

**UC Merced Undergraduate Academic Advising  
Annual Assessment Report:  
Review of the JumpStart3 Initiative  
January 21, 2016**

## **Executive Summary**

In 2013-2015, campus wide advising assessment was focused on creation and implementation of JumpStart Your 3<sup>rd</sup> Year, a mandatory advising initiative for second year students. The goal of the initiative was to support students in development of educational goals and decisions related to academic and co-curricular programming, while supporting the campus efforts to promote timely degree progress. This report focuses on outcomes related to student success and suggests adjustment to the JumpStart experience, based on data gathered in spring 2014 and spring 2015.

The group is generally satisfied with the results, noting that unexpected data are likely to be resolved by administrative changes, suggested in the report below.

### *Time-to-Degree Measures*

- Increase in the number of students who complete their JumpStart meeting with a plan to graduate in 4 years or less, from approximately 75% in the first cohort to roughly 83% in the second cohort.
- Evidence that the JumpStart Initiative is a useful method in promoting student progress to degree, when measured by major declaration in the sophomore and early junior year

### *Utilization of Advising Services, Advisors as a Resource for Academic Planning*

- Increase in students reporting they utilized an academic advisor or a peer advisor when considering their academic path to graduation.

The success of the JumpStart3 initiative speaks to the value of academic advising in student success. The group wishes to continue collaborative efforts to develop campus wide advising assessment goals and outcomes that support all undergraduate students, but seeks guidance on how their work aligns with the mission and philosophies that drive student success at UC Merced. We currently find challenges in moving forward campus wide advising assessment due to competing priorities and minimal resources. If campus wide advising assessment is an institutional priority, institutional support is needed in defining, organizing and supporting the work of the advising assessment group.

## **I. Introduction / Background to this Year's Assessment**

In August 2013, representatives from campus advising units formed the Campus Academic Advising Assessment Committee, with the goal of initiating campus-wide assessment of undergraduate academic advising services. Under the leadership of Laura Martin, Director of Institutional Assessment, the committee spent the fall 2013 semester developing service goals and student learning outcomes that reflected best practices and standards from

NACADA, campus-wide priorities and existing academic advising goals. The committee drafted a mission statement, six advising services goals and a series of student learning outcomes, which were shared and agreed upon by campus advising staff.

### Mission:

UC Merced undergraduate academic advising, in collaboration the campus community, promotes student success by empowering students to become self-directed learners and decision-makers. In an environment that is welcoming, inclusive and supportive, we provide quality academic advising and related services to help students develop sound educational plans and to take full advantage of their university experience.

### Service Goals:

1. Promote appropriate progress to degree for native and transfer students.
2. Provide students with advising resources and materials that are accurate, current, and understandable, using delivery formats that respond to student needs.
3. Provide interactive advising in formats that meet student preferences and needs in timely and effective ways.
4. Provide advising that is tailored to the distinctive needs of specific student populations, and reflects the unique environment of a research university
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

Student Learning Outcomes: <http://advising.ucmerced.edu/student-plans-success>

In 2013-2014, campus wide advising assessment was focused on creation and implementation of JumpStart Your 3<sup>rd</sup> Year, a mandatory advising initiative for second year students. The goal of the initiative was to support students in development of educational goals and decisions related to academic and co-curricular programming, while supporting the campus efforts to promote timely degree progress. The initiative also allowed for gathering of student attitudes and expectations related to co-curricular activities, academic programs, major fit, time to degree, and campus resources. Advising staff have continued the initiative each subsequent spring semester.

## **II. Goal(s) Assessed this Year**

- Promote appropriate progress to degree for native and transfer students.
- Provide students with advising resources and materials that are accurate, current, and understandable, using delivery formats that respond to student needs.

## **III. Assessment Methods/Strategy**

Students currently enrolled in their 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> semester met with an academic advisor (or peer advisor) for the JumpStart meeting. Communications to students regarding this opportunity

began early in the spring semester, with the data collection period running throughout the spring semester.

Initial communications outlined required student preparation for the meeting, including a current MyAudit and a tentative graduation plan. Each School created a JumpStart website to provide information on the initiative and tools for creating academic plans. [See Appendix A]

Students then met with an advisor—either by walk-in or scheduled appointment—to review the plan. To guide the meeting, campus advisors were given a script intended to solicit information from students, which was then fed into a web form. Data from the web form provided the majority of the data for this report. Campus advisors were given input and training on the delivery of the script and the web form, including an all staff meeting where the interaction was role-played.

