

Capturing Student Services Data to Improve Success and Completion

Proposal Project Lead: (Project Co-Director): Chaudron Gille, Associate Vice President University Affairs & Academic Services; University of North Georgia; chaudron.gille@ung.edu, 678-717-3835

Other Team Members (all affiliated with the University of North Georgia):

- Project Co-Director: UNG Complete College Georgia Director (search currently underway)
- Hieu Huynh, Director of ACTT Center and Tutoring Services, hieu.huynh@ung.edu
- Terri Carroll, Director of Academic Advising, terri.carroll@ung.edu
- Amy Sherman, Director of Supplemental Instruction, amy.sherman@unt.edu
- UNG Math faculty member

Project Category: Start-Up: Data-Driven Student Engagement

Overview

This project proposes to implement a tracking system to capture student use of academic support services. Data collected will be used in concert with an existing, successful Academic Success Plan process to provide targeted advising interventions that promote the development of academic success skills. By using a student's ID card and linking it to the Banner student record system, the data will be easier to collect and analyze by specific student populations to determine which interventions have the most impact on success and progression. Faculty and advisors regularly refer students in poor academic standing to campus support services (e.g., tutoring, career counseling, skill building workshops), but must rely on self-reported, anecdotal evidence of attendance and effectiveness. Current tracking includes the number of students served, but disaggregating this data by individual student or sub-population is labor-intensive. Thus, little information about a student's follow-through is being provided to the faculty and advisors.

Impact on Completion

Capturing data on the use of student support services will impact success and completion through the:

- Timely use of data to increase effectiveness of interventions leading to success in courses
- Creation of an environment that encourages student-faculty-staff collaboration and engagement in student success
- Provision of a holistic approach to supporting students through the use of Academic Success Plans
- Emphasis on personal accountability for students with Academic Success Plans

Potential Lessons to be Learned

Institutional data show that, when followed, UNG's Academic Success Plan (ASP) model is effective in improving the GPAs of struggling students (not in good academic standing). By tracking student use of academic support services, this project will determine if ASPs can be used effectively with other student populations. Intended outcomes are to determine if a tracking system encourages more follow through on prescribed activities, as well as whether it enables Advising Center staff to identify and follow up with students failing to follow the ASP, and ultimately serve more students. As a result of the data gathered, faculty and staff will learn more about effective timing and duration of interventions, leading to the creation of more individualized and intentional approaches to assisting students. Data gathered as a result of this project will also inform additional completion initiatives, including improving existing Early Alert Systems.

Concept Description

The University of North Georgia was formed through the consolidation of North Georgia College & State University and Gainesville State College, two of the top-performing schools in the University System of Georgia, in January 2013. Positioned in the fastest-growing region of the state, UNG comprises four campuses united by a single mission focused on academic excellence and developing students into leaders for a diverse and global society. The University of North Georgia is a University System of Georgia leadership institution and is the Military College of Georgia. With about 15,000 students, the University of North Georgia is the state's seventh-largest public university.

Consolidation has allowed UNG to capitalize on the existing strengths of two institutions, as evidenced by this project. In order to increase the number of academically underperforming students who transition to good academic standing, this project combines a history of robust academic advising and student support services at the Gainesville campus with an existing project to track students' usage of co-curricular opportunities on the Dahlonega campus. Currently, students classified as "Not in Good Standing" are required to participate in an Academic Success Plan (ASP) program, which includes meeting with an advisor, completing an online module, and developing an individualized plan that addresses specific needs or weaknesses. The plan typically includes referrals to specific academic and student affairs services. Approximately, 60% of students not in good academic standing choose to participate in the Academic Success Plan. Data show those who do participate see an increase in their GPA. In Fall 2013, UNG will move to mandatory academic advising for students' first 42 credit hours and will implement the Academic Success Plan program across all four campuses. Additionally, planning is in place to expand the Academic Success Plan model to at-risk populations before they reach official "Not in Good Standing" status, strengthening our Early Alert System.

While largely successful in its current configuration, the Academic Success Plan program only has the ability to track students' visits to an advisor and completion of online modules, relying on students' self-report data regarding participation in other recommended services including: skill workshops, career counseling, and tutoring sessions. To complicate matters, when a student self-reports use of an academic support service such as the tutoring lab, it can mean anything from going to the lab once the night before an exam to working weekly in the math lab with a study group. Therefore, better mechanisms are needed to track student use of prescribed support services, particularly as related to frequency, duration, and timing in proximity to course assignments.

