

# ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT 100 PROCESS

## Spring 2002

### Introduction

The Office of Academic Assessment was charged with conducting an overall assessment of the Project 100 process. This report contains findings of the spring 2002 pilot study. The results reported are to be used only for the purpose of improving the process and increasing faculty participation.

The overall goal of the Project 100 assessment was to examine the impact of the intervention process on student performance. There were three specific objectives for the spring semester:

1. To examine the academic interventions of students who received unsatisfactory alert notices (i.e. did students seek assistance, did any intervention occur, etc.?)
2. To examine the communication process among Project 100 participants; i.e. advisor-student, faculty-student, instructor-advisor (i.e. was there any confusion about the Project 100 process?)
3. To determine if the Project 100 process contributes to student success (i.e. did students get a successful final course grade?)

### Assessment Method

The methodology included collecting data from all of the participants of Project 100; that is, from students who received alert notices in the Project 100 courses, from academic and faculty advisors, and from faculty who teach Project 100 courses. In order to get feedback about the early intervention process, a short survey was specifically designed and mailed to students, advisors, and faculty; additionally, feedback was obtained from the three faculty meetings/workshops held during the semester. Alert notice grades, final course grades, as well as course enrollment information were obtained using ISIS (Integrated Student Information System) to determine the success rates of students who received unsatisfactory alert notices.

First, the students in Project 100 courses who received an alert notice (N=515) were mailed a survey approximately four weeks after the alert notices were mailed. This student survey consisted of nine open-ended questions asking students about the early intervention process, the contact they had with their instructor and/or advisor, and how they felt about the intervention. Students could respond to the survey by phone call, regular mail, or email. Fifty-eight (58) students (11.2%) responded to the survey.

Secondly, academic advisors in the Advising Services office and faculty advisors whose advisees received alert notices were mailed an advisor survey. This survey consisted of 12 questions concerning issues about the Project 100 process and focused on the type and number of contacts they had with students who received alerts, whether or not the intervention was perceived as positive, whether or not referrals were made, as well as other feedback from their experiences with the students. Out of 104 advisor surveys mailed; 18 advisors responded (approximately 17%).

Third, the faculty or instructors who agreed to participate in the Project 100 evaluation process (N=15) were mailed a faculty survey. The survey consisted of 13 open-ended questions that asked them their opinions and perceptions of the early intervention process, the kind of first assessment(s) they used to evaluate the students, the type of contact they made with students who were alerted, whether they changed their way of teaching as a result of Project 100, and their feelings about and suggestions to improve the process. Approximately 47% (N=7 out of 15) of the faculty responded to the survey. Data were also collected from the faculty meetings/workshops held during the semester. A total of 20 participants attended and gave their verbal feedback about the Project 100 process.

#### Assessment Results

See attached tables.

Table 1 reports the students' perspectives. There were 58 responses out of 515 surveys mailed (11.2%). According to the student survey responses, a large percentage of students (86%) felt that an early intervention process is a worthwhile attempt at helping them succeed in their courses. In addition, 55% of the students said that the contact they had was a positive experience when they met with their advisors or instructors about their course progress. One interesting finding was that 31% of the students met with their advisor at least twice after the alert notice was received. On the other hand, approximately one-third (33%) of the students reported that no one contacted them about their alert notice and nearly 48% of the students reported that the course instructor did not mention to them that alert notices were going to be mailed about their performance or attendance.

**Table 1: Student Perspectives/Questionnaire Responses (N=58)**

Items	N	%
• Early intervention process is worthwhile	50	86
• Course instructor did not mention or discuss alert notices in class	28	48
• Contact with instructor and/or advisor was:		
Positive	32	55
Negative	20	34
No comments	6	10
• Type of contact made:		
By mail	16	28
Face-to-face	12	20
By phone	6	10
By email	5	9
No contact	19	33
• Meetings that took place after alert notice received:		
W/advisor (at least twice)	18	31
W/advisor (at least once)	11	19
W/instructor only	6	10
W/instructor & advisor	4	7
No meetings	19	33
• Advisor or instructor referred them to other services:		
Yes & followed up	8	14
Yes & did not follow up	3	5
No referrals made	14	24
• Additional comments and suggestions:		
• Instructors should tell students if they are going to receive alert notices before letters go out.		
• Alert notices should inform students why they are in danger of failing and what to do next.		
• Unclear grading policies are a problem in a lot of USM courses.		
• Instructors should interact more with students or at least use different teaching styles.		

Table 2 reports the advisor perspectives (N=18 out of 108). According to the advisor survey responses, most advisors feel that Project 100 is a worthwhile process (94%); however many additional comments were reported that Project 100 still needs a lot of work involving the faculty. Many advisors suggested mandatory faculty meetings, clearer communication between faculty and students needed, and encourage faculty to use different teaching styles. Approximately 83% of the advisors reported that they contact students by making face-to-face appointments and that they explain the early intervention process to students during the appointment. Over half of the advisors stated that their interactions with students are almost always positive and that recommendations and referrals are usually addressed.

