MAPS TO STUDENT SUCCESS:
IMPLEMENTATION OF A DEGREE TRACKING SYSTEM

Final Report of the Fort Lewis College Quality Initiative
Fall 2012-Spring 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of the activities, accomplishments, and impact of the Quality Initiative (QI) undertaken by Fort Lewis College in fulfillment of the requirements for Open Pathways accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission.

The QI, which implemented three action items related to student success in the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan, sought to transform a *loosely coupled* system of course offering and course taking into a *tightly coupled* system as a strategy to improve future freshman cohorts’ four-year completion rates.

The three action items’ 11 objectives were organized into seven activities in the institution’s QI proposal submitted in Fall 2012. All seven of the activities were fully or partially accomplished by Spring 2015:

1. There is increasing acceptance of the importance of four-year curriculum completion by students;
2. Four-year curriculum completion maps have been published in each of the last three *Catalog of Courses*;
3. Four-year instructional plans, initially developed for 2014-2018, have been updated for 2016-2020;
4. The student-friendly u.achieve degree planning and tracking technology has been implemented;
5. A policy framework for degree progression and completion has been approved by faculty and administration and published on the college’s policy website;
6. Roles of professional and faculty advisors are being clarified through the Student Success Center Demonstration Project, which is leveraging an insight/action analytics technology called the EAB Student Success Collaborative Platform; and
7. Data needed to monitor the effectiveness of, and support the continuous improvement of, QI activities 1-6 have been specified.

At the conclusion of the project, we can say that a four-year mindset has taken hold in an institution long characterized by a laissez-faire attitude toward degree progression and completion. Students are responding to incentives and policies, and department chairs are attending to the four-year sequencing of their programs’ requirements and the implications for faculty members’ teaching schedules. Supporting this mindset are new technology tools and a new advising system. Some short term results are promising. For example, a 15-credit load initiative resulted in a 10% increase in the number of retained freshmen from the Fall 2013 cohort with enough earned credits to be classified as sophomores compared to the retained freshmen from the Fall 2012 cohort.

The Quality Initiative has been a lesson to the involved faculty and staff about the process of strategic change. Focused on just three action items, the QI required intense, sustained, and wrenching re-thinking and re-working to crack open a seemingly immovable status quo. This experience has provided some insights that will usefully inform the development of the college’s next strategic plan and Quality Initiative.
INTRODUCTION

This report provides a summary of the activities, accomplishments, and impact of the Quality Initiative (QI) undertaken by Fort Lewis College in fulfillment of the requirements for Open Pathways accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission.

In Spring 2012, the institution considered three action items from the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan for the Quality Initiative: 1) improve freshman experiences, 2) explore opportunities for a Center for Teaching and Learning, and 3) improve student advising. The faculty, through their representatives on the Council of Chairs and the Faculty Senate, selected student advising, specifically action items 1.a.i.-iii. In the strategic plan coding, the “1” identifies the goal as “Increase Student Success.” The “a” identifies the subgoal as “Improve Student Retention and Graduation Rates.” The “i.-iii.” indicates these action items: “i. - Improve Student Advising”; “ii. - Require Students to Select Their Majors No Later Than Their Third Term of Enrollment”; and “iii. - Provide a Clear Curriculum Map to Graduation.”

SCOPE AND IMPACT OF THE INITIATIVE

Purposes and Goals

The QI was conceptualized as transforming a *loosely coupled* system of course offering and course taking into a *tightly coupled* system. Because curriculum completion, along with academic achievement, comprise the two components of degree completion, it was hypothesized that this change would positively impact future freshman cohorts’ four-year completion rates, which had varied between 17-19% for the five most recent freshman cohorts.

There were three reasons for the QI’s focus on four-year graduation rates:

1. The six-year graduation metric required in federal disclosure policies is derived from a calculation of 150% of “normal time.” As defined in Code of Federal Regulations, Part 668.41(a), normal time is “the amount of time necessary for a student to complete all requirements for a degree or certificate according to the institution’s catalog. This is typically 4 years (8 semesters…) for a bachelor’s degree in a standard term-based institution.”

