Idaho State University

Momentum Pathways

Academic Maps and Momentum Year Project Plan

Lance Erickson
Co-Chair

Diana Livingston-Friedley
College of Arts and Letters

John Ney
College of Business

Emma Wood
College of Education

Tiffany Mitchell
College of Technology

Ashley Larson
Admissions Visitors Center

Mark McBeth
Co-chair

Rachel Hulse
Kasiska Division of Health Sciences

Chris Owens
Kasiska Division of Health Sciences

JoAnn Hertz
Advising

Sarah Mead
Office of the Registrar

Sari Byerly
Student Affairs

September 16, 2019

ROAR

Table of Contents

Idaho State University

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The subcommittee consisted of both staff and faculty at ISU.

Co-Chairs: Lance Erickson (Career Center) and Mark McBeth (CAL).

Members: Diana Livingston-Friedley (Music), John Ney (COB), Emma Wood (COE), Tiffany Mitchell (COT), Rachel Hulse (KDHS), Chris Owens (KDHS), JoAnn Hertz (Advising), Sarah Mead (Office of the Registrar), Sari Byerly (Student Affairs), and Ashley Larson (Admissions).

The subcommittee met four times in preparation for this white paper: May 13, June 10, July 8, and August 19 (over six hours). In addition, the subcommittee worked on the white paper on Google Docs.

The Momentum Year focuses on a student's first year at ISU. The charge of the subcommittee was to develop strategies and recommendations to help students in their first year. The subcommittee sought to build recommendations that would help students make a purposeful choice about what they hope to study and then provide an integrated and coordinated approach for the university to more effectively deliver courses and administrative help to students.

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

VISION STATEMENT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

To inspire the Idaho State University community to become a model of excellence in enrollment and retention.

MISSION STATEMENT

To develop a comprehensive and coordinated momentum year, designed to enhance student enrollment processes, to support student success and retention, and to encourage degree completion by connecting students to the Idaho State University community through the use of academic maps, accessibility tools, and high quality and inspiring instruction.

READING MATERIALS

In preparation of this document, the subcommittee read studies from Georgia State University on their retention efforts (Georgia State University, 2018); studies of successful programs (Georgia State University, 2019); a story about efforts to use quality teaching to restore student connection (Steinhauer, 2018), a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article on improving graduation rates

(McMurtrie, 2018), and part of a chapter by Eyler (2018) on the importance of student connection in the classroom.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The subcommittee examined data showing ISU has a six year graduation rate of 32%. When last nationally ranked for graduation, by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, ISU ranked 500th out of 574 four year-public baccalaureate-granting schools.

While the subcommittee considered a wide variety of sources and suggests four specific immediate recommendations, the subcommittee at its core remains committed to the importance of quality teaching in the retention of students and in connecting students to Idaho State University in their first year. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2019) provides the following insights:

1. "Institutions may track students' attendance or grades but overlook the educational experience. Innovation in teaching and learning should be central to campuses' student success plans - or other efforts will have little effect. A great teacher with a strong connection to a student makes all the difference" (p. 12);
2. "Reward faculty for experimentation and innovation around teaching and learning, including taking a research-based approach to their own teaching" (p. 14);
3. "Reorienting an institution toward students is a leadership challenge, and campuses known for reform tend to have a president who prioritizes student success over rankings or research" (p. 15).

Faculty members who can connect with students in their first year and who instill in students a purpose and desire for learning are greatly valued in an institution's attempts to improve their retention and graduation rates. Hiring and reward systems should focus on addressing these important qualities of faculty. Likewise, staff members whose primary purpose is to serve students are incredibly valuable in an institution's efforts to increase retention and graduation rates. It is essential that hiring and reward decisions likewise focus on these important staff attributes.

ATTRIBUTES OF THE PROBLEM

The subcommittee brainstormed several different attributes of the problem. These include:

- Institutionally, we are not providing enough support to students from their admissions onward;
- There is a depersonalized learning environment;
- Underprepared students are not receiving the support that they need;
- There is a lack of value of education (cultural roadblock in the State of Idaho);
- There is a lack of student maturity,
- Many students come to ISU without an educational plan (don't have a clue about what to major in, or lack confidence in their current plan);
- Many students are uncertain about their career goals. This often leaves them drifting and vulnerable to not returning;
- Students maintain "undecided" status far too long without a plan;
- Courses are not always easily accessible to students;
- There are problems with levels of grit/competence of our students;
- There are problems with disjointed and ineffective institutional communication to students;
- There are problems of lack of training for administrative staff and faculty on campus;
- There are undefined roles for faculty advisors;
  - Students need more quality time with advisors for planning;
- There are problems with not putting the "best professors" in low level, introductory courses;
  - Students need more out-of-class time with professors;
- There are problems with ambiguous advising as an activity and advising needs to be valued by faculty and administrators;
  - Needs to be required of faculty
  - Faculty need to be trained to do it effectively
  - Faculty need to be rewarded for doing it well;
- Teaching "at-risk" classes needs to be valued more by faculty

