Does Participation in the Academic Continuance Experience for Success Program Increase Academic Achievement and Persistence of Students Readmitted From Suspension

NorLisa Mayes
Old Dominion University

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DOES PARTICIPATION IN THE
ACADEMIC CONTINUANCE EXPERIENCE FOR SUCCESS PROGRAM
INCREASE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND PERSISTENCE
OF STUDENTS READMITTED FROM SUSPENSION

A Research Paper
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of
Occupational and Technical Studies
Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
In Occupational and Technical Studies

By

NorLisa Mayes
May 2004
NorLisa Mayes prepared this research paper under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies. It was submitted to Dr. John M. Ritz, Research Advisor and Graduate Program Director, as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies Degree.

APPROVED BY:

[Signature]

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5-3-04
Date
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Dr. Ritz who assisted in the completion of this research study. A special thank you to Jessie, Chuckie and Charles who remained supportive throughout the experience. Finally, thanks to Sandra Waters, Martha Sharpe, Worth Pickering and Anthony Macera who kept me afloat with encouragement and data over the past two years.

Lisa Mayes
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

“Institutions must be innovative, creative and clear in their approach to retain students, not to mention setting measurable goals” (Brotherton, 2001, p. 34). Institutions of higher education everywhere are greatly concerned about holding on to their students and seek to provide strategies and programs to meet this challenge. Old Dominion University provides several programs to assist at-risk students and students facing academic difficulty. Most of these programs are intended as proactive measures to assist incoming freshmen to begin a successful academic career. Other initiatives help incoming freshmen already identified as “at-risk”. The Academic Continuance Experience for Success (ACES) is the only intervention strategy developed for students suspended from Old Dominion University and then readmitted.

ACES is an intervention and retention program designed to help students who have served a one- or two-year mandatory academic suspension from Old Dominion University. Once these students are readmitted to the University, they are required to fulfill the requirements of the program. ACES consists of a two-hour workshop, readings and an online survey component. The program is designed to educate students about university policy and resources, as well as, time management and study skills. These components help students identify and understand the causes of the suspension and ways to overcome their academic difficulty.

While the ACES workshop was developed for on-campus students, there is an abbreviated, online version for Old Dominion University’s TELETECHNET distance learning students. In order to determine if the University should invest in transmitting the
full workshop to distance learners, this study will seek to determine how effective the on-campus ACES program has been.

**Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to determine if participation in an intervention program improved academic achievement and retention of at-risk college students at Old Dominion University.

**Research Goals**

The following hypothesis was set forth to guide this study:

H₁: Old Dominion University students who participated in the Academic Continuance Experience for Success workshop show improved academic achievement and persistence towards a degree when compared to students who did not participate in the program.

**Background and Significance**

Currently, students academically suspended from Old Dominion University are required to separate for three semesters for a one-year suspension; six semesters for a two-year suspension; and, final dismissal after the third suspension. After serving a one-or two-year suspension, students are given the opportunity to request readmission. The readmission process involves completion of the Readmission from Suspension application (Appendix A); and, an explanation of cause for academic difficulty and plan of action for academic success. Upon readmission, the Office of Continuance and Undergraduate Services makes contact with the student via letter (Appendix B) explaining the student's academic responsibility, and a description of expectations and
policy information (Appendix C). While not required to meet one-on-one with members of this office, the letter states that students should meet with their academic advisor. While academic advisors are knowledgeable about their particular programs and graduation requirements, many do not fully understand academic policy interpretation. In addition, most academic advisors do not get involved with intervention strategies for probationary students.

Old Dominion University’s readmission process—categorized as a nonintrusive model—leaves the decision for intervention and advisement to the student. According to Abelman and Molina (2001), motivation factors for probationary students are not equal and some may seek out intervention, while most will ignore opportunities for assistance. Research has shown that this may not be the ideal model for at-risk students (Garnett, 1990; Abelman & Molina, 2001).

Herein lies the challenge of the initial readmission process. Readmitted students seek out advisors in reference to their course selections and advisor hold. However, students are not required to make personal contact (face-to-face or electronic) with experienced staff that can provide information, resources and guidance for improvement towards academic success. Therefore, interventions for academic, behavioral or personal deficiencies are ignored, and suspension may once again become a real possibility.

Before fall 2002, this readmission process was the extent to which contact was made with returning students. It has been the author’s experience that approximately 90% percent of the students were readmitted without question, and less than 10% made contact with the Continuance Office after readmission.
In an attempt to combat the recidivism of poor grades and suspension for readmitted students, a plan was developed to incorporate intrusive advising within the readmission process. Jeschke, Johnson and William (2001) define intrusive advising as a situation in which "student-advisor contact is inevitable and is not dependent on student initiation" (p. 47). The Academic Continuance Experience for Success (ACES) workshop, implemented in the fall 2002 semester, is a required intervention program for all returning suspended students. The ACES workshop consists of a two-hour presentation along with group and individual activities. The program also consists of an online component. Students are required to complete the ACES survey and Career Confidence Scale before attending the workshop. The purpose of the ACES program has a two-fold mission. Initially, it helps students identify and remedy causes of poor academic standing, which empowers them to achieve academic success. Second, it aids in the increase of retention and persistence rates at Old Dominion University (S. M. Waters, personal communication, December 11, 2003).

