

STUDENT SUCCESS BEST PRACTICE: NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE



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STUDENT SUCCESS CATEGORY --

- ACADEMIC PROGRAM
- STUDENT SERVICES
- WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
- COLLEGE BUSINESS PRACTICE
- TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION
- OTHER: MULTIPLE

TITLE: "STUDENT SUCCESS AT NOVA: GPS FOR SUCCESS AND START STRONG INITIATIVES"

PROCESS

The QEP for NOVA (GPS for Success) was developed through a process of "broad based involvement of institutional constituencies" as is required by SACSCOC. The Campus Committees and QEP Development Committee guided the process which was informed by Reaffirmation Steering Committee and the Administrative Council of the President. The Start Strong Policy mandates were formed through formative assessment of our practices with the QEP programming and an examination of Achieving the Dream best practices and literature review. Extensive input was sought from all levels of NOVA faculty, staff and administration through the formation of the Policy Change Implementation Committee which met several times over the course of the year preceding the implementation.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

NOVA's QEP (GPS for Success) was implemented for First time to college recent high school graduates and provides them with a case management style academic advisor who teaches them the importance and skill of academic planning. After the student has completed a semester and has developed their academic goal, selected a major aligned with that goal, and developed a semester by semester academic plan he or she is handed off to a faculty advisor. The faculty advisor reinforces the lessons about academic planning and evaluation of progress.

The process: First Year Advisors are involved with students from high school outreach through their first year of college at NOVA, provide the initial single point of contact for students after they apply for admission and facilitate required Student Orientation session and perform initial advising for GPS students. During initial advising, First Year Advisors teach students the goal setting and planning process, get them "class ready" and "faculty ready." Students will be handed off to faculty advisors when they are deemed "ready" – anytime between the end of their first semester to the middle of their second semester. Faculty Advising is culture change for NOVA, many advised before but this is a formal, required program. Students are expected to go to faculty advisor one time. However, we anticipate they will have learned the benefit of meeting with a faculty member

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o Start Strong policies – (Fall 2014)

Mandatory placement testing, attendance at orientation, and early advising (GPS Students)

Mandatory enrollment in Developmental coursework if required (GPS students)

Mandatory enrollment in SDV within first 15 credit hours (GPS students)

Mandatory On-time Registration (for all NOVA students)

o Start Strong policy refinements (Fall 2016 for GPS students)

2nd advising hold – to mandate a second advising appointment with the First Year Advisor to ensure progress and help reinforce the importance of transitioning to the faculty advisor

2nd Developmental Math hold-to enforce the enrollment in Developmental math coursework

2nd SDV hold – to enforce the enrollment in SDV within the first 15 hours

Student orientation consists of orientation to campus, pertinent information about college offices like: Financial aid and campus safety, and registration information. Early advising takes place at orientation and consists of interpretation of the placement test scores, establishment and recording of the student's academic goal, understanding of the coursework required including SDV and Developmental (and a schedule if possible) and an introduction to the student success planner.

Refinements to the Policies have included the advent of a second registration hold – placed after the initial registration to enforce the Developmental Math enrollment, enrollment in SDV, and to mandate a second advising requirement. The second advising requirement is intended to remind students of the benefits of using the planner, to confirm/reaffirm their goals, and solidify their commitment to seeing a faculty advisor.

ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

The GPS for Success population is approximately 6000 students per academic year (~5700 fall entry and ~300 spring entry). The success metrics specific to the GPS initiative include information on areas which advisors can affect change. Metrics such as compliance with number of advising appointments documented, number of new electronic academic plans started, placement testing mandates and enrollment in developmental courses if necessary are used. Other indirect measures are also noted such as Retention (Fall-Fall and Fall-Spring), and faculty advising appointments illustrate success and culture change. Graphics representing metrics are in the attached powerpoints

In the medium-term, retention rates for students in the Fall 2015 target cohort increased to the highest point in ten years compared to the average retention rates from the previous three years:

- Fall to Spring retention rate increased 10.5% and
- Fall to Fall retention rate increased 23.9%.

A year and a half in is too early to see any change in completion and transfer rates, but we eagerly anticipate seeing those results soon, too.

PLAN FOR SCALE & SUSTAINABILITY

The College is now embarking on an extensive strategic planning process with one focus identified as ensuring “every student has an informed and engaged advisor or advocate.” This ensures that advising is in the conversations of all constituents and that the commitment to make advising sustainably- scaled is present in the highest NOVA offices. The Advising Council (formed for the purposes of the strategic plan) is examining particularly what models will be most appropriate for both the size and intention of scaling advising, in addition to appropriately meeting the needs of the various types of students who enroll at an open enrollment institution of this size.

COLLEGE DESCRIPTION

Northern Virginia Community College is the largest institution of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia and one of America’s largest community colleges. NOVA enrolls nearly 75,000 students at its six campuses in Alexandria, Annandale, Loudoun, Manassas, Springfield, and Woodbridge, and through the Extended Learning Institute.

For more information about NOVA and its programs or services, call 703-323-3000 or visit the College’s Web site: www.nvcc.edu

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