IMPACT OF THE PROBLEM

The subcommittee examined how the low graduation (completion) rate negatively impacts the university at multiple levels. These include:

- UNIVERSITY LEVEL
  - Low graduation rates inhibits institutional student recruitment opportunities (hurts the institution's reputation);

Idaho State University

- o Low graduation rates leads to potential and actual loss of programs;
- o Low graduation rates decreases enrollment;
- o Low graduation rates becomes a vicious cycle of pushing for more enrollment leading to perceptions of lower standards which, in turn, further harms the institution's reputation;
- o Low graduation rates harms faculty morale, making faculty retention and recruitment more difficult;
- • STUDENT LEVEL
  - o Low graduation rates impedes student success (loans, debt, inability to get a job, etc.)
  - o Low graduation rates becomes a vicious cycle of recruiting unprepared students
- • REGIONAL LEVEL
  - o Low rates of graduation influence the community by creating a lower educated populace and this in turn, causes harm to the state and regional economy;
  - o Low rates of graduation impact community relationships and partnerships partially because the reputation of the university is harmed by this reality.

WHY IS THIS PROBLEM OCCURRING?

The subcommittee brainstormed and discussed various causes of the problem of low graduation (completion) rates. These include:

- • The finances of students (most of our students come from a low socioeconomic status (SES) and work full-time or at least part-time while going to school);
- • ISU has not marketed itself properly. ISU must tell our story better and focus on nationally ranked programs and high-quality education opportunities throughout the university;
- • The problem has occurred partially due to the unintended consequences of state-level SBOE policies (Direct Admissions);
- • The problem is due to a lack of adaptation in administrative processes and technology including but not limited to antiquated/outdated data collection and storage systems/processes/disjointed processes across various departments;
- • Software and technology systems are often purchased in silos (one area looking for a specific need) and may not be able to connect to and/or effectively integrate with other systems on campus;
- • The problem is compounded by lack of effective student resources, interdepartmental training, and communication at ISU (students are often bounced from department to

department when trying to resolve a concern or trying to be admitted to a program and the admissions process is difficult to interface);

- o ISU lacks financial resources ;
- ISU thinks of itself as the only option for students in southeast Idaho;
  - o We can no longer just rely on students coming here just because they are from southeast Idaho;
  - o We must utilize evidence based strategies and engage data driven practices in order to remain competitive and forward thinking with efforts to recruit, retain, and graduate students.
- There are serious questions today both nationally and in Idaho about the true value of higher education, and whether or not the investment is worth it.
- There is a lack of diversity in faculty and staff (difficult for students, staff, and faculty from minority populations to see themselves here).

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM

The subcommittee brainstormed and discussed eight solutions to the problem.

TRACKING AND COORDINATED COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

a) Develop a coordinated plan of action for communicating with students from January (spring semester of their senior year of high school) through their first full academic year on campus.

b) Who advises and works with students at specific points in the funnel? We need to develop a communication plan that clearly outlines which advisors/faculty/staff are communicating with students at different important points of their admissions and enrollment processes.

SCHEDULING

a) Classroom equity across campus - baseline classroom setup for effective instruction;

b) Enforce standardized scheduling times & coordinate program requirement offerings;

c) Broaden course offerings (morning, afternoon, evening, weekend, online)

  i) Expand course offerings (more evenings, weekends, online)

  ii) What other resources need to be provided so students can take advantage of expanded course offerings? Child care? Financial resources?

d) ACAD, General Education classes, Supplemental classes, etc.

e) Block Schedules

STRUCTURE – CONDITIONAL ADMISSIONS, PROVISIONAL ADMISSIONS, AND DIRECT ADMISSIONS

a) Students in these groups need:
   i) More resources to navigate the higher education process (especially first generation students)
   ii) Better and more frequent advising sessions
   iii) Help in finding a clear educational (major) and career purpose
   iv) Review what conditional admittance means (What are the different levels)?

MAJOR DECLARATION/ACADEMIC PLANNING

a) What is the major declaration structure and process?
b) Require Meta-majors from the beginning?
c) Introduce the FOCUS2 career guidance program early for students. This will help them with major and career decisions.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

a) Train staff and faculty on how and when to start important conversations with students
b) Connect with students in more ways than just professionally or when there is an issue that needs to be addressed. Build a relationship with them personally "How was your break?"

