2013-2014 Enhanced Advising Report

Abstract

*This year the enhanced advising program was in its second year of implementation. This program tests the concept of intrusive advising along with the” just in time” pedagogical technique. Twelve faculty along with eleven upperclassmen were paired with 164 freshmen, for whom the program was voluntary. This was double the size of the program last year. In order to accommodate the larger number of students each meeting was scheduled twice in the given week. Incentives including senior registration status was used to encourage participation. The advisors and upperclassmen peer mentors met with the students regularly throughout the year. The program was evaluated by comparing those who participated, those who didn’t but had the participating faculty members as advisors, all those assigned to the advisors regardless of participation, and the entire first time freshmen population. The GPA, the percentage of those able to maintain their scholarships (GPA above 3.00), and the percentage of those who are in academic trouble (GPA below 2.00) were calculated. The overall GPA for those attending was higher than the GPAs of both those not attending and the overall freshmen class. Due to the sample size this difference cannot be determined to be statistically significant. The percentage of those maintaining their scholarships was higher for those participating in the program and this was statistically significant. The percentage for those in academic trouble was lower for those attending than the other two groups, and this too was statistically significant. This however could be due to the fact that those attending since it is voluntary is a self-selecting group and are the better students. The students assigned to the advisors involved in the program were compared to the total freshmen population and for this comparison the overall GPA were basically the same as well as the percentage of those in academic distress. The percentage of those still scholarship eligible (GPA>3.0) were slightly higher as was the retention of those in the fall. This we believe is a better indicator as it is comparing student who participate and don’t participate with the entire freshmen class which eliminates the self-selecting bias of those who attend. Even with the growing number of students participating, it is premature to say that the program and the success of those who participated are causally linked. Nonetheless, the faculty perceptions are that it was beneficial to the students as well as the faculty.*

Introduction

The Enhanced Advising Program is a freshmen initiative created by a faculty and student team that attempts to create a learning community of freshmen in similar fields of study along with an academic advisor and an upperclassmen peer mentor. This project’s goal is to facilitate the transition from high school to university life while guiding students to become responsible and active participants in their matriculation process. In our current system for advising, freshmen are assigned advisors in their field of study by the first day of classes in the fall. Their schedules are created by the registrar’s office during the summer. During the summer they meet with a departmental representative to discuss numerous topics in the course of two hours, most of which the students don’t retain due to information overload or perceived irrelevance. Currently there is no need to see an academic advisor until midway through the fall term when registration for the spring term begins. Thus, faculty rarely met their advisees before midterm. As a consequence for meeting for the first time late in the term, errors in schedules and academic problems are often recognized when it is too late to correct them. This creates a culture where the faculty advisor is working to retroactively take care of issues if they can be corrected at all, when a proactive method is much simpler. This was the catalyst for this pilot program.

During the fall term the faculty and peer mentors met with the students each week until midterm and every other week after that until final exams. To accommodate the number of possible students, each program was presented twice during the week (Monday and Wednesday’s during the University meeting times). The freshmen met the advisors prior to the first day of classes at a social where they also met the Deans and the Vice President of Academic Affairs. At this time they also signed up for advising appointments during for the following week. During that first week each student had an individual appointment with the advisor to check the schedule and for errors and discuss the course work expectations, this allows for changes before the add/drop period is over. In subsequent weekly meetings, the faculty mentor along with the peer mentor met with the freshmen group and discuss topics such as classroom expectations, appropriate communications, on- campus tutoring and counseling resources, plagiarism and cheating, safety, preparation for registration and appropriate use of social media. The topics were discussed as they become pertinent to the students, “just in time learning”. For instance we discussed talking with professors about help and tutoring after most courses had had a test or the first paper. Plagiarism was discussed the week before the freshmen English class’s first papers were due. For some topics we had guest speakers: plagiarism was discussed by English faculty Dr. Lillie Craton and Mrs. Cuenin, safety was discussed by Captain Peppers from the LUPD, the peer mentors ran the session on social media. There are also individual meetings scheduled during this time. Two social events were embedded into the term for the students to get to know the other students in the advising group. As the students are becoming more independent during the second term we reduce the contact. This year we added three large group work which we had not done the previous year. We had lectures on the following topics: learning styles which was graciously led by Dean Neufeld; opportunities at Lander which included Dr. Colbert discussing the EYE program and internships, Dr. McMillan discussing the Washington term, Mr. Jones discussing work study and campus jobs and we also discussed study abroad; and finally a discussion on the degree evaluation and summer school. There was also a social, one small group meeting and at least one individual meeting for advising.