2. Colorado statute (C.R.S. 23-1-125, “Student Bill of Rights”) requires all public institutions to offer students a four-year graduation agreement that formalizes a plan to complete curriculum requirements in four years (eight Fall/Spring semesters).

3. The U.S. Department of Education has strongly recommended every Title IV institution develop a Default Rate Prevention and Management Plan. Because it reduces student borrowing, four-year graduation is a major plank in our default prevention plan.

The project began by organizing the 11 objectives of 2012-2016 Strategic Plan Action Items 1.a.i.-iii. into seven activities. Table 1 summarizes how the QI’s seven activities were derived from the strategic plan’s objectives.
Table 1
Relationship of Objectives in Strategic Plan Action Items 1.a.i.-iii. to Quality Initiative Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Plan Action Item Objectives</th>
<th>QI Activity Number</th>
<th>QI Activity Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Raise awareness of importance of four-year curriculum completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.a.iii. objectives - create maps to graduation for each major and make them available to students on the web</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Develop degree maps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.a.i. objective - utilize technology more effectively to improve degree tracking for both students and advisors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Implement a degree planning and tracking technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.a.iii. objective - develop and implement a detailed four-year plan of instruction that includes annual course offerings and faculty teaching and sabbatical schedules</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Develop four-year instructional plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.a.i. objective - create trigger points to ensure students are monitoring progress towards degree completion and 1.a.ii. objectives - require students to declare major in a timely way, create pace standards with sanctions, and prevent student malingering</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Create a policy framework to ensure timely degree progression and completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.a.i. objective - create clear roles and guidelines for advisors and a mechanism to evaluate faculty advising based on newly established roles and objectives</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Clarify roles and responsibilities of faculty and professional advisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Create new reporting and data collection systems related to institutionalization of Quality Initiative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accomplishments

All of the seven activities were fully or partially accomplished by the completion of the QI in Spring 2015:

1. There is increasing acceptance of the importance of four-year curriculum completion by students;
2. Four-year curriculum completion maps have been published in each of the last three Catalog of Courses;
3. Four-year instructional plans, initially developed for 2014-2018, have been updated for 2016-2020;
4. The student-friendly u.achieve degree planning and tracking technology has been implemented;
5. A policy framework for degree progression and completion has been approved by faculty and administration and published on the college’s policy website;
6. Roles of professional and faculty advisors are being clarified through the Student Success Center Demonstration Project, which is leveraging an insight/action analytics technology called the EAB Student Success Collaborative Platform; and
7. Data needed to monitor the effectiveness of, and support the continuous improvement of, QI activities 1-6 have been specified.

Detail on Activity 1 Accomplishments – Raise Awareness about Importance of Four-Year Curriculum Completion

When I started school my parents made me a deal that they would pay for my schooling for a maximum of four years. If it took me any longer to graduate I would be on my own to pay for it, so graduating in four years was really the only option I had.

--Lewis E. Wittry, Psychology major, Class of 2013

Foundational to the QI’s success was increasing student motivation to graduate in four years. Interviews of four-year graduates in three freshman cohorts and multiple discussion sessions with student groups in the 2012-2013 academic year helped us develop a situation analysis of student motivation, which is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Motivators for On-Time and Delayed Graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivators for On-Time Graduation</th>
<th>Motivators for Delayed Graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I set a personal goal</td>
<td>I could not take 15 credits each semester and maintain an “honors” GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parents expected it</td>
<td>I could not take 15 credits each semester and participate in co-curricular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My funding was limited to four years</td>
<td>I couldn’t make both of my majors fit in four years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to minimize loan debt</td>
<td>I didn’t need to take 15 credits each semester to be eligible for scholarships and financial aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to begin my professional career as soon as possible</td>
<td>I could not take 15 credits each semester and work enough hours to finance my education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings informed two initiatives related to student motivation: first, normalize four-year curriculum completion, and second, leverage student financing.
Normalization. One normalization initiative focused on developing an incoming freshman’s identity as a member of a graduating class four years hence. This identity was established in recruiting publications, in orientation, in freshman swag, in the unfurling of the class banner at Fall Convocation, in the décor of the Student Union, and in social media.