While much has been done to enhance the ACES workshop for local students, very little has been done for the University's growing constituency of distance learning students. According to Roseanne Runte, President of Old Dominion University, the distance learning program, known as TELETECHNET, is expected to increase considerably over the next five to ten years (State of the University Address, August 21, 2003). TELETECHNET students readmitted to the University are required to complete the two online surveys, readings and group discussion questions via the Blackboard course system. However, there are concerns about the effectiveness of this limited version of ACES, because it lacks the student-advisor contact. One consideration has
been implementation of a program that mirrors the campus workshop through use of communication technology. In order to determine the feasibility of this venture, it is important to consider how successful the on-campus version has been over the past year.

There is a considerable amount of research on retention and orientation programs for first year students, probation students and incoming at-risk students. On the other hand, research is extremely limited for programs designed for the at-risk students, readmitted from suspension. However, one program to note is that from the University of Hawaii-Manoa. Brooks-Harris, Mori and Higa (1999) presented their readmission intervention program and its positive effects on returning students. The results marked a considerable increase in grade point averages at the end of the semester. In addition, students were noted as having positive reactions to the dynamics of group intervention.

**Limitations**

The scope of this research was limited to:

1. Students readmitted from suspension to Old Dominion University.
2. ACES participants readmitted during the fall 2002 semester.
3. Pre-ACES participants readmitted during the fall 2001 semester.

**Assumptions**

This research was based on the assumptions that:

1. There is a considerable need for some form of intervention strategy for specific types of at-risk students.
2. The population of Old Dominion University distance learning students is increasing annually.
3. At-risk students generally do not seek assistance for academic difficulty.
4. Retention issues drive the need for a more focused program for students facing academic difficulty.

5. The goal of most college students is to achieve a college degree.

**Procedures**

The participants of this study were freshmen, sophomore, junior and senior level students enrolled at Old Dominion University. Twenty ACES participants were randomly selected out of 84 returning students and will serve as the experimental group. They were compared to 20 non-ACES participants who were randomly selected out of 89 students readmitted to the University before the establishment of the program. Data will be extracted from Banner, Old Dominion University’s student information system. This information will be used in order to evaluate participants’ pre-and post- ACES workshop GPA, academic status, and persistence at the University.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are fundamental to the understanding of this study:

**ACES** – Academic Continuance Experience for Success workshop.

**ARC** – Adjusted Resident Credit.

**GFP** – Grade Forgiveness Policy.

**GPA** – grade point average.

**GPA Cumulative** – grade point average inclusive of all recorded grades.

**GPA Semester** – grade point average for specified semester.

**Higher Education** – college level education such as a university.

**Persistence** – continue academic career through to graduation.
Readmission – the process of formally applying to return to the University after a required wait out period of three to six consecutive semesters due to academic suspension.

Retention – an effort to maintain the population of admitted students consecutively through graduation from the University.

Semester – one of three periods of instruction during a year (13-16 weeks each).

Suspension – a required period of deferral from taking classes at the University due to poor academic grades. The wait out period is three semesters for a one-year suspension and six semesters for a two-year suspension.

TELETECHNET - an interactive distance education program which students participate in their class by means of satellite at their local community college and/or video streaming using a computer.

Overview of Chapters

In Chapter I, an academic intervention strategy for at-risk college students known as the Academic Continuance Experience for Success workshop was introduced, as well as, its importance to retention efforts at Old Dominion University. Chapter II will provide a review of the literature concerning various intervention programs and their effectiveness on students in academic difficulty. This chapter will also look at the needs of distance learning students with regards to intervention for academic difficulty. Chapter III will describe the methods used and a discussion on the procedure for this study. Chapter IV will discuss the findings and analysis of this research. Chapter V will provide a summary and conclusion of the research while contributing recommendations.
to university level advisors and student service administrators who deal with the returning students in academic difficulty.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter II is the Review of Literature section of this research paper. A review of the literature suggests that there is extremely limited research on intervention programs for the suspended and then readmitted student. There is a great deal of discussion on the demographics of the suspended student; as well as, programs used to increase their academic status upon return (Finley, 2002). However, few researchers have experimentally examined the effectiveness of intervention programs that are designed for this population of students.

With this in mind, some of the review of literature will borrow from research focused on intervention for students classified as probationary or initially identified as at-risk. The common relationship between these groups, including readmitted students, is that they are all deemed at-risk, may have grade point averages below good academic standing, and are in need of intervention from professional academic services (Tinto, 1985; Brooks-Harris, Mori & Higa, 1999). In this chapter, the researcher will provide an overview of the at-risk student, intervention programs, and retention issues.

