



# The Impact of Random Drug Testing on Accountability and Academic Retention at UMBC

## Background on the Academic Achievement of Random Drug Testing Enrollees:

Prior to Fall 2002, the standard sanction for any drug offense was *disciplinary suspension*. Since Fall 2002, Student Judicial Programs has sought to retain students who commit drug offenses by offering enrollment in a Random Drug Testing (RDT) program in lieu of suspension. A total of 170 students have enrolled in RDT over the lifespan of the program. Since the program's inception:

- **32 students have enrolled in RDT and since graduated** (four have gone on to earn UMBC graduate degrees)
  - Average GPA before starting RDT= 2.83
  - Average GPA at graduation = 3.02
    - ✓ 10 RDT participants saw their GPAs decrease (5 saw their GPAs decrease by more than 0.2 quality points)
    - ✓ 22 RDT participants saw their GPAs increase (15 saw their GPAs increase by more than 0.2 quality points)
- **66 are still enrolled**
- **72 have stopped out** at some point following their drug offense

## Purpose of the Study:

To strengthen SJP's Random Drug Testing program by understanding the experiences of past and current RDT enrollees, as told through their narratives. Interviews will focus on the interaction between regimes of accountability and academic achievement in order to learn more about those features of a drug testing program that foster retention and improve the rate of graduation.

## Research Questions:

1. Do the practices and protocols of the RDT program deter students from using marijuana and other drugs?
2. What factors have contributed to GPA increases or decreases among RDT enrollees?
3. How might the protocol or program be strengthened in terms of accountability and fostering student well-being and academic achievement?

## Methodology & Method

We are approaching this research project from a constructivist paradigm. Social constructionists believe the best way to understand the perceptions held by enrollees in a university-sponsored Random Drug Testing program is to visit with them and gather information in-person. Qualitative research methods will yield robust data, but also allow the researchers the flexibility to identify and follow-up on emergent themes.

- Participants will be recruited using purposive sampling.
- A semi-structured interview protocol composed of open-ended questions will form the basis for interviews that will last 60 minutes.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed.
- Interviewers will be confederates not associated with Student Judicial Programs in order to build rapport and a climate of trust with the interviewee.
- Interviewees will not be subject to judicial sanction for any disclosures they make during the course of the interview.
- Interview transcripts will be analyzed and coded for themes