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Executive Summary

The current program review process has established a reference point for the Academic Success Program (ASP) that has been lacking since the time it began. The program, which was first established by the university in 1975 as a summer bridge program for conditionally admitted students, has seen various changes since its inception. One of the most significant changes was in 2007 when the program became its own entity in response to a directive from UNC General Administration. Therefore, the focus of this review is on ASP since its reorganization at that time. While data does exist prior to 2007, it has not been referenced in this review.

The timing of this review is also significant in that ASP is currently implementing new measures to enhance program assessment and evaluation. The recent creation of a Student Advisory Board allows ASP students to have direct involvement in evaluating and planning the program. Additionally, the measures taken this summer to establish ASP as a part of the Education Briefcase initiative, ensure that the program is an integral part of the QEP and its implementation with first-year students and establishes an assessment method for evaluating ASP learning outcomes.

One of ASP’s most significant weaknesses is in the area of program assessment and evaluation. Although data has been collected each year, this administrative program review is the first attempt at evaluating the program in a comprehensive manner. One strong point, however, is that the current ASP Coordinator has worked with the program since 2001 and has continually used evaluative measures to build up the program and bring consistency to its structure. The ASP Coordinator has gathered much of the data on the program by hand, with the assistance of student workers, and there has been little time to do much analysis. The information included in the Response to Review Criteria is primarily based on data collected by the ASP staff, with some supporting data from the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE) and the Office of Admission. It seeks to provide a general overview of the program and key areas for improvement. However, much data has been collected on ASP that was not addressed in this review. Additional analysis needs to be conducted to search for recurring themes and trends in the students’ success rates and contributing factors to on-going success.

This year, there were two significant shifts in the structure of ASP. The first was a change in the Admission criteria toward a primary emphasis on SAT scores. The second was the elimination of using the EDRD 150: College Reading and Vocabulary course and offering all ASP students two Liberal Studies courses (the First Year Seminar and a Perspective course), in addition to the one-hour credit, COUN 140: College Success Seminar course. A review of the data collected from the
last three years is used to establish a baseline comparison against these new factors. Based on preliminary data from this summer and current student progress reports from this fall, it is expected that the rising trend of success that ASP has recently experienced will be significantly impacted in a negative way. If this is the case, data from this review should be used to direct future changes related to the criteria used for selecting conditionally admitted students.

An additional area for consideration is an adjustment to the case-management model of advising ASP students so that it more effectively monitors students’ progress and utilizes current instruments that help empower students to create success in their academic careers. This would require close collaboration with the Advising Center to re-align advisor duties to include a more focused approach to working with ASP students and avoiding duplication of effort. The ASP Coordinator and advisors would also need additional training in order to best utilize instruments, such as the College Student Inventory, that assist them in working with students to define academic goals and priorities.

Finally, this review indicates a significant need for administrative support for ASP. Currently, the ASP Coordinator oversees every aspect of the program, including many administrative details that are very time-consuming and detract from more important functions such as providing interventions with the most at-risk students. Student workers and graduate assistants have often been used to try and fill this void which would more appropriately be served by professional administrative support due to the nature and complexity of the tasks.
Response to Review Criteria

Program Purpose and Goals
Western Carolina University offers the Academic Success Program (ASP) as an opportunity for students to begin their college experience early and to prepare them for success in college and beyond. This program is designed to provide a complete first-year experience to students and to help them develop skills to make their college career more successful. It helps motivate students to set higher goals in school and in life and helps hold students accountable for demonstrating attitudes and behaviors that coincide with reaching their goals.

ASP, which begins with a six-week summer term, is designed specifically for conditionally admitted students who are selected by the Office of Admission based on their potential for success at WCU which is determined, in part, by their high school GPA, SAT/ACT test scores, and academic background. ASP is structured to provide the participants with a more seamless transition into the fall semester by allowing them to focus directly on building necessary academic and life skills which will be essential to their success. It does so by establishing high levels of communication among faculty and staff in collaboration with the ASP Coordinator to provide an integrated learning experience for the students, as well as providing students with multiple opportunities for engagement at the university and within the surrounding community. In the fall semester, the students are dispersed among the freshman population and receive continued support through their entire first year, including regular meetings with academic advisors and peer mentors. (See Appendix A for Admission Criteria Overview.)

