

**UC Merced Academic Advising
Annual Assessment Report – 2016-2017
September 2017**

Executive Summary

In 2016-2017, the Campus Academic Advising Assessment Workgroup has continued efforts to develop campus-wide assessment of undergraduate advising through the alignment of advising services and evaluation of student learning. This report focuses on two advising service goals: Goal 1: *Promote appropriate progress to degree for undergraduate students* and Goal 2: *Provide students with advising resources and materials that are accurate, current, and understandable.*

The decision was made to continue assessment on Goal 1 through evaluation of the changes to the Academic Difficulty Intervention for students with an academic standing of 'subject to academic dismissal' that resulted from last year's report. This data demonstrates a movement towards more consistent outcomes across units – evidence that standardized intervention may be useful in increasing students' return to good standing. A test of statistical significance found no difference in outcomes of students participating in the intervention Fall 2016, but did note a difference in those participating in Spring 2017. This report outlines additional approaches to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention, which requires a significant number of staff hours each semester.

Goal 2 was assessed through an evaluation of student learning outcomes for academic advising at new student orientation. In Spring 2017, the campus piloted the separation of new student registration and orientation, with the goal of increasing engagement of incoming students with the University, and importantly for this group, encouraging them to understand the role of an academic advisor separate from a registration process. This structure continued for on-boarding of students for Fall 2017, which provided a unique opportunity to gather evidence related to students' understanding of the roles and responsibilities of academic advising, accessing of resources and use of advising tools. Overall, the data showed that students were gaining the expected knowledge as part of the registration and orientation experiences.

The group is happy to report continued engagement with the academic advising community and a shift in culture towards designing (or redesigning) services with an eye towards effective communication of knowledge and a priority on measuring what students are learning. The Campus Academic Advising Workgroup continued to meet monthly and finalized a multi-year assessment plan that we believe maps to the evolving needs of our growing campus and prepares for shifts in advising services (e.g. centralized first year advising).

I. Progress on Actions Stemming from Last Year's Assessment

In response to last year's assessment, the UC Merced Academic Advising Report and feedback from the *Working Group for Review of Administrative Assessment*, the Campus Advising Assessment Workgroup met monthly to move forward efforts related to collaborative advising assessment. An update on actions related to last year's results are:

In 2016-2017, campus academic advisors implemented a number of changes as a result of last year's assessment:

Academic Difficulty Interventions

- Designed and implemented a revised academic difficulty intervention across all units during Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. In an effort to align support for students on Special to Academic Dismissal (previously Special Probation) status, the group created student learning and outcomes and developed standard

communications and protocol, curriculum and tools. These tools included common scripts for each of the 2-3 required meetings, email templates, an Academic Support Agreement, an Academic Reflection Form.

Registration and Orientation Student Learning Outcomes

- In the face of increased student numbers and limited orientation space, academic advisors lead an effort to change the structure of new student orientation, where students had previously registered for courses are part of their orientation experience. This change was also driven by the advising community's desire to practice more holistic, developmental advising with incoming students, rather than serve only the transactional needs for on-boarding (e.g. registration). Advisors guided students through registration in May and June and we able to focus their limited time at orientation on the transitional needs of their students. Student learning outcomes for academic advising were created for both registration and orientation.

Multi-Year Assessment Plan

- The Multi-Year Assessment Plan for Campus Academic Advising was completed in Summer 2017. The 2016-2017 process included engagement of the Academic Advising Assembly group and focused on affirming of student learning outcomes and activity mapping.
- The Multi-Year Assessment Plan details a structure that will allow for assessment of each academic advising goal over the next five years, identifying 1-2 student learning outcomes that will use to evaluate progress on each goal.

II. Introduction / Background to this Year's Assessment

In 2016-2017, the Campus Academic Advising Assessment Workgroup has continued efforts to develop campus-wide assessment of undergraduate academic advising services, seeking to respond to data from last year's report and continue to be responsive to the changing needs of the campus and student body. This year, the group focused on alignment of services across the four units including:

- Assessment of services to students in academic difficulty.
- Development and implementation of academic advising student learning outcomes for new student registration and orientation.
- Development of a multi-year assessment plan, including identification of student learning outcomes for each assessed goal and identification of advising activities that support student learning.

2016-2017 Campus Academic Advising Assessment Workgroup Membership:

- Armando Contreras, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts (SSHA)
- Karla Gonzalez, School of Engineering (SoE)
- Rosalina Kaji, Undeclared Advising, Bright Success Center (Undeclared)
- Erica Robbins, School Natural Sciences (NS)
- Co-facilitators: Alisha Kimble, Office of Undergraduate Education; Penny Paxton, prior Assessment Manager, SSHA; Corinne Townsend, prior Assessment Analyst, School of Engineering; Amy Moffat, Student and Program Assessment Manager, School of Natural Sciences; Stephan Bera, Assessment Manager, SSHA

III. Service Goals

Academic Advising Service Goals (updated Spring 2017)

1. Promote appropriate progress to degree for undergraduate students

2. Provide students with advising resources and materials that are accurate, current, and understandable
3. Provide interactive advising in formats that meet student preferences and needs in timely and effective ways
4. Provide advising that is reflective of our diverse student populations and unique research environment
5. Facilitate student learning and self-advocacy in relation to reaching academic goals and career plans
6. Support implementation of faculty approved curriculum changes for courses and academic programs

These goals continue to serve as the framework for academic advising services and serve as a common language that helps advisors communicate their role in the success of their students and the campus. Conversations around implementation of new, or changes to existing, advising activities begin with how they will support the service goal and promote student learning.

