Roaring Fork PreCollegiate
Student Intervention/Retention Policies and Procedures

INTRODUCTION

The Roaring Fork PreCollegiate program ("Program") strives to ensure that all enrolled students complete the Program.

A successful retention program starts before problems arise. Students first need to understand the expectations they must meet and must fundamentally see the importance and value of their participation in the Program. Otherwise, no amount of formal intervention after a problem arises will be successful.

Retention issues typically center around two areas where a student is failing to meet Program requirements: attendance and participation and/or grades.

Ultimately, the Program is a selective program that expends significant fiscal and emotional resources on its participants. Given the fact that many grade levels have wait-lists for potential participants and given the limited resources available, the Program must weigh whether to retain a particular student if the requirements and expectations are not being met. This policy and procedure document will ensure that the Program is taking a systematic approach to student retention that recognizes the potentially competing demands of supporting all enrolled students and delivering resources to where they will have the greatest impact.

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

All enrolled students are expected to:

1.      Attend all scheduled meetings with mentors, or to notify a mentor in advance if they have a conflict;
2.      Attend and participate fully in any activities, projects, or tasks assigned by mentors or by the Program, including testing preparation classes and the summer programs;
3.      Maintain a 2.75 grade point average throughout the program;

4.      Tenth and eleventh grade students are required to complete 12 hours of community service per year.  Other students are encouraged to participate in civic and volunteer events throughout their time in the Program.

The Program will remind students of these expectations annually and students will agree in writing to meet these requirements.

## EXPECTATIONS OF MENTORS

In the context of retention/intervention, the Program has the following expectations of mentors:

1.      Be familiar with and follow this policy document;
2.      Set ground rules so that mentor meetings are safe, confidential meetings where students are free to share without judgment or retribution;
3.      Communicate with their students and Program staff about concerns;
4.      Immediately notify Program staff of any issues involving health, welfare, physical or psychological injury, bullying, violence, criminal activity or any similar concern;
5.      Alert Program staff if the mentor feels uncomfortable with any situation, obligation, or duty being asked of the mentor;
6.      Mentors should continue to view themselves as advocates for their students; mentors are not expected to discipline students.

## EXPECTATIONS OF PROGRAM STAFF

1.      Promptly respond to mentor or student inquiries, questions, or concerns and proactively communicate with mentors about ongoing student issues as set forth in this policy;
2.      Clearly articulate the Program expectations and benefits to students;
2.      Support mentors and students as resources permit;
3.      Make all formal decisions concerning student retention;
4.      Act as liaison and coordinator between student, mentor, counseling staff, administration, parents, and teachers, as necessary.

## "RED FLAGS" AND INTERVENTION STEPS

Potential student issues include, but are not limited to:

1. Failure to attend required mentor meetings (whether providing advance notice or not).
2. Failure to complete assigned tasks
3. Failure to respond/communicate with mentors or Program when requested or expected to do so
4. Receiving below a "C" or "2" in one or more classes

5. Failure to maintain an overall 2.75 GPA
6. Failure to attend Program events such as ACT test prep classes or the summer residential programs

When a mentor or Program staff member notices an issue or a potential issue, he or she should follow the protocol below. Early intervention is key to success, so mentors and staff should initiate this process as soon as possible. Although this process is intended to be linear, in some cases the intervention needed will require deviation from the strict application of this procedure.

STEP ONE:

Mentors should meet individually with the student to discuss the concern.

This initial meeting should be informal and supportive. The intent is to discern the root causes of the problem so that an appropriate strategy can be implemented. Mentors are encouraged to set specific benchmarks, goals, or requirements for the student to meet.

STEP TWO:

Alert Program staff.

The Program does track student issues. At this stage an e-mail or phone call to the Executive Director or Assistant Director alerting them to the issue and that Step One has or will be taken is sufficient.

STEP THREE

Follow-up.

After an appropriate period of time depending on the circumstances, directly follow-up with the student to see if there is improvement.

STEP FOUR

Involve the Program staff formally.

If the situation persists, if the mentor follow-up is ineffective or unsatisfactory, or if earlier intervention is warranted, alert the Program staff. Program staff will then meet with the student individually to discuss the issue, reiterate the Program expectations, discuss strategies, and institute and document a specific plan for correction, including potentially placing a student on probation for

a set period of time. At this stage the Program may involve one or more of the student's mentors, teachers, parents, or school counselors as appropriate.

## STEP FIVE

Program follow-up.

Program staff will either directly or indirectly follow-up on the plan for correction to see how it is being implemented and make any necessary changes or adjustments.

## STEP SIX

Retention decisions.

