

Ensuring More From Day One: Laying a Foundation for Excellence

**The Final Report of
Task Force on the First Year**

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Executive Summary

Indiana State University (ISU) understands that the foundation for student success lies in the first year in college, and research indicates that entry into college constitutes one of life's most challenging transitions. At ISU, our retention and graduation rates are below the average of our peers and, more importantly, below our own aspirations. Recognizing this, ISU began a year-long Foundations of Excellence[®] process under the guidance of the Policy Center on the First Year in College to analyze our strengths and weaknesses and to propose an improvement plan. The Provost, Vice President for Student Affairs, and the Chairperson of the Faculty Senate created the Task Force on the First Year (TAFFY). This report is the culmination of that effort. In it we, the members of TAFFY, make twenty-six specific recommendations, of which two are the most sweeping. First, we call for a major restructuring of first year academic advising with faculty and staff being developed, assessed, and rewarded in order to align our resources with our rhetoric and our practice with our priorities. Second, we call for the creation of a University College so as to intentionally coordinate and facilitate student academic services, university-wide curricular programs, and first year academic advising.

We have come to these recommendations after much study. Indiana State University offers a wide variety of programs designed to enhance student success. From first year seminars, learning communities, supplemental instruction, focused programming in residence halls, tutoring and mentoring, to math and writing labs, we offer the gamut of programs that are recommended to enhance student success. We have high levels of student satisfaction with course placement in the first year and with the accuracy of information about academic expectations, campus activities and costs. We have an excellent, student-endorsed statement on academic honesty and behavioral expectations, the *Sycamore Standard*, and an equally impressive, institutionally endorsed *Statement on Academic Advising*. We have a somewhat successful institutional response to attendance reporting. We have high levels of faculty recognition of the importance of out of class interactions with students and many opportunities for student involvement in campus activities.

Unfortunately, we also have a number of areas where improvement is required. We have a disjointed structure supporting student success with good intentioned cooperation rather than intentional coordination. Students and staff report dissatisfaction with financial aid services, the uneven quality of academic advising across units, inability of our math placement test to correctly place students in the appropriate math courses, high failure rates in a number of important first year courses, and a lack of widespread diversity education for first year students. The lack of structurally coordinated programs for first year students has limited our flexibility and effectiveness in responding to a recent significant decline in student retention. This, in turn, has contributed to a decline in tuition-based resources that, when coupled with state funding cuts, have put enormous pressure on the overall finances of the institution.

Because of the items cited above, the Task Force on the First Year recommends the creation of a University College which would draw together disparate programs from throughout the University to create an intentionally coordinated and centrally administered unit to incorporate best practices from university college structures at other similar institutions and to eliminate the duplication of efforts and services, streamline administrative structures, provide one-stop-

shopping for ISU students in need of academic assistance, and allow for greater synergies across programs.

The proposed University College would include the programs currently administered through the Student Academic Services Center, First Year Programs, and the Writing and Math Centers. It would return the TRIO programs to one administrative unit, and house university-wide academic programs such as Honors and General Education. It would also be the focus for a renewed emphasis on academic advisement with all but the highest ability first year students being advised in the University College. Additionally, the University College structure would refocus attention on faculty and staff development central to first year issues.

We also offer several recommendations beyond the creation of a University College. We recommend that the President authorize a study group to create an integrated opening experience for the entire University community at the start of each academic year. We recommend that the President work with appropriate stakeholders to revise the *University Mission Statement* so that it more accurately and explicitly characterizes the Indiana State University educational experience. We recommend that the President direct the Office of Communications and Marketing to create a fully integrated, campus-wide calendar of important dates, events and activities, combining the elements of the academic and athletic calendars with curricular, co-curricular, and cultural events and, in so doing, create a single point of contact for adding elements to that calendar. We recommend that the President direct the Office of Strategic Planning, Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OPSIRE) to begin to integrate its reporting and analytical activities with needs of the University by sharing with the academic community thorough retention, graduation, and student success reports that offer context and provide a deeper level of understanding for campus constituents. We also recommend that the President create an annual first year advocate award. Finally, we recommend that the President ask the faculty, administration and staff to follow the lead of the students and adopt the *Sycamore Standard* as a model for ethical, collegial, and collegiate behavior.

We recommend that the President and the Vice Presidents jointly investigate the wisdom of requiring proof of health insurance for enrollment. We also recommend they consider re-imagining the African American Cultural Center as a multicultural center designed to increase the number of high ability minority students, staff and faculty by proactively providing increased opportunities for interaction.

We recommend that the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs jointly create a first year advisory committee composed of students, faculty and administrators to offer insight and advice to the Dean of the University College and to the Deans of the other colleges. We recommend that the initial creation of that committee become the implementation team for this set of recommendations. We recommend that they direct their divisions to collaborate with OPSIRE to devise assessment instruments to focus on programmatic effectiveness and student learning outcomes rather than focusing merely on student satisfaction.

The resource requirements for these recommendations will be both fiscal and physical. With the full implementation of a University College, new positions will be created, some of which may be filled with already existing personnel. Though the additional resources required by a centrally

located University College would be relatively modest, such a college would require a significant redistribution of available space. The proposed gradual implementation of these recommendations and an ongoing program of assessment will allow the University to provide the best possible services to students while profiting from enhanced enrollment and student success.

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I. Background and Introduction

Background

Indiana State University joined the Policy Center on the First Year in College Foundations of Excellence program with the express purpose of analyzing and improving the first year experience for our students. On the joint recommendation of the Provost, the Vice President for Student Affairs, and the Chairperson of the Faculty Senate, the Taskforce on the First Year (TAFFY) was charged with analyzing the ISU first year experience using the Foundation Dimensions and Performance Indicators provided by the Policy Center and suggesting structural, procedural, and programmatic improvements. This report is the culmination of that year-long process.

Indiana State University requested to become a Foundations of Excellence¹ National Select Cohort university in the summer of 2005 based on the joint recommendation of the Coordinator of First Year Programs, the Director of the Student Academic Services Center, and the Interim Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management. Joined by the Provost, these program leaders traveled to Ashville, North Carolina in August 2005 to receive their charge from the Policy Center. On their return twenty-five faculty, staff, students, and administrators were assembled from across campus.² Catherine Baker, Director of the Student Academic Services Center, and Robert Guell, Coordinator of First Year Programs, were asked to jointly lead the Task Force.

As the Task Force on the First Year we organized ourselves in a steering committee-subcommittee framework. We ensured continuity between groups by assigning either Dr. Baker or Dr. Guell to each of the nine, Dimensionally-based subcommittees. Each subcommittee report was vetted by the Steering Committee and the whole TAFFY group before being submitted.

The process began with an extensive Current Practices Inventory³ wherein the Task Force, with the assistance of the Office of Strategic Planning, Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OPSIRE), developed a catalog of programs, policies, councils, high enrolled courses, frequently failed courses, and other institutional statistics critical to an overall understanding of the first year.

Following that, web-based surveys of students and faculty were initiated with the assistance of Educational Benchmarking Incorporated.⁴ Each nondemographic survey question was mapped to one or more Foundation Dimensions. We were able to ask additional questions and chose to focus the student questions on advising experiences and the faculty questions on garnering suggestions for enhancing student success.⁵

¹ <http://fyfoundations.org>

² The Taskforce membership can be found in the Appendix.

³ The Current Practices Inventory can be found in the Appendix.

⁴ <http://webebi.com>

⁵ The student and faculty surveys can be found in the Appendix.

Each Foundational Dimension⁶ required that each subcommittee⁷ analyze the performance of Indiana State University against a set of performance indicators. Each report required that the subcommittee report on the Current Situation, Areas of Concern, Summary Evidence, and Action Plans. Each report required that we grade ourselves relative to our own aspirations. Each Dimensional Report⁸ was submitted to the Policy Center for its perusal, and feedback⁹ for each was received.

Foundational Dimensions

- Foundations Institutions approach the first year in ways that are intentional and based on a philosophy/rationale of the first year that informs relevant institutional policies and practices.
- Foundations Institutions create organizational structures and policies that provide a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated approach to the first year.
- Foundations Institutions deliver intentional curricular and co-curricular learning experiences that engage students in order to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with the desired outcomes of higher education and the institution's philosophy and mission.
- Foundations Institutions make the first college year a high priority for the faculty. Foundations Institutions facilitate appropriate student transitions through policies and practices that are intentional and aligned with institutional mission.
- Foundations Institutions serve *all* first year students according to their varied needs.
- Foundations Institutions ensure that all first year students experience diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures as a means of enhancing their learning and preparing them to become members of pluralistic communities. Foundations Institutions promote student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education, both for the individual and society.
- Foundations Institutions conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to achieve ongoing first year improvement.

As previously mentioned, each Dimensional Report required a set of Action Plans which would go into this Final Report. Some of these action steps were immediately implemented. The most obvious of these was the drafting of a *Philosophy Statement for the First Year* and a set of *Learning Goals and Outcomes*. These drafts were submitted to the Faculty Senate for their approval and endorsement. After having been reviewed by the Curriculum and Academic Affairs Committee and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the Faculty Senate at its April 20, 2006 meeting endorsed all three statements and recommended that the next catalog include the

⁶ The full description of Foundational Dimensions can be found in the Appendix

⁷ The composition of the subcommittees can be found in the Appendix.

⁸ Each Dimensional Report can be found in the Appendix.

⁹ The Policy Center feedback can be found in the Appendix.

Philosophy and Learning Goals statements.¹⁰ These statements will be provided to all students during *Sycamore Advantage* and *Knowing Sycamores* during the Summer of 2006.

Introduction

The bulk of this report stems from the Dimensional Reports submitted to the Policy Center, the findings therein, and the feedback we received from the Policy Center staff. We preface it with a short discussion, “Why the First Year Matters.” Though the twenty-five members of the Task Force on the First Year were predisposed to understand the importance of the first college year, the audience for our report and our recommendations may not be so predisposed.

We proceed with a Dimension-by-Dimension analysis of our strengths as an institution and then turn our attention to our collective challenges and shortcomings. While the former section is heartening and reveals ISU to be filled with hard-working faculty, staff, and students engaged in the business of learning, the latter section is a frank discussion of what we found wanting. Neither should be taken out of the proper context, for we are not as good as the first section nor as bad as the latter section would imply taken alone.

These positive and negative findings are followed by a short discussion of why structural and programmatic reforms are required. We then proceed with our most significant recommendation, that being the creation of a University College. We report on our study of best practices across the country, acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of our advising practices, and then lay out our vision. Understanding that those universities that we studied for best practices evolved their own University Colleges over time, we recommend a step-by-step process of integrating programs and units that would form a University College at ISU. While it is always the case that significant change on a university campus is best fostered when we proceed at a pace that allows for the proper consultation with faculty, Deans, other Vice Presidential units, staff and students, this is particularly true when we face resource challenges, Program Prioritization, and faculty-administration anxiety.

Noting that not all of our recommendations focus on structure or academic advising and many fall outside the purview of Academic Affairs, we go on to present several other recommendations for University consideration. These recommendations go to the very heart of the institution. Among other recommendations, we suggest a revision to the *University Mission Statement*, a move to a more coherent General Education program, a top-to-bottom review of our assessment instruments from advising to Student Affairs programming, the creation of a comprehensive campus calendar, and a more contextualized way of looking at institutional reporting of retention and graduation statistics.

Noting that these recommendations will not implement themselves, we offer a suggested implementation timetable, team and plan. Finally, we note the costs at each step and the constituencies whose input is either required by the Indiana State University Handbook or simply by prudence and collegiality.

¹⁰ The Philosophy Statement and the Learning Goals and Outcomes statements can be found in the Appendix.

When implemented, these recommendations will allow us to take pride in our alignment of rhetoric, resources, rewards, policies and practices. We will have provided an opportunity for our students to engage in their community, provided a venue for service learning, and created a system within which we can evaluate academic services, advising, and programs, placing priority on those that work for the betterment of students.

II. Why the First Year Matters

Statistically and anecdotally, the evidence is clear from the many treatises of Alexander Astin, John Gardner, and Vincent Tinto¹¹ that the first year in college constitutes one of life's most challenging transitions. This is particularly true for Indiana State University first year students in that 97% have been graduated from high school in the previous eighteen months.¹²

The challenges that Indiana State University students face are substantial. Only 78% of our first year students engaged a college-prep high school curriculum.¹³ Only half earned a B or better average in their high school courses, and they score forty points below the national average on the SAT verbal and fifty points below the national average on the SAT Math.¹⁴ The vast majority (85%) note that there is at least some possibility that they will work during their first year, half indicate it might take longer than four years to graduate, and fully one-third hold open the possibility of transferring to another school. The social and economic statistics reveal further challenges. Three out of five ISU students are classified as first-generation college students, nearly one third come from families earning less than \$40,000 and 56% come from families earning less than \$60,000.¹⁵ As a result of these student characteristics, our faculty, staff and administration face substantial challenges educating and serving them.

At Indiana State University, 42% of students enrolling and taking classes on our Terre Haute campus will graduate within six years.¹⁶ Of the 58% that will not graduate, more than half will leave during or immediately following their first year. Our first-to-second, second-to-third, and third-to-fourth year retention rates are 68%, 85%, and 85% respectively.¹⁷ Supposing our second-to-third and third-to-fourth year retention rates were to remain constant, each one percentage point increase in ISU's first year retention rate would mean eighteen more second-year students, fifteen more third-year students, thirteen more fourth-year students, and nine more fifth and sixth year seniors. Our six-year graduation rate would increase by two-thirds of a percentage point, and it would raise billable tuition revenue by \$320,000 dollars.¹⁸

¹¹ An annotated bibliography can be found at <http://www.sc.edu/fye/resources/fyr/bibliography1.html>

¹² The Fall 2005 Freshman Profile can be found in the Appendix

¹³ In the Fall 2005, 78% of our non-incarcerated, non-home-schooled Indiana students graduated with an Academic Honors diploma or Core40 diploma.