RESTORING A TEACHING CULTURE

a) Put dynamic, experienced faculty in introductory courses
b) Faculty need to find ways to connect with students in these courses
c) Provide teaching series/mentorship programs
d) Connect students with internship opportunities (CPI)

EFFECTIVELY MEET THE NEEDS FOR ALL REGIONAL CAMPUS LOCATIONS AND WITH ONLINE COURSE OFFERINGS

a) Any changes need to be taking place at all campus locations, not just main campus

Idaho State University

REMOVE FINANCIAL BARRIERS/ADDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT
   a) Revitalize food service plans to be more economical
   b) Have a huge fundraising campaign
   c) Financial literacy training (help students understand higher education costs/debt, etc.)
   d) Help students find employment opportunities
   e) Career Path Internship expansion

IMMEDIATE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLANS

The subcommittee makes four recommendations. These recommendations are detailed below with specific timelines and articulation of responsible parties for the implementation of the recommendations.

SCHEDULING

The committee identified several opportunities to explore in conjunction with the other Momentum Year subcommittee recommendations related to course scheduling.

- Classroom equity across campus - baseline classroom setup for effective instruction.
- Standard time blocks for general education courses & coordinated program offerings
- ACAD/General/Supplemental (morning/afternoons/evenings)
- Broaden scheduling offerings - weekend, night and online programs
- Block Scheduling

A. *Classroom equity across campus - baseline classroom setup for effective instruction*

Objective

Recommendation to create a more formal process to evaluate and improve classrooms, furnishing, and instructional technology.

Currently, the classroom experience of students and faculty varies widely depending on which building and room is used. The experience in the Rendezvous building includes consistent instructional technology and modern furniture, while classrooms in Liberal Arts may lack instructional technology and are furnished with old, mismatched furniture. The differences constrain our ability to schedule flexibly. For example, if an instructor needs a personal computer and a projector for their class, we have far fewer rooms and time slots available in rooms with those features.

University of Oregon has a committee called the Committee for Academic Infrastructure which is charged to evaluate instructional spaces and recommend improvements. A similar committee at ISU would help guide improvements in the classroom experience for both students and faculty.

Committee for Academic Infrastructure

The Committee for Academic Infrastructure (CAI) would be charged with evaluating classroom utilization, the quality and use of classroom space, and advising the provost through the Space Advisory Group on improving university classrooms. The CAI would be charged with:

- Consults with various campus constituents regarding classrooms;
- Conducts condition assessments of campus classroom facilities;
- Reviews and analyzes classroom sizes and makes recommendations as to future campus needs;
- Develops and recommends classroom configurations informed by curricular needs and pedagogical best practices;
- Reviews annual classroom utilization statistics;
- Evaluates long- and short-term impacts of adding classrooms or changing existing classrooms to non-classroom functions; and
- Recommends campus classroom design and construction standards which include but are not limited to finishes, furnishings, ADA requirements, and universal design.

CAI members are appointed by the provost and include instructional faculty from diverse disciplines and representatives from the following offices:

Project Sponsor

A representative committee of:

- Academic Affairs;
- Faculty representatives;
- Instructional Effectiveness;
- Office of the Registrar;
- Campus Planning and Facilities Management;
- Marketing & Communications;
- Instructional Tech Resource Center (ITRC);
- Equity and Inclusion; and
- Disability Services

Idaho State University

Constraints

- Financial/budget available to get all classrooms up to a baseline ISU standard
  - Create a reasonable timeline
- Ability to effectively plan and coordinate classroom remodels
- Teaching pedagogy differences

Timeline

Begin in late 2019; assess current classrooms and development an ISU baseline classroom setup; allocate money and begin looking at classrooms that could be upgraded by the Fall 2020 term.

B. *Enforce standardized scheduling times & coordinate program requirements*

Objective

To create standardized and enforced time-blocks used to schedule all lower division course offerings.

As part of the Office of the Registrar implementation of CLSS, this September, departments will be shown a subset of standard time blocks for general education course offerings. Utilizing the new CLSS tool, departments will gain the ability to coordinate program offerings. The tool will allow them to select other program courses and see which times other required courses will be offered.

Project Sponsor

A representative committee including Academic Affairs, Faculty, Deans, and the Office of the Registrar

Constraints

Guidelines need to be developed to optimize the physical space and online learning environments. This recommendation will require coordination with departments in conjunction with the program MAPP.

Timeline

This is in process for general education courses beginning Spring 2020.

Idaho State University

C. *ACAD/General/Supplemental (morning/afternoons/evenings)*

Objective

The committee would like to look at ways to improve the experience of students transitioning to college learning structures and environment. One of the ways this could occur would be to develop general education courses that includes academic success strategies and allocated time for supplemental instruction. The idea is to have the same faculty member be assigned to all three components.   The faculty assigned to these courses would be well versed in the needs of new students.   Many students have the aptitude for higher education learning, and may lack the experience to effectively manage their time, or limited self-efficacy, preventing them from seeking campus resources (connecting with professor, tutor, counseling, career center, academic advising, etc.) when they begin to fall behind academically. This model would help prepare students for college based learning and provide all students with a consistent experience designed to raise their self-efficacy levels in their first year.