In order to assess this program, the GPAs of our students were examined in comparison of the others. Each faculty member involved kept track of meetings with the freshmen outside of those for the program along with number of changes in schedules made during the add/drop period and the registration period. This year we also asked the students to evaluate the program at a small group meeting lead by the peer mentors.

The goals of this initiative were to improve the retention rate of freshmen as well as improve the GPA’s which influence scholarships. All the faculty involved in this program have had freshmen that leave the university for reasons that with some guidance could have been prevented. Another goal was to increase the students’ independence so they have fewer problems as they move through the curriculum and manage or at least know who to ask for help when problem do arise. The faculty had also seen a decrease in civility over the years, and by having open dialogues about such issues we hoped to reduce the number of the behavioral problems. This change in approach, being proactive and intrusive yet nurturing during the freshmen year, hopefully created students who understand how to be successful at Lander. The fewer problems academically and behaviorally the more likely the student is to remain at Lander and complete a degree.

Assessment

The faculty members involved (Dr. Rebecca Cox-Davenport, Dr. Chad Kinsella, Dr. Danny McKenzie, Dr. Matthew Fawcett, Dr. Pedro Lopez, Dr. Frank Rausch, Mrs. Brittany Cuenin, Dr. Gail Moore, Dr. Lee Vartanian, Ms. Nicole McCluney, Mr. Adam Haigh, and Dr. Paige Ouzts) were asked to keep track of some basic data throughout the year on their advisees. Attendance at the group meeting was also recorded. The following are the results.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 |
| Number regularly attending | 47 | 48 |
| Number attending at least one  meeting | 53 | 101 |
| Number of meetings | 8 Large group  3 Small group | 10 Large group  4 Small group |
| Times for advising | 4 (2x in Fall; 2x in Spring) | 3 (2x in Fall; 1x in Spring) |
| Number of schedules altered | 28 (26 fall; 2 spring)  All faculty reporting (5) | 23 (11 fall; 12 spring)  4 faculty reporting |
| Extra Email contact with students | 190 \*(120 fall; 70 spring)  All faculty reporting (5) | 179 (139 fall; 40 spring)  7 faculty reporting |
| Extra Office visits | \* | 64 (47 fall; 17 spring)   1. faculty reporting |

\*For the 2012-2013 year email and extra office visits were grouped together.

The faculty were also asked to give their perceptions of the program as well as any anecdotal evidence for the program. This information is in the appendix A. The student survey information is also included in appendix B. The peer mentors were not asked to evaluate the program officially; however, all those involved not graduating asked to participate again next year.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2013-2014  Lander Freshmen (517) | 2013-2014  EA attending (48) | 2013-2014  EA not attending (116) | 2013-2014  EA  (164) | 2012-2013  Lander Freshmen (569) | 2012-2013  EA  attending  (47) | 2012-2013  EA not  attending (62) | 2012-2013  EA  (109) |
| Fall GPA |  | 2.857  ±0.909 | 2.488  ±1.038 | 2.590  ±0.998 | 2.526  ±0.998 | 2.658  ±0.800 | 2.099  ±0.987 | 2.340  ±0.906 |
| Spring GPA |  | 3.03  ±0.654 | 2.491  ±0.929 | 2.649  ±0.848 | 2.489 | 2.698  ±0.865 | 2.044  ±1.065 | 2.326  ±0.979 |
| Overall GPA | 2.728 | 3.009  ±0.616 | 2.570  ±0.869 | 2.698  ±0.795 | 2.508 | 2.695  ±0.703 | 2.044  ±0.945 | 2.325  ±0.841 |
| % with GPA >3.0 for fall |  | 58.3% | 41.4% | 46.3% | 30.6% | 38.3% | 18.5% | 27.0% |
| % with GPA >3.0 for spring |  | 50.0% | 28.4% | 34.7% | 33.4% | 36.2% | 18.5% | 26.1% |
| % with GPA >3.0 for year | 37% | 56.3% | 36.2% | 42.1% | 32.5% | 31.9% | 14.8% | 22.2% |
| % with GPA <2.0 for fall |  | 14.6% | 26.7% | 23.2% | 27% | 19.1% | 44.4% | 33.5% |
| % with GPA <2.0 for spring |  | 14.6% | 31.0% | 26.2% | 28.4% | 17.0% | 44.4% | 32.6% |
| % with GPA <2.0 for year | 24% | 10.4% | 29.3% | 23.8% | 27.6% | 17.0% | 40.7% | 29.7% |
| Registered for fall | 72 % | 89.6% | 68.1% | 74.4% |  |  |  |  |

