Early Alerts
Subcommittee

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Goals

- To investigate and assess current use of Early Alerts
- To determine Best Practices
- To determine how to implement Best Practices

Time-line: 2005/06 academic year
As suggested in “Early Alerts II: An Experimental Evaluation” (RTDE Vol. 20, Issue 1, Fall 2003), early alerts do not significantly impact student behavior. However, they “keep advisors informed about student progress and signal that a student needs attention. These communications between faculty and advisors build trust that everyone in the institution is doing what they can to help students.” (27)
The committee notes that early alerts:

- increase Institute’s and faculty’s accountability to provide documented feedback to students
- increase communication between professors and students (EAs serve to document professor’s outreach to student)
- increase communication among people who work with students (department head, 1st, 2nd, 3rd advisors, FYE coach)
Observations:

- Math department seems to use EAs most consistently.
- Should other departments be using EAs, esp. high service courses (physics, chemistry, LA)?
- Some faculty prefer to use their own system through their own web site.
Issues:

- are EAs used consistently? (by profs, departments, colleges; for 01, 02, 03, 04, and 05 year students; throughout the quarter?)
- are they overused?
- are too many people being copied with result that student is bombarded with “ alarming” messages (issues of confidentiality)?
Issues (cont.)

- are they sent out too soon, too late for recovery?
- do they have any “teeth” to them?
- is there any attempt by faculty, advisors, FYE coaches to follow-up on EAs?
- how are faculty made accountable for sending EAs? if so, how is this communicated?
What training is there for Early Alerts?

- NFO resource fair
- Registrar’s booklet (used for old myCourses)
- Anything within academic departments?
Training for Early Alerts (cont.)

- Online learning was charged with creating materials for “Retention Strategies: Course Design Modifications & The Early Alert System,” but this charge (from Kit) was tabled in late 2003.
What % of faculty use EAs, myCourses, Grade Book, their own web site for posting syllabus, assignments, grades?

- 34% of RIT fall (2005-1) courses used myCourses
- 26% of RIT fall (2005-1) courses are using Grade Book
- Many faculty use their own web sites for syllabus, grading, notification of missing class/assign (Early Alert-type info) but no percent is known
- Is there any correlation between faculty who use myCourses and those who use EAs?
Are Early Alerts being tracked?

- Registrar’s office tracks EAs by
  - College (based on the college of the course in which the early alert or the grade was received)
  - Year level
  - Final Grade
Levels of implementation from:

- Institute: Kit’s e-mail ~week 3-4 urges faculty to send early alerts, especially for 1st year
- Deans–are EAs on their radar?
- Department heads–do they encourage their faculty to use EAs?
Need input from:

- faculty (ClipBoard)
- advisors (ClipBoard)
- students (ClipBoard)
Report submitted to Kit Jan. 21, 2006

- Assumptions
- Research
- Themes for Improvement
- The Next Step: Request for upper admin. support to conduct faculty and student surveys to determine how to improve RIT’s Early Alert System
Themes for Improvement

- Simplify format; make it more flexible
- Train new faculty
- Encourage more routine use of EAs
- Encourage follow-up processes that are most effective for STUDENTS
- Use technology to facilitate communication and follow-up among faculty, students, coaches & advisors
Kit’s Response to committee’s request to survey faculty & students:

- Current system is “widely used” & “dynamic”
- Correlation between EAs and final grades suggests that EAs do “some good”
- There isn’t a “groundswell of discontent among faculty” re: EAs
- All faculty are “required” to use EAs per Kit/Stan’s e-mail week 4
Committee’s Recommendations:

- Draft a “Best Practices” for professional advisors
- Include a suggested format for an EA follow-up letter to the student; provide a sample letter
Cont. Committee’s Rec’s

- For first-year students who receive two or more EAs with no response from the student to the advisor, consider initiating an outreach to parents (letter or phone call)
- Check SIS to see if release of info to parents/guardian permitted or not
Cont. Committee Rec’s

- Deans should encourage the continuous use of EAs throughout the quarter
- Departments should generate EA reports or develop a way of tracking EAs
- There should be an ongoing exchange of information between the FYE coach and the student’s advisor regarding students who have received an EA
- Departments should file copy of each EA in student’s academic folder
Cont. Committee Rec’s

- **FORMAT**: Work with Joe Loffredo to revise format (font, BF, color, cut & paste, shorter, primary info first, allow faculty to choose among different formats)

- **TRAINING**: Provide pre- and post-training on how to use the EA system, reminders to follow-up on EAs, and sample constructive comments
Cont. Committee Rec’s

- TECHNICAL: Create a return-receipt so we know if student received EA
- STUDENTS: Create a protocol that requires students to take action in response to EA; document process
- ADVISORS: Create a protocol whereby advisor gets back to professor to follow-up
Cont. Committee Rec’s

- DEPARTMENTS: provide reminders; encourage faculty buy-in (ex: CIAS EA policy)
- FACULTY: change to a flexible format to allow for individual needs/preferences
Conclusions

- Ideally, students should receive both EAs and mid-quarter feedback
- Many colleges/universities have mandatory mid-term grades/progress reports (can quarter system handle this?)
- Supports faculty accountability to students; helps students who wish to remediate; may quell “helicopter” parents