Trinity Washington University College of Arts & Sciences

Academic Advising Report

Fall 2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview of Advising

Academic advising at Trinity Washington University’s College of Arts and Sciences, CAS, employs a high-touch, personalized advising model to deliver comprehensive, proactive retention services for students enrolled in Trinity’s historic undergraduate women’s college, with the ultimate goal of student persistence and retention from the first year through graduation.

Continuing Programs in the Fall 2012 Semester

CAS’ cohort advising for UND, UND-N, UND-E, probationary, transfer and dean’s list students, and Triage programs were continued for the fall 2012 semester. Enforcement of Triage policies were increased; the CAS advising website introduce new professional advisors and streamlined the navigation process; the “rolling alert” (early, mid-term, withdrawal deadline) communication and service delivery systems were high priority during the fall semester. This report focuses on outcomes for four of these initiatives: CAS alert systems, the advising website, the Triage program, and the UND-N cohort.

Key Findings

* Fewer than 25% of Trinity’s CAS students were placed on some form of probation in Fall 2011 or Spring 2012; 100% of probation students received a communication from the professional advising team and 43% **met** with advising, academic support, or both
* Early alert data suggest that students struggled most with low performance on exams and quizzes, attendance issues, and not completing homework assignments
* 40% of Triage cases were requested by freshman students, and of these, 29 freshman students (60% of freshman Triage cases) were pregnant or had pregnancy related issues
* 19% of Triage students were placed on some form of probation
* 2% of CAS student who applied for Fall 2012 admission to the Nursing program were admitted. The decrease in CAS admits is due to the new admission policy as described in the report.
* The average GPA of the UND-N professional advising cohort is 2.9.

Key Recommendations

* Focus student workshops and training on using Self-Service, time management, attendance and missing assignments issues
* Examine ways to increase Academic Services’ data tracking
* Increase communication about the nature and scope of Triage services to faculty and students
* Increase communication to faculty about the purpose and importance of the CAS alert system
* Communicate new policies and admission processes to the UND-N cohort, including procedures for assisting students to raise their GPAs
* Add professional advising staff as the number and complexity of the CAS student population grows
* Enhance advising professional development

**Introduction**

Academic advising at the Trinity Washington University College of Arts and Sciences provides comprehensive, proactive retention services for students enrolled in Trinity’s historic undergraduate women’s college. The Advising team reports to the Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Science, and forms part of the decanal team overseen by the Dean of the College. Advising liaises between Trinity students and the University’s academic programs and ensures that Trinity students receive the attention they require with regard to academic planning and administrative policies/procedures.

Trinity’s CAS advising model utilizes high-touch, individualized, personalized service delivery to proactively outreach to students at multiple phases of their academic journeys, with a focus on our most vulnerable students. Our advising philosophy embraces the idea that each student presents with unique strengths that must be nurtured and unique challenges and constraints that must be addressed; the ultimate goal student empowerment so that they are able to problem-solve their academic and life challenges with resiliency and, eventually, independence. These goals are met in many ways, and begin with the development of strong advising relationships grounded in trust and supported by interaction with academic services, student services, health and wellness, enrollment services, campus ministry, resident life, athletics, and all other offices providing holistic, comprehensive services to Trinity’s population of college women. The ultimate, over-arching goal of Trinity’s CAS Advising Team is student persistence and retention from the first year through graduation.

Specific functions executed by CAS academic advising include:

* Receiving and troubleshooting calls, emails, and visits from new first-year, transfer, and returning students
* Coordinating the CAS Triage Program, which entails intensive advising of students in crisis situations
* Assisting faculty in their advising roles, including planning and delivering faculty training workshops, individual consultation, and support
* Communicating to students, faculty and all stakeholders in a timely manner regarding advising, registration and issues resolution
* Working with the deans and other decanal staff to collect and analyze advising-related data
* “Spot” analysis of transfer transcripts in order to register students in a timely manner, as well as performing transcript evaluations for transfer credits
* Reviewing and ensuring the accuracy of academic standing decisions and graduation audits
* Maintaining the CAS advising website

This semester, advising continued to track retention and persistence by examining multiple data points that may factor into attrition. By collecting data from enrollment services, advisors, faculty and other campus offices (Dean of Students; Health and Wellness) regarding students who were registered Fall 2012 but who are not registered for Spring 2012 or who submitted withdraw forms, emails to faculty and advisors, or other forms of communication indicating they plan not to return to Trinity. This data analysis informed advising about enrollment trends and allowed planning for more targeted programs to preventively minimize non-persistence factors. .