¹⁴ ISU SAT scores can be found in the Freshman Profile. National Averages can be found at <http://www.collegeboard.com/prof/index.html>

¹⁵ See the Fall 2005 Freshman Profile which can be found in the Appendix

¹⁶ The 2006 Retention and Graduation report can be found in the Appendix.

¹⁷ These computations can be made using the Retention and Graduation report.

¹⁸ These computations can be found in the Appendix.

**Average First-to-Second Year Retention
and Four and Six Year Graduation Rates
1998-2003**

School	1st to 2nd year Retention	4-Yr Graduation	6-Yr Graduation
Ball State U	76.30%	26.86%	51.57%
Bowling Green State U	76.86%	33.53%	60.80%
Central Michigan U	77.01%	19.75%	53.60%
Cleveland State U	61.86%	10.25%	26.50%
Idaho State U	57.21%	7.28%	26.50%
Indiana State U	68.86%	21.00%	42.00%
Miami U - Oxford	89.89%	66.25%	80.95%
Southern Illinois U- Carbondale	68.00%	20.18%	43.15%
U of Massachusetts-Boston	69.37%	10.45%	30.35%
U of Missouri-Saint Louis	68.59%	18.65%	41.80%
U of North Carolina- Greensboro	74.72%	27.85%	50.09%
U of Northern Colorado	69.21%	25.93%	45.95%
U of Northern Iowa	81.74%	31.43%	64.75%
Western Kentucky U	73.70%	16.09%	43.63%
Wichita State U	68.40%	13.47%	35.33%
Wright State U	69.52%	17.34%	40.06%
Average (w/o Miami U)¹⁹	71.95%	22.89%	46.06%

Source: CSRDE data supplied by OSPIRE.

Though this *Foundations of Excellence*[®] project is explicitly not about mere retention and graduation statistics, and is aspirational rather than comparative, when compared to our peers, ISU is decidedly below average.

Rather than simply focusing on retention rates, we need to broaden our definitions of success. The first year in college sets academic and behavioral expectations that carry through the entire college career and beyond. We need to create and maintain academic and social programs that prepare our students for higher level work and positive interpersonal relationships. Programs that prepare, transition, integrate, and assist students are necessary if students are going to succeed. Bringing those programs together organizationally will not solve all of the problems our students will face but such a structure will allow us to more effectively focus our attention on their needs.

Besides establishing academic and behavioral patterns for students, the first year offers an excellent opportunity to acculturate students to priorities we value as a University community. Whether it be service learning, civic engagement, active and participatory citizenship, or any other university, college or departmental priority, first year seminars, learning communities, and

¹⁹ Miami University located in Oxford Ohio is a very different type of school than is ISU. It is included here because it is listed in the co-hort of comparison schools by the CSRDE. We have presented the average without Miami, as it is clearly an outlier.

a one stop services center can advertise, fertilize, and organize programs so as to maximize student engagement.

III. The Findings About ISU

Strengths of Current Programs/Structures

Over the past year, faculty, staff, and students from across campus have immersed themselves in consideration of the nine dimensions identified by the Foundations of Excellence Project as being reflective of best practice in enhancing student success in the first year of college. Participating in this self-study is in itself evidence of the interest in strengthening First Year Programs on the ISU campus. In reviewing the Current Practices Inventory and the faculty/student surveys, we found that ISU has in place programs and initiatives that contribute to success in the first year. Many of these are articulated as strengths in the following discussion of the nine Foundational Dimension reports.²⁰ It is these key strengths of the first year at Indiana State University that will allow us to build excellence. Specifically, we now have a *Philosophy Statement on the First Year*, an enumerated set of *Learning Goals* and *Learning Outcomes for the First Year*, a broad set of programs, and a collaboratively minded collection of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs faculty and staff that can be put together under an intentional structure.

Philosophy Dimension

As we began the self-study process, ISU had not agreed upon philosophy/rationale for the first year that “informs relevant institutional policies and practices.” The results of the surveys of students and faculty expressed the need for such a statement. For example, 76%²¹ of our faculty responded that a formalized institutional philosophy for the first year of college is valuable. When students were asked “to what degree do you understand your institutional goals for the personal development of students during the first year?” 59%²² responded either “not at all” or “moderate,” indicating a gap between “what is” and “what is desired.”

With this compelling evidence, the Philosophy subcommittee met regularly, and with input from the entire committee, developed a philosophy statement, learning goals, and learning outcomes for the first year. This statement passed overwhelmingly through appropriate academic channels and was adopted by the Faculty Senate in the Spring 2006 semester. It will be widely promulgated in University publications and at *Sycamore Advantage* advising and registration during June.

Organization Dimension

Even without formal coordination, Student Affairs and Academic Affairs along with Business Affairs meet regularly to discuss a wide variety of subjects not limited to first year students

²⁰ These Foundational Dimension reports can be found in the Appendix.

²¹ EBI Faculty Survey question #3.

²² EBI Faculty Survey question #4.

during bi-weekly University Academic Advising Committee meetings. Further, two planning committees, the *Sycamore Advantage* Planning Task Force and the *Knowing Sycamores* Planning Committee, bring together a campus-wide group to plan and execute our June first year registration program and our August orientation program.

First Year Programs, the Student Academic Services Center, and Student Affairs personnel consciously seek out their counterparts across campus for input on topics in their units. Key first year faculty, transfer advising, learning community and new faculty training exists. All utilize Student Affairs and Academic Affairs personnel. Academic themed housing supports the first year student by providing a social network that is built around a common academic pursuit.

Learning Dimension

Campus wide, the answers to the "quality of courses and instruction" section of the student survey were positive. Students report that their course placement is quite good, with less than 9% considering the chosen course "too easy" and less than 3% considering it "too difficult."²³ Sixty percent or more of students responded "often" or "always" to the following items regarding instruction:

- Helped you learn the course material
- Encourage you to ask questions in class
- Effectively organize course material
- Use effective teaching methods
- Show a sincere concern that you learn
- Communicate academic expectations to you

Course coordinators for courses enrolling a significant number of first year students, to a varying but significant degree, intentionally monitor course sections for consistency and commonality. Sections of these first year courses are, by and large, taught by adjuncts and graduate teaching assistants, thereby enabling the coordinators to ensure a degree of commonality that would be difficult to achieve if the courses were independently taught by tenured/tenure track faculty.

The current Honors Program is undergoing reorganization, and so the fruit of that effort has yet to be born.²⁴ About 25% of first year students qualify for the current program.²⁵

Indiana State University is participating in the American Democracy Project, providing rich curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students in regard to the goals of this project.

²³ EBI Faculty Survey question #54.

²⁴ An external consultants report on the Honors Program can be found in the Appendix.

²⁵ This is a committee generated computation based on the stated criteria for entry into the Honors program as compared to the enrollment figures for August 24, 2005 first year cohort.

Faculty Dimension

Our faculty and staff are interested in the success of first year students. One demonstration of this is the 60% response rate on the various surveys.

Of the first year students who responded on the student survey, 66.2%²⁶ indicated that faculty often or always make themselves available outside of class.

Transitions Dimension

Students reported on the first year student survey that they received accurate pre- and post-enrollment information about ISU in all areas other than our mission. Students indicated “very high,” “high,” or “moderately” accurate communication in multiple areas (90.6% for academic expectations,²⁷ 81.5% for out-of-class activities,²⁸ 93.9% for available majors,²⁹ 88.8% for tuition and living expenses.³⁰)

Students receive the *Sycamore Standard*,³¹ a student and faculty endorsed statement on academic honesty and expectations, three separate times during their pre-enrollment period. They receive it during *Sycamore Advantage*³² and *Knowing Sycamores*³³, and it is part of their ISU-provided academic planner. The responses to the student survey concerning academic honesty reflect that emphasis.³⁴

In recent years intentional communication, reporting, and record keeping has occurred across campus with regard to attendance, timely registration for subsequent semesters, eligibility to return to school (for those who have dropped out), and progress toward degree completion. Many (68%) faculty report “high” or “very high” on initiating early communication with poorly performing students, and very few (5.1%) make little or no effort in this regard.³⁵

We collect family e-mail addresses and (using a program called GoalQuest) communicate consistent messages to families every 10-15 days during the school year. These messages are targeted to help families help their students with problems that are likely to occur. This initiative, as well as others, is being noticed in that 58.6%³⁶ of student respondents feel that ISU has connected their families with their college experience.

²⁶ EBI Student Survey question #68.

²⁷ EBI Student Survey question #1

²⁸ EBI Student Survey question #3

²⁹ EBI Student Survey question #2

³⁰ EBI Student Survey question #4

³¹ “The Sycamore Standard” can be found in the Appendix

³² The *Sycamore Advantage* web page is <http://www.indstate.edu/site/fyp/723.html>

³³ The *Knowing Sycamores* web page is <http://www.indstate.edu/site/fyp/724.html>

³⁴ EBI Student Survey question #32

³⁵ EBI Faculty Survey question #68

³⁶ EBI Student Survey question #10

The Student Government Association is involved in issues related to first year students and charges its Director of Freshman Affairs with representing SGA on these issues. This representative is often asked for input from a wide-variety of faculty and administrative offices.

Three-quarters of student respondents indicate that ISU communicates the importance of out-of-class interaction with faculty and provides interesting alternatives for involvement. Slightly more than half of student respondents (51.7%³⁷) feel the university has connected them with faculty.

Approximately 74%³⁸ feel connected to academic support services of the institution. These resources include tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, mentoring (for AOP students, minority students, 21st Century Scholars and student-athletes), Academic Peer Advocates in the residence halls, and the "Career Advocates in Technology" program.

Focusing on the specific questions from the first year student survey, we observed that faculty/staff are generally helping students understand their majors and general education requirements, students are being assisted in selecting courses, and they are having conversations about life and career goals.

ISU has a Faculty Senate endorsed, well-publicized and often-referred to *Statement on Academic Advising*³⁹ that places portions of the onus for effective advising in the hands of the students, faculty and administration. The statement allocates areas of rights and responsibilities to each so that each group understands everyone's in the process.

All Students Dimension

As evidenced by the response of over 83%⁴⁰ on the student survey, students believe that their instructors treat all students fairly regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity. Furthermore, 92.3% of students report feeling physically safe on campus, with 68.6% responding "high" or "very high" on this item.⁴¹

Over 82% of students responding reported "moderate" to "very high" on the following items:
"To what degree do you feel:

- Respected by others?
- You can express beliefs without concern about how others will react?
- You belong?"⁴²

Many student organizations are available for student involvement. For example, the Student Government Association, The Statesman, the Department of Theater, and Residential Life all offer opportunities for students to be involved with projects of central importance to this campus and to their education. The Honors Program, the McNair Project, and various departmental

³⁷ EBI Student Survey question #8

³⁸ EBI Student Survey question #9

³⁹ The *ISU Statement on Academic Advising* can be found in the Appendix

⁴⁰ EBI Student Survey question #59

⁴¹ EBI Student Survey question #39

⁴² EBI Student Survey questions #40, #41, #44

honorary organizations also provide opportunities for involvement for students who qualify for them. Intercollegiate athletics and intramural sports provide important involvement experiences for a significant number of students. A variety of campus ministries exist for students to exercise their faith. A majority of students responding to the student survey feel that their social needs have been met. A recent study indicated that being affiliated with a fraternity or sorority at ISU also has a significant, positive impact on retention.

Students are encouraged by housing staff, by their advisors, and by many of their teachers to participate in campus activities which interest them. Global email messages, the campus newspaper, advertising in the dorms via signs and closed circuit television, and posted signs on campus offer information about campus happenings.

Diversity Dimension

Students believe that the institution effectively communicates the importance of respecting others with differing opinions. Indiana State University has consistently had the highest percentage of African American students among the State institutions. This fact is likely reflected in the 80%⁴³ of students responding who feel that the institution provides moderate to very high opportunities for interactions with students from differing backgrounds. According to the 2005 National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE), freshmen students living in residence halls demonstrate more understanding of people from other racial and ethnic backgrounds than non-resident students, and there is a statistically significant difference between residence hall students and off campus students on two other NSSE measures: residential students have had more serious conversations with students of different races, as well as with students who have different personal values. These results reflect the importance of residence hall living on students' overall educational experience, especially related to the diversity dimension. Residential Life has acted affirmatively in hiring student staff in the residence halls, with approximately 30% being students of color. This, no doubt, is one reason for the positive effects of residence hall living on diversity.

According to John Gardner⁴⁴, ISU has a stronger emphasis on diversity content in its general education requirements than any of the other campuses in this National Select Cohort. Co-curricular initiatives include many campus activities by student organizations and clubs, as well as MAPS –a minority mentoring program– and the long-standing tradition of the African American Cultural Center.

Roles and Purposes Dimension

Overwhelmingly, students believe that the institution helps them in understanding how college increases their knowledge for future employment as well as for personal growth. Students also said that ISU helps them understand the importance of being an involved member of the community and the necessity to contribute to the betterment of society.

⁴³ EBI Student Survey question #28

⁴⁴ This statement can be found in the Policy Center Feedback which is in the Appendix

From the faculty and staff survey, we now know that faculty and staff also feel strongly about the institution's role in helping students understand how their education prepares them for future employment. A very high percentage of respondents on the survey also indicated that they discuss with students how college can help them achieve their life goals.

