



# 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**



# Assumptions

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?

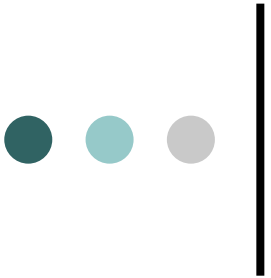
- NFO resource fair
- Registrar's booklet (used for old myCourses)
- Anything within academic departments?





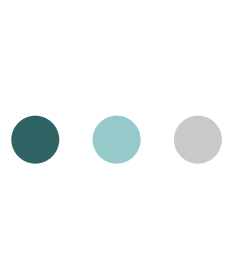
## Training for Early Alerts (cont.)

- 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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