

Baker College, MI

Project: The Development of a Centralized Advising Framework to Support a Quarter-to-Semester Calendar Transition

Version 1.0- Project

Q: What is the current status of your project?

A: In-progress

Q: Please indicate the original project start date, original project end date, and anticipated completion date if project is not completed. Please list dates on separate lines.

A: Original project start date was December 22, 2015, with the implementation of the project completed by December 20, 2016. The project was defined in scope as the creation and implementation of the AAS office; however, ongoing metrics and evaluations will be continuing through the full semester transition from August 2017 through December 2017.

Q: Briefly describe the current status of the project. Explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's most recent or soon-to-be submitted systems portfolio, if applicable.

A: As outlined in the project declaration, Baker College is transitioning from a quarter-based calendar to a system-based calendar. To support the transition, the College implemented a specialized academic advising process to provide students a successful path to graduation. During this transition, consistency of message, transparent communication, and customer service have been identified as essential to managing a quality student experience. The transition will be complete in August, 2017; however, substantial progress in establishing the framework and implementing the processes, as defined in the project plan, has already occurred.

Over the course of the past year, the College progressed on this action project in three key areas: the development of sufficient IT infrastructure to accommodate the project, the

definition of roles and human resource needs to support the project, and the execution of the project plan and associated processes. A steering committee was established to provide management and oversight. Committee membership included key personnel from advising (both face-to-face and online), the student services office, the Provost, campus presidents, and members of the IT team. In addition, ad hoc committees supported the project in targeted areas. Ad hoc committees included key areas of communications, student work flow, training, and implementation.

In the early stages of development the project team identified the need for IT infrastructure in three areas: reporting, call center capability, and centralized web-based communication tools. Each of these needs was completed in accordance with the established timelines. The College developed reporting capabilities in its Student Information System (SIS) to create Individualized Graduation Plans (IGP). The IGP reporting allows specialized advising staff members to generate a unique plan for each student to follow to ensure successful completion of program or matriculation to the semester system. Additionally, the College worked with IT to integrate capability within our existing infrastructure for the specialized advising office to have call center access. Finally, the College established a unique email alias and supporting email distribution network for the new specialized academic advising staff.

Initial meetings with the steering committee and supporting ad hoc groups helped to develop roles and responsibilities for the advising positions. Input was collected from current academic advisors, the Associate Provost of Student Services, and advising directors. Job descriptions, scope of work, and initial performance metrics were all defined during this process. The steering committee oversaw the hiring of the four Academic Advising Specialists (AAS) to staff the specialized advising office in January 2016. The committee worked to train the staff exhaustively over the course of the next month and the office began advising students in February of 2016. Initially, the steering committee had wanted to use a pre- and post-knowledge inventory to assess part of the on boarding and training of the new advisors; however, because of the tight timeline for implementation, and the depth and breadth of training received, the committee did not feel the pre-post model would yield a beneficial result and decided to focus the evaluation efforts on the student experience and process fidelity.

At this time, the office of AAS advisors is fully functional and advising students. At time of authorship, the action project has resulted in the creation of 1,936 IGPs with another 500 being developed through the AAS office. Part of the planning and communication strategy was to have a rolling calendar of student contact to solicit and complete IGP requests. Students were grouped and prioritized by proximity to graduation. The office continues to work through this strategy and is now engaging students who will transition to semesters with the College and graduate in the new semester calendar. In the initial project declaration the College asserted that in addition to the semester advising related to IGPs, the College would also have the AAS office provide assistance and support for some aspects of campus operations previously held by local academic advising offices. When fully implemented, the volume of IGP requests and associated work and rework proved more than planned. The decision was made to, for the immediate future, have the AAS focus on advising tasks related to development of student IGPs, and to have other tasks such as program changes remain the purview of the local campus academic advising office.

The steering committee continues to work on metrics and assessment of the project. Two areas of assessment defined in the project planned were deemed impractical and changed. As stated above, the use of pre-post knowledge inventory was changed. Additionally, the College had originally planned to use the number of students who graduated from their program of study under their original IGP plan. Because of the high volume of students who made changes to their plan, failed a course, withdrew or dropped a class, and made other IGP modifications, the original plan was no longer viewed as an effective measure of the larger process. Instead, the College plans to focus on student satisfaction and graduation rates as the primary metrics. These assessments are currently in development and will be implemented once the College transitions to semesters in Fall 2017. At that time, appropriate perspective of the efficacy of advising received will be possible. The College continues to have students utilize the AAS office. The College will continue to focus on compiling appropriate graduation and student satisfaction information to assess this AQIP action project.

