

Program Review Action Update of the
University of La Verne
Academic Support and Retention Services

October 1, 2011

*Prepared and Written
by*

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I. Action Recommendations

Increase traditional undergraduate participation in advising and registration activities.

- All incoming freshmen and transfer students will participate in advising and registration activities.
 - AAO will communicate more effectively with students and parents about the benefits of enrolling and participating in Summer Opportunity for Advising and Registration (SOAR).

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED

NOTES: AAO has collaborated with Admissions Office to inform incoming parents/students about the benefits of SOAR. AAO and other offices will meet in late October 2012 to streamline the University's message to students and parents.

- Develop effective alternatives to SOAR when/if students cannot attend SOAR.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED

NOTES: SOAR Online is established.

- All incoming freshmen and transfer students will be assigned an academic advisor by the start of the first semester.
 - Work directly with academic deans and chairs to recruit a representative group of faculty who can serve as academic advisors to incoming students who can help transition them through their first year at La Verne.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED

NOTES: All new freshman and transfer students are assigned an academic advisor by the start of their first semester at La Verne. Advisor recruitment for new student advising occurs twice a year (fall and spring admission cycles).

- Academic advisors can help build rapport with new students by being proactive in reaching out to them within the first two weeks of the new semester and encourage a visit.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED

NOTES: We ask academic advisors and instructors of the importance of the first six weeks in identifying undergraduates who might be showing early signs of distress. We share Early Alert notifications with advisors and encourage them to reach out to their advisees.

To encourage as a result of academic advising the development of strong advisor-advisee relationships and learning outcomes such as the understanding of policies and requirements.

- Use Developmental Advising as the theoretical framework for establishing outcomes.
 - Establish a clear understanding within the university community, students, instructors, and advisors about developmental advising and how this theoretical framework can enhance and strengthen student retention and graduation.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED

NOTES: Our published mission and institutional membership in NACADA demonstrates our commitment to academic advising based on developmental advising.

- Academic advisors should adopt the academic advising syllabus as a tool for establishing expectations with their advisees, including the understanding and comprehension of their mutual responsibilities in the advising partnership.

OUTCOME: In-progress

NOTES: Approximately a dozen main campus academic advisors have adopted the syllabus. The syllabus has also been adopted by several CAPA/RCA academic advisors, suggesting that this tool has broad appeal.

- The use of the advising syllabus can be used as the framework for establishing learning outcomes as a result of academic advising.

OUTCOME: In-progress

NOTES: Our long-term goal is to use the advising syllabus as the framework for assessing academic advising on a continuous basis. The Program Review survey gives us another rubric to assess the health of academic advising. Draft forms of online surveys exist, to assess specific advisors' performance. However, low-key conversations with at least one academic dean suggests that we should tread lightly in rolling out a formal assessment of individual advisor's performance, which might put-off faculty academic advisors if they feel that these assessments can be used in ways that might be perceived as threatening. This action item is worth keeping because we need to formalize the assessment mechanisms of academic advising at the advisor level if we are going to effect change at the advisor-advisee levels.

- All students will have satisfying advising experiences.
 - Establish a process for receiving student feedback about their academic advising experiences to inform individual advisors and their department chairs about their advisees' perceptions about their academic advising experiences.

OUTCOME: In-progress

NOTES: As noted above, the survey format exists but the rolling out of a formal assessment needs to be well planned with the academic deans, IR (maybe), and legitimized by the Provost. Also worth keeping, even if these are placed in back-burner status and slowly rolled out.

- AAO will include more topics related to rapport and relationship building so that advisors can strengthen their bond with advisees in non-classroom settings.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED

NOTES: Semester-based newsletters address tidbits of information concerning rapport and relationship building; advisor workshops include such topics. All new academic advisors meet with the Associate Dean to discuss conceptual topics related to academic and developmental advising.

