

Project: Goal 1, I3: Create a Unified Undergraduate Student Success Program

Start Date: August 1 **Client:** ISU Students

Program Manager: Joshua Powers, Interim AVP for Student Success

Thesis Statement: The fundamental purpose of this initiative is to more effectively serve the citizens of Indiana via the increased production of ISU graduates with postsecondary degrees. The demographic profiles of our students are the ones especially important to the state's future. Retaining and graduating these students is also important to institutional viability and a revenue source most within our control to affect. Ensuring high quality student experiences linked to retaining and graduating students in a timely manner undergirds the tactical projects embedded in this proposal.

Introduction/Background – What?: Plans are underway to develop a Strategic Enrollment Plan in collaboration with AACRAO. This AY long exercise is designed to integrate the many projects and initiatives that are specifically targeting undergraduate student success, all supported by a strong set of data analytics. Because it is essential that student success interventions/activities not stop during the SEM planning period, Goal 1 initiative teams, including this one, are moving ahead in parallel, informed by what has been learned through previous work and reflection. Three projects under this goal initiative are envisioned:

- A pilot project tentatively titled *Transitions*¹ that serves as a bridge program for students returning from academic dismissal or who have failed to meet the retention standard for a specific major/program.
- A pilot project tentatively titled *Scholars First* and targeting ISU 21st Century Scholars.
- A *Teaching and Advising the ISU Student Colloquium* (tentative title) in collaboration with the faculty professional development program and the new University College Dean slated to roll out Fall 2012 through Academic Affairs.

Proposal/Purpose/Justification – Why?: The specific purpose of these projects are as follows:

Transitions is a new initiative designed to address a gap need identified by the Associate Deans Council and others to assist students returning from probation to be successful as well as those students who find themselves dismissed from a major program and needing to pursue an alternative major. Although it is open to any student, rising or current sophomores are envisioned to be a majority of the students served, a population the literature suggests is a need area for retention and success (Hunter, Tobolowsky, & Gardner, 2010) for these reasons:

- Academic underperformance threatens their ability to continue in school;
- Academic underperformance necessitates a change in major due to GPA requirements;
- General major and career indecision at a moment when such a choice is typically required to remain on a timely track to completion; and
- Academic or social disengagement and/or developmental confusion that arises for the above or other reasons.

Although the loss of students is most pronounced between the first and second semesters of college and the second and third semesters of college, the sophomore year² is the next most frequent point of

¹ The term is meant to infer the unique processes beyond entering student issues and to differentiate from the concept of “bridge programs” that are typically associated with the high school to college transition.

² Defined as enrollment in the 3rd and 4th semesters of college.

departure. Over the last three years at ISU, the average loss between the 3rd and 4th semesters was 118 students and between the 4th and 5th semesters, 106 students. The revenue loss of just one student between the 3rd and 4th semesters equates to approximately \$20,000 in unrealized tuition and fee income³. The loss of the 118 students at that departure point equates to approximately \$2.36 million.

Through the utilization of the human capital talent made available via the non-renewal of the Upward Bound grant and funding cut for regional 21st Century Scholar staffing, this proposal seeks to redeploy talent from those areas toward the new *Transitions* program.

Scholars First is a project designed to help fill a gap created by the loss of state funding for regional 21st Century Scholar Coordinators and focused exclusively on the approximately 1,000 21st Century Scholars at ISU⁴, nearly 11% of the undergraduate degree-seeking student body. It is crucial that we provide support for their degree achievement, in part because they ostensibly come to us with the tools to be successful, and we now have staffing talent that can be deployed for this purpose who would otherwise be lost to the institution given the funding cut. The *Scholars First* program would be open to any 21st Century Scholar, although with a particular focus on first and second year Scholars, and consist of an expansion of academic, social, mentoring, career advice, and undergraduate research opportunities, the kinds of engagement experiences the literature indicates are valuable for student retention and success. Other offices/units on campus will be invited collaborators on this initiative.

The *Teaching and Advising the ISU Student Colloquium* is a component of a larger collaboration with the newly re-envisioned faculty development program through Academic Affairs and the new Dean of the University College and that is envisioned to include a Master Teacher Program. The Colloquium is designed to enable a deeper understanding of who our students are and some of the teaching and advising innovations that are occurring around campus and elsewhere in the country that can aid this group through customized learning tools, brain science, and reconfigured classroom activities vis-à-vis out of class engagement. Because student advising is inextricably linked to course taking and curricular pathways, there will also be an academic advising component to this colloquium. In addition, either as a precursor to or part of the colloquium, we plan on showing the new film, *First Generation*, to be followed by a panel presentation of a diverse group of first-generation ISU students and alumni.

