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# Success Training for Academic Resiliency: An Advising Intervention Program for Undergraduate Students on Probation

Charles Liu
*Michigan State University, USA*

Justin Bruner
*Michigan State University, USA*

Ravichandran Ammigan
*University of Delaware, USA*

## ABSTRACT

*In this paper, we examine how Success Training for Academic Resiliency (STAR) Lite, an advising intervention program, influenced undergraduate students to overcome academic probation into achieving good academic standing. We use descriptive quantitative methods to assess the impact of program participation for 194 undergraduate students on academic probation at a large public university in the Midwestern region of the United States. We found that 153 students who participated in the STAR Lite program returned to good academic standing after one semester of intervention, in comparison to 41 undergraduate students who did not participate and did not improve academically. The implication of the findings suggests that students participating in all or extra of the intervention program components overall improved their academic status from probation to good standing.*

**Keywords:** academic probation; student success; undergraduate college students

## INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions within the United States strongly emphasize undergraduate students' collegiate experience immersed in a diverse and vibrant campus community (Renn & Reason, 2021). At the same time, universities must account for students' persistence, retention, and graduation to ensure everyone has an equitable outcome to achieve higher learning and degree (Quaye et al., 2020). Beyond having a moral obligation to prepare students as citizens of the world, institutions of higher education are called upon to provide their students with pathways to graduation (Hamman, 2018; León et al., 2019). One area to increase undergraduate students' persistence to graduate is looking at students on academic probation, which are a vulnerable student population that may not persist after one semester of academic probation (Han et al., 2017; Spurling & Gabriner, 2002; Tovar & Simon, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the Success Training for Academic Resiliency (STAR) Lite program in supporting undergraduate students dealing with academic probation to achieve good academic standing after one semester of program intervention. The research is guided by three research questions: (a) To what degree does the STAR Lite program enhance students' return to academic standing after their academic probation semester? (b) To what extent does the program participation and completion impact students' return to good academic standing? and (c) How does the program affect certain student demographics and the background of their overall academic performance? We begin with a review of the literature and the approach to working with students on academic probation. Next, we provide the methodology for our study and offer implications for working with students who are placed on academic probation. Lastly, we conclude with future research directions for enhancing overall student success work in postsecondary education in the U.S.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, we provide a review of the literature that relates to supporting students on academic probation. First, we contextualize how academic probation is defined at postsecondary educational institutions. Second, we provide academic success intervention literature about improving undergraduate students' academic performance. Lastly, we evaluate literature emphasizing mindsets that lead to better academic performance for students on academic probation.

## Academic Probation in Context

Globally, postsecondary education institutions use a broad range of academic standing policies to measure undergraduate students' academic performance in college (Loucif et al., 2020). Both private and public educational institutions take into consideration college students' characteristics and experiences to affect individual students' academic performance, including the rate of success in persistence, retention, and degree completion during students' college life (Renn & Reason, 2021). In an empirical study, James and Graham (2010) identified common issues—in this case, culture shock, lack of motivation, family or health problems—that often led to negative effects on college students' academic performance (i.e. academic probation). Students who are trending in the negative direction in their academic performance are placed on academic probation (Tovar & Simon, 2006). In other words, any college student "earning less than a C grade" in their cumulative grade point average is placed on academic probation (Tovar & Simon, 2006, p. 549).

Related research revealed that college students on academic probation tended to be younger than the general population and included a disproportionate number of male students, students of color, first-generation students, and international students (Spurling & Gabriner, 2002; Tovar & Simon, 2006). Hence, U.S. higher education institutions have begun to embrace the notion of student success as helping students on academic probation and helping each student achieve goals as part of their educational experience (Renn & Reason, 2021).

## Academic Success Intervention

The burgeoning student success accountability movement is now front and center of most U.S. higher education institutions' agendas (Cantwell, 2018; Renn & Reason, 2021). Namely, research universities employ big data, provide predictive tools, and improve learning outcomes for individual students as well as ways that ensure students are on track to graduate (Daniel, 2015; Williamson et al., 2020). By designing programs that collect data at every step of students' learning process, research universities can now address on-demand student needs with customized modules, assignments, feedback, and learning trees in the curriculum that will promote better and richer learning towards degree completion (Daniel, 2015).

