



**Graduation Rate Planning Group
Recommendations
November 30, 2015**

Membership

First	Last	Department
Kate	Barringer	Admissions, Graduate School
Gerry	Derksen	Professor, Design
Anna	Fredericks	Director, Student Services
Joanna	Harris	Director, Academic & Student-Athlete Services
Michael	Lipscomb	Professor, Political Science
Cara	Peters	Professor, Management and Marketing
Abigail	Roush	Student, Economics & Mathematics
Pamela	Wash	Chair - Counseling, Leadership, & Ed Studies
Nicki	Washington	Associate Professor, Computer Science
Kristi	Westover	Professor, Biology
Michelle	Wolf	Director, Academic Success Center

Charge

Dr. Mahony charged the committee to research, analyze, and discuss strategies to increase Winthrop’s four-year graduation rate and to submit a final recommendation report consisting of five to ten action items.

Meetings

The full committee met on the following dates:

- September 28
- October 12
- October 26
- November 9
- November 30

Recommendations

The committee researched, analyzed and discussed institutional trend data encompassing true freshman 4-yr. and transfer 4-yr. graduation rates, course withdrawals, change of major data, and D, F, N, and U grade summary data. Additionally, the committee reviewed varying reports provided by the chair and Dr. Boyd’s office; all of which informed the following recommendations.

The GRPG committee took a unique approach to its task – brainstorming potential *roadblocks*, identifying common themes for those roadblocks, then identifying actionable ideas to potentially remove or lessen the roadblock. Therefore, the committee is making recommendations across five main areas: *Data, Advising, General Education, Scheduling, and Academic Performance*. Within each of these areas, with the exception of Data, the committee sub-divided the actionable recommendations into *immediate* and *long-term*. Please find our formal recommendations below.

Identified Goal Area	Recommendation	Rationale	Est. Cost
Data	Data: Appoint a key individual and/or office to oversee, analyze, and make data-driven recommendations using the myriad of informative data collected both semesterly and annually by the institution. Ex. course withdrawals, change of major data, DFNU grade summary reports, exit surveys from those leaving the institution before graduating, etc.	Key information is collected; however, there does not appear to be a systematic method for using these data to drive and/or inform decisions.	FTE - Salary
Advising			
Immediate	ACAD Instructors: Assign in <i>Wingspan</i> all ACAD instructors as the secondary advisor for their students for one academic year.	To provide consistency and familiarity for entering freshman that first critical year. By assigning the faculty as secondary advisors, they can monitor mid-term grades (1 st & 2 nd semester), make sure students are registered for classes the subsequent semester, monitor attrition from fall to spring and following fall, state scholarship concerns etc.	Increase total compensation to ACAD Instructor to \$1,875 (\$1,250 + \$625 = \$1,875)
	Course Withdrawals: Part I: create a course withdrawal pop-up window in <i>Wingspan</i> when a student attempts to withdrawal from a course that both asks for a “why” response and provides a warning	To collect data to ascertain any patterns as well as provide a caution warning to students about credit hour reductions.	None

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Immediate	<p>to check with financial aid regarding FT status and scholarship/aid guidelines.</p> <p>Part II: Send an email to each student’s advisor if he/she withdraws from two or more courses after the drop/add date.</p>	To make advisors aware of this matter; thus allowing the advisor to reach out to the student regarding this matter.	None
	<p>Advising Webpage: Advising main landing web page (highly visible) to serve both students and faculty. Include FAQ or What If page for both constituents (see Appendix A at end of report), Explore Your Major options as shown at the following link, and other key information – before directing students to each individual college SAS. Ex. of Explore Your Major site: https://ugs.uoregon.edu/discover-majors</p>	To provide direct answers to new and continuing students and faculty advisors.	
	<p>Academic Standing Alert: Make Academic Standing more prominent for advisors in Wingspan. Currently, it is in degree works, but there are no indicators on the faculty roster/list, etc.</p>	Some advisors may not access degree works for each student; therefore, placing this information in multiple locations would be helpful.	None
	<p>Supplemental Instruction: Supplemental Instruction (SI) Pilot for Fall 2016 for the following key courses (start with specific sections) with high D, F, U, Ns: MATH150; HIST211. Ideally, the model would mimic those of larger institutions where the time to attend is embedded into the course schedule as “lab” time. For the pilot, making this accessible will be a first step.</p>	To provide SI to those at-risk of not being successful in these courses.	Stipend to those students selected to lead the SI sessions.
	<p>My Majors: Place the My Majors college exploration tool link on our website. http://www.mymajors.com/</p>	Encourage both the use of this tool with prospective students, but also with partner K-12 constituents to encourage exploration of an appropriate major.	None

