

**2013-14**  
**STUDENT SERVICES FOCUSED ASSESSMENT COLLABORATIVE TEAM**  
**PROBATION COMMITTEE**  
**FINAL REPORT**

This document summarizes the activities and results of Highline College’s Focused Assessment Collaborative Team (FACT) committee studying academic probation interventions during the 2013-2014 academic year.

**Committee Purpose & Membership**

The committee includes representatives from each of the programs within Student Services and a data analyst. All the members are listed below.

<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Affiliation/Role</b>
Deana Rader (Chair)	Director of Women’s Programs/WorkFirst Services
Gwen Spencer/ Jennifer Cooke	Director of EPAC
Lorraine Odom	Associate Dean for Enrollment Services
Allison Lau	Associate Dean for Counseling and Student Judicial Affairs
Debbie Faison	Registrar
Ekk Sisavatdy	Program Manager for Retention and Advising
Kelsey Anderson	Data Specialist, Enrollment Services
Yuritzzi Lozano	Program Manager, TRiO SSRS

## **Primary Activities**

The FACT Probation Committee provides information to the Student Services Assessment Task Force (ATF) as well as the Student Services Leadership Team.

The purpose of this committee is to:

1. Conduct research and gather data and information about the current policies, practices and student trends related to student academic probation interventions and pre-academic probation interventions in place at Highline College.
2. Devise methodology in quantitative and qualitative data assessment.
3. Identify preventative measures and implementation strategy.

The FACT Probation Committee purpose statement was initiated by the Assessment Task Force and Student Services Leadership Team. The committee's purpose statement has remained the same for the past two years as we continue to pursue the effectiveness of our probation policies and services. During this reporting period, the committee agreed to two objectives: 1) survey students who successfully moved themselves from a probation status to a non-probation and 2) gather Student Services Leadership team feedback on the effectiveness of the probation policy. The data results were both quantitative and qualitative.

## **Quantitative Data & Qualitative Data**

### ***Objective 1: Student Success Survey***

The Student Success Survey was used to measure three things in students who had successfully transitioned off of a non-suspension probation status: (1) what specific things students attribute their academic success to post-probation, (2) The perceived importance of each step in the current probation process, and (3) campus resource usage and the perceived usefulness of campus resources in assisting students to get off of probation.

### ***Sample Group***

The survey sample group was drawn from 75 students who had, post-probation the previous term, improved their GPAs to at least a 2.0 in either Fall 2013 or Winter 2014 and remained enrolled during Spring 2014 (when the survey was conducted). All 75 students were called and 40 agreed to participate; yielding a response rate of 53%.

In the tables below, the students who responded to the survey are compared against the survey pool and probation population for their representativeness by program affiliation and race/ethnicity. The following definitions are used to categorize each group: Survey Respondents are those who provided responses for measurement (n=40). Students Off-Probation are those that

improved their GPA and were not in a probationary status in the subsequent term (Summer-to-Fall or Fall-to-Winter), and provided the survey's sample group (n=75). Probation Population are those in any probation status in the same quarter that the surveyed students originally were placed on probation, regardless of their activities in the subsequent term (n=784, Summer and Fall 2013).

Table 1.1: Representativeness of Survey Sample by Special Program Affiliation

	Survey Respondents	Students Off-Probation (sample group)	Probation Population (same quarters)
No Program Affiliation	45.0%	52.2%	56.1%
Gateway to College	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%
International Students	7.5%	10.0%	9.2%
Running Start	27.5%	20.0%	13.2%
TRiO	2.5%	2.2%	0.7%
Veterans	2.5%	4.4%	7.0%
WorkFirst	7.5%	3.3%	3.8%
Workforce Education (BFET, OG, WRT)	2.5%, 5.0%, 5.0%	4.4%, 3.3%, 4.4%	6.6%, 5.4%, 4.4%

*(Note: because students can be affiliated with multiple programs, percentages will not sum correctly by column)*