After the data collection period ended, qualitative data was gathered from participating advisors, in the form of a focus group, and from participating students, in the form of a follow-up email that included an anonymous web form.

Using the feedback from advisors, the process was changed for the 2015 cycle. Instead of the advisor gathering information from the student directly, students were given a small intake form with questions. The responses from these intake forms were then input into the web form for analysis. Questions on the intake form were also improved and answer options streamlined based upon the feedback from advisors and common answers reported by students in 2014.

Direct evidence was gathered from student record systems (such as MyAudit and data housed in BANNER), while indirect evidence was reported by the student, either on an intake form or in an interview, and entered into a web form. Data was gathered from 2,377 students in their fourth term of enrollment. Most analysis were done by entry cohort 2012 (n=1100) and 2013 (n=1277), including comparisons between cohorts.

Table 1: *Participants by Advising Unit*

	2015	2014
SOE	272	234
SNS	365	377
SSHA	504	386
Undeclared	136	173
Total	1277	1170

**Goal 1: Promote appropriate progress to degree for native and transfer students.**

*Measure 1:* Using student records data (BANNER and/or MyAudit), our analysis looked at whether a student was (a) declared in their intended major at the time of the interaction and (b) whether the student was declared or undeclared in the term following the JumpStart3 Intervention (generally term 5). For (b), comparisons were drawn between years, and for a previous cohort (2011, n=1076) that did not participate in the intervention.

Measure 2: Evaluation of number of terms to graduation as outlined on the Proposed Graduation Plan

**Goal 2: Provide students with advising resources and materials that are accurate, current, and understandable, using delivery formats that respond to student needs.**

Measures in this goal were assessed by student responses to two questions on the web form:

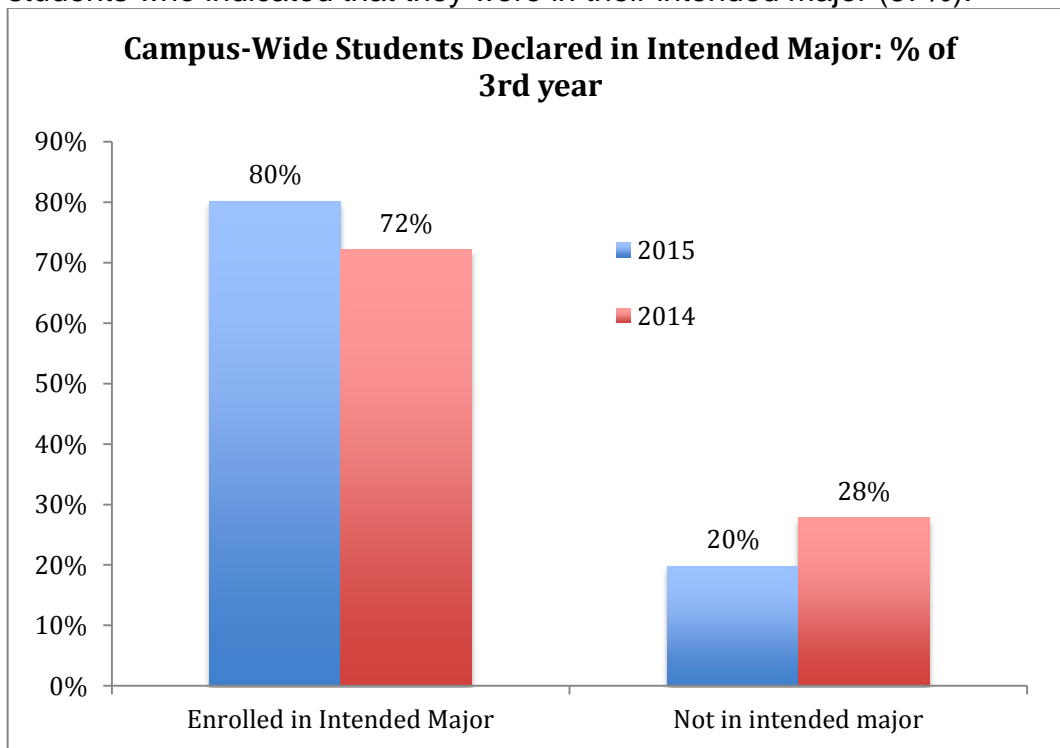
Measure 1: “In general, from whom do you seek advice to plan your academic path to graduation, including your major and/or minor?”