In summary, the project to develop and implement a specialized semester transition advising team is complete. The work of these newly established structures, processes, and metrics is ongoing. One of the largest and most comprehensive strategic initiatives the College has in process is the change from a quarter-based system to a semester-based system. The semester transition impacts several other strategic initiatives including, but not restricted to, addressing changing enrollment demographics, new marketing strategy and regime, and addressing campus population decline over the past five years. All of these initiatives will be addressed in the upcoming portfolio process in 2019. The success of this action project is considered mission critical because a key successful measurement of the semester transition process will be from a student experience perspective.

List the project goals as stated in the original project declaration along with the Q: metrics/measures for assessing the progress for each goal.

A: Project Goals: The plan is designed to provide the student a successful path to graduation. To streamline communications and ensure consistency and accuracy of academic advising across multiple campuses, the decision was made to create a new specialized academic advising structure. The specialized academic advising staff will be accountable for providing student academic guidance and information related to the semester transition.

As stated previously, there are three primary goals to examine:

1. Path to Graduation - To evaluate the goal of creating a successful path to graduation for students enrolled during the semester transition, the College desired to track the number of IGPs created, the number of revised IGPs, and the number of advising phone calls or virtual engagements routed through the new specialized advising office. As of February 7, 2017, the following information and data has been collected:

Total IGPs created: 1936

Total IGPs in progress: 500

Total Advising Calls or Virtual Engagements: 5000+

Total IGP Revisions: At this time the College has decided not to evaluate this criterion. Difficulties in tracking changes to an IGP through our current student information system (SIS), as well as student influences and external factors prompted the College to remove this as an evaluative criterion for this project.

Graduation Rate: The College plans to assess graduate rate of students who engaged in the IGP process and receive advising through the Academic Advising Specialists (AAS) office; however, at time of authorship this information remain unavailable as the majority of students complete coursework towards the end of our current winter and spring quarters. The College will monitor and evaluate this metric at the appropriate time and as the needed information becomes available.

2. Ensure Consistency of Communication and Message - As stated in the project summary, the College created an ad hoc committee focused on communication strategies. These strategies were implemented on two levels. The College worked to achieve a consistent message and information for our internal stakeholders, specifically, staff, faculty, and administrators. The second component was to ensure a consistent in message to students through the AAS office. The following data points/milestones have been achieved as a part of this project implementation.

Institutional Consistency: Baker College provided consistent information on the semester transition strategy via live WebEx town hall meetings, recorded training, and a series of publish Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and informational documents.

Student Messaging: Baker College used strategically developed and deployed standardized communication messages that were made available through the student portal. The College also developed and implemented consistent processes and communication pathways. Student FAQs and supporting documents were developed and distributed. Finally, the College used, and continues to use targeted phone and email communication to provide consistent outreach and messaging to students.

3. Student Satisfaction: The College plans to assess student satisfaction at two points via survey. At time of authorship, the appropriate time-based milestones have not achieved to make this assessment possible. The College plans to assess student satisfaction with the advising received through the AAS office after the Spring 2017 graduation for those students who were able to complete their program of study prior to the semester transition. The second data set will be collected from those students who transitioned from the quarter system to the semester system and assess their satisfaction of the communication received with the advising processes.

Describe what has been accomplished with this project over the past year, specifically referring to quantifiable results that show progress. You may need to include a Q: discussion clarifying how the original goals and anticipated outcomes may have shifted during the year.

A: By in large the move to develop a specialized academic advising office to support the College during the transition from quarters to semesters has been positive. As stated in the summary, the College has been successful in establishing the required infrastructure, hiring four qualified and knowledgeable academic advisors, and fully implementing the associated processes and strategies. At time of authorship more than 2,400 students have begun or completed the process that provides them a unique and individually tailored plan to graduate on time and without additional costs. In the past year, this project has been fully implemented and students are reaping the benefits of the newly established structures and services. At this time, all campus employees have had the opportunity to be trained and are knowledgeable of this new initiative.

