
UNIVERSITY *of* WEST FLORIDA

PERFORMANCE FUNDING
IMPROVEMENT PLAN
MAY 2015 – STATUS REPORT





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OVERVIEW

The core of the University of West Florida’s mission is a commitment to ensuring student success. As outlined in the 2012-2017 UWF Strategic Plan, the University is dedicated to planning and investing strategically to enhance student success and educational attainment.

UWF is concentrating on three key areas of focus that provide the University the greatest ability to make a positive impact on students during 2014-2015. The plan is aligned with the priorities highlighted within the Board of Governors Performance Based Funding Metrics and driven by national best practices in retention and completion.

THREE KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

Metric 4. Six-Year Graduation Rate for First-time-in-College (FTIC) Students

Metric 5. Academic Progress Rate

Metric 9. Baccalaureate Degrees Awarded Without Excess Hours



HISTORY

Our efforts toward student retention and graduation rate began in earnest in Fall 2012 upon the approval of our 2012-2017 Strategic Plan by the UWF Board of Trustees. A one-year retention plan, geared toward FTIC students, included the hiring of a Director of Student Retention and a statistical modeling of our students’ progress historically. In addition, the UWF Haas Center surveyed all non-returning FTIC students to determine reasons why they did not re-enroll. We began a focus on early warning and significantly increased the number of faculty who provided information to trigger alerts. We formed a university-wide Committee On Retention Efforts (CORE) and began to look at institutional barriers to retention. We identified gateway courses that may be problematic to students as well as advising issues.

Noel Levitz, a leading enrollment management consulting firm, was selected as a partner to assist with market research and to conduct an analysis of current enrollment practices. The assessment began in November 2013 and ended in June 2014. Recommendations from this assessment were included in UWF’s Strategic Enrollment Plan.

STRATEGIES AND STATUS UPDATE

The following content outlines the specific and measurable actions and initiatives that have been completed to date during the 2014-15 academic year. UWF concentrated on three key focus areas, as positive progress related to one metric is likely to increase the University’s standing related to another. Therefore, UWF has adopted a holistic approach to increasing the institution’s standing by focusing on strategies to maximize impact on student success.

Create a comprehensive, centralized unit for student support services.

May 2015 – Expectations	May 2015 – Status Report
Add advising training module into curriculum for department chair development program.	An advising training module was added into the department training curriculum during the 2014-15 academic year.
Create a comprehensive advising plan for implementation in Fall 2015.	A comprehensive university-wide plan was devised during the 2014-15 academic year for Fall 2015.



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Report: A training module for advising has been added to the curriculum of the current *Department Chair Development Program*. At UWF, departmental advising is key to a student’s effective progress toward degree. With changes in policies and online support, department chairs need to be individually equipped to guide the advising function within their programs. The addition of this module better equips department chairs to accomplish that function. Additionally, UWF has created a comprehensive advising plan that provides the construct for an integrated approach to student advising university-wide.

Increase the number of full-time faculty members and academic advisors.

May 2015 – Expectations	May 2015 – Status Report
Hire 18 new full-time faculty members (including 6 dedicated to General Studies courses).	19 new faculty members (including 7 dedicated to General Studies courses) have been hired.

Report: UWF has hired 19 new full-time faculty members that will improve the student-to-faculty ratio to ensure that students are provided the courses and attention required to progress toward completion of a degree in a timely fashion. Hiring 19 new faculty members better equips the institution to meet the curricular needs of students in growing programs and ensure that students are obtaining enhanced mentoring and high impact learning experiences, which will lead to greater success in degree completion. Six of these faculty lines are dedicated to General Studies courses.

Faculty hired: Carrie Fonder (Dept. of Art-Gen Ed); John Bloodworth (Dept. of Communication Arts-Gen Ed); Jasara Norton (Dept. of English-Gen Ed); Justin Mccoy (Dept. of English-Gen Ed); Gabriel Blackwell (Dept. of English); Sylvia Fischer (Dept. of Govt.); Howard Reddy (Dept. of Theatre); David Miller (Dept. of Management and MIS-Gen Ed); Alibasic Haris (Dept. of Applied Science, Technology and Administration); Jocelyn Valerio-Faessel (Dept. of Applied Science, Technology and Administration); James Dickson (Dept. of Teacher Education and Ed. Leadership); Andrea Nelson (Dept. of Public Health, Clinical and Health Sciences); Peter Memiah (Dept. of Public Health, Clinical and Health Sciences); Alexis Janosik (Dept. of Biology); Michael Reynolds (Dept. of Electrical and Computer Engineering); John Derek Morgan (Dept. of Environmental Studies); Lauren Rex (Dept. of Mathematics and Statistics-Gen Ed); Ian Adkins (Dept. of Mathematics and Statistics-Gen Ed); Erica Taylor (Dept. of Biology)

Develop degree completion tools for students.

May 2015 – Expectations	May 2015 – Status Report
Develop and disseminate a <i>Graduation Guide</i> for students after completion of 60 credit hours.	The <i>Graduation Guide</i> has been developed and is being disseminated to students after completion of 60 credit hours.

Report: A significant number of UWF students are working adults and must accommodate their employment needs by enrolling in fewer credit hours. On average, more than 50 percent of the UWF student population enrolls in 12-13.5 credit hours per semester, and more than 60 percent of UWF students indicated in the Beginning Student Survey (conducted during Fall 2013) that they expect to work while attending classes.

Therefore, a *Graduation Guide* has been developed to provide to students that have completed 60 credit hours. The guide ensures that students receive a series of communications throughout their junior and senior years that reinforces the importance of staying on track and completing the requirements of their degree.



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Purchase and implement new degree audit and planning software.

