

This study, conducted by the Department of Developmental Education during 2003-2012 for certification by the National Association of Developmental Education (NADE), evaluates the strengths and needs of the developmental education program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. To begin the study, th

success as much as it did where advising had been poor. Additionally, where advising was still poor, mandatory placement was heavily undermined.

Target core classes where mandatory placement had been focused and/or prerequisites had been placed or raised (CHEM 100x, HIST 100x, ANTH 100x, MATH 103, ENGL 111x) showed large gains (of 6.2% to 10.8%) in success rates. Lag time or lack of interest in establishing prerequisites on the part of some departments seems to have been responsible for decreases in success rates in other target core courses. We see from our data that if students come to their DEV classes, engage in class, and do their homework, they are significantly more likely to get an A or B in their target, college-level Math or English courses.

Retention to 24 credits for students who placed into DEV courses went down from 53% to 43%. But retention also went down university-wide. Throughout 2006-2011, retention to 24 credits for students who placed into DEV courses and enrolled in them within one year was quite a bit higher than it was for students who placed into them and did not enroll, and in 2009-2011 those enrolled retained at 43% and those who did not enroll retained at 29%.

We are very concerned about the forty percent of students who place into DEVE or DEVM classes and are not enrolling in a DEV course within one year of that placement. Our data doesn't show the number who went on to non-DEV/non-college-level courses with embedded developmental-level curriculum and were thereby successful in meeting their educational goals. We have requested data from the office of Planning, Analysis & Institutional Research so as to better track these students. We also need to study the demographics of our entering student population. In concert with many other faculty and administrators at the university, we accomplished a lot during the time when mandatory placement was initiated; however, both advising and mandatory placement need improvement if more than 60% of students with developmental placement are going to find their way to the appropriate educational support.

Two recommendations of our visiting evaluation team in 2002 seem pertinent here: students in developmental education benefit from (1) specialized advising done by a centralized developmental program fitted to their specific needs, and also from (2) centralized, coordinated learning assistance programs such as the Learning Commons being considered by the library today. There is also a need for more faculty in our program to be able to do research in our field as part of our workloads, like other departments do. Developmental Education faculty will continue to strengthen our coordination with each other, systematically evaluate our program and share our findings with faculty and administration, make recommendations for university-wide initiatives, and request funding for the programs we know will aid our students in their path. Most importantly, we will remember that the time we spend with our students in the classroom makes a big difference in their lives, not only because our specialized understanding of their needs makes us able to assist them with academic progress but also because, as time and time again they have told us, it means a lot for them to know how much we care about them.

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