In addition, students are exposed to the value of general education, as expressed in the *ISU Goals for General Education*:

- Critical Thinking - To develop students' capacities for independent thinking, critical analysis, and reasoned inquiry.
- Communications Skills - To enhance students' writing, speaking, reading, and listening abilities.
- Issues of Value and Belief - To enhance students' capacities for making informed and reasonable choices.
- Lifelong Learning - To help students develop the knowledge and intellectual skills that encourage participatory citizenship, acknowledge the value of learning, and facilitate adaptation to change.

Improvement Dimension

The Vice President for Student Affairs has made a vocal and admirable commitment to assessment and has focused the Division on writing learning outcomes, using *Learning Reconsidered* as a model.⁴⁵

We have in place numerous assessment strategies that help us learn about our first year students such as NSSE⁴⁶, our Student Information Questionnaire⁴⁷, our First Year Experience survey⁴⁸, and our regular Quality of Life⁴⁹ surveys done by Residential Life. We also have an institutional research person designated to assess effectiveness of First Year Programs.

Our Collective Strengths

These strengths enumerated above will make possible the implementation of the recommendations of this report. We have a wide variety of programs, services, faculty and staff that work collaboratively to assist students. Without these strengths any restructuring recommendation could easily be dismissed as “reshuffling the deck chairs.” With these strengths, we can and should expect that a restructuring of the University's student services, academic advising, and curricular programs will result in increased student success outcomes.

⁴⁵ Reference

⁴⁶ The NSSE results for 2003 and 2005 can be found in the Appendix.

⁴⁷ The Freshman Profile can be found in the Appendix.

⁴⁸ The First year Experience Survey results can be found in the Appendix.

⁴⁹ The Residence Life Quality of Life Survey results can be found in the Appendix.

Weaknesses of Current Programs/Structures

When identifying the weaknesses of current programs and structures, it is important to distinguish between actual weaknesses, perceived weaknesses, and weaknesses where the perception creates its own reality. This is particularly true with comments about programs and services where a displeasing message is delivered in an accurate and timely manner. For instance, aggregated comments concerning dissatisfaction with Financial Aid must distinguish between potential problems with the timeliness, competence, or accuracy of the service and problems with the recipients not receiving as much aid as they had anticipated. However, the fact that these perceptions exist (and need to be addressed) is significant because they inform attitudes about Indiana State University. It is also important to note that each of the weaknesses identified, whether it be in organization, development, assessment, or programming, has a concomitant set of recommendations to address them. While those recommendations are not included in this section, they are addressed specifically within Sections V, VI, and VII of this report. As with the Strengths subsection that preceded this, this subsection is organized by Foundational Dimension.

Organization

In the student survey nearly 32% of the 669⁵⁰ respondents indicate that they have slight to no understanding of how ISU is organized so that if they needed help with non-academic matters (e.g. money management, family matters) they would not know where to go. Organizational problems exist at other levels as well. We have multiple initiatives and several administrative units at multiple levels reporting to both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. These units and initiatives are neither formally coordinated nor integrated. The units do not have a common budget but do have somewhat overlapping administrative responsibility for these varied programs and desired outcomes. In some areas, such as orientation and registration, we communicate formally, while in other areas informal communication dominates. Without more structured and formal communication and interaction, our varied programs are disconnected rather than integrated. Current practice informs the need for more formal communication and coordination.

The Center for Teaching and Learning has changed focus in recent years and will change focus again. In each case, its mission is less about teaching first year students well. We have not reached our capacity for integrating living and learning within the Learning Community structure. It is unknown whether and to what degree the cooperation is personnel dependent. The delivery of services is uneven, and the evaluation of services and advising ranges from excellent to nonexistent. The committee structure is purely administrative and does not include regular faculty. There is no committee where the totality of the first year is emphasized, nor are there advisory bodies for programs like Learning Communities.

Anecdotal evidence indicates there has been significant improvement in student relationships with the Financial Aid Office; however, given this area's importance to ISU student retention, it

⁵⁰ EBI Student Survey question #36

remains an area of concern. Students continue to have negative perceptions of the Financial Aid Office. According to the 2004 First Year Experience Survey 40%⁵¹ of the students were dissatisfied with the Financial Aid Office. Students have expressed frustration over the lack of communication and coordination between the Controller's Office and the Financial Aid Office.

Little training of substance exists for new Graduate Assistants, Teaching Assistants, and adjuncts. There is no overall first year seminar faculty training. Development and assessment of needs are viewed as events rather than processes. Funding for the professional development of GAs, TAs, and adjuncts has been reduced, and the length of time devoted to that development has been reduced.

Students have negative perceptions of the Barnes & Noble operated ISU bookstore. According to the 2004 First Year Experience Survey 25%⁵² of the students are dissatisfied with bookstore operations. Additionally, students fail to realize that ISU does not control textbook pricing. This perception is reinforced in the Pictorial Study of Student Perceptions of Retention.⁵³ It is important to note that much of this displeasure with the bookstore concerned the unavailability of used textbooks at the beginning of each semester and relatively low return amounts offered at the end of the semester. Though some of this displeasure is as a result of the national increase in textbook prices, a significant part is due to faculty failing to turn in book orders in a timely fashion so that the bookstore can know which books to buy back in large quantities for the following semester. The SGA has made a concerted effort to inform faculty of this issue and faculty are, to a degree, beginning to see their role in keeping student costs down.

Learning

From its inception in 2003, the COMPASS exam has been roundly criticized for producing some implausible placement results: anecdotes abound where students with A's in high school Algebra, Algebra II, Geometry, and even Calculus as well as with SATs above 600 have been placed in remedial courses. As a result of intense scrutiny by TAFFY and by the University Academic Advising Coordinators, COMPASS has been the subject of two systematic studies. The first noted the fact that COMPASS recommendations were not being followed nor monitored. As a result, though an analysis was done of the explanatory power of the placement test, it was quickly dismissed in favor of a more thorough analysis.⁵⁴

That second, more methodologically rigorous study, took a random sample of students placed in math courses and compared the explanatory power of COMPASS with that of the math SAT and information gleaned from students' high school transcripts. The study concluded that the number of math courses taken in high school was the most powerful predictor of success in college level mathematics and that when combined with the math SAT offered much better placement information than the COMPASS test. The study also concluded that the COMPASS test offered little information in addition to that which was knowable with the transcripts and SAT alone. With this information, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences is now working with the Department of Mathematics and Computer Sciences to develop a satisfactory placement method.

⁵¹ The First year Experience Survey can be found in the Appendix

⁵² The First year Experience Survey can be found in the Appendix

⁵³ The Pictorial Study of Student Perceptions of Retention can be found in the Appendix

⁵⁴ This study can be found in the Appendix.

The final conclusion of the study is that quite a number of ISU students require some developmental mathematics.⁵⁵

With respect to honors enrollment, the former program was housed within the former Department of Humanities, and the courses came, quite disproportionately, from there. This program was not popular among the honors eligible population, so much so that in the Fall 2005 semester there were, aside from composition, only six sections of honors courses offered at the 100/200 level. The newly appointed Honors Director has been charged with increasing the depth and breadth of the offerings within the Honors Program.

The NSSE reports for 2003 and 2005, and the NSSE-authored benchmarking report that compares ISU to all schools participating in the NSSE, all American Democracy Project schools participating in the NSSE, and to all Doctoral Intensive schools participating in the NSSE, show that fewer ISU students feel challenged by the material presented in courses than do their counterparts at other schools.⁵⁶

Faculty

As reported in our faculty survey results, the faculty perceive that "Senior Academic Leaders" place a greater sense of importance on the first year than do Deans and Chairpersons; however, we have work to do helping our senior leaders understand important characteristics of our first year students and our success enhancement strategies. Faculty report a perception that their colleagues do not value first year instruction. We assume that this includes the relative importance they perceive being placed on teaching in learning communities.

Many surveys of students and faculty (including our own, the EBI surveys for the Foundations of Excellence project and the National Survey of Student Engagement) are administered at ISU but the results are rarely widely distributed or analyzed. Generally, the results are merely posted to web sites (Office of Strategic Planning, Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OSPIRE), FYP, etc.) without notice or comment.

Faculty money to travel to discipline-specific academic conferences is limited with very little devoted to funding faculty travel to conferences on the first-year. What funding does exist for this purpose is allocated through First Year Programs.

Enthusiasm for pedagogies of engagement varies significantly among the Deans and Chairs. Some departments are actively involved in learning communities, service learning activities, and other out-of-class activities while others remain uninvolved and uninterested.

The faculty survey clearly shows that, for recent tenure-track hires, the likelihood of or the relative importance of assignment to first year courses rarely appears in advertisements, usually comes up in interviews, and only becomes fully apparent during new faculty orientation. Thus, we are not adequately informing or preparing applicants for the likelihood that they will teach first year students. We therefore may not be attracting the applicants particularly skilled at or

⁵⁵ This study can be found in the Appendix.

⁵⁶ Each of these reports can be found in the Appendix.

predisposed to enjoy teaching first year students because we fail to adequately advertise this part of the job. Additionally, a significant concern centers on new tenure/track, adjunct faculty, and graduate teaching assistant development pertaining to first year courses. Funds for this purpose have decreased in recent years. Haphazard funding for the Writing Center and the Math Center result in hours of operation that are inconsistent with student needs and preferences.

Transitions

The 2003 to 2005 NSSE comparison suggests a decline in the perception of advising quality. For freshman, the percentage describing advising as fair or poor rose from 25% to 33%. For seniors that percentage rose from 27% to 35%.⁵⁷ The EBI survey indicates that a significantly large percentage (35.3%⁵⁸) had little ("slight" or "not at all") contact with their advisor on the subject of their future enrollment plans.

Historically, ISU has been an institution with a campus community composed of many students coming from homes within a two hour driving radius of Terre Haute. Since many of these students go home for the weekends or even more frequently, it often happens that their center of social interaction remains at home rather than on campus.

Communications on campus need to improve so that the entire campus community has easy access to an accurate, up to date, daily/weekly/term calendar of events on campus. This needs to be available from the first page of the web site and perhaps on large electric signage several places on campus as well.

Forty-four⁵⁹ percent of students responding to the student survey apparently feel that their social needs have not been met; 44.3%⁶⁰ that they cannot express their beliefs without some concern; 39.7%⁶¹ that they are not respected by others, and at least 29.7%⁶² don't know where to go to find out about organizations and events on campus.

⁵⁷ Each of these reports can be found in the Appendix.

⁵⁸ EBI Student Survey question #19

⁵⁹ EBI Student Survey question #43

⁶⁰ EBI Student Survey question #41

⁶¹ EBI Student Survey question #40

⁶² EBI Student Survey question #37

Diversity

The EBI student survey reveals several diversity related concerns. Among these:

- 34.9%⁶³ of ISU students responding feel that they have no or slight exposure to different world cultures in the classroom;
- 50.5%⁶⁴ feel that they have no or slight exposure to world religions in the classroom;
- 33.2%⁶⁵ feel that they have no or slight exposure to issues related to social class/economic status in the classroom;
- 39.1%⁶⁶ feel they have no or slight exposure to world cultures outside of the classroom;
- 51.3%⁶⁷ feel they have no or slight out-of-class exposure to world religions;
- 39.5%⁶⁸ feel they have no or slight out of class exposure to different political perspectives;
- 40.1%⁶⁹ feel they have no or slight out of class exposure to issues of social class/economic status.

The EBI student survey also reveals that 29.1%⁷⁰ of the student respondents feel that the institution provides no or slight opportunities for such interaction with faculty and staff from differing backgrounds and that 42.7%⁷¹ feel the institution provides no or slight opportunities for interaction with persons outside the institution from differing backgrounds.

While many activities and programs are offered, we find little evidence of organized encouragement for students to attend or participate, except for curricular requirements, which do not always fall within the first year of enrollment. OSPIRE data indicates that 42% of first year students take at least one class considered multicultural and these include foreign language courses. However, there is no overarching sense of a general education diversity experience in which all first year students participate. Once again, the lack of campus wide communication of events and activities may play a role in students' knowledge of or encouragement to join such campus programs.

Some of the interactions students have with faculty and staff from differing cultures are, unfortunately, not positive. Numerous complaints have been voiced to advisors and others about faculty and graduate students whose command of English is so poor as to be incomprehensible to the typical ISU student. Some of this is due to the generally provincial experiential background of the typical ISU student who is not accustomed to talking with persons for whom English is not a first language, but some of it is also due to the hiring of persons whose command of English is indeed poor.

Additionally, the initiation of interactions is generally left up to students. While there are many activities and programs going on about campus, few organized strategies have been developed to

⁶³ EBI Student Survey question #20

⁶⁴ EBI Student Survey question #21

⁶⁵ EBI Student Survey question #23

⁶⁶ EBI Student Survey question #24

⁶⁷ EBI Student Survey question #25

⁶⁸ EBI Student Survey question #26

⁶⁹ EBI Student Survey question #27

⁷⁰ EBI Student Survey question #29

⁷¹ EBI Student Survey question #30

attract many students to them. Some faculty give extra credit for attending various functions, but this is haphazard. Further, most of the social/student run functions are designed for and by homogeneous student groups, and too often these groups do not attract individuals from different populations.

Roles and Purposes

There is no intentionally consistent curricular or co-curricular setting in which students are exposed to the University's vision for higher education. The University has a Mission Statement and Vision Statement for itself, but not for the purposes of higher education as they relate to our students.

ISU students too often view higher education as an event in which they receive a fixed volume of knowledge and garner a key to a middle-class life. Though we have a generally accepted set of *Goals of General Education*, we have failed to convince students that education is a lifelong process in which they are constant participants.

The General Education program is not viewed by faculty nor by key administrators as being a coherent program. There are more than 200 courses that qualify for General Education credit. Many faculty advisors, particularly those outside the College of Arts and Sciences, believe the program is overly complicated. Though nationally recognized for its multicultural, quantitative literacy, and capstone requirements, it is not locally acclaimed. Faculty advisors often do not sell the program's rationale to students.

