

ACADEMIC ALERT

Handbook for Faculty Participants

**Office of Academic Assessment
Student Success Centers**

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Academic Alert: A Student Intervention Initiative

The *Academic Alert Program* is a student intervention initiative which was designed to replace the previous early alert system, Project 100. The purpose of the new program, similar to that of Project 100, is to identify students who may be having some difficulty in their courses, and to assist the student in making connections with their course instructors, their advisor, and/or to other campus resources that might be helpful to their academic success.

The *Academic Alert Program* is an intervention approach using an efficient electronic format. An online web-form was created for faculty to use to report a concern about a student, and an email alert notice is used for contacting students and their advisors. This approach allows for a faculty member to report student performance and attendance issues, as well as, behavioral or financial concerns that students may express, at any time during the semester. The program offers continuous support for the duration of the semester with no deadlines.

Retention and Student Success

The literature on student retention and student success strongly suggests that students, particularly those in their first two years of college, are among those at the highest risk of leaving. At USM, nearly 40% of the freshmen students do not return for the second year. The second-to-third year can also be of concern, since we lose an additional 10-15% of the students who originally began at USM. For comparison purposes, the retention rate (after one year) of USM first-time students has averaged approximately 66%, compared to a 78% retention rate from some of our peer institutions.

According to the research conducted by the NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) Institute, factors such as faculty-student interaction and a supportive campus environment can determine whether students are engaged in their college learning. At USM, we are committed to helping students succeed, and the Academic Alert program is a supportive intervention tool for faculty and academic advisors to assist students in making connections with campus resources, and give them learning strategies for success.

Participation and Expectations of Faculty

The goal of the *Academic Alert Program* is to increase student success by providing feedback to as many students as possible, with the participation of the faculty. Faculty members teaching courses in which first-year students typically enroll are strongly encouraged to participate in the student intervention process. Although the faculty members who teach 100-level courses will automatically receive reminders of the Academic Alert program through the email; faculty members who teach 200-level, 300-level, or 400-level courses are also welcomed to participate.

The *Academic Alert Program* is designed to be a supportive tool to help students connect with their faculty, as well as with the academic advisors, and campus resources. For the program to be useful, expectations of the faculty include the following:

- Faculty members should include a paragraph regarding the *Academic Alert* program in their course syllabi. This inclusion is so students are aware that some courses are part of this project. (*A sample syllabus statement is included in this handbook on page 5*).
- Faculty members should mention the *Academic Alert* program as they review their syllabi with students during the first few days of classes.
- Faculty members may complete and submit an Academic Alert Form (online) anytime during the semester for any student who is having difficulty in the course. (*A copy of the Academic Alert Online Form is found in the Appendix B*)
- Once the online form is submitted, the information is given to the Student Success Centers for the initial phone contact. The contact between the Student Success Centers will be documented and put in the Advising files.
- Follow-up contact may be conducted by the academic/departmental advisors to determine if additional intervention is needed.

Administration of Academic Alert Program---A Campus Partnership

The administration of the *Academic Alert Program* is a partnership among several offices at USM. The Academic Assessment office provides the overall administrative support for the project; i.e. sends information to faculty about the Academic Alert process, receives the online alert forms that are submitted by faculty, and prepares tracking and assessment reports. The Student Success Centers/Advising office and the academic departments play an important role in the student intervention process by making follow-up contact with the students who are alerted.

In order for the *Academic Alert Program* to be a successful initiative, it has to be a collaborative campus effort. A number of other offices play an essential role in providing campus resources to faculty and students, i.e. Library, Learning Center, Academic Support for Students with Disabilities, University Counseling Center, and University Health Centers. See description of the campus resources on page 7-9 of this handbook.

Syllabus Statement

The *Academic Alert Program* should not be a secret to students. Students should be aware that the course in which they are enrolled is part of the student intervention initiative. The following paragraph has been prepared to be incorporated easily into a course syllabus. You may use this verbatim or amend it to be consistent with the style and tone of your course syllabus.

- *This course is participating in a program called Academic Alert, designed to support students in their USM experience. As a student, you may receive an alert notice by email, at any point during the semester, if the faculty member teaching this course has concerns about your class attendance, academic performance, or any other issue related to your success as a student. The alert notice may include information about USM resources that the faculty member believes may be helpful for you. You are also encouraged to approach your faculty member directly if you are experiencing any challenges related to the class or any other aspect of your college life.*

Academic Alert: Activities Timeline

- Prior and beginning of semester **Invitation to Participate**
 - An invitation letter is emailed to all faculty members teaching 100-level and developmental courses inviting them to participate in the *Academic Alert* project during the semester.