At-Risk Students

At-risk students are defined as those who possess certain characteristics that may lead them into academic difficulty or have already fallen into poor academic standing. Research attributes academic difficulty to a variety of areas or circumstances. Poor academic achievement can be attributed to one or more of the following areas: personal, academic, social or support (Finley, 2002). For example, a student who is deficient in
study skills and has an overactive social life is very likely to harm their chances for academic success. Likewise, the student who has to work and take care of a family may also face problems maintaining a good academic status.

In addition, students may also underestimate the requirements of courses and the amount of work required to achieve academic success at the college level. Therefore, at-risk students may lack needed coping skills to seek out assistance when the threat of problems arise. Kirk-Kuwaye and Nishida determined that poor academic achievement comes from “inadequate cognitive and motivational strategies that hinder students” from successfully navigating through college (2001, p. 40).

Students academically suspended from college and then readmitted make up a portion of the at-risk population. Readmitted students are unique to other at-risk students, in that they have experienced the full consequences of their academic circumstance. The benefit of this experience may be motivation in which students recognize and appreciate their second chance at a college education. Molina and Abelman (2001) believe that these students may be more likely to accept responsibility for past mistakes and change poor habits and behaviors to achieve academics success.

Literature presents many valid characteristics that define the at-risk student. It is important to note that identifying strategies that will help change, motivate and educate this group is key to their obtaining academic success.
**Intervention Programs**

While most institutions have some form of academic suspension/dismissal/readmission policy, there is limited research to determine if intervention programs are prevalent and beneficial for readmitted students. Most of the research involving intervention strategies and programs focus on students who enter their freshman year classified as at-risk, or college students who fall below good academic standing and are placed on probation. A limited number of studies on readmitted students provided positive outcomes for long-term intervention programs. Findings have shown its positive effects on grade point averages for those who participated in weekly intervention meetings (Taylor, Powers, Lindstrom, & Gibson, 1987). According to Cuseo, there is a positive relationship between “utilization of campus support services and persistence to program or degree completion” (2002, p. 8). In light of this, it is vital to connect readmitted students to academic support services possibly in the form of mandatory intervention programs.

**Intrusive Intervention**

According to Tinto, a nationally known retention scholar, “one of the clearest aspects of effective programs for academically at-risk students is their proactive orientation toward intervention” (1987, p. 182). The intrusive advising model meets the goal of the proactive orientation. Students at the higher level of academic difficulty benefit more from intervention that is more intrusive in nature. This model does not leave student-advisor contact up to the student. Instead, advisors and student services personnel take the lead on contacting students during important points of time—one being readmission. Noticeable benefits of the intrusive model in advising and
intervention are: increased grade point average, increases in making the honors lists, increases in retention, and reduction in the number of probationary students (Jeschke, Johnson, & Williams, 2001; Glennen, Baxley, & Farren, 1985).

Academic Continuance Experience for Success

The Academic Continuance Experience for Success (ACES) workshop was designed specifically for students readmitted from suspension and follows the intrusive, proactive orientation for intervention. The workshop mirrors an existing program at the University of Hawaii-Manoa (UHM). The Success Workshop was designed to reduce the number of dismissals for students readmitted from suspension (Brooks-Harris, Mori, & Higa, 1999). Like the UHM program, it was determined that ACES should, in fact, be mandatory for all returning students to insure one hundred percent participation. The Old Dominion University policy states that,

Students who are returning from academic suspension from the University must participate in the [ACES] program prior to the start of classes for the returning semester. Failure to participate will result in a deferment of readmission until the next semester at which time the ACES program must be completed (Old Dominion University Catalog, 2002-2004, p. 28).

While Brooks-Harris, et. al. (1999) have determined their readmission workshop to be successful since its inception in 1994, there have been no published data to support this claim (1999).

Retention Issues

Some may inquire about the importance of 1) allowing students with such low academic status to return to college; and 2) focusing resources on a population of students who failed to academically achieve. One of the most important reasons for allowing suspended students to return is the issue of retention.
Retention has been the buzzword over the last decade for many colleges and universities. Retention is the ability to maintain the student body at an institution. In other words, it is the responsibility of the institution to develop ways to help students continue their academic career at that institution.

Over the past several years, a number of initiatives have been instituted in order to retain students. Colleges and universities have pushed quality customer service to keep the “student consumer” happy and satisfied. Campus-wide diversity training has provided assurance for equitable treatment on campus. Student support services have increased to assist students in their academic, physical, and social environments. Last, professional advisors have focused on developing strategies to ensure that students make successful progress toward attaining their academic goals—including the at-risk population. Old Dominion University has followed suit with these efforts, however, the persistence rates provide a stark reminder that more needs to be accomplished.

