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## Student personnel preparation programs: The capstone seminar

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that there has been a statistically significant improvement ( $p < .05$ ) in the mean QPAs. Of the students, 73% improved their cumulative QPAs during the semester of SAGE participation.

Over the past 3 years, statistics indicate that 22% of the students achieved cumulative QPAs of 2.00 and higher, and 33% achieved their goal of "good academic standing" by the end of the semester in which they participated, thereby removing themselves from academic probation, and another 42% made sufficient progress to remain on probation.

The Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (Form C) pre and post differences indicated an average change of 9 percentile points. The overall pre- and posttest data are striking in terms of study-habit change from the beginning of a semester to the end; the study-attitude change, however, was more moderate, at 3 percentile points during the same period. The nature of the SAGE program is such that study habits would change more rapidly, because a structured study session and specific study procedure are required of all students on a weekly basis. It seems that regulating habits is easier than is effecting a change in attitudes.

Student perceptions of program effectiveness determined by anonymous student evaluations indicate a high degree of satisfaction with all aspects of the program, except one. Most noteworthy, more than 87% of the students believed that the structured study sessions helped them to improve their time management and organizational skills and their semester grades. Additionally, more than 90% indicated that the coach-conversation service was helpful, and an

equally high percentage supported the program's continuation. The one service area rated less favorably than we had hoped was the series of mini-study-skills seminars, with only 50% of the students viewing this as helpful to their academic progress. This could possibly be the result of the seminars' concentration on generic skills, and the students' inability to relate them directly to their own study situations.

## CONCLUSION

SAGE has been an experimental program to assist students who are on academic probation with improving their levels of performance. It is unique in its holistic approach of assisting underachieving students to go through a required set of program services that include supervised and structured study and continuous academic mentoring, advising, and performance feedback. The results achieved thus far are promising in that students have experienced a significant improvement in cumulative GPAs, with one-third achieving good academic standing. Additionally, positive results have been achieved in terms of changes in study habits and students' perceptions of the program's effectiveness.

## REFERENCE

- Brown, W. F., & Holtzman, W. H. (1967). *Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes manual*. New York: The Psychological Corporation.

## College Student Personnel Preparation Programs: The Capstone Seminar

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In many 2-year graduate programs in college student personnel, students tend to devote their 1st year to required courses while the 2nd year is spent in electives, cognates, and practica. For 2nd-year students, this pattern often results in a severe reduction of valuable contact with peers) faculty) and professional staff. To combat

this problem, graduate students in the Student Affairs Emphasis of the College and University Administration program at Michigan State University developed the Capstone Seminar.

The Capstone Seminar is an informal discussion group that meets in 2-hour sessions on a biweekly basis, generally late in the afternoon. Meetings are held in small special dining rooms or staff apartments in the university's residence halls. At the beginning of each term, group members meet to decide on topics. One or two individuals take responsibility for locating some

relevant journal articles on the chosen topic and distributing them to seminar members several days prior to the meeting. Articles stimulate thought and discussion. Those members also serve as “leaders” for the informal discussion that takes place. The seminar’s membership list consists of 2nd-year graduate students, departmental faculty, and student affairs professional staff. First-year master’s students are invited to attend the seminar during the final (spring) term so that they may become acquainted with the purposes) format, and procedures.

The goals of the seminar are the following:

1. To provide a rigorous and challenging arena for exploring the major developments in and concerns of the profession
2. To promote continued discussion of student affairs issues during the 2nd year of a degree program when students and major professors usually experience less intensive regular contact with one another
3. To apply and share learnings from practica, cognate studies, elective courses, and assistantship experiences
4. To continue the enrichment of close relationships between faculty, students, and professional staff
5. To provide ongoing communication and a support system for 2nd-year students
6. To provide a forum for addressing issues related to the impending transition from student to full-time professional

A wide variety of topics is addressed including the following: the future of higher education, professional career development, moral development in men and women, translation of theory into practice, national conference preparation, articulation of one’s philosophy of education and student development, morals and professional ethics, publication writing, and “packing the intangibles” (important ideas and concepts to take to one’s next job).

In the Capstone Seminar’s first 3 years, participant response has been very positive. Participating students have developed an increased connection to peers and faculty. Success depends upon a core group of committed students, coupled with faculty attendance and involvement. It is a simple, low-cost, effective avenue for continued professional development and personal and intellectual growth. An opportunity for participants to examine their commitment to student affairs and their role in the field, the Capstone Seminar provides an open and supportive environment in which to define and articulate this commitment.

### **Focusing on Freshmen: Increasing Persistence and Success at a Historically Black University**

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Since 1980, increases in Hispanic and Asian enrollments have resulted in an overall increase in the minority enrollment in higher education. Black undergraduate and graduate enrollment, however, has declined significantly. More specifically, the enrollment trends for Black students in the historically Black colleges and universities indicate a disturbing loss (Ottinger, 1986).

An analysis by Noel and Levitz (1983) of data provided annually to the American College Testing (ACT) Program by all colleges and universities in the United States reported that the

freshman-to-sophomore year attrition rate across all types of institutions was 32%; further investigation revealed a linear relationship between ability levels of entering students and attrition at the end of the freshman year. Institutions admitting freshmen with ACT composite scores of 26 or higher and Standard Aptitude Test total scores of 1100 or higher retained 90% of their freshmen-to-sophomore (F-S) students, whereas only 59% of the F-S students remained at institutions that admitted freshmen whose average ACT scores were 15 or lower and whose SAT scores were 700 or lower.

Although an increasing number of students entering all institutions of higher education demonstrate a lack of competence in the core skill areas, this is particularly true for institutions with liberal admissions policies, such as Ala-