Project Sponsor

A representative committee of faculty from colleges, departments, advising, and the Office of the Registrar would be the primary parties responsible for developing, and coordinating this objective.

Constraints

- If mandatory ACAD and supplemental instruction courses were added to the first year curriculum it will impact free electives and overall credits within specific degree programs, and may move some programs beyond the State Board of Education 120 credit hour maximum.
- Departments would need to be able to resource appropriately - faculty load would need to be reviewed in light of this type of course model.
- Course offerings across the spectrum would need to be broad enough to accommodate for this type of first year course model.
- The student information system (Banner) will need to be reviewed for ways technology can be used to support mandatory course registrations.

Timeline

The timeline is dependent on the constraints identified above.

Idaho State University

D. *Broaden scheduling offerings - weekend, night and online programs*

Objective

To account for various student populations, the committee recommends the institution coordinate broader course offerings. The idea is to create schedule offerings designed to accommodate our varied student population needs; early morning, mid-day, evening, weekend, and online.

Project Sponsors

A representative committee of faculty and staff including the Office of the Registrar would be the primary parties responsible for developing, and coordinating this objective.

Constraints

Departments may not have the faculty resource at this time. The Banner student information & CLSS (scheduling software) will need to be reviewed for ways technology can be used to support block course registrations.

Timeline

A representative group including faculty and the Office of the Registrar begin working with Deans and Department Chairs in late Fall 2019 to identify areas of opportunity and potential constraints impacting their ability to expand course offerings. Currently, most courses are taught in the 9:00 am - 2:00 pm time-frame.

E. *Block scheduling:*

Objective

Move toward coordinated block schedule program offerings. This would be an expansion of recommendation D., listed above.

Develop a coordinated curriculum MAPP with departments and advisors identifying specific meta-majors (or majors) and create a block schedule for new incoming freshmen, designed to prepare them for their area of interest - Health Profession, Science, Engineering, Humanities, Social Science, Education, etc.

- The university would need to define the meta-majors that make sense here at Idaho State.
- Once the meta-majors have been defined, a first year course MAPP will need to be developed tailored to the specific needs of the majors/disciplines within the meta-major. For instance, which science and math courses should be included in the meta-

Idaho State University

major map for first year students identified as Health Professions, STEM, Humanities, and Education?

Project Sponsor

A representative committee of faculty, Academic Affairs, Deans, Department Chairs, Advising, Undergraduate Admissions, and the Office of the Registrar.

Constraints

- Clearly define who the block schedule would be tailored for; new freshman, transfer students, undecided students, etc. (there are concerns about this with regard to some departments such as music, clinical internships, labs, and other courses).
- System limits will need to be looked at after bullet number one is defined.
- Once the student is registered for the block schedule, will they be able to change their schedule?
- Will block schedules only be designed for full-time students; non-traditional students; part-time students; or others?

Timeline

Identify the core meta-majors for Idaho State by the end of spring 2020 and begin working with departments/discipline areas to develop the meta-major MAPPs for fall 2021 with a target to have information & systems ready for registration 2021.

REMOVE FINANCIAL BARRIERS/INCREASE FINANCIAL LITERACY/FINANCIAL AID ADVISING

A. *Problem Statement*

Few factors have the potential to impact postsecondary institution's recruitment, enrollment, retention, and graduation rates in the same magnitude as Financial Aid. For the purposes of this recommendation, the term "Financial Aid" is inclusive of both federal financial aid (grants, loans, and work study) and nonfederal aid (scholarships and other paid student employment options). With the cost of a college education steadily increasing each year and news of the student loan debt crisis lingering, colleges and universities are being forced to evaluate how financial aid can impact their recruitment, enrollment, retention and graduation efforts in both positive and negative ways. Specifically, "Retention analysis is also increasingly centered on the role financial support plays in college attendance," (Herzog, 2005).

Idaho State University

Both costs and debt associated with higher education are becoming a serious concern for many. A significant number of constituents are uninformed about options available to pay for postsecondary education. Difficult to understand financial jargon and an overall lack of understanding regarding financial aid and scholarship processes has created an environment where many students are left behind in the race to acquire funds necessary to complete a postsecondary certificate or degree. The committee recommends ISU look at how to support student success (financial and academic) from enrollment through graduation, and should consider implementing the following objectives:

Objective 1

Develop an educational program, aimed at increasing prospective students' financial literacy and encourage responsible financial decision-making to pay for a post-secondary education.

Rationale

Many students rely on their families and friends for financial advice for covering the costs associated with attending a postsecondary institution. Responsible financial planning and decision making, in postsecondary settings, can begin long before a student actually encounters a college or university representative with whom they can discuss financial options.

