



HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of Institutional Research and Planning

Evaluating the First Semester of RAMP and Second Year of the FYE



Office of Institutional Research and Planning

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Key Findings

- Students know about Support Services, but utilization is low.
- Decrease of First Time Freshman (FTUG) on Probation from Fall 2011 to Fall 2012 by 3.2%.
- Students with lower High School GPA (HSGPA) were more likely to be placed on probation than students with higher HSGPA.
- Results of the RAMP surveys indicate success on these important indicators:
 - Creating a four year plan
 - Creating a spring schedule
 - Acclimating to the campus
 - Academic and non-academic interventions
- Students who met with their RAMP mentor 3 or more times were less likely to be on academic probation than students meeting 0-2 times (except for EOP advised students).
- The second year of the First Year Experience pilot yielded no measurable results.

Introduction

The following is a preliminary report of the Special Programs 120 course (better known as the First Year Experience, FYE) and the Residential Academic Mentoring Program (RAMP). Fall 2012 was the second and last year of the First Year Experience (FYE) pilot course and the first semester of a two-year pilot of RAMP. For previous findings on FYE see <http://www.humboldt.edu/aavp/sites/default/files/enrollmentManagement/2011-2012/FYFE%20Fall%202011.pdf>

First Year Experience

The mission of FYE is the development of student’s college survival and learning skills. As a primary goal, FYE endeavored to establish a connection between new students and the HSU community while teaching students to balance life inside and outside the classroom to achieve academic success.

FYE students met with their instructors twice a week for 80 minutes for the first six weeks of the semester. Two of these class meetings were replaced by third party workshop presentations on budgeting and time management.

Residential Academic Mentoring Program

The mission of RAMP is to support and advance efforts to improve student retention and persistence at Humboldt State University and promote successful degree completion. RAMP provides students with academic and non-academic support services dedicated to addressing issues common to first year students. The Residential Academic Mentoring Program seeks to create an environment of peer academic support and encouragement for all new students entering the university as first time freshmen.

All first time undergraduates (FTUG) students, including both students who lived on and off campus were assigned a RAMP mentor. Mentors were assigned about twenty-five students each. Mentors were supposed to meet with their mentees once every three weeks and also arranged group study lessons, extracurricular activities, and workshops for students.

Method

As shown in the table below, FYE students were surveyed twice, RAMP Mentees three times, and RAMP Mentors once.

Name of Survey	Collection Dates	Emailed	Opted out	Responded	Response Rate
RAMP1	9/19-10/2	1105	3	389	35%
FYE 1	10/1-10/8	307	2	120	39%
RAMP2	11/13-11/20	1102	0	238	22%
RAMP3	12/3-12/10	1102	0	306	28%
FYE2	12/3-12/10	307	1	81	26%
RAMP Mentor	12/7-12/15	45	0	38	84%

RAMP Survey One: Initial Impressions

Did not meet with a mentor (n=9)

Five respondents said they missed their meeting, three said they don't know who their mentor was, and one said they did not set-up a meeting with their mentor but knew who they were.

Did meet with a mentor (n=380)

The vast majority of students who responded (98%) said they had met with their mentor. Of those students, 370 left a qualitative response that fit into one of four categories: Positive, mixed, negative, and no evaluation.

Open Responses from Students Coded

Category	Percent	Count
Positive	90%	335
Mixed	5%	19
Negative	2%	8
No Evaluation	2%	8

Only 2% (n=8) students left a negative comment or critique of the RAMP Program. An additional 5% had mixed feelings or a positive comment with a critique. 90% had only a positive response about RAMP and/or their mentor.

Examples of Positive Comments about RAMP focused on mentor support, comfort level, and transition to college:

- “Very approachable and she knows me by my name and randomly says hi to me if she sees me on campus. Helps me with my classes. I'd be lost without her”
- “Awesome! I love my mentor! She had a lot of good information for me, and she was very supportive when I told her about a few problems I had. She was very cheery and happy to see me, which made me feel good.”
- “It went very well. My RAMP mentor is very kind and helpful. Not at all scary. She seems to understand what the purpose of mentoring is and is doing very well.”
- “Great, (Mentor Name) is the best mentor I’ve ever had in my life, he is very helpful no matter where he sees me around campus . He’s dedicated and cares. big props to him”
- “Quite well. I really enjoyed meeting my RAMP Mentor actually. She is a delightful personality. We get along well. It's good to hear from someone with experience at HSU already. I feel like I can go to her for any question or concern. Not only will she be a good support for me if I need it, I now have a new friend!”
- “great! (Mentor Name) is an incredible ramp mentor! She is caring and devoting with her time spent at meetings. The program makes it easier not to get lost in the midst of college.”
- “It went well, and was kind of fun.”

