

Recommendations for Proposals to Help First-Year Students Persist

1. Pay ACAD instructors \$250 to continue advisement in the students' second semester. This should include a mandatory training session before the second term begins where advisors are provided with GPA information (they currently have access only to students' mid-semester grades but not final grades), information about how student success might have differed had students chosen S/U options, etc. This will help contribute to the "intensive advising" type atmosphere that made LEAP successful.
2. Additionally, pay peer mentors to continue support to ACAD students in their second term. They should receive similar training (without access to individual grades) and instruction on how to emphasize S/U as a strategy for success, not an admission of failure. We should work with Leah Kendall to design and implement this training. The peer mentors should keep in touch with their students and, if possible, meet with them at interim grade time and before the drop deadline to make sure the students are making the best choices to support their GPAs.
3. Propose a change to the S/U policy that allows students to use two S/U grades in their first 45 hours. (This should apply to traditional freshmen and those that bring in credit but are still 'learning to do college'.) Specifically,
 - Students with up to 45 hours can use one S/U grade per semester (total of two). We're not recommending two S/U's in one semester because if students get two U's in the first semester, they have trouble successfully making up the 30 hours needed to maintain the LIFE scholarship.
 - Students with 46-60 hours can use their third S/U grade.
 - Students with 61-90 hours can use their fourth S/U grade.
 - Students with 90+ hours can use a fifth and final S/U grade.

This adds one more S/U (total of 5). We recommend that this be tried for 3 years so that we can collect data on it.

4. We should encourage departmental faculty to examine thoughtfully the prerequisites they choose for entry-level courses in their majors. There may be good reasons for students NOT to S/U particular courses (for instance, students seeking teacher certification currently should not S/U MATH 150 because if they want to take PHYS 250, they must have a C or better to take the class, not an S; this is the kind of advising information that needs to be shared with advisors). But we also need to look at the prerequisites we put on courses to ensure they remain appropriate and that they are not providing unnecessary impediments for students. We should also look at co-requisites instead of prerequisites in some cases.
5. We need collectively (faculty, staff, peer support) to create a culture change to where students see the S/U grade as an opportunity to take risks and to explore instead of an admission of defeat. As faculty, we need to realize that students who take courses S/U are not (necessarily) "slacking off" or looking for an easy out, but attempting to meet requirements while preserving their ability to remain in school. This will require a lot of discussion at all levels: faculty governance, departmental meetings and retreats, staff and faculty development, ACAD training and course delivery, etc. It's important that we share data about student persistence, success, and support with all parties so that they can enhance student advising, consider curricular adjustments, and help our at-risk students succeed.