Title: Increasing Degree Completion for General Studies Majors through Intrusive Advising

Project Leader: Amy Schmidt, Director of Academic Advising, Dalton State College, aschmidt@daltonstate.edu, 35 years in higher education – 25 in career planning & student services – 10 in academic advising

Other Team Members: Ginger Almon, Academic Advisor for Liberal Arts, Dalton State College, galmon@daltonstate.edu, 7 years enrollment management – 7 years academic support services & academic advising

Project Category: Proof of Concept or Start-Up

Overview of Project: We propose to identify an at-risk student population and affect an improvement in the retention and degree completion rate through intrusive academic advising. The at-risk population is the Associate of Arts and Associate of Science General Studies majors. At Dalton State College all new students who are undecided about their academic majors are assigned to one of the two General Studies majors. Many General Studies majors have low GPAs and high withdrawal or dropout rates. We speculate that the lack of a clear career goal leads to lower motivation, lower grades, and increased withdrawal from classes. All new General Studies majors will be assigned to one of two experienced academic advisors. The students will work with their assigned advisors beginning at New Student Orientation and lasting through degree completion at Dalton State. There will be a number of special interventions particularly during the students’ first semester.

Impact on Completion: The initial cycle of this project will not be complete until the first cohort of students entering college in the fall of 2013 begins to graduate with associate degrees at the end of spring semester 2015. There should be indications by the end of the first semester as to whether the interventions are influencing student success. After completing career exploration during the FYES 1000 class, some students may change their majors to bachelors’ degrees and others may decide upon a career requiring a certificate. The success of the program will be based on student completion of the chosen educational path. The ultimate impact should be greater academic success for the student and higher completion rates for the college. Positive results in this program could result in changes to the following: freshman courses, the early alert program, FYES 1000 instruction, and academic advising. All of these changes could be adopted by other colleges and universities.

Potential Lessons to be Learned:

1) Whether the development of career goals leads to greater academic motivation and academic success.
2) Whether having the advisor also function as the FYES 1000 instructor builds a stronger advisor/advisee relationship.
3) Whether enrolling students in courses in which instructors have committed to providing more and earlier academic feedback results in a more effective early alert system.
4) Whether the college’s support services are adequate to meet the needs of our students.
5) Whether the positive effects of the intrusive advising during the student’s first semester are lost during subsequent semesters when the advisor/advisee interaction is not as strong and frequent.
6) Whether the retention and degree completion of General Studies majors is increased as a result of exposure to this model of intrusive advising.
Area of Need

Most Dalton State students majoring in the A.A. and A.S. General Studies have selected the major because they are undecided about an academic major, and they have no clear career plans. The lack of career plans and clear academic goals may be related to specific behaviors that lead to failure in college. During spring 2013, we have an interesting comparison between A.S. General Studies majors and Early Childhood Education majors. Sixty-two percent of the General Studies majors as compared to 41 percent of the Education majors received one or more mid-term grades of “D” “F” or “U.” Of the students receiving these grades, 30 percent of the General Studies majors received the grades in 3 -5 courses, and only 13 percent of the Education majors received the grades in 3 -5 courses.

The General Studies majors are also slow to respond to emails from advisors requesting that they schedule a follow-up advising appointment or encouraging them to register for the upcoming semester. During the first three days of early registration for fall 2013, 25 percent of the General Studies majors scheduled a registration appointment as compared to 49 percent of the Education majors. When students register late, they frequently have a more disjointed schedule which puts them at even greater risk for failure.

Research has shown that students who have a relationship with their advisor are more often successful in college. It is difficult for an advisor to develop a relationship with a student who will not respond to emails or schedule appointments. We believe that, if the academic advisor has a dual role and also teaches the FYES 1000 for the General Studies majors, this will create the opportunity for the development of an ongoing advisor/advisee relationship and the opportunity for purposeful career exploration in addition to the usual benefits of the FYES 1000 course.

Potential Impact on Completion

The potential impact on completion of this intrusive advising model should be increased retention and completion for students who enter the college as General Studies majors. In addition to this institutional outcome, there should be great benefits to individual students who identify realistic career goals and the appropriate related academic majors early in their academic career. Clearer goals should encourage behaviors related to success in college which will, in turn, affect the GPA and educational motivation and satisfaction.

Connection to the Campus Completion Plan

The Intrusive Advising Model proposal strongly aligns with the following campus completion plan Goals and Objectives:

**GOAL II: IMPROVE ACCESS AND COMPLETION FOR TRADITIONALLY UNEVERSERVED STUDENTS**
Objective 4: Develop and/or Expand Programs/Services.

**GOAL III: SHORTEN TIME TO DEGREE**
Objective 1: Improve Advising.

Specifically, the proposal addresses a way to both expand current services and improve the academic advising experience for new General Studies’ majors. The primary objective of the Intrusive Advising Model is to move the at-risk population of students from college entry to program completion/transfer in a timely manner. In order to achieve this objective, the revised academic model seeks to remove barriers to academic success, which include a lack of clear direction, poor academic performance, low motivation, and poor adjustment to college. In addition, the model’s use of academic advisors as instructors of FYES courses fosters relationship building and allows more face time to address these issues.