RAMP Survey Two: Registration and Use of Student Services

Academic Adviser

Most freshmen (81%) had met with their academic adviser and an additional 5% had appointments planned. With spring registration occurring after Thanksgiving break, this indicates that most students were aware of what they needed to register.

Have Met with Their Academic Adviser

Yes		Appointment Made		No	
<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
193	81%	11	5%	34	14%

Services used by freshman

Respondents were asked questions regarding the awareness and use of student and academic support services. Students were fairly aware of the services that exist, yet they were not well utilized. Of special interest are the services that students need to be successful. Ninety-three percent of freshmen respondents reported knowing how to access the Learning Center, but only 16% had actually used it. Similarly, 86% of respondents reporting knowing how to access both the Math Lab and the Writing Center; however, very few did (18%, 10%, respectfully). With the implementation of an Early Alert system in Fall 2013 which identifies at-risk students, thought needs to be given on how to encourage support services utilization.

Access and Use of Student Services counts and percent

	Know How to Access Service		Have Used Service	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Student Health Center	206	99%	121	62%
Student Clubs and Organizations	205	99%	105	54%
Library Services	201	98%	155	79%
Professor's Office Hours	201	97%	137	70%
DARS (Degree Audit Report for Students)	195	95%	173	86%
Career Center Services	195	93%	60	31%
Learning Center Services (Tutoring)	193	93%	32	16%
Financial Aid Services	191	92%	122	62%
Student Recreation Center (SRC)	186	89%	115	58%
Math Lab	179	86%	35	18%
Writing Center	177	86%	20	10%
Intramural Sports	177	84%	27	14%
Psychological Counseling	173	83%	19	10%
Services for Students with Disabilities	164	78%	15	8%
Testing Services	125	60%	18	9%
Computer Labs	120	58%	44	23%

RAMP Survey Three: Preparing Students for Success

Planning Ahead

RAMP mentors discussed with their mentees how to register for the spring semester as well as making a 4-year plan. Eighty-two percent of all survey respondents ($n=251$) said that their mentor helped them to make a 4-year plan. Of these students, 12% completed all ($n=31$), 26% most ($n=65$), 56% some ($n=141$), and 6% none ($n=14$) of their 4-year plan.

Of the 18% (54) of the students who said they had not discussed a four-year plan with their RAMP Mentor, most said it was because their mentor never brought it up.

Students who did talk to their mentors about a four-year plan

	<i>n</i>	%
My ramp mentor never brought it up	23	43%
I do not have a major	13	24%
I was not ready yet	10	19%
*Skipped question	8	15%

Accessing Their RAMP Mentor

Students were pleased with their ability to contact and schedule meetings with their RAMP Mentor.

Rating Ease of Access to RAMP Mentors

Question	Strongly Agree/Agree		Total Answered
	<i>n</i>	%	
My RAMP mentor returned calls and emails in a timely fashion	286	96%	299
It was easy to schedule meetings with my RAMP mentor	279	92%	302

Amount of Meetings

	<i>n</i>	%	Number of Meetings	Length of Meetings
Not enough	8	3%	1	1.6
Just right	251	84%	4	2.9
Too many	39	13%	4	2.7

The vast majority of survey respondents said the quantity of meetings was just right. Interestingly, students who said the number meetings was too many and students who said the number was just right met on average the same number of times for about same length of time.

Self-identified issues

Students who said personal, academic, course difficulty, and motivational factors concern them throughout the semester were more likely to be on probation than students who said these things were not factors for them.

RAMP Mentor Survey: What the Mentors are Saying about RAMP

Mentors comment on the Effectiveness of RAMP in supporting student success

- “Not only did we contact our mentees via email, but utilized their cell phone numbers, room numbers, and class schedules :)”

Mentors comment on making a difference in the Academic and Social Integration of their mentees

- “I get feedback from my mentees about how much I've done for them and how hard their first year would be without me.”
- “I was able to respond on a personal level to mentees when problems would arise but also lead them to resources that made a difference in their lives and on their approach to their academics.”
- “I helped many students stay on track. I caught some things that mentee's would not and I informed them things that were critical for their success. One example was that a student had chosen complete random classes. We caught this early and were able to enroll in classes that count for graduation.”
- “I reminded all the mentees about deadlines, helped pick out classes, made sure they met with their advisors and brainstormed majors/minors and possible career paths.”
- “I made a difference in many of my mentees' lives. I think, in a way, the most important role I filled was just being a sounding board for my students' concerns about school and their personal lives. Also, I think I was able to help in smaller but more concrete ways like forcing them to set up a meeting with their advisor, helping them register and make a four year plan, or connecting them with a resource on campus.”