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Long-Term	Professional Advisors: Professional Advisors to advise all students through 36-40 credit hours. This includes transcript reviews for transfer students.	This would provide consistent support for new and early transfer students making the transition to faculty advisors smooth as they progress through their program of study.	FTEs to each college contingent on enrollment in each college/unit
	Virtual Pre-College: Virtual Pre-College Orientation Requirement – create explicit exploratory “major” videos informing the prospective students about the requirements needed for their selected major. Ex. Did you know that computer science majors must complete through calculus III as part of their degree requirements?	Students need a student-friendly means to explore the expectations and requirements for each major in order to make a more informed decision about their selection. This can assist in decreasing “change of majors”.	TBD – videographer support and/or outsource this task.
	University-wide Advising Survey (electronic): Design and employ an advising survey. This data can be collected semesterly or annually.	To assess the overall effectiveness of advising at WU from the students perspective.	None – Provost Office
General Education			
Immediate	Designators: Open the designators in our general education program to allow more courses to be “met” for each designator. Example – Allow any lab science course to fulfill the natural science requirement as it does for our transfer students who transfer in lab sciences.	By doing this, it will make gen ed more accessible to change of majors and to transfer students.	None
	Writing Requirement: Eliminate the writing requirement for courses meeting the distribution requirements in the General Education program. Note: this proposal would NOT affect the requirement to take core courses (Writing 101, HMXP, and CRTW) or the requirement to take an Intensive Writing Course.	The requirement to take the three core courses in the General Education program (Writing 101, HMXP, and CRTW) and the Intensive Writing Course requirement provide a sufficient basis for building students’ writing proficiency. Eliminating the writing requirement for courses that meet General Education program distribution requirements would	None

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Immediate		give students greater flexibility by (potentially) opening up more courses for inclusion in the array of courses available for meeting those distribution requirements.	
	MATH151: Eliminate the pre-test requirement (as done for those taking this course in the summer) or revise to include a prerequisite course.	Currently, there are discrepancies regarding the pre-test requirements; therefore, the recommendation is to remove this requirement for consistency to students or add a prerequisite course. Students who do not take the pre-test mistakenly enroll in MATH150 thinking it is a pre-req to MATH151 when in fact, it is a discrete math course. This directly contributes to the high DFNU rates.	None
	MATH150: Allow/provide alternative entry-level math courses to fulfill the quantitative skills requirement (MATH150 is the highest DFU course).	The misconception by students is that MATH150 is an introductory math course (basic course); however, it is a discrete math course that does not appear to fit well with our non-math majors.	None
Long-Term	Early College: Begin exploration and discourse of dual credit offerings to support our high credit hour degree programs.	These types of programming are expanding rapidly, predominantly with two-year colleges; however, WU can position itself to serve its local area constituents in this capacity.	TBD
	BA in Humanities	Create an interdisciplinary degree program that would employ a two cognate area format to fit those students that	TBD

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		change majors late in their college career and that would require a thesis or research project for completion; thus providing them a degree track to complete a degree program in a more timely fashion.	
Scheduling			
Immediate	Course Sections: Examine courses with multiple sections to ensure each section is offered at a different day and/or time.	When sections of the same course are only offered at the exact same day/time, this limits scheduling options for students.	None
	Class Times: Enforce common start times for MWF, TR, and MW offerings.	Offering courses at set start times helps ensure that classes do not overlap into other course start times; thus improving the likelihood that students can enroll in available courses. Ex. MW should not have a start time of 9:30 – it would then overlap with a course that is scheduled traditionally for 10:00 – 10:50.	None
	Waitlists: Banner has the software capability to offer waitlists for courses. This option affords students the ability to register for a particular course, be put on the waitlist if it is full, and then be added in the order in which they were waitlisted automatically if someone drops.	This feature would increase overall efficiency to our students as well as provide data to support opening additional sections of courses.	Cost of Banner Upgrade - TBD
	Pre-requisites Effecting Registration: There are key courses on campus that are being taken the semester before the student needs to take the follow-up course(s), yet the pre-requisite for the follow-up course requires a recorded grade; thus preventing the student from registering for this course in a timely manner.	Add the coding commands into Banner for these types of courses that allow students to register for these courses, but auto-deletes the courses should the student not make the appropriate grade needed. Ex. HMXP is a	None

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		gatekeeper course for several business courses. Students must receive a C- or higher to register. However, they are unable to register for the subsequent semester until after grades are posted.	
Immediate	Creative Programming: Two ideas: 1) consider offering more ½ semester courses. 2) explore and consider a “winter session” in Dec. or Jan.	<p>1) This will allow students more flexibility when building their schedules as well as offer replacement courses if they dropped a course.</p> <p>2) The committee is operationally defining a Winter Session as a “pay to play” option; therefore, not tying into financial aid unless this is easily accomplished. Students who would like to catch up, stay on track, or even students from other institutions could take advantage of this 2-3 week session to pick up an additional course or two. This would also be attractive to students who need to increase their overall WU GPA and/or address their probationary status.</p>	<p>None</p> <p>Instructor salaries; however, revenue generated could/should offset these expenditures.</p>

