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Student Success Plan: Final Report
Florida Polytechnic University
February 2023

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I.   Executive Summary

This Student Success Plan is focused on advancement in areas guided by Performance-Based Funding (PBF) metrics where the University has underperformed. Florida Polytechnic University has developed six strategies that will strengthen the execution of our mission and advance performance on seven key performance metrics. Positioning Florida Poly to sustainably receive a score of at least 70 or more excellence points within the PBF system is central to this plan. The University has aggressively pursued the tasks defined in the original plan and has completed the plan. [1]

This final report provides an abbreviated motivation for the Student Success Plan followed by abbreviated task descriptions from the plan that was approved by the Board of Governors at their September 2022 meeting. Each task is followed by a status statement on the task. These descriptions are clearly marked as text within boxes below each task description.

II.   University Mission and Background for Performance-Based Funding

The table below shows results from our two years in the PBF system (2021 and 2022) for the metrics addressed in this plan. The precipitous drop in score from 2021 to 2022 is driven by performance in the first year where improvement points provided 33 of the 83 points received. For year 2022, our performance was similar to the prior year (or, in the case of Academic Progression Rate [APR], impacted by COVID) thus shifting the campus to "excellence points" which were not sufficient to achieve a score above 70. **This plan positions Florida Poly for sustained achievement, based on excellence points, to be above 70 points; Florida Poly will use this Student Success Plan to drive excellence scores upward in critical metrics, in support of the University mission.**

Academic Progression Rate (APR, for the First Time In College [FTIC]) cohort and for

PERFORMANCE-BASED FUNDING METRIC		POINTS	2021 Score	SCORE	2022 Score	SCORE	Variance from 2021 to 2022
			Scores based on Excellence or Improvement				
1	% of B.S. Grads Employed ($30K) or Cont. their Ed.	EXCELLENCE	74.1%	10	69.6%	9 (norm)	-1
		IMPROVEMENT		10		0	
4	Four-Year Graduation Rate *Full-Time FTIC Only*	EXCELLENCE	34.3%	0	38.2%	1	
		IMPROVEMENT		0		7	7
5	Academic Progress Rate (APR)	EXCELLENCE	76.6%	0	64.2%	0	
		IMPROVEMENT		10		0	-10
7	University Access Rate *Percent of UG w/ Pell*	EXCELLENCE	33.8%	7	33.1%	7	-1
		IMPROVEMENT		8		0	
8.A.	Percent of Freshmen in Top 10% of H. S. Class	EXCELLENCE	32.0%	2	33.0%	3	-7
		IMPROVEMENT		10		2	
9.A.	2-Year Graduation Rate AA Transfer	EXCELLENCE	4.2%	0	4.0%	0	0
		IMPROVEMENT		0		0	
9.B.1	2nd Year Retention for FTIC with a Pell-Grant	EXCELLENCE	87.8%	3	66.0%	0	
		IMPROVEMENT		5		0	-5
	Total			83		66	-17

Table 1. Performance based metrics that are the focus of this student success plan. The total shown at the bottom is the sum for all metrics.

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[1] Sentence amended to indicate completion on March 3, 2023.

Pell students, metrics 5 and 9.B), FTIC four-year graduation rates (metric 4), and three-year graduation rates for Associate of Arts (AA) Transfer students (metric 9.A[2]) are naturally difficult metrics for all our STEM peer institutions. In addition to promoting student success that aligns with the metrics listed above, Florida Poly will strengthen its support of graduate programs where the university has transitioned from metric 8.A (fraction of incoming FTIC students in top 10% of their high school class) to Metric 8 (Fraction of graduate degrees in areas of strategic emphasis).[3] The plan described below focuses on improvement in the metrics listed in Table 1. **Based on the long time scales associated with academic progression and graduation rates, we started student success activity in support of PBF improvement in summer 2021. The Student Success Plan formalizes and extends this important activity.**

III.   The Student Success Plan

This Student Success Plan is designed to achieve a score of 70 or more excellence points by summer 2024 (noting that we expect our score to be above 70 in 2023 with the inclusion of improvement points). The Student Success Plan is based on six strategies that create systemic change on our campus in support of improved student success., The strategies are:

A. **Excellence and Achievement in the Freshman Year (PBF #4, PBF #5, PBF #9.B)**
B. **Student Culture: Supporting the Whole Student (PBF #1, PBF #4, PBF #5)**
C. **Graduate On Time (PBF #4, PBF #9.A)**
D. **Grow and Support the Graduate Program (PBF #8)**
E. **Provide Tailored Support for Pell Students (PBF #7, PBF #9.B)**
F. **Promote Strong Employment Outcomes for Our Students (PBF #1)**

These six strategies are briefly presented below with rationale for each strategy and an overview of critical elements required to execute the plan.