IV. Service Outcomes Assessed this Year

Academic Difficulty Interventions

In 2016-17, the workgroup continued its focus on Goal 1: *Promote appropriate progress to degree for undergraduate students*. Building on the data analyzed and the logic model developed in 2015-16, the group committed to developing and implementing a consistent academic difficulty intervention program for students on Subject to Academic Dismissal (SD) status. A preliminary review of the data collected over the 2016-17 academic year has informed changes to the 2017-18 academic difficulty intervention program.

Registration and Orientation Student Learning Outcomes

We worked to assess Goal 2: *Provide students with advising resources and materials that are accurate, current, and understandable*. There were significant changes made to the way new students register for their first-term courses, requiring development or modification of resources and materials support the change in process. We developed student learning outcomes for registration and orientation (Appendix A), which provided the foundation for the information communicated throughout these two important processes for incoming students. Goal 2 was assessed by of student learning related to the newly developed resources, specifically as communicated in the academic advising registration messaging and orientation presentations.

Multi-Year Assessment Plan

Upon the recommendation of the Campus Working Group on Assessment, we worked to develop a cohesive multi-year assessment plan to guide our work over the next 5 years. We looked to align all four Schools in our assessment activities with the campus vision and priorities as well as known changes in organizational structure.

V. Assessment Methods/Strategy

Academic Difficulty Interventions

To assess the effectiveness of the updated academic difficulty intervention, the group examined the end of term outcomes for students in Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 with an academic standing of 'Subject to Academic Dismissal' (SD). This intervention was required for all students who had previously appealed their academic dismissal in the previous term. Similar to the 2015-2016 analysis, data included the students major in the term following the earned SAD status and their academic standing at the end of the term. Unlike the previous analysis, however, a student's 'major' for the data set was the declared program at the time of the intervention. This allowed for control of the impact of unit-specific activities related to academic dismissal and demajoring that may skew the outcome data. This strategy allowed the group to focus only on what students gained from the intervention.

Registration and Orientation Student Learning Outcomes

Survey questions were developed to assess the learning outcomes for both registration and New Student Orientation. The survey was administered via Qualtrics during the Academic Advising portion of New Student Orientation. Students were able to complete the survey electronically on their smart phones, tablets or laptops. Printed copies were also available for students and were then entered into Qualtrics later by student staff. (See Appendix B)

Multi-Year Assessment Plan

In response to last year's assessment report, the group focused on finalizing our multi-year assessment plan (See Appendix C). With assistance from campus advising staff, the plan was finalized at the end of Summer 2017. This plan calls for evaluation of one advising goal each year, identified 1-2 student learning outcomes that will be examined in an effort to assess progress on meeting the goal and an advising activity that will serve as the source of data and measurements in support of student learning.

In 2016-2017, the Campus Academic Advising Assessment Workgroup engaged the academic advising community in the development of a multi-year assessment plan, including activities affirming existing vision, mission and goals, mapping of student learning outcomes and advising services. In Summer 2016, the advising community viewed and established the need to reaffirm mission, vision, and goals across all units. At this point, it was noted the community was lacking a vision statement. In Fall 2016, the community worked on reaffirming the mission and establishing a vision. Through group activities, the community refined and finalized advising goals to more accurately reflect the work being done. Throughout Spring 2017, the community worked to refine the Student Learning Outcomes and identify which program activities support those outcomes.

