Academic Advising Plan
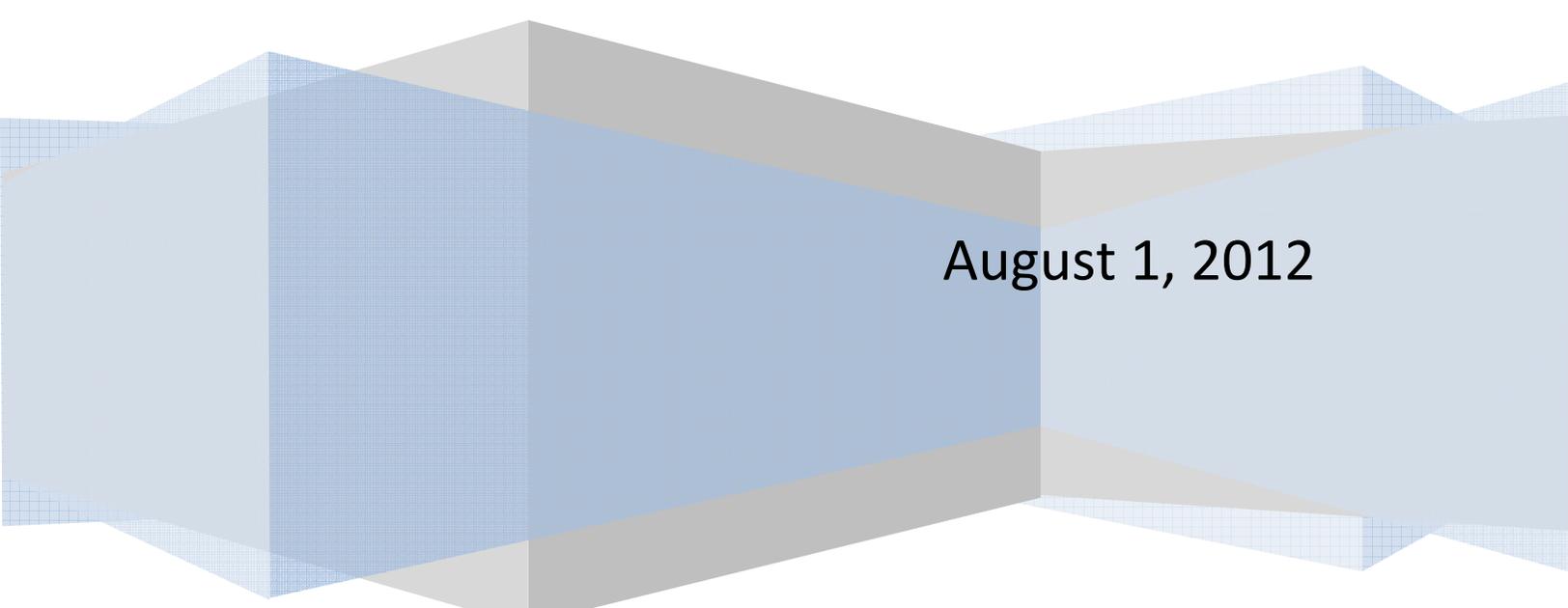
The University of Texas at San Antonio

August 1, 2012

Academic Advising Plan

The University of Texas at San Antonio

As one of the elements to improve student success in general, and the four-year graduation rate in particular, The University of Texas at San Antonio is committed to improving academic advising. In order to better understand the effectiveness of academic advising and to look into problems with academic advising as indicated by student folklore, in 2009, the Provost appointed the Provost Task Force on Undergraduate Academic Advising. The Report of the Provost Task Force on Undergraduate Academic Advising, which was completed in 2010, contains an extensive analysis of undergraduate academic advising at UTSA. Additionally, tactics to improve academic advising at the university are also presented in the UTSA Four-Year Graduation Rate Improvement Plan that was developed as part of the UTSA 2012-2014 Tuition and Fee Proposal. The fact that several of the suggestions to improve academic advising found in the Report have already been implemented is evidence that the university is serious in its commitment to improve academic advising.