Developing a financial educational program provides opportunities for ISU to educate and assist prospective students in our service region with financial questions and processes, and provides vital information to make financially sound decisions that support long term goals of graduating with a postsecondary degree or certificate. A financial educational program allows students, families, community members, and secondary school teachers and staff, to become informed about financial opportunities to effectively support students through financial decision making processes. Creating a financial based educational program staffed by trained and experienced professionals will allow ISU the ability to decrease the dissemination of incorrect information regarding the affordability and value of an education at Idaho State.

- **Strategy A:** Develop and distribute a financial literacy survey to key community stakeholders (prospective students, parents, high school teachers, high school administrators, high school counselors, etc.) with the purpose of determining, a.) What are the needs for the varying stakeholders in regards to increasing post-secondary financial literacy and b.) What kinds of training formats would be most ideal (evenings, weekends, on campus, off campus, etc.).
  - *Responsible Parties:* A faculty group including the College of Business, the Admissions Visitor Center and the Alumni Association are poised to develop a list of important community stakeholders and their contact information. While the financial literacy survey itself should be developed by the Scholarships and Financial Aid Office, the Admissions Visitor Center and the Alumni Association are more integrated into the community and therefore should assist with determining who to distribute the survey to and how to distribute it. If the above parties would see benefit from having a marketing specialist involved in the

Idaho State University

creation, distribution, and promotion of the survey, the Office of Marketing & Communications should be included as a contributing party.

- o *Timeline:* The timeline for creation and distribution of the survey should be determined by the responsible parties.
- o *Constraints:* The most impactful potential constraint for this strategy is time. The beginning of the academic year is a very busy for all of the responsible parties listed, for students and their families, and high school teachers and staff. Creating and distributing the survey, and collecting a usable number of responses will require an additional time commitment from several parties who are already very busy.

- **Strategy B:** Utilizing the information garnered from the survey, a representative group of faculty and staff should develop a financial literacy training/event schedule, agenda, and action plan for event planning purposes (location logistics, refreshments, a/v setup, handouts, etc.).
    - o *Responsible Parties:* A representative group of faculty (including the College of Business) and staff should develop the content and delivery of the training, and the Admissions Visitor Center could support facilitating community events on both a small and large scale.
    - o *Timeline:* The timeline for developing the training/event schedule should be within 4 weeks of the survey's end. The trainings themselves should take place over a series of months between the October 1 FAFSA opening and the February 15th scholarship deadline. If it is determined that additional training would be useful following the February 15th deadline that would be encouraged as well.
    - o *Constraints:* Time constraints will be impactful on this strategy as well. Consideration should be given to the potential cost of facilitating the trainings, finding a location to hold trainings, and how to effectively market for and encourage participation in the trainings.

Objective 2
Expand the availability of the Career Path Internship program to provide part-time internship opportunities both on and off campus for students. CPI students are retained at a high percentage and persist to graduation at higher rates as well.

Idaho State University

<u>Rationale</u>

Many students at ISU work part-time or full-time jobs in the community in order to pay for their tuition and fees and/or support themselves and their families while going to school. Employment can help defray the costs of higher education, but it can place an undue burden on students who must find the balance between going to class, going to work, and study time. The Career Path Internship program, traditionally offers more education and career focused internships in the community and tend to be of the mindset that the individual is a student first, and an employee second. Expanding the Career Path Internship opportunities would allow more students to intern and supplement the cost of their education without placing a large burden on the student's academic performance. CPI students can only work a maximum of 25 hours per week, but many work fewer hours.

- **Strategy A:** There are currently about 900 students who participate in the CPI program each academic year. Can this be increased both on and off campus to help students defray educational and living costs? We know President Satterlee wants more Career Path Internships to happen off-campus, which would help students build resumes and focus on their career related goals, which should help them be retained at a higher percentage and persist to graduation as well.
  - Responsible Parties: Work with the CPI staff regarding current CPI data to determine the details of possible expansion. Work with Vice President for Student Affairs and Vice President for Finance to determine viability of CPI expansion.
  - Timeline: Collection of the data should be completed no later than January 1, allowing time for study of the data and determination of a necessary next step before the start of the new fiscal year.
  - Constraints: First, funding is always a critical resource, and may not be available to increase CPI funding. Also, many freshmen students are undecided or are not sure what to major in, which is critical for the CPI program. These internships must be educational and/or career related, which can be very difficult for freshmen and sophomore students. Finally, the CPI program is a high-caliber internship program and the integrity of this program must be maintained.

Idaho State University

Objective 3

Integrate financial counseling into a prospective student's recruitment and enrollment process.