Improvement and Assessment

No evaluation plan exists to ensure overall, systematic, and consistent assessment of first year interactions, interventions and curriculum. Though the data would allow it, we do not store, publicize or organize it for longitudinal comparison. Current assessments focus more on satisfaction than with whether specific goals are accomplished. The assessments rarely motivate or inform change processes. Assessments are overly concerned with satisfaction and do not tend to track learning correlated with its effectiveness in transmitting information. The assessments are rarely created in such a way that the learning goals of a program are tied to specific questions.

All too often, assessment is done for the sake of assessment, and the results are neither deeply analyzed nor widely disseminated. Even the University 101 assessments, where course learning goals are specifically evaluated, the results are simply provided to the instructors without comment from the program coordinator.

Additionally, because there is a lack of resources and, as a result, a lack of useful instruments and statistical analysis within the student services offices of both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, assessment problems are typically acknowledged, but not adequately addressed. For instance, selection biases are acknowledged but not controlled for statistically, and reports are read with an all too familiar refrain: "the [program] participants do better than non-participants but it is unknown whether they would have done so anyway."

Our Collective Opportunities

This collection of weaknesses must now be recast as a collection of opportunities for progress. With enrollment challenges placing a significant financial burden on the campus, it is important that we not simply enumerate our weaknesses. We must use these observations systematically and intentionally to guide our improvement process. So, though we have a structure that does not allow us to effectively respond to student success shortcomings, we can restructure so as to allow such a response. Though we inadequately develop, assess, and reward academic advising, and though Student Affairs and student services too often measure satisfaction or simple participation rather than learning outcomes, these practices need not continue. The measure of whether we are progressing toward an excellent foundation for the first year will be the degree to which we can look on this enumerated list of weaknesses, see it as a set of opportunities, and ultimately use it as a set of challenges to overcome.

IV The Restructuring Imperative

Indiana State University currently faces significant issues in the areas of student success, as evidenced by average retention and graduation rates, and of enrollment, both of which are compounded by, and contribute to, budgetary retrenchment. It is imperative that we now act to build on the strengths outlined above to meet the challenges just enumerated. In the coming sections where we, the Task Force on the First Year, make recommendations, there are only a few recommendations for further study. The vast majority of recommendations are actionable. They, in varying degrees of detail, lay out the restructuring imperative. For those who remain unconvinced, this section explains the consequence of the status quo and the opportunities for major change that are before us.

While some of the problems ISU faces are quite obvious, others are not. Obviously, with retention of first year students to the second year at 68%, and four-year and six-year graduation rates for a given first year cohort at 21% and 42% respectively, we have a considerable amount of work to do. Considering that 65% of incoming freshman believe they have some chance not only of graduating, but of graduating with honors, and only 2% believe they might drop out permanently,⁷² our students are not meeting their own expectations or ours. While student beliefs likely reflect some amount of overconfidence or naiveté, ISU still bears some responsibility for harnessing this exuberance into meaningful opportunities for success.

Some of the problems are more subtle. Incoming students often perceive college education as the prerequisite for comfortable middle-class employment rather than as an opportunity to develop skills and experiences that will allow them to build a personally and economically fulfilling life and career beyond their first job. In addition, the value that students place on this education is also evident in alumni giving. Though the ISU Foundation is slightly above average in alumni participation compared to other public universities, greater identification with and loyalty to the institution, combined with greater student success, would create long-term returns for the financial stability of the university.

By way of comparison, ISU's retention and graduation rates compare unfavorably with other similar universities and tend to fall in the lower half of our peer institutions. Indiana State University competes with other Indiana universities for a large portion of the student body. Ball State especially has garnered national acclaim for its adoption of structures/programs that address student success with particular emphasis on first year students. IUPUI, another competitor school, is nationally recognized for its University College and has seen significant increases in enrollment, retention and graduation rates as a result of its student success efforts. These two institutions have also seen significant growth of their reputations, both regionally and nationally. It is important to note that IUPUI has done so primarily through an improved focus on first year student success and without significantly increasing admissions standards.

The two main reasons students choose ISU are low cost and reputation of the school. Though Indiana State University has recently been acclaimed for the value of its education, improving

⁷² The OSPIRE Retention and Graduation report can be found in the Appendix

the recognition and reputation of the University for its attention to first year students is imperative in addressing the issues facing the institution and in maintaining its reputation.

We, the members of the Task Force on the First Year, believe tackling these areas of concern will require significant change, rather than merely tinkering with existing structure and programs. Given ISU's reputation, at least internally, for a lack of structural innovation, we believe it is essential to persuade the wide variety of campus units involved to rethink their approaches to the student body generally and to first year students in particular. Moreover, the university as a whole must have a coherent, well-established and widely accepted approach to first year education. This reform must address issues of coordination of First Year Programs; teaching, including high DWFI-rate courses; advising, particularly in regard to math placement; and faculty/staff rewards for first year participation and excellence. While progress has been made, such as in the adoption of the *Statement of Philosophy*, it is our belief that a significant change to the academic advising practice, development, assessment, and reward, as well as the formal creation of a University College, are the most effective ways to promote the success of students in their first year and beyond. We believe that significant changes to the first year experience will benefit not only those students directly involved but also have far reaching positive effects for the institution. Specific issues such as general academic success, retention, graduation rates, identification with and loyalty to the university can all be addressed by an aggressive focus on the coordination of First Year Programs through the establishment of a University College.

V. A Recommended Change to First year Academic Advising

Is the Glass One-Third Empty or Two-Thirds Full?

Academic advising at Indiana State University is neither universally good nor universally bad; it is, however, universally uneven and unevenly assessed. While ISU has a relatively long history of involvement with the National Association of College Academic Advisors and has adopted many of the best practices articulated by that body, student dissatisfaction with academic advising is so pervasively reported, both statistically and anecdotally, that it is difficult to know where to begin. Indeed, what we say about academic advising, as articulated in the *Statement on Academic Advising*,⁷³ draws significant praise from the Policy Center on the First Year in College.⁷⁴ On the other hand, what we do in academic advising draws loud and consistent jeers from at least a one-third of students.⁷⁵

There are points of light on the academic advising front that need to be highlighted so that the entire picture is not painted with dark clouds. Students and faculty value academic advising,⁷⁶ which supports the conclusion that if we are less effective than we aspire to be, then the ineffectiveness most likely resides in implementation. Moreover, two-thirds of students (both seniors and freshmen) rate advising on campus “good” or “excellent.”⁷⁷ Clearly, the quality of academic advising for these students is no problem at all.

Academic advising problems tend to come to the attention of those in authority when the student’s case has, at least, *prima facie* merit, and the student complains or appeals the case to higher administrators. While this may serve to artificially highlight the problems, there are cases of malfeasance where advisors give factually incorrect advice, and nonfeasance where advisors are simply not available. Those actually engaged in academic advising and academic advising outcomes are only too happy to share their perceptions of the flaws. Technology, such as DARS and CAS, are quite effective, though in each case these innovations are promised long before (as many as five years) they are delivered. Faculty respect for the role of academic advising varies widely from College to College and even within Colleges. It is considered as grounds for promotion and tenure in some units and not in others. It is “teaching” in one unit and “service” in another. It is compensated in a few units (typically with release time) and uncompensated in the vast majority. The *de facto* advisor is sometimes not the *de jure* advisor. Often this is as result of those with poor advising skills choosing to be purposefully unavailable as a “beggar thy neighbor” strategy to get out of the responsibility. Allowing this practice to continue only

⁷³ The Statement on Academic Advising can be found in the Appendix.

⁷⁴ The Feedback from the Policy Center can be found in the Appendix. Specifically this praise is found in the comments on the Current Practices Inventory.

⁷⁵ The results of the Student Academic Services Center sponsored survey, the EBI student survey, the OSPIRE Senior Year and First Year Experience Surveys, and the 2003 and 2005 NSSE surveys of both first year students and seniors all lead to the conclusion that many students are dissatisfied with “academic advising.” All of these surveys are available in the Appendix.

⁷⁶ EBI Faculty Survey questions #58 and 59; student questions #9

⁷⁷ The 2005 NSSE for both Freshmen and Seniors can be found in the Appendix.

encourages the activity and, with certainty, contributes to student dissatisfaction with academic advising.

Furthermore, advising is not the subject of any award, anywhere on campus, in large measure because it is not well assessed anywhere on campus. It is also an area where exceptions to rules often become the rule. In particular, students who are readmitted after having been dismissed, or are on probation, are regularly allowed to change Colleges and majors, though good academic standing is required for such a change. Somewhat regularly, students who do not know what they want to do, but know very clearly that they no longer wish to pursue a major for which they are demonstrably not suited, transfer to the Academic Opportunity Program.

Changing the Structure of First year Advising

While we, as the Task Force on the First Year, recognize these successes and failures, we cannot help but note that academic advising is not a practice restricted to students in their first year at ISU, nor is there evidence that any one unit on campus does a particularly better job than any other unit.⁷⁸ Still, we were asked by both the Provost and the Policy Center on the First year in College⁷⁹ to explore what could be done to increase advising satisfaction and effectiveness in both the first year and beyond.

We were not able to come to a consensus on the merits of changing first year advising practices in a radical fashion given a lack of evidence that one model of advising is more effective or practical than another. Rather, we came to a simple and data-driven conclusion that we should meet the needs of identifiable populations when data suggested this could be done. Specifically, we noted that students who earned a high school GPA of less than 3.0 and were placed directly in their College of choice fared substantially worse in their first year and were retained at a significantly lower rate than students who were in that category but assigned to the Academic Opportunity Program (AOP).⁸⁰ We do not conclude from this that all students would be better off, necessarily, in a central-intake advising system. We note that students professionally advised (in OP, AOP, Nursing, Education, and Business) were neither more nor less satisfied and neither more nor less exposed to the elements of developmental advising than students advised by the faculty (in the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Technology and Health and Human Performance.)⁸¹ What we conclude is relatively simple: being advised within AOP helps students become aware of other student success resources, perhaps by mere proximity. What we extrapolate from the evidence is that if we enroll students who have high school grades indicating a need for support, we should put them in proximity of that support when they are advised.

To specifically tackle the practical problem of there being no formally recognized mechanism to deal with students who are not in good academic standing as they transition from a major, we conceptualize a formal route and designation as “students in transition.”

⁷⁸ A comparison of EBI student survey results across the units can be found in the Appendix.

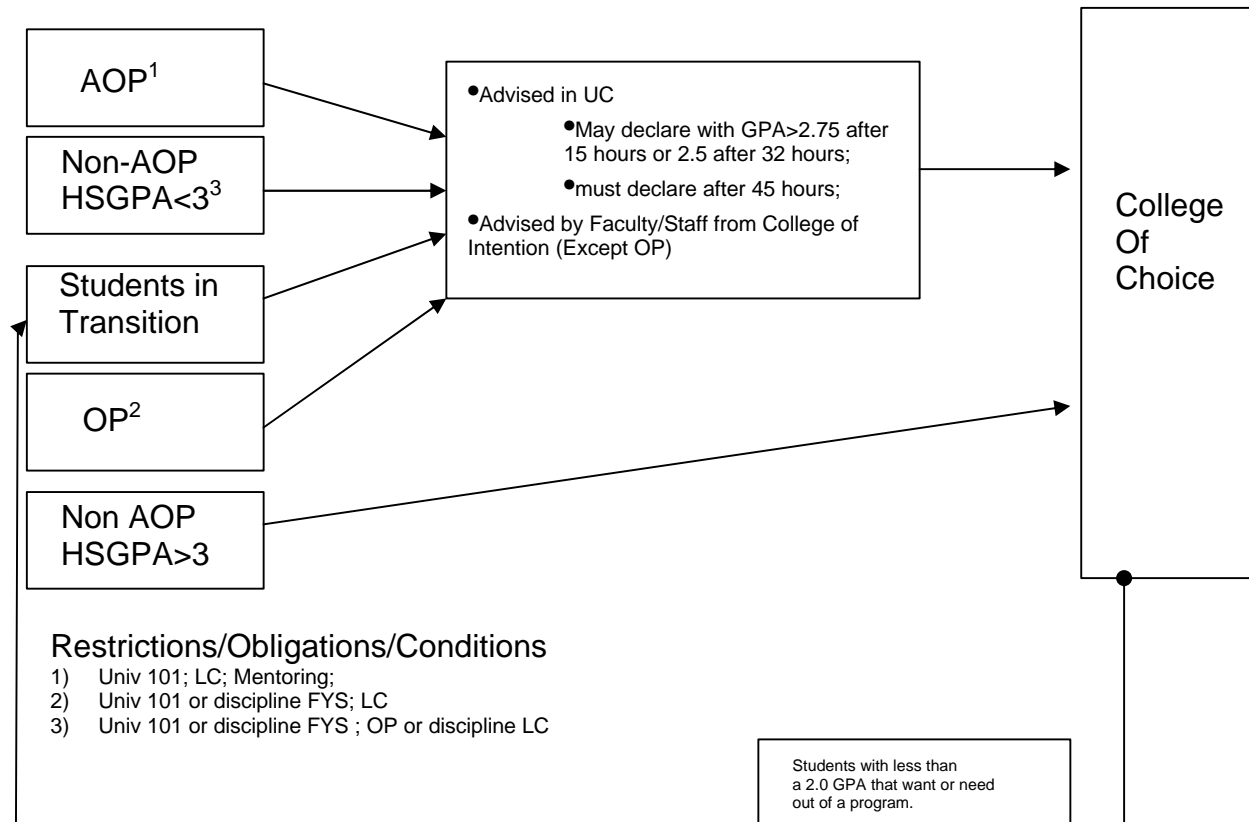
⁷⁹ See the Policy Center Feedback in the Transitions Dimension.