A 15-credit registration campaign backed up the class identity initiative. Enrollment in 15 credits each semester became established as the norm in academic advising, and if students enrolled in fewer credits, advising messaging emphasized the need to “make up” the credits by taking a heavier load the following semester or by attending summer school.

Leverage Student Financing. Three financing initiatives backed up the 15-credit registration campaign. Beginning in the 2013-2014 academic year, students receiving institutional merit scholarships were required to earn 30 credits during the Fall, Spring, or subsequent Summer semesters in order to have their scholarships renewed.

Additionally, a scholarship incentive was introduced in 2013-2014 for students who joined the Finish in Four! Program. In this program, students developed four-year graduation plans. If they completed all of the courses on their plans each semester with grades sufficient to progress to the next courses on their plans, they received priority registration for the following semester and a $500 bonus scholarship.

Lastly, the Fort Lewis College Foundation implemented a policy that required students receiving privately funded scholarships to enroll in a minimum of 15 credits each semester.

Detail on Activity 2 Accomplishments – Develop Degree Maps

My greatest challenge was figuring out which classes I was going to need to finish my degree on time.”

-- Abby L. Jackson, Business Administration–Marketing major, Class of 2011

Maps to graduation are eight-semester course sequencing guides published in the Catalog of Courses immediately following the curriculum listings for each major. The maps are intended as the official, singular statement from the faculty to students and advisors about how a student should progress through a program’s curriculum.

The first maps to graduation were published in the 2013-2014 Catalog of Courses. They were developed through introductory workshops with the Council of Chairs followed by multiple one-on-one sessions with each department chair.

Maps to graduation became institutionalized with the procedures for program creation and revision beginning with the 2016-2017 catalog. Under those procedures, a four-year degree map must be submitted along with the proposed curriculum for each new or revised program. Once approved, both are published in the Catalog of Courses.
Detail on Activity 3 Accomplishments – Implement a Degree Planning and Tracking Technology

It has definitely been an organizational feat keeping track of what classes I had taken, and what ones I still needed to take.

--Molly J. Blum, Art-Graphic Design major, Class of 2013

The u.achieve suite from College Source was selected in Summer 2013 as a robust but student-friendly degree planning and tracking tool. It was first implemented for the programs published in the 2013-2014 Catalog of Courses.

On the degree planning side, this system replaced degree planning worksheets. On the degree tracking side, it replaced the WebCAPP degree audit tool, which is no longer being supported by Ellucian for its Banner system users.

WebCAPP produced reports that were of great value for technical, high-frequency users such as the Registrar’s Office staff and professional advisors. Most faculty advisors, over time, learned to accurately interpret the reports, as did some students. But it was far from student-friendly.

Six months of research preceded the development of the budget request for a new system. The research included a literature review of college and universities that had implemented degree planning and tracking systems and informational webinars with all known vendors. After approval of the funding in Spring 2013, an RFP was issued. Two finalists made campus presentations to stakeholders, including students. After the contractual matters were finalized in Summer 2013, implementation of the project began. A Student Advisory Group offered input on decisions that impacted student end users throughout the 2013-2014 academic year.

While the u.achieve system was institutionalized with the appropriation of funds for the maintenance contract, the assignment of IT personnel for its ongoing technical support, and the assignment of Registrar’s Office personnel for its annual updating based on curriculum changes, there is a sense that a lot of potential for this system had to be left on the table to make way for the advising reform activity.

To realize the value of this technology, we need to:

- Revisit the decision to only partially implement u.achieve’s planning functionality;
- Systematically train students on the system; and
- Institutionalize the expectation that all students will personally create degree plans and know how to run degree audits. When a critical mass of students have plans, we need to actively explore the system’s reporting capabilities to improve instructional planning.
Detail on Activity 4 Accomplishments – Develop Four-Year Instructional Plans

How can we finish in four years when required classes don’t have faculty to teach them?