Ross-Gordon (2005) characterizes several significant attributes to student success: the (a) individual effort of self-efficacy, (b) support network on- and off-campus, and (c) relevance of personal experience with their curricular learning. Scholars have found that the distinctive success attributes appear to come from students' own efforts from both self-confidence and self-efficacy (Ross-Gordon, 2005). In other words, when students face obstacles or difficult situations, they overcome them because of the characteristics—

strong willed, self-confident, and self-efficacious—around their internal strength. Overall, scholars agree that academic success interventions begin with an understanding of each student's dispositions and characteristics before cultivating any academic strategies with students.

Factors that contribute the likelihood of academic recovery includes, but not limited to, (i) institutions specific retention goals for underrepresented and minoritized students, (ii) institutions focus attention on academic preparation in pre-college programs, and (iii) institutions provide necessary support such as learning centers across the campus community (Hamman, 2018). A recent intervention for students to achieve good academic standing is the Student Success Model (Royal et al., 2015). Royal et al. (2015) conceptualized that achieving good standing is the outcome determinative of student's sense of control over their success. More specifically, students are motivated to be successfully when they feel supported by the institutions in 1) achieving their academic proficiency, 2) cultivating their skills to navigate institutional resources, and 3) engaging in activities related to their belongingness to the campus community (Royal et al., 2015).

**Academic Achievement Mindsets**

In a quantitative study, Han and colleagues (2017) posit that academic mindsets—noncognitive factors of self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and academic motivation—can predict academic performance for college students and retention rates for higher education institutions. More importantly, analysis of the 1,400 pieces of collected data from surveyed to students demonstrated "high academic mindset groups were more likely to return for their second year than were those in other groups" (Han et al., 2017, p. 1128). Farruggia and colleagues (2018) have further expanded that academic mindset is amenable to change across race and ethnicity for college students with intervention programs. In other words, institutions that designed effective program interventions that included belonging, self-efficacy, and academic motivation increased students' academic performance and resulted in higher retention rates. For example, when students face unfamiliarity with local laws, culture, and academic expectations may lead them to a sense of marginalization and deflation of purpose; and worse when institutions may operate in a deficit-orientation perception—put blames on students if they are unable to seek just-in-time resources—that in reality the responsibility should be on the institution (Foote, 2013; Foote et al., 2008; Philipsen, 2010).

In another quantitative study, Ammigan and Drexler (2021) revealed that a positive statistical association—in this case, students' satisfaction and academic performance—can enhance the effectiveness of educational practices for student success. Namely, U.S. higher educational institutions must focus on academic and support resources starting day one at new student orientation, so students know where to find help (Ammigan & Drexler, 2021),

especially to create humanized educational environments "to develop meaningful relationships with faculty and staff members who care about and are committed to student [*sic*] success" (Quaye et al., 2020, p. 23).

## Conceptual Framework

### *Student Success Model*

The genesis of the student success model aims to close the graduation gap for undergraduate students (White, 2022). We adopt Royal et al.'s (2015) Model for Student Success to serve as a conceptual framework for the STAR Lite program. The Student Success Model addresses three variables, namely academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement (Royal et al., 2015). Each of the Student Success Model variables are used as guiding principles to serve students participating in the STAR Lite program. Most importantly, the Student Success Model integrates with the NACADA academic advising core competences model in serving undergraduate students (See Figure 1). The Student Success Model focuses on three key success indicators to increase undergraduate student's (a) academic proficiency; (b) institutional navigation; and (c) socio-emotional engagement.

#### *Academic Proficiency*

Academic proficiency emphasizes supporting students who were placed on academic probation (James & Graham, 2010; Tovar & Simon, 2006). Academic proficiency is defined as enhancing a student's overall academic grade point average. Academic proficiency includes that students understand their learning styles and utilizing learning strategies to enhance their academic performance. Lastly, students are encouraged to use academic resources on campus early and often to increase their overall academic performance at the end of each semester.

In practice, Quaye et al. (2020) have cautioned that identity-conscious work must be infused throughout all student success work, particular their academic proficiency. Intentional academic advising services—such as the STAR Lite program—focuses on tailoring the needs of each individual student to enhance their academic proficiency while acknowledging students' intersecting identities. As it is key for student affairs professionals as well as faculty members to keep abreast of continuous learning on how students learning and how their identities affect their learning.