What has changed slightly during the evolution of this project is the scope of the evaluation metrics and assessment strategies. The College remains committed to evaluating graduation metrics and student satisfaction metrics related to the advising practices of the Academic Advising Specialists (AAS) office. What was unforeseen at the time the project declaration was drafted, was a true understanding of the business volume that would be channeled through the AAS office within the original scope of work. As the project was implemented, it became clear that the steering committee would need to adjust some of the proposed metrics, specifically as it related to the knowledge inventory for AAS advisors and to the tracking of program changes, Individualized Graduation Plans (IGPs) changes, and students graduating under the original IGP. The College is comfortable and confident that the more targeted evaluation metrics described in the project summary outlined previously and in the discussion of project goals will meet the needs of assessing this project and provide an accurate picture of progress and success both from institutional and student perspectives.

At this time the College is fully operational and in full swing of the implementation of the AAS office and the transition to semesters, which will be completed in August of 2017. As data becomes available, the College will collect, analyze, and report this data in its upcoming portfolio and as a follow-up to the closure of this project.

Q: Describe how various members of the learning community have participated in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration, particularly during the past year.

A: This action project was far reaching in terms of the number of stakeholders who were involved in the planning and implementation, and then even more in the utilization of the developed tools for advising students. The steering committee was purposefully composed of a mix of leadership, directors, and end users throughout the organization. The steering committee had campus presidents, the Provost, the Associate Provost for Student Affairs, members of the registrar office, advising office director, and campus advisors. The ad hoc committee structure described above contained an even larger subset of end users and personnel in the appropriate areas.

Following the development phase and prior to implementation, the communications committee developed a deliberate, continuous communications strategy that was available to all staff members at Baker College. All staff were encouraged to attend live information sessions, and there are numerous web-based communication tools still in use. Because this process represented a substantial change in advising practice, it was deemed imperative that all frontline and advising staff whether admissions, academic, career services, or other areas be knowledgeable in this project and able to participate in it from a sense of assisting students to the appropriate resources.

Once the project went live in February of 2016, nearly every student in Baker College has been touched through the IGP or through the student messaging campaign. This campaign was rooted in awareness and resources and remains in effect. All members of the Registrar's Office, the College's campus advising departments, and system advisors have been impacted by this project.

Describe the effect that this project has had on the institution, students, and others in the learning community. What has the institution learned that can be identified as a Q: good practice to use in other aspects of its quality work or from which other institutions might benefit?

A: There are a number of very positive themes that can be extrapolated to other areas and initiatives. The first positive item to note is that from all initial accounts, the specialized academic advising strategy has helped promote consistent messaging and experience to students. Advisors are proactively communicating to students to contact the Academic Advising Specialist (AAS) team to provide semester transition planning and support to our students. Students are proactively reaching out to the AAS team for advice on program completion and Individualized Graduation Plans (IGPs) creation. The partnership between academics, IT, and student services is working well.

Another positive outcome of this project is the time and planning that went into the communications structure. Upon reflection, the time spent developing adaptive, targeted, and strategically placed communication strategies to the various stakeholder groups helped promote consistent knowledge, supported the implementation, and provided support and resources to students. This strategy minimized confusion, questions, and helped make for a smooth implementation of a wide-reaching and new office structure and strategy for the College. Moving forward, having a communication committee dedicated to evaluating and supporting the various and diverse information needs of a complex organization, will be a best practice for additional projects.

The final lesson learned from this project, one that could apply to any complex school or system of schools operating multiple locations and sites, is that centralization and specialization of resources can be enormously efficient and beneficial. In many ways, Baker College was using this specialized academic advising project as a pilot test to determine the viability of "centralized" advising resources in general, not just for the semester transition. What the College discovered is that even a complex school system with geographically disperse students can provide effective, consistent, and cost efficient academic advising through a centralized and remote model. This lesson has prompted the

school to earnestly begin exploring a centralized / integrated student services model for all campus and for most areas - student services, academic affairs, career services, and even admissions.

Describe the anticipated challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project's goals.

A: There are a couple of challenges that the College is actively working on to address and keep at bay. Because students are allowed to make changes to schedules and enrollment on their own through the web, tracking progress and staying abreast of changing advising needs remains a highly fluid situation. Academic Advising Specialists (AAS) are working hard through a series of audits and new reporting to provide outreach and manage these changes as they occur. While students have all been provided or contacted to receive an IGP, that does not guarantee they will follow the plan outlined. Initially, it was thought that process fidelity from campus to campus would be a barrier, however, coming out of the comprehensive communication and training programs, there has been little to no reported issues.

Another potential pitfall is the adaptability of the student information system (SIS) to accurately provide reporting as the new AAS office continues to evolve. This again is something that is being addressed proactively through the partnership between student services and IT. That said, reporting needs continue to evolve as the process unfolds and as the AAS team begins the initial planning of their roles and scope of work once the semester transition is complete.