Measure 2: “What campus resources/tools did you use in creating your proposed Graduation Plan?”

## IV. Results

### Goal 1, Measure 1a:

The first JumpStart cohort (2012), 72.5% of students were declared in their intended major at the time of the JumpStart interaction. The second cohort (2013), 80.2% of students were declared in their intended major. One notable population in the 2013 analysis is undeclared students who indicated that they were in their intended major (67%).



### Goal 1, Measure 1b:

In the control cohort (2011), 20.7% of the students were undeclared in their fourth term, while 10.2% were still undeclared in their fifth term. The first JumpStart cohort (2012) showed a decrease in undeclared students between the fourth and fifth terms, with 17.1% of students

undeclared in the fourth term and 7.4% in their fifth term. The second JumpStart cohort (2013) saw a smaller decrease in undeclared students, 18.3% to 13.4%.

**Goal 1, Measure 2:**

Table 2: *Anticipated number of terms to graduation, as outlined in Proposed Graduation Plan*

	Fall 2012 Cohort*	Fall 2013 Cohort*
>4 years	5%	13.2%
4 years	70%	66%
4 years, plus summer following final term	N/A	3.8%
4 ½ years	4%	11.7%
5 years or more	19%	2.4%

\*2-3% of responses could not be categorized

**Goal 2, Measure 1:**

Table 3: *Top sources of academic planning advice*

	Fall 2012 Cohort	Fall 2013 Cohort
UCM Academic Advisor	34%	42%
Peer Mentor (all)	8%	10%
Faculty or instructor	4%	3%
Family members	6%	6%
Peers/friends	29%	25%

**Goal 2, Measure 2:**

Table 4: *Top resources used to develop Graduation Plan*

	Fall 2012 Cohort	Fall 2013 Cohort
MyAudit	45%	73%
Schedule of classes	13%	15%
School website	20%	40%
University Catalog	21%	11%

**IV. Conclusions**

**Goal 1, Measure 1a:**

Our group did not establish a benchmark for this measure, but were pleased to see an increase in the number of students in the second cohort who were declared in their intended major at the time of the JumpStart interaction. This result was not unexpected, as the advising groups sent targeted messaging to the 2013 cohort ahead of the major change deadline for the intervention term. The goal of this messaging was to address 2012 cohort data, which found that of students who were not in their intended majors, 56% were eligible but did not submit the paperwork. Conclusions drawn from this data may be limited when considering student intention versus time-to-degree outcomes— experience with a program in

sophomore year may not expose students to the content and rigor of upper division major coursework. We recommend additional analyses of student major at the time of graduation to determine if students graduate in their intended major at JumpStart. This may highlight a need for establishment of junior year (5<sup>th</sup> term) interventions (based on a key major requirement) that may indicate a student's ability to be successful in their intended major.

Another limitation in this data is the fact that undeclared students were allowed to select undeclared as the intended major. This option will be removed from the 2016 JumpStart data collection.

### **Goal 1, Measure 1b:**

Our group was surprised to see a smaller decrease in undeclared students in the term following the JumpStart interaction, given the targeted messaging described above. Possible explanations include students not eligible to declare as well as incomplete and unprocessed forms. For the 2014 cohort (the population involved in the 2016 JumpStart interaction), we recommend that denials of change of major across units be manually tracked to identify opportunities for process or practice improvement.

### **Goal 1, Measure 2:**

Our group was pleased to see an increase in the number of students who complete their JumpStart meeting with a plan to graduate in 4 years or less, from approximately 75% in the first cohort to roughly 83% in the second cohort. On the converse, the decrease in degree plans that require more than 4 years of enrollment better aligns to campus and system wide initiatives related to time to degree.

