Targeted Advising Campaign Report / Bryce Sasaki, Academic Support Coordinator

Target Population

The target student population consists of 16 first-generation undecided/undeclared students who entered Western as transfer students. These students have earned 105 credits, are below a cumulative 2.0 GPA, and have not made sufficient progress towards a degree or major.

Target Population Search Parameters

- List of 117 undecided/undeclared first-generation students with 105 credits was provided by the Academic Advising Office to Student Outreach Services (SOS).
- 16 students below a cumulative 2.0 GPA were selected from this list.

Campaign Objective and Rationale

To encourage earlier declaration of majors, SOS placed registration holds at 105 completed credits in Week 3 of the quarter for transfer students who are still undeclared. The spring quarter campaign followed the fall and winter campaigns with a new group of students below a cumulative GPA of 2.0 being selected due to their inefficient progress towards a degree or major. At the beginning of spring quarter, all 16 students were classified as having low academic standing (a cumulative GPA below 2.0). The breakdown of the students’ academic standing is as follows: 2 students were on Academic Warning; 13 were on Academic Probation, and 1 was on Continuing Probation.

Questions regarding the students’ progress towards declaring a major are raised. What prevented them from declaring a major? Why are the students in low academic scholarship? Are the two factors connected? Academic advising could help to inform students about strategies for raising their cumulative GPA’s, which could in turn lead them to declaring a major and avoid registration holds on their accounts in future quarters. It could also improve retention rates of students, which could lead to preserved tuition. Students received notice of potential holds well in advance of spring quarter registration.

Goals

1. Contact students a minimum of 4 times to encourage them to schedule an advising session.
2. Develop an academic plan to improve their GPA’s and/or choose or change a major during advising.
3. Connect students to resources such as financial aid, counseling, tutoring, etc., to develop a network of support during advising.
**Intervention Approach**

The period of the campaign was Spring Quarter 2016, beginning March 29 and running through June 6. Students were contacted via email throughout the quarter with the same information that was sent to all 105 Credit Hold students. All emails invited students to meet with their SOS academic advisor to discuss strategies that could help them to declare a major. Additionally, students were contacted by telephone if there were no responses to email. Advising appointments consisted of: 1) developing an academic plan to assist students with increasing their GPA; 2) choosing or changing a major; 3) connecting students to campus resources to develop a network of support. Watch lists were downloaded weekly during the quarter to track student status.

Students were asked to take the following steps:

- Schedule appointments to meet with an advisor
- Develop an academic plan of action to raise their cumulative GPA
- Declare/change a major
- Increase use of campus resources

**Results**

As a result of the campaign, 16 first-generation, undecided transfer students were contacted by email four times during spring quarter. In addition, two follow-up phone calls were used to contact students who had not responded. At the end of spring quarter, Students were in the following categories of low academic scholarship: 7 students in good standing (43.75%), 1 student on academic probation (6.25%), 6 students on continuing probation (37.5%), and 2 students were academically dismissed (12.5%). Only 1 student declared their major (6.25%). Of the 16 students, retention to summer/fall quarters resulted in 14 (87.5%) students enrolled and 2 (12.5%) being academically dismissed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outreach</th>
<th>Students Targeted</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email #1 Sent 4/11</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email #2 Sent 4/13</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email #3 Sent 4/20</td>
<td>15 (93.75%)</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email #4 Sent 4/27</td>
<td>14 (87.5%)</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up Phone Call #1 4/28-4/29</td>
<td>12 (75%)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up Phone Call #2 5/3</td>
<td>9 (56.25%)</td>
<td>88.89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Metric</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Actual Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact Rate</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>93.75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Outcome Metric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Metric</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Actual Result</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Response Rate</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>93.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Advised Rate</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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</table>

### Outcome Metric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Metric</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of students on low scholarship who used campus resources; academic success plan, professor, major department</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>68.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students who were academically dismissed</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students on low scholarship who achieved a term GPA &gt; 2.0</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>81.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students on low scholarship who achieved good academic standing with cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>43.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of students who declared a major</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Lessons Learned & Recommendations for Future Campaigns

Of the 16 students who started the term in low academic standing, 43.75% (7 students) finished with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher; putting them back into a state of academic good standing. Furthermore, 81.25% (13 students) achieved a term GPA of 2.0 or greater. This indicates that the majority of the students in this group did have some type of academic success during spring quarter 2016. However, of the 16 students, many of which experienced an increase in their GPA’s, only 1 student (6.25%) declared a major. What are the reasons for this?

