Undergraduate Advising MIU Report 2012-2013
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The improvement of undergraduate advising is a centerpiece 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 invested. This report provides an update on the significant impact of MIU funds for undergraduate advising and summarizes the individual reports of all the units that received funds and positions.

**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**

UW-Madison hired 34 new academic advisors and advising leaders as a direct result of the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates. All MIU positions are currently filled. In every case these hires 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 are also having email questions answered more quickly. Highlights include:

1. The Center for Pre-Law Advising opened in August 2012 as a direct result of MIU funding. Jamie Ibrahim was hired as the first director. The Center has conducted 450 appointments with individual students considering or actively applying to Law School, held workshops, panels and participated in SOAR.
2. The Transfer Transition Program advisor conducted more than 325 advising appointments and responded to more than 1200 email inquiries. These contacts provide access to pre-transfer advising that did not exist before the MIU funded position.
3. The College of Engineering reduced advising loads for pre-engineering advisors from 600:1 to 310:1 as a result of the MIU hires. They can now offer drop-in advising every day of the week and participate in after-hours advising. In addition, nearly 450 non-
engineering students were advised about possible transfer into the College of Engineering.

4. The Center for Pre-Health Advising (funded entirely by MIU) advised 2106 students in appointments and drop-in advising meetings this year.

5. The Exploration Center for Majors and Careers was able to realize a 35% increase in student appointments since hiring the two MIU advisors.

6. CALS transitional advisors made over 1600 contacts with students focusing on major exploration, transferring into CALS, and course selection.

7. The Biology Major, the largest major on campus, was able to increase individual appointment times from 20 to 30 minutes as a result of the new MIU hire.

8. The Cross-College Advising Service (for undecided and exploring students) has shifted its emphasis from drop-in advising hours to scheduled individual appointments which resulted in a 24% increase in the number of students seen in appointments. In total, CCAS appointment and walk-in contacts have increased 86% over pre-MIU levels.

In addition to increasing access for traditional advising appointments, MIU advisors have created new and innovative communications, workshops, partnerships, and assessments that allow them to reach more students in effective and efficient formats. For example:

1. The integrated career and academic focus of many of the Letters and Science MIU hires helped bring coherence to career advising in Letters and Science. The creation of the L&S Career Alliance is helping those advisors, and other advisors, build community and career-advising competence.

2. Many offices (e.g. Biology, Pre-Health, Communication Arts, CALS) reported the additional advising staff allowed them time to build proactive relationships with programs that support under-represented students such as POSSE, PEOPLE, and Chancellor’s Scholars. For example, the Communication Arts Department provided on-site advising for Center for Educational Opportunity (CeO) students and reserved seats for those students in fundamental courses.

3. The MIU hires bring life and energy to communication efforts and technology in many of the units. College of Engineering advisors worked with a computer science course to develop an EGR App for current students with the intention of quick access to advising resources. The Historical Humanities advisor uses Twitter, blogging, LinkedIn, Pinterest and email to communicate weekly with over 900 historical humanities students. The International Directions Advisor has a Twitter following, Facebook fans, and publishes mini biographies of students and alumni reflecting on their language skills and international experiences.

4. The Transfer Transition advisor launched a transfer peer mentor program in Fall 2012. Seven former transfer students were hired and trained to connect with new transfer students through email, social media, individual meetings and events. These ambassadors helped create new and innovative programming specifically for transfer students.

5. Advising assessment is expanding as a result of the MIU hires. The Center for Pre-Health Advising, Psychology Department, Cross-College Advising Service, Department of
Theater and Drama, and others are conducting basic assessment of advising services and seeing encouraging results. The Office of Undergraduate Advising is poised to begin a campus-level assessment plan which will incorporate (and encourage) rigorous unit level assessments.

Project Goal #2: Create a System for Campus-wide Advising Leadership and Coordination

The Office of Undergraduate Advising (OUA) made its official debut in November 2012 following the hiring of two assistant directors: Annette McDaniel for Training and Communication and Jeffrey Shokler for Technology and Assessment. Jeff and Annette were hired after a national search which produced an exceptional pool of candidates and engaged the campus advising community in weeks of public forums and interviews. Kory Deavers was hired as the Budget and Human Resource Manager for the Office of Undergraduate Advising to round out the team. One of the first steps taken by the new office was to establish a clear mission statement: The Mission of the Office of Undergraduate Advising is to cultivate an environment in which all UW-Madison advisors can best facilitate undergraduate education.

