering credentials. We divided the group evenly. As usual, we met with students for an hour a week on an individual basis. Of those 28 students, five students did not achieve a 2.0 GPA. While required to attend, three of those five students did not attend regularly weekly meetings with either of us. I believe that had they attended regularly, some of them would have achieved passing grades. Other than those five students, we had a very good success rate. Of the 28 students required to participate, 2
students achieved grades in the top 10% of their class. As of January 2011, one of them was the #1 student in the night division. We had one student in the top 25% of the class. Two students achieved grades in the top 33% of the class, and the majority of the students (12 students) achieved grades in the top 50% of the class. Five students ended up in the bottom 25% of the class.

The breakdown of the fall 2010 semester student performance was as follows:

- **Top 10%**: 2 students (1 student was #1 in night division as of Jan. 2011)
- **Top 25%**: 1 student
- **Top 33%**: 2 students
- **Top 50%**: 12 students
- **Bottom 25%**: 5 students
- **Below 2.0**: 5 students
- **Withdrawal**: 1 student withdrew prior to exams.

Total: 28 students

While the program is only three years old, it does seem to yield good results and in the case of this year, the majority of students who were considered at risk because of low entering credentials ended up in the top 50% or higher of the class. Students who are willing to work hard on a consistent basis perform well. I believe that a good academic success program can aid students to become more diligent, organized, and focused on their coursework.

While the program is mandatory for at risk students and those students who are on academic probation, it is open to all students. We have many students who continue with us in the program even though they are no long required to participate in the program. We also see a number of upperclassmen who have heard about the program and seek help in improving their grades. Students have shared with me that they are grateful that Loyola offers such a program.

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In the spring 2011, the academic success program consisted of two parts: the Principles of Legal Analysis Course and individual student weekly meetings.

The Principles of Legal Analysis course was taught to three sections of first year students whose grades fell in the bottom quartile of the class. Approximately 59 students were enrolled in the Principles of Legal Analysis course. Of those 59 students, 80% of those students saw an improvement in their overall GPA as a result of the course. While most of the increases in GPAs were modest, there are a few examples of significant GPA improvement. (Comparison of fall 2010 and spring 2011 GPAs attached)

Student evaluations of the course were overall positive. After the initial distress of being required to take the course, most students found the course beneficial. The class helped them understand the importance of case synthesis and taught them how to perform good legal analysis. They believed that the class also taught them to become more organized and efficient in their approach to their studies. Many of them compared themselves to the Moot Court students and felt that because of the class emphasis on outlining, brief writing, etc. that they were more prepared for exams than those who did not take the class. I had a student audit the class who was not required to take the class. She indicated to me that she found the class helped her understand how significant public policy is to the study of the law and how professors use it on exams. She said that without the Principles class, she may have glossed over public policy arguments when studying as not important because it isn’t always black letter law. After the class lecture on briefing a case, several students thanked me for teaching them how to brief a case. Prior to that they had not known or realized how to properly brief a case. Students seemed to appreciate (at least when it was over) the emphasis of the course on writing. They felt that their writing had improved even though many of them struggled throughout the semester. These are just a few of the comments.

In addition to the Principles course, students whose grades were below a 2.0 after the fall 2010 semester were also required to meet on a weekly basis with David Normann and myself for individualized tutoring sessions. 17 students fell below a 2.0 after the fall 2010 semester. Of those 17, 13 saw their GPAs improve above 2.0 in the spring of 2011 as a result of the Principles course and individual weekly meetings.
In the fall 2011, an additional academic success instructor was hired. We are currently working with approximately 33 first year students who are required to meet weekly on an individual basis with an academic success instructor.

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