As campuses work to manage schedules ensuring fiscal responsibility and the integrity of an IGP that may be several quarters old, the potential for campus scheduling decisions to effect the relevance and value of the IGP was elevated. There was some anecdotal information to indicate this may have been a problem in fall 2016 and in winter 2017 quarters. In response to this feedback from campus stakeholders, the College responded by creating a centralized schedule and a transition auditing committee that assumed responsibility for schedule management and IGP fidelity for all campuses. Initial results from this maneuver have resulted in savings on almost every campus, leaner schedules, higher class sizes, and IGP fidelity.

At this time there remains areas of potential threat that are actively monitored. Additional resources in advising have been dedicated to help work through this crucial time as the change approaches, and the communication structures needed to quick response remain in place. Confidence is high that these barriers will be overcome and not damage the action project progress to completion in August 2017.

Q: In light of the project goals, current circumstances, institutional learning from this project, and anticipated barriers to success, list the next steps to be taken over the

course of the next 12 - 24 months in order to complete or institutionalize the results of this action project. Provide a timeline for completing each next step.

A: The next steps are as follows. The Academic Advising Specialist (AAS) and Individualized Graduation Plans (IGP) processes will continue as an option for all students through the College's transition to the semester model in August of 2017. In the fall semester of 2017 (August-December 2017), the original steering committee will shift its focus to assessment and evaluation as described previously. During this time student satisfaction will become a focus as will the evaluation of graduation rates among the various student cohorts touched by this project. It is expected that some of the lagging indicator data sets will be collected and analyzed for presentation to the College's President's Cabinet in February of 2018.

Two new processes/entities that were developed out of this project will continue indefinitely. As mentioned previously, the College is now considering the implementation of an integrated student services (ISS) model. Stemming from the success of this initial foray into this area, the College had conducted extensive research into the viability of these systems and convened a group to explore options and implement an integrated services model by August 2017. The full implementation of this new endeavor is expected to be complete by August 2018. The role of the AAS group will become part of this new model and the best practices gained from this initial step will be an essential part of the next steps taken in the ISS model.

Finally, ensuring the fidelity of the IGP in such a complex organization with multiple campuses has helped bring light to the benefit of a centralized scheduling management strategy. It is thought at this time that the College will continue to utilize a centralized schedule management committee to create an independent auditing process to promote positive student experiences, fiscal responsibility, and a system approach to shared instructional resources. This committee is in its infancy but expects to provide input into the Fall 2017-18 schedules by April 2017 and will continue on an ongoing basis to set targets, benchmarks, and audits for future years.

Provide any additional information, inquiries, or concerns that the institution wishes Q: reviewers to understand regarding this Action Project. Enter N/A if not applicable.

A: N/A

Version 1.0- Update

Q: I certify that this project is ready for review.

A: I agree.

Declaration

Q: Briefly describe the project in less than 100 words. Be sure to identify the key organizational areas (departments, programs, divisions, units, etc.) and key organizational processes that this action project will affect, change, and/or improve.

A: An ongoing commitment to position Baker College with a sustainable business model responsive to an ever-changing higher education climate is driving a transition from a quarter-based to a semester-based calendar. This project provides a new centralized student advising framework to support the change in calendar with particular impact on academics, admissions, and financial services. The new framework leverages centralized strategies for academic advising in order to align the messaging, communication, policy, and quality of experience for students.

Q: Describe your institution's reasons for initiating this action project now and how long it should take to complete it. Why are this project and its goals high among your institution's current priorities? Also, explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's recent or soon-to-be submitted Systems Portfolio.

A: Baker College is transitioning from a quarter-based calendar to a system-based calendar. During the transition, there is a specific need to design specialized academic advising to provide students a successful path to graduation. During this transition, consistency of message, transparent communication, and customer service have been identified as essential to managing a quality student experience. The transition will be complete by August, 2017.

Baker College is comprised of ten campuses, including an Online campus and a Center for Graduate Studies, with each entity having a campus specific advising department. During the semester transition each student will be provided an individualized graduation plan that identifies program requirements. The plan is designed to provide the student a successful path to graduation. To streamline communications and ensure consistency and accuracy of academic advising across multiple campuses, the decision was made to create a new centralized academic advising structure. The centralized advising staff will be accountable for providing student academic guidance and information related to the semester transition.

This project addresses the commitment to reposition the institution in a sustainable business model that is responsive to changing climates in higher education. The project is not related to feedback on the Baker College AQIP System Portfolio.