--Comment at a student group meeting, Spring 2013

In a discussion of obstacles to four-year curriculum completion with student groups in the 2012-2013 academic year, scheduling problems were on the top of the list. Therefore, the maps to graduation had to be backed by a credible four-year instructional plan.

Until the late 1990s, the course descriptions in the catalog stated when a course would be offered. When the Registrar at that time observed that courses were not being offered as advertised, the semester of offering was deleted from the descriptions. About five years later, when it became untenable for students not to know when courses were going to be offered, a “planning schedule,” always incomplete and quickly out of date, was implemented.

This was the state of affairs when the deans and department chairs developed four-year instructional plans for 2014-2018. These plans were subsequently loaded into u.achieve, and students received a warning when they tried to add courses to their degree plans that were not scheduled to be offered.

Because the maps to graduation and the four-year instructional plans were done at different points in time, there were some misalignments between when the maps indicated a course would be offered and when a class was scheduled to be offered in the initial instructional plan. Staffing changes additionally contributed to some misalignments.

In Summer 2014, the planning began for a complete curriculum re-design. The re-design would render much of the 2014-2018 instructional plan moot, so the feature in u.achieve that informed students of the course offering calendar was disabled beyond Spring 2016.

The 2016-2020 instructional plans will be on firmer footing because they have been developed in alignment with each faculty member’s two-year “tool belt.” The tool belts specifically identify which Liberal Arts Core, major field, minor field, certificate, and elective courses a faculty member will be teaching.

Students will see real value in the lengthening of the instructional planning horizon because we can offer them detailed course schedules on an annual basis. For example, by Spring 2016, students will be able to see the times/days of all course offerings for Fall 2016, Spring 2017, and Summer 2017.
Detail on Activity 5 Accomplishments – Create a Policy Framework to Ensure Timely Degree Progression and Completion

[One of the reasons I was able to graduate in four years,] is that I stayed with the major I started with as a freshman. I didn't have extra credits just laying around.

--Rebecca D. Thill, English-Writing major, Class of 2011

As summarized in Table 3, a policy framework for timely degree progression and completion was implemented as part of the QI. All policies were approved through the institution’s shared governance process, and are published on the college’s policy website, and are accessible to students through the Academic Policies and Procedures section of the Catalog of Courses.

Table 3
Academic Policy Framework for Degree Progression and Completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Title</th>
<th>Policy Description</th>
<th>Developed by</th>
<th>Academic Year (AY) Implemented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revision of Grades, Quality Points, and Grade Point Averages</td>
<td>Implemented restrictions on course withdrawals</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>2013-2014 AY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision of Course Load</td>
<td>Defined normal course load as 15 credits per semester</td>
<td>Provost</td>
<td>2013-2014 AY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Pace Requirement for Remedial Education</td>
<td>Created mechanism to enforce state policy requiring completion of remediation by 30 credits</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>2016-2017 AY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Pace Requirement for Introductory Composition and Math</td>
<td>Imposes severe restrictions on students who do not complete composition and mathematics by the time they earn 45 credits</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>2016-2017 AY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Degree Conferral Policy</td>
<td>Establishes authority of Provost to confer a degree upon a student who has completed degree requirements but has not applied to graduate</td>
<td>Provost</td>
<td>2014-2015 AY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Declaration of a Major Policy</td>
<td>Requires undeclared students to declare a major by the time they earn 45 credits</td>
<td>Provost</td>
<td>2015-2016 AY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Detail on Activity 6 Accomplishments – Clarify Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty and Professional Advisors

Why have professional advisors assigned to us if they just refer us back to our faculty advisor?

--Comment at a student group meeting, Fall 2012

Without a doubt, advising reform was the most protean activity in the Quality Initiative. The word count for this report prevents a full telling of the zigs and zags, twists and turns, and trial and error that have led to where we are today, which is imminent implementation of a large-scale, multi-year pilot of a new advising system.

There were two game-changers in this activity. The first was the decision that professional advising would be hardwired to specific majors to repair the mistrust that had developed between some faculty and a centralized advising center. By having professional advisors assigned to specific majors, strong relationships could be fostered between the professional advisors, the chairs, and the faculty.