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Long-Term	<p>Summer School: It is recommended that more competitive rates be explored and implemented to attract increased student interest. It is also recommended that equity for faculty compensation be carefully examined.</p>	<p>Currently, our students are electing to take summer courses at other institutions and transferring in the credit hours. Additionally, faculty are not motivated to teach in the summer due to complicated compensation policy as well as the vulnerability of the classes being cancelled. This drastically reduces the number of summer offerings available to our students; thus also contributing to low summer enrollment numbers.</p>	TBD
	<p>Banner: The committee recommends that the additional features available to expand our current Banner software capabilities be explored and purchased.</p>	<p>There are numerous upgrades to this product that would increase productivity in Admissions, Records, and Registrar which will then trickle down to improve the overall service provided to students from initial enrollment to the University to graduation. The committee feels this purchase is worth the investment and would payoff through more efficient and timely enrollment procedures, course waitlist capabilities, transcript analyses, etc.</p>	TBD

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Academic Performance			
Immediate	Repeated Courses: Provide notification and/or a flag to and for students who attempt to repeat a course for the 3+ time.	Advisors and Student Academic Services need to be aware of students attempting to repeat courses multiple times. Counseling to other degree programs, etc. can take place if all parties are apprised of this situation.	None
	Withdrawing from Courses: Two ideas: 1) Add a pop-up window in Banner that is activated each time a student attempts to drop a course. The window should provide cautions for students to check with financial aid regarding credit hour requirements as well as a drop down menu to elicit feedback on “why” the student is dropping the course. 2) Reach out to students who drop 2 or more courses as well as notify their advisor.	1) This recommendation would serve two purposes – warn the student about credit hour requirements to maintain both FT status and certain financial aid awards and provide data to the institution on patterns for why students are dropping certain courses. 2) Would allow for intervention from SAS and advisors.	None
	S/U Options: Explore mirroring the S/U policy for LEAP to all entering freshmen.	This would provide consistency of this option to all students. We have a population of student that could greatly benefit from this option who are not part of the LEAP program.	None
Long-Term	Academic Boot-Camp: After fall mid-term and final grades for freshmen are posted, auto-enroll students with a low GPA into a spring Academic Boot-Camp course similar if not identical to that afforded to LEAP students.	Students who struggle in the first semester need a support system to get them back on track before recovery is out of reach. This course could have a similar course fee attached to support its offering. ACAD 102?	\$500 student fee; Fee waiver for students receiving Pell Grants

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	Scholarships: Provide more financial assistance to students overall.	With rising tuition costs and high summer school rates, financial stress is a major factor in student retention and graduation. Dispersing of financial assistance can help recruit and retain students as well as decreasing summer school rates.	TBD

Appendix A

Advising What Ifs...

What if ...

- **I drop a course?**
 - This can put you below the minimum total of 30 credit hours needed to maintain State Scholarships each academic year
 - This can drop you below what is considered “full-time” student status which is needed for most financial aid
 - This can slow down your graduation timetable and/or prevent you from meeting a pre-requisite for a course needed next semester
 - **Action:** Check with financial aid and your advisor if you have questions
- **I change majors?**
 - The general rule of thumb is that most change of majors result in one or more semesters added on to your degree completion timetable
 - Do a “what if” in Degree Works to make an informed decision
 - **Action:** Speak with someone in Student Services for that degree program
- **I use a Repeat Exemption?**
 - The new grade replaces the old grade and is exempted from the GPA calculation. After maximum repeats are met, grades are averaged
 - **Action:** Check with financial aid about satisfactory academic progress
- **I need longer than four years to complete my degree?**
 - A lot of students need longer than 4 years, but keep in mind ...
 - that there are credit hour restrictions on available financial aid which may run out before you complete your degree
 - the Life Scholarship only applies to your first 8 semesters
 - **Action:** Check with financial aid if you have questions
- **I took a course under my catalog and now the curriculum has changed?**
 - If you find that a curriculum change affects your degree completion, consider ...
 - asking Student Services about either course substitutions or petition options
 - **Action:** Check with Student Services and/or your Advisor
- **I want to take a course at another institution?**
 - Students must complete the Approval to Transfer Credit Form before taking the course and must also request the official transcript be sent to WU immediately following course completion
 - **Action:** Complete the Transient Permission Form and have official transcript sent to WU immediately after completing the course

Advising Did You Knows...

Did You Know ...

- All students need 40hrs. or more above in courses above the 299 level to graduate?
- That a 2.0 cumulative GPA is required for good standing and graduation for all degree programs (higher is required for some programs)?
- All students must meet the constitution requirement by taking an approved course?
- That a minor is required if you are pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree?
- All students must participate and receive credit for cultural events (18 for new freshmen; 3 events per 20hrs. completed at WU)?
- Students may change a course to an S/U designator for some courses up to 4 courses total, but only 1 per semester?
- Students can use the repeat/exemption option 4 times in their academic career? This is prorated for transfer students (check with Student Services if unsure)