Project Details

Title: Improve Academic Advising
Category: 1-Helping Students Learn
Timeline:
- Planned Project Kickoff: 05-02-2011
- Actual Completion: 04-30-2012

Status: COMPLETED
Updated: 05-17-2012
Reviewed: 07-09-2012
Created: 05-09-2011
Version: 1

1: Project Goal

A: This project will improve academic advising through:
   1. Expand the current UMC advisor handbook and/or website to include a variety of resources related to effective advising.
   2. Develop a student website providing easy access to advising related information and resources.
   3. Implement advising pilot project involving intrusive advising for conditionally admitted students who are typically high risk. Measure the effectiveness of this project including its impact on retention.
   4. Measure and analyze advising effectiveness:
      1. Conduct a survey measuring student satisfaction with advising
      2. Combine the survey results with other student data to determine groups of students with low satisfaction

2: Reasons For Project

A: There is an institutional priority to increase student retention and graduation rates. Since advising is closely related to student success, this project will analyze that relationship.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Advising Committee, Retention Committee, Academic Assistance Center, and all academic departments

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: 
   - Academic advising of students
   - Advising processes for high risk student groups

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The one year period of time will allow time to conduct a student survey, analyze the results of the survey along with other student characteristics to determine high risk student groups and relationships with advising, develop and implement pilot advising projects for high risk groups.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: The project leader will report to the AQIP Steering Committee on a regular basis with:
   1. Student survey conducted spring 2011
   2. Data analysis completed during summer 2011
   3. New advisor training implemented fall 2011
   4. Pilot advising projects implemented fall 2011
Project Outcome Measures

A: Measures of success will include:
   1. Annual results from student advising survey
   2. Retention rates
   3. Graduation rates

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: 1. Expand the current UMC advisor handbook to include a variety of resources related to effective advising.

   The online Faculty Advising Handbook was reviewed for information, accuracy, and up to date links. The identified broken links were reported to the E-communications director for updating. Additionally, the name, Faculty Advising Handbook, was changed to Academic Advising Handbook For Faculty, to better reflect the purpose of this resource. Review of how faculty access the handbook showed that it was not readily accessible (i.e., not available from home page, not in drop down menus for faculty.) More entry points to the handbook were identified and relayed to the E-communications director for inclusion on various web pages that faculty use.

   The design and content of the handbook were not changed, although discussed at great length. At this time it was decided against changing the layout until the student website was complete and until the various departments that need a “handbook” format for accreditation purposes (i.e., early childhood education) have a chance to review another format. Some additional content was identified as being pertinent to the handbook. These include information on what to do with a student in crisis, clarification on suspension policy (if student can/should take courses at a different institution), and having a reference for the different hold codes. Each of these requires that pages be created/written by different departments. This was put on hold until the format of the handbook be identified.

2. Develop a student website providing easy access to advising related information and resources.

   The University of Minnesota Crookston did not have a place for students to go for information about advising. Students would have to know where to look for answers to their questions, and some of those places were not intuitive. A new website with advising information for students was developed. This new website brings resources from many places to one spot for students, serving as a one stop for advising questions and issues for students. It is divided into several sections and includes information on finding their advisor, registration, graduation requirements, career planning, getting involved, and how to find help (financial, academic, health, and emotional); just to name a few. The website is at: http://www1.crk.umn.edu/studentadvising/

3. Implement advising pilot project involving intrusive advising for conditional admission students who are typically high risk.

   Measures the effectiveness of this project including its impact on retention.

   Students enrolled in the GNED 1000 course were required to meet 3 times with their advisor during the first semester. Each meeting was designed to allow the students to get to know their advisor. At the end of the semester both the students and the advisers were surveyed. 103 students completed the survey and 90% thought the assignment allowed them to get to know their advisor. 64% of the students thought this assignment contributed to their success during the first semester. Advisers were also surveyed with 22 advisers responding and 93% indicating this was a valuable assignment for students.

4. Measure and analyze advising effectiveness:
   a. Conduct a survey measuring student satisfaction with advising
   b. Combine the survey results with other student data to determine groups of students with low satisfaction with advising

   A student advising survey was sent out to all on-campus students. The survey asked students to evaluate their satisfaction with advising at UMC. The results for 2011 indicated that the 84% of the students rated their academic advising as either very good or excellent. The survey revealed some subgroups that were not as satisfied. The survey was sent out for the first time in 2009. The survey is being repeated spring of 2012.

2: Institution Involvement

A:
The main people involved in this project were members of the advising committee. The committee members developed the student advisee site and reviewed the advisor website. The e-communications director designed and updated the websites. The faculty in the course Seminar for New Students implemented and assessed the intrusive advising portion of the project. The advisers for the students in the GNED 1000 were involved in the intrusive advising implementation. The Coordinator for the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology designed, distributed, and collected the data from the surveys (student survey for GNED 1000, adviser survey for GNED 1000, student advising satisfaction survey.) The advising committee and the Director of Institutional Research reviewed and analyzed the data from student advising satisfaction survey.

### Next Steps

1. **Expand the current UMC advisor handbook to include a variety of resources related to effective advising.**
   
   Revise faculty handbook layout to a more effective/efficient layout for faculty access (after determination of how to meet the needs of those groups needing the handbook layout). Review content to ensure that as many areas of advising (not just academic advising) are included as resources. Look at areas to include (i.e., crisis advising) and to expand (i.e., international student issues/resources and study abroad). Identify a person or group to keep the site/information current.