The second game-changer was the EAB Student Success Collaborative Platform. The platform is an insight/action analytics tool that:

- Assesses each student’s risk for not completing, based on 10 years’ of Fort Lewis College student data;
- Tags students who have missed milestones;
- Assesses each student’s skills and their applicability to different academic and career paths;
- Provides a simple, but sophisticated, search function that allows specific populations to be targeted for interventions; and
- Provides a centralized note-taking system accessible to all authorized users.

Additional features will become available in the next year as the Student Success Collaborative Platform is upgraded to incorporate functionality from EAB’s recent acquisition of the GradesFirst early alert system.

While the added potential of the Student Success Collaborative Platform in our old advising system was limited, we had a breakthrough after a year of head-banging work about how to leverage the technology in a new advising system. This system was piloted with the four majors in the School of Business Administration in Spring 2015.

The characteristics of the new advising system are:

- Professional advisors are conceptualized as academic success coaches.
- Coaches are assigned to specific majors and co-located with the faculty in Student Success Centers.
- Coaches carry loads of 250-300 students. They:
  - Are advisors of record for all students in a major.
o Provide “every day” assistance through drop-in hours and individual appointments. The Student Success Collaborative Platform gives them efficient access to students’ academic records and identifies students who are part of a group of institutional interest.

o Teach students how to interpret the maps to graduation and utilize the u.achieve degree planning and tracking technology.

o Follow up on early alerts provided by the faculty in their instructional roles.

o Identify, via the Student Success Collaborative Platform, opportunities for improved student success and pursue those opportunities with targeted campaigns with measurable outcomes.

o Keep records on all student interactions through the Student Success Collaborative Platform’s note-taking function.

- The faculty, conceptualized as mentors, provide guidance to students on how to maximize the value of their degrees. Drawing on their disciplinary and professional expertise, faculty members help students identify and evaluate curricular and co-curricular opportunities vis-à-vis students’ post-baccalaureate goals. Mentoring is available throughout the academic year, through faculty office hours and by appointment.

The Student Success Center concept was presented to the majority of academic departments in Spring 2015, resulting in 13 requests to be included in the expanded pilot that will be implemented in Fall 2015. One benefit of this expansion is that a broad group of faculty will begin to consider how to fully realize the role of faculty mentor, what faculty expectations in this role should be, and how to measure effectiveness in that role.

**Detail on Activity 7 Accomplishments – Create New Reporting and Data Collection Systems Related to Institutionalization of Quality Initiative**

The 2012-2016 Strategic Plan specified the same “measureable outcomes” for each of the three action items that comprised the Quality Initiative:

Create data measures/key performance indicators based on National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), student evaluations, and tracking of degree completion.

In the QI proposal, we tried to envision a data collection system that would satisfy this statement, but during the implementation phase, we shifted the focus of this activity to identify the data needed to monitor the effectiveness of each activity and support its continuous improvement. Table 4 summarizes our work to date.
Table 4
Data Collection Systems to Monitor and Continuously Improve Quality Initiative Activities 1-6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QI Activity Number</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Metrics of Effectiveness</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Raise awareness of importance of four-year curriculum completion</td>
<td>At least 85% of students in each freshman cohort report four-year degree completion is important to them</td>
<td>Fall freshman survey (formerly Map-Works, but will be home-grown beginning with Fall 2015 cohort)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Develop degree maps</td>
<td>100% of courses on each major’s degree map are offered in the specified semester</td>
<td>Maps are published in <em>Catalog of Courses</em> and course schedules are published in WebOPUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Implement a degree planning and tracking technology</td>
<td>At least 85% of students in each freshman cohort have developed at least one degree plan and run at least one audit on the u.achieve system by the time they earn 45 credits</td>
<td>Usage data collected by system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Develop four-year instructional plans</td>
<td>Same as “Develop degree maps”</td>
<td>Same as “Develop degree maps”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Create a policy framework to ensure timely degree progression and completion</td>
<td>At least 95% of students in a freshman cohort are in compliance with each progression policy</td>
<td>Query of Banner data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Clarify roles and responsibilities of faculty and professional advisors</td>
<td>Retention of the Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 freshman cohorts declared in a major served by a Student Success Center will increase 4% from the 2013-2014 baseline for that major</td>
<td>Query of “Greathouse Report” (internal report on student registration)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation of Impact of Initiative