- All first-time freshmen and transfer students will know about services and degree requirements.
 - AAO will schedule Student Registration workshops at more locations and more time slots to capture a greater number of students to help prepared them for academic advising meetings by instructing them about academic policies and procedures and services on campus.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED

NOTES: AAO now is offering a full slate of workshops focusing on student preparedness:

- Academic Advisor Workshops
- Selecting a Major Seminars
- Student Advising & Registration Seminars
- Wired-in...Navigating Graduation Strategies

- AAO will develop an online review and assessment module for students who cannot attend a Student Registration workshop.

OUTCOME: Not yet addressed

NOTES: The basic ingredients are available to us but the lack of time and human resources prevents us from devoting time (and money) to move this project from a conceptual stage. Worth keeping as a visual reminder.

- All academic advisors will understand services and general education requirements.
 - Work with and train academic advisors who are not confident with general education and other academic policies.

OUTCOME: In-progress.

NOTES: We don't think we will ever reach a level of "accomplished" given the fluidity of academic policies and procedures, advisor turn-over, and the complexity of individual student circumstances and issues that make academic advising a challenging, but rewarding profession.

- Encourage larger advisor participation in training workshops to diminish advisors' concerns about general education.

OUTCOME: In-progress.

NOTES: Advisor participation is among the most challenging—difficult—tasks that AAO deals with despite its best efforts to encourage increased advisor participation in workshops to address the concerns of the most vocal individuals, who, ironically, are the least likely to attend a workshop. As long as academic advising is treated as an add-on task (chore) to faculty advisor's workloads—and their grievances persist—increasing advisor participation beyond the 20% is likely to be a long-term issue with no easy solution.

Although challenging, this action recommendation must be one that we strive for on a continuous basis. AAO has increased its focus in student empowerment via workshops in an effort to bridge the gaps between advisor and advisee understanding of academic policies and procedures.

- Faculty should revisit the general education requirements with the intent to minimize its complexity, without undermining the breadth and depth of its learning outcomes.

OUTCOME: In-progress

NOTES: As noted in this review, task value is important in the observer's perception of utility in the things they do; unless the attitude changes, the behavior will not change either. Although it would be easy to select "DROPPED" as an outcome, doing so would be a copout by AAO and absolve academic advisors from personal responsibility to be the best advisors they can be. Academic advisors have ethical obligation to their students and their university to treat academic advising as a profession, to stay abreast of concepts, research, and best practices to self-reflect and to improve as individuals and as professionals.

At some point, the institutional stakeholders who can effect change will need to raise the stakes and the importance of academic advising and go as far as removing individual who are not good advisors and replace them with those who can advise more effectively. Assessment is key, but as noted above, its implementation needs to

be done with caution given the nature of administration and faculty relations and tenure or tenure-track implications that assessment can impact.

To increase persistence and retention rates of traditional undergraduates.

- Reduce the number of traditional students who are on academic probation.
 - AAO staffing and budget needs should increase to handle the record growth of traditional undergraduates who are expected to enroll at La Verne.
 - AAO staffing shortage limits its ability to effectively monitor at-risk students and to intervene effectively.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED; In-progress...

NOTES: Accomplished, with caveats. Although we have gained one staff position (one academic advisor) our office remains understaffed. The staff-to-student ratio remains high, 1-500 respectively. Even though we now have two full-time academic advisors, the advisor-to-student ratio remains high, 1-1250.

- The faculty admissions committee should reconstitute with the intent to help shape each entering class and to help review and identify remedial students who have the potential to succeed.

OUTCOME: In-progress...

NOTES: We have collaborated with individual faculty members who have championed the need and importance of a reconstituted faculty admissions committee. We trust that this committee will soon reconstitute.

- AAO and LEC directors should work with the Admissions counselors to establish quantifiable rubrics for the identification and selection of FYRP students.

OUTCOME: In-progress...

NOTES: Although the LEC director is “consulted” on a case-by-case basis by Admissions staff, she remains outside of the admissions decision-making process.

- The university should reduce the number of students who are admitted with remedial deficiencies and FYRP participation.

OUTCOME: Not yet addressed. In-progress...

