



Degrees with Less Debt:

Effective Higher Education Strategies for Underrepresented Student Populations

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What Project Is and Is Not

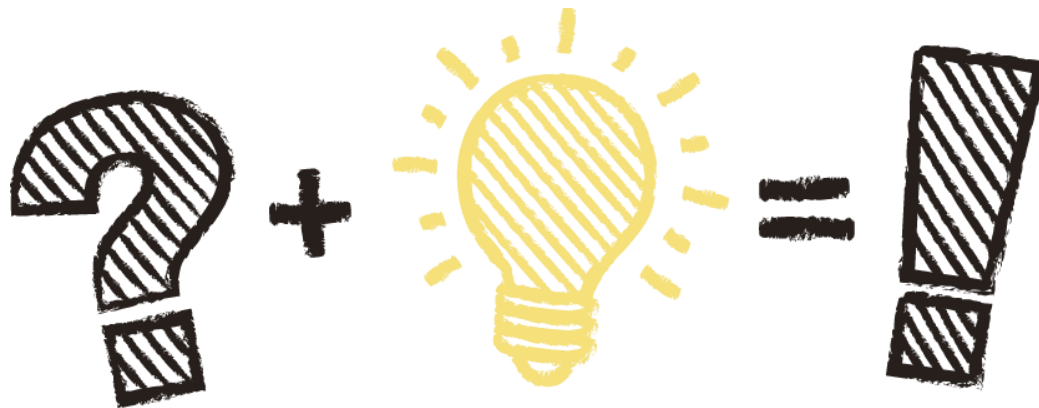
- Effort to share institutional strategies of what's working for first-generation, low-income students, and/or students of color
- This is not a recommendation for these 5 institutions
- We recognize that an institution that is a good fit for one student may be a poor fit for another
- We recognize that high schools share the credit for getting students college ready
- Nonetheless, we will share our strategy for selection and more importantly, our findings of what is working at these institutions
- In the hopes that other institutions may find some new strategies that fit them
- At this point, ask you to keep the institutions confidential.
Will be released at a later date.

St. Louis Graduates Higher Education Recognition Task Force



Institutional Rankings → Our Formula

- Original Idea to combine features of institutional rankings and identify those institutions that are doing best at graduating identified populations
- Rich discussions



Qualifiers



- Are **serving a substantial number** of underrepresented students
- Are **successfully graduating** underrepresented students