At most institutions, the ability to retain students through to graduation, within five years, is defined as persistence. Figure 1 shows the persistence rates of public four-year institutions. Old Dominion University, categorized as a PhD public institution, falls within the 45% - 50.6% graduation rate for students who completed a bachelor’s degree within five years.
**Figure 1**

*ACT - National Graduation Rates – 2003 by Type of Institution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Level/Control</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD**</th>
<th>Mean %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA/BS Public</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA/1st Professional Public</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD Public</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2419</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Graduation in 5 years for BA/BS  
** Standard deviation
Source: Compiled from the American College Testing (ACT) Institutional Data File, 2003

Figure 2 illustrates Old Dominion University’s graduation rate for students who entered 1994 through 1996. Students who graduated fell below the reported national average (46.1%) at thirty-seven percent (37%); while those who graduated in five years was an alarming 29.6%. Figure 3 represents the number of freshmen students who left Old Dominion University in academic difficulty. In 2001, fifty-nine percent (59%) of the freshman class did not return, which represents the lowest number of students leaving the University over the past decade. These data provide an alarming perspective on the fundamental need for intervention to help students persist through to graduation, including those in academic difficulty.

The need to retain at-risk students also has a direct relation to budgetary concerns. Students represent dollars coming into the system by way of tuition and fees. An increase in attrition—students leaving—equates to decreases in financial support for the institution (Cuseo, 2002). While more funding in the form of intervention may be needed to retain the readmitted student, they are just as valuable as academically successful students and more cost effective than recruiting new students. Tinto, points out that the
Figure 2
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
4, 5 & 6 Year Graduation Rates
of First-Time Freshman in
Entering Classes of Fall 1994 to Fall 1996

Note: Graduation Rates are calculated at the end of the academic year.
Courtesy of Institutional Research and Assessment, ODU.
Figure 3
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
Leavers in Academic Difficulty
Fall 1984 - Fall 2001 Entering Freshmen

Note: Academic difficulty is defined as having less than a 2.00 average at the end of the first year of attendance. Attrition rate reflects percentage not returning the subsequent fall semester.

Courtesy of Institutional Research and Assessment, ODU.
"utilization of sophisticated marketing techniques to recruit students has diminished in value and institutions have come to view the retention of students as the only reasonable course of action left to insure their survival" (1987, p. 2). Austin also stated that a student who drops out of a four-year institution has the potential to "affect three classes of students at once, whereas any change in recruiting" will only affect that one year of the incoming students (1975, p. 2). Therefore, the justification for providing intervention resources for readmitted students is substantiated. Recruitment strategies may bring in a quality student body, but it takes successful retention programs to keep them through to graduation.

Summary

Chapter II presented an overview of the at-risk student, intervention programs, and retention issues. While researchers agree that long-term intervention programs are needed to assist students in academic difficulty, few discuss the needs of the readmitted population. In order to meet the growing financial needs of higher education, well known retention scholars point out the cost effectiveness of working with at-risk students, including those readmitted from suspension. Chapter III will present the methods and procedures used to collect the data for this research.
CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study was designed to determine whether the Academic Continuance Experience for Success (ACES) workshop had been effective in increasing academic success and persistence of readmitted students at Old Dominion University. The experimental method included use of a control group and an experimental group of students. A description of the population, research variables, instrument, method of data collection and analysis will be used to develop this chapter.

Population

Participants of this research were undergraduates enrolled at Old Dominion University. All students were identified by the Office of Continuance as having served academic suspension and were then readmitted to the University.

These students were divided into two distinct groups. Twenty participants in the experimental group consisted of students readmitted for the fall 2002 semester who had taken part in the ACES workshop. The control group consisted of 20 students readmitted for the fall 2001 semester before the inception of ACES. Thirty-eight of these students returned from a one-year suspension and two returned from a two-year suspension.

Research Variables

According to the review of literature, the following research variables were identified in this study. The independent variable was identified as “the Academic Continuance Experience for Success intervention workshop,” and the dependent
variables were identified as “academic achievement” and “persistence” of readmitted students. Other possible variables to consider were maturation of students, motivation, inherent ability and student participation in outside intervention.

**Methods Of Data Collection**

Official permission from the Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Services at Old Dominion University was requested and granted for the use of confidential student information for research purposes. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment supplied these data necessary to analyze academic status of students readmitted in fall 2001 and 2002 respectively. Data were extrapolated from the Banner student information system. In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, no identifiable information, such as, names and social security numbers were provided to the researcher. The information included GPAs prior to readmission; semester GPAs upon completion of one year following readmission; attendance information; and, academic status based on Old Dominion University’s standards. The data obtained were then compiled and tabulated for the purpose of analysis by the researcher.

**Statistical Analysis**

Data from the Banner student information system were analyzed in order to establish the outcome of student achievement according to pre- and post-ACES criteria. The mean grade point averages for prior and one-year post readmission were calculated for further testing. A t-test was employed for two instances. First, it was used to ensure that there was no significant difference between the prior GPAs of the two incoming
readmitted groups. Second, the t-test was used to determine if there was, indeed, a significant difference between the academic levels of ACES and non-ACES participants. In addition, data on persistence were compiled for each group. Frequencies were analyzed to find out if students exposed to ACES continued at Old Dominion University at a higher rate than non-ACES participants did.