On August 31, 2020, the four-year graduation deadline for the Fall 2016 cohort, we will be able to evaluate the overall impact of the initiative. On September 11, 2017, the Census Date for the Fall 2017 semester, we will be able to evaluate the impact of the initiative on freshman retention. At this time, we can report the following positive indicators of the initiative’s impact:

Student Intent to Graduate in Four Years

An institution-specific question on the first-time freshman Map-Works survey asked, “How important is it to you to complete your degree in four years or fewer?” Table 5 summarizes the findings from Fall 2014.

Table 5
Fall 2014 Freshmen Responses to Question About Importance of Four-Year Graduation, Seven-Point Scale (78% response rate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Important (6 and 7 on scale)</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Important (4 and 5 on scale)</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important (1, 2 and 3 on scale)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of students who completed the entrance requirements for Finish in Four!, the four-year graduation agreement program more than doubled between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014. This data is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6
Number of Students Who Completed Entrance Requirements for Finish in Four! Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>118 (107% increase)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Monitoring of Curriculum Completion

In response to the direction provided by the maps, the idea of being “on track” or “off track” for graduation has emerged in student discourse:

“In order to be on track for graduation I need to be in PH 250 (CRN 20558) in the fall. I am currently on the waitlist for the class.”

“I would really like to take Chem 151 during the fall semester instead of during the summer because of financial issues. I need this class to stay on track.”

“I attempted to register for BIO 110 (CRN 20093 and 20094). My advisor told me to take this class to remain on track for my ENVS graduation requirements.”
A more objective metric of student monitoring of curriculum completion can be found in the u.achieve usage data. Overall, 29% of students (1,111 students) have at least one u.achieve degree plan created by the student herself and/or a plan created by an advisor. Among students with plans, a third (376, 34%) have plan updates. Table 7 summarizes degree planning and tracking activity by students and advisors in the current academic year.

Table 7
u.achieve Usage Between Aug. 15, 2014-March 31, 2015
N=3,850 unique students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Initial Degree Plans Created (% of student population)</th>
<th>Degree Plans Updated at Least Once (% of students with plans)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By Student Only</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By an Advisor Only</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Both</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Credit Accumulation

Initiatives to increase the number of students making a traditional progression from being freshmen during their first year, to being sophomores in their second year, to being juniors in their third year, etc., began to show an immediate impact. As Table 8 shows, the percentage of continuing sophomores increased by 10% between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014.

Table 8
Percentage of Continuing Lower-Division Students with Sophomore Classification
Fall 2013 N=989
Fall 2014 N=937

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Lower-Division Continuing Students Classified as Freshmen</td>
<td>336 (34%)</td>
<td>228 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Lower-Division Continuing Students Classified as Sophomores</td>
<td>653 (66%)</td>
<td>653 (76%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New Tools, Data, or Other Information That Have Resulted To Date

The Quality Initiative has resulted in the following new tools, data, and information:

- Four-year maps to graduation (see p. 6)
- u.achieve, a student-friendly degree planning/tracking technology (see p. 7)
- Four-year instructional plans (see p. 8)
EAB Student Success Collaborative Platform (see pp. 10-11).

Biggest Challenges and Opportunities Encountered in Implementing the Initiative

The QI, which sought to transform a *loosely coupled* system of course offering and taking into a *tightly coupled* system, faced two significant challenges and provided one unexpected opportunity.

**Challenges**

1. The QI was buffeted by large-scale curriculum changes from the beginning to the end. The Liberal Arts Core was revised to be in compliance with the Student Bill of Rights during the 2012-2013 academic year. Both the Liberal Arts Core and the major field curricula are being revised as part of the implementation of a three-credit curriculum model and alignment of curricular offerings with instructional resources (2013-2014 academic year to present).