Existing Institutional Ranking Systems

Various philosophies underlie ranking systems

**Prestige Ranking
Systems**

**Economic Mobility
Ranking Systems**



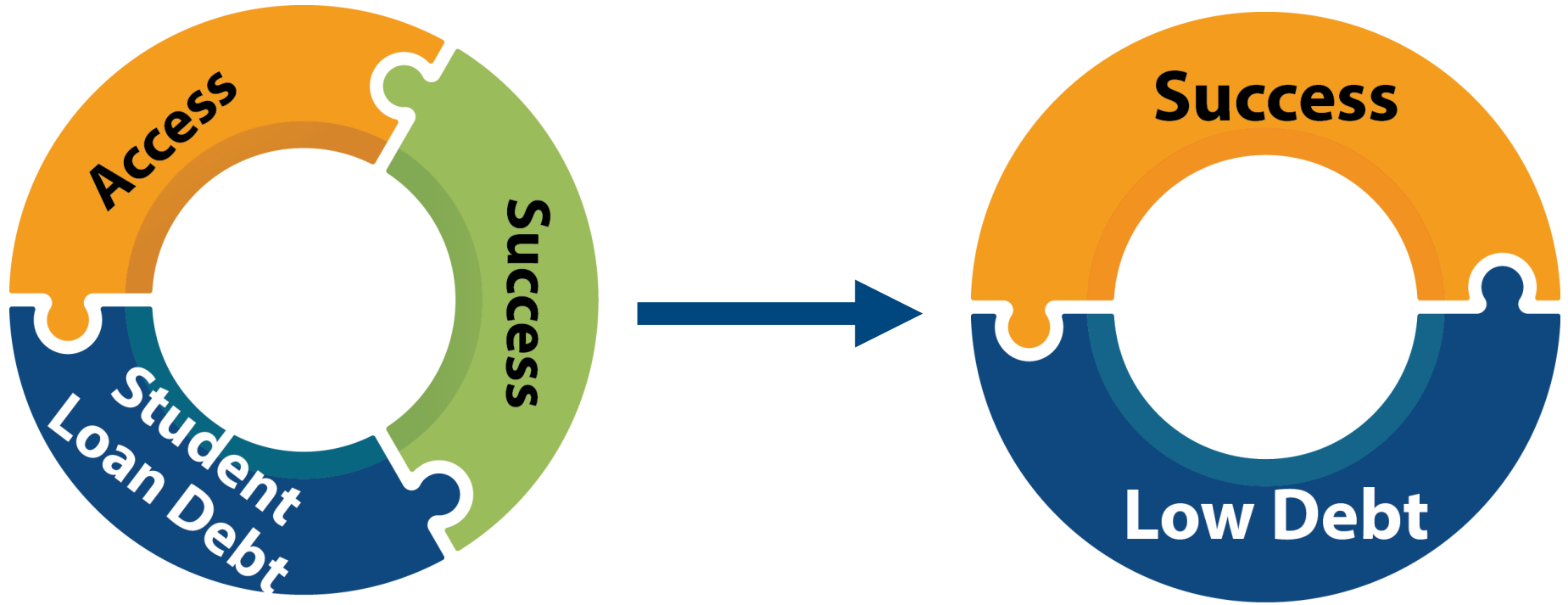
Existing Institutional Ranking Systems

Access & Social Mobility Ranking Systems



- Washington Monthly's College Ranking
- Social Mobility Index
- Pro-Publica Debt by Degrees
- Ed Trust Graduation Tool