#### *Institutional Navigation*

Here, the navigational abilities affect how students understand academic policies related to their academic standing and their time to degree

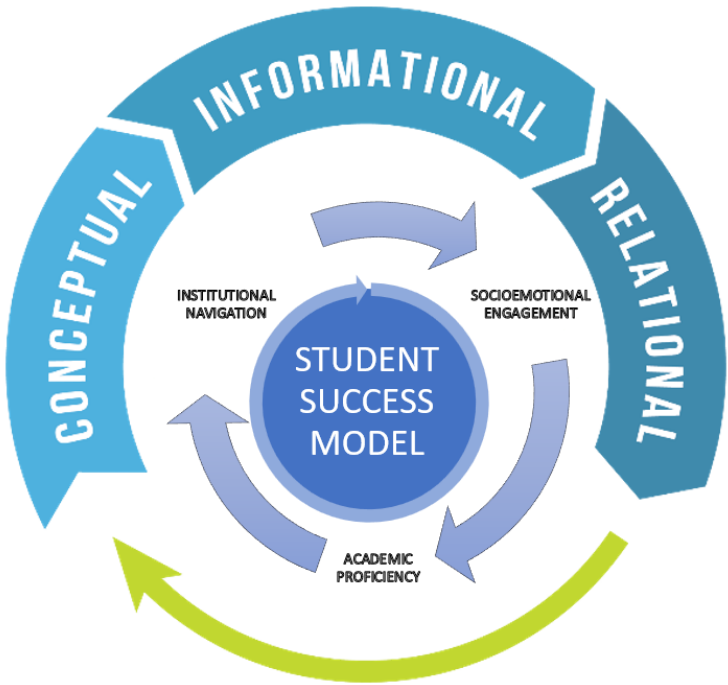
attainment. The more likely students are to understand institutional policies and procedures, then the likelihood of students feeling more confident in how to navigate resources and seek help increases. The onus is on the institutions of higher education to ensure just-in-time services and easy-to-find resources that are accessible across campus.

In practice, institutions should offer training and development for faculty and staff members to learn how students navigate campus resources. Higher education is a place for continuous co-learning. University faculty and staff members must be equipped to develop course curricula and engage in teaching practices that are suitable for a diverse student population on what, why and how institutional navigation skills are key for student success.

*Socio-emotional Engagement*

Grounded in the literature's focus on student's sense of belonging (Renn & Reason, 2021), socio-emotional engagement is to increase (a) student's ability to balance their engagement with campus; (b) reflecting on their campus environment for their development; and (c) balancing their engagement with purpose and intercultural awareness.

**Figure 1**. Integration of Student Success Model and Academic Advising Core Competencies Model




*Note.* Adapted from NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model (2017)

The institution strives to close the achievement gap of underserved students by implementing the Student Success Model since 2009 (White, 2022). Additionally, the Neighborhood Model aligned with the literature that especially for underrepresented and historically marginalized students—low-income, first-generation, students of color—have benefited the most regarding their overall success at and beyond the institution (Quaye et al., 2020; Renn & Reason, 2021; White, 2022).

In practice, institutions bear the responsibility to provide in-house certification of micro-credentialing to enhance intercultural competence, diversity, equity, and inclusion from broad contexts—such as Eastern, Western, African, and Native Indigenous ways of knowing and student support/engagement to help them they feel welcome and belong to the campus community. We recommend faculty and staff members need to listen and involve student panels and presentations to faculty and staff. These types of listening sessions create space for intra- and inter-cultural perspectives to make students feel a) safe and comfortable, b) valued and cared for, and c) their voices are being heard to make change for their success.

### *NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model*

The underpinnings of the NACADA academic advising core competencies are to effectively support academic advisors in their advising of undergraduate students (NACADA). The three core competencies are (a) conceptual; (b) informational; and (c) relational. First, conceptual provides context and approach in academic advising. Second, information provides substance to how academic advisors advise students. Third, relational enhances the skills for advisors to connect with students in a caring and authentic way. The NACADA academic advising core competencies is a circular framework in which each component is interrelated. Additionally, we centered student success in the core competencies as the literature grounds as the goal of advising—that is, putting the student in the center of the work (Liu & Ammigan, 2021). Hence, we integrated the NACADA model with the Student Success model (See Figure 1).