⁸⁰ A comparison of AOP and nonAOP students, the first year GPAs and their retention rates can be found in the Appendix.

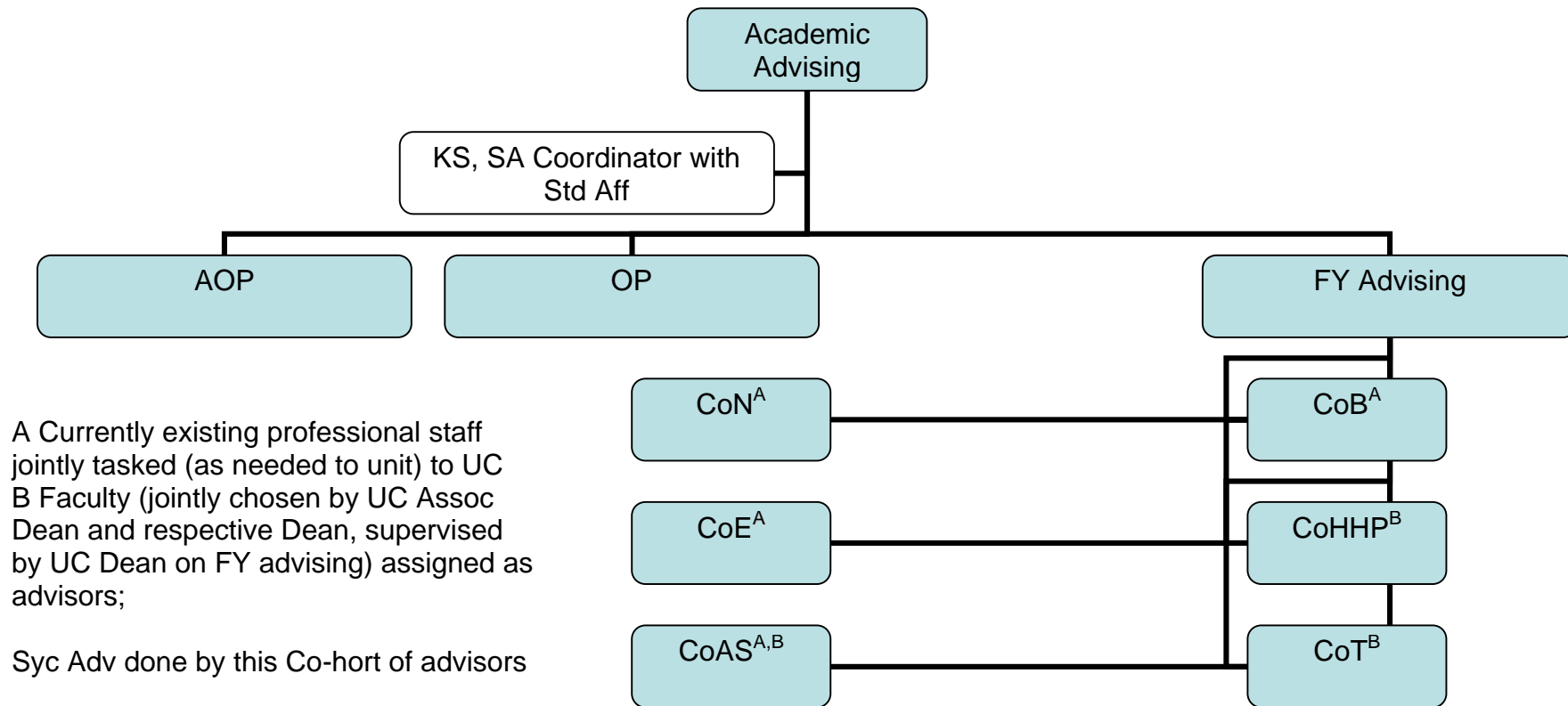
⁸¹ A comparison of EBI student survey results across the advising methods can be found in the Appendix.

As modeled below, students with high school GPAs less than 3.0 would be given a “Non Designated” or “Pre” category of major. Though they would not be formally admitted on conditions, like that of their AOP counterparts, their advising appointments would be held within the confines of the University College (to be proposed below) and those appointments would be with professional or faculty advisors assigned to the University College for that purpose. There would be formal exit criteria for these students. Those clearly successful in their first semester or in their first year could choose to exit the program. We also recommend that mandatory exit criteria be put in place so as to minimize the occurrence of perpetual transition. Students in this category rarely graduate and will often use the entirety of their financial aid eligibility trying to get off of probation.

Advising Model



Academic Advising & Transition



Changing the Development, Assessment, and Reward Structure for Academic Advising

We believe that the time has come to align the resources of the institution for academic advising with the rhetoric of the institution on academic advising. If followed, the recommendation above will make only a minor dent in the third of students who report dissatisfaction with academic advising. What will have a major impact on the quality of academic advising is to develop faculty and staff adequately for the purpose of academic advising, to evaluate academic advising so we could recognize and reward excellence, and to employ those high quality advisors more strategically.

The opportunities presented by the proposal suggested above make possible reforms that are far more substantial. With more than half of all first year advisees handled within the confines of the University College,⁸² advisor development could be markedly enhanced. Whether through conferences, workshops, speakers, brown-bags, a centrally located library of advisor references, or simply the proximity of other advisors for consultation, the quality of academic advising for the majority of first year students could well be improved as a result of this opportunity alone.

With a large proportion of first year students being advised within the confines of the University College, the utility of adopting a common advising assessment instrument becomes magnified. The resulting data could be used to recognize and reward excellent advising and minimize the consequences of poor advising. Such data could and should be used in the future to assess whether the current model of advising, the proposed model of advising, or a central intake model of advising would serve our students best.

Additionally, though the choice of faculty deployed to the University College for the purpose of academic advising would be made jointly by the Dean of the College to which the student aspires and the Dean of the University College, compensation must be available. Whether that compensation comes in the form of stipends, release time, or a special service designation, compensation coupled with assessment will foster accountability, a feature sorely lacking in the present model.

The creation of a university college will not automatically solve the problem of assessment. It would, however, provide a structure through which university-wide assessment could occur, but that assessment must be preceded by articulation and adoption of measures of effectiveness that clearly and consistently align with the university's definition of academic advising as an aspect of faculty work and performance review. A university college can be instrumental in fostering the campus dialogue necessary to produce a common understanding of the need for effective assessment of advising.

⁸² Data from the Fall 2005 cohort and discussed in the Section VIII show that between 50% and 60% of new students would be advised in such a College if the recommendations were all brought to fruition.

VI. A University College Recommendation

Best Practices

As the Task Force on the First Year moved from analyzing our institution to recommending new directions for it, we studied the practices of schools that have successfully shown increases in measures of student success. We began by investigating a number of institutions, those known for their successes and those similar to ISU in some way, either by virtue of their populations, their locations, or their size. Initially, we researched a large number of post-secondary institutions and began narrowing the field to a number of schools which seemed to both represent best practices *vis a vis* first year programming and possessed similarities to ISU. These institutions included Arkansas State University, Ball State University, Ferris State University, Idaho State University, Illinois State University, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, Kennesaw State University, Northern Kentucky University, the University of Texas at El Paso, and Wright State University. We ultimately focused particular attention on schools that had succeeded in bringing together programs into cohesive units. These were Ball State, Illinois State, IUPUI, UTEP, and Wright State.⁸³

We particularly regarded the success of their students as impacted by their University Colleges, the administrative structures of said colleges, and the services and programs which such entities included. Each of these schools has either maintained or increased enrollment while providing innovative and intentionally coordinated programming for first year students as well as cost effective services for the university community as a whole.

After much research, we have agreed that in order to adapt this concept to ISU and to incorporate its best practices into the ISU college structure, a University College with its own dean would best fit our needs. The establishment of such an entity, as separate from Enrollment Services (the UTEP model), would enhance the academic integrity and visibility of such a unit, thus providing the best possible services to and representation of the students it is designed to serve.

In consideration of the best practices of schools listed above and the needs of first year students at ISU, it was also necessary to consider the current status of services for students as well as the current budget constraints of our institution. We have found that ISU has many excellent services and programs available but that these have not thus far been intentionally coordinated. Persons and programs have worked well together, but this has generally been the result of individuals and their informal interactions rather than a result of a deliberately organized structure.

Thus, the incorporation of best practices for students in the first year, and indeed after their first year, being our ultimate goal, we feel that a University College at ISU can be constructed of

⁸³ Organizational Charts for these Universities can be found in the Appendix.

disparate, already existing elements within the University whose work can be intentionally coordinated with a minimum of cost. In fact, the University College will also eliminate duplication of efforts and services, streamline administrative structures, and provide one-stop-shopping for ISU students. Increased efficiency, increased availability of services, and increased student retention would ultimately prove cost-effective.

Vision for a University College

This recommendation for the development of a University College at ISU has been made based on the following assumptions about student needs, on considerations of available resources, on considerations of excellent programs and services available within various sectors of our University, and on beliefs about effective program management and servant leadership which reflect the *Statement of the Philosophy for the First Year* and the mission of the University:

- First year students need informed and caring personal guidance as they negotiate the university culture and bureaucracy;
- First year students need carefully planned and readily available academic advisement and career counseling, services not universally and proactively provided currently;
- First year students need first-hand introductions to all academic support services and programs;
- First year students need carefully designed curricular offerings, i.e. first year seminars and learning communities, which will enable them to successfully make the transition into academe;
- All students need easily accessible services and program staff in one integrated location;
- University resources for space, budgets, and personnel are extremely limited;
- ISU needs to build upon its superb base of personnel who are passionate about the success of our students and upon programs which have been proven to provide avenues to student success.

The model suggested for consideration incorporates ideas from similar units at other colleges and adapts them to the situations and resources of ISU. The strengths and weaknesses of the first year experience for ISU students have been considered and addressed. However, this vision represents an end goal to be reached *via* a series of carefully planned stages of development.

Under the vision there are three positions: one for academic services, one for advisement programs, and one for curriculum. Under the auspices of these are drawn together disparate programs from throughout the University in order to create a center where students are provided fully integrated services in a proactive environment. In this manner, very little in the way of additional personnel is required even when the final model is implemented. Only greatly expanding programs or new programs would require additional personnel.

There are several challenges apparent with this model. First, in its imagined form, the most desirable scenario would relocate most of the above services to one centrally located facility. While facilities are available, relocation of many offices would be required. Second, though there is a full-time Director of the Student Academic Services Center and there are faculty assigned on a part-time basis to be the Coordinator of First Year Programs, the Director of the Honors

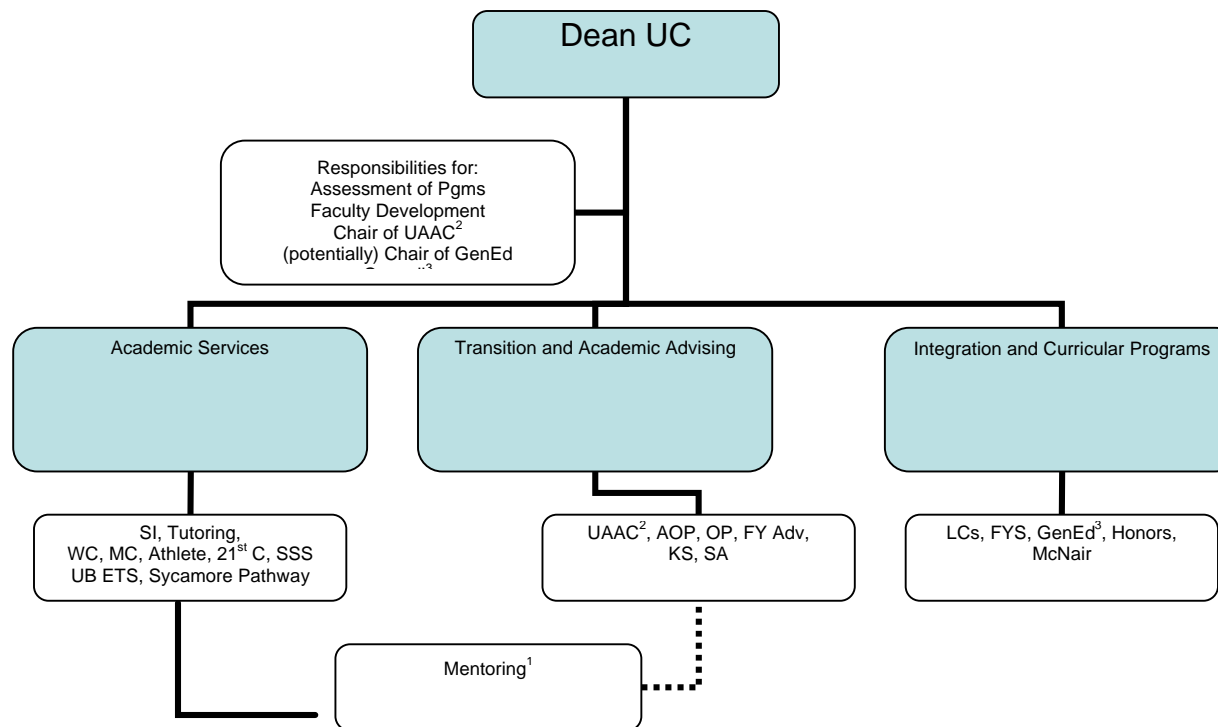
Program, the Coordinator of General Education, and the Director of the Writing Center, the University College model suggests four full-time personnel. Third, many of the programs which are included above are currently under-funded and would require additional funds in the form of student wages. Fourth, several new assessment strategies and instruments would have to be developed to ensure that the University College indeed enhanced student success. As a result of these challenges and recognizing that all change engenders anxiety, units and personnel being reassigned will need support and encouragement as they engage in the process of becoming one entity.