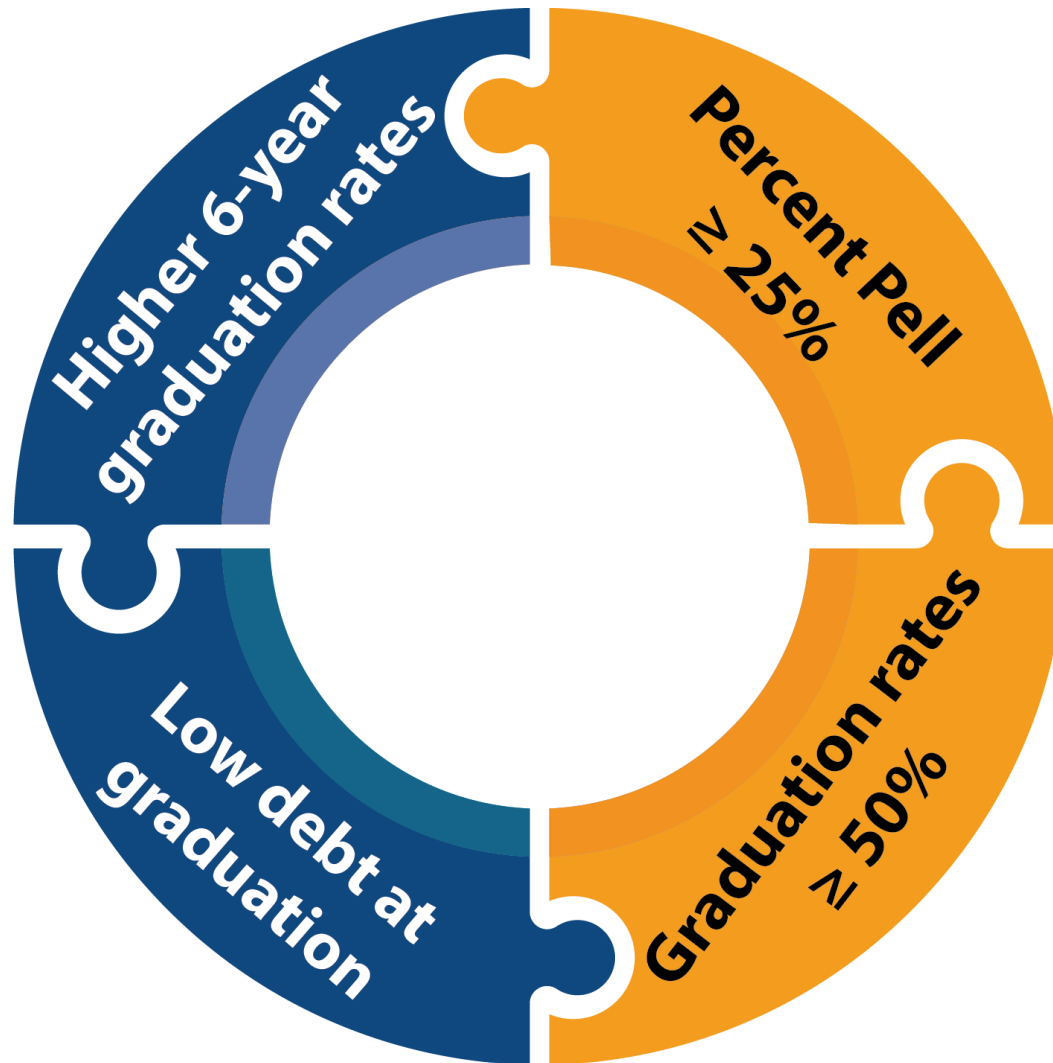
Evolution of Our Success Formula



Our Success Formula

Metrics

Threshold



4-Year Institutions of Interest

1. Fontbonne University
2. Harris-Stowe State University
3. Lincoln University
4. Lindenwood University
5. Maryville University
6. McKendree University
7. Missouri Baptist University
8. Missouri State University—Springfield
9. Missouri University of Science & Technology
10. Saint Louis University
11. Southeast Missouri State University
12. Southern Illinois University—Carbondale
13. Southern Illinois University—Edwardsville
14. Truman State University
15. University of Central Missouri
16. University of Missouri—Columbia
17. University of Missouri—Kansas City
18. University of Missouri—St. Louis
19. Washington University
20. Webster University

Top 5 Institutions Based on Success Formula

#1

UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL MISSOURI
LEARNING TO A GREATER DEGREE

#2



#3

Webster
UNIVERSITY

A horizontal yellow swoosh or arc is positioned below the word 'UNIVERSITY'.

#4

Missouri
State
UNIVERSITY

#5



Methodology for Identifying Success Strategies

Interview **institutional administrators** for:



- Academic Affairs/ Student Success
- Student Affairs and/or Diversity and Inclusion
- Enrollment Management
- Financial Aid

Institution-selected focus group of students

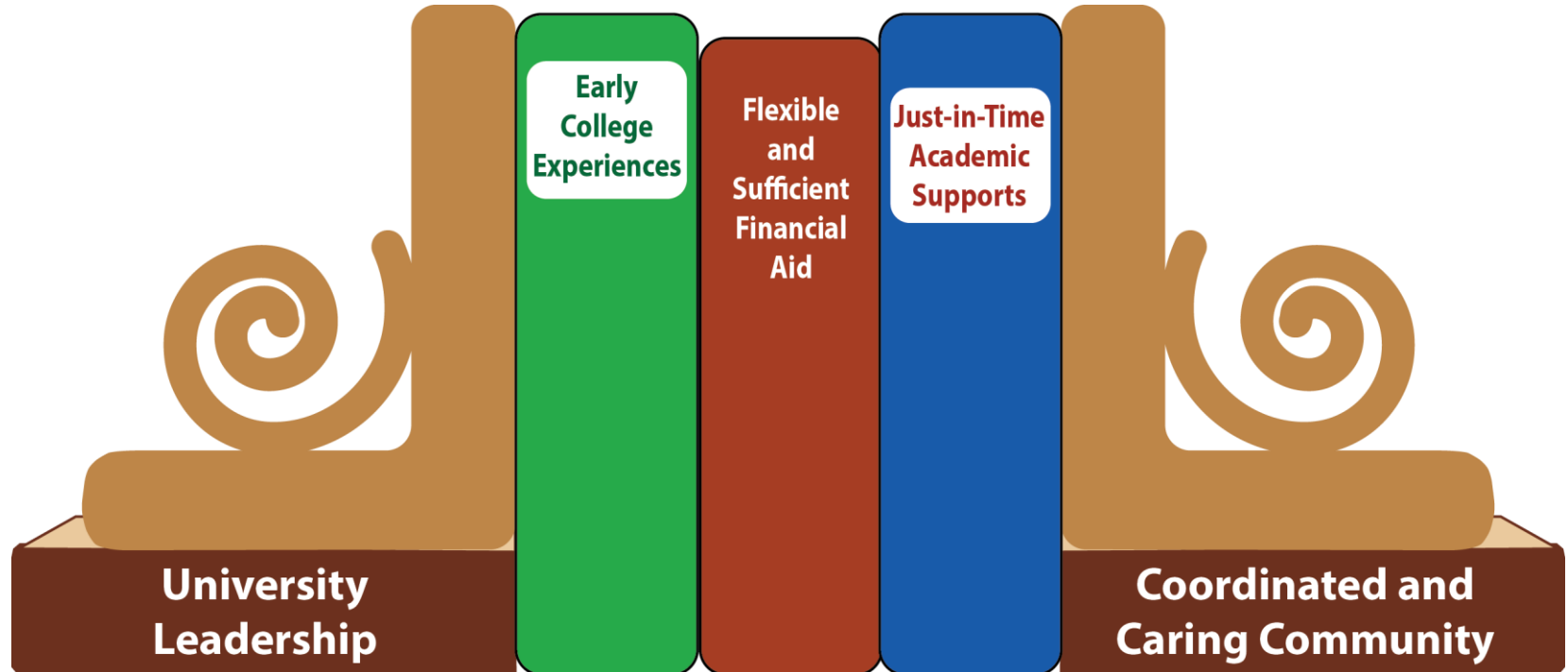
Methodology for Identifying Success Strategies