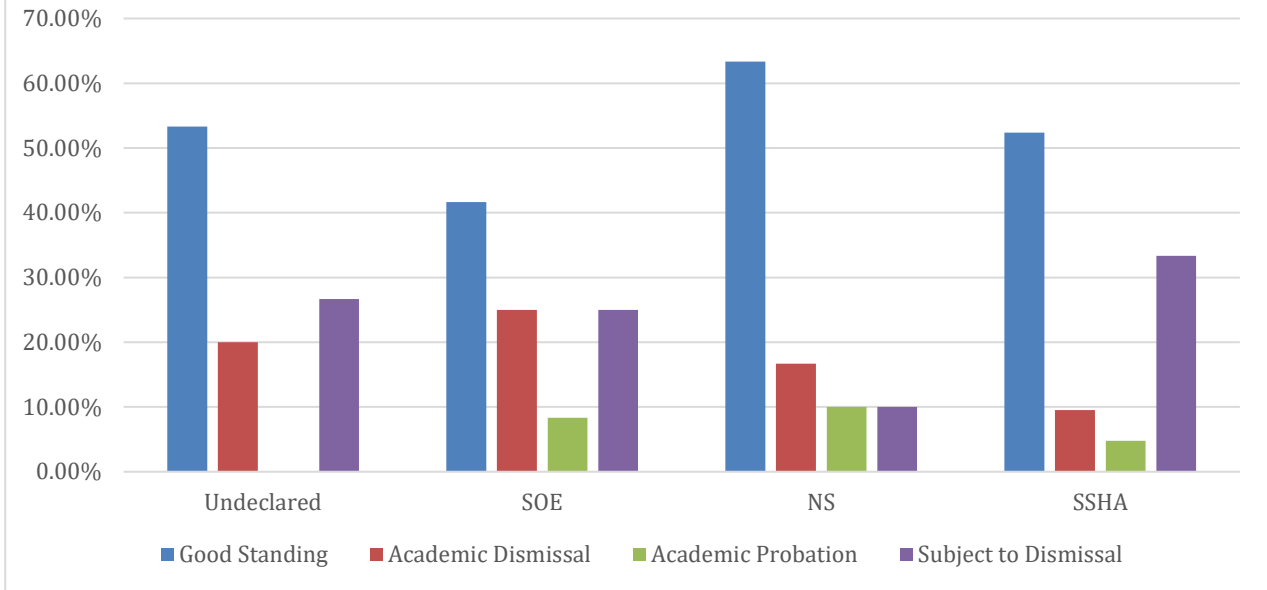
VI. Results

Academic Difficulty Interventions

To examine the effectiveness of the revised academic difficulty intervention, an analysis was conducted on the academic standing outcomes of the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 Subject to Academic Dismissal (SD) cohorts, a total of 222 students. In addition to the descriptive data below, a Chi2 test of statistical significance was conducted. For Fall 2016, there was no significant difference between each of the schools for the outcomes of students who started the semester on Special Probation (SP).

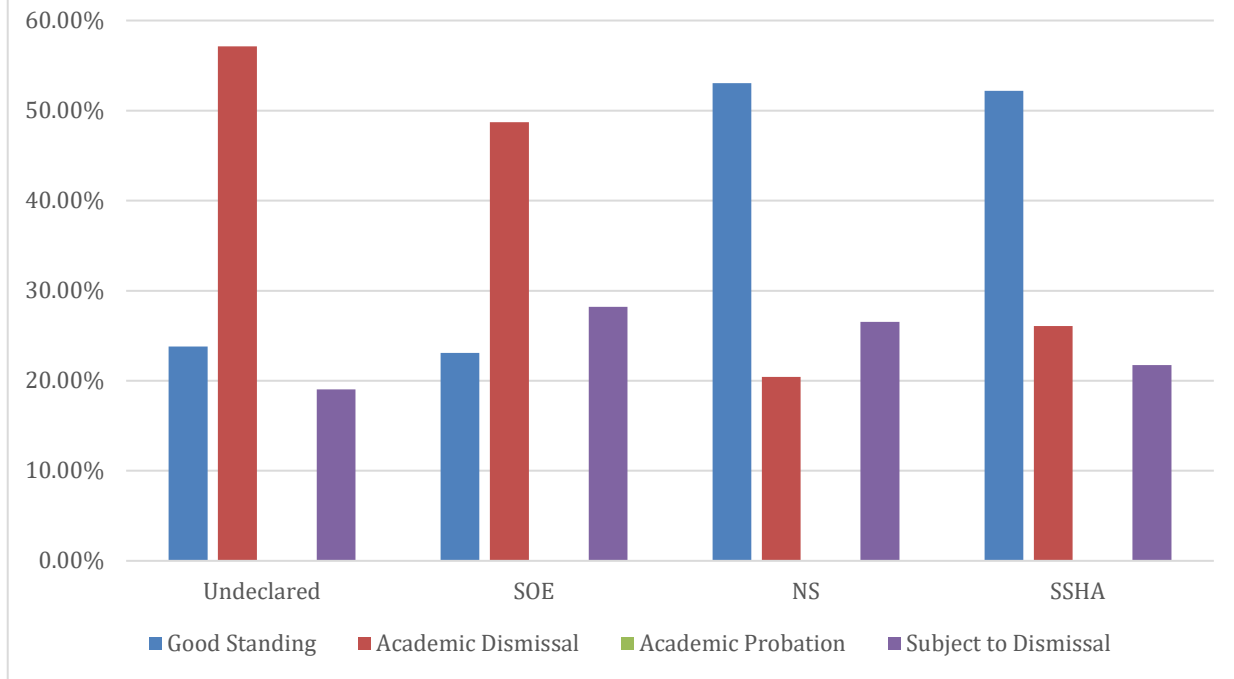
As a note, the term 'special probation' was replaced with 'subject to dismissal' in Spring 2017 to better align with the academic standing policy. Both terms indicate academic standing for students who were Subject to Academic Dismissal and were continued into the next term after successfully appealing their dismissal.

Outcomes of students who began Fall 2016 on Special Probation (SP)



For Spring 2017, there was a notable difference between the advising units for the outcomes of students who started the semester on Subject to Dismissal (SD). Both SSHA and NS had higher percentages of SD students return to good academic status than SD students in SoE and Undeclared.

Outcomes of students who began Spring 2017 on Subject to Dismissal (SD)



This data demonstrates a movement towards more consistent outcomes across units – evidence that standardized intervention may be useful in increasing students’ return to good standing. However, a review of the data reveals variance among cohorts in each unit. After a review of the data within each unit, we identified that differences may be attributed to:

- Individual student circumstances (e.g. GPA prior to the intervention, course repetition and availability, circumstances that led to academic difficulty)
- Subject to dismissal review processes within each unit (e.g. students with similar profile may have had their appeals approved in one unit, but denied in another, resulting in variance in students included in the cohort)
- Guidelines for continuing a student who did not return to good academic standing at the end of a term (e.g. one unit may give a student multiple semesters to return to good standing, which another may decide to dismiss a student who does not return to good standing in one term)