Mentors comment on the Success of RAMP

- “I think this is a really great program that I wish I had when I was a freshman. I think it really makes the students think about the future and feel more accountable towards themselves and how they perform during their time at HSU. I also think it makes them feel more attached to the campus and it offers them a connection to someone that may be difficult to find at first.”
- I feel that RAMP was a major success because students engaged in goal setting, went to study sessions, and had their spring semester schedules before registration.
- “I feel students were very much informed of all the wonderful things that are offered on campus: clubs, resources, classes, events, etc. I feel RAMP mentors gave them someone to support them, to guide them, and to listen to them during hard times, whether it's directly related to academics or not. Everyone needs a support person in their life, and I think RAMP effectively provided that to the incoming freshman this semester.”

Mentors comment on the impact of RAMP on their own success at HSU

- “I think being a mentor makes you learn about your own strengths and weaknesses and it is a growing opportunity for you and your mentee.”
- “I would love to be a mentor again. I wish I could do this job after I graduate, because it would be amazing to pour all the energy I devote to school into RAMP. I really like fixing problems--like when a mentee comes to me stressed out about something, and we can take care of it during our meeting. It is the best feeling when my mentee leaves the meeting smiling and feeling relieved. I also think I am a better student because of being a mentor. I am more familiar with campus resources and I have extra motivation to do well in school.”

FYE Survey One: Measuring Course Objectives

Learn to Access and Use HSU Services

The course increased knowledge of services on campus to a great extent. Most students said they already knew how to use the HSU Gmail account.

Answer Options	Agree	Disagree	Already Knew/Do This	n
Library resources	81%	4%	15%	114
Academic resources	78%	4%	17%	115
Health resources	69%	8%	23%	114
DARS	69%	9%	22%	116
Social networking	64%	6%	30%	110
My RAMP Mentor	62%	8%	30%	114
Moodle	60%	5%	34%	116
myHumboldt	57%	3%	40%	115
HSU Gmail	43%	3%	54%	116

Like Best and Like Least

The students spoke very highly about the instructors and liked the small class size, but many felt they already knew the topics, or they weren't relevant. They didn't like that the class was mandatory, that they couldn't choose the time and day of the class, and they didn't like buying the book. The class was too long.

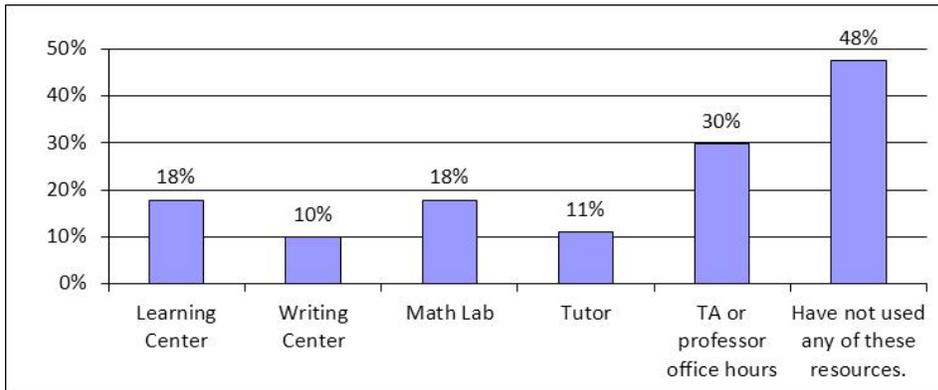
Time Spent Studying

Students said on average that they spent 10 hours studying, but that they should have spent about 17 hours studying. This indicates that students are aware that they do not study the recommended amount of time. Interestingly, students on probation at the end of term and students in good standing both studied an average of 10 hours per week.

What Counts as Study Activities

Study groups topped the list with 43% followed by making flash cards (32%), reading the text book (24%), and reviewing course materials (19%).

Campus Resources



Forty-eight percent of students said they had not yet used any of the student resources offered on campus. Thirty percent had gone to see a TA or professor during office hours.

FYE Survey Two: FYE Students Reflect on Their First Semester

Evaluating the Course

Eighty students indicated they were in the FYE course.

Students were asked to look back on their experience in SP120, and describe how they felt about the course after not having it for eight weeks. Sixty-one percent wrote a negative comment about the course. In general, students liked their lecturer; however, they felt the class was a waste of time. Many said that their RAMP Mentor covered the topics that SP 120 was covering. This might indicate that RAMP Mentors were more effective and time efficient with coverings topics than SP120.