Goal is to describe **success strategies** used to **increase graduation** among:

- ➡ first-generation students
- ➡ low-income students
- ➡ and/or students of color



Cross-Cutting Themes



University Leadership

University Investment

Investments come in many forms

Personnel investment for diversity and inclusion leadership, counselors & coaches, PD and training for faculty and staff

Scholarship investments – gearing capital campaigns and development efforts to secure scholarship money

Initiative investments to show promise in graduating students with less debt

Facilities and physical resources investments for academic and social activities functions



University Leadership

University Investment *(continued)*

Hiring

Webster University created a new position
Associate VP of Diversity and Inclusion

Presidential Personal Investment

President Mark Lombardi (Maryville) **funded multicultural scholars program**

President Clifton Smart (MSU) **made donation to create the new first-generation student scholarships**



University Leadership

University Investment *(continued)*

Other Investments

New campus **multicultural center** at UCM that houses all diversity-related student organizations.



University Leadership

Setting Goals and Developing Strategies

Mission statements, visions, and strategic plans give the university's objectives and targets

Presidents and other campus leaders emphasize certain aspects of the mission, vision, or strategic plan

Set up task forces to accomplish the goals

Campus community develops strategies and initiatives to achieve goals



University Leadership

Setting Goals and Developing Strategies

Diversity Task Forces

- In response to events such as racial tensions in Ferguson, MO or on Mizzou campus
- In fulfillment of strategic goals

Professional Development

- For faculty and staff
- For campus leadership –
Example: Board of Governor's at MSU



University Leadership

Recruitment Strategies

Most of the universities are increasing their recruitment to **support diversity**

Increasing their connections with area high schools and community colleges

Work with **access agencies** to broaden their impact

One example of supporting **high school recruiting efforts** – Maryville University is sponsoring the printing of their college workshop materials for area high schools



University Leadership

Engagement with Multicultural Students

In most universities/colleges, **students spoke out** about **campus leaders**, including the President

High visibility

Structured opportunities for students to engage with campus leaders **concerning relevant issues**

Campus leadership **connecting students with opportunities**



Coordinated and Caring Community

A “Family” Approach

The university as student’s “**family**” or home away from home

A safe atmosphere for students to **share academic or personal struggles**

At a few institutions, faculty who are first generation **self-identify to students** to make connections.

Students sometimes attributed their success to **small class sizes** and approachable and helpful **professors and staff**



Coordinated and Caring Community

Caring Means Believing in Students

As **Ernest Morrell** from Columbia University described as “Pedagogies of Love.” Students need to know that faculty and staff believe in them and their ability to succeed.