NOTES: We see no evidence of reductions in FYRP admissions decisions. AAO and LEC have collaborated to more effectively identify and release students from FYRP status as quickly as possible. AAO and LEC have had initial discussions to reinvent the existence and purpose of FYRP, short of eliminating it altogether.

- Any First-year Experience-type courses that remedial students are required to take should focus on teaching applied skills that have a direct impact on academic achievement.

OUTCOME: Dropped.

NOTES: We see no evidence among faculty to reinstate FYE-type courses. We believe that their focus in the near and long-term in the La Verne Experience and FLEX Learning Communities will make the reinstatement of FYE-style courses or programs even less likely.

- International students should be integrated socially and academically to the university to help improve their academic achievement.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED; In-progress...

NOTES: The College of Arts & Sciences Dean created a learning community specifically for international students with the intent to help them to integrate socially and academically. The FLEX Community came about after a two year process of discussions about the retention and graduation rates of international students that were first brought to stakeholders' attention by AAO, followed by an Arts & Sciences program review of La Verne's ELS programs that corroborated AAO's international student data.

- Instructor participation rates in filing midterm reports should improve in order to identify and engage with students who are at-risk of failing to help reduce the number of students who fail courses and end up on probation.

OUTCOME: In-progress...

NOTES: Although we have succeeded in streamlining and enhancing midterm notifications and created early alert notifications, budgetary and technological limitations prevent us from further developing these retention tools beyond their current, separate iterations. Although we have heard positive feedback from instructors who have used it, others have not bothered to use it at all (there's nothing to compel them to participate), or have used it and criticized it for one issue or another.

- Improve Junior-Senior Persistence Rates toward Graduation.
 - AAO staff increases can help it to further enhance its retention interventions based on its rubric and retention intervention module, including the identification of student subgroups that might also be at risk of failing.
 - AAO will reach out to students earlier and more often upon reaching junior status to apply for graduation.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED/In-progress...

Notes: AAO has gained one permanent staff position (Retention Specialist/Academic Advisor) but concerns remain due to the high staff-to-student ratios & advisor-to-student ratios mentioned above. Despite these concerns, the additional staff has allowed AAO to focus more time and effort to follow-up with students who delay their registrations for upcoming semesters—resulting in exceeding returning student projections once again for the fall semester—and focusing on at-risk students that are identified by Early Alert notifications or that are brought up to AAO’s attention by the Counseling Network.

The Early Alert notification—an effort to identify students who are exhibiting “at-risk” behaviors—for fall 2012 was “activated” in week three (after two full weeks had been completed), an improvement of 10-weeks compared to two years ago when “midterm notifications” were distributed and collected by hand in the 10th-to 12th weeks, too late to affect any meaningful changes in student performance or behaviors. Midterm notifications—allowing instructors to assign grades to at-risk students—was activated in week 6 of the semester, an improvement of 4-weeks compared to two years ago when midterm notifications were distributed and collected by hand in the 10th-12th weeks, too late to affect any meaningful changes in student performances or behaviors.

At the request of the University President, AAO collaborated with the Vice-Provost and the Director of Institutional Research to form a Retention Group to study the retention and graduation rates for traditional undergraduate subgroups. The group drafted a report and submitted it to the President with recommendations. AAO expects that this group will continue to meet in the future.

- The University should strengthen its residency requirements to improve the retention of junior and senior students who would otherwise leave the university to transfer units from elsewhere at the expense of lost tuition revenue.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED

NOTES: AAO proposed to UGAP in early 2010 to revisit the residency requirement: to consider raising the minimum units from 32 units and to adopt a senior residency policy. Despite the topic’s divisiveness and contentious debates among stakeholders, slow progress resulted in a two-tier increase in the residency requirement (for all undergraduate populations) and approval of a senior residency (for traditional undergraduates only).

In spring 2011, UGAP approved a proposal for fall 2011 catalog to increase the minimum residency requirements for all undergraduates (traditional and non-traditional) to 40 semester hours for all undergraduates. UGAP also approved a senior residency policy for traditional students only (16 of the last 32 units must be earned in residence).