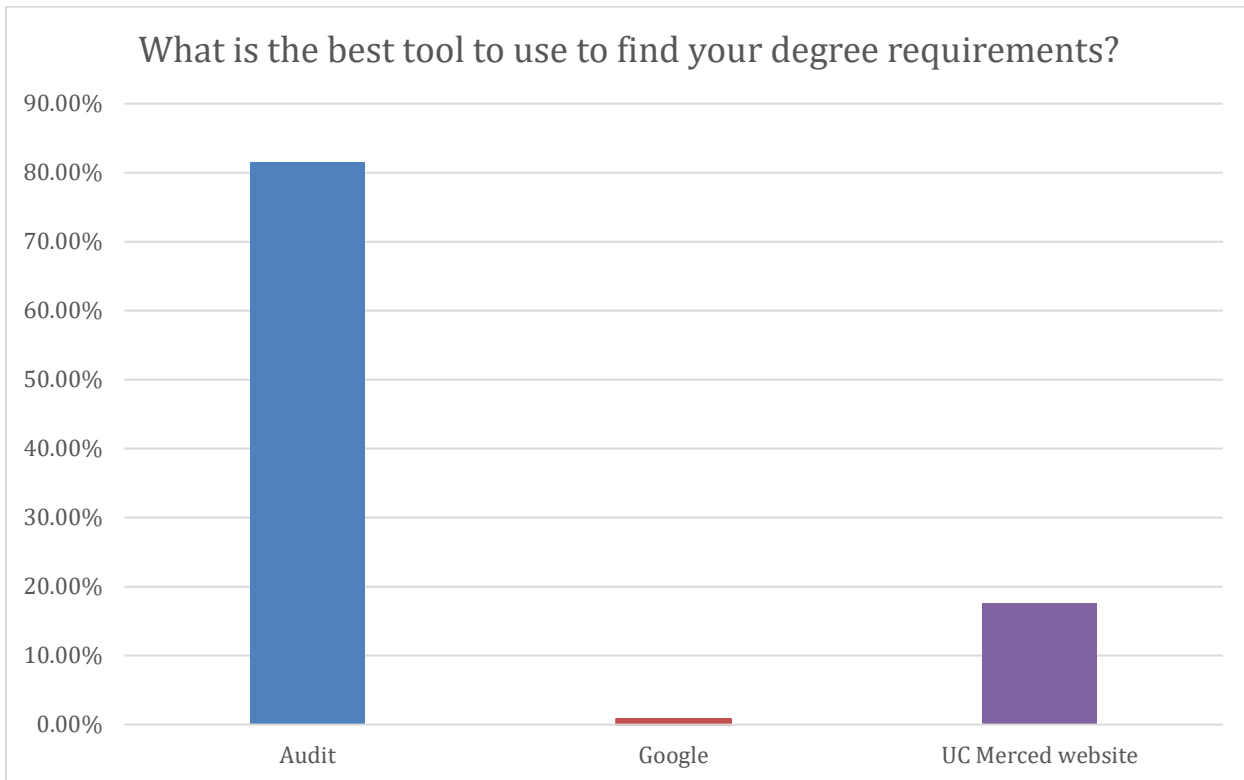
Registration and Orientation Student Learning Outcomes

During summer 2017 New Student Orientation sessions, students were asked to complete a brief survey to assess their learning of intended objectives as well as to collect feedback on their registration experiences. Survey questions were designed to evaluate the effectiveness of registration and orientation curriculum and aligned to the New Student Orientation and Registration learning outcomes. Survey responses were collected from 1,863 students, with response rates representative of orientation participants by advising unit.

This section outlines an evaluation of student learning related to New Student Orientation Outcomes 1, 2 and 5 and includes data on student responses to the related survey question.

Student Learning Outcome 1: Access their audit report and find degree requirements

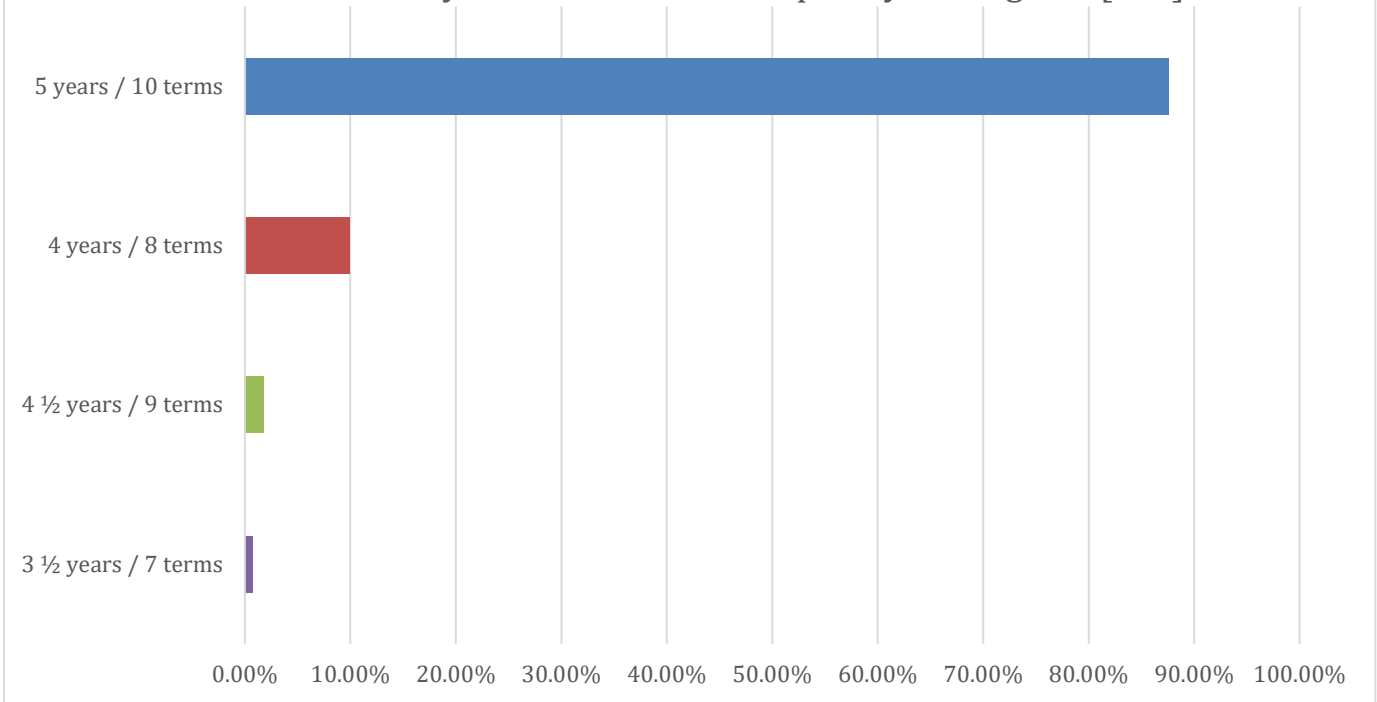
- Survey question: What is the best tool to use to find your degree requirements?
- Students were asked what the best tool to find their degree requirement and 81.59% responded with “their audit”. The other two options included “Google” (0.81%) and “UC Merced website” (17.60%).



