Facilitating Student Graduation through Academic Advising and Technology

Leadership Development Program Project
April 29, 2011

Team Members

Victor Delgado, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, College of Engineering and Computer Science

Kathryn Dickson, Acting Chair and Professor, Dept. of Biological Science

Grace Johnson, Director, Guardian Scholars Program

Kenara Ly, Director, Systems Infrastructure and Application Development, Information Technology

Deanna Merino-Contino, Director, President’s Scholars Program

Valerie Nguyen, Supervisor, Advancement Information Services, University Advancement

Lydia Rodriguez, Financial Reporting & System Administrator, Financial Services

Lillybeth Sasis, Assistant Director, Center for Careers in Teaching
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Acknowledgements

Sponsor:

Bridget Driscoll, Director, Academic Advisement Center

Advisors:

Chris Manriquez, Associate Vice President, Chief Technologist/Academic Technology Officer, IT

Chris Renne, Director, Faculty Development Center

Others:

Nancy Dority, Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Services, Admissions and Records

Lyzette Hingco, Coordinator, Titan Degree Audit, Admissions and Records

Mark Filowitz, WASC Student Engagement SE-6 Committee Chair and Associate Dean, College of Natural Science and Mathematics

Joe Luzzi, Director, Instructional Technology

Maria Mezhinsky, Director, IT Admissions and Records
Executive Summary

Through a close partnership between the Divisions of Information Technology and Academic Affairs and analysis of campus-wide feedback, the need to develop a common communication system between students, advisors, and evaluators has been identified. The use of the Titan Degree Audit (TDA) as the official CSUF advising tool that accompanies students from admission to graduation has facilitated advising and increased student’s understanding of degree requirements. However, an enhanced TDA system that overcomes constraints of our current technologies and business practices should be developed. The enhanced TDA should be completely accurate, capture advising information given to students, clearly indicate the graduation requirements that each student still needs to complete, and link to the class schedule and registration. A transparent, universal advising notes feature linked directly to the TDA must be implemented. Important graduation requirement messages must be pushed out to students via the communication technologies that they use. Additionally, to ensure that faculty and staff advisors remain current and informed about pertinent advisement policies and procedures, an advisor-training curriculum must be established and assessed. The content and program will be based on the nationally recognized, grant-funded Academic Advisement Certificate in Excellence program, hosted by Academic Advisement. A streamlined communication process for advising will establish a high level of transparency, accountability, and accuracy of shared, academic information between students, advisors, and evaluators. The expected outcomes of this transparent communication system are that (1) time to graduation will be reduced, (2) the number of graduation deferrals will decrease, and (3) students will be empowered to take control of their academic program and success.

Background

The University and the CSU have been developing strategies to facilitate students’ graduation in a timely fashion. To ensure that students graduate on time, accurate and consistent advising is essential.

The Charge

To review current advising practices and use of technology; partner with Information Technology to develop features that post important graduation requirement messages on student portals or Titan Online and capture advising information given to students; and recommend additional mechanisms to ensure faculty and staff advisors remain current, trained, and informed.

Introduction

California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) is dedicated to student academic success, and CSUF prides itself on being very student-centered. Over the past ten years, data and feedback have been collected, through committees and surveys, from over 11,000 voices campus-wide, the majority of which are from students themselves. The methodology and overall quality of advisement at CSUF are not in question. Students have access to quality General Education (GE) advisement (GE Survey, 2008), and 87.8% of student respondents rated their major advisement experience as excellent, above average, or average (WASC Student Engagement SE-1, 2009). However, when students move from one department or advisor to the next, there is no way to track the information, and information may be lost. The data consistently support the need to create streamlined communication processes that establish a high level of transparency, accountability, and accuracy of shared, academic information between students, advisors, and evaluators. This core need has continuously been a topic of discussion and a request for action at CSUF (WASC Student Engagement SE-6 Academic Advisors Professional Development Conference, 2010, Appendix F). Our LDP team has benefited from the historical data collected and the dedication of previous committees. We are now positioned to move beyond recommendations and take the required actions to achieve the desired result – student academic success.
The mandate of the CSU Graduation Initiative (http://graduate.csuprojects.org/) is to raise the CSU freshman six-year graduation rate by eight percentage points by 2015-2016 and cut in half the existing gap in degree attainment by CSU’s under-represented minority (URM) students. CSUF must increase graduation rates by 6% to 55% for first-time freshmen, by 8% to 81% for transfer students, and by 8-9% for URM students. Currently, fewer than 50% of CSUF entering freshmen graduate within six years. “Every interrupted education is a lost opportunity for the student, the student’s family and community, and the state. … We face a moral imperative to serve our students better by helping more of them complete the college educations that prepare them for full and productive lives.” (http://graduate.csuprojects.org/). Currently, many students who become candidates for graduation must defer graduation (see Appendix A). By the time these students learn of their graduation deferral, many have started jobs or have been accepted into graduate programs. Although there are many things that CSUF can do to increase graduation rates, such as identification of at-risk students and early intervention, more effective advisement and advising tools can eliminate a significant fraction of deferrals.