One such attempt to improve tracking is currently being piloted in the math lab on the Gainesville campus. All students entering the lab are required to stop at a computer, log-in using their student ID number, and identify their course and instructor. The students' usage information is linked to the Banner system, allowing faculty and tutoring staff to generate reports which can be used for intentional and timely conversations with students regarding progress and the need for additional interventions. It also allows for faculty to incentivize the use of the tutoring services, particularly among those students in remedial and introductory-level courses. This timely intervention is made possible by the close coordination of support services and the classroom experience. Unfortunately, the process utilized in the math pilot is cumbersome and creates a bottleneck at the lab's entrance. If students could simply swipe their ID card, the same level of data will be collected while simplifying the process.

While exploring options for "swipe card" data tracking systems, the project team learned that the UNG Division of Student Affairs is currently working with Auxiliary Services to implement a "swipe card" system across all four campuses in Fall 2013 that will allow for the collection of data on participation in student life activities using the Org Sync software program. This system, currently limited to the Dahlonega campus, links with Banner, and is used for library check out and residence/dining hall access, but does not collect any data on use of academic support services. Funding through this RFP will allow the project team to collaborate with

Student Affairs and Auxiliary Services to coordinate with the rollout of new ID cards and implementation of the Org Sync software on the Gainesville campus for Fall 2013. Gainesville, the largest of the four UNG campuses, has been selected as the pilot site because of its robust academic support programs and historical access mission.

Increasing the number of academically underperforming students who transition to good academic standing will enhance several aspects of the UNG Complete College Georgia plan, particularly those goals associated with providing support for completion to underserved populations, and decreasing excess credits earned upon degree completion through enhanced early intervention protocols. As highlighted in our CCG plan, UNG has a history of providing support for veterans, military personnel, and adult learners, which is reflected in the development of CALM, the Center for Adult Learners and Military. This “one-stop shop” advocates and coordinates services on behalf of these specific student populations. CALM staff would benefit tremendously from targeted data indicating how their student populations are utilizing campus resources. The UNG CCG plan also outlines strategies for providing financial management workshops and targeted advising for students not progressing, all of which are currently integrated into the Academic Success Plan model.

Theory of Change

The most critical aspect of collecting data on student use of academic support services is to facilitate feedback that increases student motivation and accountability. According to Tinto (2012), “Students are more likely to succeed in settings that enable all parties – students, faculty, and staff – to adjust their behaviors to better promote student success. In such settings, students become more involved in learning activities, and more effective in self-assessment to improve their learning strategies and study habits.” Implementing a data collection system to track student use of support services would facilitate just this type of setting in which students, faculty, and staff could adjust their behaviors in a more timely fashion guided by data-driven decisions. Tinto also quotes Carroll (1988), “Feedback is particularly helpful when it creates a slight cognitive dissonance between what a person thinks of his or her performance and what a person discovers from feedback because such dissonance can cause profound changes in behavior.” The ease of the ID card system will make it possible to expand the populations served by this model because student compliance could be easily monitored. The additional accountability on the part of the students will encourage adherence to the plan. Additional structure and motivation is often needed to create new habits. The ability to demonstrate the link between the level of participation and the impact on course success can be a powerful motivator for the student to change behavior.

Potential for Lessons Learned/ Models for Other Institutions

As a result of this project we will: 1) Identify patterns of use among specific student populations, 2) Create better communication/coordination among faculty, advisors, and academic support staff to support academically struggling students, and 3) Determine the impact of support services on academic performance.

Since the same data system will integrate tracking of participation in student affairs activities, it may be possible in the future to analyze the impact of participation in different types of activities on the level of engagement and academic success of specific traditionally underserved populations, especially when engaged in academically-oriented co-curricular activities. Project data will also be used to provide other institutions seeking to serve academically struggling students and other at-risk populations with tangible intervention strategies for use by faculty to encourage successful course completion, as well as a viable model for holistic student support, the Academic Success Plan.

