Undergraduate Advising MIU Report 2011-2012
Wren Singer, Director of Undergraduate Advising
Office of the Provost

The improvement of undergraduate advising is a signature initiative of the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates (MIU). The MIU Advising Work Team co-chaired by Don Woolston and Annette McDaniel issued the final recommendations in April 2011 regarding how the majority of the MIU funds set aside for advising improvements should be allocated. This report summarizes the individual reports of all the units who received funds and FTE.

**Question A: For your specific project goals, what progress have you made? What impact is your project having on the quality of the undergraduate experience?**

**Project Goal #1: Improve Access to Advisors**

Since 2011 the campus has hired 21 new academic advisors and advising leaders as a direct result of the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates. An additional eight positions are either posted or in the process of getting approval. In every case, these advisors have improved student access to advisors and reduced advisor loads. As a result more students are being seen in individual and group advising settings and having email questions answered more quickly. For example:

1. Individual advising appointments in the five CCAS residence hall offices increased 38% this year on top of the increase of 39% last year.
2. The new academic/career advisor in the Language Institute worked with more than 1200 individual students through appointments and workshops since January 2012.
3. The new advisor in the Major’s Office for Biology, Molecular Biology and Biological Aspects of Conservation has taken on a caseload of 621 students and met with 374 students since February. Because of the addition of one FTE in this office all students in these majors now have a named advisor.
4. Because of the new advisor in the Communication Arts Department, the advisors now have time to use the Advisor Notes System for all students.

5. Based on a survey sent to advisees of the transfer advising team in the College of Letters and Science in the Spring 2012 semester, 57% of respondents had successfully scheduled an advising appointment during the first half of the spring semester, up from 32% of respondents at the same time in fall 2011. 18% of respondents had attempted to schedule an advising appointment, but were unable to do so, down from 25% of respondents in fall 2011. 25% of respondents had not attempted to schedule an advising appointment, compared to 41% in fall 2011.

In addition to increasing access for traditional advising appointments, these new advisors have created new and innovative communications, workshops and seminars that allow them to reach many students. For example:

1. New advisors in the Cross-College Advising Exploration Center and the Center for Pre-Health Advising partnered to create a new seminar requested by the Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA)
2. The new academic /career advisor in political science organized eight career panels since January with an average attendance of 40-50 students.
3. New advisors in a variety of programs assisted in the redesign of the school/college level SOAR advising programs
4. The historical humanities advisor offered a career blog, twitter account and job and internship panels as well as weekly emails to students.
5. The new advisors in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences will teach sections of the CALS freshman seminar.

Project Goal #2: Create a system for campus-wide advising leadership and coordination.

Much of the potential of the new system for campus-wide advising leadership and coordination is yet to be realized. The first piece was put into place at the end of January 2012 when Wren Singer (the author of this report) was hired to be the first Director of Undergraduate Advising. The national search process began in August 2011 and brought five highly qualified candidates to campus for two-day interviews. The level of advisor and campus partner involvement in the interviews was exceptionally high, with between 40-70 advisors attending the open campus forum sessions for each candidate. The process of recruiting and selecting the first campus director of undergraduate advising brought the advising community together and created great optimism and energy for the future of advising.

Since hired, Wren has spent the first semester in the position working on the infrastructure of the new central advising group, developing the advising governance and leadership structure and getting around to meet advisors and...
generate a sense of pride in the advising community. Here are some examples of Wren's accomplishments since February.

1. Worked through budget, human resources and information technology solutions for moving the reporting units into the Provost's office.
2. Developed and posted position vacancy listings for the other leadership positions in the Director's office and the Director of the Pre-Law Advising Center.
3. Developed the new Academic Advising and Policy Leaders group, reconfigured the Council on Academic Advising and created an advisory board for campus advisor training.
4. Facilitated the completion of the SOAR Advising Module project.
5. Hosted eight advising forums with staff and students to learn more about advisors and their concerns.
6. Met individually with many advisors and observed advising programs and appointments. Held an advisor celebration breakfast in May to build community and celebrate the great accomplishments in the advising community over the past year.