**Fall 2012 Academic Standing:**

Of the 318 students enrolled for the fall 2012 semester

* ***74%*** *were placed on probation (235 students)*
* ***22%*** *were on Academic Watch (70 students)*
* ***10%*** *were on academically suspended (3 students)*
* ***31%*** *students were dismissed (10 students)****.***

On [\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_], every student placed on academic probation was sent an official notification of their standing by mail. In addition to a letter detailing the student’s change in academic standing, the envelope contained the “Checklist for Academic Success.” The enclosure outlined the 3 requirements associated with academic probation: a meeting with a professional advisor, a meeting with Dr. Kimberly LaBoone in Academic Support Services and academic support workshop attendance.

**Early Alert Analysis**

In fall 2012 faculty and instructional staff contacted the professional advising staff and Academic Services with the names of students who were failing their courses within the first 3 weeks of classes.

**This year the professional advisors directly contacted 100% of the early alert students in fall 2012 semester.**

In addition to providing faculty with the names of advisees in danger of failing courses, advising also provided Academic Services with the names of students who received alerts in multiple courses to signal the “high risk” for academic intervention.

The design of the early alert form requires instructors to indicate the primary reasons that individual students are not doing well in their courses.

**Of the 290 early alert notices received in fall 2012,**

* ***25%*** *of instructors who submitted early alert notices indicated that students were failing the course because of “missed assignments.”*
* ***23%*** *of instructors who submitted early alert notices indicated that students were failing the course because they “low performance on exams and quizzes.”*
* ***10%*** *of instructors who submitted early alert forms indicated that students were failing the course because of “poor attendance.”*

Early alert data also reveals that some disciplines are more of a challenge than others for our students. A review of the early alert data in both Fall 2012 illustrates that Math is the most challenging discipline followed by English, Psychology, and Philosophy. However, this evidence is strictly anecdotal because the criterion for submitting early alerts is not standardized. Thus, some professors simply submit more early alert forms than others while some professors do not submit early alert forms at all. This is especially distressing given that the numbers of students with failing grades are proven to not have received an early alert for the course and, thus, no intervention from professional advisors or academic services.

**Recommendations**

Early alert data suggests that students are in trouble because they are not completing homework assignments which would increase their chances of performing well on exams and quizzes. In response, we might experiment with strategies to improve self-guided learning experiences. Increasing tutoring and academic services resources that allow students to independently seek assistance may increase academic skills and decrease test anxiety and related barriers to academic success.

**Triage Program Report: Academic Year 2011-2012**

The Triage Program at Trinity Washington University assists students who have an emergency situation while enrolled in courses and who expect to be absent from classes for an extended period of time. The program assisted 123 students during the academic year of 2011-2012. Students were referred to the Triage program through faculty, staff, the Health and Wellness center, and online.

Triage services are classified into four categories:

1. **Medical Emergency:** This category includes absences resulting from physical or emotional health issues.
2. **Family Emergency**: This category involves family illness which may result in the student caring for family members or attending funerals. Family issues include emergencies which require the student to assist family members.
3. **Other Emergency**: This category involves students with a combination of family and medical emergencies.
4. **Personal Emergency**: This category involves personal situations in which the student is unable to attend classes.

Program Case Points of Interest:

**40% of the Triage cases that were handled were requested by freshman students. Of these, a total of 29 Trinity freshmen (60% of freshmen requesting Triage) were pregnant or had pregnancy related issues.**

**10% of personal emergencies were cases of students that were victims of domestic violence**

**19% of the students registered in the Triage program were placed on Academic Watch, Probation 1, or Probation 2.**

**New Program Initiatives**

This year the Triage program made connections with other campus departments. By connecting students with Health & Wellness, we were able to have more information to better assist them with academic decisions and provide support to students with chronic and serious conditions. We were also better informed as to the status of students upon their return to campus. Housing assisted us through locating students and providing a contact person (Triage Program Advisor) for students who have been noticeably missing class.

Chart 1: Reasons for requesting Triage services in Fall 2011 (N=68)

*53% Medical Emergency (31 % of this total were pregnant or it was pregnancy related)*

*25% Family Emergency (Loss of childcare or homelessness)*

*10% Other (combination of family and medical)*

*12% Personal Emergency*

Chart 2: Reasons for requesting Triage Services in Spring 2012 (N=55)

*49% Medical Emergency*

*31% Family Emergency (17% death in the family)*

*13% Other (combination of medical and family)*

*4% Personal Emergency*

Total Triage Cases: 123

***Note:*** 53% of the students who registered in the Triage program received face to face advising from the Office of Academic Advising.