Rationale

When beginning their college education at ISU, students are provided multiple opportunities to connect with advisors, whether they are admissions advisors, academic advisors, or department/faculty advisors. However, there is currently no step in a student's admissions process where they are actively engaged in a financial advising relationship, and in turn they are often left to interpret complicated system generated emails regarding financial aid and scholarships, on their own. Implementing an active financial advising process, where students are contacted by a financial advisor (or an existing advisor cross trained in financial aid) within a short time of their initial application, will help students navigate financial aid more effectively from the start of their admissions process. Providing personalized service to make sure students are aware of their financial opportunities and obligations before they even begin their first class as an ISU student, will better prepare them to be successful academically and financially as they pursue their degree or certificate.

- **Strategy A:** Examine the current advisor/student relationships that are developed as a prospective student moves through the enrollment funnel to determine if there are existing advisors that would be poised to aid in financial advising, or if that would place an undue burden on current faculty and staff.
    - *Responsible Parties:* A representative group of faculty and staff should be tasked with outlining the current communication plans across the various offices.
    - *Timeline:* This first step should be completed no later than November 1.
    - *Constraints:* The most impactful potential constraint for this strategy is time. As the beginning of the academic year is a very busy time for all of the responsible parties listed, coordinating efforts to gather this data may require a significant time commitment.

- **Strategy B:** Develop a financial aid advising timeline and communication plan.
    - *Responsible Parties:* A representative group of faculty and staff should work together to develop a comprehensive communication plan and timeline, identifying the needs they see in their respective student populations.
    - *Timeline:* This second step should be completed no later than December 1.
    - *Constraints:* The most impactful potential constraint for this strategy is time. As the beginning of the academic year is a very busy time for all of the responsible

parties listed, coordinating efforts to develop this communication plan may require a significant time commitment.

- **Strategy C:** Develop a training session where current advisors on campus are able to learn more about financial advising. In order to advise students on financial items, advisors should have to participate in the training.
    - *Responsible Parties:* A representative group of faculty and staff should develop and facilitate the training.
    - *Timeline:* This can be happening simultaneously with strategy B, with a timeline completion date no later than January 1.
    - *Constraints:* Time constraints will be impactful on this strategy as well. Furthermore, consideration should be given to the potential cost of facilitating the trainings, finding a location to hold the trainings, and how to effectively market for and encourage participation in the trainings.
- **Strategy D:** Explore long term solutions for incorporating financial advising into a student's recruitment and enrollment process. For example, providing funding for designated scholarship and financial aid advisors.
    - *Responsible Parties/Timeline:* A representative committee of faculty and staff would work to understand budget constraints and organizational limitations. Ideally, determinations would be made during this year which provide evidence based data supporting the hiring of financial advisors or the appropriate cross-training of current campus advisors.
    - *Constraints:* There is the potential for incurrence of significant costs in regards to hiring new financial advising staff.

The committee identified two areas that lack sufficient consistent communication to students as they move through the recruitment and admissions funnels. It is important to note that these recommendations will not be fully realized until Central Academic Advising is provided with resources for additional support staff and professional academic advisors.

- Division of labor regarding which entities are responsible for prospective and admitted students.
- Development of a communication plan once students are admitted to ISU through their Momentum Year.

A. *Division of labor regarding which entities are responsible for prospective and admitted students.*

Currently, there is not a written procedure regarding when the hand-off from the Admissions office to Central Academic Advising occurs. This can result in confusion for not only staff, but more importantly students regarding who is responsible for guiding the student in their academic journey.

Objective

It is recommended the division of labor be split between the Admissions office and the advising entities that reside under the Central Academic Advising umbrella. The Admissions office will be responsible as students move through the funnel from "prospect" to "admitted" in the CRM. This includes recruitment events, application nights, high school visits, tours, etc. Central Academic Advising will take the role of responsibility for students once they are admitted to Idaho State University through their Momentum year and beyond. This includes registration events, advising appointments, academic interventions, etc.

Constraints

This change will result in the need for additional resources in the Central Academic Advising office (i.e. additional professional advising and support staff) before full efficiency can be realized. These resources are critical to the implementation of this division of labor.

Timeline

However, this transfer of student ownership can occur prior to the spring 2020 semester. This will allow students that are currently applying to Idaho State University to be directed by their advising staff early.

Responsible Party

A representative group of faculty and staff.

B. *Development of a communication plan once students are admitted to ISU through their Momentum Year.*

Currently, there is no consistent communication plan for students once they have been admitted to Idaho State University as well as once they begin attending classes. The disengagement with this population prior to the beginning of classes can lead to loss of incoming freshmen and transfer students. Lack of consistent communication during time of admit to start of classes results in some students not beginning their higher education journey or enrolling at other institutions that have consistent contact with students. Consistent communication with students also allows them to feel more prepared as they enter Idaho State University. A communication plan is also necessary during a student's Momentum Year. It allows conversations with students to stay on track with study habits, applications for the next year's financial aid, registration, etc.

Objective

Central Academic Advising will develop two communication plans – one from time of admit until classes begin and another for the Momentum Year. These communication plans will include plans for phone calls, texts, social media, letters, and email communication designations as well as plans to include faculty connections and conversation starters at some point.