Summary

Chapter III presented the methods and procedures utilized for collecting and analyzing data of this study. The targeted population was Old Dominion University students readmitted from a mandatory academic suspension, classified as an at-risk population. Research variables were identified. Data collection from Banner provided academic demographics on pre- and post-ACES students used for statistical analysis. The results of the analysis will help to determine what influences the ACES workshop had on student’s academic success and persistence. Chapter IV of this study will present detailed findings of the data analysis.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine if participation in an intervention program improved academic achievement and retention of at-risk college students at Old Dominion University. In fall 2002, students readmitted from academic suspension were required to attend the Academic Continuance Experience for Success (ACES) workshop. The research compared a group of ACES participants to a group of non-ACES participants who were readmitted during the previous fall term before the program existed. Through random selection, 20 participants from each group were used for this research. The method of data collection for this study was by means of existing student information from the Old Dominion University Banner database. These data consisted of semester GPAs, academic status and persistence status. This chapter presents the findings and a summary of the chapter.

Report of the Findings

The data collected from this study were compiled into Tables 1 through 3 and Figure 4. Tables 1 and 2 list the raw data compiled from the Old Dominion University Banner student information system for the control and experimental groups. Table 3 provided a statistical report for ACES and non-ACES participants which, included the mean, median, standard deviation, and variance for comparison of each group. Table 4a and 4b provide the results of the t-test analysis for this research.
Summary of Results

The control group (non-ACES) consisted of twenty students randomly selected out of 84 readmitted students for the fall 2001 term. Nineteen of the participants were returning from a mandatory one-year suspension (3 semesters) and only one returned from a two-year suspension (6 semesters). Thirty-five percent of the participants had a prior grade point average below 1.0 or 'F' letter grade and only one participant was just under good standing at 1.85 GPA. The non-ACES mean grade point average before readmission was 1.17 or 'D' letter grade. Upon completion of the first year following readmission, the mean grade point average for the fall, spring and summer semesters was 1.36 or a 'D+' letter grade. One-third of the participants continued taking classes after the one year following readmission. Of the participants who did not return, three were suspended for the second time and one was expelled for failure to maintain an adequate academic standing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior GPA</th>
<th>GPA After Readmit*</th>
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</table>

*Represents the fall, spring and summer semester average after readmission.

Table 1
The experimental group (ACES) consisted of twenty students randomly selected out of 89 readmitted for the fall 2002 term. These participants were the first required to participate in the ACES program. All were returning from a one-year suspension. Thirty-five percent of the participants had a prior grade point average below 1.0 or ‘F’ letter grade, and one participant was just below good academic standing at 1.76 or ‘D+’ letter grade. The ACES mean grade point average before readmission was 1.11 or ‘D’ letter grade. Upon completion of the ACES program and the first year following readmission, the mean grade point average for the fall, spring and summer semesters was 2.11 or ‘C’ letter grade. Fifty percent of the group continued taking classes after the one year following readmission. Three participants were suspended out of the 10 who did not continue taking classes.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Prior GPA</th>
<th>GPA After Readmit*</th>
<th>Suspended</th>
<th>Suspension Status</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
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<td>1.71</td>
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</table>

*Represents the fall, spring and summer semester average after readmission.

Table 2
Figure 4 illustrates a comparison of mean GPAs prior to readmission and following one year of academics. Both groups reentered with no significant difference in GPAs. After one year of readmission, the control group showed only a minor increase in GPA. However, the experimental group showed a marked increase upon completion of their first year after readmission.

**Figure 4**

A Comparison of Pre- and Post- Mean Grade Point Averages for non-ACES and ACES participants

Table 3 contained a descriptive statistical report for the control and experimental group. In the control group, the mean score after one year from readmission was 1.35 and the median score was 1.16. For the experimental group the mean score was 2.10 and the median score was 2.08. A comparison of mean and median showed a marked difference between the groups. The minimum and maximum GPAs were comparable for each group with the control and experimental groups standing at the minimum of 0.00 GPA and maximum 3.66 and 3.92 GPAs respectively.
### Statistical Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>non-ACES (control group)</th>
<th>ACES (experimental group)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>1.356</td>
<td>2.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Error</strong></td>
<td>0.2989</td>
<td>0.2505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median</strong></td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Deviation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
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<td>3.92</td>
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<td><strong>Minimum</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum</strong></td>
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<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample Size (N)</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3**

Two t-tests were completed in order to determine the significance of difference between the sample means for both groups—before readmission and one year following readmission. The results of both tests are displayed in Table 4a and 4b. The first t-test was performed to insure that no significant difference existed between prior GPAs for the control and experimental group. The result of this analysis was \( t = .12 \). A two-tailed test was conducted because the prediction was a null hypothesis. The degrees of freedom for this test equaled 38, which yielded a critical value of 2.031 at the .05 level of significance and a value of 2.736 at the .01 level of significance.