Potential for Lessons learned and Models for Other Institutions

In response to each of the potential lessons learned that were identified on page one, we will need to make adjustments to the program. As we gain evidence that the interventions are having the desired positive effects, we will move to make appropriate changes in academic advising for other majors at the college. The career component may not be as important for other majors, but students in other majors might benefit from a more effective early alert system and a stronger advisor/ advisee relationship. This model of intrusive advising could be easily adopted by other institutions.
## Illustrated Logic Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Line - Milestones</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior to 1st Term</td>
<td>New Student Orientation Session</td>
<td>Career Reflection</td>
<td>Student considers career options</td>
<td>Student begins the journey to program completion.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Initial Visit - First Registration</td>
<td>Advisor and Student develop a schedule.</td>
<td>Student understands degree requirements</td>
<td>Student begins to share responsibility of academic plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing - Weeks 1-12</td>
<td>General Studies FYES Course: Career Exploration and Academic Planning Component</td>
<td>The student will: 1) participate in activities designed to better understand interests, values, skills, and abilities. 2) explore the world of work. 3) participate in activities to develop action plans for degree completion. 4) participate in activities designed to understand the importance of course selection, course sequencing, and degree completion. 5) complete a career exploration project/portfolio.</td>
<td>The student will: 1) identify three potential career areas to investigate. 2) narrow career options to one field. 3) declare the major to meet the chosen career path. 4) develop an academic plan to achieve his/her desired degree.</td>
<td>The student will: 1) be less likely to lose funding for school. 2) be more likely to complete a program at DSC or transfer to another institution. 3) graduate within the self-selected timeframe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ongoing - Weeks 1-12</td>
<td>General Studies FYES Course: Study Skills</td>
<td>Student will participate in activities on: Adjusting to College, Time Management, Note-Taking, Reading Comprehension, Organizing Information, Test Preparation, and Memory.</td>
<td>The student will demonstrate an understanding of study skills and learning strategies necessary for college success.</td>
<td>The student will: 1) study more efficiently. 2) earn higher grades. 3) drop/withdraw fewer classes. 4) repeat fewer classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2 Follow Up Appointment</td>
<td>The advisor will: 1) meet with student to gauge adjustment to college and assess need for interventions. 2) discuss the results of the Personality Inventory that was administered in the FYES course during Week 1.</td>
<td>The advisor will make referrals as needed.</td>
<td>The student will: 1) address personal issues and behaviors that inhibit academic success. 2) have a better understanding of how personality influences academic and career interests.</td>
<td>The student’s understanding of self will enhance the adjustment to college and improve career choices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4 Early Alert Progress Check</td>
<td>1) The advisor will contact instructors to track student progress. 2) The advisor will meet with student to discuss academic progress. 3) The advisor will make referrals to DSC and Community Resources as needed.</td>
<td>The student will: 1) The student and the advisor will be made aware of academic issues. 2) The advisor will make appropriate referrals. 3) The advisor and student will develop an action plan for success.</td>
<td>The advisor will assist the student with early interventions for success.</td>
<td>The student will: 1) have a higher GPA. 2) be less likely to lose funding for school. 3) shorten time to graduation/transfer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8 Mid-Term Check</td>
<td>The Advisor will: 1) review mid-term grades. 2) meet with advisees to discuss academic performance.</td>
<td>The student and the advisor will be made aware of classes with academic issues.</td>
<td>The advisor will: 1) make referrals to appropriate resources. 2) assist the student with the development of an action plan for success.</td>
<td>The student will: 1) have a better understanding of his/her early academic progress. 2) connect to resources early in the term.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 9-18 1st Cohort: Registration, FYES Course Ends, and Post-Course Transition</td>
<td>1) The student and advisor will select courses for next term. 2) The student will develop a completion plan to graduation/transfer for the degree selected. 3) The advisor will assist the student with transitioning to the next term.</td>
<td>The student will: 1) develop a schedule that is in sync with his/her program of study and career path. 2) have a better understanding of the timeframe for completion.</td>
<td>The student will: 1) be more likely to register earlier. 2) be more likely to have a schedule with better class times to fit with their other responsibilities. 3) be less likely to take unnecessary courses. 4) shorten time to graduation/transfer.</td>
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### Major Project Phases

1. Initial Meeting/Orientation Session – First Semester Mid-Term Assessment  
2. First Semester Mid-Term Assessment – End of First Term Assessment  
3. End of First Term Assessment – Second Mid-Term Assessment  
4. Second Mid-Term Assessment – End of First Year Assessment  
5. End of First Year Assessment – End of Second Year Assessment/Graduation/Transfer  
6. End of Second Year Assessment – End of Third Year Assessment/Graduation/Transfer  
7. End of Third Year Assessment – End of Fourth Year Assessment/Graduation/Transfer  
8. End of Fourth Year Assessment – End of Fifth Year Assessment/Graduation/Transfer

### Activities, Milestones, and Timeline

- Please see Illustrated Logic Model for detailed information.