The Executive Director makes the final decision concerning the continued retention of a student. Program staff will consult with the mentor prior to making any retention decisions. In the event a student is disenrolled from the Program for failure to meet expectations the Program staff will memorialize the decision in writing and sent it to the student, parents, and mentor.

## STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING ISSUES

Attendance:

Attendance issues are almost always indicative of a larger problem. In order to determine the causes of the problem it is critical to discuss the issue with the student in-person versus phone or email.

Find out if the issue is just with Program meetings or if it is a larger attendance issue at school. If a larger issue, alert Program staff for further intervention.

Determine whether issue is a simple one of communication, such as the student is not receiving notice of meetings due to a changed email address, or is not tracking or planning for them adequately due to poor organizational skills.

If not a communication problem, ask whether the problem is due to conflicts in schedules, logistical issues, or for another more substantive reason.

If the issue is one of student motivation attempt to find out specific causes.  Is the problem that they do not see the value in the Program? That the student does not understand the goal or process? That the student values other activities more

than the Program? Is the issue one of confidence in their ability to get to college? Drilling down on these specific issues will help determine how best to proceed.

Reiterate that attendance at Program meetings is expected, tracked and needs to be a priority, and that while an occasional absence will be excused for good reason (e.g. getting additional academic help, sickness, school event/field trip conflicts) others or regular conflicts will not (e.g. doctors appointments, other voluntary school or extracurricular activities, transportation issues).

Remind them that the group is a team-it needs all students there and participating. The Program does take attendance into consideration when determining whether someone can attend the summer programs, and mentors should consider attendance as well when doing any events. The analogy is that you cannot play in the game if you don't practice with the team.

Set specific benchmarks or goals. For example, tell the student that they cannot miss another meeting without contacting you twenty-four hours in advance with a valid excuse. Have them put the next meeting date and time into a calendar or planner and have them show you before they leave the current meeting.

Participation/Behavior

Mentors are permitted and encouraged to assign individual and group tasks from time to time.

If a student is not participating in the timely completion of those tasks, is not engaged in the mentor meetings in a productive manner, or is exhibiting disruptive behavior, the mentor should meet with the student individually to determine the cause(s) if possible. Questions to consider asking include:

What specifically prevented you from completing the task?
Are you feeling overwhelmed at home or with school work? If so, give specific examples.
Did you understand the purpose in assigning the task?
Did you recognize why your behavior was unacceptable?
Do you feel comfortable participating in the group?

Mentors need not tolerate disruptive behavior and may ask a student to leave a meeting. Program staff should be informed as soon as possible of such behavior so that there can be follow-up.

Mentors should reiterate to students that full and positive participation in Program activities and assignments is an expectation and that failure to adequately or properly participate may jeopardize their standing in the program.

<u>Grades</u>

Typically grade related issues emerge right after the quarterly progress reports and after semester grades are issued. Occasionally a student will volunteer a grade concern or issue. Grades are a cornerstone in the continued participation of a student in the Program, but the corrective action that the Program takes will be dependent in part on the efforts of a student to remedy the situation. For example, a student who is struggling in one class but has demonstrated initiative, perseverance, and a commitment to trying to improve may be retained in the Program despite the poor mark. The Program sends letters to those students who have failed to meet the grade expectations for a given academic period and will remind students of the minimum GPA requirements.

When meeting with a student with a grade concern the first question to ask is what additional steps the student has taken to try to remedy the issue. Is the issue one of student/teacher conflict, workload, or comprehension? Is the grade issue localized to one class, or is it endemic?

Grade concerns can offer good teaching moments on self-empowerment, advocacy and goal setting. Mentors should be wary of going directly to a specific teacher with a concern without first ensuring that the student has taken at least minimal steps on his or her own. Instead mentors should focus on providing the student with tools so that the student can attempt to address the issue themselves. Tools the student should use include:

-Meeting with the teacher one-on-one, ideally more than once, to discuss the grade and develop a plan for improvement.
-Attending any extra help sessions that are offered
-Seeking out other tutoring options or asking for peer help
-Speaking with the school or peer counselor
-Researching additional study aids or tools outside of the class
-Setting achievable goals to help the student improve, such as turning in homework on time or setting aside specific time during the day for additional work.

If a student has done all or most of the above with no effect, or if the student is reporting specific teacher/student conflict concerns, then the mentor should contact Program staff about scheduling a meeting with the teacher, student, and maybe counselor or parent.

If the mentor is hearing of academic difficulty across a number of students, that information should also be reported to Program staff to determine if the school is aware of a potentially larger issue. Mentor groups are encouraged to discuss

study habit strategies, strategies for dealing with academic problems, and even to use the time to do specific peer-group tutoring or review of homework if the group will find it beneficial.

Mentors should also follow-up directly with students who are having grade concerns to see how the situation is developing between grade reports.