Table 1.2: Representativeness of Survey Sample by State's Race/Ethnic Groupings

	Survey Respondents	Students Off-Probation (sample group)	Probation Population (same quarters)
Asian American, Pacific Islander	20.0%	17.5%	16.8%
Black, African American	18.9%	17.5%	20.3%
Hispanic, Latino/a	5.6%	2.5%	11.9%
Native American,	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%

Alaska Native			
White, Caucasian	28.9%	32.5%	26.1%
Multi-Racial	7.8%	12.5%	9.3%
Not Indicated	18.9%	17.5%	15.0%

In general, the students who responded to the survey were more likely to be affiliated with a special program than the general probation population from the same quarters (most notably over-representing Running Start and WorkFirst students). In terms of racial/ethnic identity, survey respondents more closely represented the larger probation population than they represented those who were able to leave probation status. Respondents were also more likely to be Asian or Latino/a and less likely to be Multi-Racial or White than the group of those who transitioned off of probation in those quarters. The caveat to this is that Latino/a students are underrepresented by about 6.3% compared to those on probation. Respondents were also more likely to be Asian or White and less likely to be Black or Multi-Racial than those on probation as a whole.

While sampling bias may exist, it may also appear greater because of the small sample size for the survey. As a subcommittee we felt these sampling limitations were important to note, but that they do not invalidate the strong themes present in the survey's results as a starting point for intervention development.

*Methodology*

**Student Success Survey Part 1: What Do Students Attribute their Success in Leaving Probation?**

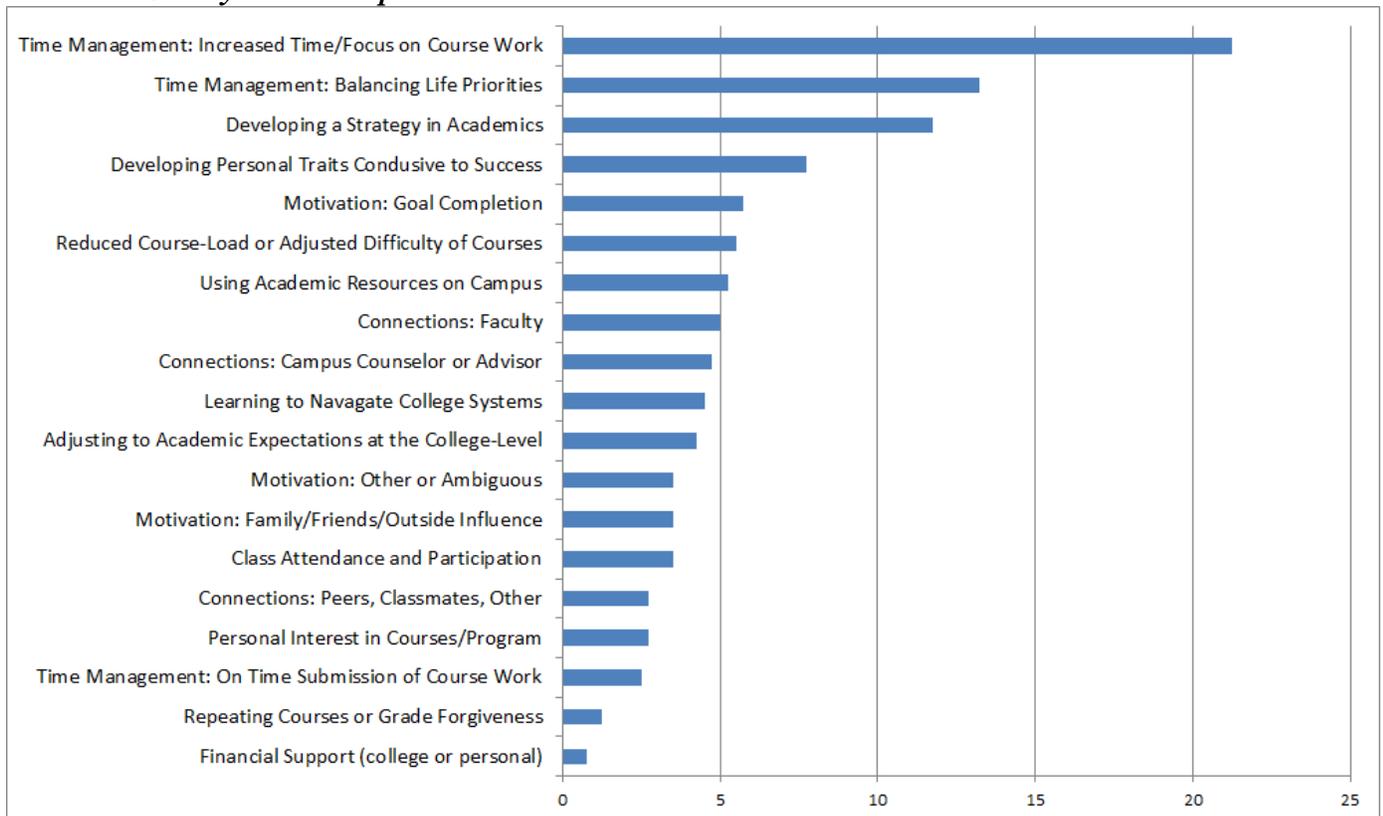
Using a script developed by Jonathan Brown, Associate Dean for Student Programs, a member of FACT and the FACT subcommittee, all 70 students in the sample were called and surveyed. The survey was broken into three parts. For part 1, each participant in the phone survey was asked to give a brief narrative description of the top two things that helped them to transition off of academic probation.