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

In reviewing the extant literature, higher education scholars have indicated a myriad of reasons—Torres et al.'s (2012) sense of belonging, Cox's (2009) college fear factor, Quaye et al.'s (2020) lack of student engagement, and Conner and Rabovsky's (2011) affordability and access—that contributed to undergraduate students' academic performance. We pulled the above theories together to conceptualize a student success model that broadens the scope to include multiple student identities that could help shape a new student support

program design. Therefore, we amassed literature that addresses student success work—academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement—into one model (i.e., Student Success Model).

**Description of STAR Lite Intervention**

Success Training for Academic Resiliency (STAR) Lite is grounded in a strength-based mindset to help undergraduate students to persist in college. The Lite connotes the idea that the program is tailored to the needs of the student and centered on the resources that are most urgent for their success. Namely, the STAR Lite program focuses on studying the patterns of academic probation rates of undergraduate students concurrently to provide practical advice for students. For this purpose, the program used the Student Success Model as the conceptual framework to analyze issues related to the academic performance of undergraduate students who are/were on academic probation. The Student Success Model addresses three variables, namely academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement (Royal et al., 2015).

**Protocol/Method**

The purpose of this protocol/method is to help streamline the internal office function to track STAR Lite students' academic progression as efficiently as possible. The protocol is tailored around the needs of individual students and for their best interests. At the conclusion of each semester, undergraduate students receive their Academic Standing of Undergraduate Students (ASUS) notification. This notification states each student's academic standing based on their updated grades from the most recent semester. Students with a grade point average (GPA) of under 2.0 (out of 4.0) are considered to not be in good academic standing and therefore become candidates for participation in the STAR Lite program. We began by inviting students to participate in the STAR Lite program who were Exploratory Preference (undeclared) majors and placed on academic probation. Students are only required to participate in the STAR Lite program for the one semester immediately after being placed on academic probation. Participation in the STAR Lite program requires meeting with an assigned STAR Lite advisor at least three times during the academic semester. In the short term, the goal for the STAR Lite program is to support students in returning into good academic standing at the end of the next semester. In the long term, the goal is to help the student's persistence and help them graduate.

**Data Collection**

Participation in STAR Lite depends on each undergraduate students' academic performance, where their grade point average is the primary indicator of their academic standing using the previously described ASUS

process. For example, students may be in good academic standing, academic probation, recess, or dismissal under their earned grade point average at the end of the semester. Students will be notified through institutional communication channels (i.e., email) of their ASUS and next steps. Specifically, for the STAR Lite program, students placed on academic probation are also exploring their academic degree program options and have not decided which degree to graduate from at the institution.

Collectively, the STAR Lite program was designed to create a sense of belonging and persistence at the academic success at the institution. More specifically, the cohort model in the STAR Lite program allowed students to work together and share their experiences that spurred motivation as well as kept each other accountable beyond the participating semester. More specifically, the program served as a starting point for students to build a peer-to-peer community of support guided by the Neighborhood Student Success Model.

**Participants and Context**

In this study, we examined a total of 153 undergraduate students on academic probation who participated for one-semester in STAR Lite program over the course of four consecutive academic semesters at a Midwestern university in the United States. Each academic semester is 16 weeks (or about 4 months) in total. All undergraduate students on academic probation are pursuing their first bachelor's degree in a singular major.

**Table 1. Background Characteristics**

| | STAR Lite (*n*=153) | | Comparison (*n*=41) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *N* | Percent | *N* | Percent |
| **Background** | | | | |
| Male | 108 | 71% | 24 | 59% |
| Non-White | 98 | 64% | 27 | 66% |
| Pell Recipient | 47 | 31% | 19 | 46% |
| First Generation | 57 | 37% | 11 | 27% |
| International | 52 | 34% | 8 | 20% |

Since data collection takes place across four separate academic semesters, this creates four distinct cohorts of STAR Lite students. At the completion of the data cycle, academic information for 41 additional students was collected to serve as a comparison group. These students were also placed on academic probation and had similar backgrounds to the STAR Lite participants. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the four cohorts of STAR Lite participants and comparison students. Among the five background characteristics, we included Pell Grant recipients' students to demonstrate the

STAR Lite program is inclusive to serve students who have exceptional financial need and maybe award aid by the U.S. government to obtain their first bachelor's degree in college. We also tracked their legal sex, race/ethnicity, citizenship, and if they identified as the first generation.