The Report of the Provost Task Force on Undergraduate Academic Advising

The Provost Task Force on Undergraduate Academic Advising undertook activities to address the concerns raised by students that were listed in the charge to the task force. The concerns about undergraduate academic advising noted in the charge were the following:

- students' inability to see an advisor when most needed;
- students receiving course advice that later turns out to be wrong;
- students receiving conflicting advice from two or more different advisors; and
- lack of coordination between centrally-supervised advising services and college-based advising centers.

The Report of the Provost Task Force on Undergraduate Academic Advising can found at the following link: http://utsa.edu/success/docs/provost_task_force_on_academic_advising-final_report_9-27-2010.pdf .

The Four-Year Graduation Rate Improvement Plan

The UTSA Four-Year Graduation Rate Improvement Plan identifies four categories of factors that are most responsible for inhibiting students' timely completion of degrees at UTSA. One of

the categories of factors identified is "Advising and Student Support Services." One of the objectives mentioned in the Four-Year Graduation Rate Improvement Plan report is to develop strategies to improve advisor quality and access at UTSA.

The UTSA Four-Year Graduation Rate Improvement Plan can be found at the following link: http://provost.utsa.edu/home/docs/UTSA_Graduation_Rate_Plan_2011-FINAL.PDF .

Structure of the Academic Advising System at UTSA

Undergraduate Academic Advising at UTSA is conducted by professional advisors housed in various advising centers across the university. Freshmen with declared majors are advised by the Colleges' Freshman Advising Center (CFAC) whereas all students who have not declared a major, including freshmen, are advised by the Tomás Rivera Center. Each college with the exception of the two colleges housed completely at the Downtown Campus, the College of Architecture (COA) and the College of Public Policy (COPP), has an advising center which advises its majors that are sophomores or above. The Downtown Undergraduate Advising Center (DTUAC) has advisors representing each college except the Honors College, houses all of the COA and COPP advisors, and advises all level of undergraduates with declared majors, including freshmen, who wish to seek academic advisement at the UTSA Downtown Campus. The Tomás Rivera Center (TRC) has locations at both the Main and Downtown campuses. Students that are members of the Honors College also receive advisement from the Honors College advisors.

Each college advising center, except the Honors College Advising Center, is supervised by a Director of Advising who reports to one of the associate deans of the college. The supervisor of the advising center in the Honors College is an Academic Advisor IV who reports to the associate dean of the Honors College. The Director of Advising of the CFAC reports to the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Director of Advising of the DTUAC reports to the Vice Provost for the Downtown Campus, and the Director of Advising of the TRC reports to the Executive Director of the TRC. The Executive Director of the TRC reports to the Associate Dean for Retention and Graduation.

Other offices provide specialized advising for our students. Students interested in pursuing careers in the health professions may also seek advisement and support from the University Health Professions Office (UHPO). Students interested in pursuing careers in law may seek pre-law advisement at the Institute for Law and Public Affairs (ILPA). Athletes are dually advised by the Athletics Academic Advisor.

The Executive Director of Advising is responsible for coordinating all academic advising at the university, providing leadership for a comprehensive advising program at UTSA, managing the budget and personnel allocations to the advising centers, developing and coordinating university wide training programs and professional development opportunities for advisors, and overseeing the implementation of advising policies, procedures and best practices.   She is the supervisor of the Office of Undergraduate Studies Support and Technology Services which provides technical and other support for UTSA academic advisors.

The Executive Director of Advising, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Associate Dean for Retention and Graduation, the Director of the UHPO, and the Director of the ILPA all report to the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

Initiatives Designed to Improve Academic Advising at UTSA

Almost half of all UTSA undergraduates are first-generation college students, which means that they require special attention and additional assistance to navigate through their university studies. To help these students succeed, the university must provide a robust infrastructure of academic support and advising services to help them stay on track toward their degrees. These services become a barrier to student success when *(i)* they are insufficient for the size of the student population, *(ii)* they are not optimally organized to provide access to services when students need them the most, and *(iii)* there are limited opportunities for students to help themselves through self-service.

As one example, first-year students are often unaware of the degree of self-monitoring required at the university level and may not track the status of their work in their courses. As a consequence, by the time they become aware of a poor overall grade, it may be too late to recover and succeed in the course. They then may drop, or earn a D or an F in the course, which negatively impacts their progress and costs them money when they have to retake the course. Hence, the quality of our academic support services is critical to our students' ability to complete a degree within four or six years.

