



**Tshwane University  
of Technology**

*We empower people*

Office of Quality, Planning and Risk Management  
Directorate: Quality Promotion

### ENHANCING STUDENT SUCCESS

<b>Faculty/Directorate</b>	Management Sciences	<b>Department</b>	Dean's Office
<b>Name Of Staff Member</b>	Minky Seromo	<b>Email Address</b>	SeromoMM@tut.ac.za
<b>Year Good Practice First Implemented</b>			

#### Academic excellence office in the faculty of management sciences

In 2010, the Faculty of Management Sciences identified some of the root causes of student high failure rate as: students under preparedness, wrong career choice, lack of academic support, unexpected subjects such as accounting and statistics, written and oral communication and the different teaching and learning style. Underachieving students spend more unduly years in the system, they fail, repeat subjects and dropout causing concern for the university, faculty, and the government. In view of these facts the declining faculty performance and high student failure rate in the faculty of Management Sciences created a serious challenge that needed immediate academic interventions.

The last faculty success rate of 74% was experienced in 2008. Since then, there was a gradual decline of 69% in 2010. In order to mitigate this challenge, in 2011 the Executive Dean created an "Academic Intervention Programme" for the seven departments in the Pretoria Campus and deployed, Ms. Minky Seromo who was then a part-time lecturer in the department of People Management. The main responsibilities of this office was to monitor the academic performance of more than 1,800 re-instated students who were re-admitted after academic exclusion as well as monitor subject performance of first year students. Ms. Seromo identified that there were many students who failed first year accounting related subjects. To address this problem, one Saturday tutorial workshop with more than 200 students was introduced the beginning of the second semester year.

The turnaround strategies implemented in 2011 increased the success rate by 4% from 69% to 72.5% and the appeal forms declined by 50%. In 2012 the Academic Excellence office (AE) was established and in 2013, the service was extended to the satellite campuses of Polokwane, Emalahleni and Mbombela. The purpose of Academic Excellence office is to enhance performance, increase retention and completion of studies especially those who have been re-instated after academic exclusion. In view of the purpose of the AE office, a number of successive interventions were put in place, namely: (i) to raise awareness of academic excellence and the need to reduce high failure rate, (ii) to utilise limited resources in order to improve success rate, (iii) to identify at-risk students (iv) to track and evaluate student's progress and (v) to identify intervention initiatives to address academic achievement challenges. Some of the strategies used for improving performance and success rate include: academic preparatory workshops for re-admitted students, motivational and coaching sessions, mentoring, tracking and monitoring performance, one-on-one consultations and referrals to Student Development Support.

In August 2012 "Accounting come Alive" workshop was conducted for accounting students. The aim of the workshop was to introduce accounting concepts to students who have not previously studied accounting to foster positive attitude, to remove the negative perceptions and provide

students with the knowledge and skills to become confident in learning accounting. The workshop was attended by 166 students of these, 86 passed the final examination, 40 did not qualify for predicate before the workshop and 40 failed the examination.

In 2013, a total of 1222 appeals were received from all campuses, in Pretoria 733 were reinstated, Emalahleni 58, Polokwane 38 and Mbombela 46. In addition to the service provided, more accounting, communication and cost accounting tutorials were introduced in all campuses and that further increased success rate to 73.7%. *“Success of students does not come by accident”* Tinto (2013) and therefore *“We need to consider students holistically ... and look at what they need entirely.”* Nicolene Murdoch.

Compiled by: Ms. Minky Seromo; Academic Excellence, Office of the Executive Dean, Pretoria Campus.

### **Minky E-Literature Information**



***Minky Seromo, Academic Excellence  
Coach at the Faculty of Management  
Sciences.***

#### **Article**

**Student pass rate increases by 4%: From humble beginnings of coaching and mentoring students to an Academic Excellence Office**

**By Willa De Ruyter**

**Published on 2013-03-01 | [archive/search](#)**

The pass rate of students at the Faculty of Management Sciences has increased by 4% from 68% to

***[Annexure B \_ DQP/Good Practices Project \_ 14/08/2013]***

72% in the past two years. This is as a result of the success of an academic excellence intervention programme that started in 2011.