The script read by the surveyor for this section was: “We want to start by hearing from you about your story. I would like to know, briefly, what two actions, changes, or approaches led you to achieve your academic success? What are the top two things that most influenced your ability to significantly increase your grades?” Surveyors then recorded, in real-time, the content of student responses. These records vary for each surveyor. Some are first-person quotations, some are third-person summaries and some are a combination of these. Surveyors were not guided in how to record responses; were we to re-administer this survey we might consider providing some instruction to standardize response language and minimize potential researcher bias.

After survey collection, a team of four reviewers coded and scored all narrative responses according to themes that were developed out of the responses themselves. These scores were then averaged to compensate for potential interpreter bias in coding.

The chart below represents an averaging of all four reviewers' coding of themes present in student narrative responses.

**Table 1.3: Survey Part 1 Responses**



Some sample responses from the survey are included below.

Increased Time/Focus on Course Work: “Put in extra time and extra work got grades back up;”  
 “It is simple- I started doing the work”

Developing a Strategy in Academics: “Talked to advisors- found out a game plan and took a new route as a student;” “Changed perspective on homework. I had to do it. This helped me do better all around-- tests, knowledge, material retention, and this is a big deal! There is always a way to do it!”

Developing Personal Traits Conducive to Success: “Being patient and believing in yourself”

Motivation: Goal Completion “Failure was a good motivator and wanted to complete;” “Career goal/major goal. She was motivated to get the grades needed to succeed in her future pathway.”

## Conclusion

The narrative portion of the student success survey reveals what students primarily saw as the most important aspects of their academic growth. Unsurprisingly, devoting more time and effort to their studies was the most frequently occurring theme, with about 19% of all scores relating to increased time and effort in course work. Following this were balancing life priorities (12%), developing a strategy in academics (11%), and developing personal traits conducive to success (7%). There was a four-way tie for the 5th most popular theme between goal completion as motivation, reducing course-load/class difficulty, using academic campus resources and connecting with faculty, each with a 5% share of the scoring points.

This indicates that students may, retrospectively, find most helpful strategies that focus on time management both with their academics and outside lives; academic planning (what tactics they should adopt when engaging with a new course/subject, what courses to take when, and how the educational system work)s; developing strong goals, resiliency and self-efficacy about school; and lastly, connecting with faculty about course work prior to falling behind.

Parts 2 and 3 (addressing the importance of probation processes and campus service usage) were asked and recorded as straightforward Likert scale or “yes/no” questions. Quantitative data from this is found in the results section below.