At the behest of Faculty Senate, UGAP revisited the residency policy in fall 2011 to consider raising it once again. In spring 2012, UGAP debated and approved raising the minimum requirement by another 4 semester hours to 44 semester hours. The increase from 32 semester hours to 44 constitutes an increase of 37.5%, a major accomplishment by UGAP considering the contentious debates and divisiveness from campus stakeholders.

Faculty Senate unanimously approved the residency increase to 44 semester hours in fall 2012 for inclusion in the Fall 2013 catalog. UGAP has committed itself to revisit the residency policy in the near future to assess its impact on student retention, leaving open the option to further increase the minimum semester hour requirements.

- The application for graduation fee should not be the reason or an impediment to a student's willingness to apply for graduation.

OUTCOME: In-Progress

Notes: Discussions continue between AAO, the University Registrar, and Student Accounts about the timing and logistics of the application for graduation fees.

Goal 4: To implement educational and training opportunities that supports academic advisors and their advisees.

- Develop technological and online resources to support academic advisors.
 - AAO's technology budget should be funded to help it to review and seriously consider adopting third-party software and/or applications that can support and enhance academic advising and retention efforts.

OUTCOME: In-progress

NOTES: No changes to the budget; AAO continues to advocate for funds.

- AAO will continue to work with OIT and University Registrar to explore technological improvements and enhancements of Banner.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED/In-Progress

NOTES: AAO has accomplished many technological advancements despite the many limitations noted in the program review. For example, SOAR Online, MyLaVerne's Midterm Grade Notification, and Early Alert modules are three such outcomes of collaboration between AAO, OIT, and the Registrar. AAO continues to collaborate with OIT and the Registrar in the technological area in general, and Banner, in particular, to work with what it has.

- AAO will solicit from academic advisors feedback about technological enhancements they would like to see to streamline and improve academic advising.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED/In-progress

NOTES: Program review feedback resulted in changes to AAO's online resources; advisor surveys include a question about advisor support and what can be done to improve.

- Implement mid-term report module via SunGard's Banner to identify traditional undergraduates who are at-risk.
 - AAO will work with OIT to enhance the midterm report module.
 - AAO will work with academic deans and chairs to support and improve instructor participation rates in midterm report submissions.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED/In-Progress

NOTES: AAO has worked with OIT to successfully launch a midterm grade module via MyLaVerne. However, adjustments to the midterm report module has been limited due to technological (out-of-the-box limitations in Banner); wholesale changes and improvements cannot be made due to budgetary and technological limitations.

AAO has initiated discussions with academic deans to support increases in instructor participation with early alert notifications and midterm notifications continue. The fact that the Early Alert notification and Banner's Midterm grade module are not in a single module, limits is appeal to instructors who prefer to deal with ONE tool, not two.

- Develop workshops and professional development opportunities for traditional undergraduates and advisors.
 - AAO will collaborate with academic advisors to develop workshops that will cover topics that will help them to become more effective advisors.
 - AAO will formulate a standard procedure for soliciting feedback from students and advisors about the effectiveness of workshops and professional development opportunities to encourage self-reflection and improvements.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED/In-progress...

NOTES: AAO has instituted surveys to collect student and advisor feedback after workshops to help AAO assess and improve programs and services.

- Academic deans and/or department chairs should consider funding membership dues to NACADA for their academic advisors.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED/in-progress

NOTES: The College of Business provides individual NACADA memberships to its academic advisors. AAO holds an institutional membership with NACADA.

- Academic deans and/or department chairs should support and encourage their advisors' participation in regional or national advising conferences.

OUTCOME: ACCOMPLISHED/in-progress

NOTES: In spring 2012, AAO sent one academic advisor to NACADA's Region 9 Conference in San Diego.

The College of Business sent their entire advising staff to NACADA's national conference in Tennessee in October 2012. Opportunities like these support the professional development of academic advisors. The Colleges of Arts & Sciences and Education & Organizational Leadership do not provide their advisors with memberships to NACADA, allowing them to participate in regional or national conferences to engage with advising peers from other institutions.