2. The QI was one of many activities undertaken simultaneously in preparation for our accreditation review in 2015-16. One year after the QI launched, the institution began researching and writing the assurance argument, evaluating all assumed practices, and auditing its compliance with federal regulations. In addition to these accreditation-related activities, other strategic plan projects were put in motion, including the creation of the college’s first graduate program. Escalating expectations for Title IX compliance also loomed large. For many people in the institution, the last three years have been a blur.

**Opportunities**

1. The QI created an opportunity to truly experience the intense, sustained, and wrenching re-thinking and re-working required for strategic change. The 2012-2016 Strategic Plan was the institution’s third strategic plan. Like the plans before it, it had a long list of objectives and action items. In the past, these had been approached in “check off” mode. Under the QI, we were able to thoroughly plumb the interrelationships between the action items, grasp the scope of the work, and devise a multi-year implementation plan. This experience has implications for how the institution might approach strategic change in the future. Perhaps the next strategic plan should be limited to just three epic changes, with the first scheduled as a five-year project, the second, as a three-year project, and the third as a one-year project. One of those projects could be identified as the next Quality Initiative.

**COMMITMENT TO AND ENGAGEMENT IN QUALITY INITIATIVE**

The Quality Initiative was accomplished through the joint efforts of the Academic Affairs, Advancement, Enrollment Management, Finance & Administration, and Student Affairs divisions. Table 9 provides a summary of the personnel who led, were involved in, and supported each of the seven activities.
Table 9
Key Personnel Engaged in the Quality Initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 1: Importance of four-year completion</th>
<th>Activity 2: Degree maps</th>
<th>Activity 3: Degree planning and tracking technology</th>
<th>Activity 4: Four-year instructional plans</th>
<th>Activity 5: Policy framework</th>
<th>Activity 6: Clarify roles of advisors</th>
<th>Activity 7: Data collection and reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lead:</strong> Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management</td>
<td><strong>Lead:</strong> Coordinator of Degree Planning Resources</td>
<td><strong>Lead:</strong> Coordinator of Degree Planning Resources</td>
<td><strong>Leads:</strong> Deans and associate deans</td>
<td><strong>Leads:</strong> Academic Standards Committee and Provost</td>
<td><strong>Leads:</strong> Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, Coordinator of Degree Planning Resources, and Associate Dean of School of Business Administration</td>
<td><strong>Lead:</strong> Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Involved:</strong> Director of Admission, Department of Marketing &amp; Communications, Director of Orientation, Director of Student Success, Director of Student Union, Fort Lewis College Foundation, and Scholarship &amp; Financial Aid Working Group</td>
<td><strong>Involved:</strong> Deans, associate deans, and department chairs</td>
<td><strong>Involved:</strong> Students, faculty advisors, and academic success coaches</td>
<td><strong>Involved:</strong> All department chairs</td>
<td><strong>Involved:</strong> Faculty Senate, Council of Chairs, and Deans Council</td>
<td><strong>Involved:</strong> Faculty Advising Committee, deans, Director of Student Success, academic success coaches, and EAB Student Success Collaborative platform consultant</td>
<td><strong>Involved:</strong> Coordinator of Degree Planning Resources and Director of Student Success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Through summer retreats and weekly meetings, Quality Initiative Task Force members drove the initiative forward by conceptualizing the project, keeping tabs on the progress of each activity, doing foundational inquiries and analyses, troubleshooting issues, providing assistance when activities stalled or hit snags, serving as project ambassadors, and keeping the campus informed through regular reports. Eight faculty and staff served on the QITF for the entire project, beginning in July 2012 and ending in April 2015: Beverly Chew, Coordinator of Degree Planning Resources and Professor of Psychology; Haeryon Kim, Dean of Students; Carol Smith, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management; Steve Stovall, Faculty Athletics Representative and Senior Lecturer of Marketing; Robert Stremba, Director and Professor of Adventure Education, Jenn Wagnon, Director of Program for Academic Advancement (TRiO); Deborah Walker, Professor of Economics, and Amy Wendland, Professor of Art. Serving for shorter periods were: Kathleen Aguilar, Associate Professor of Modern Languages; Lauren Delle, Senior Lecturer in the Writing Program; Crystal Fankhauser, Director of Student Success; Lisa Snyder, Director of Assessment, and Kelly Stanley, Director of eLearning.
Involved Individuals’ and Groups’ Perceptions of the QI’s Worth and Impact