<u>Admit to Semester Start</u>
- Within 2 business days of admittance a professional advisor will reach out to the student via phone, letters, social media, and texts to discuss their admission to Idaho

State University. A checklist will be used to talk about vital topics with each student. See Appendix A.

- Student will receive monthly communications from Central Academic Advising. See Appendix B.
- Two months prior to the start of student's entering semester student will be called again to ensure student is ready to begin courses.

<u>Semester Start through Momentum Year</u>
- Student will receive communications throughout the semester. See Appendix C.

Constraints

This change will result in the need for additional resources in the Central Academic Advising office (i.e. additional professional advising and support staff) before full efficiency can be realized. These resources are critical to the implementation and success of these communication plans.

Timeline

The communication pieces can begin Spring 2020, however, until reallocation of resources to support the expansion of Central Academic Advising are in place, the outreach to new students via phone calls will not be obtainable.

MAJOR DECLARATION/ACADEMIC PLANNING

A. *Problem Statement*

ISU currently has an inefficient, cumbersome, and misunderstood major declaration and advisor assignment process that must be revised to better retain students and facilitate their graduation. Additionally, students who have not decided on a major upon admission are allowed to choose undecided/undeclared as their major without having a structured means to assist them in reaching a decision. ISU policy states students have until they earn junior class level standing (58 credits) to declare a major though currently there is nothing to prevent a student from remaining "undeclared" indefinitely, at least until graduation. To graduate, a student must have an officially declared major in the system.

1. The major declaration structure and process needs to be improved at two distinct points: upon admission to the university and whenever a student wishes to change, add, or delete a major.

   Currently, students identify their major choice on the admissions application. When the application is processed, the major is officially recorded in the Banner system and CAA

Idaho State University

(Central Academic Advising) is assigned as the primary (and only) advisor of record. ISU considers the major "officially" declared at this time. This is the first point where the major declaration structure and process needs to be improved.

Current process

To be assigned a departmental advisor, students must contact their major department with that request. When the departmental advisor request is submitted for processing, CAA is removed from the student's advisor list and replaced by the departmental advisor. Though the process is both written and explained to students and departments, it has proved to be neither memorable nor understood. Students and departments are mostly unaware of the expectation for students to contact their major department and request a departmental advisor to replace CAA and therefore, CAA is currently noted as the primary advisor for 2,656 ISU undergraduate students. (Institutional Research, 8.30.2019)

Desired process

Upon admission, students are assigned a professional academic advisor and, within the college, a faculty/departmental mentor. Having two advisors will ensure students have access to academic advising and support throughout the full academic year. A request for a structural change was submitted to IT for implementation this academic year. It will need to be modified.

The second point at which the major change process needs to be improved is when continuing students wish to change their major.

Current process

Students who wish to change their major are directed to a faculty member in the desired department. The faculty must submit a Curriculum Change Request (CCR). The CCR process is nebulous, varies in use from department to department, and is further hampered by the need for students to go into Bengal Web and approve the change.

Desired process

Central Academic Advising submitted a suggested set of changes to the CCR in 2015. (See Appendix D). A fully redesigned major declaration process should be developed whereby the student initiates the change in an easily accessible link in Bengal Web, possibly within in the Student Profile.

Responsible Party

A representative group of faculty and staff.

2. In order to improve student retention, ISU should require exploring students (i.e. undecided/undeclared) to choose a "meta-major" upon admission.

> According to the educational firm EAB, https://eab.com/insights/unknown/student-success/how-meta-majors-guide-students-toward-on-time-graduation/, "[M]eta-majors, sometimes referred to as career clusters or communities of interest, group individual majors under a larger academic umbrella. These programs provide students with a clear pathway to graduation, and help them make connections between their studies and different career tracks. Students also have set schedules depending on their meta-major.
> A student interested in health care, for example, may enroll in a meta-major that includes prescribed health-related courses in science, communications, and statistics, opening up career opportunities ranging from nursing to pharmacy. "

Complete College America identifies six meta-majors (STEM, Health Sciences, Social Sciences, Liberal Arts, Education, and Business) https://completecollege.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/GPS-BOOKLET-06-14-FINAL.pdf, a meta-major working group comprised of professional advisors, career counselors, faculty, administration, IT personnel, and students should be established to determine the appropriate meta-major options at ISU. Each meta-major must have an aligned math course.

Within their first year, meta-major students would be assisted with investigating and formally choosing a major by their sophomore year (26 earned credits). The meta-major working group would establish an efficient, clear, and helpful process to meet this goal. A selected faculty member and the director of academic advising would co-chair the working group.

