

Student Success

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This RFY strategy sought improvements in the welcoming, assistance, and development of students who gain admittance to the University, as well as improved communication and outreach to the same. It called for an annual review of communication, policies, procedures, and programs affecting the first year.

Since 2005, the institution has administered the **College Student Inventory (CSI)** to incoming freshmen. The instrument measures students' self-perceived dropout proneness, any academic difficulty, educational stress, and other risk factors. This data was incorporated into SSC Campus, and it is now a component of a new homegrown "at-risk" model.

Beginning in the fall of 2016, the University began to administer the so-called **Mid-Year Student Assessment (MYSA)** produced by the same company. Both instruments will provide us with a baseline of data for targeted interventions in the coming academic year. (See academic coaching.)

Also since 2005, the University has administered the **National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)**. The one change wrought by RFY was to increase the frequency of its administration from every 3 years to every 2. The survey is administered to incoming freshmen and seniors; because it is voluntary, it does not allow us to track individual students, but it does give us a sense of how each cohort perceives the degree of support provided by, and quality of interactions with, faculty and staff.

As part of this effort to effect a cultural shift, in October Academic Affairs convened a **Student Success Taskforce** to coordinate faculty and staff efforts at increasing retention and graduation rates. The group identified initiatives already underway and new near-term strategies in four areas:

- Pre-enrollment engagement
- Enrollment interventions
- Student engagement and support services interventions
- Curricular support and interventions

Last, the RFY team developed a **Campus Climate Survey** to assess what faculty, staff, and student workers felt was the current state of our efforts to welcome, communicate with, and assist admitted students. We are also using the instrument to measure how we are fostering a sense of belonging and growth mindset. As of today, some 200 respondents have filled out a survey. **(If you haven't yet done so, please fill out a survey!)**

Expansion of Academic Coaching

The goal of this RFY strategy is to engage in more targeted interventions. While all students are eligible for assistance from the Career Counseling and Academic Advising Center (CCAC) staff, the focus of the academic coaches will be primarily on incoming first-time, full-time (FTFT) students and transfers with fewer than 30 credits.

To effect this change and to consolidate the advising services that were offered in disparate offices, in the AY16/17 we carried out a merger of the Career Center and Academic Advising Center. For the first time, advising staff will now have a full-time administrative assistant to provide clerical services and assistance with the development of "campaigns" in SSC.

The president also authorized a doubling of our advising/coaching staff, from 2 to 4 full-time personnel. Two new coaches are slated to begin work on 1 July, 2017.

This new CCAC and its staff have an **expanded mission**, with particular emphasis on:

- Career counseling from the first year that is scaffolded through the remainder of a student's college career.
- Regular interventions for FTFT freshmen and transfers under 30 credits around attendance, deficiency grades, and non-registration.
- Targeted interventions for elements of the same cohort around self-identified risk factors drawn from the CSI and MYSA and risk factors flagged in our homegrown risk model.

We see the increase in coaching staff as a significant part of the effort to reach the University's strategic goal of **increasing retention and graduation rates**.

Expansion of Supplemental Instruction

The use of supplemental instruction in mathematics courses preceded the RFY project, but the goal of this strategy was to continue to expand its use in other gateway math courses and investigate a scaling out of the practice beyond math.

Each year students in select math classes were provided waivers to gain entrance to **credit-bearing math classes** even if they did not pass the Accuplacer for Algebra exam, so long as they met certain other thresholds – e.g., a high enough aggregate GPA in high school. (We continued to administer the Accuplacer for Algebra for the purposes of tracking and analyzing these students.) Given the success of the first cohort of students, new credit-bearing courses with supplemental instruction were added each academic year:

- AY15/16, "Applied Statistics" (MATH 1700)
- AY16/17, "Introduction to Functions" (MATH 1250)
- AY17/18, "Business Statistics" (MATH 1800)

In the coming year, the campus is also slated to take up the question of whether to carry the **expansion of supplemental instruction** into courses that treat reading and writing or that rely upon broader quantitative literacy skills

This RFY strategy is a key component of our retention initiatives. It is designed to help students make a successful transition to university-level work, engage with campus resources, and connect and form bonds with faculty and staff.

A committee consisting of representatives from every academic department and the Honors program has met from November through May of this academic year. We are in the process of finalizing a memo to the Provost that lays out recommendations for the submission of a proposal to governance.

A high-level preview of our recommendations:

All first-time, full-time (FTFT) freshmen and transfers with fewer than 30 credits take a 3-credit FYE course in the fall term; this will require some sections in the spring term, especially for transfers.

Enrollments by metamajors (the composition of which need to be determined) and **thematic arrangement of content** – with a baseline of universal content – chosen by individual faculty or groups of faculty. The key here is **flexibility**.