There are also numerous significant opportunities which would accrue from the development of a University College. First, new students would be guided toward appropriate services rather than having to seek them on their own. Second, faculty, already faced with increasing class loads and declining ranks, would be relieved of the advisement task for many first year students. Third, students would be able to explore various major options and work with unit advisors in the University College to research curricular offerings and avenues for academic engagement. Fourth, all first year services, including mentoring and tutoring, would be integrated into a one-stop shopping experience. Fifth, pedagogy in the first year could be specifically addressed by the faculty teaching first year courses. Sixth, academic advisement would be immediately and universally available to all students. Finally, students would be better prepared to succeed in majors of choice after their first year.

It is also important to recognize the important symbolic and representative effects of increasing the voice given to student success issues, in the first year and beyond. By creating a dean-level position we enhance the opportunity for student success programs to compete for shrinking resources. We also create the vehicle by which resources may eventually increase. Around the country, universities have restructured themselves in recognition of the fact that a rising tide of student success raises all academic boats. A properly structured university college brings together curricular programs that often float without a home (such as General Education, Honors, first year seminars, and learning communities) with academic services programs like tutoring, mentoring, and Supplemental Instruction. Often, but not always, when a university college is created, it is accompanied by a change in academic advising practice. A central theme that arose from our study of university colleges across the country was that they evolve to meet students' needs. Their creation solidified in students' and faculties' minds the idea that their institution cared enough about student success to create an entity to help them navigate college.

The University College concept is not new nationally or locally. Within the last two decades, numerous universities have moved to this model because of these obvious benefits. In the case of two of our sister institutions in Indiana, Ball State and IUPUI, the development of a UC has been followed by periods of unprecedented growth in enrollment and very creative programming. All TAFFY research and discussion has focused both on ISU strengths and weaknesses and the best practices at other, sometimes rival, institutions. In so doing, we have been able to learn from their experiences and results. It is time for our university to adapt to the changing environments and roles of academe in society, and one of the best ways to do that is to emulate what works and adapt it to the needs of students at ISU.

Vision Fall 09



Abbreviations

SI: Supplemental Instruction
 AOP: Academic Opportunity Program
 OP: Open Preference
 21st C: Twenty-First Century Scholars Program
 SSS: Student Success Services
 FYS: First-Year Seminars
 SRP: Summer Reading Program
 SA: Sycamore Advantage
 KS: Knowing Sycamores
 LCs: Learning Communities
 DA&T: Degree Audit and Transfer
 UB: Upward Bound
 ETS: Educational Talent Search
 UAAC: University Academic Advising Committee
 FY Adv: FY Advising
 WC: Writing Center
 MC: Math Center

- 1) Mentoring supervised through Academic Services with linkages made by academic area though advising.
- 2) The Dean would chair, the Ac Adv coordinator would facilitate implementation issues
- 3) The Dean (could/would) chair, the Curricular Programs area would facilitate implementation issues

The Path to a Pre-eminent University College

In the present environment, the creation of a University College must be undertaken with a series of well-planned steps in order to husband available resources and review grant opportunities, to phase in new programs and administrative structures, and to shift personnel into positions for maximum program development.

Stage 1

In the first stage, the First Year Programs Coordinator, administrative assistant and student worker(s) move to the SASC facility in Gillum Hall. Additionally, as is the case throughout all of the best practices schools, the coordination of first year seminars (University 101) becomes aligned with the coordination of learning communities. The overall supervision of the programs remains with the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services. Pending final approval of the Provost, and in recognition of the fact that in 2006 the McNair program grant must be reauthorized and that reauthorization is more likely with a unified set of TRIO programs, the TRIO programs will be brought back to the SASC (where they had been housed until 2002).

Stage 2

In the second stage, the Honors Program is brought into the Curriculum, Transition and Integration division and the Writing and Math Centers are brought into the Academic Services division. While the Honors Program may ultimately become a separate Honors College, until it has changed programmatically, such an upgrade in standing is not warranted. Additionally, pending a decision by the Provost with regard to the pace of restructuring advising, the advising of Academic Opportunity Program and Open Preference students may or may not move from the Academic Services division to the Curriculum, Transition, Integration and Academic Advising division.

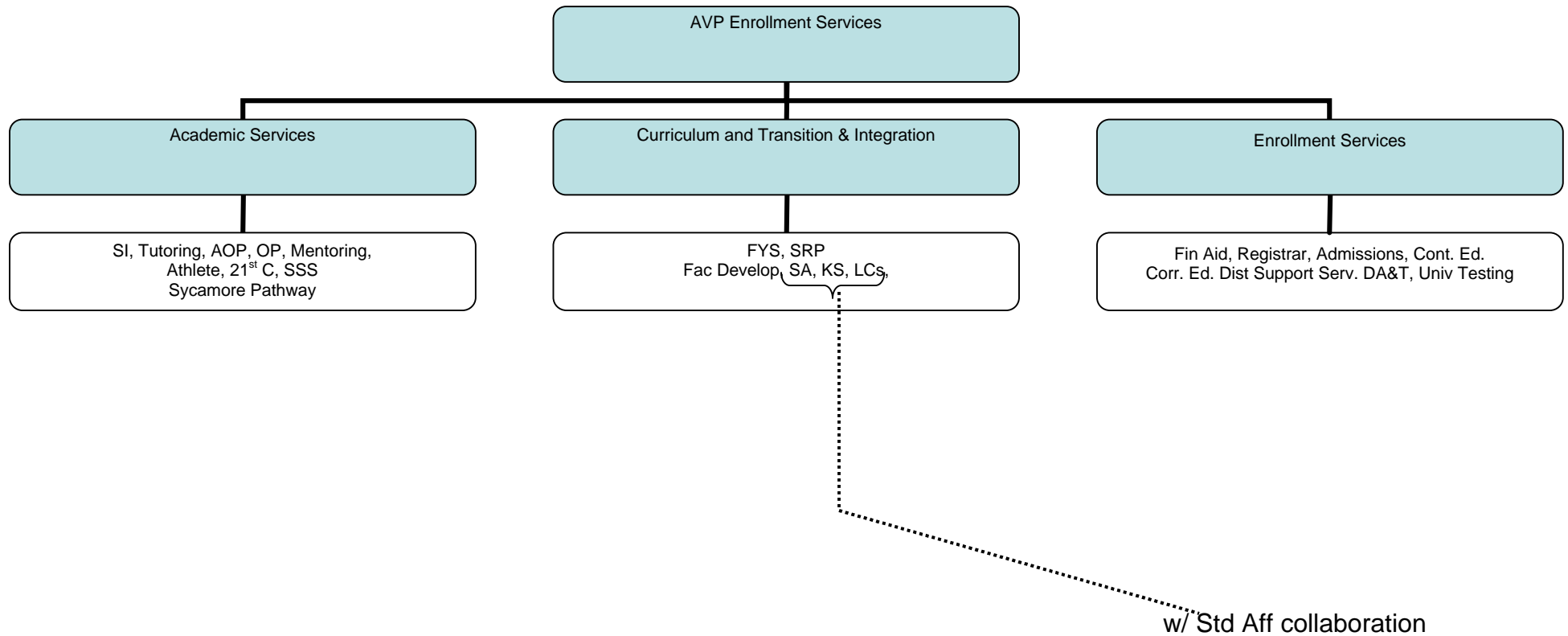
Stage 3

In the third stage, the division of Curriculum, Transition, Integration (and Academic Advising) would produce, in concert with an OSPIRE assigned assessment specialist or specialists, a unit-wide assessment plan. The Office of General Education will also be located within this division.

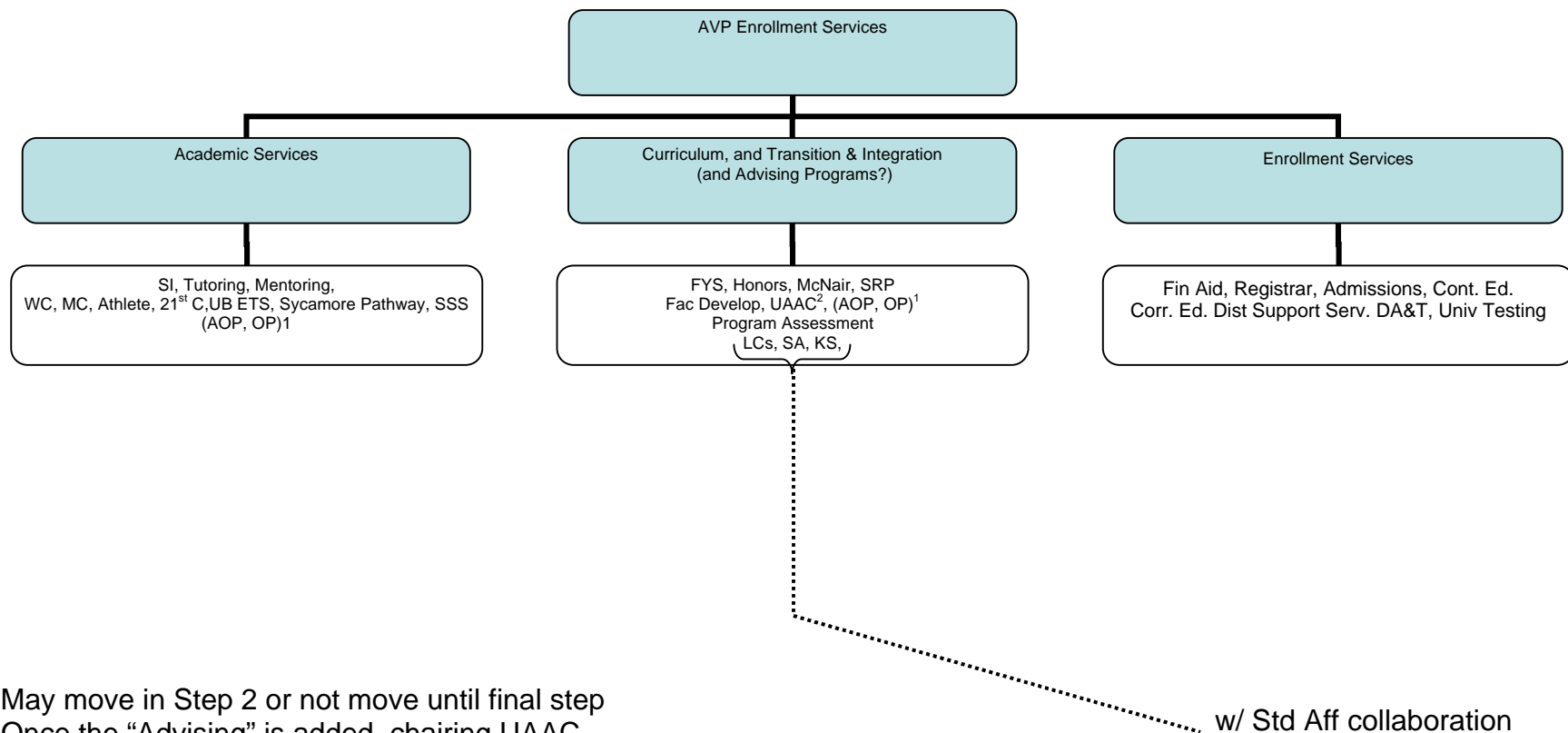
Vision

In the final stage, all of the elements of the envisioned University College would be put in place. A Dean would be appointed as well as the heads of the particular divisions (with titles appropriate to their academic rank and areas of responsibility.) The Enrollment Services areas would be formally separated and the Dean would report directly to the Provost. The new advising model would be adopted, and an appropriate division of the time and responsibility for each of the areas would be developed. Faculty and staff assigned to advise students within the advising division would be assigned to the University College on a full or joint-appointment basis, as appropriately negotiated between the Provost, the University College Dean and the Deans of the Colleges to which they were presently assigned.

