

# *Early Alert Task Force Report and Recommendation*

**Membership:** David Charbonneau, Aida Cuenza, Bob Hughes, Joe Jennum\*, Tom Mauch\*, Baochi Nguyen (Chair), Art Nitta, Julie Perez-Garcia, and Bailey Smith

\*unable to attend all meetings due to time conflict.

## *Early Alert Task Force Function and Purpose*

1. To recommend enhancements to the current early alert tutoring technology to improve the usage and efficacy of the system in allowing faculty to refer students to support services, including counseling and tutoring
2. To develop a plan by which self-selected departments would pilot this enhanced system
3. To review early data and suggest modifications that would allow for wide scale adoption by faculty

## I. Report

### *Task force meetings:*

The task force met four times

Friday 09/12 11-1:30

Tuesday 09/23 1-2:30

Friday 09/26 1-3:30 (with 1 hour demo from Starfish Retention Solution)

Tuesday 09/30 1-2:30

We also conducted our discussions via email to lead to our final recommendations.

### *Information on current early alert system with data*

Faculty can access Tutorial and Counseling Referrals by signing in their **portal** → click on “faculty” tab → click on **Refer Students to Tutoring or Counseling** → click on **Faculty Feedback** → click on ► to the left of the student’s name then a window as follow will pop out

Select any issues that apply

- Academic Counseling
- Behavior Issues
- Career Counseling
- Foundational Concepts - Math
- Foundational Concepts - Writing
- Incomplete Homework
- Low Attendance
- Low Test Score
- Material Review

Offer one or more recommendations

- Visit the American Language (AMLA) Tutoring Center
- Visit the Counseling Center
- Visit the EOPS Tutoring Center
- Visit the Learning Assistance Center (LAC)
- Visit the Math Activities Resource Center (MARC)
- Visit the Speech and Sign Success Center (SSSC)
- Visit the Transfer-Math Activities Resource Center (T-MARC)
- Visit the WIN Program
- Visit the Writing Center

- Missing Course Materials
- None
- Personal Counseling

Enter Comments:

Faculty can click on applicable box(es) and leave comments for the student, then the system will generate a letter and emails it to the student. This process is very embedded. We need to streamline it to make it easier for faculty to find and navigate, hence increasing usage. Currently, when faculty make a referral, one of the following e-mails is sent automatically to the student:

***A sample computer generated letter for counseling referral***

3/7/2014 Referral for CRN: 40807 ENGL 1A				
<p>Dear Zeeshan,</p> <p>Your instructor, Robert Hughes, is concerned about your academic success and is referring you to the Counseling Center to get some additional help. Counselors will assist you with any concerns you may have about your career and educational choices, your academic progress and/or any personal concerns that are affecting your class(es). This will help you achieve greater success this semester and keep you on track to your educational goals. Counseling services at Mt. SAC are free. You can schedule an appointment in person by visiting the 2nd floor of the Student Services Building, by phone at (909) 274-4380, or online by going to the Student Success channel in your portal or the Counseling Center's website at <a href="http://www.mtsac.edu/counseling">http://www.mtsac.edu/counseling</a>. It is strongly recommended that you contact Counseling to schedule an appointment early in the morning as appointment slots fill quickly.</p> <p>Please contact your instructor if you have any questions about this referral.</p> <p>Comments from your Instructor: Please visit a counselor to learn how to better handle work/life balance.</p>				
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="border: none;">ISSUE</td> <td style="border: none; text-align: right;">Personal Counseling</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: none;">RECOMMENDATION</td> <td style="border: none; text-align: right;">Visit the Counseling Center</td> </tr> </table>	ISSUE	Personal Counseling	RECOMMENDATION	Visit the Counseling Center
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***A sample computer generated letter for tutorial referral***

3/7/2014 Referral for CRN: 40807 ENGL 1A				
<p>Dear Alma,</p> <p>As your instructor, I am concerned about your progress in this course. To help you succeed, I am referring you to a tutoring center to get some additional support. Tutors will help you develop the skills and understanding of the class material you will need to do well in the course. These sessions will help you improve your grades, prepare for your next test, and/or complete your next assignment. Tutoring services at Mt. SAC are free, and you can find out more about the tutoring centers on campus by visiting The Tutoring Channel on your student portal (<a href="http://myportal.mtsac.edu">http://myportal.mtsac.edu</a>). Please contact me if you have any questions about this referral.</p> <p>Sincerely, Robert Hughes</p>				
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The tutorial referral option was fully launched in 2013. The Tutor Coordinator's Group, and in particular, its chair, Bailey Smith, has gone above and beyond to publicize the service. Here's the Fall 2013 list of actions the group took to publicize the faculty referral screen:

- Handout distributed at Instruction meeting (August)
- Joint LAC/Writing Center visit to English Department to demo the system
- One page handout given to all full time faculty at Fall Flex Day (August 23)
- Electronic copy sent to all faculty (Sept. 9)
- Handouts of instructions, Ed Code, and Senate Resolution distributed at Instruction meeting(Sept. 11)
- Handouts distributed to Division offices (Sept. 12)
- Reminder e-mails sent to all-faculty list a few weeks into each term
- Instructions placed on Faculty Services Portal (Oct. 7)
- Flyer sent for faculty distribution (Oct. 21)
- Final reminder with updated instructions (Nov. 15)

The data showed that there were over 400 referrals for academic year 2013-2014 mostly from Math and English. Given that this is only a tiny fraction of the 'at risk' students in the developmental sequences, we believe action is needed to increase usage and buy-in from both of these and other departments.