The second t-test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference between the sample means of each group. The result of the t-test was \( t = 4.60 \). A one-tailed test was conducted to support the prediction of the hypothesis. The degrees of freedom was 38, which generated a critical value of 1.686 at the .05 level of significance and 2.429 at the .01 level of significance.
Results of t-test Analysis on Sample Means for Prior GPAs

Control vs. Experimental:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control (non-ACES)</th>
<th>Experimental (ACES)</th>
<th>Confidence Level = 0.95 (two-tailed test)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>Difference = .06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DF</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Critical t-Value</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4a

Results of t-test Analysis on Sample Means of Hypothesis

Control vs. Experimental:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control (non-ACES)</th>
<th>Experimental (ACES)</th>
<th>Confidence Level = 0.95 (two-tailed test)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>Difference = .06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DF</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Critical t-Value</td>
<td>4.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4b

Figure 5 provides a representation of students from each group who continued or left the University after readmission. In the control group, four out of 20 participants continued their academics at Old Dominion University; while 10 out of 20 participants in the experimental group continued. This represents a 20% increase in persistence of the experimental group over the control group.
Summary

This chapter contained the findings of the research study. Data obtained from the Banner student information system were tabulated and examined to determine if participation in an intervention program improved academic achievement and retention of at-risk college students at Old Dominion University. Pre- and post-ACES grade point averages were analyzed for readmitted students—before their return and one year following readmission. The t-tests were used to verify the level of significance in difference between the returning groups; and differences between the ACES and non-ACES academic achievement. Persistence data were tabulated to investigate the level of students retained in both groups. Upon completion of the analysis, ACES participants were found to continue their academics at a higher rate than non-participants. Old Dominion University. Chapter V will provide a summary, conclusions and recommendations based on the results of this analysis.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if participation in an intervention program improved academic achievement and retention of at-risk college students at Old Dominion University. The hypothesis of the study stated, $H_1$: Old Dominion University students who participated in the Academic Continuance Experience for Success (ACES) workshop show improved academic achievement and persistence towards a degree when compared to students who did not participate in the program.

The research study analyzed two groups of students readmitted from academic suspension at Old Dominion University. The population was classified as “at-risk” because they had experienced academic problems due to behavioral or skill deficiencies; as well as, outside or extenuating circumstances. The control group consisted of twenty randomly selected students returning for the fall 2001 term. The experimental group consisted of twenty randomly selected readmitted students required to participate in the ACES intervention program during the fall 2002 term. The control group was readmitted before the inception of the ACES program.

Data were compiled from Old Dominion University’s Banner student information system. A comparison of pre- and post-ACES mean grade point averages helped to establish the program’s affect on academic achievement. The $t$-test was used to determine if there was a significant difference in achievement between the two groups. Individual student persistence was totaled in order to determine if ACES had an influence on retention rates.
Conclusions

The results from the findings of this study were compared to the purpose and hypothesis. The hypothesis of the researcher was:

H₁: Old Dominion University students who participated in the Academic Continuance Experience for Success (ACES) workshop show improved academic achievement and persistence towards a degree when compared to students who did not participate in the program.

The t-test outcome was a 4.60 value. The results of the t-test noted a critical t-ratio of 2.42 at the .01 level of significance. From this analysis, the researcher was able to accept the hypothesis. In conclusion, it was determined that the Academic Continuance Experience for Success program had a positive impact on academic achievement and persistence at Old Dominion University. The students who participated in the workshop realized a significant change in their semester GPAs over the course of one year. Upon examining their academic data, it was found that the experimental group took greater advantage of policy information presented in the workshop. This group was more likely to use the grade forgiveness policy and adjusted resident credit to transform their poor academic standing. While the experimental group’s cumulative GPA remained at probationary status, the mean GPA for the one year after readmission showed good academic standing (≥ 2.00 or ‘C’ letter grade). The control group remained at the same academic level, showing only a slight increase in their mean GPA upon completion of the one year (1.36 or ‘D’ letter grade).

It was found that no significant difference in prior mean GPA was found between the two groups. Both groups returned with a mean GPA less than 1.2 or ‘D’ average.
Therefore, the researcher concluded that participation in the ACES workshop exposed students to detailed explanations of academic policies; reflective exercises for identifying sources of academic difficulty; group discussions addressing solutions; relevant campus resources; and, face-to-face contact with undergraduate advising professionals. These components provided students with a stronger foundation for returning to the University. On the other hand, the control group was provided with relevant documentation about policies and resources, however, it was their responsibility to initiate contact with the appropriate offices and professionals for assistance. Most did not seek assistance through the Office of Continuance at the University.