1st Step Fall 06

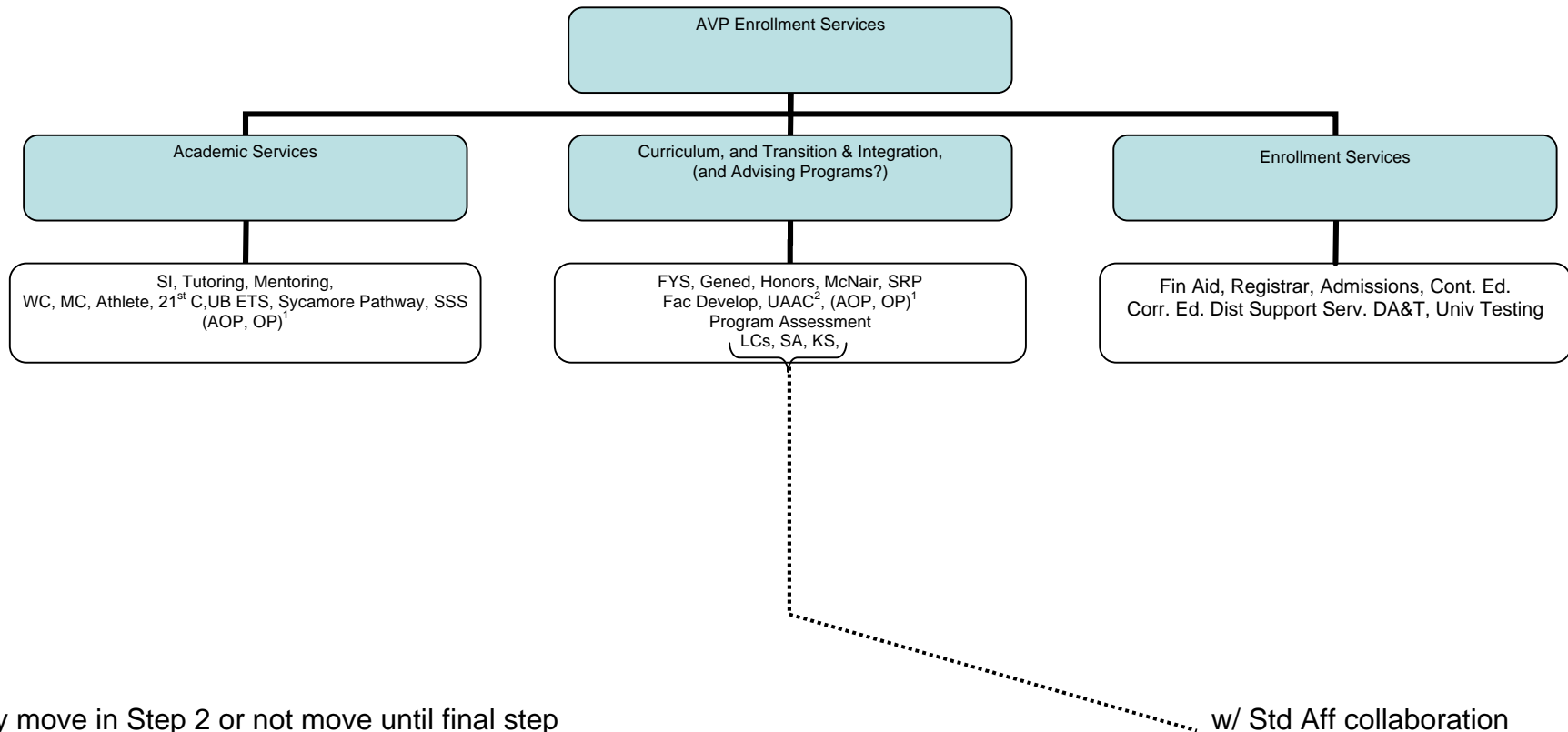


2nd Step Fall 07



- 1: May move in Step 2 or not move until final step
2: Once the “Advising” is added, chairing UAAC makes sense.

3rd Step Fall 08



- 1: May move in Step 2 or not move until final step
 2: Once the “Advising” is added, chairing UAAC makes sense.

VII. Other Recommendations

Overview

Although the most obvious recommendations of this report are directly related to the creation of the University College and the adoption of a new academic advising model, there are many recommendations that result from the Foundations of Excellence analysis. We have divided these recommendations section into six areas: Curriculum, Communication, Diversity, Health, Assessment, and Faculty Development and Awards. We also have included areas that merit further study. Each area gathers together similar recommendations, but these in no way stand alone outside of the recommendations for Academic Affairs.

Curriculum

We recommend that the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences seek appropriate revisions to prerequisite designations based on the evidence that COMPASS is not effective.

We recommend that the General Education Council create a taskforce in 2006-2007 to review the current program in terms of its coherence as a program.

We recommend the consideration of the development of a Latino Studies Program to coincide with the new emphasis on recruiting Latino students.

Communication

Mission

We believe that the mission statement is unnecessarily vague, expressing very little about the distinctive character of an ISU education. We recommend to the President that the mission statement be reviewed.

Review

In order to create an environment where everyone on campus understands and embraces the *University Mission Statement*, *ISU Statement of Philosophy for the First Year* and the *Goals and Learning Outcomes for First Year Students*, we recommend that the President conduct an aggressive review of communication across campus as it relates to the beginning of the semester. The goal of this review is to create an integrated opening experience for faculty, staff and students.

Distribution

After the communications review is completed, we recommend OSPIRE develop a retention, graduation, and degree progress communication plan so that faculty, staff and the administration can receive important analyzed, contextualized, and digested information regarding this work in a timely fashion.

The *Statement of Philosophy for the First Year* should be distributed to each department so that it may be used as a model for the generation of department-specific statements.

To further enhance the communication of the *ISU Statement of Philosophy for the First Year* and the *Goals and Learning Outcomes for First Year Students*, we recommend that Admissions include these on all printed material for *Sycamore Advantage* and *Knowing Sycamores*. We further recommend that Communications and Marketing include these statements on the ISU website.

To assist new students and their families in their assimilation to campus, we recommend that Student Activities and Organizations create material for *Sycamore Advantage* and other venues and a publication that specifically advertises their activities to first year students.

Enhancement

We recommend that the Vice President of Student Affairs and the Provost jointly create an Event Calendar Task Force with the job of creating a unified campus calendar. This calendar should include: academic, co-curricular, athletic and community events. The calendar would be maintained by a single office, and readily accessible from the ISU main page.

Diversity

In order to improve the experience of diversity on campus, we recommend the University make several improvements on campus in the areas of attitude, personnel, and facilities. Improvements need to be made in all departments on campus which would include the hiring of more highly qualified, diverse staff members as well as proactively providing increased opportunities and incentives for student interactions with persons of diverse backgrounds. While Student Activities and Organizations, Residential Life, and the International Affairs Office produce some of these programs, greater coordination with community cultural groups for both on-campus and off-campus activities and projects could promote greater interaction.

There are currently several documents that promote civility, inclusion and the embracing of diversity on campus that are under-promoted and under-utilized and thus fail to promote diversity. Student Affairs needs to increase the visibility of the *Code of Student Conduct* and the *Sycamore Standard* throughout campus by the development of ceremonial activities celebrating same and by their prominent placement throughout campus and in campus publications. In addition, we recommend that the Board of Trustees, the Support Staff Council, and the Faculty Senate adopt the *Sycamore Standard* as a pledge of ethical behavior for all members of the campus community.

These documents are not the only way to enhance the experience of diversity for our first year students on campus. Through the Vice President of Student Affairs, programmatic efforts can be enhanced to provide opportunities for groups of various cultures and international students to meet, develop a sense of community, plan activities, and facilitate the integration of their

activities into the broader University community, perhaps through the creation of an ALANA⁸⁴ Center.

Health

Consistent with the recommendations of an external review conducted by American College Health Association Consultants,⁸⁵ we recommend that the Vice President for Student Affairs, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, and Director of Admissions jointly investigate the appropriateness and viability of a requirement for proof of health insurance prior to registration.⁸⁶ In making this recommendation, the Task Force focused on student-success consequences emanating from the absence of health insurance. We did not weigh the administrative costs of enforcing such a requirement. In addition, we acknowledge that such a requirement would have a significant financial effect on some students, potentially adversely affecting their recruitment and retention. The student-success consequences of health insurance make us predisposed to favor such a requirement but we acknowledge the complexity of the issue.

The committee gave consideration to the extension of Student Health Center hours of operation. The recently available consultant's report by The American College Health Association⁸⁷ to Indiana State University found that there was no value to be gained from making this change. While the consultants reported that the national trend was to reverse expanded hours initiatives

⁸⁴ ALANA centers typically include African American, Latino, Asian American, and Native American students.

⁸⁵ A copy of the consultant's report is available in the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Health Insurance

"Health insurance for all students is a goal worth achieving ? meeting health care needs that cannot be handled within SHC. Currently, only international students are required to have health insurance under a mandatory hard-waiver program."

"Mandatory health insurance for all ISU students does not seem like a realistic goal at the present time. However, ISU should continue to strive toward this goal to minimize health risks to their student body, to encourage their students to be fiscally responsible adults, and to support the institution's overall risk management plan."

⁸⁶ According to an article in Spectrum entitled, "Student Health Insurance in Massachusetts: A Mandate that Works", March 2003, national research demonstrates that higher education students with insurance coverage are more likely to complete their studies. Many students attend college without health insurance and then while in school become ill and cannot afford medication or treatment. Many have to leave school because of the illness or the financial burden that lack of insurance coverage could cause. Additional information in Spectrum entitled "Mandatory Health Insurance for Students: Addressing Individual and National Goals" cites the University of California Advisory Committee on Student Health which found that "prior to the implementation of a system-wide requirement for insurance, up to 25% of the students who left school before graduation did so because of medical reasons. Lack of insurance or inadequate insurance accounted for a major portion of those drop outs." The University of California Advisory Committee on Student Health had some rather interesting comments in their committee minutes, including that UC-Berkeley, which already required proof of insurance, found it to actually be a recruiting asset rather than encouraging students to go to school elsewhere and that at UC-Santa Cruz, which had a large portion of students with significant financial aid, the student body generally supported their initiative to mandate insurance and that it appeared to have little negative impact on recruitment.

⁸⁷ A copy of the consultant's report is available in the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

"Despite requests made from several areas for extended SHC hours on nights and weekends, the consultants feel it would be cost prohibitive for the SHC, considering the low utilization of services experienced by similar university health centers for these same time periods." p5

that some universities had made in recent years, we continue to be concerned about whether our students have appropriate access to health care services. Acknowledging the ongoing work on this subject by the Director of the Health Center, the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, and the Vice President for Student Affairs, we ask that they continue to meet with ISU's Risk Manager and Director of Public Safety to identify creative means by which health care services, or appropriate transportation to health care services, can be provided at reasonable expense to the university and to the patient.

Assessment

The most effective way to improve programs and events across campus is to make improvements based on the achievement of goals based on the learning outcomes.⁸⁸

Although Student Affairs has been assessing their programs, these instruments mostly address satisfaction and not learning outcomes. Therefore, we recommend that assessment and/or measurements be devised to allow for the evaluation of program quality focusing less on satisfaction and more on learning outcomes.

We recommend that OSPIRE assist Student Affairs in the analysis and interpretation of program assessment.

We recommend that a communications mechanism be created to analyze the results of assessments to improve programs within a unit and to share information between and among units as appropriate.

Faculty and Staff Development and Awards

We recommend to the Provost that newly hired faculty with no prior tenure-track experience be required to participate in a faculty development course during their first semester and that their teaching load be reduced by one course for that term.

We recommend that faculty teaching a significant number of first year students be regularly identified as such and be encouraged to participate with their colleagues in discussions about how they contribute to the first year learning goals and outcomes.

We recommend that the Goals of General Education be explicitly and intentionally reinforced within first year seminars, within the Residential Life First year Initiative and within Learning Communities. We recommend that specific action be taken by the appropriate program leaders to ensure this occurs.

⁸⁸ The recommendations for the creation of a University College and change to academic advising makes specific references to the need for assessment in that proposed college. The following recommendations for assessment therefore involve only those areas outside that area.

We recommend to the Faculty Senate, Provost, and President that they jointly recognize the importance of the Caleb Mills award by working together to revise how the award is granted and rewarded. We specifically recommend that each College be encouraged to create College Teaching awards (where none exist) and that at some point Caleb Mills nominees be named from the group of past College award winners. We also recommend that the award stipends be made part of the awardees' base salary.

To further promote the First Year Experience we recommend the President initiate a campus First Year Advocate Award for the campus community.

Future Study

The following areas were recommended for future study. In each case, they merit consideration only after the University College has been developed and shown to enhance student success. While we cannot and do not recommend these actions be taken in the near or intermediate term, these areas merit consideration as they could potentially continue the process of enhancing student success.

- The adoption of a total intake advising model for all first year students. Students would only be allowed to declare a major after they had earned 32 hours and a minimum GPA of 2.0.
- A requirement that all students take a general or area-specific first year seminar as part of the General Education Basic Studies curriculum.
- The relocation of the General Education Basic Studies courses for First year Composition, Communication and Quantitative Literacy to the University College.

VIII. Resource Requirements and Reallocations

We, the members of the Task Force on the First Year, recognize that the final recommended structure for the University College has monetary, physical, and personnel consequences requiring both a reallocation of existing resources and the creation of new ones. As outlined in Section VI above, “The Path to a Pre-Eminent University College” is not a revolutionary one, but an evolutionary one and resources will have to be adjusted following that timeline. As also noted in Sections V and VI above, to implement a new advising model where many more students meet their professional and faculty advisors within the confines of the University College, joint appointments and monetary resources will have to be employed or redeployed. The remainder of this section begins with a basic description of the currently existing personnel costs, Supplies & Expenses budgets, and space allocations of those units and personnel involved in the University College/Academic Advising recommendations. The section goes on to discuss the implications of these recommendations at the final stage. The section concludes with a resource allocation and reallocation time-line.

Currently Deployed Resources

Under the current structure there are several offices and functions of the University located in disparate parts of campus. In the table below, the existing budgets are listed for each category as well as the titles of the personnel in each office. In some cases, where the Director, Coordinator, etc. is also a faculty member, the personnel costs are those in excess of their faculty salaries.

Current Resources

Program	Compensation	S&E	Space in sq ft	Staff
21st Century Scholars	\$222,684	\$ 46,000	1008	Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator, Student Coordinator, Regional Parent Idr, County Parent Idr, Admin/Clerical
Upward Bound+M/S	\$148,090	\$ 37,195	2942	Assistant Director/Project Coordinator, Academic Coordinator, Secretary, TRIO Director, Tutors (2), Intensive Skills Instructor, Instructors Life Skills Advocate
ETS	\$197,017	\$ 42,490		TRIO Director Project Coordinator/Asst. Director, Educational Specialists (2 @ \$29,878), Secretary, Student Workers (2 @ \$1000), Tutors (5 @ \$2025)
Student Support Services	\$265,516	\$ 8,225	520	Project Director, Counselor Academic Counselor, Writing Specialist, Administrative Assistant Tutors (7)
McNair	\$160,050	\$ 15,567	1164	Project Director Academic Coordinator Secretary. Graduate Mentors (3), Faculty Mentors (14) Student Worker
Writing Center	\$14,000*		1153	
Math Center	\$14,000*		614	
Gen Ed Office	\$25,949		907	Coordinator Secretarial Support
Honors Office	\$25,850		392	Coordinator Secretarial Support
First Year Programs**	\$33,600	\$130,000	232	Coordinator Secretarial Support
Student Academic Services Center**	\$862,114	\$38,960	8169	Director, Coord Tutorial Srv, Coord AOP, 2 Asst Coord AOP, Coord OP, Coord Mentoring, Coord Ath Adv, Asst Coord Ath Adv, Counselor DSS, Dir SSS/DSS, Coord Curr, Acad Counselor, 1 AAIL, 1 AAI, 3 OAIII

Source: Information provided by the Office of Academic Affairs

* The Math Center and the Writing Center are funded separately though they receive a portion of their allotments from First Year Programs.