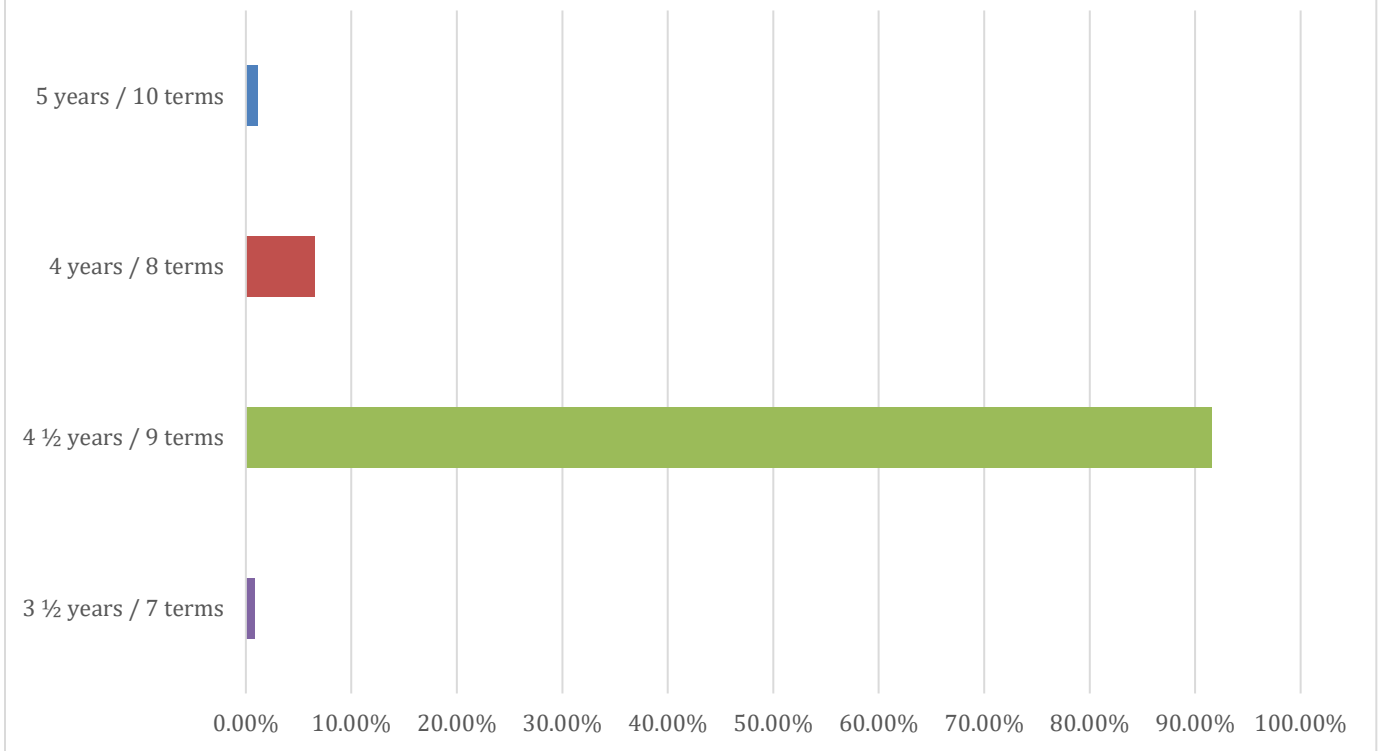
Student Learning Outcomes 2: Describe the policies related to timely degree progress

- Survey question: Per Normal Progress Policy, how many years/terms are you allowed to study at UC Merced to complete your degree?
- Students were asked the number of terms allowed to complete their degree at UC Merced per Normal Progress policy, which emphasized the importance of this policy in completing their degree. Acceptable responses were determined by the students' intended academic program to account for enforcement differences between Schools – the School of Engineering allows for completion in 10 semesters, rather than the 9 outlined in the policy. The charts below disaggregate responses by School to account for this distinction.

