

Recommendations of the Student Success Taskforce Open Forum

November 5, 2018



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY®

Student Success Taskforce

- 56 Members including faculty, staff and students
- Four subcommittees formed to address incoming FTIC needs for fall 2019
 - Advising
 - First Year Experience
 - Graduation Help Desk
 - Regents' Scholars



TAMU Student Success Initiative

- Year 1 retention: 92% to 95%
- 4-year graduation rate: 56% to 65%
- 6-year graduation rate: 82% to 85%
- Decrease disparities
 - First-generation
 - Gender
 - Race/ethnic
 - Socioeconomic

Achievement Gaps

	Overall	Black	Hispanic	1 st -Gen	Male	Below \$60k
Year 1 Retention	92.0%	89.7%	88.6%	86.6%	91.0%	86.6%
4-Yr. Grad.	56.2%	46.3%	49.6%	50.3%	45.3%	50.2%
6-Yr. Grad.	81.9%	61.2%	76.3%	74.0%	77.7%	74.2%

*299 more students (95% Year 1 Retention)



Behind AAU Peers & UT Austin

	1-Yr Retention	4-Yr Graduation	6-Yr Graduation
UT Austin	95.1%	69.8%	82.9%
AAU Peers	94.5%	64.9%	85.2%
Texas A&M Univ.	92.0%	56.2%	81.9%



Fall 2017 Not Retained

Demographic	% of Admitted Class	% of Not Returned	% Not Retained in Good Standing
All	100% (N=11,717)	7.2% (N=847)	43.2% (N=368)
Black	3.3% (N=384)	4.4% (N=37)	31.4% (N=11)
Hispanic	25.4% (N=2,975)	36.1% (N=306)	37.2% (N=107)
White + Others	71.3% (N=8,358)	59.5% (N=504)	52.9% (N=250)



Drop Out Survey Results

- 42% reported only slight or no **connection to campus**
- 41% dissatisfied with **financial aid/support**
- 37% dissatisfied with **academic advising**



Benefits

- An estimated 915 more students each year will complete their degree within four years, meaning less cost and debt for these Aggies
- An estimated 240 more students each year will be former students with an Aggie degree
- Positive impact that will improve climate on campus
- Become national leader in first-generation student success
- Transformational learning for every student in the first year



Common First Year Experience



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY®

Recommendation

Establish a University-wide FYE for all FTIC students beginning Fall 2019

SSI Goals addressed:

- Increase first year retention from 92% to 95%
- Decrease achievement disparities

Overarching outcomes:

- Increase sense of belonging/connection to campus
- Early alert and intervention through mentors
- Address identified common themes/issues that are barriers to first-year student success
- Just in time delivery of resources



Current First-Year Initiatives

The only “common” experience for first-year students on CS campus is the New Student Conference.

Other First Year Focused Initiatives	~ # FTIC
First-Year Learning Communities/Intro Courses	5000
Regents participation in academic success program	750
Live on-campus	8000
First Year Living Learning Communities*	2664
Freshmen in the Corps	900
Fish Camp	6100
Freshman Leadership Organizations (FLOs)	1000



Identified Issues

- Provide timely interventions
- Create some consistencies in current FY initiatives
- Enhance sense of belonging and build institutional commitment
- Create more shared/common experiences in which all students engage (beyond NSC)
- Further connect first-year students with their academic college/major/program



Mapping the Aggie First Year Experience (FYE)



Aggie First Year Experience (FYEX 101/102)

- Weekly group meetings of 25 or fewer students
- 10-14 weeks/semester for fall and spring
- Led by 1 staff or faculty and 1 peer mentor
- 3-4 common themes each semester
- scheduled 0 credit hour



Additional FYEX Recommendations

- Allow an opportunity for existing learning communities or first year courses to be designated as an FYEX if:
 - Experiences are modified to meet FYEX criteria
 - Weekly group meetings of 25 or fewer students,
 - 10-14 weeks/semester for fall and spring,
 - Led by 1 staff or faculty and 1 peer mentor,
 - 3-4 common themes each semester,
 - 0-1 SCH
 - Mentors participate in training
 - Experience is co-branded with FYEX branding



Additional FYEX Recommendations

- Recognize and consider compensating or incentivizing faculty/staff/ and peer mentors for significant time and effort in support of this initiative.