** Budgets are exclusive of Student Wages.

In terms of academic advising, there are currently 15 professional/staff advisors working, as at least part of their assignment, to advise students in their academic units. In the table below the non-faculty advisors are identified, and the number of students across a variety of academic standings are shown by College. The purpose of this table is to allow for a first estimate of the degree of reassignment that would be required to implement the advising model outlined in Section V.

Current Academic Advising Personnel, Clients and Practices

College/Unit	Professional Staff	Number of Undergraduate Students							Advising Practice
		New Fr HSGPA<3 (Fall 05)	New Fr HSGPA>3 (Fall 05)	2 nd Yr Fr GPA<2.5 (Fall 04 cohort in Fall 05)	2 nd Yr Fr GPA>2.5 (Fall 04 cohort in Fall 05)	So	Jr	Sr	
Arts and Sciences	Holly Hobaugh	194	260	336	217	639	764	822	Faculty advising except for Pre-Med, Pre-Dent, Pre-Vet, Pre-Engineering
Business	Susan Johnson, Jodie Ward	54	105	103	74	294	290	273	Professional advising until students achieve "Junior Standing in Business"
Education	Judy Sheese ¹ , Brian Coldren, ² Ken Coleman ³	39	102	51	89	125	149	211	Professional advising until students achieve TEPI.
Health and Human Performance	None	35	39	56	38	135	174	190	Faculty advising
Nursing	Lynn Foster	26	51	97	21	97	99	117	Professional advising through the first year
Technology	None	64	70	93	52	188	211	301	Faculty advising
SASC - Open Preference	Susan Goings, 2 Interns, Michelle Fowler ⁴ , Venita Stallings ⁵ , Henry Villegas ⁶	405	95	64	59	68	7	0	Professional advising
SASC - Academic Opportunity Program	Jeff Tincher, Cynthia Evans, Mary Kay, Michelle Fowler ⁴ , Venita Stallings, ⁵ Henry Villegas ⁶			108	18	38	5	0	Professional advising

- 1) 20% of her work involves students prior to their acceptance into TEPI.
- 2) 80% of his work involves students prior to their acceptance into TEPI.
- 3) nearly 100% of his work involves students prior to their acceptance into TEPI.
- 4) when the student 21st Century
- 5) when the student SSS
- 6) when the student is an Athlete

Resources Required in the Under the Vision of a University College

Personnel

The University College imagines a structure in which a Dean supervises three divisions: Academic Services, Transition and Academic Advising Programs, and Integration and Curricular Programs. Positions for the leaders of these three divisions would be full time with teaching expectations between that of an Associate Dean (of one course per semester) and a Director, Coordinator, or Department Chair (of three to four courses per year). The teaching assignments would depend on the academic background of the persons named.

Given the uncertain nature of whether the General Education Coordinator and/or Honors Director positions will be enhanced or diminished by the time this plan is implemented, comparing the current state of affairs with the imagined state of affairs is somewhat tenuous. In any event, there is currently a full-time Director of the Student Academic Services Center, and part-time faculty members assigned to coordinate First Year Programs, direct the Honors Program, and coordinate General Education. Depending on how these positions are re-imagined there would be, at minimum, one position, that of the University College Dean, and at maximum two and one half new positions.

We assume that the University College Dean, when appointed, will have administrative responsibilities but hold faculty status as do other dean positions. We anticipate that the titles and requirements for the other positions would be negotiated between the new Dean and the Provost. At the universities referenced in the best practices area there is a combination of Associate Deans with academic rank and Directors and Coordinators without academic rank. An Academic Dean at Indiana State University earns between \$120,000 and \$150,000. Associate Deans, outside the anomalous College of Business, earn between \$90,000 and \$105,000. Adding benefits, the cost of these positions is the most significant monetary cost associated with these recommendations.

In terms of supporting the academic advising function within the University College, there would have to be an appropriate reallocation of time of the professional advisors from the other Colleges to the University College. A preliminary estimate of the time reallocation is given in the table below.

Reallocation of Advisors

College	Advisor(s)	Percentage of Time Reallocated to the University College.	Basis for Estimate* “EC”= Exit Criteria
Arts and Sciences	Holly Hobaugh	50%	33% of new “Pre” students have a HSGPA less than 3.0.; plus any Pre-Med students who have already chosen a science; plus any second year Pre-Med students who do not meet the EC by the end of the first year.
Business	Jodie Ward	100%	31% of new Business Students have a HSGPA less than 3.0.; plus any second year Business students who do not meet the EC by the end of the first year.
Education	Ken Coleman	100%	27% of new Education students have a HSGPA less than 3.0.; plus any second year Education students who do not meet the EC by the end of the first year.
Nursing	Lynn Foster	50%	35% of new Nursing students have a HSGPA less than 3.0.; plus any second year Nursing students who do not meet the EC by the end of the first year.

*Preliminary estimate is based on the percentage of new first year students in the unit who have less than a 3.0 High School GPA times the number of FTE advisors meeting those needs plus some slack for other named needs.

Faculty advising for students in the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Health and Human Performance, and Technology is, and will remain, the norm even for students receiving their advising through the University College. Of the approximately 800 new first year students who have less than a 3.0 HSPGA, 410 are already advised within the Student Academic Services Center and approximately 140 would be advised by reassigned professional advisors. The remaining approximately 250 students would require advising appointments by faculty advisors. Increasing this number by 50% to account for transfer students assigned to the University College and to account for students who must return to the University College for part of their second year yields an estimate of 375 students.

While there are myriad ways to imagine providing these services and not wishing to presume how that would be done, it is still useful to express, in time and money, the cost of providing that service. The full-time professional advisors (who have no other programmatic responsibilities) have an average clientele of between 120 and 160 students per year. Assuming their average compensation plus benefits is \$40,000 then one plausible estimate of the cost of this advising model would be \$120,000.

Using *Sycamore Advantage* compensation to estimate the cost yields a much different estimate. Though we do not pay an explicit per-capita or even daily rate, during a typical *Sycamore Advantage* advising period we pay faculty advisors approximately \$30 per individual advising appointment. Assuming three advising appointments per student over the life of their assignment to the University College yields a monetary estimate of \$33,750.

Physical

Ideally, the University College should be located in one building close to the center of campus and close to the residence halls. Currently, these services are spread out across campus. A centrally located facility will enhance utilization, accessibility, and communication and would certainly be a positive point for marketing the University to new students. It is especially important for new students to have one identifiable area to go for all academic services. The location should be easily accessible to disabled students, be close to parking, and have sufficient area for shared space and for Writing and Math Centers and other tutoring areas. In addition, a single location makes it easier for students to become aware of the range of services available and facilitates the pooling of secretarial and office resources which can provide much more cost effective program management. The offices that comprise the proposed University College, when combined, occupy 17,101 square feet. Providing a shared space for the advisors assigned (partially or fully) to the University College, would require an additional 1000 square feet.

Monetary

Monetarily there would be significant one-time costs associated with remodeling space, moving personnel and their belongings, and purchasing additional equipment to operate effectively. We have made no attempt to estimate these costs. Our preliminary estimate of the increase in annual expenditures for reorganizing and restructuring both services and advising range from \$320,000 at the low end to \$420,000 at the high end. This assumes no concomitant savings can be found in the reorganization.

Potential Areas for Savings

The possible areas of savings could include:

- 1) The reassignment of the tasks of the General Education Coordinator to the University College Curriculum and Integration division head.
- 2) The reassignment of the tasks of the Honors Director to the University College Curriculum and Integration division head.
- 3) The reclassification of the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management position so that it would be a professional, nonacademic position rather than a faculty position.⁸⁹
- 4) The ability to coordinate secretarial duties among fewer staff.

⁸⁹ This is the position as it was prior to 2002. In 2004, the FYP and SASC areas of supervision were taken over by the AVP for EM. Under the Vision, these would be supervised by the University College Dean.

Resources from Step 1 to the Vision

The transition from the status quo to the Vision will take place over the course of three or more years. The transfer and addition of resources will similarly take place over time. In the first step, the only change involves First Year Programs relocating to Gillum Hall. Budgets would remain separate and the only reporting line change would be that the Coordinator of Curriculum in the SASC would report to the Coordinator of First Year Programs.

In the second phase, more substantial changes would occur but no new monetary resources would be required. With the addition of the Writing Center, Math Center, Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, McNair Program, and Honors Programs, space requirements would nearly double. However, on an interim basis, these programs can be moved administratively without waiting for a reallocation of space and can move physically as space becomes available.

The third phase also requires no additional monetary resources. Moving the Office of General Education to the Curriculum, Transition and Integration division would take place at this time. However, this move also need not wait on a physical reallocation of space and could be made administratively at the appropriate time.

As we move into the final phase, when two positions are added, faculty advisor stipends (or adjunct replacement funds) are allocated, and the advising model is adopted, space resources will be required to physically move programs together to facilitate student interaction with multiple programs.

IX. Implementation Plan

We, the members of the Taskforce on the First Year, recognize that the creation of a structure to support coordinated efforts toward improving the first year experience to achieve the goals of the first year as described above and as endorsed by the faculty of Indiana State University, cannot be effectively accomplished by administrative fiat. Rather, for Indiana State University to accomplish the objectives laid out in this report, we will require a change in the institutional culture that will be supported by a structure within the University community that will foster and encourage the necessary improvements.

We further acknowledge that institutional structures require time and cooperative effort while some recommendations can be implemented immediately. We recommend the creation of a four person Implementation Team which will coordinate the implementation efforts across the campus community. We recommend that the Implementation Task Force include one of the faculty members named by the Faculty Senate, one Associate Dean charged with supervising academic advising, the Director of the Student Academic Services Center, and the Coordinator of First Year Programs as their areas of responsibility will be immediately and directly impacted.

The Implementation Advisory Panel will support the work of the Team providing advice and assistance in identifying and marketing proposed changes to the campus community. The Advisory Panel should include:

- Faculty representatives from each College/unit as selected in consultation with the Senate Executive Committee
- The Director of the Center for Instruction, Research and Technology
- The Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management
- General Education Coordinator
- Honors Director
- SGA Director of Freshman Affairs
- The Dean of Students
- The Director of the Student Academic Services Center
- The Coordinator of First Year Programs
- The Director of Residential Life
- A representative from UAAC
- A representative from Communications and Marketing
- A representative from OSPIRE
- A representative from Facilities Management

The Implementation Team, along with relevant members from the broader Advisory Panel, will be responsible for seeking advice and consultation from a supplemental resource group, described below in order to establish the necessary support structures to implement the desired diverse groups that must be involved.

Supplemental Resource Group

- Administrative Bodies/Units/Offices
 - Dean's Council
 - Chair's Council
 - The Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Research and Effectiveness
 - University Testing
 - Enrollment Services
 - Admissions
 - Financial Aid
 - Registration & Records
 - Student Affairs
 - Student Activities and Organizations
 - Residential Life
 - Dean of Students
 - Student Health Center
 - Student Counseling Center
- Faculty Bodies
 - Senate Executive Committee
 - CAAC
 - AAC
 - FAC
 - SAC
 - General Education Council
- Staff
 - Support Staff Council
- Students
 - SGA

We also recommend that the Implementation Team generate an annual report of their progress that includes an “evaluation/assessment” of changes on 1) enrollment, 2) retention, 3) student satisfaction with advising, 4) achievement of first year learning outcomes, 5) progress towards timely graduation, 6) graduation rates, and 7) increased student engagement in campus, etc. Once the vision described herein is fully implemented, we recommend that the Implementation Advisory Committee be replaced with The First Year Advisory Committee that will continue to monitor the success of our first year students and offer advice to the Dean of the University College.

X Conclusion

The Foundations of Excellence process has not only exposed a number of strengths and weakness of ISU's set of student success programs, it has also provided a light by which we can navigate toward providing an excellent experience for our students in their first year and beyond. By engaging in a rigorous self-study based in aspirations, rather than mere comparisons, the Task Force on the First Year has developed a plan that, if properly implemented, offers the University a vision for a successful student experience, a consequence of which will be an academically and financially healthy institution.

Those looking for a bottom line may only see the costs associated with these recommendations. We counsel them to look at the bigger picture. The revenue associated with increasing first year retention to our 2001 high of 72%, is \$2 million annually. If we reach our aspirational goal, first articulated in the goals of the Lilly Project to Transform the First year Experience, of 75%, an additional \$1 million would accrue. With a University College centralizing the academic support services of the University, with an academic advising plan that is constantly assessed for effectiveness, with a math placement system that better recognizes student abilities and needs, with a communication mechanism that encourages students to actively engage in their university and local community, with a commitment of the faculty, staff and administration to promoting excellence in the first year, and with all of the other recommendations mentioned above, we can achieve those aspirations.

We can only achieve those aspirations, however, if we recognize that none of this can be imposed overnight. Thoughtful deliberation on this report, and a careful analysis of its findings, conclusions, and recommendations is now required. The twenty-five member Task Force on the First Year took almost an entire year to engage in this process. It will take bold leadership combined with patient persistence to form the broad consensus for action that will result in success. We believe we have recommended the right plan for Indiana State University.