Eastern Washington University

Business Process Analysis:
Advising Process

February 12 and 13, 2015
Eastern Washington University

Introduction

Eastern Washington University (EWU) has commissioned an Academic Advising Task Force (AATF) with the following vision:

“EWU’s advising system will significantly improve our students’ academic success, retention, and time to degree. Outstanding advising will be a hallmark of EWU’s academic excellence.”

In support of this vision, a Business Process Analysis (BPA) workshop was conducted. The purpose of the session was to improve the advising processes – from initial contact with a student through degree completion. The focus was on undergraduate students.

More than thirty people from across the University participated. There were representatives from Admissions, Graduate Programs, International Programs, Transfer Center, Academic Departments, Orientation, Advising, and IT. Kari Blinn, from Strata Information Group (SIG), facilitated the workshop.

The objectives included:

- Improving student success with a program and processes that are easy-to-navigate, welcoming, informative, and empowering
- Fully utilizing available technology – e.g. Hobsons, Banner, SOAR, Luminis, Workflow, etc.
- Improving “hand-offs” between departments and offices
- Eliminating unnecessary steps and redundancies
- Overcoming organizational silos
- Freeing up advisors and evaluators for higher-value activities
- Identifying significant opportunities for improvement, not simply marginal change

Participation was lively and engaging. Many challenges were discussed, in addition to opportunities for improvement. This document summarizes the contents and outcomes of the group’s efforts. The results will be used by the AATF as they fulfill the charge to “propose a state-of-the-art advising system for all EWU undergraduates.”
Executive Summary

One of the most significant results of the workshop was developing an outcomes-based Advising Program (see page 4). Mapping the information students receive at key transitional points is critical in the advising process. This is a substantial step toward reimagining the purpose and framework for advising at Eastern.

Several themes emerged as the workshop progressed:

- Many advisors are split between recruiting and advising
- There is not a consistent advising process across the University so students have a different experience in every school and major
- Several activities are bogged down – e.g. transcript evaluation, major declaration

Significant opportunities exist to fully utilize technology in support of a new advising program:

- Implement the educational planning tool (UDirect)
- Auto-load incoming transcripts to SOAR and articulate classes early in the process
- Broaden the use of TES to speed up and bring transparency to the transfer evaluation process
- Utilize Banner workflow – e.g. for major changes

Next Steps

At the end of the workshop, the group agreed to take the next steps:

- Use results from BPA workshop to advance the work of the Task Force
  o Articulate the strengths and weaknesses of the current practices
  o Review the technologies that support advising
  o Solidify the new advising program and processes
- Create a new approach to advising
  o A comprehensive advising program
  o A culture of advising and connection
- Develop an advising program focused on learning outcomes (see chart on next page)
- Consider utilizing a team of advisors for students – e.g. general education, major, financial, etc.
- Create different modalities for advising – e.g. face-to-face, group, discussion boards, etc.
- Develop training for advisors – regularly offered
  o Cultivate critical knowledge and expertise
  o Tools for advisors and students
  o Progression through levels to various roles
- Develop a plan for students to connect with advisors every term
- Ensure recognition and reward
- Align communication plan between advisors and students
### Advising Program -- Outcomes at Each Milestone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Considering Eastern</th>
<th>Transitioning to Eastern</th>
<th>Year One</th>
<th>Year Two</th>
<th>Year Three</th>
<th>Year Four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What transfer classes count? (early DTAs)</td>
<td>Start developing decision making ability</td>
<td>Group advising: - Tools - If I have a problem, I know where to go</td>
<td>Apply to program</td>
<td>Request letters of recommendation</td>
<td>Practice interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's the cost?</td>
<td>Identify services -- e.g., for students w/ disabilities</td>
<td>Individual advising: - Goals - Interests - Strengths - Relationship</td>
<td>Leadership in an org</td>
<td>More involved outside classroom -- e.g., national org</td>
<td>Start becoming alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the possibilities?</td>
<td>Prescribe classes based on assessment using multiple measures -- e.g., scores, grades</td>
<td>Set expectations of student and of advisor</td>
<td>Finalize 4-year plan</td>
<td>Come to advising apt w/ a plan</td>
<td>Present research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's it like at Eastern?</td>
<td>Clear expectations of students</td>
<td>Access and use tools</td>
<td>Declare major</td>
<td>Do -- e.g., research, internship, study abroad, co-op</td>
<td>Apply to grad school</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear expectations of advisor</td>
<td>Built tentative 4-year plan</td>
<td>Seek internship, co-op, study abroad, volunteer, etc.</td>
<td>Complete resume and LinkedIn profile</td>
<td>Send resumes, interview</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Educate parents</td>
<td>Exposed to involved in an org</td>
<td>More specific career exploration</td>
<td>Prep for grad exams</td>
<td>Review loan repayment plan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Get through first 4 weeks</td>
<td>Access resources -- e.g., library, career services, etc.</td>
<td>Explore graduate programs</td>
<td>Complete degree requirements -- e.g., thesis</td>
<td>Confirm degree completion -- e.g., substituence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You belong here, you can learn, you can face and overcome obstacles</td>
<td>Explore majors</td>
<td>Find grad school deadlines</td>
<td>Check on degree progress (SOAR) and update ed plan (UDirect)</td>
<td>Launch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connect w/ faculty member</td>
<td></td>
<td>Complete non-class degree requirements -- e.g., service</td>
<td>Exit assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complete math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transition to grad school or job</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ongoing - early intervention, warning, SAP, etc.
Process Mapping