Students commented on:

- Importance of advisors believing in students when they had self-doubts
- Not wanting to let down the academic support staff who has helped them
- Counselors, faculty, & staff pushing students to do their best
- Faculty placing trust in students
- Counselors, faculty, & staff as role models

A strategy with multiple benefits was **employing paid peer mentors** as role models for students and to provide needed **non-threatening assistance**



Coordinated and Caring Community

Wrap-Around Supports

A few sites **employed coaches** to be in touch with students around the clock and to have their fingers on the **pulse of students' needs and struggles** in real time.

- At UCM, **academic resource coaches** are located in residence halls to talk to students struggling with academics, attendance, other life issues
- **Life coaches** are newly employed at Maryville University and are **available 24/7** to meet and talk with students



Coordinated and Caring Community

Coordination of Care

University and campuses are **big bureaucracies** with departments in student support and academic support, and financial aid offices. How best to **coordinate this support** and provide **non-duplicative services** for students?

- At UCM, staff are developing a **care team approach** to coordinate student services and provide appropriate, targeted care to **students most at risk**



Early College Experiences



Providing additional supports between high school and college **benefit higher college enrollment**. Supports recommended for low-income students in **summer bridge programs** include:

- Expert guidance and support with college admissions and application process
- Assistance in finding the right college fit
- Social and emotional support for both students and families
- Intensive and consistent financial guidance

First-generation students more likely to lack the ***navigational capital*** needed to successfully manage the university environment

Example of the **10-day orientation program** at Webster University in the summer for **2 credits** at no cost for conditionally-admitted students

- **Retention** now higher than regular admits (85% vs 79%)!

Early College Experiences



Fall Orientation Programs

Fall orientation programs take place a few days before fall term and designed to **introduce students to the campus experience**

Students at several universities mentioned the orientation programs as being **helpful**

Some tailored programs for first-generation/low-income students are targeted for what these students need

- The 2-day **ASC Training Camp** at SEMO held the week before fall classes for student qualifying for student support services. Students learn about campus resources, financial aid, strategies for successfully transitioning, and college expectations.

Early College Experiences



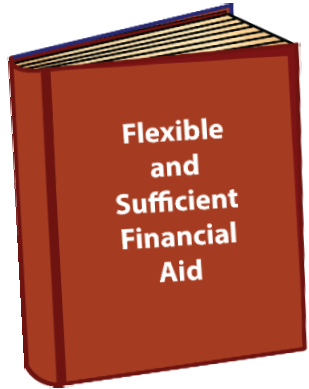
First Year Experiences

Many of the student support programs are designed to continue the work with students throughout the year

- Provide additional counseling support
- Introduction to resources for seeking assistance on campus
- Special sections of freshmen seminars
- Social activities

At MSU, there are special sections of general education program classes for self-identified 1st generation students. Content introduces students to the vocabulary and culture of the college.

Flexible and Sufficient Financial Aid



Need-Based Multicultural Scholarships

Maryville University's award-winning **Multicultural Scholarship** program

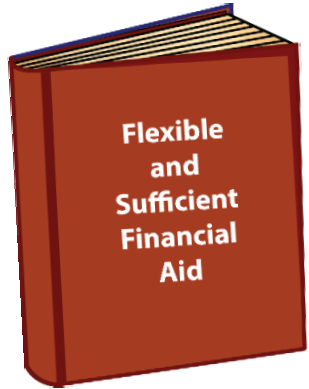
- 4-year leadership program
- ½ price tuition waiver

SEMO's **supplemental financial assistance** for students qualifying through Student Support Services

- Students with ACT ≥ 21 and GPA ≥ 2.75 receive \$500 - \$2,000
- Students with ACT ≥ 23 and GPA ≥ 3.25 receive \$500 - \$2,400
- Get multi-tier supports

Pell recipients attending Webster University get more than double their Pell award in institutional aid/scholarships—average award ~\$10,000

Flexible and Sufficient Financial Aid



Keeping Unmet Need Low

One of the strongest financial **predictors of retention**

Evidence shows only low-income students respond via **college persistence** to changes in aid amounts