### Goals and Objectives

**Goal I:** Improve Completion Rates of General Studies majors.

Objective 1. 2nd Term Retention - 5% increase in retention rate of Cohort 1 (Fall 2013 students entering as General Studies majors returning for Spring 2014 term) using baseline data from respective 2012-2013 term.

Objective 2. 2nd Year Retention - 5% increase in retention rate of Cohort 1 (Fall 2013 students entering as General Studies majors returning for Fall 2014 term) using baseline data from Fall 2012 General Studies majors returning for Fall 2013.

Objective 3. Graduation Rates – 2% increase in graduation rates of Cohort 1 (Fall 2013 students entering as General Studies majors) with check points at 3 years for students graduating with an Associate’s degree and 5 years for students graduating with a Bachelor’s degree.

**Goal II:** Determine the Transfer Rates for new students entering as General Studies majors to serve as a benchmark for future terms.

Objective 1. Calculate the number of Cohort 1 (Fall 2013 students entering as General Studies majors), who transfer to another institution without completing a degree at DSC.

Objective 2. Determine the school/program types to which students transferred before graduating from DSC.

Objective 3. Determine if students completed the intended program at another institution.

**Goal III:** Increase the GPAs of new students entering as General Studies majors.

Objective 1. 2nd Term GPA - Increase by .5 the average GPA of Cohort 1 (Fall 2013 students entering as General Studies majors) using baseline data from respective 2012-2013 term.

Objective 2. 1st Year GPA - Increase by .5 the average GPA of Cohort 1 (Fall 2013 students entering as General Studies majors) using baseline data from respective 2012-2013 term.

Objective 3. Graduation GPA - Increase by .5 the average GPA of Cohort 1 (Fall 2013 students entering as General Studies majors) at the point of graduation using baseline data from respective 2012-2013 term.

### Major project phases, activities and milestones with timeline (initial results within 6 to 9 months)

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<td>2nd Term</td>
<td>1st Cohort: Follow Up of Non-returning Students (see details in assessment below)</td>
<td>The student will: 1) be invited to attend a Cohort Reunion. 2) be asked to meet with the advisor to discuss mid-term grades. 3) be advised and registered for the next term classes.</td>
<td>The student will: 1) celebrate 1st term accomplishments and enhance advisor/advisee relationship. 2) be reminded of important dates, academic resources, and academic planning. 3) have multiple opportunities for individual meetings with advisor to discuss barriers and concerns. 4) register for appropriate classes and academic load.</td>
<td>The student will: 1) have a higher GPA. 2) be less likely to lose funding for school. 3) be more likely to register earlier. 4) be more likely to have a schedule with better class times to fit with their other responsibilities. 5) be less likely to take unnecessary courses. 6) shorten time to graduation/transfer.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st Cohort: Reunion, mid-term follow up, and registration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1st Cohort: Mid-Term and Final Year Assessments (see details in assessment below)</td>
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<td>2nd Cohort: Begins Weeks 1-18 (see details at the beginning of the Logic Model.</td>
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Data Sources for Evaluation

For each cohort, a database will be built to track students within the program. Through Banner reports, the advisors will obtain mid-term grades, grade point averages at check points and assessment periods, and enrollment information to track retention and major changes. Students who do not return to campus (with the exception of summer terms) will be asked to complete a survey to determine transfer enrollment and reasons for stop out. The following table illustrates the check points and assessments planned.

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<tr>
<td>Week 8 Mid-Term Check</td>
<td>The advisor will review mid-term grades.</td>
<td>The advisor enters the mid-term grades into the database.</td>
<td>Changes will be made to the intrusive advising program in response to the assessment results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of First Term Assessment and Follow-Up</td>
<td>The advisor will 1) Assess retention rates, GPA's, major changes, and transfer rates. 2) follow-up with non-returning students. 3) meet with returning students as needed.</td>
<td>The advisor will compare data for the current term incoming class to data from the previous years’ incoming fall classes.</td>
<td>Changes will be made to the intrusive advising program in response to the assessment results.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Term Mid-Term Check</td>
<td>The advisor will review mid-term grades and enter information into the database.</td>
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<td>Changes will be made to the intrusive advising program in response to the assessment results.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Year - 5th Year Fall Terms Assessment and Follow-Up</td>
<td>The advisor will: 1) Assess retention rates, GPA's, major changes, and transfer rates. 2) follow-up with non-returning students. 3) survey graduates and transfer students. 4) meet with returning students as needed.</td>
<td>The advisor will compare data for the current fall incoming class to data from the previous years’ incoming fall classes.</td>
<td>Changes will be made to the intrusive advising program in response to the assessment results.</td>
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Consideration for Sustainability and How Work Will Inform Other Efforts

This model of intrusive academic advising could be sustained and expanded to academic advising for other majors with minimal additional funding. If all of the professional advisors begin to teach multiple sections of FYES 1000, the college may need to hire more advisors, but there will be fewer faculty members teaching the classes, and the faculty members will be available to teach more sections of their content courses.