Justification for Projects

The research on student retention and success evidences the importance of institutional interventions that enable student involvement (Astin, 1985), engagement (Kuh et al., 2005), and academic and social integration (Seidman, 2012; Tinto, 2012), particularly for the large number of first generation, minority, and economically challenged students that are enrolled at Indiana State (Davis, 2010; Fleming, 2012; Gabriel, 2008; Harvey & Housel, 2011) and a constituent that has been historically under addressed, sophomores (Hunter, Tobolowsky, & Gardner, 2010). These four proposed projects are sourced in this knowledge base, as well as the critically important ISU institutional context factors, something that the research also indicates is important to consider (i.e., good ideas need to be adapted to their unique institutional situation). Furthermore, opportunities for faculty and staff to more deeply understand the student experience are embedded in various ways across these projects. This first-hand insight is particularly effective in transcending traditional assumptions about what works best in the classroom, the advising, or the co-curricular context.

³ Assuming they remained matriculated through a year four graduation.

⁴ Data from Fall 2011.

Work Plan – Action Steps – Process – How?: The action steps for the four projects are as follows:

- Form planning teams for each project that include potential collaborators.
- Secure locations to hold events/activities and schedule presenters as applicable.
- Develop a phased marketing plan to support the promotion of the activities to the right audiences and at the right moments.
- Utilize MAP-Works⁵ as well as staff/faculty referrals to inform invitations and outreach to students who would benefit from these programs.
- Make MAP-Works software installs and execute training for its more effective and expanded use.
- Execute the assessment plan.
- Seek external funding to support aspects of projects⁶.

Reporting and Deliverable Schedule – When?:

Planning team meetings underway (by mid-August).

MAP-Works install (by mid-August).

MAP-Works training for expanded use (by early fall).

Web presence operational (late August)

Student advertising campaign begins (by early September).

Space reservations made for events/activities (by end of August for Fall activities; October for Spring activities).

Teaching and Advising the ISU Student Colloquium (initial thinking if feasible: Friday morning, October 5 of Homecoming Weekend⁷ although second semester may be a better moment).

Budget – How Much?:

Transitions Coordinator⁸ (\$63,800 including fringe).

Transitions graduate assistant (\$13,588 including fringe & fee waiver).

Upper-class Student Mentors for *Transitions* (\$8,000 including fringe)

Materials, supplies, and advertising for *Transitions* (\$10,000).

Scholars First Coordinator⁹ (\$63,800 including fringe).

Transitions graduate assistant (\$13,588 including fringe & fee waiver).

Upper-class Student 21st Century Scholar Mentors for *Scholars First* (\$8,000 including fringe).

Materials, supplies, and advertising for *Scholars First* (\$10,000).

Colloquium materials, supplies, and advertising (\$3,000).

Colloquium invited external presenters via distance connectivity (\$3,000).

First Generation Film Screening with Panel (\$500).

Total: \$197,276

⁵ The install of MAP-Works for sophomores is planned, an expanded tool that will also come with tools for juniors and seniors as well and ultimately a feeder into the planned CRM.

⁶ State, federal, and private organizations may be interested in supporting aspects of the projects under the auspices of institutional renewal and/or innovation in working with first generation, minority, and low income students, a large portion of the ISU student body.

⁷ Enables the possibility of alumni and Board of Trustee involvement.

⁸ This and the other personnel requests are for one-year appointments ONLY for which one-time dollars are requested. If the programs are successful, base funding to support may be requested. No expectation of future such support will be associated with these hires however.

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Stakeholders and Management Plan – Who?: *Transitions* (one coordinator drawn from 21st Century Scholars or Upward Bound staff), *Scholars First* (one coordinator drawn from 21st Century Scholars or Upward Bound staff), *Teaching and Advising the ISU Student Colloquium* (Josh Powers, Interim AVP for Student Success and representative from SASC in collaboration with TBA faculty fellow from Academic Affairs responsible for faculty professional development program).

Other stakeholders: New Dean of University College, Susan Powers, AVP, Student Affairs, Information Technology, Center for Student Research and Creativity, Career Center, associate deans, academic advisors, Library, Data Team from SEM Project.

Outcome Assessment & Future Testing – How Well?:

- 200 student participants in *Transitions* program.
- 150 student participants in *Scholars First* program.
- Pre- and post- test self-efficacy survey of student participants in the *Transitions* or *Scholars First* program and related assessments.
- Participation (operationalized as 1/0 and # of times) in *Transitions* or *Scholars First* as a regressor variable in retention to subsequent semester and GPA performance study (obtained via collection of student 991 numbers at events/activities).
- 75 faculty and advisor attendees to colloquium.
- 70% of colloquy participants who indicate in a survey two months later that they made changes to their teaching/course or interactive style with students that was informed by the colloquy or *First Generation* film.

References

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