Per Normal Progress Policy, how many years/terms are you allowed to study at UC Merced to complete your degree? [SoE]

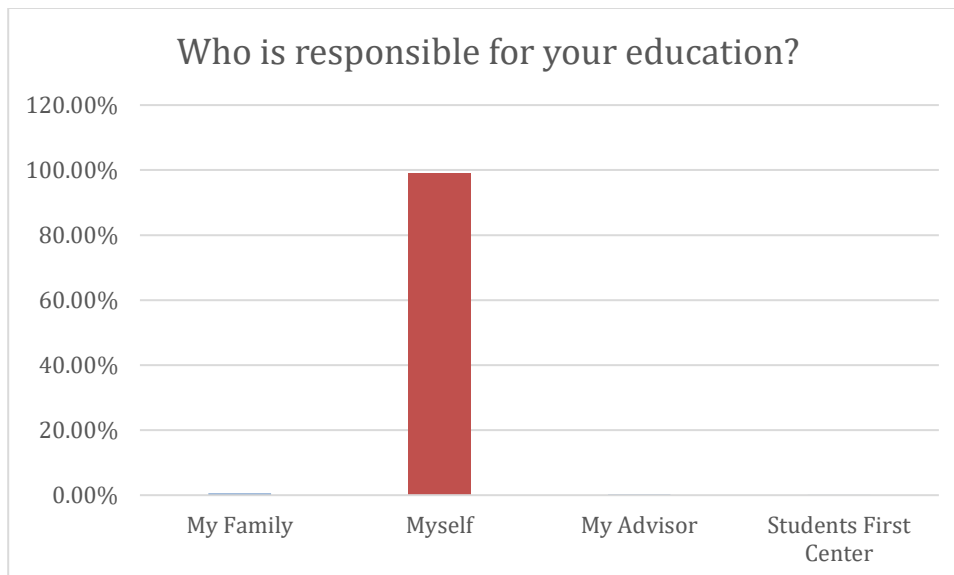


Per Normal Progress Policy, how many years/terms are you allowed to study at UC Merced to complete your degree? [all others]



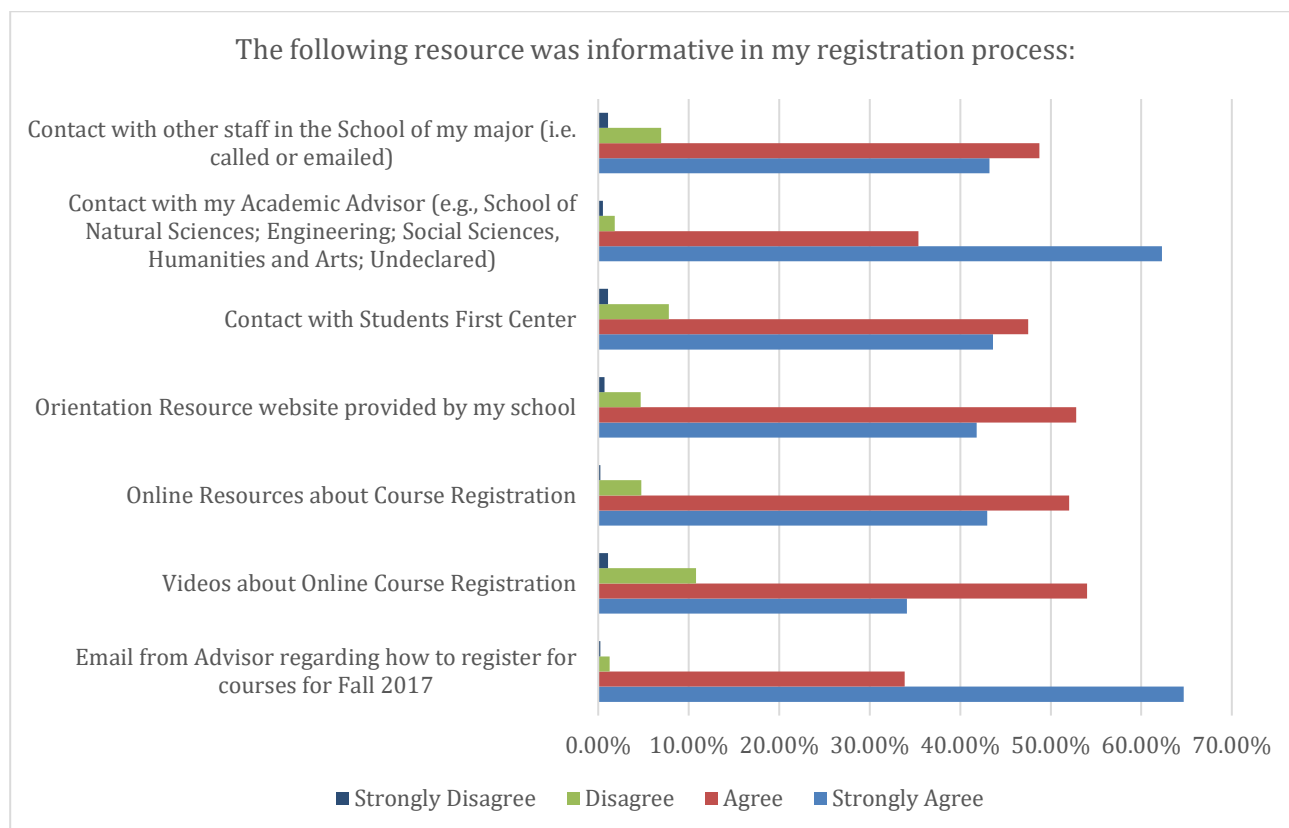
Student Learning Outcome 5: Describe their responsibilities as advisees

- Survey question: Who is responsible for your education?
- The New Student Orientation presentations emphasized the importance of the role and responsibilities of an advisee, resulting in 99.14% of students responding “myself” as the person responsible for their education. The other options included: “My family” (0.54%), “My Advisor” (0.27%), and “Students First Center” (0.05%).