A. **Excellence and Achievement in the Freshman Year (PBF #4, PBF #5, PBF #9.B)**

Student progression and on-time graduation are critical areas where the University struggles; the most important issue is low student retention from the freshman to sophomore year (as measured by APR). An analysis of FTIC students who do not return in their sophomore year shows poor academic performance as the root cause. Rationale for poor performance includes the rigors of an all-STEM curriculum (noting the nationwide failure rate for calculus 1 is over 30% and that other core freshman STEM courses have similar failure rates) and the destructive effect of COVID on both student academic preparation and overall maturity. Our analysis shows that Florida Poly's fall 2020 cohort of FTIC students had an APR of 64%; our projection for fall 2021 FTIC students is significantly better with a 76% APR. This gain in APR is based in part on the Freshman Initiative, which we launched in fall 2021. We expanded this Freshman Initiative into "Excellence and Achievement in the Freshman Year," which is a part of this Student Success Plan with the elements listed below.

i.   *Freshman Council*: The Freshman Council provides organizational consistency for critical freshman courses and produces coordination across the multiple departments that deliver first-year courses. This Council will impact the entire first-year experience and culture with coordination and

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[2] Note that this metric is transitioning from a two-year rate to a three-year rate starting in summer 2023.
[3] Metric 8 is used for ten other universities in the SUS.

collaboration across the STEM core curriculum. The council, acting as the managing department for a key set of courses, is empowered to manage:

- **Policies:** Common grade scale; similar percentages assigned to homework and exams; attendance policies; student-friendly exam schedule.
- **Effective and efficient learning initiatives:** Explicit use of course learning objectives in driving curriculum; focus on process, communication, and critical thinking; focus on the use of out-of-class student time-commitment and learning resources with to learn; emphasis on active learning in highly engaged classrooms.
- **Student support:** Frequent feedback to students through formative assessment; strong academic support network through Peer Learning Strategists (PLS) and a centralized help center.
- **Broad feedback on overall success:** Progress metered via a STEM core GPA and course-completion count.

> **Progress on this task:** _This activity has been accomplished._
> The Freshman council was established at the start of the fall 2022 semester; it has provided the framework to maintain and demand common policies in freshman courses, supports a focus on high quality teaching, has been a critical player in managing the Peer Learning Strategists program, and regularly considers, and advocates for the academic needs of the freshman. The STEM core GPA and completion ratio within a student's freshman year will be used as a predictive tool to measure a student's academic progress and their potential to graduate on time.

ii. **_Creation of the STEM Core_**: The STEM Core curriculum consists of 22 credits: two courses from the Calculus sequence, Physics 1 and Chemistry 1 with labs, an introduction to computer programming course, and an introductory course in STEM applications. FTIC students who matriculate through these courses over the fall, spring, and summer (if needed) of their freshman year are well positioned to confidently enter their selected degree programs as sophomores on track to graduate in four years.

> **Progress on this task:** _This activity has been accomplished._
> The STEM Core has been established, integrated into our advising best practices and used actively in the monitoring of student academic progression. Students are required to complete the STEM core as early in their degree program as is practical. The University has implemented progression policies that are rigorously applied to students and strong interventions are applied when students are not progressing through the STEM Core.

iii. **_Enhancing the Freshman Year with Hands-On, Team-Based Projects:_** To address issues around poor student engagement, we identified key curricular opportunities to reconfigure course experiences and include team-based projects which encourage student engagement. Specifically, hands-on and team-based activities have been added to two key first year courses.

> **Progress on this task:** *This activity has been accomplished.*
> These first-year team-based projects position students to advance through the design and/or project sequences specific to their program of study. We delivered an entry course to ~450 entering students initially in fall 2021 and repeated in fall 2022 (EGN 1006 Career Design for STEM Disciplines). The course includes a team-based, multi-hour project as the culminating activity. We are including a similar (but slightly more complicated) project in EGN 1007 Concepts and Methods for Engineering and Computer Science (approximately 350 students) in spring of 2023. The team-based project in each course provides a faculty-led opportunity to engage with the curriculum as a part of a team.

iv. ***Policy Enhancements:*** We have changed our policy execution to require students to progress toward their declared degree, augmenting the already in place traditional GPA-based probation and suspension controls. This more tightly controlled student progression has resulted in some student suspensions, but it allows us to focus resources on students who are making academic progress.