Conclusion

Given the number of students who participated in the program due to the voluntary nature it would be premature to speculate on the causal relationship between the enhanced advising techniques and the higher overall GPA’s, the higher percentage of those maintaining their scholarship eligibility, and the lower percentage of those on academic probation of those who attended compared to those who did not have this experience. The faculty who have a combined of over 50 years of experience in advising in higher education feel that the program was beneficial to those students who did participate. This is simply a difficult concept to currently quantify.

Looking forward

If this program continues in the future, the group would create a handbook for program including program outline, expectations for mentors, expectations for advisors, and meeting ideas. The program would need to be expanded to include more faculty members. A third year goal would be to maintain the size of the program and have 10 faculty members as enhanced advisors. This would allow the number of students involved to be 200. Currently the program offered incentives for the students to participate (a Lander planner, a Lander t-shirt, and early registration for courses). For the 2014-2015 year a single advising group of 24 students will be grouped into a single English 101 course. For these students the program will be mandatory as the English course material and the programs from enhanced advising will the integrated. The other students involved the program will remain voluntary.

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Appendix 1

Faculty number 1:

This was my first semester advising at Lander, so it was a learning experience in several ways.  However, I can certainly see all of the advantages, especially at the end of the semester, in knowing the students well.  Since Lander is a small school, it makes sense to use our size to our advantage and really help the students.  I think it really helped during advising week because they knew me, they knew where my office was, and they knew I expected them to come prepared with their schedules.  Therefore, we were able to use our time wisely to prepare the best schedule possible.  That was also the week the advisees were excited to have early registration! I thought the socials worked well to let the students mingle and get to know other freshman.  Overall, this program was a great experience.

Faculty number 2

In way of comment, and while I think this program is helpful to most freshmen, I am under the impression that including student-athletes in it becomes redundant. One of my two student-athletes had her access to the aforementioned survey cleared by someone else besides me, for example. And of course none of them has shown any interest in more Lander t-shirts…

Faculty number 3

I believe in this program and in the closer relationships it helps us establish with our students.

Faculty number 4

Regarding comments and suggestions, I am somewhat limited in what I can say as this is my first semester advising so I don't have anything to compare it too.  Some of the students really had it together and didn't really need much help.  Some of the students appeared to have other issues that I could not really do much about.  I can say that I felt much more confident as an adviser by being a part of this program and being able to ask you for help.  I think that also helped me to give better advising advice.  Meeting with students early helped too, as I did find a couple of places where students had been enrolled in courses that they didn't really need.  I had a transfer from another university who was in one of my classes.  I was chatting with her and we found out she was enrolled in a class she did not like and did not need, so another professor and I helped her fix her schedule.  I wonder if it might be helpful to expand this program to include transfer students?  One of my advisees told me she really liked the peer advising system. I wonder if that is an area where we could expand and put up front (perhaps even paying the advisors something, perhaps making it something like tutoring?).  If we put them up front, perhaps we could have some small group exercises led by the peer evaluators during that first meeting.

Faculty number 5

As far as the program is concerned, I think it is a very effective program.  I will say that it is time consuming, but you told me that from the start, so that was expected.  The information that students are receiving is very beneficial and it seems to reinforce that we are here for them.  My students who actually show up to enhance advising talk to me all the time about whatever issues they have, and I feel very good that they feel like it’s okay to approach me.