Overall, the data collected during New Student Orientation sessions demonstrated that students grasped key information from the summer presentations (i.e. Normal Progress policy, who is responsible for their education, and what tool to utilize to find out their degree requirements). Overall, the data collected during New Student Orientation sessions demonstrated that students grasped key information from the summer presentations (i.e. Normal Progress policy, who is responsible for their education, and what tool to utilize to find out their degree requirements).

The survey also allowed for gathering of data to evaluate the effectiveness of the communications and resources available to students as part of the new model of course registration.



Generally, students agreed that the available resources were informative in their registration process. Overall, students found the email from their academic advisor and contact with their advisor the most helpful. Conversely, students found the online videos to be the least helpful.

The survey also allowed an opportunity for students who responded ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ to provide qualitative feedback related to their response. Though there was some concern about potential ambiguity around the ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ response, it’s possible that students did not identify the qualitative option as a result of that response. As a result, qualitative feedback was gathered for students who also answered ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ – yielding both positive and negative feedback. A total of 565 responses to this question were collected and common themes identified:

Challenges

- Confusion with which courses have linked components and which do not.
- Lack of specific information on how to proceed with registration errors within the registration video.
- Unaware that a registration video was available.
- Orientation Resources and online registration resource webpages were noted as being difficult to navigate and overly complicated.
- Long wait times for the Students First Center and academic advisors.

Strengths

- Emails from their academic advisor was well organized and detailed, as well as making them feel confident in choosing their courses
- Ability to obtain support from their advisor, who provided clarification on specific aspects of the process.
- Positive reviews of the Students First Center were mentioned as being extremely helpful and informative.
- Appreciation of the opportunity to interact with their advisor and School staff before the semester had started.

Multi-Year Assessment Plan

By the end of Summer 2017, a final multi-year assessment plan was completed (see Appendix C). The Campus Advising Assessment Group will be reporting on each year's efforts by October 1, 2017 to align with School-specific administrative report time frames.

An important result of this activity was identifying activities and responsibilities of advising staff that did not support service goals or student learning. This will continue to provide useful information for staff and supervisors as they consider how they deploy advising resources.

The goals and outcomes were placed on the campus advising website, advising.ucmerced.edu, which was relaunched and more intentionally publicized beginning Summer 2017.

VII. Conclusions: Explain what the results mean

Academic Difficulty Interventions

The 2016-17 efforts in the alignment of academic difficulty interventions had several positive outcomes for the advising units and students. The use of a common curriculum, resources and timeframes allowed for a consistent experience for students across units and a resource for new advisor training.

Our focus was on Goal 1: *Promote appropriate progress to degree for undergraduate students*. Based on the academic standing data collected, both SSHA (52.17%) and NS (53.06%) SD students performed better than SD students in SoE and Undeclared. This means that less students were dismissed from SSHA and NS, allowing more students to make appropriate progress to degree by participating in the Academic Difficulty Intervention. Limitations of this data include the small number of students included in the analysis and differences between units as outlined in the section above. Additionally, data analysis did not control for factors that could affect a student's ability to return to good academic standing, including previous term GPA, number of units enrolled and repeated courses.

Registration and Orientation Student Learning Outcomes

The New Student Orientation committee worked with each of their units to ensure that their orientation presentation followed similar themes and addressed all of the Student Learning Outcomes. Through these efforts, the data shows that all new incoming students learned about advising services at UC Merced, the importance of progress to degree, and unit specific information (i.e. advising location and services).

Due to the overall success of the new process for new student registration, the same process will be used in subsequent semesters. Overall, students highly agreed the resources, staff, and communications were useful. Lastly, student comments reaffirmed changes and improvements to the process already identified by those implementing the registration process.

Multi-Year Assessment Plan

The multi-year assessment plan has been reviewed by relevant campus stakeholders (academic advisors, advising administrators and School assessment personnel) and will be implemented beginning Fall 2017.

VIII. Actions

Academic Difficulty Interventions

Data demonstrates that a uniform intervention strategy for students in SD status may be having an impact on student outcomes, but further analysis is needed to determine whether it is the intervention or other factors (such as student courses, major or GPA) are impacting performance. Given the nature of the intervention, it is not appropriate to have a control group that does not receive the support.

For 2017-2018, we will be collecting qualitative data, including students' reported reasons for difficulty and resources utilized, to determine potential correlations with quantitative data (e.g. major, GPA or academic standing). Data will be collected in pre- and post- intervention surveys. This may lead to considerations of differing interventions based on student attributes – whether the current intervention is good for all students at all points of their career.

Finally, we will begin to investigate how end-of-term decisions are made and how potential alignment of guidelines might improve the effectiveness of the SD intervention.

