

# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students Similarities and Differences

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# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students Similarities and Differences

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# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students

## Similarities and Differences

### Definitions

- **At-Risk:** Students who earned less than a 2.00 university cumulative GPA; these students may also have pre-college indicators and/or lack of academic preparation that predispose them to poor academic performance.
- **High-Achieving:** Students who earned a 3.25 university cumulative GPA; these students may also have the academic preparation and/or cultural capital that will increase the likelihood of attaining academic success.
- High-achieving students can be at-risk and at-risk students can be high-achieving (not mutually exclusive).

# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students

## Similarities and Differences

### Students Who are Simultaneously At-Risk and High-Achieving

- Many students who are pre-identified as At-Risk students due to certain demographic information (such as being historically under-represented in higher education, first-generation or low-income) may also be High-Achieving students.
- In 1964 the SUNY board of trustees realized that there were academically talented youth (high school students) who were underprepared for college; and so the Educational Opportunity Program was born in New York State. In 1970 the legislator approved funding this program on all state campuses.
- Furthermore, these pre-identified At-Risk students that show themselves to be High-Achieving students by performing well in college; may become eligible to participate in a federally funded TRiO programs such as Student Support Services (SSS), and the McNair Scholars Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program. (US Department of Education, 2009)

# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students

## Similarities and Differences

### Students Who are Simultaneously High-Achieving and At-Risk

- Many high-achieving students may feel isolated within their college environments, since they may have felt isolated during elementary and secondary school (Hebert & McBee, 2007).
- According to Kerr and Erb (1991), “Multipotentiality can lead to difficulty in the development of a sense of purpose; students with many talents wonder how they can possibly integrate or prioritize abilities in order to make a meaningful contribution to society” (pp. 309).
- At the post-secondary level, high-ability students with learning disabilities often need guidance in understanding their academic strengths and weaknesses, thereby learning to advocate for themselves (Reis, McGuire, & Neu, 2000).
- Since gifted students are traditionally successful academically, they may be ill-equipped to deal with the challenges related to time management, study skills, and mastering course materials (Kem & Navan, 2006).

# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students Similarities and Differences

## Research to Date

### 2005-2006:

- Advisors concerned about students in academic difficulty (Fall 2005)
- Students with Academic Difficulty (SAD) Committee was formed (Spring 2006)

### 2006-2007:

- Committee studied Fall 2006 Cohort of students with less than 2.00 GPA
  - 1809 students were analyzed (10% of the Fall 2006 UB undergraduate population)
  - Profile: 63.6% Male; 54.4% White; 86.6% U.S. Citizens; 57.8% 17 – 18 Years Old
- Reviewed existing probation and dismissal policies and procedures

# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students

## Similarities and Differences

### 2007-2008

- Collected data on academic review
- Identified “Best Practices”
- Designed survey on academic performance and behaviors

### 2008-2009

- Submitted preliminary recommendations to Assistant Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
  - Changes to Current Definitions
  - Fall and Spring Review
  - Increased Communication re: Academic Status
  - Mandatory Advisement (“A” Checkstop)
  - Mandatory Workshops
  - Academic Support Services
  - Contract Enrollment
  - Advising Dismissed Students
- Surveyed Undergraduates on Academic Performance

# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students

## Similarities and Differences

### 2008-2009 (continued in 2009-2010)

- Committee studied Spring 2009 Cohort of all Students
  - 454 Students Were Analyzed
  - Profile: 52.9% Male; 66.7% White; 94.5% GPA 2.00 or higher
- GPA is significantly and positively correlated with
  - Completing homework assignments
  - Reviewing class notes
  - Knowing where to get academic help
  - Feeling they would succeed when experiencing academic difficulty
  - Valuing coursework as more important than involvement in extracurricular activities
  - Feeling able to keep pace in courses
  - Feeling able to understand course materials
- GPA is significantly and negatively correlated with
  - Valuing involvement in extracurricular activities as more important than coursework
  - Working for pay OFF campus
- Additional data synthesized/analyzed by Research Team



# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students

## Similarities and Differences

### 2010-2011

- Research Team continues research of at-risk students
- Mixed-method study focuses on academic performance and academic behaviors
- Survey (quantitative) sent to 1,500+ UB undergraduate students who received academic warning or probation notices from Provost Office
- Focus groups (qualitative) will be conducted late spring/summer

# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students Similarities and Differences

## Similarities and Differences

### Similarities

- Need access to academic services
- Academic goal (college degree) and held to the same college standards
- Study skills underdeveloped (Schwartz, 2010)
- Identity development
- Other psychosocial issues (low orientation to adult responsibilities, diffusion problems, financial and personal issues, residence life/commuter issues, lack of academic focus, and so forth)

# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students

## Similarities and Differences

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### Differences: At-Risk

- Face different learning challenges (e.g., difficulty with study skills and strategies)
- Academic self-concept and motivation
- Academic performance – less engaged with course content within/outside of the classroom
- Compromised ability to devise and implement creative problem solving solutions

# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students

## Similarities and Differences

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### Differences: High-Achieving

- Facing different learning challenges (e.g., multitalented with multiple goals - may want to “do it all”)
- Psychosocial issues (perfectionism, social isolation, and so forth)
- High schools have told this Millennial group that they are special/privileged and colleges have reinforced this notion (special housing, access to faculty, preferred registration, and so forth)
- Academic goals do not always match performance outcomes

# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students Similarities and Differences

## Best Practices

### At-Risk Students:

- Mandated advisement (e.g. academic interventions and strategies, referrals to programs/services, increased advisor contact, use of Checkstops/service indicators, etc.)
- End-of-semester and mid-semester reviews (e.g., discussions on academic capacity and ability within majors/university, academic performance, etc.)
- Learning contracts (specific action steps and accountability)
- Workshops (e.g., time management, study skills, academic success, etc.)
- Social media (e.g., academic support groups)
- Assessments (i.e., LASSI)

# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students Similarities and Differences

## Best Practices

### High-Achieving Students:

- Mandated advisement (e.g., progression on academic plan, explore research and community service/engagement opportunities, explore graduate school preparation, explore COOPs/internships, etc.)
- End-of-semester review (e.g., reflect on academic goals and performance, scholarship eligibility, etc.)
- Workshops (e.g., fellowships and assistantships, specialized fields, etc.)

# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students

## Similarities and Differences

### NACADA

“The primary purpose of Academic Advising Programs (AAP) is to assist students in the development of meaningful educational plans, “  
(NACADA, CAS Standards).

- Theoretical bases (i.e., advising curriculum, pedagogy, and student learning outcomes)
- Professional responsibilities and core values
- Specialized competencies (e.g., learning, cultural, communication, assessment, etc.)
- Transferrable awareness, knowledge, and skills (e.g., listening, empathy, legal, management, etc.)
- High-achieving and at-risk students/population require specialized knowledge to help them develop appropriate and meaningful educational plans

# High-Achieving and At-Risk Students Similarities and Differences

## Summary

- Next Steps
  - Continue multi-year research
  - Expand to other colleges/universities (invitation to join research efforts on at-risk students)
- Questions, Comments and Observations