

History of College 101/Compass 101

Retention data indicates that the most difficult students to retain at TCU are the first time/full time students who perform poorly academically (earning lower than the minimum 2.0 GPA) their first semester. The data takes into account expectations of success based on the entering qualifications of these students.

The Office of Institutional Research compiled five years of data (from 2000-2004) to show a retention rate of 31.8% in the first time/full time student population with a grade point average below 2.0 after their first fall semester. First time/full time student population with a grade point average below 2.0 after their second semester show a retention rate of 68.9%.

Traditionally, students earning less than a 2.0 GPA in the first semester receive an “Academic Warning” letter from Registrar’s office. The letter notifies students that they have performed poorly, advises them to use University resources to put themselves back on track, and admonishes them to do better. Other than the notification no other efforts or resources were offered to the student. However, in the spring of 2006, the Registrar’s Office, partnering with the Center for Academic Services, the Office of Institutional Research, and Student Development Services worked collaboratively to pilot a proactive retention and recovery program for these students.

Following the fall semester of 2005, 157 students were identified as “Academic Warning” students by the registrar’s office. The Registrar’s office contacted each student who had received an “Academic Warning” letter and informed these students that TCU would now require this group to participate in a specific set of activities designed to assist them in academic and social adjustment. The first activity was the completion of the College Student Inventory (CSI).

Students were then assigned to advisors appropriate for their respective school/college. Students were instructed that they were to meet with their new advisor within the first five days of the spring semester. The “Twelve Steps to Academic Success” Program (College 101), held on the first Saturday of the spring semester, was created and implemented by the Center for Academic Services to “jump-start” these students in the right direction. The Office of Institutional Research gathered and analyzed data to help determine the effectiveness of these activities.

Although the data did not demonstrate a strong effect from the program, it was theorized the program might be more successful, with additional planning development. The Center for Academic Services requested Strategic Initiative funds to continue and expand this program in order to provide practical support for and assistance to students who have been identified on “Academic Warning.”

The aim of the College 101/Compass 101 program is to increase retention of first-year students. We seek to equip students who are unsuccessful in their first semester (cumulative GPA < 2.0) with resources, tools, and mentorship that will enable them to achieve academic good standing (cumulative GPA ≥ 2.0) by the end of their second semester.
The College 101 component consists of a mandatory one-time meeting in which students learn study skills and strategies and explore their motivations for attending TCU. The Compass 101 component provides mentoring for each student throughout the spring semester.

**Purpose for College 101**

The purpose of College 101: A Program to Enhance Student Retention is to create an opportunity for students who fail to thrive in their first academic semester to be equipped with resources and tools that will enable them to reach their academic goals.

Research has demonstrated that many students who perform poorly their first semester in college have many obstacles to overcome. Most are not aware of how their limited study skills impact their GPAs. While the majority of these students are lacking in effective study skills, some are also having a difficult time adjusting to the college environment. College 101 plans to help students with these deficits by providing self-assessments and workshops showing students their strengths and weaknesses, as well as, the various resources that are available on campus to help them.

**Eligibility for College 101**

The population served by this program includes full-time, first-time college students, excluding athletes, who have a GPA below 2.0 at the end of their first fall semester (i.e., first-year students who are on academic warning or probation).