A focus group of nine faculty and staff directly involved in one or more of the Quality Initiative activities was conducted in mid-April to make a “big picture” assessment of the QI’s worth and impact. These were the major themes that emerged, illustrated by participant quotes.

Four-Year Mindset

Through the QI, “we’ve started to instill -- from students, to faculty, to parents -- the four-year mindset.”

Critical Role of Degree Maps

“Maps completely dictate how we advise new students. It horrifies me to think what we used to do. Now, we pull up that map and tell the student, ‘this is what the faculty expect.’”

Weak Link of Course Offerings

The maps highlight the vulnerability of our course supply. “There are some courses on our map that only one professor can teach and if that professor is not there, we’ve got a real issue.”

The Measure of the Value is the Student Experience

“If, because of the QI, more students are able to get through in four, and more students are able to do it without roadblocks, that’s huge for me.”

Most Important Points That Have Been Learned

Some of the most important take-aways from the Quality Initiative include:

1. A realization that we can manage student degree completion. Our institution was laissez faire about student progression and outcomes until the late 1990s. Because we had no institutional retention, progression, or completion goals, we assimilated the federal government’s “12-credits is full-time” concept. As late as 1998, when we launched our first large scale effort at improving student outcomes, we took the posture that students defined success for themselves. Fourteen years later, emboldened by the Compete College America agenda, we finally articulated an institutional definition of student success – four-year graduation. Through the QI, we have entered a new era of institutional agency.

2. The need for the construct of “advising” to give way to more specific descriptions of student support activities. These include support in:

   - Institutional navigation – which offices do what, and where they’re located;
   - Curricular and co-curricular mentoring – how to maximize the value of the degree through the selection of curricular and co-curricular options that align with a student’s post-baccalaureate goals;
- Degree planning -- the development of degree plans and assistance with the implementation of those plans through each semester’s registration;
- Career counseling – the implementation of post-baccalaureate goals through the graduate school application process and the job search;
- Grade monitoring and management – assistance in identifying course grade goals to meet academic achievement requirements, habits for monitoring grades, and assistance in developing action plans when grades are not at the target level.
- Financial planning and management -- the identification of sources of financing for a student’s college career based on an understanding that debt should be taken on judiciously, the development of financial management skills such as budgeting, and assistance in identifying the best loan repayment program for a student’s post-baccalaureate circumstances;
- Personal counseling – support in self-management of one’s emotions, stressors, and reactions to stressors, loss of motivation, and/or increased family expectations.

RESOURCES PROVISION

The institution allocated significant human and financial resources to accomplish the Quality Initiative.

*Human Resources*

As Table 9 suggests, faculty and staff devoted significant time resources over three years to accomplishing the Quality Initiative. Except as noted in Table 10, this work was accomplished through a reallocation of time from operational duties and other projects.

*Financial Resources*

Key activities in the Quality Initiative could not have been accomplished without the one-time funding allocated by the President and the Provost. Table 10 shows that 70% of the investment was to accelerate the development of a new advising system.
Table 10
Financial Investments in Quality Initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of Funding</th>
<th>Approximate Amount of One-Time Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temporary job enlargement stipends for two part-time employees to serve as project managers for Activities 1, 2 and 3</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u.achieve degree planning and tracking technology for Activity 3</td>
<td>$175,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three full-time temporary academic success coaches for Activity 6 in 2014-2015</td>
<td>$135,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six full-time temporary academic success coaches for Activity 6 in 2015-2016</td>
<td>$270,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAB Student Success Collaborative fees for Activity 6</td>
<td>$350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$1,030,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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