The following items are planned to improve academic advising at UTSA. Some of those items are recommendations of the Report of the Provost Task Force on Undergraduate Advising. Others are found in the UTSA Four-Year Graduation Rate Improvement Plan.

1.   **Establish the University College**

A University College will be established to change the way that the university interacts with freshmen, including academic advising and other student academic and social support. In Fall 2010, the Provost established the UTSA *Freshman Experience Task Force* to make recommendations on steps that the university may take to modify the freshman year academic experience in order to ease students' transition to college, while introducing them to the rigors of college-level course work and to standardize our approach to advising students so that their overall academic experience at UTSA rests on a solid foundation of coursework during the freshman year. The task force issued its report in May 2011. Presently, the university has established a *Freshman Experience Task Force Implementation Committee* to devise specific recommendations for implementing the provisions of the report, which has been termed the *Freshman Focus.*

The University College will soon be established to oversee the *Freshman Focus* initiative, which will provide a cohort learning experience as well as social, academic, and financial literacy support for all first-year students. When the Freshman Focus is scheduled to be fully implemented in Fall 2014, all first-year students, as well as most students having pre-majors and all undecided majors, will be members of the University College.

The University College will develop strategies to encourage its students to satisfactorily complete at least 30 semester credit hours within one calendar year, to successfully address any deficiencies identified in their academic preparation for college, and to choose and qualify for majors that are best suited for their aptitudes, interests, and career goals. This last point is important as we wish to decrease the likelihood that students will change majors after the initial year of matriculation at the university. Getting students into the appropriate major early in their academic career is one of the elements that may position students to be track to a timely graduation.

Effective and improved academic advising for freshmen and for all members of the University College will be critical to the success of the University College and the Freshman Focus. The University College advisors will practice both intrusive and appreciative academic advising as they offer support and guidance to our freshmen as they adjust to college. The current freshman advisors for declared majors and the current advisors for all undecided majors, including those admitted provisionally, will advise all students belonging to the University College. In addition to providing guidance for course selection, the University College academic advisors will also be responsible for monitoring the academic performance of University College students and intervening when a decline in performance is detected.

The University College will implement one of the key features of the Freshman Focus, which is to organize first semester freshmen into cohorts of 25 students each, enrolling them into block scheduled courses, one of which will a new academic inquiry course designed to introduce

freshmen to the academy and to improve critical thinking and problem solving skills in a collaborative environment. (For ease of implementation, some groups of freshmen may be organized into cohorts during their second semester of matriculation at the university.) Academic advisors will assist students in supplementing their block schedules with other courses, based on students' capabilities and interests. They will also help cohort members think about choices for majors and assist them with developing four-year degree plans. The students will be introduced to the recommended four-year academic plans outlined in the catalog of the intended major during the advising portion of Freshman Orientation. The advisors will reiterate the importance of these plans and course sequencing. This will foster the students' understanding of the expectations of their majors and the connection of their cohort courses to their degree plans.

In order to more effectively promote student success, each cohort of students will be assigned an upperclassman to serve as a peer advisor and mentor for the group to help ease the transition into college for these first-time-in-college students. Peer advisors/mentors will reach out to the members of their groups to aid the students' adjustment to the university, both academically and socially. They will contribute to instructing freshmen in the development of essential study skills, including effective time management abilities, will provide an orientation to campus life, and, generally, will welcome freshmen into the university family. As successful students themselves, peer advisors/mentors will serve as role models for our incoming freshmen, providing a template for the success of the mentees. Peer advisors/mentors will monitor the progress of students, ensuring that they attend classes regularly and directing them to appropriate university resources as needed. The peer advisor/mentor program should contribute significantly to increasing the freshman-to-sophomore retention rate of our students.

During the freshman year, the University College will also host information sessions to increase knowledge and awareness of the various degree plans available to students and help students select a major that meets their educational and career goals. The goal of the University College is that, by the end of the freshman year, all freshmen will have selected reasonable majors, will have individualized semester-by-semester degree plans on file in the system, and will have successfully completed at least 30 semester credit hours, placing them on track toward a four-year graduation. Although it is certain that some students will change majors after the freshman year, the goal is to reduce the likelihood and the incidences of changes of majors after the freshman year.