> **Progress on this task:** *This activity has been accomplished.*
> We continue to use a combination of policies: grade forgiveness policies that provide a pathway for success by helping students recover from first-term course failures; and academic progression policies that require students to repeat courses they have failed or withdrawn from that prove critical to successful academic progression.

v. ***Student Support Services***: As a part of Student Support Services, we have restructured tutoring and academic support on the campus starting in fall 2021. This restructuring was driven by aligning departments and faculty for the key foundational courses with peer tutors/Peer Learning Strategists (PLS) familiar with the subject matter and trained in learning techniques. This activity, coupled with a designated place on campus for PLS, has been well received by students and faculty. In addition, we are rebuilding our advising unit, starting with position creation and hiring of an Associate Vice Provost of Student Success as a direct reporting line to the Provost. Three new dedicated success coaches will also be hired (bringing the total to four). Strongly included in the mission of this success center is the "emotional and information support" that is necessary; students need a place to have their questions answered and a place to go with complicated, non-academic questions.

> **Progress on this task:** *This activity has been accomplished.*
> We have continued with an external consultant to help refine the learning services delivered by student Peer Learning Strategists (PLS). This system continues to support first-year courses and we have expanded the courses that we support in the Tutoring and Learning Center (TLC). The AVPSS has been assigned oversight of the day-to-day operations of the TLC and will provide non-academic training of the PLS. Academic training for the PLS will continue to be provided by subject matter experts from the various academic units. This portion of the task is complete.
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> We committed to hire an Associate Vice Provost of Student Success (AVPSS) and three success coaches. We have hired the AVPSS and the three success coaches. This completes this task.
> ***Progress amended to complete on February 17, 2023.***

vi. ***Freshman Course Assignment and Registration Requirement***: At Florida Poly, we enroll all new students in their first semester of courses to ensure they begin on an appropriate path that will lead to optimal degree progression. As an enhancement to this initiative, starting with the 2021 FTIC cohort, we analyzed prior student admissions data and course performance data to develop schedule-based cohorts for students with varying levels of rigor. Using this data, students were registered for schedules where they are more likely to be successful. For the entering 2022 FTIC cohort, we have refined this practice with a strong focus on mathematics placement with a data-driven, multi-step process to account for our students' varying mathematical backgrounds.

In addition to the care taken in assigning freshman year courses, we have also changed our practice to require all students to see a faculty advisor before they register for courses in the sophomore year (and beyond), and we have additionally put in place registration hold-based intervention mechanisms to require students to take key courses that are necessary for them to maintain academic progress and graduate on time.

> **Progress on this task:** *This activity has been accomplished.*
> As we created student schedules in the fall, we followed the process noted above. In our advising for students, we have proactively noted the importance of completing the STEM core in their freshman year and the utility of the summer to retake STEM core courses. We continue to require students to meet with an advisor in order to register for classes.

B. Student Culture: Supporting the Whole Student (PBF #1, PBF #4, PBF #5)

Florida Poly strives to support the whole student and hone not only their academic talent, but their professional skills with guidance, engagement, and a wide range of opportunities to match the unique individuals in our student body. Leadership is a critical part of the whole student experience, as well as career development. Employers expect students to navigate the workplace seamlessly, knowing when to lead and when and how to contribute. An active and complete program in leadership supports retention, on-time graduation, and positive employment outcomes.

As a part of this Student Success Plan, we will hire a new Director of Career Services, and also a program coordinator who will organize the full suite of leadership activities at the University. These individuals will work with a department chair who has over a decade of experience with leadership programs on another campus.

The ULead program was established in fall of 2021 and has provided training and experience for students through activities sponsored by Students Affairs. Expansion of leadership opportunities includes an Emerging Leaders Program, focused on inviting students "in" to participate in activity outside the required curriculum. The curricular piece of this program reaches out to all students by mapping experiential learning activities with a leadership component throughout the curriculum.