ASP seeks to:
- Assist underprepared students in developing effective academic and life skills
- Provide support for students through their first year of enrollment as they transition from conditionally-admitted status to fully-enrolled, continuing students
- Engage students in campus programs and activities that foster their learning and development
- Hold students accountable for demonstrating attitudes and behaviors which lead to academic success

ASP fulfills the above objectives by providing an educational experience which empowers students to:
- Identify and utilize various communication methods to understand and convey information appropriately and effectively.
• Utilize strategies to strengthen personal, academic, and professional skills and behaviors in making a successful transition through their first year at WCU.

• Individually and collaboratively utilize appropriate campus resources, academic policies, and student programs to become active participants in their experience at WCU.

• Exhibit clear, sound reasoning as they develop goals and plans which reflect their purpose and values as engaged learners.

• Participate in service learning experiences and co-curricular activities aimed at developing their social skills and providing opportunities for learning about the campus and surrounding community.

**History and Description of Unit**

In 1975, WCU established access to the university for conditionally admitted students through the creation of a summer bridge program. This occurred prior to the Minimum Course Requirements (MCR) being established by the UNC System and before WCU decided to discontinue its use of remedial/developmental courses.

According to Phil Cauley, Director of Student Recruitment and Transitions, “The admission requirements were not as rigid as they are now, and we were encountering a fair number of applicants who, based upon course selection, performance in classes, and/or standardized test scores had indicators that pointed toward the potential to be successful in college, but also had some academic indicators that placed them at risk.” Mr. Cauley further articulates, “This was also prior to implementation of the tuition surcharge, heightened satisfactory-completion-toward-a-degree policies by the NCAA, the revamping of the college prep track in NC public schools, etc. The primary goal was to help these students address core deficiency areas (predominantly English, reading and math) and to hone their study skills in order to increase their potential for success. Early on, the bulk of the courses many were taking as part of the program did not count toward Liberal Studies and/or hours for graduation (i.e., ENGL 100, MATH 100, EDRD 150).”

Throughout the early years of its inception, the program was housed under various offices affiliated with Student Affairs and Orientation Programs until it transitioned primarily to the Career Academic Planning and Placement (CAP) Center. It was also called by various titles, such as Summer Bridge Program, Summer Enrichment Program, and Summer Success Program. With the reorganization of the CAP Center and the creation of the Advising Center in the mid-1990’s, it then transitioned to be coordinated jointly between the Advising Center and the Department of Residential Living, specifically between the Associate Directors of each. On average the program had approximately 60 – 100 students.
In 2001, the decision was made to create more consistency with the program and establish a sole coordinator who would work collaboratively with the other units on campus. A vacant academic advisor position was redefined to include coordination of the Academic Success Program and Janina DeHart, the current ASP coordinator, was hired to fill this role. She began working consistently to build campus networks which have helped expand ASP into its current structure as a first-year experience for conditionally admitted students. (See Appendix B for an Overview of ASP Collaboration.)

For a period of three years, from 2004 – 2006, there was an added program for conditionally admitted students beginning in the fall term, called Fall ASP. These students showed higher potential for success than the Summer ASP students, but still had risk factors that indicated a need for additional support. With no funding or support in place for this new “program,” Fall ASP required students to take a fall transition course and receive additional advising support.

Then, in 2007, the UNC General Administration implemented an initiative for all of the UNC System schools to develop summer bridge programs. Using this initiative as a springboard, ASP became its own separate entity, with the Coordinator, Janina DeHart, reporting directly to the Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Dr. Fred Hinson, who reports to the Provost. All ASP students now start in the summer session. Fall ASP was discontinued and Summer ASP was expanded to accommodate 100 – 200 students. At this time, the program name was changed to the Academic Success Program.