**Program Issues**

* The Triage program experienced difficulties communicating the program guidelines and responsibilities to adjunct faculty and to faculty that were in programs outside of CAS. Adjunct professors were sometimes unresponsive to Triage emails or did not understand the program. Students enrolled in courses offered through the School of Professional Studies sometimes had trouble catching up on assignments upon their return due to the accelerated nature of Term 1 and Term 2 courses.
* Faculty referrals were sometimes problematic. Triage is a voluntary support service, and although professors were well-intentioned, some students felt pressured into registering with the Triage program.
* Outreach to students registered in the Triage program became increasingly difficult to contact due to a change in phone number or limited to no email access.

**Triage Referrals**

The students that were referred to the Triage program requested assistance online, via email, phone, or an office visit.

* 32% Submitted an online form
* 26% Walk-in
* 21% Faculty referral
* 11% Health & Wellness
* 8% Dean of Students

***Notes on referrals***

Students expressed that filling out the online Triage Request form made it easier for them to alert Trinity and simultaneously handle their emergency. Other students felt more comfortable seeking Triage assistance when they were accompanied by a faculty member that they trusted.

**Academic Standing**

*19% of the students registered in the Triage program were placed on Academic Watch, Probation 1, or Probation 2. (23 students)*

At the end of the academic year of 2011- 2012, twenty-three students were listed for review on the Academic Standing list. After evaluating the students, the data indicated that students Triage cases were due to family and medical emergencies.

**Recommendations**

* The Triage program will need to increase its web visibility and accessibility. Faculty and staff should encourage students to submit online Triage request forms. The forms provide up to date information on how to contact the student, the nature of their emergency, and the last date the student attended class. Moving forward, the Triage program will provide online faculty referrals to make it easier for professors to alert the Office of Advising of students who may be in crisis.
* The program needs solid structures and next steps to help students come back to class and re-adjust to the classroom. Moving forward, the program will need to set guidelines on acceptable amounts of time to miss courses in regards to grief periods.
* Managing expectations of students became increasingly difficult. The program will work to ensure that students understand their role and responsibility in the process.
* The program will coordinate an outreach plan to let students know of important dates such as midterms, last date to withdraw, and finals.

**Advisement Assessment for CAS UND-N Students: Fall 2012**

On July 26, 2012, there were new admission policies for Trinity’s Nursing Program. These new admission policies included:

* A reduced number of admitted students to 60 per year;
* All pre-requisite math, science, and social science courses must be completed at Trinity; and
* No prior credits more than two-years old will be accepted to fulfill general education requirements.

All students admitted for the Fall 2012 semester and who paid the deposit fee after the July 26, 2012 memo were subject to these new admission policies.

**Data collection:**

* Number of CAS students who applied to the Nursing Program for Fall 2012 admittance:
* Of 81 total student applications, 25 were from CAS (31%);
* Of 30 admitted students, 6 were CAS students (2%).
* With regards to academic standing:
* There were no UND-N advisees with midterm alerts.
* The average GPA of the UND-N professional advising cohort is 2.8.
* Conclusions:
* We need to bring the average UND-N GPA up to a 3.0 – 3.5 to be competitive with other schools;
* We need to increase the average TEAS score to > 80%;
* We need to inform students of all academic support systems;
  + - CAS students are better prepared regarding expectations of the Nursing program;
    - Students are more realistic about GPA and grade expectations;
    - Students submitted their clinical documentation in a timely manner.

**Overall Conclusions and Recommendations**

CAS Professional Advising is moving toward increasing faculty involvement with effective, accurate, wrap-around advising with the goal of student persistence and success in multiple measureable ways. Better tracking and outreach in our “rolling alert” system, enhanced procedures in our probationary advising services, improved Triage practices, the cohort advising model, and faculty and advisor development were new initiatives in Fall 2011 that already shows increase in performance in math courses and overall retention.

Challenges in advising continue to center on the expanded array of functions advising is called on to perform. The addition of new University programs and services leading to increased enrollments is a most welcome campus development. At the same time, we acknowledge that this positive and necessary expansion puts increased pressure on advising in terms of higher student loads, more complex advising protocols, and the presentation of students with much more complicated advising issues, including multiple transfer transcripts, differentiated advising needs, and an elevated spate of academic, personal, financial, medical and life challenges. Advising has rallied to meet this challenge with stream-lined, more efficient procedures which we will continue to examine, assess and improve. We do foresee that as our student population continues to grow in both numbers and complexity, our professional advising staff must keep pace in numbers of staff positions and enhanced professional development and training opportunities.