Finally, the University College will oversee all the various academic support services offered by the university, including tutoring services, supplemental instruction, the Writing Center, and the Quantitative Skills Lab. University College students will be permitted to transition into the

college of their major after declaring a major, earning 30 semester credit hours of course work, which includes completing the academic inquiry course and the core curriculum requirements in mathematics and writing, and removing any identified deficiencies in their academic preparation for college.

Timeline for Implementation:
> Fall 2013
> - Partial implementation and pilot of the Freshman Focus
> - Undeclared majors and pre-engineering majors will be admitted to the University College
>
> Fall 2014
> - The Freshman Focus will be fully implemented
> - All new freshmen will be admitted into the University College

Metrics to Determine Effectiveness:
Short term:
> - Percent of freshman classified as sophomores one year after matriculation
> - Freshman-to-sophomore year retention rate
>
Long term:
> - Persistence rates for two, three, and four years
> - Average number of credit hours completed by "native" students to earn degrees
> - Four-year graduation rate
> - Six-year graduation rate

Resources Required
> - Associate Dean for the University College
> - Administrative staff position
> - Peer Advisors
> - Reallocation of faculty to teach the academic inquiry course

Source of Funding::
> - Reallocated E&G funds

2.   Require Four-Year Degree Plans of Study Prior to the end of the Freshman Year

Since Fall 2007, UTSA has required all students to have approved individualized semester-by-semester, four-year degree plans on file with their academic advisor prior to earning 45 semester credit hours. A registration hold is placed on the records of all students who fail to file a degree plan when they have earned 45 or more hours. It is the hope of the university that this roadmap toward graduation will promote timely graduation. With the implementation of the Freshman Focus, the plan is to require each student to have a filed, individualized, semester-by-semester degree plan prior to the end of the semester in which they earn 30 or more semester credit hours and transition from the University College to the college of their major.

Presently, degree plans are created manually by advisors working with students and is a time-consuming endeavor. Having an electronic system that aids in developing individualized semester-by-semester degree plans will help the university to more efficiently use the time of academic advisors. Hence, UTSA intends to be an active participant in the implementation of tools resulting from the partnership of the UT System with *MyEdu*. An electronic tool will be selected with degree planning functionality, which can be partnered with completion and progress data that will give students an improved way of tracking their own progress toward their degrees. The individualized dynamic four-year degree plans of study for every freshman will be developed with assistance of the electronic tool prior to the end of the freshman year. The *MyEdu* Student Degree Plan Tracker is a tool that may be utilized to help UTSA facilitate the semester-by-semester degree plan requirement. Degree plans appropriately adjusted for the number of credits that transfer students have earned will be entered into the system, verified and approved by academic advisors during the initial semester of matriculation at UTSA.

These dynamic four-year plans will be based on four-year degree maps prepared by departments, and will be maintained in an online database that will be updated as students' enrollment needs change. These plans will encourage students to think of their studies at UTSA more holistically and will provide a mechanism for students to assess their progress toward completing their degrees as they make changes to their dynamic degree plans in real time, as opposed to rigid, static plans. Moreover, the four-year plans of study will also aid departments in developing class schedules as they will have an early indication of the expected enrollment demand for courses.

See Appendix II for a discussion by UTSA Office of Information Technology regarding the implementation of four-year degree plans from a technological point of view.

Timeline for Implementation:

     Fall 2014
- Begin with the Fall 2014 cohort of freshmen

Metrics to Determine Effectiveness:
- The four and six-year graduation rates
- Percentage of students with validated degree plans in the system
- Number of course schedule changes
- Average number of total credit hours taken by graduates

Resources Required
- Increase advising resources
- Peer advisors

Source of funding:

- Advising fee.

3. Improve Electronic Degree Audit System

UTSA presently uses the Curriculum, Advising and Program Planning (CAPP) software to electronically track degree requirements met by students for their specific majors. Some advising centers make extensive use of CAPP. However, other advising centers still rely heavily on manual degree audits, often delaying the entering of essential information into the electronic system until students have applied for graduation. We have discovered that the efficiency of using CAPP is a function of the requirements for the particular majors. For example, majors in the College of Engineering and the College of Business are very structured with limited leeway for students to make individual choices for courses. Such degree plans are well suited to be electronically verified by CAPP. On the other hand, majors in the College of Liberal and Fine Arts tend to be less structured with much flexibility allowed for students to design their degree plans. CAPP does not work as well for these more flexible degree programs.