Effective advising throughout a student’s career can reduce time to graduation, provide a personal link to the campus, positively impact students’ experiences at CSUF, and guide them toward suitable career paths - all elements of the CSUF mission and goals and strategic plan. Yet, to have these positive effects, advising must be accurate, consistent, and transparent. Advising should also be ongoing, and must engage and educate students about all of the multi-faceted requirements for graduation, so that they can take responsibility for their progress and make informed decisions about their academic program each time they select courses. It must start at orientation, and continue on through graduation, as a shared responsibility between students and advisors.

During the Academic Technology Day at CSUF on February 15, 2011, keynote speaker, Dr. Gerry Hanley from the CSU Chancellor’s Office gave a presentation on “Academic Technology in the 21st Century.” He discussed our role to motivate, guide, navigate, and equip students with the skills and knowledge to succeed. Faculty and staff need to provide students with clear and consistent advice on the choices available in their academic program plans and what they need to do to fulfill graduation requirements. Services should be designed for the students and from the students’ perspectives. Technology should be used effectively to support students’ academic planning and advising.

A key objective for an advising system for CSUF is for all students and advisors effectively to use the universal advising tool on campus, the Titan Degree Audit (TDA), to track degree progress and to plan for graduation. The TDA is the one tool that follows each student from admission to graduation, and has become the official Grad Check document. At present, faculty, staff, students, and administrators agree that TDA is an effective advising tool (GE Survey, 2008); over 30,000 students are now downloading and printing their TDA on an annual basis. If we can ensure that the TDA always contains accurate and up-to-date information, contains notes from each advising session attended by the student, and is used effectively by students and advisors across campus, students will know where they are at all times on the path to graduation, graduation deferrals will be reduced, and time to degree will decrease.

At the present time, not all students (or advisors) know how to use the TDA to plan the student’s course selections and overall academic plan and to track requirements for graduation. Some students do not use the TDA or take advantage of advising support-services. A student may obtain advising information from many individuals, and sometimes they receive incorrect or conflicting advice. Some students do not remember or follow the advice that they receive. Currently, there is no easy way to track the advice given. Different advisors would benefit from knowing what previous advisors told students, and students would benefit from a record of the advice given. To solve these problems, there is a critical need for a universal advising notes system embedded into the TDA that maintains a record of advice given to students throughout their CSUF career. A complete record of advice given to students would also be useful for correcting errors well in advance of graduation and in evaluating petitions. This feature was requested as a
top priority by the participants in the Academic Advisors Professional Development Conference held at CSUF in November 2010 (see Appendix F).

Once the two priorities of accuracy and transparency for the TDA are met, the next level of improvements to the TDA will involve active student engagement. The format of the current TDA should be improved to better engage students (see Appendix B). Imagine if the TDA could be linked to a web-based, interactive application that graphically displayed progress toward graduation and mapped out how all requirements could be met by course selections in future semesters. Imagine if the TDA could be linked to the class schedule each semester and to course descriptions and prerequisites, and students were required to review their TDA before registering each semester. Students would find it much easier to navigate the requirements, select courses that meet their outstanding requirements, and more efficiently make progress toward their degrees. Envision for a moment that a prospective transfer student could view how their completed courses meet CSUF requirements and which requirements would need to be fulfilled once they transfer to CSUF, depending on their selected major. These elements are available at other CSU campuses: My Academic Planner (MAP) and Roadmap to Graduation at CSU Northridge and a similar system at CSU East Bay (see Appendix C and G); Dr. Hanley also spoke about the new Titan Graduation Positioning System (GPS), which is a turn-by-turn system and a step-by-step navigation to graduation. We need to consider implementing such a system at CSUF and remove any barriers to doing so.

In addition, we also need to focus on educating students how to use the system and must ensure that all advisors receive ongoing training. Thus, a training program must be developed and a spirit of cooperation among all involved in advising services must permeate the campus. CSUF must create a campus culture in which quality, consistency, accuracy, and effective communication are the foundations for the advisor training program. Realizing that each campus unit conducts advisement differently, consistent standards for advisement information must be maintained and assessed, as initially recommended by the WASC SE-2 committee.

**Process**

Our LDP team met weekly to discuss strategies for the project. Team members included members of the WASC SE-6 Committee and the Advising Requests and Records System (ARRC) Focus Group. The team consulted with our project sponsor and advisors several times to seek guidance on our charge and to solicit their input. The team sought feedback from students and other individuals and committees on campus to align the group’s charge with current efforts, recent campus discussions and workshops on advising. CSUF Admissions and Records staff members were invited to discuss the current and soon-to-be-released technologies used to track students’ academic progress. Members of the CSUF Academic Advising Center staff met with the committee to discuss critical needs for advising on campus. Team members researched degree audits and processes in use at other CSU campuses, reviewed and discussed the CSU Chancellor’s Office Degree Audit Best Practices report, the WASC SE-6 Committee report, First Time Freshmen and Transfer Advising Road Map, survey results from an Advisor Survey conducted in 2007, and survey results from the Academic Advising Professional Development Conference hosted in November 2010 (see Appendices A-G). We reviewed a number of off-the-shelf products and other technologies, as well as models developed by team members (see Appendix H and I). We identified key stakeholders and obtained information from and/or considered advising from the perspective of these different stakeholders: students, including transfer students, GE advisors (members of the Academic Advising Center staff), major advisors, Department Chairs, Assistant Deans (who work closely with students on probation and other issues), online users, Information Technology Staff, Admissions and Records, and WASC SE-6 Committee Members.
Findings

The estimated cost of current advising practices at CSUF is $6.1 million per year (WASC SE-6 Preliminary Report, Appendix D).