The ASP Coordinator is only full-time staff person working to oversee and coordinate the Academic Success Program. In addition, there is one undergraduate student worker and an occasional graduate student intern who provide additional support. During the summer, the staffing expands to include faculty teaching the ASP courses, graduate teaching assistants, supplemental instruction leaders, resident staff, and sometimes an additional program assistant. All of these positions are essential to the continued function of the program. While conducting this review, it was discovered that the job description for the ASP Coordinator currently on file with Human Resources has not been updated since 2004. As a result, a revised job description has been created and will be submitted once the program review is completed. (See Appendices C – E for ASP Organizational Chart, ASP Coordinator Position Description, and ASP Coordinator’s Curriculum Vitae.)

Program Structure
Although the oversight of ASP has changed over the years, the primary structure and focus of the program has remained somewhat consistent. Students and parents begin the summer session with
a two-day Orientation session that is tailored specifically for ASP and contains sessions designed to acclimate the students and parents to ASP as well as WCU, including preparation for both the summer and fall terms. One of the components is the Parents as Partners workshops which were designed by the ASP Coordinator, in conjunction with faculty and resident staff, to address the transition needs of parents and coach them in how to empower their student for success. (See Appendix F for the 2010 ASP Orientation Schedule.)

During the summer session, students are enrolled in three classes for a total of seven hours of academic credit. The classes meet each day, Monday through Friday. The focus of the program is on developing the students' reading, writing, and oral skills in order to enhance and support their successful transition to the rigors of college-level requirements and expectations. Therefore, the students take the following courses:

- ENGL 190: First Year Seminar in Literature; 3 hr. credit
- A Liberal Studies Course (ex. General Psychology, Human Society, or Cultural Anthropology); 3 hr. credit
- COUN 140: College Success Seminar; 1 hr. credit

The ASP courses are paired together to form a Summer Academic Theme. This allows the instructors to work together to relate the classes and provide a collaborative learning experience. ASP classes are small, approximately 20 per course section, so that the students receive personal attention from their instructors. Each Summer Academic Theme includes a field trip and a service learning component to involve the students and engage them in becoming responsible and active participants in learning. Students choose their summer and fall course preferences when completing CatWalk in April. (See Appendices G – J for 2010 Summer Academic Themes, Class List, Sample Student Summer Schedule, and Progression of ASP Courses.)

A mandatory study hall is offered on Monday through Thursday afternoons and is monitored by the ASP resident staff. Students are required to attend and are encouraged to use this time productively so that they can learn to manage their time effectively and get into the habit of making study time a priority. Additionally, ASP has piloted supplemental instruction sessions for the Liberal Studies paired courses for the past two years. Students may choose to attend these sessions voluntarily during study hall time to receive assistance and additional instruction from peer educators who serve as role models both inside and outside of the classroom.

ASP students are also required to meet with their academic advisor at least two times during the summer session. The advisor develops a personal connection with each student and begins exploring their academic and life goals. This connection also provides a foundation from which the
advisor can work with each student in order to identify areas of weakness that may need to be addressed as well as any personal issues that may be occurring. Additionally, the faculty and staff meet together on a weekly basis to discuss individual student issues and concerns. Individual follow up and intervention are made with students as needed.

During the summer, ASP students live together in a residence hall with their classmates and a team of experienced Resident Assistants (RA) who are carefully trained as mentors to work with first-year college students. The RAs aid these students in making a successful academic and social transition to college. Seminars to prepare them for their transition to college life are also included in the program. ASP students are held to a high standard of student conduct at all times during their enrollment in the program. They are expected to engage in behaviors that promote an environment conducive to active teaching and learning. ASP students must complete a participation agreement, prior to their arrival at WCU, which outlines these guidelines. Any violation of these policies can result in their dismissal from the university. (See Appendix K for a copy of the ASP Participation Agreement.)