Students themselves have the ability to monitor their own progress toward their degrees by accessing their CAPP degree plans online through Web CAPP. Since advisors often neglect to update CAPP degree plans by not entering transfer work and course substitutions in a timely fashion, the CAPP plans are often not up to date, and students receive information that is often not current when using Web CAPP.

We have found that CAPP is a cumbersome system to use both for students using Web CAPP and for advisors. Some advisors feel that they can more effectively track and verify the progress to degrees of their advisees by using paper degree plans as opposed to using CAPP to produce electronic degree plans. The advising community has decided that obtaining a more user friendly degree audit system, such as "Degree Works," would help the university move toward completely using electronic degree audits. Automating the degree audit system and requiring uniform processes university-wide will help our advisors to more efficiently handle audits and free up time for the advisors to spend on more in-depth advising issues with their advisees, reducing wait times.

The university plans to augment or replace CAPP with a more user-friendly online tool that will encourage more widespread use by students and advisors. As the *MyEdu* working committee and local implementation team put together more concrete deliverables and plans for the degree audit functionality, they will be incorporated into a locally developed project plan to upgrade UTSA's online degree audit system. UTSA will also be comparing the functionality proposed by *MyEdu* with other commercially available tools such as the above-mentioned *Degree Works* that integrates very well with our current student information system. In all

cases, our goal is to integrate our student information system with a user-friendly, streamlined tool to allow advisors and students to build, maintain, and track students' progress toward degrees.

Appendix II contains a discussion by the UTSA Office of Information Technology of a plan to improve the electronic degree audit system at UTSA.

Timeline for Implementation:

Fall 2015
- Roll out the new electronic degree audit system

Metrics to Determine Effectiveness:
- The percentage of the final graduation audits verified electronically
- The number of students utilizing online degree audits
- Average number of total credit hours taken by graduates
- Four-year graduation rate
- Six-year graduation rate

Resources Required
- Requires minimal resources if able to partner with MyEdu to develop the system
- Funds to purchase a commercially available tool

Source of funding:
- Reallocated E&G funds
- Advising fee

4.   Improve Access to Advising for Students

UTSA will implement programs designed to improve access to advisors by students and, in particular, reduce the wait-time for scheduled advising appointments. We will address advisor access by increasing advising resources available to students. These include expanding online advising resources, increasing the number of academic advisors available, and increasing the efficiency of the use of advisors' time. In addition to providing one-on-one in person advising, we plan to expand outreach by advisors to students via telephone, email, Blackboard, and Facebook. We hope to also increase advisor access by providing more effective communication of advising information to students. Providing a website where students can find answers to frequently asked questions and find registration tutorials and guides will hopefully decrease the number of visits to advisors for help with routine matters leaving more time for advisors to assist students with more in depth advising issues and students in academic difficulty.

a.   Strategically reduce the student to advisor ratio

According to a 2009 report by the UT System, the student to full-time equivalent (FTE) advisor ratio at UTSA is 276:1, which is lower than the standard set by NACADA of 300:1 and which compares favorably to the student-to-advisor ratios of the other UT System institutions. Eliminating from the UT System data the advising personnel with little or no contact with students, such as the directors of the advising centers who are more involved with supervision, Fall Semester 2011 data show that the overall student to advisor ratio at UTSA was 347:1 and varied by advising center from 278:1 to 413:1. In spite of the favorable student-to-advisor ratio, surveys conducted in Spring Semester 2010 showed that students' number one concern with academic advising at UTSA was the long wait time to see advisors. Of all the concerns that the Provost Task Force on Academic advising was asked to consider, the task force concluded that the inability to see an advisor when most needed was a systemic problem and concluded that the other issues the group were asked to consider were isolated, non-systemic matters.

Table 1: Undergraduates per Professional Academic Advisor – Fall 2009*

Institution	# FTE Advisors	Student/FTE Advisor
UT Arlington	65.7	325
UT Austin	136.0	281
UT Brownsville	19.5	832
UT Dallas	40.5	254
UT El Paso	33.5	520
UT Pan American	30.0	532
UT Permian Basin	5.0	605
UTSA	91.6	276
UT Tyler	11.5	458
UT System Average	48.1	353

*Source: UT System Academic Institutions, THECB:
http://www.utsystem.edu/osm/accountability/2009/SectionI.pdf

Table 4: Number of Advisors by Advising Center

Advising Center	No. Full-time Advisors-Main Campus	No. Part-time Advisors-Main Campus	No. Advisors Assigned to DTUAC	Total FTE Advisors
COA			2.6	2.6
COB	11	1	2	13.6

COE	4			4
COEHD	6		2	8
COLFA	10	2	1.5	12.5
COPP			2.5	2.5
COS	8	1	0.6	9.1
CFAC	14		1	15
TRC	8			8
Total	61	4	12.2	75.3
Honors	2	1		2.5
Grand Total	63	4	12.2	77.8

The Executive Director of Advising and the directors of advising centers are not included in these figures. Each of the college advising centers has a director except COA and COPP. COA and COPP each have 2 full-time advisors and one part-time advisor all supervised by the Director of the Downtown Undergraduate Advising Center (DTUAC).   The other colleges have advisors assigned to the DTUAC as indicated by the table, and these advisors are supervised by the Director of the DTUAC. The CFAC has a Director of Advising and an Associate Director of Advising. The TRC has a Director of Advising, and has advisors at the Downtown Campus but supervised by the TRC Director of Advising. The Honors College has 3 full-time advisors. However, since it does not have a director of advising, 50% of the time of one of the advisors is dedicated to the supervision of the center, leaving 2.5 full time equivalent advisors to do the academic advising of the students. This table does not include the three teacher certification specialists that are assigned to the COEHD Advising Center. They were excluded since their primary focus is on the teacher certification admission processing of undergraduates and post-baccalaureate students seeking teaching certification at the secondary level. [UTSA Colleges: College of Architecture (COA), College of Business (COB), College of Engineering (COE), College of Education and Human Development (COEHD), College of Liberal and Fine Arts (COLFA), College of Public Policy (COPP), College of Sciences (COS).] [Other advising centers: Colleges' Freshman Advising Center (CFAC) and Tomás Rivera Center (TRC).]

Table 5: Student to Advisor Ratios – Fall 2009

Advising Center	Freshmen	Sophomores	Juniors	Seniors	Total*	FTE Advisors	Student to Advisor Ratio
COA	193	184	186	443	813	2.6	313
COB	1067	1044	1213	1906	4163	13.6	306
COE	682	497	419	736	1652	4	413
COEHD	615	710	853	1459	3022	8	378
COLFA	1251	1114	1525	2182	4821	12.5	386
COPP	165	196	297	332	825	2.5	330
COS	1464	981	849	1349	3179	9.1	349
CFAC	5437				5437	15	362
TRC	1604	460	90	68	2222	8	278
Total					26142	75.3	347
Honors					815	2.5	326
Grand Total					26142	77.8	336

*For the colleges, the total is the number of sophomores through seniors. The number of CFAC advisees is the total number of freshman in the colleges. The Honors College students are also counted in the college of their major, which is also responsible for the academic advisement of these students.

Although the student-to-advisor ratio for UTSA advisors is reasonable, it appears that our students, many of whom are first generation students, need more support and reassurance from advisors when it comes to routine issues such as class selection, which students are typically expected to figure out for themselves. Hence our students place a tremendous burden on our advising centers when registration begins. During the next academic year, the university plans to increase the total number of advisors by six or seven positions and assign those advisors strategically to decrease the student-to-advisor ratios in those advising centers that have the greatest need. The assignment of advisors to an advising center will depend on the present student to advisor ratio of the center and the amount of intrusive advising dictated by degree requirements of certain majors. Decreasing the student-to-advisor ratio is one strategy to help decrease the wait time for students to see advisors. Increasing the total number of advisors by 7 will decrease the UTSA student to advisor ratio from 347:1 to 318:1.