### Student Success Survey Part 2: Importance/Usefulness of Current Probation Process

Each survey participant was asked to rate eight steps of the current probation process in terms of the importance of each in getting off of probation. The results are shown, in descending order by average importance score, in the table below.

**Table 1.4: Survey Part 2 Responses**

(N=40; Scale from 1-to-5; 1 being very little importance and 5 being very strong importance).

Probation Process Step	Average Score	1	2	3	4	5
Becoming aware of the college's expectations to get off probation.	4.3	5.0%	5.0%	7.5%	17.5%	65.0%
Meeting with staff member(s) to remove the registration hold (block) on your student account.	4.3	0.0%	7.5%	10.0%	25.0%	57.5%
Receiving your letter of being on academic probation.	4.1	7.5%	5.0%	7.5%	32.5%	47.5%

Retaking a class for a higher grade on my transcript.	<b>4.1</b>	12.5 %	2.5%	10.0%	17.5%	57.5 %
Meeting with your advisor.	<b>4.0</b>	7.5%	12.5 %	12.5%	10.0%	57.5 %
Reducing your course load or changing your class selections.	<b>3.5</b>	22.5 %	2.5%	12.5%	25.0%	37.5 %
Using the resources that were outlined in your academic probation notification.	<b>2.9</b>	32.5 %	12.5 %	17.5%	12.5%	25.0 %
Addressing issues of stability related to my finances.	<b>2.7</b>	40.0 %	5.0%	17.5%	17.5%	20.0 %

*Conclusions*

Survey responses to the current probation process indicate gaining an awareness of the college’s expectations through being on probation and meeting with staff (as mandatory for removal of the probationary registration block) were the two most important pieces of the student experience. They also ranked receiving the probation letter, retaking a class for a higher grade, and meeting with their assigned advisor at or above an average score of 4 out of 5. Lowest ranking items were using the resources outlined in the probation letter and addressing issues of financial stability.

Notably, both receipt of the probation letter and awareness of academic expectations ranked highly in importance, but the resources from the letter did not. These results may be interpreted to mean the letter notifying students of their probationary status was, in some cases, a wakeup call but that the actual text of the letter was less useful than its symbolic meaning.

It is also interesting to note that while both meeting with a staff member in the block removal process and meeting with an advisor received generally high importance scores, the scores for meeting with “your advisor” followed a less clear trend. There is an outlying concentration of students in the 2-3 of 5 score range for this survey item. This may be attributed to confusion about who the student’s assigned advisor is then or could show that students are less likely to use a separate advisor.

**Student Success Survey Part 3: Utilization and Importance of Current Campus Services**

Each survey participant was asked if they had used any of five different campus support services or activities believed to impact academic or social aspects of a student’s experience. If they

reported using the service, they were then asked to rate the importance of it in supporting them to get off of probation. The results are shown, in descending order by usage rate, in the table below.

**Table 1.5: Survey Part 3 Responses**

(N=40; Scale from 1-to-5; 1 being very little importance and 5 being very strong importance).

Campus Service or Activity	Yes	No	Average Importance Score	Average Importance Weighted	1	2	3	4	5
			(of "Yes" Responses)	(for "No" Responses)					
Did you use our Academic Support Services?	<b>58%</b>	43%	4.4	2.5	0%	3%	5%	18%	33%
Did you take steps to reach a more firm decision about your program of study?	<b>53%</b>	48%	4.7	2.5	0%	0%	3%	13%	38%
Did you seek career counseling or personal counseling?	<b>30%</b>	70%	4.8	1.4	0%	0%	3%	3%	25%
Did you join a student community?	<b>20%</b>	80%	4.6	0.9	0%	0%	0%	8%	13%
Did you obtain a campus job or volunteer experience?	<b>18%</b>	83%	4.4	0.8	0%	0%	5%	0%	13%

*Conclusion*

The final set of survey responses on the importance of current campus services shows to what capacity students were using one of the five campus services mentioned. The two services that were ranked highest use given the five options were the “use of academic support services” (58%) and “taking steps to reach a more firm decision about a program of study” (53%). The other three services’ usage ranked well below 50% with “obtaining a campus job or volunteer experience” ranking the lowest on use.