Q: List the project goals, milestones, and deliverables along with corresponding metrics, due dates, and other measures for assessing the progress toward each goal. Be sure to include when you anticipate submitting the project for formal reviews.

A: Project Goals:The plan is designed to provide the student a successful path to graduation. To streamline communications and ensure consistency and accuracy of academic advising across multiple campuses, the decision was made to create a new centralized academic advising structure. The centralized advising staff will be accountable for providing student academic guidance and information related to the semester transition.

Milestones and Deliverables

DATE	MILESTONE	OWNER	SUPPORT
11/5/2015	Q2S Advising Framework Complete - Submitted to System VP of Academics for Approval (Philosophy, Goals, Structure, Assessments)	All	Denise Bannan
11/9/2015	AQIP Project Declaration Complete - Submitted to System VP of Academics for Approval	Steve Simpson	Denise Bannan
11/19/2015	System Advising Technology Infrastructure Developed	Jill Langen	Jacqui Spicer, Chuck Gurden
11/20/2015	System Advising Specialist Job Description and KPIs Complete	Laura Treanor	Dawn Prueter, Denise Bannan
11/20/2015	System Advising Specialist Personnel Needs Approved	All	Denise Bannan, Bart Daig
11/27/2015	System Advising Specialist Training Outcomes Developed	All	Dawn Prueter, Jill Price, Wendy Cole

11/27/2015	System Ongoing Training Model/Information Update Process Developed	All	Q2S Conversion Team Rep
12/2/2015	System Advising Specialist Model Presented to Campus ARCs	All	Dawn Prueter
12/7/2015	System Advising Specialist Job Posted	All	HR
12/22/2015	System Advising Specialist Interviews	All	Dawn Prueter, Wendy Cole, CRO, TBD
1/4/2016	System Advising Facilities Plan Complete	Jill Langen	
1/11/2016	System Staffing/Hiring Decisions Complete	All	Denise Bannan, Dawn Prueter, TBD
2/1/2016	System Training Materials Complete	All	Dawn Prueter, Jill Price, Wendy Cole, Ken Betthausen
2/1/2016	System Advising Technology Infrastructure Implemented	Jill Langen	Jacqui Spicer
2/7/2016	System Advising Training Begins	All	Ken Betthausen, Tina Kattoula, Dawn Prueter, Jill Price, Wendy Cole
2/15/2016	System Advising Begins	All	

Project Metrics

- Training program fidelity- pre and post test
- Student satisfaction survey
- Knowledge based survey to related to key stakeholders (campus advisors, program officials, admissions advisors, ARC directors)
- Advising metrics

- Number of phone calls
- Number of program changes processed
- Consistent graduation rate (historical college average %)
- Number of students who complete the transition under the original individualized plans
- Sample audit of process owner for program changes to measure that program changes are being processed by System Academic Advising

Q: Describe how various members of the learning community will participate in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration.

A: To ensure successful completion of this project, it is imperative that individual campuses are involved in the planning process, and the expertise and perspectives of multiple student services departments are solicited. As a result, this project will be lead by a steering committee comprised of a team of academic leaders from three campuses, and will utilize the expertise of a variety of departments including but not limited to campus academic advisors, campus directors of academic advising, central registrar's office directors, System IT, campus admissions advisors, and campus and system program officials. Key stakeholders from each of these departments will be identified and appointed to develop appropriate content related to the project. For example, the Central Registrar's Office will play a critical role in developing training materials for System Academic Advising Specialists. The Vice President of Academics for the College will provide oversight and institutional support as needed.

Q: Describe how the institution will monitor project progress/success during, and at the completion of this project. Be sure to specifically state the measures that will be evaluated and when.

A: A steering committee has been established to provide project oversight and is responsible for all associated metric analyses. This committee will provide leadership for the project throughout the duration of the implementation. All milestones and metrics will be collected and evaluated in accordance with the timeline established in the table provided in the response to Question 4. Additional oversight and support will be provided by the System Vice President for Academics.

Q:

Describe the challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project's goals.

A: Upcoming infrastructure changes within the larger Academic Division may impact the flow of the project but will not impede progress toward completion. Implementation of a new Student Information System may require re-training for System Advising Specialists during the project timeline.

Provide any additional information that the institution wishes reviewers to understand regarding this Action Project.

A: This project will serve as a pilot process to review the feasibility of potentially adopting a centralized strategy for academic advising at the institution.