Process mapping is a technique used to visualize and to correct business process problems. The group reviewed the following symptoms:

- Choke points – when all paths lead to a single person
- Layering – adding automated steps on top of paper steps
- End runs – disregarding the established process entirely and jumping to the end
- Shadow systems – entering the same data in multiple systems (e.g., MS Excel®, MS Access®).
- Exception-based – complexity resulting from “one time five years ago, event ABC happened”
- Unintended consequences “downstream”
- Not scalable – the process breaks under increased volume
- Focus on symptoms rather than roots
- Paper-heavy – long, opaque, sequential, and inefficient

Mapping processes with stakeholders serves as a vehicle to:

- Identify issues with the current processes
- Work together to develop a clear, consistent process
- Align processes, people, and technology to support strategic objectives
- Take full advantage of technology
Objectives
Before developing an "ideal" framework, participants articulated their objectives for it:

- Make changes that are supported by research and confirmed by experience
- Ensure student has a consistent experience regardless of major and time at Eastern
- Cultivate a relationship and use intrusive strategies
- Align advising and academic strategies – e.g. learning outcomes based
- Create a developmental, progressive model through which students learn to advise themselves
  - The responsibility shifts from advisor to student
  - Shift in both attitude and skills
- Relationship between advisor and student correlates to students retention and success
- Teach about resources and strategies early enough to be useful – without telling a student everything at once – "dose" information
- Flexible – not "one size fits all"
- Expose students to what Eastern has to offer – encourage them to explore and to decide
- Clarify expectations for students and advisors
- Learn soft skills – e.g. persistence, responsibility
- Empower students – launch them
- See the end goal and the path to get there
- Ask questions to create a culture of "what do I get to learn?"
- Advising as more than class selection
- Teach engagement and translate to life
- Help broaden goals – e.g. civic, philanthropic, service
- Give advisors tools and training
- Attract the best advisors
- Remove choke points in the process
- Provide a clear path for students to get a degree – identify who is here to help and when to get it
- Satisfied students and families
- Moved from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset
- Include all levels of student achievement

The following pages include maps of the current process and new, redesigned processes. The objective is to use the "new" maps as a guide for the project team as it reimagines advising at Eastern.
Current Processes -- Advising and Registration

International Programs
(ongoing) Receive report from Admissions of confirmed new students
Conduct new student orientation (4x/year)
Send e-mail and Skype w/ new students
When student arrives on campus, remove registration hold
Register in classes