During their free time and on weekends, students have the opportunity to plan and participate in special activities in which they have an interest. These activities may include trips around the area, special sporting events, and other regional attractions. Students are also encouraged to use their leadership skills and creativity to plan additional activities to make their time at WCU enjoyable. (See Appendix L for the 2010 ASP calendar.)

Participating in the Academic Success Program, successfully completing and passing their summer courses, and being in good academic standing (2.0 GPA or higher) allow students to continue at Western Carolina University in the fall with improved skills and confidence. At the end of the summer, students are recognized in a special closing ceremony and receive awards for their participation and academic achievement.

In addition to the summer programs and activities, ASP students are also supported and monitored throughout their first year of enrollment. Academic advisors continue to work with the students throughout their first year and serve as their primary resource and support person. Additionally, all ASP students live in Scott or Walker Halls as part of Western Carolina PEAKS, WCU’s freshman learning experience. This offers ASP students continued support and programs throughout the academic year. Students may choose to register for one of the Western Carolina PEAKS transition courses. The purpose of the course is to provide ASP students with enhanced support throughout the Fall semester. It is meant to assist with their continuing transition to college and will help to
motivate them in successfully completing their college education as well as developing leadership and other skills.

In the fall semester, ASP students are also assigned to a Peer Mentor. The mentors are former ASP students who are upperclassmen and have established themselves as successful students and campus leaders. Mentors serve as a role model and a supportive peer educator for the ASP students and assist them by providing information and guidance.

Throughout their first year, ASP students’ academic progress is monitored through the use of a progress reporting system. Each semester, the faculty for each student are notified that the students are participating in the program and are asked for feedback at key points during the semester. The faculty are asked to give information detailing the student’s grades, participation, and attendance in addition to other comments about their progress in each course. This information is shared with the students’ advisors so that follow up can be made with the students and appropriate interventions can occur. (See Appendix M for the online Progress Report form.)

In the spring, ASP students who have not yet declared a major may choose to enroll in COUN 150: Career and Major Exploration. This one-hour credit course is intended to assist students in exploring their possible career and related majors. It helps students learn about themselves and what they want out of a major and/or career, discover opportunities in the world-of-work, and to learn the process of career decision-making for use throughout their lives. (See Appendix N for an outline of the components of the program in the summer and the first year.)

Alignment with WCU Mission, Vision, and Values

Institutional Mission
In support of the mission of the university, ASP is structured so that students have the opportunity to achieve a successful transition into Western Carolina University by developing academic and life skills, building interpersonal relationships, forming connections with members of the campus community, and becoming engaged learners. The program is also central to the university’s access mission by allowing conditionally admitted students the opportunity to attend a state university and to provide a bridge from their high school experience through their first year of college.

UNC Tomorrow
ASP has been specifically targeted in WCU’s Response to Major Findings and Proposed Initiatives for UNC Tomorrow as follows:
Recommendation 4.2.6 - Academic Preparedness: UNC should help ensure that all students are better prepared to enter and succeed academically in college. WCU’s approach to academic preparedness is threefold: to increase admissions standards to reflect institutional expectations; to provide successful bridge programs to ease transition to the University; and to provide a comprehensive network of support at matriculation that remains consistent during the time the student is at WCU. WCU intends to build and strengthen its efforts at all stages, from pre-enrollment through matriculation and graduation.

Initiative 4.2.6.1: Expand support for the Academic Success Program (ASP)

WCU offers an Academic Success Program (ASP) for promising underprepared students to begin their college experience early to promote success. This program is designed as a complete “first-year experience” to aid transition to college and the development of academic skills. WCU will continue to monitor the size of the program to best accommodate this population of underprepared students.

Summary of Implementation Strategies

1. Focus on integration between curriculum and co-curriculum
2. Align ASP with Liberal Studies
3. Incorporate integrated learning principles consistent with the QEP
4. Provide peer mentoring component
5. Implement case management model of student advising

Implementation of these strategies produces:

- Improved retention of underprepared students
- Increased matriculation of underprepared students
- Improved learning and development of ASP students

(See Appendix O for a status on the implementation of these strategies.)

