A Strengths Based Approach to Student Retention

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Strengths Based Case Management (SBCM) Theoretical Framework

“The strengths perspective is based on the belief that individuals possess abilities and inner resources that allow them to cope effectively with the challenges of living.”

Rothman, 1994; Weick, 1983; Weick & Pope, 1988

Guiding principle behind our intervention
Components of Intervention

- Social Work Case Management
  - One-on-one

- Crisis Intervention
  - Housing, Suicide, Grief & Loss, Drugs and/or Alcohol

- Academic Enrichment Programs
  - Critical thinking, tutoring, various support groups
Referrals

- Self Referral - 81%
- Instructor Referral – 19%

Top Five Reasons I See Students

- Inability to balance home, work & school responsibilities
- Drug & Alcohol
- Mental health problems
- Lack of housing
- Financial problems
Number of Students Served

- 2004
  - 131 (1:1) SW interactions
- 2008
  - 404 (1:1) SW interactions

Average number of interactions per student: 8-10
Who Participated?

- Of our 2009 graduating seniors, I worked with 29 of the 62 students
- 1st graduating class I’ve worked with beginning to end
- 41% of these students were minorities
- All perceived themselves as being at high risk for not succeeding in the program
- They sought me out!
Retention Rates for Class of 2009

- 62 graduating seniors
- 29 of the 62 participated in the SBCM program (‘07~’09)
- These 29 students represent 37% of the class of 2009

- 100% were retained and will graduate May 2009!
Outcomes

- Post program satisfaction surveys
- 75% wanted more social work services
- 83% would refer a peer to the social worker
- The only dissatisfaction was there were not enough available appointments with the (one) social worker
Summary

- Two themes emerged
  - Value of the helping relationship
  - A focus on personal strengths
Questions and Answers

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