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New Early Alert program assists students with academic difficulties

By Eric Reikowski, media relations assistant

Oakland University has implemented a valuable new program to help keep students on the path to graduation. The Early Alert program aims to identify students who are experiencing academic difficulties or who need help identifying resources on campus.

Sponsored by Oakland's Division of Academic Affairs, the program is a proactive way to assist students early in the semester, while there is ample time to resolve issues and overcome challenges.

Plans for the program began two years ago when a committee was formed to explore different methods of intervention to help struggling students, said Christy Lee, Early Alert's student retention assistant.

"We realized that we needed to reach these students much earlier in the semester," Lee explained. "We thought that reaching them within the first three to five weeks of the semester would give them a much better opportunity to get help."

The program was piloted in Rhetoric 150 and 160 courses last fall and helps faculty identify and communicate with students who may be experiencing difficulties in class. Faculty members can submit a referral form online, which initiates the Early Alert process. Lee can respond in collaboration with other departments to address student challenges, which may include poor class attendance, incomplete or missing assignments, poor quiz and test scores, lack of course materials, not being at course level and inappropriate behavior.

"One of our first recommendations is for students to talk with their professors to help fill in the gaps they may have," said Lee. "We want students to know that someone is looking out for them and that faculty and staff do care about their overall success."

Lee said that one of Early Alert's goals is to acquaint students with the wealth of campus resources available including the Academic Skills Center, Writing Center, Advising Resource Center Disability Support Services and Center for Multicultural Initiatives.

While the program mostly has served students in 100- and 200-level classes, Lee said that Early Alert also welcomes referrals from upper-level classes.

The program's core mission is to help students stay in class, avoid academic probation and focus on the finish line of graduation, Lee said.

For more information, visit oakland.edu/asc, then click on "Early Alert," or contact Lee at (248) 370-2529 or email uea@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

The new Early Alert program is designed to help keep students on the path to graduation by identifying and assisting students with academic difficulties.

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