Five student learning outcomes falling under three headings: academic mindsets, academic skills, and help-seeking and planning. The emphasis here is on metacognition and the teaching of reading and listening skills.

Co-curricular experiences (4 minimum). Faculty should be free to choose the balance between workshops and experiences, so long as students participate in 1 of each.

Broad consensus on the value of **linked courses (or learning communities)**, but for a variety of reasons the committee recommends not implementing now and reconsidering after the first cohort in the AY18/19.

The committee will also recommend **summer work** for any FYE committee volunteers and chart a course for the committee over the next academic year.

Last, the committee will solicit **feedback in the fall term through forums and surveys**. The goal here will be to incorporate suggestions prior to the submission of a proposal for the course to AUC.

Expansion of AIMS

The goal of this RFY strategy is to move undeclared (PREM) students more rapidly to advising with faculty members and into academic majors.

The **Academic Interests and Motivations (AIMS)** project was the product of a partnership between the STEM disciplines at Fitchburg State University and seven Massachusetts community colleges who took part in Complete College America's (CCA) Guided Pathways to Success (GPS) program.

Starting in the AY15/16, two cohorts of undeclared students who had indicated an interest in the STEM metamajor worked with advisors in the CCAC and faculty in STEM disciplines to select a major. It was conceived of as an **iterative process** of "funneling" students to a major.

This next academic year, we will begin the process of **scaling out the guided pathways beyond the STEM fields**. Throughout the spring of 2017, Academic Affairs has worked closely with departments in the arts and humanities, social and behavioral sciences, and professional disciplines to develop similar AIMS.

This summer, **all undeclared students will be asked to select a metamajor**. Should they select one, they will now immediately receive a faculty advisor in that collection of disciplines, with whom they will remain until the major has been selected.



Increased Student Success

Development of a comprehensive, integrated approach to student success.

Implementation of evidence-based, literature-informed strategies.

Enactment of a cultural system of student success

Application of clear pathways for student learning

Enactment of student success mindset

Development of a comprehensive, integrated approach to student success.

Student Success Task Force



EAB

Student Success Collaborative™

Implementation of evidence-based, literature-informed strategies.



Expansion of academic coaching
Supplemental instruction
Creation of first-year experience
Creation of peer-mentoring program

Enactment of a cultural system of student success



Strategic relationships with P-12 partners
Improved communication with prospective students
Improved transitions to university-level work
Increased collaboration with 2-year institutions

Application of clear pathways for student learning



Metamajors (AIMs) for PREMs and the FYE
“15 to Finish” and “Think 30”
General education revision
Math pathways
Cleaner transitions for transfer students

Enactment of student success mindset



Growth mindset
A sense of belonging
Standards of care

Center for Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning Hours Fall 2017

September 19, 3:30PM

Teaching Gender Across the Curriculum: Content, Pedagogy, and Practice

Patricia Arend, Behavioral Sciences

Katharine Covino, English Studies

Viera Lorencová, Communications Media

Heather Urbanski, English Studies

Fitchburg State faculty will share their experiences with incorporating gender studies scholarship and feminist pedagogy into their courses. Faculty will present pedagogical examples and talk about their experiences in an à la carte fashion to maximize opportunities for instructors from diverse disciplines to find applicability in their own teaching. Whether you are new to the study of gender or a seasoned scholar, please come join the conversation!

October 17, 3:30PM

Implicit Curriculum: Tackling the impostor phenomenon in academia

Lena Ficco, Psychological Science

Undergraduate academic and career advising often includes tips on negotiating, but what happens when students believe they lack attributes to negotiate with? The imposter phenomenon (IP), an experience of intellectual fraudulence and success through luck rather than ability, undermines student success particularly in high-achieving minorities. The IP diminishes professional development and networking through missed connections and collaborations with classmates, mentors, administrators, and future colleagues. Through self-reflection and small and large group discussion, session attendees will: gain increased awareness of the IP in higher education; identify and discuss risk factors that contribute to the IP in undergraduates and their faculty and administrative role models; and lastly, identify and discuss teaching, advising, and mentoring strategies that support students and their role models while challenging discipline and campus culture, such as performance- rather than mastery-focused learning, that promotes imposter feelings in academia.

November 21, 3:30PM

Athens Besieged: An introduction to game play in the college classroom

Kate Jewell, History and Center for Teaching and Learning

In this session, faculty will play a condensed version of the role-playing games that are part of the Reacting to the Past pedagogy. Games are not just for history classrooms; they introduce students to using data, texts, and analysis in many fields, including STEM, literature, art history, nutrition, and international affairs. Students must work through ethical and strategic challenges, make decisions in character, and speak and argue to influence others. Come experience this innovative approach to teaching and play the one-session game *Athens Besieged*. *Can you save the people of Athens from the Spartans and preserve its democracy?*