FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY™

The Year Ahead:
Proposed Improvement Plan for Florida Atlantic University's
Performance Based Funding Model Scores

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In the Board of Governors' Performance Based Funding Model that was released in January 2014, Florida Atlantic University (FAU) scored zero points in the following two metrics common to all universities in the State University System (SUS):

> **Metric 4** - 6-year graduation rate for full- and part-time First-Time-In-College (FTIC) students; and

> **Metric 5** - Academic progress rate, which is measured by the 2nd year retention of students with at least a 2.0 grade point average.

Moving forward under the direction of newly-appointed President John Kelly, Florida Atlantic University intends to place strategic emphasis on improving these metrics, both of which can be classified under the category of "student success."

FAU's current vision is to be a university known for excellent and accessible undergraduate and graduate education, as well as an institution distinguished for the quality of its programs across multiple campuses. This vision can only be attained through a thoughtful and robust plan to promote student success. Accordingly, FAU developed short-term and long-term strategies related to the graduation and retention rates of its baccalaureate students. These actionable strategies will be presented in this document, along with specific, measurable targets associated with each goal.

In 2013, FAU renewed its focus on student success. On November 1, Provost Gary Perry appointed an Assistant Provost for Student Success, who subsequently created a university-wide task force with subcommittees on data & analysis, program-specific plans of study for undergraduates, early warning for students approaching critical milestones, and communications. These groups were to be led by a steering committee that reviewed and audited recommendations for student success. As a result of this initiative, FAU will soon introduce a number of high-impact techniques and national best practices to decrease time-to-completion for students, which will be detailed in the final report of the task force due this semester in summer 2014.

The Goal of Promoting Student Success

The prominent, overarching goal of FAU for the 2014-2015 academic year will be to enrich the educational experience in a manner that will support an organizational culture in which all units are dedicated to student success. This goal emerged as one of particular importance in FAU's 2012-2017 Strategic Plan, entitled *Making Waves: Celebrating and Cultivating Discovery, Diversity, and Distinction*. Specifically, the basis for this plan is located in Goal I, Objective D of this FAU Board of Trustees-approved document.

The Year Ahead – Strategies and Rationale

An increase in FAU's standings in the above-specified SUS metrics would result in achieving this broad goal to promote student success. It should be noted that a short-term increase in retention would likely coincide with long-term increases in graduation rates, and the identified strategies might accomplish dual objectives. Therefore, it would be appropriate for these two SUS metrics of *6-year graduation rate* and *2nd-year retention rate* to serve as a single institutional objective for the coming year.

Per the tables below, specific actionable strategies will be implemented with measurable targets, in order to accomplish this objective of *promoting student success.*

A. Increase the number of academic advisors

Deadline	December 2014	May 2015
Target	Hire 13 new academic advisors	Hire 13 additional academic advisors
Measurement	Number of new academic advisors hired	Number of new additional academic advisors hired
Expectation	13 new academic advisors are hired and strategically placed in FAU's University Advising Services (5) as well as FAU's colleges and departments (8)	13 additional new academic advisors are hired and strategically placed in FAU's University Advising Services (5) as well as FAU's colleges and departments (8)

Rationale: Hiring a total of 26 academic advisors in the next year would enable FAU to achieve 300 students to 1 advisor ratio, which is recommended by the National Academic Advising Association. This ratio represents the minimum number of advisors that is adequate for offering students the personal connection to the institution. Studies indicate that these personal connections are vital to retention and success (Nutt, 2010)

B. Purchase and implement advising software

Deadline	December 2014	May 2015

Target	Select and purchase advising software	Implement new advising software package
Measurement	Advising software purchasing process completed	Advising software implemented and functional for use
Expectation	Starfish advising software is installed on university servers. Training is coordinated	100% of advisors (83) are trained and using new advising system with students

Rationale: FAU currently has no campus-wide advising software in place. Individual units have maintained their own software, and some units have maintained advising notes on paper only. The purchase of new software will enable us to do the following.

1. Create a more seamless advising system. Notes about students in their first two years that are kept by the central advising office will be visible to advisors within the academic units. This will facilitate a global understanding of the students' strengths and areas that require improvement.

2. Monitor participation in tutoring sessions and Supplemental Instruction, which is an integral component of the advising software. Advisors will be able to see the extent to which students have availed themselves of academic support services and better monitor those who have not followed the recommendations of advisors.

3. Identify at-risk students. Faculty will use the system to identify students at risk. The system also links to Blackboard, where many faculty members maintain students' grades. Advisors can use the information to commence an intervention program with the student.

4. Monitor the success of advisors in working with students. Advising units will be asked to meet metrics (meetings with students, meeting with students deemed at risk, etc.) deemed necessary to improve student retention and timely graduation.

C. Launch "Jump Start" pilot for undergraduates admitted in summer

Deadline	**December 2014**	**May 2015**

Target	First cohort will have completed summer portion of pilot and initiated special advising process	First cohort will have received special advising, and FAU will conduct assessment of program
Measurement	Number of students in first cohort who have completed summer portion of pilot and initiated special advising process	Number of students in first cohort who have completed spring semester with at least 2.0 GPA

Assessment of program completed |
| Expectation | 125 Students have completed summer portion of pilot and initiated special advising process | 50% of the 125 students are retained and complete spring semester with at least 2.0 GPA or higher |

Rationale: Currently, 30 percent of FAU freshmen enter the second year with a GPA below 2.0. The Jump Start program, which focuses on first-year students, is modeled closely after FAU's successful Academic and Career Enhancement for Second-Year Students (AcCESS) program, which works with at-risk students in the sophomore year. Over 70 percent of AcCESS students are retained. Jump Start students become part of a summer learning community. Data has also shown that students in learning communities outperform students who do not participate in such communities.