This indicates that students tend to focus more on getting access to campus services that specifically focus on academics given their probationary status. Other campus engagement and retention programs seemed to be ranked as the least sought out during their probation status.

### ***Objective 2: Student Affairs Cabinet: Focus on Policy Barriers Qualitative Data***

Within the Student Affairs Cabinet (SAC) during this last academic year, many fruitful and critical discussions were surfaced as SAC added an additional meeting to its monthly governance gathering to spend more focused time advancing our division-wide assessment initiatives. These SAC Assessment meetings, held on the first Wednesday of each month, brought Student Services management and members of the Assessment Taskforce into community for dialogue and discussion about our departmental and FACT assessment. Four of the nine SAC assessment meetings included in-depth strategic discussions about our probation policies and practices. We feel that a report of our annual FACT activities would be hollow without a summary of the information that surfaced during these discussions.

Our Probation related discussions during monthly SAC Assessment meetings mostly served as a way of highlighting departmental perspectives on different facets of the probation policies and systemic barriers for student success that may be present in our offerings. Below are themes that emerged during these discussions that have help frame our understanding about our systems of probation and areas that may need modification or revision.

#### *Punitive Attention*

SAC Assessment discussions uncovered the common belief that our Probation system, by and large, provides only “negative/punitive attention” to students that are not achieving academically. It was during these meetings that the division realized the need to make our achievement expectation better known to students prior to taking classes. Further, discussion of this theme has led the division to initiate new offerings that will celebrate and honor those students that achieving attainment milestones.

#### *Timing Issues*

Monthly discussions revealed a number of troubling timing issues in dealing with a student’s probation status in relation to their registration, financial aid status and their ability to petition for appeal of probation sanctions. Depending on the quarter and the shortened times available for posting grades, some students are informed of their probation status or their probation-related suspension with very little time (1-2 days) to take action. The timeframe for probation sanctions will need to be re-examined to assure that students have fair access to all the resources needed to keep them off probation.

#### *Probation Block Issues*

Early SAC Assessment discussions reveal a lack of control regarding who was authorized to remove the Probation Hold (A1 Block Code). As this is one of the primary ways students get off academic probation, SAC undertook a revision and clarification of who on campus is authorized to remove Probation Holds from student accounts.

### *Conclusion*

There was universal agreement from SAC Assessment meetings that some sort of intervention would improve student success for students struggling academically. There was robust discussion about early warning systems, predicative interventions for new students, College 100 class initiatives, and a critique of current student success workshops. These conversation themes served as brainstorming platform for many of the forthcoming FACT intervention recommendations. Overall, the FACT committee would endorse the continuation of monthly SAC Assessment meetings to keep momentum and dialogue engaged on this important campus issue.

### **Next Steps and Recommendations**

The FACT Probation committee's work has had a substantial impact on Student Services leadership discussions involving student probation and student attainment. It has also provided a foundation for Student Services Managers and Student Affairs Cabinet members to think proactively about when looking at student progress.

### *Student Survey Results*

Implementation of the student success telephone survey helped FACT identify changes in students' personal decisions and the utilization of college resources to achieve positive outcomes. The survey focused on students who were on probation and were then able to increase their GPA, thereby removing themselves from probation status. The three focal points were:

- What actions students attribute their success in leaving probation
- The importance/usefulness of the current probation process
- The utilization and importance of current campus services

The majority of the outcomes were fairly consistent with expectations. However, one possible unexpected interpretation of the results might validate the leadership determination that the probation letters are too lengthy and wordy. Additionally, survey results call in to question student advisor usage. Although students are meeting with advisors, it could possibly be to only have the registration block removed, not for more substantial advising purposes.