Registrar
On 10th day, add registration hold in Banner to all students with fewer than 45 credits
When class schedule is published, e-mail students directing them to meet with their advisor prior to registration

Advisors
(some) E-mail their students inviting them to come meet
Meet w/ student - check on her progress - discuss next term's classes
Remove registration hold

Student
Make appt w/ advisor
Meet w/ student - check on her progress - discuss next term's classes
Remove registration hold

Registrar
If undeclared and greater than 90 units, add registration hold

Student
Meet w/ advisor and complete Major Declaration form
Update Major and Advisor in Banner
Remove hold
New Processes - Transcript Evaluation

**Precursors**
- Discontinue using holds to prevent registration -- use Banner Alt-PIN instead
- Discontinue blocks at 45 and 60 units -- instead student connects with advisor every term
- Broaden the use of TES
- Encourage feeder schools to send transcripts electronically
- Write process to load transcript data to SOAR
- Implement ed planning tool (UDirect)
- Allow advisors to change majors using Banner workflow

**Evaluator**
- (ongoing) Build and maintain transfer articulation tables
- If transcript received electronically, auto-load to SOAR
- Auto-articulate classes
- If transcript received via paper or PDF, image, index, shred/delete
- Enter classes manually in SOAR

**Evaluator**
- Review each transcript against EWU policies -- make adjustments as needed
- If class not in articulation table and can articulate, enter equivalency in SOAR
- If class not in articulation table and cannot articulate, route via TES for review and approval

**Student**
- View complete degree audit in SOAR -- run what if... scenarios
- Meet w/ advisor to create ed plan (UDirect)

**IDEAS:**
- Encourage equivalencies over exceptions (one and done)
- Use SOATEST entry to enter one exception for one student
- e.g. to meet pre-req
New Processes - New Students

Prospect
- View online catalog with maps - link to dept pages
- Enter classes taken elsewhere and see Eastern equivalences real-time (e.g., Transferology)

EWU
- Pre-populate first term classes in Banner

New Student
- View registered classes at First Step (or earlier)
- Create first ed plan during First Step

Advisor
- (ongoing) Review degree audit and ed plan
- Meet w/ advisor prior to next registration period

[Start classes -- teaching and learning]
- Review plan -- give student "key" to register (Banner Alt-PIN)

Idea:
- Auto-assign initial advisor based on interest area and credits

[ongoing - faculty and advisors raise a flag when a student is having difficulty -- explore Banner Faculty Feedback module]
New Processes -- Graduation

Registrar
- When student "close" send link to application to graduate
- Run audits for all students w/ graduation status of "applied"
- Review degree audit
- If on track to graduate, notify student and advisor
- If not on track, intervene

Student
- Apply to graduate using EagleNet (explore Banner functionality)

Eastern
- In last term, connect student w/ alumni mentor (see "launch" in new paradigm)

Idea:
- Enter all exceptions and substitutions in SOAR (ongoing)
Appendix A:
Notes on Potential Opportunities for Improvement

In brainstorming fashion, the workshop participants identified the following potential opportunities for improvement. Such items are not listed in any particular order. Additionally, they do not necessarily represent consensus.