Faculty number 6

Once again I think the faculty benefit from the program as well as the students. It is nice to know your advisees and to be able to have meaningful conversations with them as opposed to seeing them twice a year for 15 minute advising sessions. This is my second year advising in this program and I still believe we make a difference, even if it is just by correcting errors in the schedule before the end of add/drop. This year my sophomores that were actively involved in last year’s enhanced advising program all made appointments with me during the first week of classes for me to go over their schedule and check to make sure summer courses transferred. All these appointments were unsolicited, each one contacted me as they wanted to talk. I also saw these sophomores regularly throughout the year as they wanted to discuss various issues. Some that have even changed majors and therefore advisors still make appointments to talk. I had a number of the freshmen email or schedule office visits outside those arranged by the program. I think they felt more comfortable than some freshmen do about talking and asking questions about issues. They asked very thoughtful questions about scheduling, classes, college in general, and summer options. I even had students bring roommates and friends to meetings of the program because they had questions.

Appendix 2

The students were asked to complete a survey. The peer mentors then led a group discussion about the freshmen experience.

The following are the survey answers from the freshmen:

1. What did you struggle with the most your first semester?

Making time to study

Finding ways to balance school work and studying for all classes

Time management- being away from home

Learning how to study for chemistry 105 and anatomy in the same semester

Staying focused when I was supped to be studying

Trying to keep up with all my classes and studying

Figuring out how to adjust and study for my college classes

My biggest struggle was going from a slow-paced learning style to having numerous things

thrown at you at once

My classes

I struggled most in my biology class

Stress and balancing classes

Figuring out my study habit and what helped me remember things for tests

Learning the level of difficulty compared to high school

The thing I struggles with the most was adjusting to classes, schedules, and homework

Managing my time

I struggled with studying for my exams because I wanted to go to parties and sleep. I also

struggled with waking up for 8:00am classes.

Time management, and making sure I get everything done on time

1. What advice would you give an incoming freshman?

Always study whenever you get a chance

Stay focused and don’t try to to too much at once

Not to worry if one test doesn’t go the way you wanted it to, it is possible to still get the grade

you want

Sat ahead pf all assignments

Study hard and stay focused

Manage time wisely

Balance your social time and study time. For every hour you spend studying you can have 30

mins of play

Talk to your professors regularly

Study more because it will be needed and get help when needed

I would tell then to study daily when taking hard classes they need to pass.

Do your homework; make plans (to do lists, priority lists)

Get into a study habit, so when tests are coming they will be ready

Make sure to study hard and don’t get behind; try to do work the day it is assigned if possible.

Get to know your teachers and do your work

Get a calendar and use it plan accordingly

Be organized; don’t party too much, study a lot; get plenty of rest

Make sure you keep organized and keep a planner (color coding helps!)

1. What are the three most important things you have learned and how has it helped you make the transition from high school to college?

Time management, study tips, safety

Being responsible enough to keep myself on track, learning to balance school, work and free

time, and learning new ways to study

Manage your time wisely, don’t worry about the small things, you can do it

Write EVERYTHING down, make a good grade on the first exams, don’t wait until finals

Taking summer school is easier to take here than another place, how to study better, what

learning style I am

Time management, being able to keep up with multiple classes and tutoring. It helped me

because I had to learn these things on my own to help myself. It made me mature.

Studying at least once a day, be on time, don’t be afraid to talk to your professors

Your professors will not bite, STUDY!, have friends in your classes

How to study, be your own and enjoy what you have. These helped out with class and for me to

be comfortable here away from home.

I have learned that I have to study no matter what, do my work on time and go to class

everyday. They have helped me with this transition b/c if I don’t do these things then c college would be a failure

Prioritize, know your professors, go out and do things (not always school), have fun

Study more improves grades a great deal, socialize- make more friends, easy going- the more

you can agree with something easier

Not to stress about finals because it doesn’t help anything, be on top of things, talk to your

advisor, he can help

Better communication, better time management, better work ethic

To have a connection with your instructors and advisors, learning how to study, being active and

proactive

To study longer (use flashcards) improved my grades, make smart decisions(be mature) b/c you

are given a lot of freedom in college, being organized

Finally getting all of my stiff organized, the Academic Success Center helps!

1. Which large group meeting was most useful for you as a freshman?

The police department meeting

They were all helpful to me. Having someone I could talk to about my classes and other

concerns was great.

