



First-Time Student: Advising for Engagement, Retention, and Completion

Q1. Briefly describe the project in less than 100 words. Be sure to identify the key organizational areas (departments, programs, divisions, units, etc.) and key organizational processes that this action project will affect, change, and/or improve.

A. This project will build on improvements to WSCC's advising process by providing a more aligned, initial advising experience which integrates both admission advising with program specific guidance at the outset of a student's first term. The project will also implement a new student advising software tool to create an enhanced relationship between the initial admission-advising process in Student Services and the faculty-led advising that students will transition to for the rest of their time at the college. Furthermore, it will facilitate advising by creating a more personalized student advisement plan than is possible with our current "one-size-fits-all" advisement worksheets.

Q2. Describe your institution's reasons for initiating this action project now and how long it should take to complete it. Why are this project and its goals high among your institution's current priorities? Also, explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institutions recent or soon-to-be submitted Systems Portfolio.

A. Student success is central to the mission of WSCC. During the recent AQIP Strategy Forum, the college's team determined that a focus on improving initial advising of all students should yield strong results for improving retention and graduation rates. First-time students, whether full-time or part-time, are often not given a clear path to degree completion; instead their advisement worksheet is presented as a two-year, full-time pathway and does not reflect other options such as part-time study or possible placement in developmental classes.

WSCC plans to use Ellucian's Colleague Student Planning Module to personalize students' pathways and create a more effective bridge between admission advising and faculty-led advising. Early review by a faculty adviser and a subsequent meeting with student within the first month of the semester will enable both full-time and part-time students to determine a realistic understanding of the pathway and time-frame to degree completion.

This project is a further extension of the college's success agenda and the statewide mandate for improved college completion. Research indicates that a strong advising program and regular contact between students and advisees has been linked to student persistence and success; WSCC believes that initiating these links earlier will have a decided impact in the institution's retention and completion rates. This project also builds on earlier work created by the WSCC's Structured Training for Academic Advisers AQIP Action Project, which was recently completed retired.

Q3. List the project goals, milestones, and deliverables along with corresponding metrics, due dates, and other measures for assessing the progress toward each goal. Be sure to include when you anticipate submitting the project for formal reviews.

A. Goal 1: Academic Deans and the Vice President for Academic Affairs will meet to review the Colleague Student Planning Module software in April and May 2016. They will create a plan for demonstrating the capabilities of this software to faculty advisers. Deliverable: Written plan and timeline for informing faculty about the capabilities of the advising software for the fall in-service in August 2016.

Goal 2: Communication and Planning: Department chairs and program directors will begin work on alternate completion pathways and communicate challenges to their deans. August-October 2016. Deliverable: List of implementation challenges and suggested solutions.

Goal 3: Software acquisition and installation. The college will acquire the software, install it, and test it. August-Mid-November 2016. Deliverable: Fully installed and correctly functioning software platform for enhanced advising services.

Goal 4: Software training for advisers prepared by outside consultants in conjunction with college personnel. October-November 2016. Deliverable: Training process developed and ready to deliver.

Goal 5: Training and Coordination: Deans, Student Services advisers and faculty advisers will participate in training seminars to ensure that all advisers are prepared to use the software. Mid-November 2016-January 2017. Deliverable: At least 85% of advisers will complete the training process by January 31, 2017.

Goal 6: New Student Reports: Management Information Systems will construct a system whereby faculty advisers will be alerted by email that a new student has scheduled with a Student Services adviser and has then been assigned to them for continued advising. An additional report will be issued to each adviser again at the start of fall semester 2017 summing together the recent list of advisees. January through June 2017. Deliverable: Accurate list of new advisees for each faculty adviser.

Goal 7: Advising for completion of individualized academic pathway map. Following initial advising by Student Services staff, faculty advisers will meet with new advisees within the first two months of the spring 2017 term to help them create an individualized advisement map based on their developmental education needs, full-time/part-time status, and other unique factors. January-February 2017. Deliverable: At least 85% of new students will meet with faculty advisers and develop an individualized advisement map that they can view online through the new advising software.

Goal 8: First-Term Review: Deans will gather data from faculty advisers and aggregate and share the data with Student Services March & April of 2017. Strengths and weaknesses will be assessed and improvements, if needed, will be implemented for summer 2017. March-June 2017. Deliverable: Written assessment of implementation phase with recommendations for improvements moving forward to summer and fall semesters of 2017.

Q4. Describe how various members of the learning community will participate in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration.

A. This project will need to be initially driven by the interactions between division deans and faculty advisers as alternate routes and time-frames to degree completion are created. At the same time, the Information Technology department will be working to integrate the e-advising system into the college's online portal and data management system. Once the audit sheet pathways are in place, a strong partnership between Student Services and faculty advisers will be needed. Because both areas are strongly invested in student advising, each has a stake in this action project's success.

Q5. Describe how the institution will monitor project progress/success during, and at the completion of this project. Be sure to specifically state the measures that will be evaluated and when.

A. Milestone 1A: Under the oversight of the Chief Information Officer, the Colleague Student Planning Module will be implemented no later than Mid-November 2016.

Milestone 1B: Academic Deans will implement the re-evaluation of front-end advising processes by faculty advisers to be completed no later than October 2016.

Milestone 2: Academic Deans, the Chief Information Officer, and the Vice-President for Enrollment and Student Success will coordinate training and integration of the Student Planning Module software within the advising process no later than January 31, 2017.

Milestone 3: Implementation of software and advising process during advising of new first-time students will occur during January-March 2017. Following initial advising by Student Services staff, faculty advisers will meet with advisees to create an individualized advising plan to map the students' pathway to completion. That advising plan will then be available online for the student or any subsequent adviser.

Milestone 4: Academic Deans and Program Directors will ensure that meetings occur between faculty advisors and first-time students January-March 2017.

Milestone 5: The Executive Cabinet will assess the new advising process and feedback.

April-June 2017.

Milestone 6: The Colleague Student Planning Module software will be fully implemented and used with all new students (and many continuing students) by fall semester 2017. Over the 2017-2018 academic year, all advising will be moved to the Student Planning Module system.

Milestone 7: Summative assessment of the process will be through the analysis of results in the student advising satisfaction section of the SENSE survey, which will be delivered in fall 2018. Additionally, changes in retention rate and completion rates will also be monitored over a period of three years to determine the effect of the changes to advising processes.

Q6. Describe the challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project's goals.

A. Challenge 1: Implementation of the software may present some technical issues. Though the Colleague Student Planning Module is designed for the Ellucian/Datatel information management system (which WSCC currently uses), there are still other obstacles in the implementation phase that may extend the timeline.

Challenge 2: This project encompasses an aggressive deadline in order to enact the new advising during the 2016-17 academic year. Delays in any of the milestones could impact the deadline for the entire project.

Challenge 3: Faculty at WSCC have heavy workloads, and they have multiple demands of their time. Ensuring that they have time to meet with the new student advising workload, as well as maintaining a load of previous student advisees will be a challenge. Assistance from Management Information Systems staff will be necessary to keep faculty advisee lists current so as to avoid any extra work. However, we believe that the implementation of this technology will ultimately reduce faculty and staff workload.

Q7. Provide any additional information that the institution wishes reviewers to understand regarding this Action Project.

A. None at this time.