Because these are transfer students, many of them are simply not able to declare their preferred major as there may still be obstacles in their way. Of the 16 students in this group, many of their preferred majors have prerequisite courses that can take up to a year to complete before being able to apply to the major. Of the 16 students, 6 are interested in pursuing business-related majors and to declare a major in business requires students complete a series of foundation courses. Additionally, 4 students were interested in declaring science-related majors, which often have math and science course prerequisites and again add extra time to their career at Western and extend the wait to be able to declare a major.

Conversely, the one student who did declare a major declared a major in English with an emphasis on literature. English as a major has no prerequisites to speak of which aides in the ease of the student being able to declare. Majors that require no prerequisite courses or program-specific GPA requirements however are the exception and not the rule for the majority of students at Western.

If the student was fortunate enough to have good advising at their previous institution and had it in their mind that they were going to major in business or science, they could have potentially started taking classes that might transfer to Western as prerequisite courses. Not every transfer student comes to Western knowing what they want to major in, and for those that do not, they often have to “start from
scratch” in preparing to be eligible to apply for a major. This has other ramifications as well, such as the added expense of prerequisite courses which increase the cost of attending university and the student’s potential debt afterwards.

Furthermore, as all of the 16 students in this group are first-generation students, they don’t always have knowledge and understanding of the major declaration process that our more “traditional” students do. Additionally, the declaration process at Western is not standardized and each department has its own rules and requirements, which can be quite complicated and extensive or can be almost non-existent. By the time these students do have a good idea of what they want to major in, they might not know how to follow through with the declaration process. This was true for many of the 16 students in this group that I advised with and it was fortunate that they did come in for advising so they could learn about the requirements and who to contact and what to do.

It’s apparent that something needs to be done when onboarding transfer students to help them understand the major declaration process right from the start, perhaps even pre-entry to Western, so that they fully understand that all majors are not created equal and that declaring is not a universal process that requires a simple visit to a single office. Transfer students who typically come from two-year colleges and are not exposed to bachelor’s degrees are often more familiar with campuses that do have centralized administration offices. The transition to a university such as Western can be quite a shock (i.e. “transfer shock”) and for first-generation students, this shock can be amplified a great deal. Perhaps something more than a one-day orientation/registration program (Transitions) is needed. Transfer students are often some of the students with the smallest connection to campus; with many only coming to take classes and then leaving as soon as the period ends. Perhaps more energy and efforts need to be dedicated to provide a more comprehensive and detailed onboarding process to make sure our transfer students fully realize what the expectation is from the university and where these students can find the best centers of support during their first terms of transition. As we are beginning to see greater numbers of students attending two-year colleges and an increasing first-generation student population, it’s important to realize the urgency in which we meet these students where they are and provide quality services that respect their contribution to our campus community. This is definitely an area that could use further study and more campaigns around these issues would be beneficial to our understanding of transfer students and their unique needs.

Another issue regarding first-generation transfer students and one that could lead to the students finding themselves in low academic standing and thus, delaying their ability to declare a major is the transition from courses taken at a two-year institution (or other four-year institution) and the level of academic rigor when comparing the students’ transfer courses to courses at Western. As first-generation students, there isn’t always an understanding that different higher education institutions are indeed different and sometimes there is an expectation that academic rigor levels will be similar. Comments from the 16 students tracked repeatedly spoke of the difference in challenge level between courses taken elsewhere and those taken here at Western. Among the 16 students, a repeated pattern emerges showing them struggling their first one or two quarters as they make adjustments to being a student here. By their second or third quarter, students have found themselves in one of a couple possible scenarios.