Consistency and accuracy in advising relates directly to improving graduation rates. Yet the current advising system on campus is decentralized, and there is no easily accessible, transparent record of a student’s advising history at CSUF.

There is an unacceptably high number of graduation deferrals each year, and many students are not aware of all the necessary graduation requirements, thus delaying time to degree. For example, a recent study by the CSUF Academic Advisement Center examined a sample of 4,690 students who were candidates for May 2009 graduation. Of these, 1,038 graduation deferral notices were found; approximately 1 in 5 of the candidates did not graduate when they expected they would! The common reasons for these graduation deferrals were deficiencies in units for the major or for GE, in required total units, in upper division units, having a GPA < 2.0, and not having passed the Exam in Writing Proficiency (see Appendix A). Many of these issues could be solved if the TDA was completely accurate and up-to-date, if outstanding requirements were more obviously displayed, and if the graduation check business process identified deficiencies in time for the student to enroll in the appropriate classes prior to the expected graduation date.

There is no “one-size-fits-all” advising strategy. Advising activities are very complex and include a wide range of student support functions, ranging from basic course selection advice to creating a thorough academic course plan or road map for each semester through graduation. Advising sessions may include career and post-graduation counseling and occasional “life” counseling. Yet a repository for 4- or 5-year road maps for each major does not exist. There is no central repository of information on relevant CSU Executive Orders and University Policy Statements about advising, and no consistency in how this information is conveyed to the campus community.

Colleges and Departments provide advising services that are unique to their mode of operation and based on their available resources. Some have professional advisors and some do not; some utilize only professional advisors. In some departments, all faculty members advise students, whereas in others only specific faculty do so. Several departments use a combination of faculty and professional advisors. Some advise annually, some each semester. Some train faculty advisors, others do not provide any training at all. Some are very GE savvy, some are not. The WASC SE-6 committee surveyed 19 other campuses that are in a similar situation.

Training and development programs for advisors are not institutionalized or consistent across campus. There is no single unit on campus that is officially designated to provide up-to-date training and information to advisors. Faculty advisors are needed for the major and as experts on careers with their discipline. Faculty advisors need to be properly trained and vetted as knowledgeable, so the information given to students is accurate and consistent. The WASC SE-6 Committee recommended that each college have a full-time college-based advisor. In addition, an Advisor Professional Development Committee is needed to address current advising practices and to share information that would help continue to improve communication process across advising units. These elements are needed for accountability, transparency, and accuracy (see Appendix F).

Only 11% of today’s college students use email as their primary mode of communication (Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project Center). Therefore, messages regarding important advising dates, deadlines, and information must be automated and sent to students via a variety of methods, including email, campus portal, and iFullerton/mobile phone, in a way that grabs their attention and that they will actually use.
Technology as it relates to advising is fragmented and does not meet all the needs of students and advisors. The current mechanism that is utilized to run the Titan Degree Audit (TDA) report is through the Degree Audit Records System (DARS) developed by Miami University in Ohio. Red Lantern is the new vendor that replaced the previous owner of DARS. DARS was migrated from the main server to the client server of PeopleSoft. Admissions and Records (A&R) is launching an interactive TDA in July 2011 that will include some improvements, such as graphs to visualize the student’s GE progress overall and in each GE category. Yet the interactive TDA features that we reviewed do not meet all the needs of students and advisors on campus; in particular, advising notes are not included on the TDA. Thus, advising information will not be easily captured and stored for access by all users.

In 2010, U-Direct, an educational planning system, was purchased by CSUF. Due to the PeopleSoft 9.0 implementation in July 2012, however, certain system programming changes cannot be made until 9.0 is deployed because A&R does not have the resources to do anything but focus on the 9.0 implementation through July 2012. To wait until July 2012 to assess what systems are available to implement in PeopleSoft 9.0 means that at least one full graduation cycle of students will not benefit from an enhanced TDA and may be delayed in graduation. We may not start to see improvements in graduation rates until 2013, close to the target date of the CSU Graduation Initiative for improving graduation rates. We need to overcome the constraints of the current system(s) by allowing Information Technology (IT) the access to data necessary to implement the requested communication process within the TDA.