The year’s accomplishments validate the 2011 MIU Advising Working Group’s recommendation to create a central coordinating body for undergraduate advising. With resources devoted to campus-level leadership of advising the following advancements have been made:

1. The Guiding Principles for Academic Advising, created by the Council of Academic Advising in 2009, were reintroduced as the central advising philosophy for the campus. All new and continuing advisors were provided a copy. Peer advisors were also introduced to the principles.
2. Four advisory committees were formed to provide input and guidance to the Office of Undergraduate Advising. The Academic Advising and Policy Leaders (AAPL) committee consists of the assistant/associate dean or director of each school/college advising unit. The Council on Academic Advising (CAA) has representatives from all types of campus advising. The Advisory Board for Advisor Training (ABfAT) provides advice and implementation support for advisor training efforts and the Advising Architecture Review Board (AARB) provides advice regarding advising technology and information/data access. The four groups met regularly throughout the year and provided input to all of OUA’s initiatives. At the end of the academic year the OUA staff surveyed the committee members about their experience. One hundred percent of the 46 committee members who responded felt the meetings were a good use of their time!
3. Wren Singer, Director of Undergraduate Advising, met personally with every new advisor who started during the academic year (approximately 33 meetings). These 30-minute meetings were designed to convey expectations about the advising role at UW-Madison and welcome the advisor to the community. In addition, Wren conducted a personal 60-90 minute interview with each advising office director (approximately 15). These meetings helped Wren to get a sense of the myriad types of advising which occur
on campus and where efficiencies and improvements could be made. These meetings also helped to strengthen partnerships between the decentralized advising units and the central Office of Undergraduate Advising.

4. The groundwork was laid for a new advisor resource website set to launch in October 2013. The OUA staff conducted brainstorming sessions, synthesized and prioritized ideas, and partnered with DoIT to begin building the site. A central feature of the new site, an advisor and advising unit directory, will help advisors provide accurate and timely referrals to students.

5. The OUA staff served as facilitators and consultants to a number of campus partners facing advising related challenges. Wren Singer worked extensively with the Institute for Biology Education and the Biology Major. Additional examples included the College of Letters and Science Academic Advising Services and the International Institute.

6. Listening sessions, interviews and committees helped identify priorities for improving the advising system and the experience for undergraduates. These priorities include (1) future simplification and integration of course enrollment tools, (2) an overhaul and modernization of the Undergraduate Catalog, and (3) the creation of a one-stop user interface/dashboard for advising. Over the next year OUA staff and partners will put considerable effort into these projects.

At the spring advising community celebration OUA asked advisors to fill out a short survey evaluating the progress of the Office of Undergraduate Advising. The comments were overwhelmingly positive, particularly about the creation of community among advisors. Here are a few examples:

“ I am very excited about the Office of Undergraduate Advising. The leadership is pro-active, innovative, encouraging and supporting and has planned several events throughout the year for campus advisors”

“ Having been an advisor eight years ago and now one again the fact that your office exists is the sign of a sea change on campus”

“Very nice having a central go-to for a really decentralized campus”

“The change between when I was hired in December 2011 and now is amazing. My new colleague is actually being trained as an advisor!”

“I love that your office exists! How awesome that you provide leadership and professional development for advisors! I’ve advised at other schools and never had support”

“I have really loved seeing the advising community come together more often and connect, share and engage!”
In the coming year the Office of Undergraduate Advising will complete an overall 3-5 year strategic plan complemented by action plans for training, technology, assessment and communications. The listening and information gathering of the past 1.5 years will be put into more significant action in the coming years.

**Project Goal# 3: Improve Advising-related Technology**

Advising-related technology has been substantially improved due to MIU support. The two examples below demonstrate the significant gains made over the past year(s). In October 2012, Jeffrey Shokler was hired as Assistant Director for Advising Technology and Assessment and is the designated point person for these initiatives.

1. Advisor Notes System

As of June 1, 2013, the Advisor Notes System (ANS) completed its third year of operation. In the three years since the system went live more than 500 campus faculty and staff in 148 units across 17 campus divisions have adopted it for use. To date more than 160,000 advising contacts have been entered into the system for over 60,000 unique students. Twenty-five one-on-one, small group, and large group orientation sessions for ANS training and authorization were held over the past year by three ANS trainers. During this year the final MIU funded improvements/enhancements were made to the ANS system including deployment of the unit specific contact reasons and displaying the student photo ID image along with the ANS record.

2. Student Orientation Advising and Registration (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. 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 directly to the Advisor Notes System. SAM represents the most significant enhancement of the ANS system to date from the MIU Round 3 funding. Final MIU funded enhancements to SAM were completed this year including the student academic interest functionality and new and improved warning and error messages designed to improve data entry accuracy.

The on-going strategic goal for advising technology is to develop an all-in-one user interface that will allow advisors to quickly and seamlessly navigate the tools and to obtain the information/data they need to do their jobs. The ANS and SAM developments are first steps along that path.