One scenario is that students were able to figure out what is was they needed to do to improve their grades and did so. This could have been accomplished solely by the student, with the help of advising and academic planning, with assistance from instructors, or by collaborating with class peers. Of the 16
students in this group, 7 students (43.75%) found themselves back in academic good standing by the end of spring quarter. 5 of these 7 students (71.4%) received academic advising in Student Outreach Services. This infers a correlation between improvement in the student’s academic progress and academic advising; stressing the need for advising and a stronger initial connection with transfer students when they arrive at Western. The 105 hold “program” might possibly be too reactive and might be more of a “too little, too late” approach to helping students declare their majors.

The other scenario is that transfer students who find Western’s courses to be academically more rigorous than their previous coursework elsewhere become discouraged and sometimes self-defeating. If a student is getting a poor grade in a class, they may opt to simply try to take the course again later rather than to seek out and address problems they are having in the class. This is also true for many students after the class has ended and grades have been posted. Transfer students need to be better educated and encouraged about their coursework and to be made better aware of all of the different campus resources available to them so that they will have opportunities to engage and address smaller problems with classes before they become major ones. For students who wish to pursue science and business related majors that have stricter admission practices and policies, this is even more important. Again, the need for quality, early academic advising is great for transfer students, especially those that are first-generation. When academic advising happens earlier in a transfer student’s academic career, students are more aware of the available resources and support services to help ensure that they will be successful, both in their classes and in making progress towards declaring a major.

Regarding this specific campaign and the lessons learned, an area that could definitely use more consideration is a review of the methods used for communicating with students. When looking at the outreach methods and the corresponding response rates, it becomes quite apparent that email does not have the effect that I would have liked it to when reaching out to the students that were part of this campaign. Whereas emails had little effect, phone calls however had quite the opposite effect and were quite successful in getting students to respond to our outreach and to come in for advising regarding the declaration process.

Four emails were sent out within a three-week period and with this particular group of students, the total response rate was 25% (4 of the 16 students) and students either completed an online major declaration plan or came in for advising. However, when phone calls were made, 11 of the 12 remaining students responded. For future campaigns requiring outreach to students, a recommendation might be to introduce phone calls earlier in the outreach timeline/schedule.

In conversations had with the advisees from this group, many students commented that they knew they received the emails from our office, but did not really look at them or looked briefly or read them but forgot. Additional comments were made that they felt they received too much email from the campus as a whole and that our emails simply got “lost in the mix”. When asked about the phone calls, students responded by saying that the phone calls seemed more important and also served as good reminders, referencing back to the previous emails they had received. As previously stated, emails seem to be a form of communication that is challenging for both our students and for us as professionals. Other, more student-focused forms of communication should be further studied and utilized where applicable. Or if we must continue with email as our official method, a review of the messages including language and tone, academic jargon, and general readability should be in order.
Appendix

Email #1 – Sent 4/11/2016

Student Outreach Services
Old Main 387, 360-650-7443
http://www.wwu.edu/sos/

W#

Dear (Name),

As of April 11th, a hold has been placed on your summer/fall class registration. To remove your registration hold, please take one of the following actions:

• **OPTION 1: Complete the online Major Declaration Plan before 5:00pm on Friday, April 29th.** I will review your Major Declaration Plan to determine whether you need to meet with me before registering for summer/fall quarter classes. Click below to complete this form as soon as possible as the review process may take up to one week.
  http://www.wwu.edu/Advising/form_undeclared_major_1_SOS.shtml
  Note: you should complete this form even if you did so last quarter.

• **OPTION 2: Meet with me in person in Student Outreach Services – Old Main 387**
  - You can schedule an appointment by calling 360-650-7443

• **OPTION 3: Declare your major**
  - Once you have declared, click here to complete the appropriate form.

Declaring a major is essential to graduating in a timely manner. I would like to support you in taking the next steps in your process of declaring a major. Western’s major declaration policy requires that students apply to or **declare a major by the time they complete 90 credits**. Students who do not declare a major by the time they complete 105 credits are required to communicate with an advisor prior to registration. Our records show that you have completed 108 credits, and have not yet declared a major.