Additional FYEX Recommendations

- Centralized coordination and implementation of FYEX
 - Fidelity and consistency of implementation
 - Select and train staff, faculty, and peer mentors
 - Develop objectives, common topics, and curriculum
 - Certification of existing programs
 - Annual assessments
 - Provide outreach & marketing for FYE
- Hire additional staff and appropriately resource initiative
 - 1 director position + 1 program coordinator



Support for At-Risk Students



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY®

Current At-Risk Student Support

- Primary program is Regents' Scholars Program
 - Low-income, first generation student scholarship of \$5000/year
 - Requirements include:
 - Attend 2-Hour Orientation before first fall semester
 - Participate in a Learning Community / Academic Success Program
 - Live on-campus for first year
 - Scholarship paid at start of each semester
- Gateway Provisional Admissions Program
- First Generation Learning Communities
- Support for Academic At-Risk through Academic Success Center
- Other smaller programming and initiatives through Student Affairs and Academic Affairs / Colleges



Identified Issues

- No uniform method to monitor students deemed at risk
- Some programs are voluntary with varying degrees of quality and engagement
- At-risk is broader than low-income, first generation
- Decentralized and uncoordinated communication strategy for admitted students with unknown impact
- Regents Scholars Program has no clear lead overseeing program
- Award amount and income threshold for Regents has remain unchanged since inception



Regents' Funding & Eligibility

1. Initial Recommendations

- Increase amount of award per Regents' Scholar
- Cap number of awards to 750 new FTIC, annually
- Pay/refund scholarships on a monthly basis, based on attendance/engagement in interventions

2. Next Year Recommendations

- Raise floor of family income from \$40K to \$60K
- Set a maximum estimated family contribution (EFC) of \$6,000
- Create a holistic review process for awarding



Regents' Oversight & Coordination

1. Initial Recommendations:

- Create management position for centralized oversight
- Expand Regents' orientation program, connecting students with learning communities
- Establish minimum standards and certification of learning communities supporting Regents', coordinated with First Year Experience (FYE) process

2. Next Year Recommendations

- Explore block scheduling of Regents' into cohorts
- Determine support needed in years 2-4
- Evaluate resources/personnel in colleges supporting students following FYE implementation



First Generation Program

1. With Student Affairs, develop programming & build identity for this student population
2. Create annual recognition event(s) to celebrate First Generation students
3. Create First Generation staff position to build program and collaborate with the Regents' Scholars Program



Centrally Support At-Risk Students

Establish team of dedicated staff that support at-risk students in collaboration with colleges to:

- Assist admitted students through “onboarding” processes, build connections, and support transition
- Closely watch progress of 850-1,000 at-risk first year students
- Coordinate interventions for students with excessive absences and low performance
- Communicate with students who have not pre-registered



Additional Considerations

- Conduct a communication audit
- Review Gateway Admissions criteria
- Expand emergency grant program for students in immediate financial difficulty
- Expansion of financial aid for low and middle income families



Academic Advising & Graduation Help Desk



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY®

Advising Recommendations

- General Themes

- Promote a change in culture from institutionally-centered to student-centered
- Increase support and consistency for academic advising
- Advocate for student success through supporting our most at-risk students
- Create a “Graduation Help Desk” to help identify systemic issues and assist students in timely graduation



Advising Recommendations

1. Promote a change in culture from institutionally-centered to student-centered
 - Streamlining processes and procedures to help FTIC and at risk students navigate our systems
 - Changes will help ALL students across our institution



Advising Recommendations Cont'd

2. Increase support and consistency of advising

- Oversee career ladder, professional development, & assessment of advising
- Manage those charged with Common First Year Student Success
- Provide necessary vetting and improve advising software and tools
- Facilitate the reinstatement of General Studies for undecided FTIC students
- Support consistent change of curriculum processes
- Coordinate with colleges to create uniform advising expectations



Graduation Help Desk

1. Purpose & Services - help students find solutions to roadblocks to academic progress & timely graduation
 - Focus on academic issues that cannot be resolved through existing resources (no available seats, course not offered, scheduling conflicts, inconsistent policies)
 - Provide self-help information and referrals to existing campus resources (academic advising, academic success center, enrichment programs, campus resources, billing, financial aid, etc.)
 - Targeted outreach campaigns



Graduation Help Desk

2. User Interface

- Audiences: students, faculty/advisors/staff, family members
- Provide both virtual and face-to-face interface
- Intuitive website/app with both public and CAS-authenticated content and services
- Chatbot with answers to common questions
- Service tickets through website or face-to-face meeting
 - Automated reply when ticket is submitted
 - Follow-up response, preferably two business days
- Refine system using ticket and chatbot data



Improve Student Success

- These recommendations for a Common First Year Experience, Regents' Scholars & First Generation Students, & Advising reflect the work of many across our campus
- Some recommendations are already in progress, while others are still in the discussion phase
- While somewhat ambitious, these recommendations seek to improve student success for ALL students across our institution



THANK YOU!!!

**Send immediate comments to:
studentsuccess@tamu.edu
or
Complete Qualtrics Survey**



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY®