WESTERN
WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ACCREDITATION EVIDENCE

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WESTERN
WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ACE IT CENTER

(Advising, Career, Employment, Internships & Transfer)

"Meeting our Students Where they Are"

Revamping and Renewing Student Success Initiatives at WWCC

Student Success Services
April 2011

I. Introduction

Western Wyoming Community College has recognized for some time the importance of student engagement in the success of our students. This engagement begins when they first show interest in WWCC and continues through their completion of goals and involvement in our alumni association. Key components of student success while they are attending relate to receiving customized support service, identifying clear academic and career goals, getting good advice when make course and program decisions, and receiving appropriate referrals for challenges throughout their time at Western and as they transfer or seek job opportunities.

Our overall focus with this initiative is to increase our retention of all degree-seeking student groups from Fall to Spring and Fall to Fall and to increase our completion rate of certificates and/or degrees. Benchmark success goals are provided later in this document. We believe that a fundamental component of achieving these goals is to significantly enhance our academic advising and support program.

Based upon the fact that we know students "do not do optional," this plan involves a higher level of required and intrusive interaction based upon student risk factors and what we know about student success initiatives at other institutions. This plan provides new direction to our College-wide advising effort by bringing together several student support services in an Advising & Career Center. Advising services at WWCC have had both successes and challenges and this is not unusual on most campuses. As a general rule, advising services should conform to recommendations from the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) and the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) and should reflect the culture and needs of students attending WWCC. Services should be measurable to ensure accountability, and activities should be reviewed annually for impact, effectiveness and relationship to actual success of students in terms of satisfaction, persistence and graduation.

This plan is designed to provide a broad framework for advising activities, however, flexibility is important and activities will be reviewed and revised throughout the year as appropriate. This plan is extremely ambitious and may be incorporated into our AQIP projects in the coming year.

II. Philosophy of Advising and Student Success

At WWCC, the mission statement for academic advising has been "to provide high quality advising to all students, fostering an environment in which individuals involved are dedicated to mutual respect, flexibility, and the empowerment of student success." To this end, the advising effort focuses on providing personalized services to students as they make decisions regarding educational and career choices. A major purpose of advising should be to assist students in the development of meaningful educational plans that are compatible with their life goals. However, there is far more to providing the level of student support we need to give to help assure student success. One of the goals for FY12 will be to have an extensive campus team review and expand this mission statement to better reflect the needs of students in today's world.

III. Definitions

It is important to assure that all stakeholders are on the same page in terms of definitions related to our goals.

Retention—the number of degree seeking students (both full and part-time) who do not graduate and return for the subsequent semester. Measure Semester to Semester and Fall to Fall

Student Success—Student achieving the minimum GPA requirements for each semester and achieving their educational goals as measured by certificate or degree attainment

Registration—process students go through to schedule and register for courses for a specific semester

Orientation—specialized programming designed to help students enter and connect with WWCC

Advising—building connections with students, serving as a resource and helping them with academic planning and scheduling

IV. WWCC's Student Engagement and Success Goals

In Preparation—FY11

A. Solicit feedback from involved constituents related to successes and challenges of academic advising and consider additional student success needs. (SAC, Senate, AAC, Divisions)
B. Revise job descriptions for staff who will work in the Center.
C. Gain administrative support for the overall plan for moving forward.
D. Hire a Director of Academic Advising to oversee the effort.
E. Work with the ACE IT Center Staff to assure everyone is on the same page in terms of commitment and direction.
F. Work with Student Success Services to engage people in an extended team to be a part of the effort.
G. Work with academic advisors to determine needs for support and better preparation.
H. Determine how career planning can be incorporated into the first year student experience.
I. Create a welcoming center where students feel comfortable seeking assistance and support.
J. Develop a marketing strategy to get students into the Center and to educate the campus community on the revamped philosophical approach and practical service activities of the Center.

Year One—FY12

A. Review and revise the mission for Western's academic advising to encompass the ACE IT Center concept.

B Develop a strategy for advising full-time students that involves a centralized hands-on approach for first-year students and a more faculty-involved and ocused effort for the students who are in good standing after their first year.

C. Develop strategies for intrusive hands-on intervention for students who enter with low GPA or ACT Scores or who test into two or more development studies courses.

D. Implement the online orientation and registration program for part-time, distance, and students who cannot attend early registration programs.

E. Develop standard indicators regarding student status and achievement that are routinely tracked over time.

F. Expand the web presence for advising and other student engagement information and incorporate non-traditional methods for helping students with questions, concerns and scheduling (for example, virtual advising, on-line chat, search-based FAQs, telephone advising using Skype, Elluminate or other media).

G. Work with the Vice President for Student Learning and other academic leaders to develop a strategy for determining which faculty should advise, how they are recognized, and how they are evaluated. Develop an advisor job for advising and student engagement.

H. Develop a full training program for advisors.

I. Review the current academic alert/probation/suspension policy and procedures and make recommendations for changes in the process.

J. Begin to determine cohort groups of students who can be targeted for special tracking, advising strategies and other student success initiatives.

K. Get trained on MAP-Works and develop an intervention strategy for high risk students.

L. Incorporate all of the separate activities of the staff relocated to the ACE Center into a coordinated whole. Determine where redundancy and unnecessary activities can be combined or replaced.

M. Participate in the Freshman Experience Class targeted for Athletes for FY12 with the thought in mind to expand the program to the rest of the college community in future years. Work closely with the Learning Center.

N. Implement the Student Satisfaction Inventory from Noel Levitz (given on opposite years from CCSSE).

O. Continue the Noel Levitz 2nd Year Survey.

P. Develop a strong program of follow-up for students who do not graduate and do not register in a timely fashion for the following semester. Track data on students who do not return.

Q. Play an active role in WWCC's College Completion Agenda.

R. Work with Financial Aid to promote scholarships designed to encourage retention and completion.

Year Two—FY13

A. Develop a comprehensive written plan for advising and supporting all identified WWCC cohorts of students.

B. Review and set stretch goals for retention and completion.

C. Expand the use of MAP-Works to the campus community for more formal intervention strategies.
D. Work on articulation relationships to assure that agreements are up-to-date and information is shared with the campus community.
E. Complete a procedures manual for activities of the ACE IT Center.
F. Participate in the master planning effort to determine if the current location is the ideal location for the center.
G. Develop a comprehensive and on-going orientation program for new students.
H. Develop strategies for addressing retention and support of students after their first year.
I. Develop a strong transfer information and transition programming system.
J. Develop consistent strategies for utilizing the SENSE, CCSSE, and SSI to determine student engagement and success challenges and work with the rest of the college community to develop strategies to address them.
K. Create a complete calendar of advisor training and interaction.
L. Develop a plan for implementing a required freshman year experience class.
M. Develop strategies to assure that students are creating educational plans for their entire WWCC experience and that appropriate technology is being fully utilized.

Year Three—FY14

A. Develop concrete relationships to activities of the Behavioral Intervention Team and Assessment Team.
B. Review current trends and further incorporate technology into the advising and student engagement functions. Consider how we could use social networking and other Internet trends.
C. Streamline advising and student engagement processes in outreach sites and for online students.
D. Review and update all tools provided to advisors.
E. Expand utilization of the data gathered from the Noel-Levitz 2nd Year Student Survey.
F. Help continuing students develop educational or work plans that take them beyond Western.
G. Create exit interviews and follow-up survey for students who leave or do not return to WWCC.
H. Create a communication strategy for sharing advising and career information with the rest of the campus community.

V. Staffing and Services for the ACE IT Center

Staffing - Staffing responsibilities are listed below. Actual assignments will be modified based on the strengths, experience, interests, and education of each individual.

- Associate Vice President for Student Success Services—Oversees the entire Center and supervises the Director. Provides strategic direction to the program. Responsible for MAP-Works implementation and oversight.

- Administrative Assistant to the Associate Vice President—provides clerical support for various student retention projects including registration programs.

- Director of Academic Advising (professional) – Responsible for supervision and oversight of the entire Center. Responsible for assuring that goals are addressed and carried out.

- Career Counselor & Internship Coordinator (professional) – general advisor, career assessment, career counseling and workshops, career fair, internship program, member of the MAP-Works team.

- Advisor (professional) – General Advisor, oversees COMPASS placement testing and specialized advising for part-time and distance students, GED recipients and students with placement in three developmental courses, member of the MAP-Works team.

- ACE IT Center Office Assistant (clerical) – reception duties, scheduling appointments, reporting, maintaining career and transfer libraries.

- COMPASS Test Aide (part-time clerical) (COMPASS placement testing)

- Outreach advisors—while not a formal part of the Center staff, this group will be trained in the overall philosophy of the Center and in the practical aspects of doing advising, life planning and coaching, and career counseling.

Service - Those benefiting from services at the Advising & Career Center include WWCC students (full-time, part-time, online, and outreach), faculty, staff, and the community (including prospective students and employers).

- **New Students**--The Center will serve entering students by supervising the COMPASS placement testing program, assuring students take required developmental courses as early in their program as possible; conducting New Student Registration Programs and checking course prerequisites to ensure that students are registered appropriately.

- **Continuing students** will be offered "drop in" services and scheduled appointments to help them transition to faculty advisors, plan schedules and develop degree plans to meet their academic goals. Prerequisites will be checked for all continuing students. Using the MAP-Works Retention Tool, targeted intervention services and follow up will be provided to students at the highest risk of dropping out. Utilize intrusive strategies for students who are on probation.

- **Part-time and distance students** will be provided with asynchronous advising services through the Center using email, telephone, Skype, and other relevant technology. The online orientation, up-to-date website information and frequent Mustang Cruiser announcements will keep this population informed and connected to College advising services.

- **Transfer services**—a transfer library of four-year colleges and universities and transfer planning services will be provided in the Center. Sessions will focus on academic as well as personal transition issues. Regular transfer workshops will include programming for students and guest sessions with recruiters from transfer colleges. The Center will maintain a **career library** and assist students with career assessment, resumes and applications for internships and full- and part-time jobs.

- **Faculty** will benefit from the Center as a resource for relevant advisor training and information. The Center staff will closely monitored advising loads and update WebAdvisor each semester to remove graduates and students no longer attending WWCC and add new students. Advisee lists will be distributed to all academic advisors to encourage advisors to provide ongoing communication and support to advisees. Permanent advisors should be the first to assist their assigned students, and "advisor shopping" at the Center will not be encouraged.

- **Community**—The Center staff will provide community workshops on key topics of interest including career assessment, academic planning and resource location. They will assist with workshops provided by the Student Development Center and coordinate with other Student Success Services initiatives on student engagement and strategic enrollment management.

VI. Facilities, Equipment and Technology

The ACE IT Center will be located on the second floor of the Annex on the Rock Springs Campus. The facilities include space for a reception area and clerical assistant, storage for Registration Program materials and other supplies, offices for the three professional staff, space for career and transfer libraries, three kiosks with computers for COMPASS and career assessment testing, and a large conference area for student workshops and advisor training. Activity to move offices and create a comfortable gathering and learning environment will take place in the Summer 2011.

Outside the Center's offices are two study tables with chairs, a computer kiosk, a lounge area, and restrooms. Classrooms in the Annex area are heavily utilized and will help generate traffic to the Center and can also be used for Center workshops. The Annex is located near the main campus entrance, Information Desk, Registration & Records, and Admissions.

VIII. Strengths, Limitations and Opportunities

Strengths of the proposed Advising & Career Center include providing a larger space for centralized student services with staff working together to provide testing, advising, career, and transfer information. WWCC students can be helped in a "one stop" environment. The Center is located close to Registration and Records and Financial Aid for easier movement of students to those offices when needed. Additional staff can be involved in the New Student Registration Programs and cross-training will help with any office coverage issues.

A limitation for the Center is that WWCC's advising model continues to rely heavily on faculty advising. The new Vice President for Student Learning will need to embrace faculty advising and support recognition of advising in the employment contract and evaluation process with incentives for good advisors. Faculty who are not strong advisors must be offered alternative activities for their contributions. A regular evaluation and feedback process for academic advisors will help with training and support the importance of the effort. "Healthy" communication should inform an advisor when incorrect advice is given to a student. Ongoing training should help alleviate this concern.

After the Center is established, other opportunities will be considered such as a First Year Experience program and Service Learning initiatives. More work should be done with special audiences, including first generation students (nationally, more than one quarter of these students leave after their first year -- four times the dropout rate of second generation students), commuter students and veterans.

IX. Assessment of the ACE IT Center

Defining goals and developing measures for outcomes for the new Center will demonstrate transparency and accountability for student success. Although no Western new program portfolio will be due for a few years, the Center should begin collecting direct data on the number of student appointments, workshops given, New Student Registration Programs, success of the academic alert and probation programs and indirect measures including surveys on student satisfaction from SENSE, CCSSE, the graduate exit survey, student focus groups, and advisor surveys. This data can be compared to standards set by CAS, NACADA core values and WWCC's Guiding Principles. Annual action plans should be redone to reflect changing priorities. Only through assessment can we know how well we are meeting the needs of our students.

Benchmarks

Retention (Degree Seeking FT)

Semester	Fall to Spring	Fall to Fall
Fall 2006	81.3%	54.9%
Fall 2007	80.3%	58.7%
Fall 2008	82.2%	60.3%
Fall 2009	81.5%	58.6%
Fall 2010	83.5%	In Process

Benchmark goal: Fall to Spring 83%, Fall to Fall 60%