### **Goal 1 Conclusions**

An analysis of data for Goal 1 indicates that it is a useful method in promoting student progress to degree, when measured by major declaration in the sophomore and early junior year. A stronger correlation may be seen when analyzing graduation rates for the JumpStart cohorts. The group cautions against using major declaration as the primary indicator of degree progression, however, and would encourage the institution and academic programs to seek other information (i.e. performance in gateway courses and timing of pre-requisite completion) when assessing factors that may inhibit student progress to degree. A limitation of this analysis is that it only utilizes 'undeclared' status as a marker for major selection and thus does not account for students who are declared in an academic program but may not be able to complete that program successfully. Additional resources or tools to identify those students who are off-track for on-time graduation (i.e. not progressing through pre-requisite sequences) could greatly assist advisors in providing outreach to those at-risk students.

### **Goal 2, Measure 1:**

The group was pleased to see an increase in students reporting they utilized an academic advisor or a peer advisor when considering their academic path to graduation. This result was not unexpected, as use of mandatory advising has increased; Natural Sciences began the practice in 2012, while Engineering and Undeclared began in 2014. These interactions include discusses of course selection, using resources to plan course schedule as well as curriculum that stress the importance of utilizing advising staff for academic planning.

### **Goal 2, Measure 2:**

Again the group was pleased to see an increase in the utilization of MyAudit and School websites as the top campus resources students used to create their graduation plan. This result can likely be attributed to the increased publication of sample plans for the majors on the School websites and increased messaging to students on the importance of their MyAudit. Advising staff spend a considerable amount of time ensuring these resources are correct and aligned with faculty intentions.

## **Goal 2 Conclusions**

Data gathered for measures 1 and 2 indicate a culture change at UC Merced related to sources of academic planning. The group credits a change in orientation messaging which began in earnest with the fall 2014 cohort. These changes include common messages on the Normal Progress Policy and emphasized the use of academic advisors and peer academic advisors as resources. A concise “How to Get Assistance” slide was also shared with all students. [See Appendix B] The group hopes to continue to cultivate an academic advising and student culture that values the advising relationship, where students see advising staff as effective, consistent sources of information as they plan their UC Merced degree.

## **VII. Actions**

### **JumpStart 2016 Program Updates**

- Removal of option for undeclared students to select ‘undeclared’ as their intended major

### **JumpStart 2016 Assessment Plans**

- Acquire 2012 cohort graduation data for analysis to show investigate impact of JumpStart on graduation rate and time to degree
- Evaluate major/minor change denials (see below) to identify additional interventions needed to support academic program declaration

### **Advising Unit Administrative Updates**

- Update major/minor change forms to indicate that an academic plan is required for students who wish to declare a major or minor in Engineering and Natural Sciences
- Establishment of mechanism to track major change denials between fourth and fifth terms, across units

### **Campus Academic Advising Workgroup**

- Development of campus-wide advising assessment plan
- Creation of logic model for advising activities

## **VIII. Resource Implications**

The success of the JumpStart3 initiative speaks to the value of academic advising in student success. The group wishes to continue collaborative efforts to develop campus wide advising assessment goals and outcomes that support all undergraduate students, but seeks guidance on how their work aligns with the mission and philosophies that drive student success at UC Merced. We currently find challenges in moving forward campus wide

advising assessment due to competing priorities and minimal resources. If campus wide advising assessment is an institutional priority, institutional support is needed in defining, organizing and supporting the work of the advising assessment group.



## IX. Appendices

### Appendix A: JumpStart Websites

- Campus Advising Home: <http://advising.ucmerced.edu/resources/jump-start-your-third-year>
- Bright Success Center: <http://learning.ucmerced.edu/academic-advising/resources/jump-start-your-3rd-year>
- School of Engineering: <http://enr-advising.ucmerced.edu/jumpstart3>
- School of Natural Sciences: <http://ns-advising.ucmerced.edu/jumpstart3>
- School of Social Sciences, Humanities & Arts: <http://ssha-advising.ucmerced.edu/jumpstart3>

## Appendix B: How to Get Assistance

- STEP 1 → Research
  - Visit the school website: <<insert website>>
  - Utilize academic resources - Academic Planning Sheets, etc.
- STEP 2 → Personalize and Plan
  - Prepare your course options
  - Identify academic concerns
  - Explore major/minor options
  - Make preliminary decisions about the upcoming semester
- STEP 3 → Meet with an Advisor
  - Items to bring: current copy of MyAudit and planning info
  - Advising/Peer Advising
  - Advisors help with course selection, not creating schedules