In 2011, Admissions and Records invited faculty and staff advisors to the table to create the requested advising notes system as part of the Advising Requests and Records System (ARRC) Focus Group. The ARRC group was introduced to an advising notes system that uses functions currently available in PeopleSoft 9.0 (CMS). However, that system does not allow advising notes to be posted directly to the TDA, the primary feature requested by the end users. Resources were cited as the primary obstacle for not producing a transparent communication system within TDA. We cannot let resources stand in the way of our students’ graduation and success.

Recommendations

A. ACCURACY: Ensure that the TDA is accurate and up-to-date, and develop an enhanced TDA system, used by all students and advisors to plan academic programs, that efficiently moves students toward successful graduation

Utilize best practices from other CSU campuses (e.g., those presented to the CSU Chancellor’s Office on August 26, 2010 [http://graduate.csuprojects.org/uploads/81/rz/81rz4k8QA7ddA4xIoC-Z3Q/Degree-Audit.pdf; see Appendix C and G]). Look for system options other than DARS/Red Lantern to retrieve the data from CMS, to develop an enhanced TDA which includes the following features:

1. The TDA must be accurate. Duplicate units must be removed from the TDA, transfer coursework must be evaluated within the student’s first semester, and completed courses must be listed correctly. To accomplish these key objectives will require changes in the business practice for correcting duplicate units and when it is completed, and may require additional A&R personnel. It would be beneficial if some processes could be automated.

2. When a student applies for their Grad Check (they receive notification via email to do so after completing 85 units), an evaluation of all coursework must be completed prior to registration for the final semester. This process will highlight deficiencies and provide sufficient notification and time for the student to register for classes that will fulfill the remaining requirements, or for the student to know that s/he will have to postpone graduation and plan accordingly.
3. For transfer students, processing transcripts and post transfer units to the TDA within their first semester, to prevent duplication of courses (including course equivalents and GE categories) already completed at the community college and to minimize enrollment in unnecessary classes. Allow transfer students to use a “what if” feature to see how courses already completed match CSUF requirements for different majors, utilizing the CSU East East Bay model. This model also allows prospective transfer students to plan their programs more efficiently while enrolled at community colleges.

4. Based on student’s selected major, generate a roadmap to degree completion, or study plan, for each student to follow that is specific to the major and also includes GE requirements, utilizing the CSU Northridge model (see Appendix G). This will necessitate that all departments have complete roadmaps for their major(s) that are linked to the system, but many departments already have them available.

5. Require students to review the TDA in order to register. There could be a checklist or questions to prompt students as they navigate through each section of the TDA requirements prior to registering to ensure that they are selecting appropriate courses to make progress toward their degree.

6. Requirements that the student still must meet should be noted on the TDA, with a list of courses that meet each requirement, linked to the course schedule and catalog. A student could click on a course, find out if it was being offered that semester, read the description to determine if s/he wants to take the class, see how it fits his or her schedule, and view the prerequisites; it would also be useful to provide a link to the prerequisite course’s description and schedule.

7. Once the student identifies in which course s/he wishes to enroll for a given requirement, s/he would simply click on the course to register for it, without having to move between programs or open multiple windows.

8. Based on recommendations 5-7, implementation of the “Course Cart” feature of the new interactive TDA being rolled out in July 2011 should be a priority (Appendix B).

9. Include quality-assurance checks; i.e., before completing registration, there should be an automatic check of the planned courses to ensure that the course meet requirements and to minimize duplication; if they do not, create an error message for the student to correct course selection.

10. Send automated messages to students at specific milestones in their progress towards their degree (e.g., when they must declare a major, take the EWP exam, or apply for graduation). Any forms needed should be available electronically, so that students do not have to go to A&R for everything. Electronic communications to students should be pushed out to them via the student portal, text messaging, iFullerton, or other social network devices, based on student’s selection (see Appendix H).

B. TRANSPARENCY: Create a streamlined communication system between students, advisors, and evaluators within the Titan Degree Audit

1. Implement an advising notes system that is embedded in the TDA. With such a universal and transparent advising notes system, all information given to students during advising sessions about their academic program will be available to advisors and students, at all times.

2. Create an advising app in partnership with Information Technology, using the information gathered from stakeholders to improve advising practices. Make this available in iFullerton (see Appendix H).

3. Implement features in the current Student Portal that include the following tabs (see Appendix H):
   - TDA with advising notes
   - advisor information
   - reminders of advising appointments
To facilitate implementation of the recommendations in sections A and B, hold an Academic Advising Technology Summit on campus to demonstrate and evaluate existing technologies that meet the identified campus needs.

C. ACCOUNTABILITY: Recommendations for Implementation and Training

1. Prior to implementing any new system or changes to existing systems, beta-test with a group of users, including students, faculty, and staff advisors.

2. With collaboration among Information Technology, Academic Advising, Admissions and Records, and the WASC SE-6 proposed Professional Advisors Committee, notify the campus in advance of any changes or new system features. Provide update summaries and training links, explain the benefits of the changes, and involve users and stakeholders to ensure compliance and avoid duplication of efforts.

3. Develop an “advising curriculum” for students that is introduced at new student orientation. The curriculum should demonstrate the use of the TDA, introduce roadmaps for degree completion, and automatically notify students of the important degree requirements that must be completed every semester. Post Frequently Asked Questions on the web page for easy access by all users.