Registration and Orientation Student Learning Outcomes

The Orientation Student Learning Outcomes served as a useful tool for mapping out important themes that need to be covered in all advising orientation presentation, ensuring that all incoming students received consistent information about the role of academic advising in their success.

The high survey response rate, attributed to 'just in time' delivery and web and mobile accessibility, affirmed the role of technology in the communication of important information as well as the assessment of student learning. Improvements for next year include engagement of the Campus Survey Committee and students themselves to provide clarity to questions. We anticipate using this tool in assessment of student learning in orientation and as appropriate for future advising activities.

Given that all of the current resources were indicated to be helpful to students, we will continue to offer the all of the resources for new student registration. The comments related to the registration resources provided by students will be used to inform improvements in the specific tools. Many of these will be implemented for

registration of Spring 2018 cohort, while others will be updated or Fall 2018. Recommended improvements included:

- Strengthening language around the number of units a student should take per term to maintain progress to degree
- Clarifying which courses have multiple components and how to avoid registration errors
- Promoting use of online videos as well as a resource for registration, which may include expanding available video topics and providing guidance as to how these videos supplement advisor support.

We will continue to assess the usefulness of the resources over the next year as well as in 2018-19, as indicated in our multi-year assessment plan. Doing so will allow us to continuously improve the resources available to students as well as provide baseline information necessary for the development of the Office of First Year and Undeclared Advising.

Multi-Year Assessment Plan

The implementation of a multi-year assessment plan will begin in 2017-18 academic year. Each year, the group will revisit the plan to affirm that the goals and learning outcomes continue to be relevant and responsive to institutional needs. Special attention will be given to the advising activities/initiatives that provide the content and indicators for student learning and goal satisfaction each year to ensure academic advising supports student and campus priorities.

IX. Resource Implications

With the launch of centralized first year advising in Fall 2018, the committee will need to be cognizant of the curriculum, indicators and measures for student learning at different stages of the academic career. This will require intentional, focused collaboration that may benefit from additional expertise in designing a cohesive academic advising assessment that allows for the scaffolding of student learning. This may be served by increasing capacity through professional development of those currently involved in advising assessment, or the assignment of an assessment staff support to the collaborative efforts of the group.



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New Student Orientation Learning Outcomes

By the conclusion of their session with their School academic advising team, students will be able to:

1. *Access their audit report and find degree requirements*
2. *Describe the policies related to timely degree progress*
3. *Identify their academic advisor and their advisor's office location*
4. *Summarize their advising office's website and basic office procedures*
5. *Describe their responsibilities as advisees*
6. *Identify key differences between previous institution and UC Merced as it pertains to academic success*



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Testing Your Knowledge

1. What school's orientation presentation did you attend today?
 - School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts (SSHA)
 - School of Natural Sciences (NS)
 - School of Engineering (SOE)
 - Undeclared

2. What is the best tool to use to find your degree requirements? Choose one.
 - Audit
 - Google
 - UC Merced website

3. What website (URL) would you use to find more information about advising?

4. Per Normal Progress Policy, how many years/terms are you allowed to study at UC Merced to complete your degree?
 - 3½ years/7 terms
 - 4 years/8 terms
 - 4½ years/9 terms
 - 5 years/10 terms

5. Who is responsible for your education?
 - My family
 - Myself
 - My Advisor
 - Students First Center

6. The following resources was informative in my registration process:

Use the following scale to respond (circle one): SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree; NA=Not Applicable

	SA	A	D	SD	NA
A. Email from Advisor regarding how to register for courses for Fall 2017					
B. Videos about Online Course Registration					
C. Online Resources about Course Registration					
D. Orientation Resource website provided by my school					
E. Contact with Students First Center					
F. Contact with my Academic Advisor (e.g. School of Natural Sciences; Engineering; Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts; Undeclared)					
G. Contact with other staff in the School of my major (i.e. called or emailed)					

7. Please explain any responses for which you may have indicated strongly disagree or disagree above. What resources would have assisted you during your registration process?

8. Check off all of the resources you utilized to successfully register for Fall 2017 courses:
 - I emailed my advisor
 - Spoke to advisor/peer via phone
 - Spoke to advisor/peer via instant message
 - UC Merced computer labs
 - In person walk-in hours
 - Called the Students First Center
 - None of the above

Appendix C: Multi-Year Assessment Plan

AY Assessed	Program Goal	Student Learning Outcome(s)	Activity/Service
17-18	4. Provide advising that is tailored to the distinctive needs of specific student populations.	Seek and use resources to develop the academic skills and resilience needed to succeed at a research university.	Academic difficulty interventions
18-19	2. Provide students with advising resources and materials that are accurate, current, and understandable, using delivery formats that respond to student needs.	Seek and apply credible sources of information regarding university and school requirements, policies, regulations and procedures to make informed educational decisions	New student orientation and registration
19-20	3. Provide interactive advising in formats that meet the preferences and needs of students in timely and effective ways.	Seek and use resources to better understand your academic interests and opportunities	Mandatory first year advising
20-21	1. Promote appropriate progress to degree for native and transfer students	Identify degree requirements and formulate degree plans in the expected graduation timeframe.	JumpStart3 (Sophomore advising)
21-22	5. Facilitate student learning and self-advocacy in relation to reaching academic goals and career plans	Identify a major that aligns with your interests, values, strengths, career and educational goals	TBD