**Data Analysis**

In this study, we use descriptive quantitative methods to return to good academic standing the following semester is the measured outcome. We disaggregate this outcome by both student demographics and the degree of participation in STAR Lite as well as compare the outcomes of STAR Lite students against similar students who did not participate in STAR Lite. Next, we obtained demographic data (i.e., background characteristics) of both groups. Then we calculated the STAR Lite program completion amount each semester for the STAR Lite program group. Lastly, for all students, we determined how many students on academic probation returned to good standing (or off academic probation) after one semester. We used a simple t-test to calculate our descriptive statistics between STAR Lite program participants and comparison group who did not participate in any components of the STAR Lite program.

## RESULTS

**Level of engagement with the STAR Lite Program**

The initial analysis focused on the level of participant engagement with the program as measured by a categorical variable. Participants were sorted into one of four groups based on how much of the program they completed—None, some (at least one component), All (required aspects of meeting with their STAR Lite program advisors at least three times during the semester), or Extra (e.g., seek additional advising meetings beyond the minimum requirements). Figure 2 displays the percentage of a given cohort that falls into each group. In a broad sense, student engagement with the program increased with each subsequent semester, possibly due to improvements from experience on the part of the program administrators or through program reputation. Both the 'none' and 'some' categories show a declining percentage of students during the final three cohorts. The percentage of students completing all the requirements increased in each of the first three cohorts and showed only a slight decrease in the final cohort. The percentage of students completing additional work related to the program curiously shows a bimodal distribution with the first and last cohorts having the greatest percentage of students in this group.

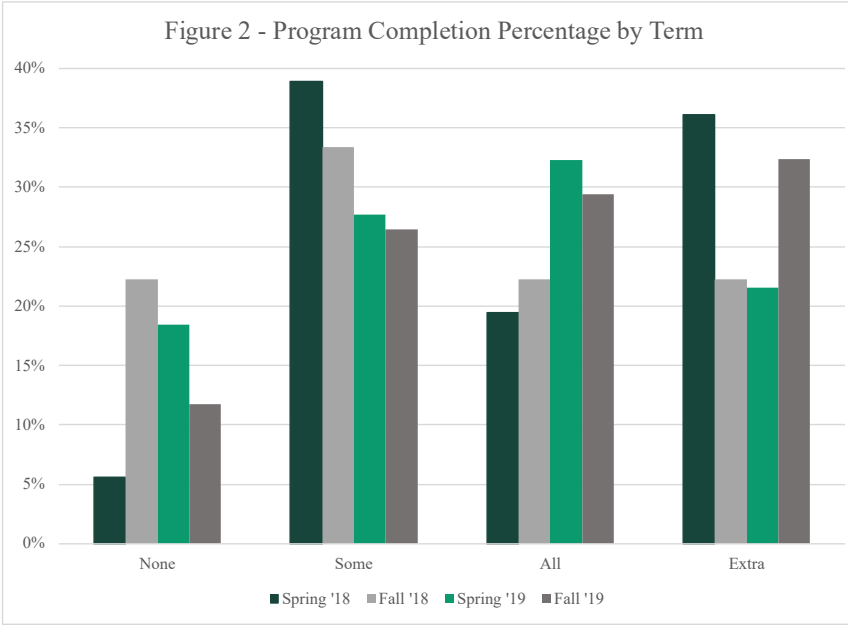


Figure 2 - Program Completion

**Impact of STAR Lite on returning to good academic standing**

The next question the analysis sought to explore was the impact of the STAR Lite program to helping students return to good academic standing and how those cohorts of students might differ from the comparison students. We aggregated spring 2018, fall 2018, spring 2019, and fall 2019 semesters' data to calculate the impact of students return to good academic standing after one semester of STAR Lite program participation against the comparison group. A simple t-test found no statistically significant relationship between being a STAR Lite participant and returning to good academic standing after a student's first semester. By calculating the aggregated data of the four semesters of STAR Lite program participation, half of the comparison group of students returned to good academic standing after the semester they were placed on academic probation while about 48% of the STAR Lite participants returned to good academic standing.

Attending to the distribution of returning to good academic standing with respect to the amount of the STAR Lite program completed indicates that a lack of significance may be due to the diffusion of program participation (Figure 3). Participants that completed all the STAR Lite program or extra components of the program returned to good academic standing at a higher rate than the comparison group while students that completed none or only some of the program returned to academic standing at a lower rate. This hints that completing the entire program is important to a student being able to return to good academic standing. It may also be the case that there is some

unmeasured motivational characteristic operating independently of the program for students that completed all or extra program components. Since students were not randomly assigned, unpacking these hypotheses further is beyond the scope of this analysis.