*Student Services Leadership feedback results on probation policy and procedures:*

- Academic probation letters are negative and punitive
- Guidance to help students with status is either buried, confusing or non-existent
- Letters are too wordy and long
- Students are notified of status only a few days before the following quarter begins not allowing time for meaningful conversations with staff
- Unusual action code blocks prohibit students from changing schedule even if due to college recommendations
- Confusion with who has the ability to remove blocks
- Lack of Financial Aid and Registration representation on the Scholastic Review Committee to assist with informed decisions regarding student suspension based on internal policies and procedures

As part of our consideration of next steps and results, the Probation FACT committee also acknowledges ongoing inter-department intervention strategies which are outside of FACT group activities. For example, Counseling Center staff conducted an intervention by contacting all students on academic suspension and offering assistance with the appeal process. As a result, 30 students (49%) appealed to the SR committee, of which 23 were granted a chance to continue at Highline. This increased the appeal rate from 16% average in previous years to 49% for the current year. This is a 33% increase in students seeking an opportunity to persist at Highline.

Highline College's Student Services Division recently hired a new Director of Educational Planning and Advising. The new Director has strategic plans to holistically address student advising experiences. For example, the relocation of the Education Planning and Advising Center to a more private setting with private office space has provided greater insight to student academic skills and social support systems by providing space which is congruent to open dialog between advisor and student. This departmental intervention will likely have an impact on probation rates. The Director has also reviewed and revised the academic probation letter, to emphasize the institutional support for success and reframing the probation policy as a positive intervention to student success, sent to targeted student populations. The next level of intervention is the effectiveness of mandatory "advising" sessions as an intervention by investigating the following questions: what are students learning as a result of this intervention, does it actually impact their behavior, and what is the workload on advising staff. More importantly, the Director will investigate how many students fail to persist due to advising unusual action code blocks placed on students' registrations. The Director's hunches are aligned with the feedback FACT gathered from Student Services Leadership members and similar to results from the student success survey.

*Next steps:*

The Probation FACT committee has agreed continued investigation of interventions in relationship to probation is needed. In 12-13 the FACT committee studied and collected baseline data which led to the 13-14 hypothesis and data collection. During 13-14, the committee uncovered more evidence probation as an intervention merits further study. The data collected the last two years substantiates this decision.

The FACT Probation committee agreed the following as immediate next steps to be taken to increase Student Services' chances of impacting student probation rates.

- Continue review of probation letter language a
- Review the timing of when probation letters are sent
- Investigate the timing of registration blocks and who has access to add and remove
- Counseling Center continue with contacting students as an intervention
- Administer and collect Student Success Survey data results from EPAC Advisors
- Continue department assessment training to ensure consistent recording of quantitative and qualitative data collection
- Investigate the capabilities of the Accutrack software package to record quantitative data
- Investigate probation intervention model which reflects some of the traits and characteristics of behavioral change data gathered from Student Success Survey
- Investigate intervention strategies using Canvas (Learning Management System) as a data collection tool to follow P1 status students to P2 stats
- Continue conversations with new EPAC Director to discuss next steps and recommendations

The FACT Probation committee agreed the following are areas of concern need further investigation in order to prove or disprove our hypothesis: current probation policy and procedures are effective as interventions to increase Student Services' ability to move probation students to non-probationary status

*Recommendations:*

- Reexamine with intent to revise current probation policy as a proactive approach to student progress rather than a reactive approach with possible inclusion of interventions created from Student Success Survey results and Student Services Leadership feedback
- Change probation letter language to include clear guidance and recommendations for students to follow the college Repeat Policy
- Increase the Scholastic Review Committee membership to include a financial aid and
- Provide transcript access to Counseling staff to assist with informed decisions during intervention
- Provide adding and removing SMS Unusual Action Code access to appropriate Student Services staff

- Delay punitive action until one quarter following student GPA dip to 2.0: delaying timing of probation letter and/or consider delaying of unusual action code block
- Pilot a probation intervention by tracking a group of P1 probation student activities to P2 using Canvas (Learning Management System) to analyze intervention strategies using top 3-4 ranked results of Student Success Survey as learning benchmarks which assisted in their success (learning they were on probation, talking with college staff)
- Develop shadow database using Accutrack to record P1 and P2 student activities