-----

**Table 2: Advisor Perspectives/ Questionnaire Responses (N=18)**

<b>Items</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
• Project 100 is a worthwhile process for retaining students	17	94
• Contact made with students is usually by phone calls and making face-to-face appointments	15	83
• Several attempts are made to contact students if first attempts are unsuccessful	10	56
• Usually need to explain Project 100 process to students	15	83
• Usually make recommendations & referrals to students during advising sessions	10	56
• Meetings and interactions with students appear to be positive	11	61
• Attended faculty discussion meetings or used Project 100 listserv	3	17
• Additional comments and suggestions:		
• Most students don't understand why they received an alert notice; educate faculty in more detail about Project 100 process.		
• Clearer communication between student and instructor needs to occur.		
• Instructors need to be more serious and take responsibility of helping students more, setting up individual meetings with students, etc.		
• Increase the use of the referral form; it would be a big help in the Project 100 process.		
• Project 100 is good for helping some students withdrawal before its too late, but sometimes students are not getting the best benefit from the process.		
• Faculty meetings should be required for those teaching required courses.		
• Instructors should automatically give students information about what services are available to them.		
• Encourage faculty to use different teaching approaches, this will give more opportunities for students to learn the content of the course.		

Table 3 reports some of the instructor perspectives. This is a small sample of the faculty who agreed to participate in the assessment process (i.e. 7 out of 15 instructors). According to these instructors, 86 % mentioned that Project 100 is a worthwhile attempt at retaining students, and that they used more than one early assessment for identifying students who may be having difficulty. Nearly 57% reported that they made direct contact with students who received alerts. Some of the frequent suggestions or comments made from faculty were that faculty meetings are not always at convenient times, more communication with advisors is needed, and students need to take responsibility for making the contact with their instructors after alert notices are received.

-----  
**Table 3: Instructor Perspectives/Questionnaire Responses (N=7)**

<b>Items</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
• Project 100 is a worthwhile attempt at retaining students	6	86
• Used more than one early assessment method to identify students who are having difficulty	6	86
• Changed my teaching style as a result of Project 100	4	57
• Made direct contact with students who received alert notices	4	57
• Attended faculty discussion meetings or used listserv	3	43
• Additional comments and suggestions:		
• Faculty meetings are not convenient for many instructors.		
• Faculty advisors need to be more available to students.		
• Students need to take responsibility for making contact with their advisor or instructor.		
• Project 100 process is supposed to help students, but often students are more confused if they received an alert notice, it is not always easy to make contact with students outside of class hours.		

Table 4 summarizes the comments made during the faculty meetings. Overall, participants offered many suggestions about clarifying the Project 100 process. The common theme was about educating instructors about the importance of the process, and offering more opportunities for instructors to share ideas on teaching approaches and grading policies.

---

**Table 4: Summary Responses from Faculty Meetings (N=20)**

- Attendance policies vary with each course; but the general agreement is that attendance should be taken in every Project 100 course.
- Performance measures vary in every course; however, many instructors use short quizzes or papers for the initial first assessment for identifying weak students.
- Making better connections between faculty and advising staff at the beginning of the semester are necessary; too much distance between the participants involved in Project 100. Faculty aren't clear about what advisors are doing and advisors aren't clear about what's going on in the classroom.
- Instructors do appreciate any opportunity to discuss concerns and share ideas; especially about teaching styles and grading policies.
- Direct contact with students (i.e. email, in-person, or phone) can be a problem because of conflicting schedules between students and faculty. Faculty agreed that usually direct contact is more helpful and useful than just a mailing. Better retention would result in direct and meaningful contact with students, but it is not always possible.
- These faculty workshops/meetings are viewed as helpful but few attend; many faculty feel that there should be some rewards for participating in a retention effort. Instructors believe that Project 100 is a lot of extra work and feel overwhelmed by the process.
- Partnerships could be developed between those faculty who have participated in Project 100 with new faculty who are just getting involved. Building a sense of community between faculty by sharing approaches and attitudes about teaching as well as explaining the importance of Project 100 is one way of increasing participation.
- Project 100 assessment results need to be shared with all faculty and staff; and more education needed about the process; and making more faculty workshops available for Project 100 participants.

Table 5 displays the performance of the freshmen students (those with 23 credit hours) who received alert notices. As noted on the table, the students were grouped by the type of alert grade they received. Out of the 262 freshmen, approximately 15 % (N=40) received an unsatisfactory grade in attendance (Group 1), 57% (N=150) received an unsatisfactory grade in performance (Group 2), and nearly 28% (N=72) received an unsatisfactory grade in both attendance and performance (Group 3). Among students who were in Group 1, 35% received passing grades (a final grade of C or higher in their Project 100 course), but only 28% in Group 2 and 14% of the students in Group 3. Unfortunately, over 50% of the students in Groups 1 and 3 received I, L, or W grades and 31% in Group 2. In addition, 41% of the students who received an unsatisfactory performance alert notice received an unsuccessful grades of D or F.