QEP

The QEP emphasis, Synthesis: A Pathway to Intentional Learning, was designed to help students create connections between what they learn inside and outside of the classroom and to afford faculty, staff, and students more opportunities to collaborate.

ASP is structured to provide the opportunity for students to begin to creating these connections during the summer prior to their freshman year. Since 2007, ASP has served approximately 8 – 12% of the incoming freshman class, which provides a substantial foundation for establishing the QEP mindset and goals among the students, and therefore, the freshman class. Additionally, ASP emphasizes collaboration and engaged learning to prepare students for these experiences later in their college experience.
In addition to supporting the overall emphasis of the QEP, ASP has specifically aligned its learning outcomes with the five QEP learning outcomes. (See Appendix P for a comparison chart of ASP and QEP learning outcomes.)

ASP serves a specific population and has been able to adapt programs and procedures to intentionally focus on transitioning these students successfully, not only as college students, but as successful WCU students in alignment with the learning outcomes as set forth in the QEP. For example, sessions are incorporated into the ASP orientation session to begin this dialogue with students and parents from the moment they arrive on campus. ASP works with the faculty and staff, as well as many other offices on campus such as the Advising Center, Residential Living, Service Learning, and Student Support Services. In collaboration, ASP provides a consistent message to the students and coordinates services to reinforce the goals of the program, which in turn reinforces the goals of the QEP.

This year, ASP began integrating the students into the new electronic Education Briefcase (eB) implementation starting in the summer session. Since Blackboard was not yet available for use, students were able to use Google Sites to host their individual websites. Students were given instructions on how to set up their accounts, create their websites, and include examples of intentional learning. The sections of their websites align with QEP outcomes and can be easily incorporated into their eB in the fall semester. An assessment of the student websites is currently being conducted as a means of identifying how well the students responded to ASP learning outcomes. (See Appendix Q for the rubric being used in this assessment.)

**Demand for the Program**

The support offered to ASP students during their first year assists students in making successful transitions into their academic departments and to continue on towards graduation. ASP incorporates a case-management model of advising which begins in the summer. ASP creates student portfolios that combine various instruments to give the academic advisors a well-rounded picture of the student in terms of personality type, career interests and strengths, potential barriers to their success in college, and learning style. Advisors work with the students in developing individualized plans and goals which lay the groundwork for their entire college experience. Consistently, over 95% of students indicate that ASP has helped them feel more confident about college and their ability to be successful.
The information contained in the instruments gives advisors an indication of potential difficulties that the students may experience. For example, a review of the College Student Inventory results from last year indicate that students who scored a seven or above in the Predicted Academic Difficulty field were more likely to be placed on academic probation at the end of the fall semester. Advisors use these indicators to identify students who may need additional encouragement to use campus resources, such as tutoring, counseling services, disability services, career services, student employment, etc.

Additionally, ASP seeks to use resources, such as the Academic Hope Scale, to foster discussions with students regarding their motivation to be successful. Advisors have the students complete the scale at the beginning of specific appointments throughout the summer and fall to get an idea of where the students rate themselves, so that they can discuss the students’ progress and hold them accountable for achieving their goals. For example, a student who rates himself high on “Thinking about pursuing my goals in school fills me with energy,” but rates himself low on “I actively pursue my educational goals” shows an incongruence between establishing goals and then following through on them. The advisor can discuss this inconsistency with the student and assist him in exploring options to follow through with actively pursuing his goals rather than merely thinking about pursuing them.

ASP also solicits background information on each student’s previous education experience by using a reference letter form. The form is used to obtain two reference letters from each student’s high school teachers to gather background information about the student’s academic achievements in high school, as well as to identify any potential areas of concern in their transition to college. This information is used by the ASP Coordinator and the student’s academic advisor to assist in determining potential campus resources and other academic support that may be helpful to the student, as well as any areas of interest or leadership experience that the student may have so that they can get connected with similar programs on campus, if applicable. (See Appendices R – T for samples of the Academic Hope Scale, College Student Inventory Report, and Reference letter form.)