- Each month during the semester **Letter/Link Emailed**
 - Brief reminder letters that provide the link to the online Academic Alert Form will be emailed to the faculty.

- Ongoing during each semester **Contact with Students/Follow-up**
 - All online forms submitted will be reviewed, and students will be contacted by the Student Success Centers.
 - Follow-up communication will be conducted by the student's advisors if additional assistance to help the student if necessary.

- End of semester **Feedback Forms**
 - Faculty members and academic advisors will be emailed a feedback survey to obtain their views and opinions about the student intervention process. The feedback will be used to improve the process for the following semester.
 - Students who were alerted will also be emailed a feedback survey or contacted by phone to examine their perspectives about the Academic Alert program.

Campus Resources

The University of Southern Maine offers a number of services to support students' academic and personal needs. Once students are identified as having course difficulties, they can be referred to one or more of the following offices for assistance.

- **Library**
 - The USM Libraries have developed a wide-ranging, vibrant library instruction program which includes helping students develop the information literacy skills that are critical to academic success. The Library's instruction program is used in four ways. First, through formal classroom instruction tailored to particular assignments, library staff members work with the instructor to create meaningful learning experiences for students. Second, classroom learning is reinforced with informal instruction at the reference desk. Reference librarians work individually with students to help them develop search strategies, to match them with topic-appropriate resources, and to help them assess search results and redirect searches as necessary. Third, the library produces a wide variety of print and electronic course and research guides, database use guides, and online tutorials. Finally, the library staff works hard to create a welcoming, pleasant atmosphere in the library, one that allows students to feel free to ask questions and to seek help as necessary. Contact Bill Grubb at x4690 for additional information about the information literacy instruction session.

- **Learning Centers**
 - The USM Learning Centers assist enrolled students with current coursework in the areas of all mathematics, the writing of all college papers, and with support work for the ESL classrooms. Faculty may refer students needing help with study skill or test taking issues. Tutorials may be made by appointment or on a walk-in basis on the Portland and Gorham campuses. LAC has its own Writing Center and math tutors. The Learning Center location is on the 2nd floor (room 253) of Luther Bonney Hall in Portland (780-4228), and the Math Center is in 115 Bailey Hall, Gorham (780-5360). For the LAC Writing Center, contact Karen Hall (753-6674).

- **Support for Students with Disabilities**
 - The Office of Support for Students with Disabilities provides a variety of services for students with varying disabilities (sensory, mobility, physical, psychological, learning and attention disorders) who are participating in courses and programs offered by the University. The services include note-taking, providing test and course accommodations, interpreting, and other appropriate accommodations. Students are required to provide documentation regarding their disability, this information remains confidential except as mandated by law. The office is located in room 242 Luther Bonney Hall, the phone number is x4706.

- **Student Success Centers**
 - Student Success Centers provide comprehensive academic advising for students who have undeclared majors, who have been admitted to the University with conditions, and who are non-matriculated. The students who have declared majors are assigned a faculty advisor in their respective school or college. The Student Success Centers are located on each USM campus: 119 Payson Smith Hall in Portland (780-4040), 119 Bailey Hall on the Gorham campus (780-5652), and Rm 119 at Lewiston-Auburn College (753-6500).
 - The Student Success Centers were created to support students during their transition into the college experience. This transitional time is one filled with both opportunities and challenges, often lasting for three to four semesters. Some of the common challenges facing a student early in their college career include:
 - Not being aware of which office to go to with a particular issue
 - Finding a place to “fit in” and connect with other students
 - Adjusting to a new schedule, set of demands, and way of life
 - Managing the financial pressures with being a college student
 - Understanding the connection between the college experience and life goals

- **The Advising Network**
 - Providing helpful and useful advice to students about their academic and professional plans is one of USM’s most important responsibilities. Being knowledgeable and accurate is essential in building trust with students who depend on the advice they receive as they make decisions that affect their futures both at USM and after they graduate. Academic advisors at USM, partner with students to help them make informed decisions that lead to academic, person, and professional success.