Figure 3 - Return to Good Standing

**Differential impact of STAR Lite based on student demographics**

The final component of this analysis seeks to understand if the STAR Lite program was more successful in returning specific populations of students to good academic standing compared to others. Table 2 below replicates the population table with the modification of indicating the percentage of students within a given population that were able to return good academic standing for both STAR Lite participants and comparison students. Male students in the STAR Lite program appeared to have less success returning to academic standing compared to the comparison group with a 14% difference between male participants and non-participants. However, students that identified as first generation appeared to be well served by the STAR Lite program. Half of the first-generation participants returned to good academic standing compared to only 30% in the comparison group.

**Table 2. Return to Good Standing by Background**

| | STAR Lite (*n*=153) | | Comparison (*n*=41) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *N* | Percent | *N* | Percent |
| **Background** | | | | |
| Male | 48 | 44% | 14 | 58% |
| Non-White | 50 | 52% | 14 | 54% |
| Pell | 18 | 39% | 8 | 42% |
| First Generation | 28 | 50% | 3 | 30% |
| International | 29 | 56% | 5 | 63% |

## DISCUSSION

The data presented above answered all three research questions in this study. Overall, we found that all and extra participation in the STAR Lite program services generally enhance students' return to good academic standing after one semester when there is student engagement. Comparatively, we see a lower rate of first-generation students on academic probation to return to good academic standing if they did not participate in any of the program services. Our data guides the response to the three research questions: (a) students who participated in the STAR Lite program generally persisted into the continuing semesters at the university, (b) international students have the highest percentage to return to good academic standing after one semester the STAR Lite program, and (c) underrepresented students—e.g., female students of color and male international students—generally see a greater increase of their academic performance when participating in the program.

First, we distinguished participation rates—none, some, all, and extra—in the STAR Lite program that generally helps students on academic probation persist into the next academic semester. Overall, students who participated in all and extra of the program requirements do persist into the next academic semester. Even when male students in the STAR Lite program appeared to have less success returning to academic standing into the following semester compared to the comparison group with a 14% difference between male participants and non-participants, they all persisted to remain at the institution and avoid academic recess or dismissal. On the other hand, some male students may need longer time to establish rapport with their STAR Lite advisors as well as allowing more time to process their academic mindsets.

Moreover, we see a higher success rate returning to good academic standing for students who identified as first generation—namely, half of the first-generation participants returned to good academic standing compared to

only 30% in the comparison group—because many of the STAR Lite program included a component such as sense of belonging, institutional navigation tools, and academic mindsets appeared to be better received by them. In other words, first generation students look for STAR Lite advisors to make them feel they belong to the institution, provide key resources, and believe that they can achieve success even when they are on academic probation.

More importantly, the STAR Lite advisors purposefully guided students on academic probation with a growth mindset as well as served as an accountability partner to ensure students themselves achieved the goals they set for themselves. First generation students had the highest percentage of returning to good academic standing with a 20% difference compared to the comparison group The STAR Lite advisors intentionally approached the advising session as co-navigator to identify campus resources with the student's needs. Non-White and male international students had the highest increase in semester GPA after participating in the program. Here, designated STAR Lite advisors intersect with students' social identities and help make them feel more comfortable, welcome, and cared for. Aligning with the literature and findings from our study—particularly applying the Student Success Model in the STAR Lite program—a few key implications for academic advising units and campus-wide student support offices emerged. These are discussed below.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION PRACTICE

### Academic Advising Strategies to Enhance Students' Academic Proficiency

Informed by the findings from this study, we offer a few recommendations for academic advisors as they develop advising practices and support strategies to work for-and-with students on academic probation to enhance their academic proficiency.

*Validate each student's stories and situation(s).* Advisors should affirm students' intersecting identities—for example, sexual, socioeconomic, (dis)abilities, legal status, technological abilities and more—without casting judgment based on their academic grade point average. For instance, if a student in their first advising appointment appears to be disheveled or looks confused, pausing judgment and simply asking how they are doing right now might bring important information as to why students are feeling this way as well as stop our own personal assumptions. In other words, advisors need to humanize the advising experience by demonstrating care and compassion for students to feel (Liu & Ammigan, 2021).

*Provide just-in-time guidance and resources.* Resources and services to support academic enrichment, study skills, time management, etc., should be made available to students throughout the semester. Similarly, to what

occurred in the STAR Lite program, advisors should have these readily available academic resources to tailor to the needs of the students so they can utilize that which may improve their skills and knowledge, their ability to find their community of support, and their likelihood to motivate their study habits, as well as gain a higher education GPA to persist toward graduation.

*Help with goal setting.* Advisors can set iSMART goals (defined here as Identifying, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) with students and account for their milestones throughout the semester. The advising sessions occurred during the STAR Lite program helped students take practical and realistic steps to achieve their goals and to ensure progress towards academic success.

*Cultivate mindful mindsets and engage in meaning-making dialogues.* Advisors should reflect on how growth mindsets can cultivate a positive attitude to empathize with students and engage in more authentic advisor-advisee relationships where there is an intentional space (Liu & Cermak, 2022) where students feel comfortable to share their feelings in their learning experiences. These dialogues may build a deeper relationship amongst peers, staff, and faculty of belonging to the institutional eco-environment (Museus et al., 2017).

## Feedback and Assessment to Enhance Students' Institutional Navigational Skills

Ammigan and Drexler (2021) revealed that student success work begins day-one at orientation; this serves as the first touch point to make a significant impact on how students find and get access to resources for their success. Thereby institutions can recalibrate their resources—i.e., asking questions for student success: Do the program work? What works? What can be improved to be more effective? Who are the partners to advance the work?—for a continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms to cultivate a supportive campus community that is easily identifiable and accessible for students to navigate resources they need.

*Feedback.* One critical component to understanding how students are navigating campus resources is to listen to students' concerns—academic, socio-emotional, financial, as well as familial situations—that pinpointing why they are using the resources on campus. For example, institutions of higher education need to pay attention when students are facing culture shock, lack of motivation, or family and health problems that attributed to their academic probation status (James & Graham, 2010). In the classrooms or outside the classrooms, receiving feedbacks from students how they are finding the resources they need (e.g., course syllabus) is helpful to determine scaling of institutional programmatic capacity for a better academic outcome,

at the same time cultivating a sense of shared responsibility as part of their college experience.

*Assessment.* Campuswide continuous assessment—both qualitative and quantitative—will help better understand the academic needs and challenges of students and in turn provide necessary support services, such as how we assessed pre-post STAR Lite student's effectiveness on navigating campus resources in a timely manner to achieve their intended goals and objectives. Having an assessment plan can provide institutions of higher education a clear eye view to proactively engage with students of just-in-time resources when students are trending a downward direction in their academic performance (Tovar & Simon, 2006).

*Collaborative engagement.* Putting feedback and assessment into action, we recommend campus units–academic departments and student support units–to partner on outreach initiatives to effectively reach, engage, and communicate with student groups on campus. Students must also be encouraged to fully engage with their learning community by taking advantage of study groups, collaborative class projects, and academic support from teaching assistants and academic staff. In turn, collaborative engagement with students and campus units may converge students' needs and institutional programs synchronously and effectively.

## Intercultural Programming to Enhance Students' Socioemotional Engagement

Reflecting on the literature, scholars are keen to ensure higher education institutions should bear the responsibilities to ensure student success implementation is inclusive of their socioemotional wellbeing (Cantwell, 2018; Renn & Reason, 2021). For instance, institutions can ease the "deficit-orientation" of students to provide the best educational opportunities for them inside and outside the classrooms; and institutions must adapt flexible models to advise and teach students centering on their learning experiences. Below are some approaches institutions can consider implementing (Foote, 2013; Foote et al., 2008; Philipsen, 2010).

*Culturally relevant programming.* We suggest culturally relevant programming and events on campus and in the community to sustain their sense of belonging. Further, there should be programming for intercultural engagement inside and outside of the classroom through partnerships and collaborations with academic and non-academic units on campus (Chow, 2019).

*Role model.* We recommend institutions provide group chat opportunities for students to become role models for themselves and other students who may be experiencing similar situations in the group; this would include peer-to-peer mentoring and student leadership programs.

*Celebrate culture.* Institutions can celebrate and encourage this process as a lifelong journey of continuous learning and growth for the students and their families. More joyous and celebratory settings can lead to more humanizing and culturally engaging learning environments (Flores Lopez, 2021; Joseph et al., 2019).