**Table 5: Performance of Freshmen Students Who Received Alert Notices (N=262)**

Student Groups by Alert Notice Types	N	%	Project 100 Course Grades	Semester GPA	Accum. GPA
Group 1 Unsatisfactory Attendance	40	15.3	C or above (35%) D-F grades (13%) I-L-W grades (50%)	x = 1.23 SD = 1.19	x = 1.67 SD = 1.15
Group 2 Unsatisfactory Performance	150	57.2	C or above (28%) D-F grades (41%) I-L-W grades (31%)	x = 1.58 SD = 1.11	x = 1.81 SD = 0.95
Group 3 Unsatisfactory Attendance & Performance	72	27.5	C or above (14%) D-F grades (19 %) I-L-W grades (58%)	x = 1.09 SD = 1.20	x = 1.40 SD = 1.10

Also noted on the table is the freshmen semester grade point averages and accumulated grade point averages. Overall, freshmen who received alert notices received significantly lower grades (on the average) than the upper-level students (sophomores, juniors, or seniors). Freshmen who were in Group 3 had an average accumulated grade point average at the end of the spring 2002 semester of 1.40 compared to 2.66 for upper-level students.

Table 6 shows the performance of the upper-level students (sophomores, juniors, seniors) in Project 100 courses who received alert notices (N=227). There were nearly 14% (N=31) who were in Group 1 (unsatisfactory attendance), 59% (N=134) in Group 2 (unsatisfactory performance), and 27% (N=62) in Group 3 (unsatisfactory attendance and performance). Approximately 29% of the students in Group 1, 37% in Group 2, and 60% in Group 3 all had final grades of I, L, or W. The highest success rate was in Group 1 in which 48% of the students received a final grade of C or higher.

**Table 6: Performance of Upper-Level Students Who Received Alert Notices (N=227)**

Student Groups by Alert Notice Types	N	%	Project 100 Course Grades	Semester GPA	Accum. GPA
Group 1 Unsatisfactory Attendance	31	13.7	C or above (48%) D-F grades (19%) I-L-W grades (29%)	x = 1.81 SD = 1.26	x = 2.19 SD = 0.86
Group 2 Unsatisfactory Performance	134	59.0	C or above (34%) D-F grades (28%) I-L-W grades (37%)	x = 1.97 SD = 1.10	x = 2.23 SD = 0.87
Group 3 Unsatisfactory Attendance & Performance	62	27.3	C or above (24%) D-F grades (16 %) I-L-W grades (60%)	x = 1.33 SD = 1.20	x = 2.66 SD = 0.83

When examining the whole group (freshmen and upper-level students), 44% of the students (N=225) who received unsatisfactory alert notices ended up with an I, L, or W grade for their Project 100 course; 27% (N=141) received D or F grades, and 29% (N=149) had grades of C or higher. Therefore, some students who received unsatisfactory alert notices were able to achieve passing grades by the end of the semester.

## Summary

Based upon the assessment results of the Spring 2002 semester, Project 100 is making some attempts for enhancing the retention and success of students. The purpose of this assessment was to obtain data to improve the early intervention process and help increase the faculty participation on the campus. The findings suggest that clearer communication may benefit more students; i.e. more interaction between instructor and staff may create better procedures for making contact with students, and building instructor awareness about the opportunities for students to get additional assistance.

According to the survey results, students, instructors, and advisors reported that an early intervention program was worthwhile. However, a percentage of students and advisors feel that faculty play a key role in the process and that a large number of the instructors do not clearly communicate with students about why alert notices are mailed and what it means in regard to their course. Most students and advisors reported that interventions were positive interactions.

With regard to grades, many students who received only an unsatisfactory attendance ended up with a final grade of C or higher in their course, whereas, students with unsatisfactory performance had the highest failure grades. Yet, students who received both an unsatisfactory attendance and performance grade were more likely to receive I, L, or W final grades.

In addition, the data show that students who are not freshmen had a higher percentage of passing grades (C or above) in their Project 100 courses than freshmen students. Also, the findings show that the average semester grade point averages were lower for freshmen than upper-level students. Therefore, the data reveal that freshmen may need more attention from instructors and advisors than other students.

## Conclusions

The assessment findings reported in this report are met to be reviewed by the Project 100 Steering Committee and may assist in making the necessary improvements to this retention effort. This project is an ongoing process. Data will be collected each semester to address the identified problems and to assess the impact on students' retention and performance as a result of an early intervention process.