- The Advising Network is a collection of academic advising resources that includes an advising timeline, learning modules, links and forms most often used by faculty and professional academic advisors. PASSPORT: Promoting Advising for Student Success Portal is a set of learning modules that offers participating academic advisors an opportunity to expand their familiarity with best practices and to provide directions to additional resources and information that will enrich students' experiences with a USM academic advisor. These modules were developed by a University-wide committee of faculty and professional academic advisors from all the schools and colleges at USM. Go to: <http://www.usm.maine.edu/advising/network/>

- **University Counseling Services**
 - The University Counseling Services offers comprehensive psychological services to undergraduate and graduate students. The diverse group of professionals includes licensed psychologists, professional counselors, a multicultural counselor, and graduate interns. A number of services are offered: individual counseling, crisis intervention, consultation, and outreach. The services available include counseling for anxiety, depression, verbal and physical aggression, trauma, psychological developmental issues, psychosis, suicide gestures, and personal growth issues (low self-esteem, relational issues, strive for health). Faculty can contact the center for any consultations if they have concerns about students. Counseling Services are located in Payson Smith Hall on the Portland campus. For more information, call x4050.

- **University Health Centers**
 - The University Health Center is staffed by skilled professional nurses, certified nurse practitioners, and physicians. Services available include: required immunizations, diagnosis and treatment of health problems, physical exams, athletic exams, work physicals, gynecological exams, lab services and tests, flu and allergy shots, consultations and referrals, travel information, self-care cold clinic and safer sex supplies, health screens, communicable disease surveillance, and more. The Portland Center is located next to the Woodbury Campus Center (x4211), and the Gorham Center is located in Upton Hall (x5411).

Information Resources

Undergraduate Catalog: The undergraduate catalog is the student's contract with the University. It contains policies and procedures that affect student enrollment at USM including academic policies, financial policies, University services, and detailed information regarding the University's Core Curriculum and major and minor requirements. Each student receives a copy of the catalog during summer orientation. Faculty members may access the catalog online at the following URL:
www.usm.maine.edu/catalogs.

The Navigator: The Navigator is the student handbook which contains important information regarding policies and procedures as well as critical dates related to course adding, dropping, and advanced registration. This handbook is revised each year. Faculty members may access the online document using the following URL:
www.usm.maine.edu/navigator.

Faculty Handbook: The Provost's office has prepared a Faculty Handbook that provides guidance for any number of academic and administrative issues that may affect the classroom. The handbook is an online document and may be accessed using the following URL: http://www.usm.maine.edu/prov/faculty_resources/handbook_toc.htm

Appendix A

Attendance Policies and Performance Measures

The following information regarding attendance policies and performance measures were established during faculty workshops held during the 2001-02 academic year.

Attendance Policies

Attendance-taking varies from course to course; not all faculty members require attendance, although faculty agreed that at a certain point (which does depend upon the nature of the class and the assignments), absence from class will negatively affect a student's performance. Therefore, the general principle is that when a faculty member indicates that a student's attendance is unsatisfactory in a course, it means that he or she has determined that the student's attendance pattern is a concern and may affect student success in that course. This principle preserves a faculty members' right and responsibility to set and administer their class attendance policy.

Performance Measures

Faculty members may use a variety of measures to determine student performance in their course. Several faculty use short quizzes, essay assignments, or papers due within the first four weeks of the semester that provide a sense of how students are performing. Some also use small group activities to help with this assessment of performance. Faculty can choose any form of assessment to determine whether a student is performing at an unsatisfactory level.

Appendix B

Academic Alert Form

*Actual form can be accessed online at <http://usm.maine.edu/assessment/assessment/academicalert.html>

The web form consists of providing the following information.

Course Number/CRN: _____ Date _____
Course Name _____ Location of Course: POR GOR LAC
Instructor: _____ Email _____

*Please write the student name and check the appropriate areas of concern.

Student Names	Low Grade	Performance	Attendance	Financial	Behavior/Emot.
_____	___	___	___	___	___
_____	___	___	___	___	___
_____	___	___	___	___	___

Student Names	Already contacted	Planning to contact	Prefer to have Advisor contact
_____	___	___	___
_____	___	___	___
_____	___	___	___

Comments: _____

* Other recommendations: _____

*Please indicate your office hours: _____

Submit Button

By completing this form, you may be contacted for more information about the student.