4. Offer students, advisors, and department chairs online tutorials on the enhanced TDA system, advisor notes system, and university academic advising policies. Use as an example the tutorials developed by the Academic Advising Center (AAC) through the assistance of the Faculty Development Center (FDC) - Extended Education Technology Support (a Missions and Goals Initiative).

5. Stakeholders should be involved in developing roadmaps, online training and user guides.

6. Training must be flexible, always available, and meet the needs of different stakeholders. This will help ensure that any system that is adopted is used campus-wide, and its use is supported by advisors, deans, department chairs, and students.

7. Institutionalize a formal and sustainable Academic Advising Training program (e.g., Academic Advising Certificate in Excellence) that may include the following approaches:
   • AAC and FDC partner to provide training and/or faculty/professional staff “master advisors.”
   • Create, maintain, and troubleshoot Academic Advisors’ information/training modules online (requires hiring a full-time Information Technology (IT) Technician).
   • Lead, create, plan, coordinate, promote, maintain, and disseminate all university related advising information, training, and conferences for faculty and professional staff advisors (requires hiring a full-time Student Services Professional (SSP) II).
   • Create a tiered level of training for new and seasoned advisors.
   • Start an advisor-mentor system that pairs a more experienced advisor with a less experienced one.
   • Establish an advisor list-serve or electronic newsletter.
   • Hold an annual workshop that takes place during one day or part of a day.
   • A brown-bag lunch series or a monthly afternoon coffee break for discussion of advising issues can be an effective way to continue advisor training throughout the semester.
**Benefits**

CSUF will exceed the goal of improving six-year graduation rates. CSUF will become a model campus that promotes excellence in academic support and student engagement. Positive alumni relations will increase. Students will feel more connected to the university, and will be empowered to take more control of their academic program and progress.

Learning is preeminent at Cal State Fullerton. If our goal is to facilitate time to degree and increase graduation rates, we must take a proactive approach in eliminating all the barriers that prevent our students from successfully completing a bachelor’s degree. It is our moral obligation to provide accurate, timely, and transparent advising to our students. Our role is to motivate and guide students and provide clear and consistent advice, equipping students with the skills and knowledge to succeed. Services should be designed for the students and from the students’ perspectives. Technology should be used effectively to support students’ academic planning and advisement. A key objective at CSUF is for all students and advisors to effectively use the Titan Degree Audit (TDA) to track degree progress and to plan for graduation; this will promote an intentional education, minimize graduation deferrals, and decrease time to degree. A more effective advising and advising-tracking system will enhance students’ experiences while at CSUF. Reducing the time to graduation will reduce the cost of each student’s education and allow CSUF to enroll more new Titans in an era of increasing demand for a CSUF education.
Appendix A

Data from Academic Advisement Campus Wide Graduation Deferral Study
Conducted in 2010 based on May 2009 Graduation Candidates
(provided by Dr. Bridget Driscoll)

- 6,580 Undergraduate Degrees were Awarded in 2008-2009\(^1\)
- 4,690 Student Records were provided by A&R to be Analyzed\(^2\)
- Of the 4,690 records, 1,038 Deferral Notices were found in the Online System\(^3\)
- 22% of the May 2009 Candidate sample set did not graduate on their intended date

1 Data from Institutional Research and Analytical Studies
2 The hardcopy data set received from Admissions and Records was labeled “May 2009 Candidates”
3 Deferral Notices are scanned and placed in central database online through Panagon. This number is based on records found.

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Leading Causes for Failure to Graduate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Deficiencies</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 120 Units</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE Deficiencies</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EWP</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 2.0 GPA</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is not a comparison of percentages between years, but rather illustrates the similarity in reasons for graduation deferrals within the College of HSS in 2006 and the University in 2009. It must be noted that the HSS data could have changed since the 2006 study, but the 2009 results represent Campus Wide Areas for Improvement.
Appendix B

Sample Screen Shot of CSUF Interactive TDA (Implementation in July, 2011)

**AT LEAST ONE REQUIREMENT HAS NOT BEEN SATISFIED**

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

Regarding Final Evaluation and/or Grad Checkout Status

**FINAL EVALUATION STATUS: COMPLETE**

(For Transfer Students Only)

A review of the units that you earned from other colleges, universities, or the Advanced Placement Tests has been completed.

This TITAN Degree Audit (TDA) is provided to help you keep track of your progress toward a degree. Although efforts have been made to ensure its accuracy, you must carefully review it and report any errors to the Evaluations Unit (657-378-3306) or TDA Staff (tda@fullerton.edu). You are responsible for consulting a major advisor to verify the status of major requirements. If you have a Final Evaluation & Summary of Units, please use it together with this TDA. Final verification for graduation is based on your Graduation Check.

**COMMENCEMENT INFORMATION:**

If you are a graduation candidate, please access the commencement website at www.fullerton.edu/commencement for the specific dates of your graduation ceremony.