RAMP Replacing SP120

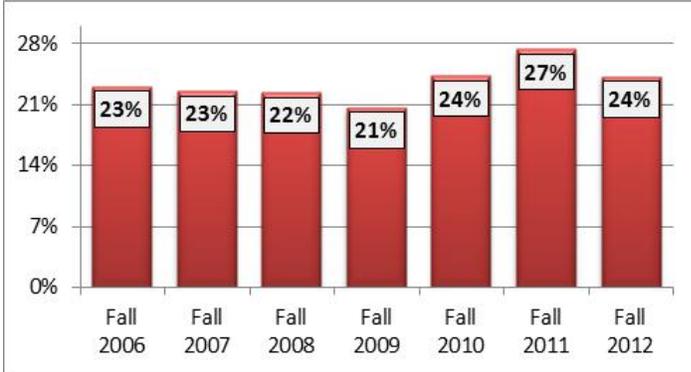
When asked if they relied more on their RAMP Mentor after SP120 ended, 30% of students said yes. This might indicate that for about one third of the students, they needed a semester long resource that SP120 did not provide. With polarized views between RAMP and SP120, it is clear that RAMP was definitely favored greatly by students and if grades support the qualitative feedback, that it is the better of the two programs.

Outcome Metrics for RAMP

Residential Academic Mentoring Program

Since all FTUG students were assigned RAMP mentors, the best comparison is previous year's probation rates.

Percent of FTUG Students on Probation by Academic Year



Over the past 7 years (2006-2012), about 23% of FTUG students have found themselves on academic probation after the first semester. In 2011 this number went up to 27%. In 2012, students on academic probation dropped three percent from the previous year to 24%.

Counts of FTUG Students on Probation by Academic Year

	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012
Good Standing	740	802	906	1051	957	900	899
On Probation	223	234	261	278	311	340	290
None	3	2	1	16	14	5	10
Total	966	1038	1168	1345	1282	1245	1199

RAMP Engagement and Probation Rates

While all FTUG students ($n=1,199$) are assigned a RAMP mentor, some students choose to see their EOP or LPM mentor instead and others choose not to go altogether. The first table below examines only students who did not meet with a RAMP mentor – thus some students who were in EOP and/or LPM who also met with their RAMP mentor were excluded. The second table examines only students who met with a RAMP mentor 1-6 times. Students who met with their RAMP mentors 7-8 times were excluded due to small cell count. Both tables exclude students without an end of term academic standing.

Of the students who did not participate in RAMP, EOP students did the best. Students without a mentor or in LPM had similar probation rates.

Probation of Rates of Students not Involved in RAMP by Other Mentor Type

	No Mentor		EOP Peer Community Course		Latino Peer Community	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Good Standing	91	69%	35	76%	30	71%
On Probation	35	27%	11	24%	12	29%

Students were supposed to meet with their mentors about once every 3 weeks, making about 4-5 meetings per mentee as the ideal number for program effectiveness. The table below shows three natural tiers of performance based on the number of meetings:

- 1-2 meetings: Student performed about the same or poorer as having no mentor
- 3-5 meetings: Students performed slightly better than EOP students
- 6 meetings: Students did the best!

Probation of Rates of Students not Involved in RAMP by Other Mentor Type

	1		2		3		4		5		6	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Good Standing	45	63%	59	64%	163	77%	213	78%	203	79%	41	84%
On Probation	24	34%	31	34%	48	23%	58	21%	54	21%	8	16%

While it appears that students meeting with their RAMP mentors 3 times or more performed the best, this is not causal data. It could be that these students were more engaged in academics and thus sought out extra resources such as RAMP to succeed.

Outcome Metrics for FYE

Evaluating First Year Experience

FYE students were originally selected based on having a high school grade point average (HS GPA) of less than 3.0; however, 20% ($n=57$) of FYE students were selected on other criteria. The Leading Indicators Study (2010) established that students with lower HS GPA's tend to have low college GPA's.

FYE and None FYE Students compared by Academic Probation

	FYE Student			Not in FYE		
	n	%	HS GPA	n	%	HS GPA
Good Standing	189	66%	2.87	710	78%	3.30
On Probation	93	33%	2.75	197	22%	3.07
None	3	1%	2.89	7	1%	3.14
Total	285	100%	2.83	914	100%	3.25

The data clearly show that the RAMP program may have more positive outcomes than the one unit one semester FYE did.