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NSU employs MAP-Works program to assist freshmen

(Tahlequah, OK)--MAP-Works, a program in place at Northeastern State University since the start of the Fall 2010 semester, is helping incoming freshmen succeed in their first months on campus.

NSU is one of only 81 institutions in the U.S. using the MAP, or Making Achievement Possible, program. The University of Tulsa is the only other Oklahoma institution employing MAP-Works.

Map-Works allows NSU to more fully support freshmen. Students complete four surveys during the academic year.

"At the time I took the surveys I did not think that MAP-Works was a very important thing, but I made some bad decisions last semester and I looked back at my printout and realized I had helpful tools right in front of me," said Chance Chambers, a freshman from Eufaula. "It helped me to know my weaknesses and identify ways to fix the problems I seem to have. This program helped me make some necessary changes in my life that helped me become a more successful student."

Brian Searcy, student success coordinator, said students can benefit from the MAP-Works program by reviewing personalized reports generated after they complete the surveys.

"This provides the students with immediate feedback on how they can meet their own expectations – how they can be more successful in college and make their own achievement possible," said Searcy.

The survey gauges a student's academic, social, emotional and financial health. The questions help the students determine whether they are thriving, getting by or struggling in academic life.

"When I came to NSU I felt lost in terms of what I needed to do to be successful in all my classes and what I needed to do for that to become possible," said Araceli Maldonado, a Tahlequah freshman.

Students receive an extensive personalized report to help them learn key strategies on how to succeed at NSU. MAP-Works empowers the student with information about how to stay on a track toward graduation and helps faculty and staff identify early warning signs of possible failure.

"It provided me with all the college perspectives I could not gain by myself," said Maldonado. "It also provided an insight to realistic goals I could set for myself in my upcoming years at NSU. I know what things to keep doing that contribute to a healthy college life and what I need to improve so I can achieve full success."

Faculty and staff contact students who are struggling, near dropping out or earning poor grades. Instead of wondering what is wrong with a student, they have an assessment and can help the student develop a solution.

"The successful use of the MAP-Works program could result in helping some students graduate and achieve their goals, where without the program, the students would drop out and end up discouraged, in debt and without a college degree," said Searcy. "MAP-Works can help to unlock a student's potential and change the course of that student's life."

There is also an alert feature in which faculty can alert staff when freshmen begin to disengage from class.

"This program helped me realize that the important things are the simplest ones we most often ignore," said Maldonado. "This program helped me get through my first semester, and I was grateful for it because I was able to maintain my goal of achieving straight A's in my classes. I think this program will help me get through all my college years successfully."

Searcy said poor class attendance and poor performance often result in failing grades or course withdrawal, which slows a student's progress toward degree completion or may halt a student's progress altogether. MAP-Works can help identify problems before they become irreversible.

"I think the university community will be able to improve the use of MAP-Works every semester going forward," said Searcy. "As a result, we hope more freshmen will become sophomores and more will stay to graduate. More college graduates in Oklahoma will improve our communities in many far-reaching ways."

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