

Academic Action for First Term Freshman Guidance and Suggested Processes

November 2015

As departments consider options for first-year, first-term students who are eligible for suspension or probation, it is important that consideration be given to a number of things when deciding the appropriate course of action.

We know that students in academic difficulty often return to campus in January and are faced with probation or suspension. Because of this, they quickly try to find a viable plan for spring semester that helps get them back on track in their major and doesn't necessitate their leaving RIT. While it can often be difficult to pinpoint exactly why a student has not been successful in their first term, one can legitimately query whether performance over one college term should be the basis for suspension. In fact, some institutions don't suspend freshman following fall semester but instead provide a term of leniency – giving students another chance to demonstrate academic achievement.

We know that many countervailing forces contribute to poor academic performance. Probation provides an opportunity to put at-risk students on notice and work with these students to help them return to good academic standing. For a small subset of first-year students, suspension will always be an appropriate action. However, providing some students with "just in time" support and assistance may be more of what they need and could result in the retention of the student through to graduation.

So, when faced with probation and suspension decisions, we encourage you to ask:

- What type of support should a particular student access when on probation?
- What students might benefit from waiving a suspension and staying at RIT with additional support?
- Whether a student should be referred to CRP
- Whether a student should be counseled about other options – taking a break for a term to attend a community college or to work

The academic action data from the last two years (excluding NTID) is interesting. About 14% of the combined cohort of 2013 and 2014 first year, first-term students were eligible for academic action following fall term. (In real numbers, this means 703 students out of 5,021 earned below a 2.0.) However, 75% of these students were registered in spring term either in an academic major (89%) or in CRP (11%). Of the students that did not return for spring term, 1.5% (or 78 students) were suspended and the rest were either on an approved leave of absence or withdrew.

Moving forward, what we want to ensure is that returning students are benefiting from appropriate support and success scaffolding in spring term which will help strengthen their chances for long-term academic success.

In an effort to intentionally provide this type of intentional academic reinforcement, we offer the following guidance:

- 1. EARLY IDENTIFICATION:** During weeks 12 through 15, use the risk indicators discussed below to help identify students in danger of academic action. For traditional-aged students especially, it is very helpful to encourage the student to talk honestly and frankly with their family about the reality of their situation. Consider offering to help facilitate the conversation if necessary.

The red flags include:

- Early alerts in multiple classes
- At risk for failing YearOne
 - The Academic Support Center in collaboration with the University Advising Office will produce this list. Based on their experiences, the ASC estimates this list will include approximately 100-125 students. The University Advising Office will provide this list to each college via fileshare. In many cases students on this list will already have received early alerts in YearOne, and will have had outreach from both their YearOne instructor and their advisor. If this information is new to the advisor/department, it will be helpful to outreach to the student.
- Advisor feedback and knowledge regarding the student's personal and academic situation
 - For example, students experiencing significant personal, health or family issues
- Multiple course withdrawals

Important: Despite our best efforts to intervene early, we know there will be a few students who may not be identified early. Careful review and consideration will need to be given to these students when reviewing academic action lists after the term is complete, as planning for next steps will be even more time sensitive.

- 2. INTERSESSION ENROLLMENT:** Has the student registered for a course during intersession? If so, talk with student to understand why they have registered and determine if this is an appropriate plan of action.
- 3. CRP REFERRAL:** Consider an early referral to the College Restoration Program (CRP). Programs do not need to wait until the academic action report is received to make a referral to CRP.

CRP has expanded its capacity to 90 students per term and will accept eligible, new first-year, first-term students with fall term/cumulative GPA's ranging from 0.0 to 1.99. However, students with a GPA below 0.5 should be carefully reviewed to determine if a referral to CRP is appropriate. CRP has an admissions process that involves student application and department referral.

Given the expanded capacity and the highly structured environment of CRP, referrals to this program may need to be discussed with the CRP Director.

A Good CRP Referral Will Include:

- Students who meet eligibility criteria: an RIT account free of “holds” and no “I” grades on the academic transcript
- Positive assessment that the student is ready to handle college level work and capable of making academic progress during the CRP term, and maintaining it long term
- Knowledge of the student’s genuine interest and ability to focus/commit to learning new study skills, developing healthy habits, proactively engaging in their learning environment, etc.
- Confidence in the student’s ability to meet all reinstatement requirements, and discussion about reinstatement conditions back to the original department

If referring to CRP, determine whether the student’s spring schedule in SIS is appropriate or whether other courses need to be added. Students will take three credit courses in addition to two (three credit hour equivalent) CRP courses.

Referrals to CRP should be carefully considered and **not** be used as a process for managed attrition.

The referring department to CRP should carefully define reinstatement conditions so that students can meet criteria if successful in CRP. CRP students must be readmitted to home department if they meet the CRP and reinstatement criteria on the referral. For more information, please contact:

CRP Director: Dawn Herman, dahldc@rit.edu - 585-475-2982

CRP Asst. Director: Rob Eckhardt, rjerla@rit.edu - 585-475-4890

CRP Website: <http://www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/crp/>

- 4. ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTER SERVICES:** For students that you believe have the potential to be successful in remaining in your program and who are placed on probation or for whom you waive a suspension, consider referring these students to the services available through the Academic Support Center. If you would like guidance regarding the services of the ASC, please contact your ASC College Liaison for additional support.

College/Department	ASC Liaison	Email
College of Applied Science and Technology	Phyllis Wade Albro	mpwheo@rit.edu
College of Health Sciences and Technology	Justyna Oldziej	jmoldc@rit.edu
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences	Wendy Gilmore	wsgrla@rit.edu
College of Liberal Arts	Sara Bayerl	sebrla@rit.edu

College of Science	Bruce Pennington	bhpldc@rit.edu
Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences	Dan Hickey	ddhcst@rit.edu
Kate Gleason College of Engineering	Robyn Reafler	rmrldc@rit.edu
School of Individualized Studies/University Studies Program	Daniele Brown	dmccst@rit.edu
National Technical Institute for the Deaf	Enid Stevenson	essldc@rit.edu
Saunders College of Business	Inge Meffert	ixmldc@rit.edu

Colleges with pre-probation programs are advised to continue working with the Academic Support Center regarding access to math/physics assessment, tutoring and support services.

Special note: Also be aware that any student that receives a grade of D, F or W in a fall term class (with the exception of students in colleges with probation programs) will be contacted by ASC and encouraged to seek services. Your support of this can also help students see the importance of seeking additional assistance in spring term.

5. **ACADEMIC CONTRACTS:** We know chairs periodically establish academic contracts with students who are not in good academic standing, and a best practice is to meet periodically throughout the semester with the student regarding the terms of the contract and the student's progress. Give careful thought to whether establishing an academic contract with the student on probation or on a waived suspension might include expectations related to participation in ASC classes and/or services. If your team cannot help the student monitor their progress in such classes or services, it is probably better not to establish this type of expectation.

6. **REFERRALS TO SOIS OR USP:** Referrals to the School of Individualized Study and the University Studies Program can be considered for this group of students; however, it is likely the students will need a stronger academic foundation or distinctive learning vision before requesting entry to either program. Both of these programs are intended to work with students who are in good academic standing at RIT. CRP or the ASC in most cases will be the better option at this point in the students' academic career, especially if the students' strong preference/intention is to return to the academic program in which they started.

USP can assist students with the exploration of other majors at RIT with the expectation of having a grade point average at the completion of the program that will allow the student to gain entry to a degree granting unit. **Questions can be directed to Ms. Marty Burris, 475-4027.**

SOIS will be able to assist students who have distinctive goals that might not fit well amongst existing RIT majors. These students typically consult with an

SOIS advisor to design an individualized course of study to accomplish those goals. **Questions can be directed to Dr. Jim Hall, at 475-2295.**

7. FINANCIAL AID REFERRAL: Remember that students should be aware of the implications on financial aid eligibility caused by suspension and repeating courses. Referral to the student’s aid counselor should always be made.

HEOP students (all majors)		Kari Young	Kari.Young@rit.edu
Rochester City Scholars (all majors)		Denise Hampton	Denise.Hampton@rit.edu
National Technical Institute for the Deaf	NTID	Renee Dann	ntidaid@rit.edu
College of Applied Science and Technology	CAST	Deidre Strutz	Deidre.Strutz@rit.edu
College of Business	SCB	Peg Silvio	Peg.Silvio@rit.edu
College of Engineering	KGCOE	Pete Fagan	Peter.Fagan@rit.edu
College of Health Sciences & Technology	CHST	Carolyn Serron	Carolyn.Serron@rit.edu
College of Imaging Arts and Science	CIAS	Kim Hunter	Kim.Hunter@rit.edu
College of Liberal Arts	COLA	Peg Silvio	Peg.Silvio@rit.edu
College of Science	COS	Carolyn Serron	Carolyn.Serron@rit.edu
College of Computing & Information Science	GCCIS	Teresa Brown	Teresa.Brown@rit.edu
School of Individualized Study and University Studies	SOIS / USP	Kari Young	Kari.Young@rit.edu

Providing students with a second chance following their first term can be a welcomed and positive action by the department. Students must have a minimum GPA of 1.5 at the end of the first year to be considered in good academic standing for financial aid continuation.

Summary:

We appreciate the complexity and difficulty that come into play when making academic action decisions for first-term, first-year students. We will continue to look for ways to provide you with the best tools and pathways to assist students in

making informed decisions about their future. If you have additional suggestions, please send them our way.

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