2. **Develop a student website providing easy access to advising related information and resources.**
   
   Pilot the website during the fall 2012 GNED 1000 course. Students will complete a user study during the course to determine ease of use and adequacy of content. Content will be continuously updated to reflect student needs. Identify person or group to keep this site accurate.

3. **Implement advising pilot project involving intrusive advising for conditional admission students who are typically high risk.**
   
   Measure the effectiveness of this project including its impact on retention.
   
   Continue with the GNED 1000 project, the incorporation of intrusive advising assignments in this course. Revise forms that advisers are given to guide discussion based on feedback from students and advisers. Continue to monitor students' satisfaction with assignment. Track student retention and GPA over next few terms.

4. **Measure and analyze advising effectiveness:**
   
   a. **Conduct a survey measuring student satisfaction with advising**
   
   b. **Combine the survey results with other student data to determine groups of students with low satisfaction with advising**
   
   The advising committee will continue to do this survey annually.

### Resulting Effective Practices

Intrusive advising appears to have benefits, but it is too soon to say conclusively that it improved retention. Likewise it is too soon to know what impact the advising website for students will have a positive impact on student advising, as it will be piloted this fall. The advising survey has helped identify subgroups that are less satisfied with academic advising.

### Project Challenges

1. **Expand the current UMC advisor handbook to include a variety of resources related to effective advising.**
   
   Identifying a “home” for the handbook. Identify a person responsible for the web site.

2. **Develop a student website providing easy access to advising related information and resources.**
   
   Identify a person to keep the website updated.

3. **Implement advising pilot project involving intrusive advising for conditional admission students who are typically high risk.**
Measure the effectiveness of this project including its impact on retention.

None

4. Measure and analyze advising effectiveness:
   a. Conduct a survey measuring student satisfaction with advising
   b. Combine the survey results with other student data to determine groups of students with low satisfaction with advising

Continue to measure the effectiveness of this method of advising on students retention.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: The University has made tremendous progress toward the completion of the action project objectives. The UMC advisor handbook was reviewed, renamed, and analyzed to determine how readily accessible the information was for faculty. It was determined that the handbook was not easily accessible so efforts to enhance faculty access are underway. Specific changes to the handbook website are pending so that it can be coordinated with the revised student website and so departments can review other handbook formats. The University successfully developed a website with advising information for students. The website serves as a one-stop source for advising information. The University also implemented an advising pilot project involving intrusive advising for conditional admission students who are typically high risk. Students enrolled in GNED 1000 were required to meet 3 times with their advisor during the first semester. At the end of the semester students and advisors were surveys and the data indicate that the program was valued by students and advisors. Specifically, of the 103 students who completed the survey, 90% thought the assignment contributed to their success during the first semester. Of the 22 advisor's who completed the survey, 93% indicated that this was a valuable assignment for the students. The University may further enhance their outcomes by asking students what additional activities might enhance their first semester as this would further inform the University regarding student needs.

2: Institution Involvement

A: The University involved a variety of appropriate individuals to participate in this action project including content area experts who developed the class, the e-communications director who played a critical role in updating the websites, advisor's for students in GNED 1000 as well as individuals from the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology and Institutional Research. The annual update does not specify the extent to which students are involved in providing input and feedback regarding the program or the website; consequently, there might be value in including students who can serve to provide information regarding student perceptions.

3: Next Steps

A: The University has clearly identified the critical next steps. The annual update does not indicate whether a timeline has been established for each of the activities so the University may want to consider outline a timeline including responsible individuals and desired outcomes.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: This intrusive advising model may be a best practice that should be shared with other institutions. Given that the University is in the beginning stages of the process, it will be important to continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions as they pertain to retention and overall student success. It may also be important for the University to remain flexible so it is poised to refine the program as additional feedback from students and advisors is analyzed and evaluated as well as additional information regarding retention and student outcomes becomes available. The existing data regarding the cited subgroup satisfaction could be a place to start to further investigate student needs.

5: Project Challenges

A: Identifying "ownership" of documents and websites versus "delegation" of the maintenance of said items can be challenging for many organizations. The University may already have in place a model for how other institutional documents and websites are maintained.
For example, if the University currently has a centralized office that maintains the website, perhaps they could take on this task as well. If so, it might be useful to maintain that precedent. If there is no such model in place, perhaps it would make sense to delegate responsibilities based on functional areas served by the resources. The University indicates that continuing to measure the effectiveness of the advising projects will be a challenge. It seems that much progress has been made resulting in positive momentum. That being said, if it is not already in place, a schedule of specific activities, timelines, responsibilities, individuals responsible, outcomes, deadlines, etc. could be developed to provide a structure and related accountability for completing the tasks. It will become increasingly important for the University to have a structure to deal with the data (surveys, retention, etc.) so it can refine practices to continue to affect positive student outcomes.

### Project Outcome

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<td><strong>A:</strong> The goals as proposed in this action project have been accomplished as outlined in the project update. A project update has been submitted and reviewed. Reviewers suggestions have been shared with the project committee and are being considered as we continue to modify and use the results of this project.</td>
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<th>Success Factors</th>
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<td>2</td>
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<td><strong>A:</strong> The primary success of this project include:</td>
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<td>- The online faculty advisor handbook was extensively revised with new material added</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- A student website was developed with advising related information and resources</td>
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<td>- An intrusive advising pilot project was conducted with a group of high risk students</td>
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<td>- A survey involving student satisfaction with advising was conducted and analyzed</td>
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<td><strong>A:</strong> All parts of this project were successful.</td>
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