Benefits to declaring your major include:
• Departmental advisement specific to your major
• Access to major restricted courses
• Connecting with faculty and finding out about major related opportunities

As your advisor, I am available to help you navigate how to choose and declare a major. I look forward to helping you make progress in your Western journey.

Sincerely,

Bryce Sasaki

**Bryce Sasaki, M.Ed.**
Academic Support Coordinator
Email #2 – Sent 4/13/2016

Dear (Name),

This is a gentle reminder that, as of April 11th, a hold has been placed on your summer/fall class registration. To remove your registration hold, please take one of the following actions:

- **OPTION 1:** Complete the online [Major Declaration Plan](http://www.wwu.edu/Advising/form_undeclared_major_1_SOS.shtml) before 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 29th. I will review your Major Declaration Plan to determine whether you need to meet with me before registering for summer/fall quarter classes. Click below to complete this form as soon as possible as the review process may take up to one week. Note: you should complete this form even if you did so last quarter.

- **OPTION 2:** Meet with me in person. You may schedule an appointment by calling 360-650-7443.

- **OPTION 3:** Declare your major. Once you have declared, click [here](#) to complete the appropriate form.

Declaring a major is essential to graduating in a timely manner. I would like to support you in taking the next steps in your process of declaring a major. Western’s major declaration policy requires that students apply to or declare a major by the time they complete 90 credits. Students who do not declare a major by the time they complete 105 credits are required to communicate with an advisor prior to registration. Our records show that you have completed __ credits, and have not yet declared a major.

Benefits to declaring your major include:
- Departmental advisement specific to your major
- Access to major restricted courses
- Connecting with faculty and finding out about major related opportunities

As your advisor, I am available to help you navigate how to choose and declare a major. I look forward to helping you make progress in your Western journey.
Take care,

Bryce Sasaki

Bryce Sasaki, M.Ed.
Academic Support Coordinator
Student Outreach Services
Western Washington University
516 High Street, Bellingham, WA 98225
Office: Old Main 387 | Phone: 360-650-7443
wwu.edu/sos | facebook.com/wwu.sos

Email #3 – Sent 4/20/2016

Student Outreach Services
Old Main 387, 360-650-7443
http://www.wwu.edu/sos/

W#

Dear (Name),

This is a follow up notice to the 105 hold email I sent you last week. As of April 11th, a hold has been placed on your registration for summer/fall quarter classes. Students who do not declare a major by the time they complete 105 credits are required to communicate with an advisor prior to registration. Our records show that you have completed (#) credits, and have not yet declared a major.

To remove your registration hold, please take one of the following actions:

- **OPTION 1:** Complete the online Major Declaration Plan before 5:00pm Friday, April 29th. I will review your Major Declaration Plan to determine whether you need to meet with me before registering for summer/fall quarter classes. Click below to complete this form as soon as possible as the review process may take up to one week.
  http://www.wwu.edu/Advising/form_undeclared_major_1_SOS.shtml
  Note: you should complete this form even if you did so last quarter.

- **OPTION 2:** Meet with me in person. You may either schedule an appointment by calling 360-650-7443 or you can come to a walk-in appointment between 3:00-4:00 in Old Main 387 daily.

- **OPTION 3:** Declare your major. Once you have declared, click here to complete the appropriate form.

Declaring a major is essential to graduating in a timely manner. I would like to support you in taking the next steps in your process of declaring a major. Western’s major declaration policy requires that students apply to or declare a major by the time they complete 90 credits.
Benefits to declaring your major include:

- Departmental advisement specific to your major
- Access to major restricted courses
- Connecting with faculty and finding out about major related opportunities

As your advisor, I am available to help you navigate how to choose and declare a major. I look forward to helping you make progress in your Western journey.

Sincerely,

Bryce Sasaki

PS. Please take action as soon as possible! Registration begins in a few weeks and we don’t want there to be a delay on your ability to register. As we approach registration, advisors in our office become busier and it can become harder to schedule appointments.