The meeting about summer classes because I had no idea about the process of applying

The one that talked about summer classes

The learning styles one

The group meeting on preparing for exams

How to address your professors in an email

The one where you learned how to address you professor in an email

Being business like (professional)

Learning how to do my studying and my study habits

Talking with our advisor- getting to know then so it was less stressful

All my advising because it helped me learn how to get through my freshmen year with the

different advice

Learning how to apply for summer classes at a different school

Information about what to do and not to do

When we learned how to register for classes

When we talked about social media because I felt like that could apply to anyone and it just

reminded me to always think twice

Summer classes

1. Would you recommend this program to incoming freshmen that you know? Why or why not?

Yes it really gets you motivated

Yes! It helped so much to be able to sign up for classes early and the info given is usually very

Useful

Yes I would strongly recommend this program. It was very helpful and didn’t require too much

of my time

Yes; it teaches you very helpful information

Yes, because this program teaches you a lot and makes you feel more comfortable and involved

with the school

Yes; because you make friends in the group, learn how to transition and become close to your

advisor

Yes! It helps you so much with the transition

Yes because this program is very helpful; gives good advice for business/carrier goals

Yes, because it’s very helpful, it helped me a lot with things I didn’t know.

Yes! Early scheduling and knowing advisor

Yes, because the advice that was given helped me get through the year

Yes I definitely would. This program gave me some information I probably still wouldn’t know.

Yes, because they give you a lot of helpful tips

Yes, I would b/c it would help them to adjust smoothly to college, helping them to become more

informed about what they’re getting into.

Yes, because your advisor really helps you with your schedule and they give you advice on what

classes to take

Yes It allows you to communicate with people in your major and gives you advice throughout

the year.

1. Have you shared any of the information you have learned with your friends at Lander who are not in the program?

Yes, I have

Yes, friends ask what the program is about and when I tell them what we discuss, they find it

helpful also

Yes I have and several of them wish that they were in the program

Yes. My roommates

Yes, ways to study better

Yes I have and also with friends who do not attend Lander

Yes, I helped a lot of my friends sign up for classes

Yes!

Yes

Yes I have

Yes, one of my roommates, she really wished she was involved

Yes and they wish they were in it as well

Yes I have

Yes, my roommates

No, but will if needed

Yes

Yes

1. Did being a part of this program help you find your place at Lander? If so please explain.

Yes. These meetings encouraged me and showed me that other people understood.

Yes, meeting people and feeling like a part of something helped me find my place.

This program helped me make several new friends so I would say yes it helped me find my place.

Somewhat

Yes; I made some friends

Yes if did. It made me look at all the possible opportunities at Lander.

I haven’t found my place quiet yet but they have set a foundation.

Yes, it helped me make friends with people in my major

Yes because it gave me a sense of what to do when it came down to professors, classes and

studying.

Yes, because when I first came here I didn’t know what all was required and had to be done but

by coming to the meetings and listening to the speakers I know a lot more.

Not really find my place, but make me feel more comfortable.

Yes, made me realize how to get along with others and make more friends.

It did. It also helped me feel more comfortable about going and talking to my advisor.

No because I got really close to my roommates.

Yes, the program has helped me to find stable ground. The level of stress that I have suffered

taking this program is a lot less compared to the level if I would not have taken it.

Yes, I met people through this program that I hang out with almost everyday.

Yes, allowed me to meet people and find friends having the same problems.

1. Did you contact your advisor outside of the scheduled meetings (email, phone, office visits, etc.)

3 No

14 yes

1. Do you anticipate seeking out your advisor in the future for help and assistance?

0 No

17 yes

1. Please make any comments about the program along with how we can improve the program.

It’s a great program!

It has helped me a lot and I appreciate everything that I’ve received to help me become a better student. Maybe there could be a way to inform upcoming freshmen about the program’s objectives, before the start of school.

Program was helpful with seeking info. I like being one-on-one w/ advisor better b/c my

questions don’t apply to everyone.

Maybe later meeting times (labs, etc) (one day earlier, one later)

I wouldn’t change anything about the program I’ve enjoyed it.

I think the program is great just the way it is.

I didn’t have any problems with it!

Very well done program

The program is very helpful and I would recommend it to future students.

I like this program. It could be improved by enlisting more people. This program could increase

the graduation rate significantly.