About the Access Program

Access is an SOS program intended for first-year Western students. The mission is to provide access to academic advising services early to facilitate improved success academically and college completion. The Access program was designed to provide first year students the support, interventions, and guidance to aid their transition from high school into the rigors of academia.

Overall retention rate from Fall of 2015 to Fall of 2016: 75%
**Assessment Objective:** To determine the experiences, barriers, and successes for students enrolled in the Access Program related to advising appointments, EDUC 108, activities, and utilization of services at Western.

**Methodology:** A mixed methods approach, mainly qualitative, using an online survey and classroom assessment strategies.

**Question:** Thinking of all that you encountered, experienced, and learned during your first year, what was the most surprising?

**Student Responses:**
- Learning about their own learning style/limitations/self-directed, effort
- Work load/challenge of course work: was lower or higher than expected, class size and experience

**Question:** What has been the impact of having an advisor to check in with regarding your well-being?

**Student Responses:**
- Reassurance and support, helping to pace myself and guidance to what to do each quarter; sort out problems and set goals; increased confidence; accountability; important and cared for
We learned that we needed to restructure internal practices to strengthen support systems for students.

**Results**

**Themes from Survey Analysis**

**Students wanted more support for:**
- Class planning
- Social connections and support
- Campus involvement

**Students wish they had known:**
- What classes would have been like
- More about helpful studying tools
- The value of being involved
- How to remain academically motivated

**What would students say to other first-year students?**
- Take advantage of advising services
- Plan ahead

**Recommendation: Next Step**

"Every time I went to check in with my advisor I felt more reassured about my classes and my grades."

"Take advantage of advising, even if you think you have an idea of what you want to study and do with your life. They’re always there to keep you motivated and determined through college struggles."

"It’s nice to have that on campus connection to help you through the difficult transitions."

"It makes me feel more confident about what I am accomplishing in college."