Project Plan

Phase I: Planning & Preparation		
Activity	Who	When
• Coordinate with Student Affairs & Auxiliary Services to expand Org Sync	Project Co-Directors	May 2013
• Contract with Org Sync for necessary software and hardware	Project Co-Directors	May 2013
• Attend Org Sync Training Conference	Project Team	June 2013
• Develop process to maximize the use of tracking system	Project Team	July 2013
• Recruit faculty and staff to participate in pilot program	Project Co-Directors	Sum/Fall 2013
Phase II: Implementation		
Implement Org Sync Tracking Program		
• Begin collecting data	Project Team	Aug 2013
• Monitor data collection process to ensure integrity	CCG Director	Aug-Dec 2013
Create intentional and immediate feedback opportunities for students (designed by faculty & staff)		
• Train faculty and advising staff to access Org Sync/Banner reports	Project Co-Directors	Aug-Oct 2013
• Recruit faculty "intervention team"	Project Co-Directors	Aug-Sept 2013
• Pilot intervention strategies in participating departments	Project Co-Dir, Fac.	Oct-Dec 2013
• Host workshops for faculty/staff on tracking system and toolkit	Project Team	Dec2013, Apr2014
• Create Intervention Resource Toolkit for faculty and staff	Project Team & Fac.	Feb 2014
Monitor Students' Progress using Academic Success Plans		
• Refine academic advising tracking process	Advising, CCG Dir.	July 2013
• Develop process to track support service usage and academic progress	CCG Dir., Math Fac.	Aug-Sept 2013
• Create Advising Center protocols for use when students don't comply	Advising Center	Sept-Oct 2013
• Report outcomes for students on ASPs to CCG Director	Advising Center	Fall 2013, Sp2014
Analyze Usage and Intervention Data		
• Determine students' Academic Success Plans completion and non-completion rates; compare to previous semester's results	Advising Center Dir. & Staff, CCG Dir.	Dec 2013 – Jan 2014
• Determine impact of academic support services on Acad. Success Plans	Project Team	Dec 2013-Jan2014
• Determine impact of usage data on ability to assist more students	Project Team	Dec2013-Jan 2014
• Determine impact of faculty intervention strategies	Project Co-Dir, Fac.	Jan-Feb 2014
• Make necessary adjustments to intervention resource toolkit	CCG Dir., Faculty	May 2014
Expand Academic Success Plan model to students in high-demand, pre-major programs		
• Approach faculty in pre-major programs to collaborate in expansion	CCG Dir, Advising Ctr	Oct-Nov 2013
• Identify struggling students in pre-major programs; Offer ASP	Advising Ctr, Faculty	Jan 2014
• Create Academic Success Plans with interested students	Advising Ctr, Faculty	Jan-Feb 2014
• Monitor ASP performance/usage data for pre-major students	Advising Center	Jan–May 2014
Phase III: Dissemination		
• Host workshops for faculty/staff focused on tracking system and toolkit	Project Team	Dec2013, Apr2014
• Create report to be shared with the USG via UNG's CCG website	CCG Director	May 2014
• Present results at internal and external workshops and conferences	Project Team	2014

Evaluation

The project will be evaluated on several factors, including the successful implementation of the card swipe data collection system as evidenced by installation of Org Sync software/hardware, training of staff to use software/hardware and data retrieval, and ease of student use. The success of creating intentional and immediate student performance feedback opportunities will be assessed based on the development and successful implementation of an academic success intervention toolkit; student performance data measured pre- and post-intervention; and faculty reports related to usefulness of intervention strategies. The impact of the swipe card data tracking system on students completing Academic Success Plans will be measured by the number of students on Academic Success Plans, compared with those in previous semesters, who: 1) successfully complete the Plan, 2) fail to comply with the prescribed activities in the Plans, and 3) are served by the Advising Center. Efforts to expand Academic Success Plans to other populations will be measured by comparing GPA improvement levels for pre-majors against those of students not in good standing.

Sustainability

Sustainability of the project rests on being able to leverage and expand an existing data collection system used by Student Affairs, thus sharing the on-going cost of the Org Sync license across multiple units and all four campuses. The simplicity of a single card reader system provides an integrated database of student engagement and academic information - an invaluable tool for developing targeted interventions aimed at continuously improving student success.