> **Progress on this task:** *This activity has been accomplished.*
> We established the ULEAD program in the 2021-22 and have continued this year to grow the program. In addition, we have started the Emerging Leaders Program with a defined structure and planned events that will launch in the upcoming weeks. In addition, we are working with all degree programs to carefully configure their curriculum to include a course per semester that includes increasingly challenging team-based, open-ended problems as a part of the class.
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> As a part of this task, we were to hire a new Director of Career Services and a program coordinator to support leadership activity. We have hired the Director of Career Services and have hired a leadership coordinator to complete this task.
> **Progress amended to complete on March 1, 2023.**

C. Graduate on Time (PBF #4, PBF #9A)

Providing students with a comprehensive and timely advising experience is essential to ensure they efficiently complete the necessary coursework to graduate on time. To facilitate this integrated, holistic, and individualized advising support, Florida Poly will implement a comprehensive advising system which will become the key advising resource and tool. Facilitating progression in this strategically supported manner will lead to improvements in retention and degree completion for all populations of students, which will directly impact PBF #4 and PBF #9.A, as well as PBF #5 and PBF #9.B.

The improved academic advising system will provide key infrastructure needed to support the significant improvements to student advising that Florida Poly began to implement in fall 2021. The creation of start-to-finish degree plans for FTIC students and AA transfers, during the first term, will provide students with a full pathway to on-schedule degree completion.

> **Progress on this task:** *This activity has been accomplished.*
> This task includes implementation of a comprehensive advising system that provides "start to finish" advising for students and degree progress tracking. The system (product name is Stellic) has been integrated with our Student Information System, is in use by our registrar's office, and has been released for advising use as of March 3, 2023 . In addition, we have created (consistent with the guidance for this task) start-to-finish progress plans for first-year Florida College System (FCS) AA transfer students.
> **Progress amended to complete on March 3, 2023**

D. Grow and Support the Graduate Program (PBF #8)

Metric 8.A (percentage of incoming class that is the top 10% of their high school class) is applied to Florida Poly and one other member of the SUS due to the small size of the graduate program. Florida Poly moving forward will use Metric 8.
To continue to support the graduate program in terms of growth and management, we will hire a graduate program coordinator this year.

> **Progress on this task:** *This activity has been accomplished.*
> This task called for the hiring of a Graduate Coordinator. This person has been hired, and in addition, as we move to growing the graduate program, the reporting for the Graduate Coordinator has been moved to the provost in anticipation of the formation of a formal Graduate Office.

E. Provide Appropriate Support for Pell Students (PBF #7, PBF #9.B)

About one-third of Florida Poly students are Pell eligible, however, up to half have household incomes under $40,000 a year. Roughly 35% of our students are also the first in their families to attend college. Many of these students attended under-resourced high schools with little academic support, no AP courses, low graduation rates, and high student-counselor ratios.

All of the opportunities for the overall student body are available to our Pell students. In addition, low-income and first-generation students will be provided a comprehensive set of academic support services that include, but are not limited to:

- Intrusive academic advisement, as necessary or required
- Identify and provide additional training for a success coach specializing in Pell
- Campus work-study programming with mentors
- Campus programming and financial aid counseling
- Additional funding opportunities for textbooks and academic materials

> **Progress on this task:** _This activity has been accomplished._
> This task asks for increased services for Pell and First-Generation students. We have established a Pell "working group" and begun tailoring key services for these students. In addition, we awarded an average aid package in the fall semester of $6340 to Pell students in support of their ongoing funding needs as they seek degrees. Additional aid in the fall of $600 per student was disbursed to approximately 350 students. Finally, there was significant other aid provided by additional need-based aid and the Florida Assistance Grant.

F. Promote Strong Employment Outcomes for Our Students (PBF #1)

To support strong employment outcomes for our students, a Director of Career and Leadership will be hired. We have elevated this position to include leadership programs based on a philanthropic gift that intends to couple a broad concept of leadership with programs across the University that promote skills and behaviors that make our students more employable. This gift allows us to recruit and pay for a seasoned professional in this unique area. A larger discussion of leadership is provided in section B (Student Culture: Supporting the Whole Student).

> **Progress on this task:** _This activity has been accomplished._
> As noted before, we have hired the Director of Career Services who will work to develop "career growth plans" specific to each major. These career growth plans are grounded in discussions with industry with a focus on providing internship and career opportunities to our students.

IV.   Student Success Plan Status

Florida Polytechnic University has embraced student academic and career success, and with this plan, has moved expeditiously to respond to difficulties with academic progression. This Student Success Plan was formally approved at the start of the Fall semester in 2022 and will improve University PBF performance to meet the required score of 70 based on excellence points by summer 2024. This Student Success Plan describes our strategies and tactics for continuing to build on the foundations we've already established through continuous improvement and incorporating additional key tactics, tools, and methods. ***Florida Polytechnic University is pleased to report that we have accomplished all tasks that were outlined in the six strategies of the student success plan as of March 3, 2023.[4]***

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[4] Sentence amended to indicate completion of all tasks on March 3, 2023.