- Route all contacts with prospective students to admissions
- Include all contacts as part of the university’s overall communication strategy
- Answer students’ the most pressing questions
  - Will my transfer work count?
  - How much will this cost?
  - How long will it take me to graduate?
  - What’s the minimum GPA to be accepted?
  - Will I get a job?
  - What are the requirements in this program?
  - Do I have to take math?
  - Can I take it online?
- Design the web based on the users experience
- Utilize Hobsons CRM to track all contacts in the pipeline
- Treat transfer credit as a recruiting tool
- Give placement recommendations earlier in the process
- Allow for online assessment
- Use multiple measures to place students – e.g. SAT, ACT, AP scores, high school English and math grades, etc.
- Encourage students to take lower level math in their first two years at Eastern
- Develop placement tools for international students
- Use “Smarter Balance” for assessment and placement
- Create clear pathways for all students including older students
- Use Banner functionality other than holds to guide students through the process
- Use holds only when payment hasn’t been received
- Provide incentives “carrots” for students to move through the process rather than “sticks”
- Develop a curriculum for the first year experience including advising
- Utilize Banner workflow to auto-notify students, advisors, etc.
- Develop clear queries and reports so advisors do not have to dig through lots of pages
- Connect students with career exploration
- Use different media – e.g. short videos
- Reimagine how portal is deployed, make it the gateway to everything, utilize targeted messaging rather than email
- Provide incentives for preparation, for example early registration
• Evaluate transcripts early so those classes are included in the ed plan developed during First Step
• Find a way to provide great information to students who cannot attend First Step
• Explore Alt Pin in Banner to enforce advising prior to registration rather than holds
• Explore the idea of having international students confirm their enrollment – in order to get better counts
• Pre-populate the first term’s class schedule for students – give them our best advice
• Make it easy for students and advisors to schedule appointments, consider Banner XE’s new functionality
• Explore other media for advising, e.g. Skype, chat, Canvas, discussion boards, Twitter
• Allow advisors to approve exceptions online (via Banner self-service) and then students register online
• Schedule classes for the entire year – this will facilitate better planning and more information for students
• Provide a consistent message with consistent timing for all students
• Teach students the tools to use and the resources available
• Insure a good handoff between advisors when a student changes majors, don’t cut them off
• Allow a student to change her interest area early in the process without paper forms
• Communicate to students based on their interest area, focus on topics in that major
• Explore pre- majors
• Implement Udirec education plan and lets students explore different majors and see how their classes would fit
• Fully implement Udirec
• Implement process for students to regularly review their major and ensure it is up to date
• Monitor students in pre-majors and intervene after a certain amount of time
• Understand the reasons for students to declare a major, e.g. connection with faculty, clarity about goals, affiliation, mentorship
• Allow advisors to change majors when they meet with students, Consider Banner Workflow to initiate this
• Make it easy to find advisors
• Clarify the purpose of warning and probation holds, set students expectations that there will be follow up and support
• Allow students to explore majors online
• Display program requirements on the web in easy-to-read manner
• Develop clear process for undeclared students
• As the new advising process unfolds, include students and get their feedback
• If transcripts are evaluated early they can be used for recruitment, advising, major selection, and ed planning, in addition to class schedule development
• Review catalog for big feeder schools annually
• Auto notify students when evaluation is complete
• Route unofficial transcripts to admissions
• The number of courses that will transfer is a vital component to prospective students’ decision to come to Eastern
• Set Eastern apart by evaluating transcripts early
• Build out articulation tables and import data electronically
• “Case manager” model – student has a single person to contact throughout their time at Eastern
• Call on multiple mentors
• Enter all substitutions in SOAR – available to students and advisors for planning
• Include financial plan with degree plan
• Overcome “hold” culture
• Schedule classes a year at a time
• Forecast demand based on data in students’ ed plans
• Develop a first year college program with enough advisors to support
• Anticipate number of advisors needed and plan for it
• Use incoming student scores to plan for seats needed in classes
Appendix B:
Notes on Potential Obstacles

In the same manner, participants identified the following obstacles:

- For some majors, if math is taken too late, completion time is increased
- An even handoffs, not always clean
- Many different ways to ask questions and get answers, confusing to some students
- Some students are passed to too many people
- Large volume of calls
- Two campuses, location can be difficult for some students
- Pace of change can be difficult to keep up with
- Not a clear path to update the web with changes
- Choke point in the process is web analytics
- Advisors are wearing too many hats, marketing, recruiting, advising, updating the web
- Some find it difficult to access and use transfer guides
- If evaluation not complete, student doesn’t have equivalency to meet prerequisite
- Sometimes "myths" are created when difficulty is encountered
- Placement testing is not required
- Some take placement tests too late to be useful for advising
- Assessment process is too complication
- Must be on campus to take assessment tests
- Insufficient supply of some math classes
- Don’t focus on reading
- 45 units and 60 units feel like arbitrary milestones
- Some students must make many attempts to get an advisor to sign a major declaration form
- Many different systems to navigate
- Not all program requirements are visible to students and advisors
- Sometimes the major declaration hold is removed prior to a student declaring
- Registration puts pressure on the process so advisors remove holds to allow students to register – “end run”
- Major declaration form is confusing
- Every department has different requirements in order to declare a major
- Because advisors have a large load they begin seeing students early in the term – too early to have enough information for high quality advising
- Students on probation need more time with advisors
- If not building relationships, not retaining students
- Not enough time to meet with advisees
• Enforcing holds – holds are seen as punitive
• Culture of using holds rather than other functionality in Banner – heavy handed
• Some students are confused about whether or not they have declared their major
• Advisors are not contacted when an advisee has been assigned to them
• Some students are bounced around
• Using personal and EWU e-mail addresses for students – confusion about which to use
• Considerable stress for advisors preparing for First Step
• Pre-requisite blocks generate another meeting in order to troubleshoot
• No clear process to change advisors – therefore Banner does not have current information
• Sometimes multiple appointments are scheduled for the same student – e.g. one because a student was placed on academic warning and then another for advising
• First Step requires an additional trip to campus – represents a barrier for some students
• Advisor assignment done by one person – choke point
• Current advising process and policies will not scale – not currently sustainable
• When a major is declared early in the process, student may miss general college information about resources and tools
• Not enough spaces in First Step for transfer students
• Transcript review is too late to be helpful to students and advisors
• Admitting and confirming students after classes have started is difficult to support
• Holds for the next term are placed early – therefore creating process churn for actions in the current term
• Not much time between the release of the class schedule and registration – advising is packed in between those two dates
• Nor formal advisor training or ongoing development – no documentation or handbook
• Students are having very different experiences between schools and advisors
• Students not always guided to the right place when they decide to change their major – therefore have to “re-recruit” them in the same major
• Don’t have a clear, efficient major change process
• Different advising structure and process at each college
• “Treat ‘em and street ‘em” – not enough time for high quality advising
• Many students are missing opportunities for study abroad, internships, etc. – their mindset is “just register”
• Using major declaration form for the wrong purpose – i.e. admission to a program
• Some students declare a “fake” major in order to register – “end run”
• Some students declare in order to register, not because they have decided on a major
• Some departments layer additional processes for students – e.g. major declaration
• Program admission requirements are not vetted and not visible to students and advisors
• Sometimes students have difficulty accessing a faculty advisor
• Conflated terminology and processes – major declaration, program admission, advisor change
• Convoluted process for declaring a major
• Students compare their experiences and access to advisors and faculty
• Not all students can change majors
• Some students don’t know they have taken the language test
• Don’t always get final transcript – some courses not evaluated
• Many barriers exist that lengthen students time to degree
• Student angst about the processes
• Evaluating transfer work has a huge impact on financial aid and advising
• Equivalency information is in many places
• Not all equivalencies have been entered in TES
• Using unofficial transcripts to make decisions, then sometimes official transcripts are never sent
• Students want transfer work evaluated before they decide on Eastern
• Don’t have a process to keep advisors updated
• Some students do not have advisors – many international students
• Not enough evaluators if all the evaluations are done manually
Appendix C:

“Parking Lot”

Over the course of the workshop, additional items were identified. They were not discussed at length, simple recorded for review in the future.

- Continue to cultivate a University-wide culture of service
  - Care
  - Support
  - Connect as individuals
  - Glad students are here
- Build relationships with students – trust, direction, advice
- Describe General Education in a compelling way
- Involve alumni – e.g. connect with careers
- Work/life balance
- Use additional tools – e.g. Salt financial tool
- Examine pockets of grade inflation
- Overcome low expectations
- Find new definitions of student success
- Use Math standards and success as a model