*Health and wellness.* Counseling services and student health and wellness programs. While advisors may not be licensed counselors, they may suggest interventions that can support their students in overcoming wellness challenges. For instance, making sure that advising offices or spaces feel safe and welcoming can provide a sense of comfort for students who are struggling with emotional stress. Academic advisors should also be encouraged to complete psychological first aid training that can help identify students' state of emotional wellbeing and, in turn, make timely referrals to the counseling center or student wellness office.

*Support programs.* Equally important, institutions need to design programs and allocate resources that support students through personal issues such as financial, familial, emotional, and visa and immigration status. These can be achieved by linking to existing campus resources from partner offices such as the Financial Aid office, Dean of Students Office, Counseling Center, and International Student Office, and by collaborating with them to offer dedicated support services to students (Ammigan & Drexler, 2021; Museus et al., 2017).

## Limitations

The current study on the STAR Lite program focuses on pre-COVID-19 pandemic—from academic years 2017 to 2019—where all student services were provided in person. Due to the nature of the pandemic, all services pivoted to remote format. Second, students participating in STAR Lite in this study were living on or near campus; however, this study does not address the academic semester beginning in March 2020-onward as many students moved back home or farther away from campus; therefore, services were provided via virtual platforms (Microsoft Teams or Zoom). Lastly, we only look at one research university in the Midwest region which is neither representative nor generalizable for all undergraduate students who face academic probation issues in the United States.

## Further Research

There are several gaps in the current study that further research would benefit to serve a broader range of students. First, the COVID-19 pandemic and its variants have disparately impacted millions of students and their families, which has caused a decline in overall undergraduate students' enrollment starting in 2020. Hence, future research could examine which student demographics choose to attend colleges and universities and study

their academic preparedness and performance during the pandemic era. Second, the turn of the 2020 pandemic has spurned racial (re)awakening in the higher education landscape—namely, that the issue of diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as social justice (DEIJ) is front and center of debate beyond the borders of the campus environment—affecting students' purpose and focus on their academic performance. Future research on how DEIJ issues affect each student's academic performance is an important factor. Lastly, the internationalization of higher education has been an important factor in teaching and learning as well as the work of student affairs professionals to serve students (Roberts et al., 2021).

We suggest future research, in a randomized controlled trial (RCT), delineate and compare undergraduate students with intersecting demographics (e.g., international rural female students v. in-state rural female students) of their longitudinal academic performance from their first semester to graduating semester. This comparison may inform whether the internationalization of higher education is benefiting international students not just being academically successful but also becoming a connector to bridge the gap between cross-cultural understanding. In essence, future research may include predictive analytics and institutional support services to help students to foresee their needs—as soon as a slight drop in their academic performance—before getting into academic probationary status at the end of the semester.

## CONCLUSION

Through a holistic approach, we found the STAR Lite program did show a positive influence on students' academic performance after one semester of intervention. These results are not generalizable, yet the data affirms our descriptive analysis that students participating in all and extra of the STAR Lite program overall improved their academic standing from probation to good. Literature is clear that students who feel more in control of their academic success and comfortable navigating the campus resources tend to perform better academically. Informed by the Student Success Model, our academic advising emphasizes the students' sense of autonomy and resiliency through the STAR Lite program. Future research and practice need to continue to study the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on undergraduate students' success in postsecondary education. Our study is a starting point for institutions to understand that investing more in academic resources enhances student success initiatives for all students. The question is whether institutions will continue to invest—through policies, programs, and services—centering on students' needs as part of the institutional ethos in student success work.

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**CHARLES LIU,** JD, is an advising director with the Neighborhood Student Success Collaborative at Michigan State University. His research interests include academic advising policies and practices that affect student success initiatives. Email: charlie7@msu.edu

**JUSTIN BRUNER,** PhD, is a Data Analyst in the Office of the Provost, Undergraduate Education Unit, at Michigan State University. His professional work is dedicated to supporting all undergraduate units at Michigan State University by providing holistic data analytic solutions that promote equity, inclusion, and undergraduate student success. His research interests focus on active learning pedagogy and spaces as conduits for student success and closing opportunity gaps. Email: jbruner@msu.edu

**RAVICHANDRAN AMMIGAN,** PhD, is the Associate Provost for International Programs and an Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Delaware. His primary area of research focuses on international student experiences in higher education, with an emphasis on campus living, learning, and support services. Email: rammigan@udel.edu

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