Project Goal# 3: Improve advising-related technology

Advising-related technology has been substantially improved due to MIU support. The three examples below demonstrate the significant gains made over the past year(s). By October 2012 the Director's office will hire an Assistant Director for Advising Technology and Assessment who will be the designated point person for all these initiatives. A diverse and representative search committee, chaired by Sarah Pfatteicher, Associate Dean in CALS, is assembled and ready to begin reviewing applications after the July 10 closing date.

1. Advisor Notes System

As of June 1, 2012, the Advisor Notes System (ANS) completed its second year of operation at the university. In the two years since the system went "live," 437 campus faculty and staff in 134 units across thirteen campus divisions have adopted it for use. To date more than 77,000 advising contacts have been entered into the system for over 32,000 unique students. Forty one-on-one, small group, and large group orientation sessions for ANS training and authorization were held over the past year by four volunteer trainers.

2. SOAR Advising Module

One direct extension of the ANS project funded by the MIU Round 3 award is the SOAR Advising Module (SAM) which deployed on June 1, 2012. Following an extensive process to determine the business requirements for SAM, DoIT developers worked in conjunction with the ANS Protocols Committee, SOAR Advising Committee, the AARB, Director of Undergraduate Advising, and Registrar's Office
staff and developers to create and deploy the system. SAM provides SOAR advisors with key information about their advisees at SOAR, enables them to manage and complete advisor assignment and program/plan changes, and helps them document the outcome of the SOAR advising contact through a record pushed from SAM to the Advisor Notes System. SAM represents the most significant “enhancement” of the ANS system to date from the MIU Round 3 funding. The architecture/infrastructure of SAM was designed and built in such a way as to provide the ability of the ANS, SAM, existing campus systems (e.g. ISIS and the SOAR Registration System), and future systems to be seamlessly integrated and, ultimately, to be presented in an integrated, all-in-one user interface designed to meet the needs of advisors on campus and to help them best serve students.

3. Advising Architecture Review Board

The ANS project helped lay the foundation for new initiatives that are also increasing collaboration and communication across campus. Perhaps the best example of this is the Advising Architecture Review Board (AARB) which in June of 2011 arose out of the successful collaboration of the advising community, Registrar’s Office, and DoIT Academic Technology in creating the ANS. The AARB was created to provide a more holistic approach for aligning and delivering the increasing array of technology resources and systems related to undergraduate advising at the university. The ANS project, in particular, brought to the advising technology community’s attention the need for better communication, increased trust and collaboration, and improved coordination of efforts among DoIT Academic Technology, DoIT Enterprise Architects, the Registrars Office, and the advising community in order to improve services, tools, and service delivery to undergraduate advisors. The AARB now exists as a formal structure to do just that and is making great strides in accomplishing its mission. The new Assistant Director for Advising Technology and Assessment will shepherd the continued development of this committee.

Project Goal #4: Improve advisor training and assessment

With the hiring of the Assistant Director for Training and Assessment this project goal will finally begin to be realized. The PVL for the Assistant Director is posted and will close on July 11, 2012. An excellent and representative search committee is assembled, chaired by Ruth Joyce, Director of Advising in the Wisconsin School of Business, and has been charged. Hopefully the position will be filled by October 2012.

In the meantime a small group of campus advisors worked to deploy two campus-level advisor trainings for the many new MIU advisors hired this year. The first training was a general overview of advising at UW-Madison lead by Wren Singer, Director of Undergraduate Advising and Becky Ryan from Cross-College Advising
Service. The second was training on advisor technologies and tools lead and coordinated by the Office of the Registrar. In addition, Wren Singer participated in and co-hosted the annual SOAR advisor training in May. These three training opportunities for advisors are just the beginning of what is expected to be an annual training and professional development calendar geared at advisors of all levels of experience and skill. A campus advisor training advisory board has been appointed to support the work of the new Assistant Director and will begin meeting this summer to work on the fall training and professional development schedule.