Jump Start targets at-risk freshmen admitted for the summer term. They are enrolled in specific courses and receive intrusive advising and tutoring support. The intrusive advising is continued into the fall and spring semesters, ensuring that these students are on a firm path to success. Students (including those not in the Jump Start program) ending their spring term with a GPA below a 2.0 will be invited to enroll in summer classes to bring up their GPA. These students will also receive the academic support and intrusive advising necessary to ensure their success and continuation at FAU.

D. Develop study plans for undergraduates, also known as "Flight Plans"

Deadline	December 2014	May 2015
Target	Develop draft Flight Plan templates for all baccalaureate degree programs	Develop individualized Flight Plans for all enrolled 2014-2015 FTIC students

Measurement	Percentage of baccalaureate programs with completed Flight Plan templates	Percentage of baccalaureate programs with completed Flight Plans templates
Expectation	65% (64 of 98) of baccalaureate programs have completed Flight Plan templates	100% of baccalaureate programs completed Flight Plans for all enrolled 2014-15 FTIC students

Rationale: Students need step-by-step roadmaps and intrusive guidance to on-time completion. Such tools save students time and money and significantly boost their success. National models for guided pathways to success have resulted in positive outcomes (Complete College America, 2012). Similarly, a recent report on undergraduate trends in enrollment management cites "tracking persistence and progression patterns, term by term, for all students who matriculate" as the most effective internal operations strategy for four-year public universities (Noel-Levitz, 2013). At FAU, these Flight Plans will enable advisors to track student progression through a program, as well as notify advisors and students when they have deviated from their plans.

E. Launch bachelors of general studies degree program

Deadline	December 2014	May 2015
Target	Approval of new degree program by FAU Faculty Senate Committees	Approval of new degree program by FAU Board of Trustees
Measurement	Initiated approval process for new degree program with FAU Faculty Senate Committees	Initiated new degree program approval by FAU Board of Trustees
Expectation	Initiated approval process for new degree program with FAU Faculty Senate	Bachelors of General Studies approved as active degree program by FAU Board of Trustees

Rationale: A general studies degree program would offer persisting students an option to obtain a degree in a variety of concentrations. In the spring 2014 semester, 14% of FAU's student body consisted of registered undergraduates who had already earned 120 credit hours or more. This is an opportunistic degree program that will be crafted almost entirely from existing resources, with only modest resources needed for advising.

These persisting students would be well-served by the creation of a new degree program for those who might have struggled with academic progress within their original field of choice, which could broaden and enhance career opportunities. Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) data shows that, for bachelor's graduates from Florida public universities, general studies resulted in the fifth-highest percentage of full-time employment in the state (SUS, 2013).

F. Launch "Major KnOWLedge" early career exploration module

Deadline	December 2014	May 2015
Target	First cohort will have completed module	Assess early career exploration module
Measurement	Number of students in first cohort who have completed module	Assessment of early career exploration module completed
Expectation	400 students have fully completed module	75% of 400 students have declared a major, remainder referred to SLS 1301

Full assessment of early career exploration module completed |

Rationale: This module will help all incoming undecided students to determine majors and subsequently decrease time-to-degree and increase degree completion. Students take the module before their first term at FAU. The central advising office will follow this up with a newly developed program, Owl Nation Exploration (ONE). With the ONE program, advisors will work closely with undecided students in getting them focused on a major and possible career. Those students still undeclared at the end of their first semester will be required to take a 1-credit course, SLS 1301 - Career and Life Planning. These career exploration programs are needed for the following reasons:

1. Career and major indecision is a major factor behind the attrition of FAU students in their first and second years. FAU loses over 75 percent of those undecided entering freshmen who are still undecided by the end of the second year.

2. FAU also loses a large number of students in pre-majors who are unable to obtain access to their majors of choice. Of the 262 pre-business majors entering in fall 2010, 34 were no longer registered students in fall 2012. These students need to be directed earlier into other majors, which they can choose with the help of the Major KnOWLedge module.

Sustainability and Assessment

FAU is currently conducting a review of its institutional strategic plan. In the future, student success will continue to play a major role in the strategic plan. Measurable goals will be created that will ensure the long-term viability of the initiatives contained within this document. This process will require extensive consultation with faculty, staff, students, and the community.

The institution embraces accountability measures and supports the philosophy behind the SUS Performance Based Funding Model. FAU is proud of its successes in terms of job and graduate school placement for its graduates, as well as the salaries of its alumni. The institution looks

forward to identifying and removing barriers to graduation, in order to ensure that even more of our bachelor's degree graduates will succeed in their careers in the state of Florida.

References

Complete College America (2012). Strategies: Guided Pathways to Success. *www.completecollege.org/strategies*.

Noel-Levitz (2013). 2013 Student Retention and College Completion Practices Report for Four-Year and Two-Year Institutions. *Noel-Levitz Report on Undergraduate Trends in Enrollment Management.*

Nutt, C.L. (2010). Stand Up and Become the Key Advocate for Student Success and Academic Advising on Campus and Around the Globe!. *Academic Advising Today 33* (2).

State University System (2013). System Summary of Post-Graduation Employment Outcomes. Board of Governors staff analysis. FETPIP data for 2011-12 Bachelor's Graduates.