Many ASP students go on to become leaders on campus and excel academically during their time at WCU. ASP students have had numerous leadership positions on campus, such as Orientation Counselors, Resident Assistants, SGA Officers, WCU Ambassadors, Greek Life council members, and a variety of student club and organization leadership positions.

In addition to the students who have directly benefited by being participants in the program, ASP has had a significant impact by providing internship and professional opportunities for students in WCU’s
College Student Personnel (CSP) graduate program. A significant number of students who have been in the CSP program have completed internships or other work experiences with ASP. Students receive mentoring and are given the opportunity to tailor their work experience to their interests. They are also challenged to take on high levels of responsibility and a comprehensive variety of tasks to further broaden their skills. These students have consistently rated their work with ASP as a valuable experience in preparing them to become higher education professionals. For example, one CSP student related her time in working with ASP as a life-changing experience which altered the direction she was considering in higher education.

Quality
The Academic Success Program gathers data from several sources and collects feedback from ASP students, faculty and staff to measure the quality of the program and how well it meets its objectives. However, a concern of the program is a lack of a comprehensive plan for program assessment and evaluation.

At the end of the summer session, ASP gives students the opportunity to respond to a program evaluation where they rate their overall summer experience and the specific activities and programs that are offered during the summer. (See Appendix U – V for the 2010 ASP Summer Evaluation and 2007 – 2010 Evaluation Results.) Additionally, ASP looks at the average GPA of the students during the summer terms and throughout their first year as a measure of student success. ASP also works with OIPE to receive data on student retention and how ASP rates compare to those of regularly admitted first-time freshman and Honors College first-time freshman. (See Appendix W for Retention Rates and Comparisons to other FTF populations.)

The following chart provides an overview of student success rates for each summer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Successfully Completed</th>
<th>Univ. Withdrawals</th>
<th>Average GPA</th>
<th>4.0</th>
<th>3.0 - 3.99</th>
<th>2.0 - 2.99</th>
<th>&lt;2.0 or Did Not Pass a course</th>
<th>% Eligible to Continue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.014</td>
<td>7.05%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>7.05%</td>
<td>90.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.399</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.406</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.880</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>96.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data provided by ASP office.
The ASP Coordinator also seeks direct feedback from students about their experiences and asks for suggestions for improving the program. A recent example of this is related to piloting the Supplemental Instruction (SI) sessions with the Liberal Studies paired courses. In 2009, ASP collaborated with the Catamount Academic Tutoring (CAT) Center to offer SI sessions for the PSY 150: General Psychology classes. The feedback from students was positive, so the program was expanded in 2010 to include all of the Liberal Studies paired courses: PSY 150: General Psychology, SOC 103: Human Society, and ANTH 120: Comparative Cultural Systems.

SI provided the students with the opportunity to enhance their learning by supplementing their classroom experience with additional ways to engage with the material. Afterwards, a majority of the students stated that the sessions were extremely helpful and really made a significant difference in their performance in the classes. In individual meetings with the ASP Coordinator this fall, several students commented, “I wish they offered SI sessions this semester.” They also suggested that SI be used with the ENGL 190: First Year Seminar in Literature courses to assist with building their reading skills and helping them feel comfortable in class discussions. Based on this feedback, plans are currently being made with the Writing Center to expand the COUN 140 instructors’ role to incorporate these sessions for the ENGL 190 courses for next summer. (See Appendix X for the 2010 SI Summary Report & Data.)

The ASP Coordinator also meets with ASP faculty, staff, and other campus offices to hold debriefing sessions in evaluation of the program and to identify opportunities to enhance future aspects of the program. For example, the decision to transition from teaching ENGL 101 in the summer to ENGL 190 was a direct result of conversations held with faculty in the fall of 2007. (See Appendix Y for an Overview of the 2007 Debriefing Session and status of issues presented.)