Public University Tuition and Fees

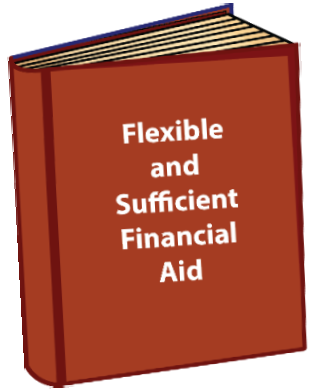
- Tuition/fees increased on **5% to 51%** between 2009 & 2015 in MO, with an average **decrease in state funding of \$1,500**
- Fees increased at public institutions in our sample **between 17% & 26%** - midrange

Grant Aid

Research shows need-based aid can increase retention with as little as \$1,000 being associated with 3-4 percentage point increases in retention

- All sampled institutions mentioned **supplemental funding offered** to meet unmet need
- Private institutions provided **own need-based grant programs**, presumably to offset the higher tuition rates

Flexible and Sufficient Financial Aid



Flexibility to Adapt to Changing Circumstances

Students from families with less resources have less of a foundation from which to draw in times of financial crises

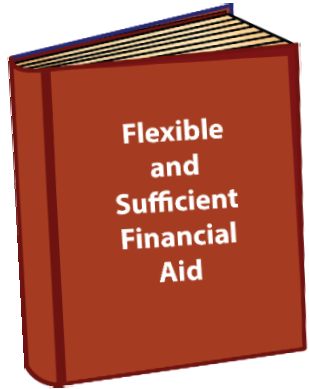
When a parent loses a job or a student or family member has a health care crisis, need somewhere to **make up the financial gap**

Universities are adapting to **more flexible policies** to respond to students' and families' changing circumstances

Key features seen in our study:

- Reconsiderations of financial aid – of up to 50% of student aid recipients
- Philosophy to not to let student drop-out for small amounts of unmet need

Flexible and Sufficient Financial Aid



Financial Literacy and Knowledge of Financial Resources

Key gap for many first-generation and low-income students

Universities with financial literacy initiatives have lower loan default rates

Webster University is in its 6th year offering a ***financial literacy program***

- **Loan default rate 4.3%** compared to national rate of 6.5% for 4-year private institutions

RealLIFE program at MSU focuses on 1st generation students

- **Cohort default rate decreased to 6.5%** compared to national rate of 7.3% for public 4-year institutions

Just-in-Time Academic Supports



Students across all universities were **using academic supports** on an as needed basis

Students were aware of available resources

Most often mentioned tutoring

- At a few universities, this was peer tutoring, with paid peer tutors from the same student population
- Students benefit from free tutoring across a broad array of classes

Other academic supports

- Supplemental instruction provided by professors for key classes
- Writing labs

Just-in-Time Academic Supports



Tailored Supports

With easy access to student information, universities are using data to provide tailored supports

At UCM administrators are using data to **identify high risk students** and **target supports**

- Develop risk profiles based on students' ACT scores, high school GPA and other information to identify students with less than 50% chance of completing 24 credit hours in first year
- Contact all high-risk students during 1st week to see if they need supports. Continue to monitor students. Interventions and mentoring are triggered if red flags are detected.

At SEMO – a **multi-tier approach** based on student's GPA to qualify for student support services

- All students get information about resources and services
- Students with 2.75 – 3.25 GPAs are additionally connected with ASC staff member to develop a college success plan and meet bi-weekly
- With GPAs below 2.75, students get most intense outreach and intervention—includes an academic alert system

Just-in-Time Academic Supports



Mentoring

Many benefits of academic mentoring have been established:

- Behavioral, attitudinal, psychological, relational, motivational, and career-related
 - Mentees tend to have higher GPAs, earn more credit hours, and less prone to stop-out or drop-out
 - Mentoring builds self-esteem and self-efficacy
-
- Across all focus groups, students showed strong support for the mentoring programs
 - Universities provided **paid peer mentors** at Webster University and UCM.
 - A unique faculty staff mentoring program at SEMO, the **Academic Support Centers' mentoring program (AMP)**
 - ❖ Matched to faculty or staff mentor – mentee employed by mentor for 12 hours (2/3 paid by ASC, 1/3 by mentors department)
 - ❖ Try to keep same mentor over student's years at university
 - ❖ Students in AMP have 95% five-year graduation rate

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