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Appendix B (continued)

Sample Screen Shot of CSUF Interactive TDA (Implementation in July, 2011)

*******AT LEAST ONE REQUIREMENT HAS NOT BEEN SATISFIED*********

- ✔ I. CORE COMPETENCIES (NEEDS C OR BETTER) - 9 UNITS
- ✔ II. HISTORICAL & CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS (12 UNITS)
- ✔ A. MATHEMATICS AND NATURAL SCIENCES (12 UNITS)
- ✔ B. ARTS AND HUMANITIES (9 UNITS MINIMUM)
- ✔ C. SOCIAL SCIENCES (6 UNITS MINIMUM)
- ✔ IV. LIFE-LONG LEARNING (3 UNITS)

** V. CULTURAL DIVERSITY REQUIREMENT (1 CLASS REQUIRED)
SEE CLASS SCHEDULE FOR A LIST OF APPROVED COURSES
Appendix C

From http://graduate.csuprojects.org/:

“Welcome to the CSU Graduation Initiative

The CSU Graduation Initiative strives to raise the freshman six-year graduation rate by eight percentage points by 2015-2016, and cut in half the existing gap in degree attainment by CSU’s under-represented minority (URM) students. Involving all 23 CSU campuses, the Graduation Initiative encourages campuses to establish graduation targets comparable to the top quartile of national averages of similar institutions, and to close the URM achievement gap through a series of carefully planned activities.

Currently fewer than 50% of our students graduate in six years. Every interrupted education is a lost opportunity for the student, the student’s family and community, and the state. We face a moral imperative to serve our students better by helping more of them complete the college educations that prepare them for full and productive lives. The Graduation Initiative commits us to systematically discovering and dislodging the roadblocks to our students’ success, now and for the rest of their lives.”

CSU, Degree Audit Best Practices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSU</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSU, East Bay</td>
<td>Teach Freshman to use the Degree Progress Report:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Always Available</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Freshman utilize to bring questions to advisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Reduces anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- When used in conjunction with course search functions of People Soft; reduces course selection anxieties, reduces course selection errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Incorporating Education of DPR in Freshman Learning Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beyond the DPR:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Developing interactive, on-line advising modules that work with the structure of the DPR (initial focus on freshman)</td>
</tr>
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<td>- Use the course lists of approved general education and graduation requirements to the DPR</td>
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<td>- Develop a FAQ section for freshmen to make maximal use of the DPR</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSU, Fullerton</td>
<td>Integrating Academic Advisement into Course Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key Elements: Homework Assignment, Degree Audit, Grade Weighted, Interactive, Solution Centered, Preventative, Major Specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose: Promote an Intentional Education, Decrease Graduation Deferrals, Decrease Time to Degree, Retention of Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Student Feedback:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>97% of students reported they felt more confident in making decisions about course selections after the Interactive Degree Audit Presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99% of students reported their knowledge about graduation requirements has increased as a result of the Interactive Degree Audit Presentation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C (continued)

CSU, Degree Audit Best Practices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSU</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| CSU, Northridge      | My Academic Planner (MAP)  
- Is the interactive audit which lets students plan courses for future terms and see how the courses satisfy degree requirements?  
- Allows the student to link to course descriptions and prerequisites and shows future course offerings.  
- Using MAP students and advisors can plan courses to ensure completion of graduation requirements. A complete MAP is attached to the graduation application when it is submitted to Admissions and Records.  
Roadmap to Graduation:  
- Roadmap is currently in development and the roll out is planned for later this year.  
- Interactive DPR in sequential term order as approved by the department.  
- Planning future terms will give departments information to plan efficiently to meet student demand.  
Academic Planning Guides have been created for all academic degree programs.  
- They are centralized and maintained in Admissions and Records and published for students, prospective students and advisors to view. Reflect a 4 year and transfer plan.  
(see also Appendix G) |
Preliminary Report Compiled by WASC STUDENT ENGAGEMENT and SUCCESS TASK FORCE-SE-6 (Chair, Dr. Mark Filowitz) December 15, 2010

1. Quantifying Graduation Deferral Data
   As reported in the May 3, 2010 Progress Report a 2006 study conducted by the College of HSS on 376 graduation deferrals indicated that 49% were due to deficiencies in the major, 41% were due to insufficient units for the degree, 23% were due to missing GE requirements, 12% were due to GPA deficiency, 11% were due to not meeting the English Writing Proficiency (EWP) requirement, and 6% were due to not meeting upper division unit requirements (some had multiple reasons so the total exceeds 100%). These main reasons for graduation deferral have now been confirmed in a campus wide study conducted by the Academic Advisement Center, where results closely mirrored the findings in HSS. The ACC survey analyzed all 4,690 graduation deferrals on campus in 2010. All of these graduation deferral issues can be improved with better advisement practices.

2. Current Advisement Practices
   The advisement practices for Colleges and Centers on campus were identified in the May 3, 2010 Progress Report. Practices vary considerably and include some or all components of faculty advisors, professional advisors, centralized advisement centers, and advisement integrated within courses of the major. The Task Force has now gathered information on advisement practices at 19 other universities around the country via the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences (CCAS) and we discovered that a similarly variable mixture of practices was quite common. The data from these campuses are summarized in Attachment 3.