ASP is also currently implementing new measures to enhance program assessment and evaluation. The recent creation of a Student Advisory Board allows ASP students to have direct involvement in evaluating and planning the program. This group has been created based on a suggestion that came from the students’ individual appointments with the ASP Coordinator. Currently, students have been identified and contacted to serve on the newly formed ASP Student Advisory Board. The Board will serve to provide feedback on past program components and will be integral in planning for future program needs. As the Board continues to develop, it will have representatives from various ASP cohorts. Additionally, the measures taken this summer to establish ASP as a part of the Education Briefcase initiative, ensures that the program is an integral part of the QEP and its implementation with first-year students and establishes a qualitative assessment method for evaluating ASP learning outcomes.
The most significant ASP achievement has been the increase in first-year retention rates of ASP students. Over the last three years, these percentages have increased steadily. In fact, this past fall, ASP had a higher fall-to-spring retention rate than either the regularly admitted first-time freshman or the Honors College first-time freshman. And, the fall-to-fall rate was 5% higher than regularly admitted freshman.

This year, there were two significant shifts in the structure of ASP. The first was a change in the Admission criteria toward a primary emphasis on SAT scores. The second was the elimination of using the EDRD 150: College Reading and Vocabulary course and offering all ASP students two Liberal Studies courses (the First Year Seminar and a Perspective course), in addition to the one-hour credit, COUN 140: College Success Seminar course. Based on preliminary data from this summer and current student progress reports from this fall, it is expected that the rising trend of success that ASP has recently experienced will be significantly impacted in a negative way as evidenced by the decline in average summer GPA as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Averages by Year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer GPA</td>
<td>3.169</td>
<td>3.399</td>
<td>3.406</td>
<td>2.880</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data provided by ASP office.

**Cost Effectiveness**

The Academic Success Program is self-funded by money received from summer tuition and fees paid by the students in the program. Since this is a complete first-year program, the funds from the summer are used to provide support to students and administrative program functions for the entire fiscal year.

In 2007, ASP sought funding from UNC-GA to assist with the expansion of the program. Previously, the Summer School Office and the Department of Residential Living provided the primary sources of funding. The proposed funding would have allowed additional staff to be hired to provide greater support for the students and implement a more effective case-management model of advising. The funding was not approved by the state, so the university agreed to find a way to support the program internally. The Provost made the decision that tuition received for the ASP courses in the summer would go into an ASP state account and be used solely to provide financial backing for the administration of the program for the entire year. Additionally, similar arrangements were made with Student Affairs to receive funds from student activity fees and from the ASP Orientation fee that are transferred into a non-state account for the purpose of supporting ASP events, functions, and activities. These accounts were established in 2008 and written policies were approved in the
Summer School Guidelines. However, it took approximately two years for the transactions and process to begin to work smoothly.

One hundred percent of the ASP budget is used to support the ASP mission and initiatives and every effort is made to maximize the use of these funds for this purpose. All of the activities and expenses for the program create the needed infrastructure necessary to provide direct support to the students and to ensure that we consistently maintain the highest quality of faculty and staff to work with ASP students. (See Appendix Z for a copy of the ASP Budget.)

Opportunity Analysis
Due to the nature of the program to provide services and intervention with a specifically identified population of at-risk students, any attempts to consolidate these services within other units or offices would potentially be a disservice to the students and would put them in danger of not getting the individual support and attention that is needed for their successful transition and continued success.

ASP has incorporated various methods of implementing a case-management model of advising the students. Prior to the reorganization in 2007, multiple variations were attempted such as assigning all students to the ASP Coordinator, dividing the ASP students between the Coordinator and one or two advisors, dispersing ASP students among all of the advisors, etc. Since 2007, the ASP students have been dispersed among the advisors in the Advising Center based on their choice of major and many have been served by Student Support Services (SSS). For a period of time (2005 – 2008), ASP also incorporated Faculty Mentors in the summer session to meet individually with the students in place of the academic advisor. This was done due to scheduling limitations of the advisors during the ASP summer session due to Orientation commitments and to allow the students to build a connection with a faculty member. The exception was that SSS advisors still met with the students in their program during the summer. This model worked relatively well, but was phased out in 2009 due to a shift in the summer session calendar which allowed the advisors to be available to meet with students. In 2010, the ASP faculty were asked to meet with each student in their classes for individual appointments to help the students feel comfortable going to a faculty member for support and to build a connection.