The counseling referral feature was launched in March 2014. The IT department is not aware of any marketing effort to publicize the feature. According to Dr. Julie Perez-Garcia, from Sept. 24, 2013 to Sept 24, 2014 there have been 39 referrals (Note: this is not 39 individual students, but 39 recommendations. Some students had multiple recommendations). Hence, action is needed to increase awareness of this service.

## II. Recommendations

### *1. Modification of current Tutoring and Counseling Referrals System*

- Request IT to include one more column for Kudos with following options
  - **Outstanding performance**
  - **Great job!**
  - **Keep up the good work!**

Note: new wording would need to be developed for the resulting letter that is e-mailed to the student.

- Under "recommendations" column we suggested to add **"Go see your professor during office hours"**

The reason this option is that students don't utilize office hours--normally less than 30% of students come to take advantage of one-on-one help from their professors.

- For easy access a **Mountie Early Alert** channel should be created on faculty portal. When faculty click on the link it will take them to a list of their current courses where they can access class rosters to leave feedback for their students. This would be a much less cumbersome way for faculty to quickly make student referrals.

## ***2. Piloting a campus-wide Early Alert Program***

This pilot should cover the developmental sequences where at-risk students are concentrated, which does tend to be Math and English. We recommend to select 10 courses from math, 10 courses from English, and at least 10 courses from other departments on campus to participate in this pilot. We suggest a low number of course because it will be easier to manage the process in terms of educating faculty on the process, managing referrals, and ideally having "check in" meetings with faculty about the result of the process.

Faculty from selected courses must agree to send "Faculty Feedback" and "Estimated Grade" to enrolled students in their course by the end of 5<sup>th</sup> week.

We can use a "Student Contract" in the syllabus statement as a mechanism to make sure students do response to feedback that they received.

We can use a syllabus contract idea like this one\*

Middlesex Community College  
Strategies for Success-Early Alert Program  
**Early Alert Course Syllabus Statement**

This class has been selected to participate in the Strategies for Success Early Alert Program. The program is designed to promote student success through coordination and communication between students, instructors, advisors, and campus support service departments. If I observe that you are experiencing difficulties in the course (in terms of attendance, test scores, or participation, for example), I will send an email message to your Middlesex email account through the Early Alert program.

My email message will tell you about my concerns and asks you to meet with an academic counselor who can work with you to create a **Strategies for Success Plan** that will address any difficulties that you are having in the course. This plan may involve taking advantage of various campus support services, such academic tutoring or advising. If I recommend that you use campus support services, an email will be sent to that support service department so that they will be better prepared to assist you.

Since the "Early Alert" program provides essential notices by email, a course requirement is that you check your Middlesex email account frequently and respond quickly if you receive an email message through the Early Alert Program. You will be contacted by an appropriate support service department, if you do not respond to this request. By remaining in this course section, you agree to these terms and to participating in the Early Alert Program.

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Name of Student (Print)

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Signature of Student Date

\* we will need to draft up a version that is suitable for our purpose.

We will track all the referrals to tutoring and will have Dr. Julie Perez-Garcia as our “Early Alert” counselor to keep track of all counselor referrals. We have spoke to Lisa DiDonato from research about data collection and analysis.

### ***3. Raise campus-wide awareness of Early Alert Program***

- Request a 5-10 minutes during the convocation at Fall 2015 Flex Day to inform faculty about Early Alert Program with one break out session of the Day devoted to Early Alert issues and strategies.
- Beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> week, IT will send an Early Alert email notification to all faculty to remind/encourage them to use online feedback system to inform students of their current standing in the class with a kudos or recommendation.
- Contact department chairs across campus to help identify an Early Alert faculty advocate for each department.

### ***4. Faculty Survey***

- Based on the committee’s review of the Starfish® early alert system, we all agreed that its greatest feature is being able to centralize everything. In order for Mt.SAC to replicate such a system, we need three things – up-to-date grade books from faculty, attendance, and assigned counselors.
- Hence, we want faculty input on an electronic grade book option integrated with Banner. With this, we will be able to use grades as a trigger for generating an automatic alert letter sent to students. Hence, faculty wouldn’t have to manually send out alerts.

### ***5. Faculty focus group on Mountie Early Alert Program***

- Request funding from FIG to hold discussions on Mountie Early Alert Program for pilot participants and other interested faculty.