May 2015 – Expectations	May 2015 – Status Report
Implement <i>DegreeWorks Student Planner</i> module.	<i>DegreeWorks</i> Student Planner module has been implemented.
Provide training to faculty and staff on <i>College Scheduler</i> .	Training on <i>College Scheduler</i> is being provided to faculty and staff.

Report: A degree audit system supports an effective advising model and serves as an invaluable tool to ensure students monitor their academic progress and advance toward graduation. *DegreeWorks*, a web-based degree audit system, has been implemented to replace the current in-house system and allow UWF the flexibility to provide students with robust data that encourages timely graduation.

By enhancing the degree audit system, which includes *DegreeWorks* student Planner, UWF students have the ability to develop a long-term plan for degree completion, verify that the courses included in the plan fulfill degree requirements, explore different degree plans and fully understand remaining degree requirements.

College Scheduler, a separate web-based schedule-planning tool, provides students with scheduling options to ensure they register for the maximum number of credit hours, therefore decreasing their time to degree.

Revise current and develop new University policies to support progress to obtaining a degree.

May 2015 – Expectations	May 2015 – Status Report
Begin implementation of <i>Progress to Degree Policy</i> .	2015-16 catalog has been updated with newly adopted policy Progress to Degree Policy/ University Policy AC-34.01-12/14
Begin implementation of revised <i>Attendance Policy</i> .	2015-16 catalog has been updated with newly adopted policy FTIC General Education Attendance Policy/University Policy AC-33.01-12/14

Report:

Progress to Degree Policy

The University’s goal is to provide students with access to high-quality, relevant and affordable learning experiences from enrollment through graduation. The *Progress to Degree Policy* is central to and aimed at assisting students’ progress toward degree in an efficient manner while effectively meeting their academic goals. Embedded within the policy are graduation benchmarks that begin with two and four-year plans of study which will support progress toward graduation.

The policy includes limitations on changing or declaring a major, minor or dual degree, sets limits on the number of course withdrawals and redefines the grade forgiveness policy.

The impact of this policy will be significant in relation to a variety of factors. For example, based on a historical data comparison, juniors and seniors represent more than 40 percent of the student population that request to change their major. The policy modifies the process to require the student to be counseled by an advisor to ensure that students are fully informed of all of the implications, including excess hours and graduation. One of the aspects of the policy is the inclusion of a departmental approval requirement for junior and senior students to change their major. This requirement reduces the likelihood of students changing programs without making an informed decision. This preventive measure will create a proactive approach to assist students in degree completion in the most efficient fashion.



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Revised Attendance Policy

UWF expects students to take full responsibility for their academic work and progress. To progress satisfactorily, students must meet the requirements of each course for which they are registered, and successful work depends, to a large extent, on regular class attendance. A *First-Time-in-College Student Class Attendance Policy* was developed and approved to encourage engagement and support retention. Class attendance is regarded as an academic matter, therefore, this policy sets the expectation that each faculty member record attendance for all FTIC students enrolled in a General Studies course and provide the students with a written attendance policy.

Implement additional tools, strategies and programs aimed at increasing retention and graduation.

May 2015 – Expectations	May 2015 – Status Report
Implement a <i>Supplemental Instruction Program</i> for students enrolled in courses associated with high failure rates.	<i>Supplemental Instruction Pilot Program</i> was implemented in Fall 2014. Program will be expanded in Fall 2015.

Report:

Implement Supplemental Instruction Program

High DWF (drop, withdraw and fail) rates represent unsuccessful enrollments in a course. The assumption is that these high rates lead to eventual attrition from the institution. The implementation of a *Supplemental Instruction Program* will emphasize the development of organizational skills, questioning techniques, and test preparation strategies in an effort to increase retention and improve grades in historically difficult courses. This will ultimately lead to the increase in graduation rates of UWF students.

Following a successful pilot program and study in Fall 2014, expanded supplemental instruction will be provided in Fall 2015. Supplemental instruction will be a “free service” offered to all students in a targeted course. Supplemental instruction is a non remedial approach to learning as the program targets high-risk courses rather than high-risk students.

Increase communication with students regarding the Excess Hours Policy.

May 2015 – Expectations	May 2015 – Status Report
Provide a series of training programs for new advisors regarding the <i>Excess Hours Policy</i> .	Training programs for new advisors were provided throughout the 2014-15 academic year.

Report: UWF has been meeting the statutory requirement of communicating to students about excess hours. However, following a 2013-2014 assessment of the effectiveness of the related communication methods, the university discovered that meeting the minimum requirements of the law did not serve the full needs of students. Based on that data, the University identified a series of areas in which our system of connecting with students could be improved. As new advisors come online, it is important to give them specific training in the *Excess Hours Policy* due to the complexity of the statute.



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Implement Summer Success Program for FTIC students on academic warning.

May 2015 – Expectations	May 2015 – Status Report
Recruit students for the 2015 <i>Summer Success Program</i> .	41 students with a 1.99-1.8 GPA have been invited to participate in the program.

Report: The *Summer Success Program* is targeted towards students on academic warning at the end of the spring semester of their first year. Students will be provided a financial aid grant to offset the cost of tuition for a summer course. The program gives students two options. First, students could repeat a course for which they qualify for a grade forgiveness option. Second, students will have the option of taking an academic foundation course geared toward at-risk freshman. A successful pilot program was conducted during the Summer 2014, the success of which was reported in the December 2014 Status Report.



SUMMARY

UWF is dedicated to creating and enhancing programs, policies and services that remove barriers to degree completion and increase the institution’s profile in the SUS Performance Based Funding Model. By embracing accountability measures and implementing actionable, measurable steps, the University will better equip students to move into successful careers.