**Question B: If you made new hires how have you increased the diversity of your unit/department faculty and staff? Describe efforts to increase the diversity of your recruiting pool.**

Each advising position hired through the MIU project used its own recruiting, interviewing and hiring plan. The individual reports detail these plans. In summary, the positions were widely posted, the search committees composed of a diversity of faculty, staff and students and the pools wide and deep. The positions have been filled by a mix of men and women and by individuals from a variety of racial, ethnic and experiential backgrounds.

**Question C: How have you considered the achievement gap among students based on demographic characteristic as relevant to your project? What elements of your project are directed to reducing the achievement gap? What impact are you making?**

Academic Advising by nature is a strategy to reduce the achievement gap, so there is inherent focus on this principle in every part of this project. The hiring of more academic advisors, thereby reducing advisor loads and increasing accessibility is the number one thing the MIU advising project has done which will help reduce the achievement gap. In addition to easier accessibility to advisors, lower case loads provide advisors with more time for appointments and more opportunity to provide individualized, high-touch advising. In the future, better advisor training and professional development will allow advisors to learn more about working with a variety of students with different backgrounds, experiences and needs. Beyond the reduction of advisor loads and the addition of training, here are a few specific examples cited in the department reports.

1. The Center for Pre-Health Advising (CPHA) is committed to serving students underrepresented in health professions. This past year the CPHA partnered with student organizations and campus offices that specifically support under represented students to provide targeted advising and programming.
2. The new advisor in the Chican@ & Latin@ Studies program has created a lunch workshop series for students in the department to introduce students
to new resources and new mentors. The lunches are designed to create a sense of community.

3. The new advisors in the College of Engineering (CoE) have built stronger collaborations with the CoE Diversity Affairs Office. The staffs meet weekly and share expertise and discuss student cases. They report feeling like a unified office serving all engineering students.

4. The Advisor Notes System permits easy sharing of information between faculty and staff who work with under-represented students on campus. Staff from programs that specifically support these students can read notes from and write notes to be read by other advisors and deans. Similarly, all of the student/academic affairs units in all of the undergraduate schools and colleges actively use the ANS. Shared advising notes permit staff to reinforce common messages, help identify and resolve discrepancies in advising, highlight potential problems early, and track referrals and student follow through. While important for all students, these capacities can be critical to the success of under-represented students.

**Question D: Unintended or unanticipated benefits**

The focus on academic advising as a result of the MIU projects has had a number of benefits that go beyond what was anticipated. The most frequently cited benefits in the department reports were improved morale among advisors, increased collaboration between departments and functions, and increased ability for advisors to impact student learning through creation and promotion of high impact practices. For example:

1. The Economics department reports that hiring a second advisor has helped reduce stress among the existing advising staff. The Institute for Biology Education declares that the largest unintended benefit is improved staff morale related to lower advising loads.

2. The new Transfer Transition Advisor has had conversations with many advising units in the process of creating the pre-transfer advising model. These conversations developed and strengthened relationships between a network of advisors on campus who now refer students to the Transfer Transition Program and reach out or consultation.

3. The Cross-College Advising Service is collaborating with other school/college advising units to bring advisors into the College Library for evening advising. More units then expected participated in after hours advising.

4. A number of departments, including the Language Institute, the Institute for Biology Education, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, the Exploration Center and others reported that the increased staffing has allowed them to develop more programming and communications, such as workshops, course sections, and websites that reach out to larger numbers of students and introduce them to courses and opportunities that otherwise might have gone unnoticed.
5. A number of departments reported increased integration between academic and career advising.

In summary, UW-Madison is incredibly fortunate to have funds from the MIU initiative to support academic advising for undergraduate students. While many peer institutions are cutting their advising resources, we had the opportunity to strategically deploy resources to assist our undergraduate students. The last year has been excellent for the academic advising community on campus- raising its stature and empowering its members. The years to come will be excellent for undergraduate students, who will have the benefit of working with knowledgeable and personable academic advisors who can help them make the most of their Wisconsin Experience.