In the last two years, there has been a shift in services for ASP students who are eligible for Student Support Services (SSS). A majority of the ASP students usually meet the guidelines for participation in the program and, up until 2008, roughly 50% of ASP students were selected to be in SSS. However, due to changes in the structure of their program, that number decreased to approximately 30% in 2009 and only 10% in 2010. This means that although there are many ASP students who
are eligible under SSS program guidelines, they are not able to receive services because of the limited number of slots available. Therefore, these students receive advising through the Advising Center along with other undeclared students. This places a greater responsibility on the Advising Center to support ASP students and means that the students receive less support because they are not receiving the increased contact with counselors/advisors that SSS provides for first-year students. This shift has created a need to re-evaluate advising practices related to ASP and potentially adjust the way that students are assigned to advisors so that they can receive greater support and be held to higher levels of accountability.

At institutions with similar programs of this size, there are usually two advisors devoted to working with the students, in addition to peer mentors. Additional advising positions for ASP were included in the original proposal when expanding the program in 2007, but lack of funding from the state made it impossible to create any such positions. In the absence of additional funding to create an additional position, some reassignment of duties among advisors in the Advising Center could take place in order to identify two advisors who could assist the ASP Coordinator in advising ASP students. The opportunity to share the advising load and supervision of peer mentors among three people would relieve some of the Coordinator’s load, as well as provide a more efficient and effective method for working with and monitoring ASP students.

At other schools, peer mentor programs have been very effective in assisting at-risk and first-year student populations. This year, ASP was able to increase support for the peer mentors by paying a stipend during the fall semester in addition to the one-hour credit leadership class in peer education that they are required to take. This helps to create greater accountability with the peer mentors and provides incentive for them to keep accurate records of their interactions with students. However, there is a need for increased supervision and training of the peer mentors so that they are more productive and effective in working with students and addressing specific needs.

There is a significant need for administrative support for ASP. Currently, the ASP Coordinator oversees every aspect of the program from scheduling rooms for meetings, handling budgeting issues, and planning activities to collaborating with approximately 25 different offices on campus, overseeing the peer mentor program, and addressing high-risk behaviors with individual students. The amount of time that the Coordinator spends on administrative tasks could be much better utilized in providing direct support to students and conducting on-going program evaluation and planning. Currently, the Coordinator meets individually with every ASP student at the beginning of the fall term and follows up with those who are in academic difficulty throughout the year. The Coordinator attempts to collaborate with advisors concerning individual student issues, which also
becomes very time-consuming since the students are dispersed among so many different advisors. This system creates some redundancy which could potentially be addressed by the realignment of advising responsibilities.

At this time, the funding proposals submitted to UNC General Administration in 2007 have been the only outside funding sources that have been sought to support ASP. Grant opportunities could potentially be researched for additional funding, but many of these are targeted to select populations (specifically, low income, first generation, minority, etc.). Since ASP does not serve a specific group, this may make options limited. There has been some recent interest from alumni in creating an endowment fund for ASP. If this were to come to fruition, then it could potentially provide some programming money in the future.

Since 2007, the Academic Success Program has made positive gains with regards to first-year retention of conditionally admitted students. To become an exemplary program, ASP should improve its case-management model of advising and provide more effective support for students during their first academic year, including greater utilization of the peer mentors. Additionally, ASP should consider ways to monitor and provide support to students after their first year and encourage their continued development as campus leaders and, eventually, successful graduates and engaged alumni.

ASP should further establish a comprehensive plan for program assessment and evaluation. There is opportunity to use data that has already been collected to conduct a more detailed analysis of the program’s strengths and student progress. The ASP Coordinator should also seek opportunities to present or publish information about the program’s success, so that the campus is aware of its purpose and the broader higher education community can benefit from its contributions.