**Project Goal #4: Improve Advisor Training and Assessment**
In November 2012 Annette McDaniel was hired as the campus Assistant Director for Advisor Training and Communications. Annette is the point-person for the advisor training and professional development efforts. The following are some highlights:

1. Between September 2012-May 2012 the Office of Undergraduate Advising hosted 20 advisor training or professional development events.
2. A total of 238 unique individuals and 731 total individuals attended these events.
3. In February 2013 the Office of Undergraduate Advising hosted the first campus-wide advising conference. The 200 advisors who attended participated in a full day of workshops and networking.
4. The Office of Undergraduate Advising created and presented the first campus-wide advising awards to recognize outstanding achievement by faculty advisors, peer advisors, new advisors, and experienced advisors. Winners were awarded funds toward professional development at the regional or national level.
5. The Advisory Board for Advisory Training (ABfAT) met monthly throughout the year to plan and implement training and professional development events and the advising conference.
6. Four advisors were awarded grants to attend the nationally renowned Career Development Facilitator training program held at UW-Madison. Upon completion of the program the grant winners will be expected to pay-it-forward by providing career development training for the campus advising community.
7. The College of Letters and Science conducted an extensive training program for new MIU hires lead by Assistant Dean Rebekah Pare. This was the first time in L&S history that departmental advisors were brought together for intentional advisor training. Elements of this program will be connected to the campus-wide training program beginning in Fall 2013.
8. A full schedule of on-boarding events for new advisors and continued professional development for all advisors is queued up for Fall 2013. These events will exceed efforts to date in their focus and intentionality.

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 were composed of a diversity of faculty, staff, and students and the pools were both 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 primary reason the MIU advising investment will help reduce the achievement gap. In addition to improved accessibility to advisors, lower case loads provide advisors with additional time for appointments and more opportunities to provide individualized, high-touch advising. Continued focus on advisor training and professional development will allow advisors to learn more about working with students with different backgrounds, experiences and needs. Beyond the reduction of advisor loads and the addition of targeted professional development for all advisors, here are a few specific examples cited in the department reports.

1. The MIU advisor in the Chican@ & Latin@ Studies program has continued the very successful CLS Community Gatherings - a lunch workshop series for students in the department to introduce students to new resources and new mentors. The lunches are helping to create a sense of community.
2. The Advisor Notes System permits easy sharing of information between faculty and staff who work with under-represented students. 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.
3. The increase in intentional collaboration between academic program advising and under-represented student programs was noted in almost every individual report. This community and trust building across different advising roles will provide a stronger and more consistent support network for under-represented students.

**Question D: Unintended or unanticipated benefits**

The academic advising focus of the MIU investment has benefits that go beyond what was anticipated. For example:

1. The MIU advisor in Anthropology/Geography is working with faculty in the departments to better prepare them for advising.
2. The faculty working in the Historical Humanities pod report the increased collaboration around advising has sparked new collaboration around curricular matters.
3. The advisor in the English department was asked to make recommendations to the department about how student drops and poor performance can be addressed across the curriculum.
4. The Political Science advisor is chairing a campus-wide working group regarding internships.
5. The advisors in the Center for Pre-Health Advising worked with a group of campus partners to address a significant bottleneck for student enrollment in Anatomy 328. As a result the department now expects to be able to enroll all students trying to add the class for Fall 2013.

6. Although not quantitatively studied, significant anecdotal evidence indicates that advisor morale and job satisfaction have increased significantly, along with a strong sense of advising community. An increase in morale and job satisfaction, in addition to stronger sense of community, is critically important for a strong campus advising system. Advisors who feel supported and valued should work more positively with students in individual meetings and advisors who are effectively networked in a community should provide students more effective referrals and circles of support.

In summary, UW-Madison is incredibly fortunate to have funds from the MIU initiative invested in 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 through a stronger advising system. Without funding from the MIU none of the many accomplishments detailed in this report, and the many other examples not included here, would have happened. The impact on students, while not yet quantitatively measured at the campus level, is best shared in the voices of students themselves.

“ I have had at least four meetings at the Exploration Center and feel much less stressed about internships/choosing a major. I’ve discovered some of my key interests and have a very positive feeling about my future at UW-Madison”

“I want to very much thank you for all of your help throughout the application and LSAT procedures. You did not have to care as much as you did in editing papers, resumes, etc. However, I am very much glad that you did. Your positive attitude throughout it also made the process enjoyable. I just wanted to let you know that I was accepted into (xxxxxx) University”

“I am very undecided about my major right now so (my advisor) has been very helpful at getting me involved in things like job shadowing and other classes and activities to help me find what I love”

“(my advisor) was great and was able to help me ensure graduation in 4 years”

“Hey (advisor), first of all I just wanted to say thank you for helping me get my internship at (xxxx) over the summer. You helped me with my resume and cover letter back in August/September and it really helped a lot and eventually led to me getting my internship! I’m sure I will be making an appointment with you sometime this semester to talk about my post-graduation plans”
“(advisor), I got the position! Thank you so much for all of your help with my cover letter and resume. I could not have done it without you. I’m looking forward to putting my Liberal Arts major to good use!”

“I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate all of your help these past couple of weeks. You are a great advisor and have given me a lot of hope about my current situation. Your suggestions are spot-on, and you don’t allow people to let their fear get in the way of important opportunities. Thank you for choosing this as your career...”

The past two years have been excellent for the academic advising community at UW-Madison-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.