Retention of the experimental group yielded fifty percent compared to the control group at thirty percent. While more students in the experimental group could have continued, it can be assumed that others did not return due to the transient nature of the student population. High proportions of students at Old Dominion University have employment, family and military obligations. Therefore, not all are able to persist in their academic careers.

**Recommendations**

The Academic Continuance Experience for Success workshop has proven to be a positive influence on students’ overall academic achievement and persistence at Old Dominion University. Based on these findings, it is recommended that a comparable program for distance learning (TELETECHNET) students be implemented. While the pre-ACES population had opportunity to meet face-to-face with experienced academic advising professionals, most of the TELETECHNET population do not have this option. The researcher recommends that the existing ACES program make use of
TELETECHNET distance learning facilities in order to transmit the workshop to sites within the network. While this option may generate additional expenses (satellite transmission, staffing, etc.), it will help to address the needs of the growing distance learning population. As mentioned earlier, the distance learning population is expected to increase up to 10,000 within the next few years (p. 4). With this increase comes an increase of students who face academic difficulty. If this issue is not addressed, the retention and persistence rates at Old Dominion University will be negatively affected.

Additional research is recommended on the population of students who face academic suspension and then returned to continue their academic career. Longitudinal studies would be beneficial to determine the full affects of intervention programs on at-risk students throughout their academic career. These types of studies may also help to identify specific areas of need to increase persistence rates of at-risk students.
REFERENCES


Old Dominion University Catalog (2002-2004).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. Application for Readmission to Old Dominion University

APPENDIX B. Letter of Readmission from Academic Suspension

APPENDIX C. Academic Policy Sheet
Readmission Application
From a One-year or Two-year Suspension

Name: ID#: 

Address:

City: State: Zip Code:

Email: Phone #:

I Have Read and I Understand:

- I must include a formal letter with this application explaining what circumstances resulted in my suspension and how I plan to overcome those obstacles to reach my academic goals.

- The Old Dominion University Regulations for Academic Continuance and the conditions required to adjust my Old Dominion University GPA using the Adjusted Resident Credit Policy (ARC) and/or the Grade Forgiveness Policy (GFP).

- I am required to have decided on a major before applying for readmission from a One-Year or Two-Year Suspension from Old Dominion University.

- With a cumulative GPA below 2.00, I am limited to a semester enrollment of no more than 4 courses in consultation with my Academic Advisor.

- I must submit all transcripts of academic work completed during my separation to the Office of Admissions, Rollins Hall, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA 23529, for evaluation.

Name of Institution Attended: ______________________ Dates of Attendance: ____________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The semester I am planning to re-enroll is (choose only ONE):</th>
<th>I plan to adjust my GPA using:</th>
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<tr>
<td>fall 20__________</td>
<td>ARC (Adjusted Resident Credit), or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spring 20_______</td>
<td>GFP (Grade Forgiveness Policy), or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summer 20______</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My declared (or intended) major is: ________________________________.

Approval of this application does not automatically guarantee readmission to the major indicated.

I agree to meet the specified conditions noted above:

Name ________________________________ Date ________________________________
APPENDIX B

Letter of Readmission from Academic Suspension
Dear FRANK:

I am writing to let you know that you have been readmitted to Old Dominion University for the Fall 2004 semester. You will need to meet with your academic advisor and/or site director and clear any holds prior to being allowed to register for the semester. In addition, you are required to attend an Academic Continuance Experience for Success (ACES) workshop before the start of the semester. Please review the enclosed letter, which provides detailed information about the workshop.

One item of note is that readmission does not automatically mean financial aid benefits are reinstated. If you are expecting financial assistance, please contact the Office of Financial Aid at (757) 683-3683 for additional information.

Enclosed you will find a checklist of actions required on your part to ensure successful completion of your degree. In consultation with your academic advisor and/or site director you will need to choose one of the grade adjustment options available. Rules for the Adjusted Residence Credit and Grade Forgiveness are also included with this letter.

You are limited to enrolling in four courses until your grade point average is at 2.00 or higher. Please choose your courses wisely for your returning semester, as the grade point average you left is still with you. You are required to earn a 2.00 grade point average in your first semester(s) until 12 credits have been attempted upon returning from a suspension. After the 12 credits, you must earn a semester GPA of 2.50 or better until good standing is achieved or you are in the probation range for the number of credits earned. If not, you will be suspended again.

Your record will be reviewed again at the end of the spring term for compliance with academic standing regulations, as outlined on the insert with this letter, and you will be notified of the outcome. Old Dominion University does not suspend students at the end of the fall term, however, suspension does occur in the spring and summer terms.

I wish you much success.