Bryce Sasaki, M.Ed.
Academic Support Coordinator
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Western Washington University
516 High Street, Bellingham, WA 98225
Office: Old Main 387 | Phone: 360-650-7443
wwu.edu/sos | facebook.com/wwu.sos

Email #4 – Sent 4/27/2016

Student Outreach Services
Old Main 387, 360-650-7443
http://www.wwu.edu/sos/

W#

Dear (Name),

This is your final notice to the 105 hold email I sent you before. As of April 11th, a hold has been placed on your registration for summer/fall quarter classes. Students who do not declare a major by the time they complete 105 credits are required to communicate with an advisor prior to registration. Our records show that you have completed 135 credits, and have not yet declared a major.

To remove your registration hold, please take one of the following actions:

- **OPTION 1: Complete the online** Major Declaration Plan **before 5:00pm THIS Friday, April 29th.** I will review your Major Declaration Plan to determine whether you need to meet with me before registering for summer/fall quarter classes. Click below to complete this form as soon as possible as the review process may take up to one week.
Note: you should complete this form even if you did so last quarter.

- **OPTION 2: Meet with me in person.** You may either schedule an appointment by calling 360-650-7443 or you can come to a walk-in appointment between 3:00-4:00 in Old Main 387 daily.

- **OPTION 3: Declare your major.** Once you have declared, click [here](http://www.wwu.edu/Advising/form_undeclared_major_1_SOS.shtml) to complete the appropriate form.

Declaring a major is essential to graduating in a timely manner. I would like to support you in taking the next steps in your process of declaring a major. Western’s major declaration policy requires that students apply to or declare a major by the time they complete 90 credits.

Benefits to declaring your major include:
- Departmental advisement specific to your major
- Access to major restricted courses
- Connecting with faculty and finding out about major related opportunities

As your advisor, I am available to help you navigate how to choose and declare a major. I look forward to helping you make progress in your Western journey.

Sincerely,

Bryce Sasaki

PS. Please take action as soon as possible! Registration begins in a few weeks and we don’t want to there to be a delay on your ability to register. As we approach registration, advisors in our office become busier and it can become harder to schedule appointments.

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**Voicemail Script**

Hi this is ______________ from Student Outreach Services at Western Washington University. We’re calling to see if you’d like to set up an appointment with an advisor to discuss declaring a major. You currently have a hold on your registration, meaning that you won’t be able to register for summer or fall quarter classes until you speak with an advisor. As registration begins soon, we hope to see you in our office in the next week. Please call us back at 360-650-7443 to schedule an appointment. Thank you!
Phone Conversation Script

Hi this is _______________ from Student Outreach Services at Western. We’re calling to see if you’d like to set up an appointment with an academic advisor to address your registration hold.

How to respond to different prompts:

“What is this about?”
Students who have high credits, but haven’t yet declared a major are asked to come in and see an advisor. They just want to check in to make sure you are doing ok in making progress towards your degree. Students who have a hold and haven’t yet talked with an advisor won’t be able to register for summer or fall quarter classes.

“I’ve already declared my major.” OR “I’ve already applied to my major”
Ok—I’ll make a note of that and check with your Student Outreach Services advisor. Sometimes there’s a lag in departments processing paperwork for declared students. An advisor will get back to you soon.

“I don’t want to set up a meeting right now.”
Ok—we really encourage you to meet with an advisor soon so you will be able to register for summer or fall quarter classes. Our advisors get very busy the week of registration so it can sometimes be difficult to get an appointment if you wait.

“I’m busy, can I call you back?”
Sure. You can call me at (______________). I’ll be here for the next (certain amount of time) or you can always call our front desk to schedule an appointment. Do you need the Student Outreach Services number (360-650-7443)?

“I’m going to apply for my major next quarter (or soon), do I still have to meet?”
Your advisor would still like to be able to chat with you about your plans before they can remove your hold.

“If already met with an advisor and they removed my hold.”
Ok—Sorry about that! Sometimes there’s a little bit of a lag in the data we receive from the advisors. I’ll double check with their list.

➤ If the student would like to make an appointment, transfer them to the front desk as they have access to advisor calendars. Let the student know who their assigned advisor is before transferring them!