3. Current Costs of Advisement
   The annualized costs of all advisement activities on campus that could be identified were quantified and the estimate is approximately $6.1 million per year, shown in Attachment 4. We believe that this information will be useful if we are to compare current versus potential costs of a recommended model for best advisement practices from the Task Force.

4. Conference on Development of Best Advisement Practices
   The Task Force and Academic Affairs hosted a campus-wide data-driven conference on Best Advisement Practices on November 9th, 2010. Prior to the conference, an on-line needs assessment survey was conducted to identify the main topics of concern to the advisors on campus. Over 200 responses were received and defined the outline of sessions for the conference designed to address concerns and to highlight best practices in effect on campus. The results of this needs assessment survey are summarized in Attachment 6. The conference invitation and agenda are shown in Attachment 7.

   The conference had 134 attendees and was extremely well received and appreciated, and it generated a number of concrete suggestions and action items to improve advisement practices. Results from the conference are summarized in Attachment 8.

5. Best Practices Advisement Model
   After discussion of what we learned at the conference, evaluation of practices on campus, and comparison to practices on other campuses around the country, the group agreed that the best practices advisement model has four principal components to optimize student success. All four
components are needed to achieve the goal of best advisement practices. The Task Force recommends that the costs of implementing this model should be estimated and compared to current costs, shown in Attachment 4.

1. Faculty advisors are needed for the major and careers within a discipline and faculty advisors need to be properly trained and vetted as knowledgeable.

2. Professional full time advisors should be residing within each College.

3. Incorporate within the first course taken within a major, a strong integrated component of student education on availability and use of advising tools, complete with assessments.

4. Keep centralized, campus-wide, professional advisement centers, as deemed to be required (e.g. Academic Advisement Center, Career Center, etc.).

* THIS PRELIMINARY REPORT HAS THE FOLLOWING ERRORS AND SHOULD READ:

1. **Quantifying Graduation Deferral Data**
   As reported in the May 3, 2010 Progress Report a 2006 study conducted by the College of HSS on 376 graduation deferrals indicated that 49% were due to deficiencies in the major, 41% were due to insufficient units for the degree, 23% were due to missing GE requirements, 12% were due to GPA deficiency, 11% were due to not completing the Examination in Writing Proficiency (EWP). These main reasons for graduation deferral have now been confirmed through a campus wide graduation deferral study conducted by Academic Advisement. The AAC analyzed academic records for 4,690 May 2009 Graduation Candidates, and found 1,038 Graduation Deferral Notices on file (22%).
Appendix E

Academic Advisement Center Current Advising Maps

First-Time Freshmen Advising Map

Fall Semester: NSO
Receive general education and major academic advisement
(AAC and Major Faculty Advisor-GE is integrated with Major Advising)

Mandatory Advisement for Spring Semester

Optional Advising: Spring Semester

FTF on Probation University Hall 123B, AAC

Freshman Programs: Langsdorf Hall 216

EOP: University Hall 143

Guardian Scholars: Titan Bookstore-C120

Specific Majors with Advisement Holds

Finish in Four: University Hall 123B AAC

Honors: Pollak Library 120

President's Scholars: LH-801

Student Athlete Academic Support Services: Langsdorf Hall 215

General Education: Academic Advisement Center (UH-123B)

Major Advising: Unless required by major department

Academic Advisement
UH 123B
www.fullerton.edu/aac
Appendix F

Purpose:
Based on the campus’ dedication to enhancing advisement, the WASC SE6 Academic Advising Task Force took action. Over 200 faculty and staff members campus wide responded to a needs assessment survey aimed to capture current advisement practices and training resources commonly used at CSUF, as well as, areas in which advisors would like to increase their knowledge. The information gathered through this assessment was the guiding principle behind the event and a prerequisite as we collaboratively commit to making meaningful advances in academic advising at California State University, Fullerton.

Methodology:
The content and curriculum of the conference was based on identified needs of advisors campus wide. A needs assessment survey was developed through collaboration and feedback between the WASC SE-6 committee members. In an effort to increase participation, the assistance of each Associate Dean was enlisted. They were encouraged to distribute the survey to identified faculty within their college who provide academic advisement to students. Additionally, the survey was delivered to special populations and advising departments including, Academic Advisement, Center for Careers in Teaching, Health Professions Advising, Honors, Freshmen Programs, Extended Education, Veteran Services, the Women’s Center, Graduate Studies, Disabled Student Services, President Scholars, International Exchange, Guardian Scholars, Athletic Academic Services, EOP, ILE, University Outreach, Advisors at the Irvine Campus, and the Assistant Deans of each College. This survey was designed to be inclusive of identified faculty and staff academic advisors.

Conference Curriculum Included:
• The Titan Degree Audit and New A-Z General Education Realignment (UPS 411.201)
• Academic Probation and Disqualification Policies, Procedures, and Data Driven Best Practices
• Issues in Graduate Advising
• Undergraduate Research and Service Learning Models
• Evidence Based Best Practices in Advising
• Evidence Based Results of the Leading Causes for Graduation Deferral
• Preventative Measures to Combat the Leading Causes for Graduation Deferral- Participant’s Contribution via Roundtable Discussion and Report Out
• Advising Technology
• Title 5, Executive Orders, and University Policy Statements

Results:
Data on this view sheet reflect feedback provided by the participants following each session. The total attendance for the Academic Advisors Professional Development Conference was 134 campus wide participants. (N=134)
Participant Breakdown:
73 Faculty including representatives from each College
15 Student representatives
46 Staff with representation from each special population
Appendix F (continued)

Participant Feedback
Requested Action Items

It is imperative Academic Advisors are involved throughout the development and implementation phases of all advancements within advising including the Action Items below.

Titan Degree Audit – The Official Advising Tool Used Campus Wide
• Establish a universal note taking system that allows authorized advisors to type directly into the comment box located at the bottom of the Titan Degree Audit - thus creating transparency and accountability between advisors, faculty, students, and evaluators.
• Maintain accurate and updated student records via the Titan Degree Audit.
  • Remove duplicate units and correctly input GE certifications and course articulations within students' first semester.

Applying for Graduation and the Grad Check Process
• Require students to apply for graduation at 85 units.
• To decrease graduation deferrals, an evaluation of graduation requirements must be conducted by an Evaluator PRIOR to TITAN I Registration Period of students' final semester – thus highlighting all deficiencies and providing students sufficient notification and time to complete required coursework – rather than notification after their intended graduation term.
• Create an interactive electronic signature component to increase accountability and ensure students are reviewing their Grad Check.
• Student representatives requested notification of graduation deficiencies be posted to their Student Portal and/or sent via text message.

Advisement Practices
• Establish a campus wide academic advisement curriculum to include mandatory Major and General Education advising opportunities.
• Establish an academic advising committee/community.

Other
• Make the EWP a pre-requisite to a required major course taken in the student's senior year.
Appendix G

CSU Degree Audit Best Practices Webinar-CSU, Northridge Interactive Audit

California State University
Northridge

The development of the Degree Audit Report System (DARS) began 18 years ago. All of our undergraduate majors have been coded into DARS back to 1991 by catalog year.

The current Degree Progress Report (DPR) lists all degree requirements. With each new catalog the degree requirements are updated.

Course articulation rules are written for both domestic and international colleges and universities. This process allows students to know how their courses will be placed to meet degree requirements.

Transfer courses that may be equivalent to CSUN courses are forwarded to the departments for course equivalencies and the approvals are coded into the degree audit system. Course review requests are forwarded to the departments on a weekly basis. The departments usually respond quickly as the equivalencies mean fewer substitutions.

The initial admissions degree audit evolves into the graduation degree evaluation and planner.

DEGREE PROGRESS REPORT

- BASIC SKILLS REQUIREMENTS (NORTHBRIDGE SECTION A)
  - SELECT 12 UNITS WITH A MINIMUM OF 3 UNITS FROM EACH OF THE FOLLOWING SUBSECTIONS:
    - A.1 ANALYTICAL READING AND EXPOSITORY WRITING
      - ENGL 135 3.0
    - A.2 CRITICAL THINKING
      - PHIL 200 3.0
    - A.3 MATHEMATICS
      - MATH 170 4.0
    - A.4 ORAL COMMUNICATION
      - CENG 101 3.0

COURSE LIST:
- COMP 151
- COMP 151
- COMP 151, 309
- ENGL 111
Throughout the day, transfer courses are electronically updated in PeopleSoft Transfer Credit Evaluation. This accumulates all unit values and equivalents which are then used during registration for course requisites.

--- EXCEPTIONS TO ACADEMIC PROGRAM ---

**Substitutions and exceptions are coded by Graduation Evaluators as they are approved by the departments. This coding can be done at any point during a student’s academic career. The example on the right is 3 types of exceptions and substitutions.

- After completion of 90 to 112 units students are sent emails and Portal alerts advising them that they need to apply for graduation. At 130 units a registration hold is placed on the student’s record until a graduation application is submitted.

- As part of the graduation application process, students and advisors complete a MAP which indicates remaining degree requirements.

--- END OF EXCEPTIONS TO ACADEMIC PROGRAM ---
Appendix G (continued)
Appendix H (continued)
Appendix H (continued)

iFullerton

![iFullerton TDA](image-url)

![iFullerton TDA](image-url)
Appendix I

Advising and Technology Resources that the LDP Team Reviewed On-line in Preparation of Report Recommendations:


Grades First Students Advising & Retention System: [www.gradefirst.com](http://www.gradefirst.com)

Academic Advising Journal at Penn State University: [www.psu.edu/mentor/current](http://www.psu.edu/mentor/current)

NACADA-The Global Community for Academic Advising: [www.nacada.ksu.edu/index](http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/index)


Defining IT’s Role in Mission-Critical Retention Initiatives: [www.educause.edu](http://www.educause.edu)