Sincerely,

Sandra M. Waters, Director
Undergraduate Academic Continuance

Old Dominion University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution.
APPENDIX C

Academic Policy Sheet
Adjusted Resident Credit
Any undergraduate student who leaves Old Dominion University for at least one calendar year will be given the option of requesting a grade point average status equivalent to that of a student admitted as a transfer according to the following conditions and regulations. The following conditions governing eligibility will apply:
1. Prior to the one-year's absence, the student must have a grade point average less than 2.00. Upon returning to the University, the student must earn a minimum of 30 credits at Old Dominion University to be eligible for a degree. This must include six hours of upper-level courses in the department of the declared major.
2. The student must have separated from the institution for at least one calendar year. A term in which the student received "W" grades cannot be counted as part of the calendar year separation.
3. Upon return, a full-time student must have attained a 2.00 grade point average for all work attempted in the first semester or upon completion of the first 12 semester hours, if part-time. Nondesgner credit work shall not be counted toward fulfillment of this requirement.
4. Upon satisfying the above requirements, the student must submit the application for Adjusted Resident Credit, at which time a 2.00 grade point average for all work attempted since his or her return must have been earned.
5. This option will be available only once during the student's career at Old Dominion University and must be elected by the end of the second semester following qualifications as described in paragraph 3 above.

Grade Forgiveness Policy (GFP)
When students retake courses, each time the grade becomes part of the transcript and the grade point average. The Grade Forgiveness Policy (GFP) makes it possible for a student to retake a course with only the repeated grade computed in the grade point average. The following conditions apply:
1. The GFP applies to all Old Dominion University undergraduate courses.
2. The GFP cannot be used once the student has graduated.
3. Courses retaken under the GFP must be taken in the Fall 1997 and subsequent semesters.
4. The GFP applies only if the course grade is C-, D+, D, D-, F, and WF.
5. An individual course can be retaken no more than ONE time using the GFP.
6. Student Transcripts will continue to list all courses taken and the grades received; however, under the GFP, the grade point average includes only the repeated grade (even if it is worse). Academic suspensions will not be removed from student transcripts and Dean's List status will not be added after use of the GFP.
7. An enhanced grade point average using the GFP determines eligibility for continuance and graduation but not for graduation with honors or Dean's List.
8. Students may elect to use both the GFP and the Adjusted Resident Credit (ARC) policy. However, students cannot use the GFP for individual courses for which they have already used the ARC policy.

Transfer of Courses and Readmission
One-year suspendees are encouraged—but not required—to take courses at an accredited institution during their mandatory one-year separation from Old Dominion University. Most colleges will not admit students under active suspension; however, some community colleges will admit active suspendees. Students should consult with the Admissions Office of any institution they wish to attend during their separation from Old Dominion University. Students should consult with their advisors regarding appropriate classes to take during their separation from the University.

Undergraduate suspendees may consult with the coordinator for academic continuance (683-3773) regarding readmission or see the website at http://www.odu.edu/ugcont. For information regarding the transfer of courses taken while under suspension, see "Transfer of Credit" in the Admission to Old Dominion University section and "Credits Earned While Under Suspension" in the Regulations for Continuance section of the University Catalog. Since students under active suspension are ineligible to attend the University, the two-course limit on the transfer of courses for General Education credit does not apply during the period of a student's separation from Old Dominion University.

Students wishing to use this policy can receive procedural information and the application from the Registrar's Office, Rolls Hall. Application must be made upon completion of the 12 credits with 2.00 gpa.

WHICH OPTION IS BEST?
Since the Grade Forgiveness Policy is applied to a student's record automatically upon repeating a course, students can wait until after completing the 12 hours to qualify for Adjusted Resident Credit to decide if ARC is the best choice.

HOWEVER, the advisor and the student should discuss the decision as to whether to apply for ARC and make a determination on a case-by-case basis. The following scenarios may be helpful:

- If repeating a few of the courses failed previously brings the student's grade point average within the probation range, the student may benefit by only repeating a few more classes rather than choosing ARC. Keep in mind that by choosing ARC, all classes below a C must be repeated if they are to be used/applied toward a degree. This may not be necessary for a student who has a few Fs and some C-s, but the rest of the grades are As and Bs. If ARC is applied, even the C-s must be repeated in order to apply to the degree.
- If the student is changing majors and does not need some of the classes in which low grades were received, ARC is probably the best option.
- If the student repeated some of the poor grades at another institution during separation from Old Dominion University, ARC is probably the best option, as Grade Forgiveness is not applied when the courses transfer. If ARC is not applied, the old grades will still count against the GPA.

Continuance Rules in a Nutshell
All undergraduate students get one semester of probation (even if they take only one course). If students on probation do not earn a 2.50 grade point average for the next enrolled semester OR earn sufficient grades to remain on probation, they are suspended.

Students readmitted from suspension must earn a minimum 2.0 grade point average during their first 12 credits upon return—even if they take one course at a time. After the 12 credit hours, they must earn a 2.50 grade point average each semester unless they apply for ARC or are in the probation range for the number of credits earned.

Students suspended for a third time are not eligible to reapply for admission.

<table>
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<th>Continuance Rules</th>
<th>Hours Earned (including transfer)</th>
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<th>Probation ClJM GPA or SEM GPA</th>
<th>CUM GPA</th>
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<td>0-25</td>
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