The academic excellence intervention, together with a sustained coaching and mentoring programme for the readmitted students who had been excluded from registering, has also resulted in a 50% reduction in the number of students appeal forms submitted to the Faculty in 2012.

“My passion is students, my office is a boardroom, my classroom is a research hub and my goal is the success of students.” This is the passionate declaration by Minky Seromo, who was appointed as lecturer and academic excellence coach for students in 2011. Her primary responsibility is to mentor and motivate students to improve their academic performance.

Minky, a professional coach, qualified teacher, mentor, brain profiler and former Fulbright Scholar with more than 20 years of corporate experience, explained that the concern of the Dean of the Faculty of Management Sciences, Dr Edgar Nesamvuni, about the high failure rate led to an urgent intervention. His proposal for a post for a student coach was accepted by the Senate and Minky, who, at that time, was coaching students in addition to her regular lecturing job, was appointed as full-time student coach and mentor at the Faculty.

“This is an important intervention,” Minky said. “In my experience many students fail because they become despondent and lose interest when they struggle to master the subject content.” She explained that the student coaching intervention is largely based on giving students self-confidence and motivating them. “Most of the students in the programme want someone to talk to, who will listen to them and who can show interest and attempt to solve their personal or academic challenges,” she said.

According to Minky, her focus is mostly on students who were academically excluded and reinstated for study based on their general academic progress. “Every year I extend an open invitation to all these students to attend my “A” Student Workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to motivate them and to rebuild their self-esteem and confidence. It takes place at the beginning of the year and I give them all an “A”. They then have to write me a letter on why they deserve an A, which forms part of building up their self-confidence. At the end of the workshop they sign a contract with me in which they commit to being successful in their studies throughout the year. “

In 2012 about 250 of the 700 students who were readmitted for study attended the workshop and they all passed all their subjects.

In addition to this, Minky hosts special tutoring workshops on Saturdays. “Although students must attend class for at least four days during the week to qualify for the coaching class, the Saturday class has become extremely popular. Even first-year students from different departments now attend the extra classes,” she said.

She says the Dean is very involved in the project and addresses the students at the start of every academic year, explaining to them the importance of attainable goals. In view of this, he has advised them not to register for more than five subjects per study term, to give them more time to work through the course content of challenging subjects such as Accounting, English and Communication.

“We have refined the intervention to the extent that excluded students who were readmitted in 2013 could only register after signing an agreement to meet the conditions attached to their reinstatement. These include only registering for the recommended subjects; that they will not be

absent from any lectures; that they will attend all recommended tutorials and that they can be referred to Student Development Support for assistance, should the need arise,” Minky continued.

Minky chuckled when I asked how close she was to ensuring that the success of the intervention programme could be duplicated throughout TUT. “Following discussions between the Dean and campus directors, this service was extended to the Polokwane, Mpumalanga and eMalahleni campuses at the beginning of 2013.”

She added she is currently sharing her experience with the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, who also came on board this year with the introduction of a similar programme to monitor the progress and improve the success rate of students.

The success of the academic excellence intervention has resulted in a grant by the Department of Higher Education and Training to support the programme in 2013.



***Minky Seromo, Academic Excellence Coach at the Faculty of Management Sciences with the Faculty student committee who assist to make the academic excellence programmes a success. From left Tshepang Modisakoana, Surprise Ndlovu and Ziyanda Mbobo. To Minky's right is Simon Shai.***

Essay predicting radical change for higher education over next five years  
Submitted by Jeb Bush and Randy Best on May 23, 2013 - 3:05am

Source URL: <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2013/05/23/essay-predicting-radical-change-higher-education-over-next-five-years>.

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**FACTORS WHICH FACILITATED ADOPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE**