UNIVERSITY *of* WEST FLORIDA

PERFORMANCE FUNDING IMPROVEMENT PLAN

DECEMBER 2014 — 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 had not re-enrolled. 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 is concentrating 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.

December 2014 — Expectations	December 2014 — Status Report
Create a separate College dedicated to student success. The College will be known as *University College* and will have overarching responsibility for student academic support, professional readiness, retention initiatives and University advising.	University College was launched Fall semster 2014.
Hire a dean for *University College*.	Dr. Greg Lanier was named Dean of University College.
Appoint an advising "czar" to oversee and coordinate all University advising.	Kathy Parker, Associate Dean of Univeristy College, was hired to serve as University "czar."

Report: During the fall semester, UWF created *University College* to streamline student services into a comprehensive unit that will enhance the effectiveness of student support services. A centralized, "one-stop-shop" for student support is a common model in 21st century American universities. The college consist of four major units and initiatives: (1) First year advising center, (2) Kugelman Honors Program, (3) General Studies Program, and (4) Professional Readiness Initiatives. Creation of University College included the hiring of a Dean of University College and appointing an advising "czar" to oversee and coordinate all university advising.

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

December 2014 — Expectations	December 2014 — Status Report
Hire 3 new academic advisors.	Tamera Kelso, Lindsey Byrd, and Rafael Arreaza-Scrocchi were hired as advisors in University College.

Report: While UWF has been actively engaged in enhancing and strengthening advising services through the campus, hiring 3 new academic advisors provides support in areas of identified need. One of the advisors is assigned to University College. The other two are assigned to support advising in the College of Arts, Social Sciences & Humanities and the College of Science, Engineering & Health. This will ensure that a professional advisor is assigned to each college to support the faculty advisors.

Develop degree completion tools for students.

December 2014 — Expectations	December 2014 — Status Report
Create and disseminate a *Financial Literacy Program*.	A Financial Literacy Plan and Finacial Literacy Committee were approved by the Provost Fall semester 2014. Initial activities include: Financial Literacy Bootcamp (October), Financial Aid Awareness Day (October), College Survival Skills Course (October), Day of Declaration (November), Financial Aid Survival Guide published (December), Financial Literacy Website launched (December).

Report: Some of the major factors that slow students in making timely progress toward a degree are a myriad of financial obstacles. UWF seeks to better equip students to understand the complex landscape of options and requirements that often accompany paying for a university education by developing a *Financial Literacy Program f*or all students. The program, initiated in Fall 2014, is raising awareness among students about financial resources and more importantly, provides financial aid literacy information. Financial literacy materials will be distributed to all students throughout the academic year.

Purchase and implement new degree audit and planning software.

December 2014 — Expectations	December 2014 — Status Report
Implement *DegreeWorks* degree audit system. Integrate 8 semester degree plans.	*DegreeWorks audit system* implemented in October 2014.
Purchase and implement *College Scheduler* software platform in order to create more refined, targeted and critical course scheduling. Integrate with *DegreeWorks*.	*College Scheduler* launched in September 2014. Training for faculty and staff have been offered throughout Fall semester.

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, 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.

December 2014 — Expectations	December 2014 — Status Report
Secure approval of *Progress to Degree Policy*.	Policy approved by President Bense, December 2014.
Secure approval of revised *Attendance Policy*.	Policy approved by President Bense, December 2014.

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, and are intended to 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 withdraws 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.

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.

December 2014 — Expectations	December 2014 — Status Report
Administer *The Student Strengths Inventory©* to FTIC students through *Beacon* software.	Inventory administered to 1309 FTIC students in Fall semester. University College advisors met with students identified by Inventory as "at-risk."

Rationale:

Administer Student Strengths Inventory© through Beacon software

Last year, UWF conducted a pilot program through the software *Beacon*. The program administers *The Student Strengths Inventory© (SSI),* which is an assessment designed to help UWF develop data-driven, evidence-based student success solutions. The SSI is administered to incoming FTIC students at UWF during summer orientation and identifies individuals who might be at risk based on non-cognitive factors, such as resiliency and academic self-efficacy. The results provide predictive models needed to develop and suggest programs, plan interventions and offer assistance to specific targeted students.

Increase communication with students regarding the Excess Hours Policy.

December 2014 — Expectations	December 2014 — Status Report
Distribute a supplemental *Excess Hours Guide* to all faculty, staff and students.	*Excess Hours Guide* was distributed to faculty, staff and students via webguide, online distribution and hard copy.

Rationale: 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, we discovered that meeting the minimum requirements of the law did not serve the full needs of students. Based on that data, we identified a series of areas in which our system of connecting with students could be improved.

The *Excess Hours Guide* will be used as a resource to ensure UWF faculty, staff and students are fully informed of all aspects related to excess hours surcharges. The guide provides relevant information on credit hours that count toward excess hours and semester-based exemptions, and is used as a resource to educate students on the implications of changing their major and excessively withdrawing from courses.

Implement Summer Success Program for FTIC students on academic warning.

December 2014 — Expecations	December 2014 — Status Report
Evaluate 2014 *Summer Success Program* pilot.	Summer program was evaluted and compared to similar program of the previous year. It was determined UWF willl continue the 2014 model because it reaches "at-risk" students capable of improving their grade point averages to acceptable levels.

Rationale: 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 pilot program is currently being conducted during Summer 2014. An evaluation of the pilot program was conducted during the Fall 2014 semester. During the Spring 2015 semester, at-risk FTIC students will be recruited into the 2015 *Summer Success Program*.

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.