3. As noted above, essential to the establishment of meta-majors is the incorporation of major-selection guidance and assistance for students. Currently, Idaho State University offers an online career and education planning system, FOCUS-2, managed by the ISU Career Center. The FOCUS-2 program has 5 career assessments that indicate careers that would be a good fit based upon a student's answers. These occupations are also tailored to ISU's majors. Undecided students should be required to participate in a

Idaho State University

structured program which includes FOCUS-2 that guides them towards an appropriate major selection, which could be initiated through a meta-major process.

A subcommittee of the meta-major working group would develop a structured program for meta-major students, determine how to incorporate FOCUS-2 assessments into the program, and identify alternatives for non-compliance. The Central Academic Advising director and Career Center director would co-chair the subgroup. When students are ready to change their meta-major, they would be directed to meet with their academic advisor to formally change their major, and to review and individualize a Major Academic Plan (MAP).

Constraints
- o IT resources would need to be prioritized related to the advisor assignment process, CCR, FOCUS-2 system, and meta-major assignments.
- o Evaluate the professional advising resources across campus to determine if the number can accommodate the need.
- o FOCUS-2 training should be undertaken with university staff and faculty.
- o Identify faculty mentors and professional advisors for each major and a coordinated plan to update as personnel changes dictate.

Responsible Party
A representative group of faculty and staff.

Timeline
- o By January, 2020, the recommended advisor assignment and major declaration changes will be completed by IT.
- o By October of 2019, the meta-major working group will begin meeting.

REFERENCES

Chronicle of Higher Education. 2019. *The Truth About Student Success: Myths, Realities, and 30 Practices that Are Working.*

Eyler, Joshua. 2018. *How Humans Learn: The Science and Stories Behind Effective College Teaching. Morgantown: West Virginia Press.*

Georgia State University. 2019. *Student Success Programs*. https://success.gsu.edu/ (accessed August 29, 2019).

Georgia State University. 2018. *Complete College Georgia*. https://completega.org/ (accessed August 29, 2019).

Herzog, Serge. (2005). "Measuring Determinants of Student Return vs. Dropout/Stopout vs. Transfer: A First-to-Second Year Analysis of New Freshmen. *Research in Higher Education*, 46(8), 882-928. doi:10.1007/s11162-005-6933-7

McMurtrie, Beth. 2018. "Georgia State U. Made Its Graduation Rate Jump. How?" Chronicle of Higher Education, May 25. https://www.chronicle.com/article/Georgia-State-U-Made-Its/243514

Steinhauer, Jason. 2018. "Fewer Students Are Majoring in History, But We're Asking the Wrong Questions About Why." Time, December 6. https://time.com/5472828/history-majors/

Idaho State University

APPENDIX A

ENTRANCE ADVISING CHECKLIST SAMPLE

- ❏ Major Discussion – Why are you interested in _____? (This can be the student's major or meta major)

- ❏ Test Scores (where they place in English and mathematics)

- ❏ Additional requirements

    - ❏ o Competitive entry programs

- ❏ BengalWeb

    - ❏ How to get username and password

    - ❏ How to access ISU Gmail account and why they should check it often (i.e. upcoming emails from Central Academic Advising)

- ❏ Cost of Attendance

- ❏ FAFSA Information

    - ❏ Have you completed the Free Application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA) yet?

    - ❏ Delayed disbursement for new students

    - ❏ Single semester students (Spring Only Attendees) will be subject to dual disbursement

- ❏ Scholarships

APPENDIX B

ADMIT TO SEMESTER START COMMUNICATION PLAN SAMPLE

- ❏ Within two business days after admission to Idaho State University, an advisor will call the student and go over information in Appendix A

- ❏ Fall Start Communication Plan

    - ❏ January 15th – Scholarship deadlines/FAFSA communications

    - ❏ February 15th - Video – College overview communications

    - ❏ March 15th - Early Registration Reminder communications

    - ❏ April 15th – Reminder to Complete FAFSA communications

    - ❏ May 15th – To do checklist communications

    - ❏ June 1st – Calling and confirming enrollment of new students

    - ❏ June 15th – Resources communications

    - ❏ July 15th – NSO info and link to sign up communications

    - ❏ August 15th - Welcome communications

- ❏ Spring Start Communication Plan

    - ❏ September 15th – Video – College overview communications

    - ❏ October 15th – Scholarship deadlines/FAFSA communications

    - ❏ November 15th – Registration Reminder communications

    - ❏ December 1st – Calling and confirming enrollment of new students

    - ❏ December 15th – To do checklist communications

    - ❏ January 2nd - Welcome communications

Idaho State University

APPENDIX C

MOMENT YEAR COMMUNICATION PLAN SAMPLE

- ❏ After the first week of class - semester check in communications
- ❏ August/January – ISU Boss System communications
- ❏ September/February – Tutoring Resources communications
- ❏ October/March – Studying Tips for Midterms communications
- ❏ November/April – Be Advised/Registration communications