<u>Timeline for Implementation:</u>

> Fall 2012
> - Begin to strategically create new advising positions

<u>Metrics to Determine Effectiveness:</u>
- The wait times for students to see advisors
- Student satisfaction with academic advising
- Number of interventions with students in academic difficulty

<u>Resources Required</u>
- Additional advising positions

<u>Source of funding:</u>
- Advising fee.

b.   Improve advisor scheduling and tracking software

In order to permit students to more efficiently schedule appointments with advisors, to permit advisors to more effectively communicate with advisees, and to provide advisors with a tool to more easily track contents of appointments, and to produce reports regarding student advisement, the university installed the advising center management tool AdvisorTrac. However, the advisors have been disappointed in the performance of the software mainly because of the slow response time when trying to use the tool. Our technology team has worked diligently with the Redrock Software Corporation, the vendor for the software package, in an attempt to resolve the issues. When working properly, students should be able to view openings in advisors' schedules and schedule appointments online through the World Wide Web. Advisors should be able to post notes regarding advising visits by students in order that any advisor seeing the same student can also view the notes through AdvisorTrac.

So far, we have been unable to resolve the issues with the software in an attempt to make this an effective tool permitting students to schedule advising appointments when they feel that they most need the appointments. See Appendix II for a recommendation by the Office of Information Technology for the university to purchase a Customer Relationship Management system to replace AdvisorTrac and to create what it calls an electronic Global Advising System in order to improve the advising infrastructure at UTSA.

Timeline for Implementation:

> Spring 2014
> - Roll out the new Customer Relationship Management system for academic advising to replace AdvisorTrac

Metrics to Determine Effectiveness:
- The number of students using the tool to schedule appointments to see an advisor
- The average wait time for students to see an academic advisor
- Advisor satisfaction with using the tool

Resources Required
- Purchase a Customer Relationship Management system

Source of funding:
- Reallocated E&G funds

c.   Partner with Student Affairs to use *Ask Rowdy*

The UTSA Office of Student Financial Aid and the Enrollment Services Center have partnered to implement an intelligent response system called *Ask Rowdy* that can provide students the answers to a myriad of routine questions, reducing the load on the Student Financial Aid and Enrollment Services Center staff. It has been reported that, for the 2011 calendar year, the system handled 304,244 questions from students and was able to offer a response to 94% of the inquiries, relieving the staff of the two offices of many telephone calls and visits. We have proposed to Student Financial Aid and Enrollment Services Center to permit academic advising to also become a partner utilizing the system. As the new contract is being negotiated with the vendor, we expect that academic advising will indeed be a partner using the system by Fall Semester 2012.

The hope is that by having *Ask Rowdy* available to field advising questions, academic advisors will be relieved of fielding routine and simple questions from students, freeing up their time for more in-depth advising, reducing the load on the advising centers, and reducing the wait times for students to see advisors. Many students are often unaware of obvious academic matters such as registration procedures. The expectation is that students visiting this website would probably not need to see an advisor in person, by telephone, or by e-mail, eliminating the need

for many visits to the academic advising centers, and, thus, reducing the load on academic advisors and freeing up advisors' time for those students with more complex advising issues.

<u>Timeline for Implementation:</u>

Fall 2012
- Academic advising to partner with Student Financial Aid and Enrollment Services Center to use *Ask Rowdy*

<u>Metrics to Determine Effectiveness:</u>
- The number of inquiries involving academic advising by students using *Ask Rowdy*
- The wait time for students seeking to see an academic advisor

<u>Resources Required</u>
- Funding to share the cost of implementing Ask Rowdy with Student Financial Aid and Enrollment Services

<u>Source of funding:</u>
- Advising fee

5.   Improve Advising Quality

The university plans to improve the quality of academic advisors by hiring and retaining superior advising personnel and enhancing the skills of those excellent academic advisors through training and other activities. To retain excellent advisors, we will provide incentives for the personnel to remain in the advising community. In order to improve new advisor training, we will gather input from various stakeholders across the campus for suggestions on various types of training needed and to help identify gaps in the present training. To improve advising skills of present advisors, we will develop a yearly compliance training module that all academic advisors must complete and hold an all-advisor workshop in the fall semesters to discuss any new policies and procedures and other matters related to academic advising.

a.   Reinstate the Advisor Career Ladder to Retain Excellent Advisors

In an attempt to retain high quality and experienced advisors, the university implemented the advisor career ladder back in April 2007. The career ladder contains four levels of advising positions, Academic Advisor I, Academic Advisor II, Academic Advisor III, and Academic Advisor IV. Traditionally, staff promotions at the university occur only when the individual takes on additional responsibilities. However, for an advisor career ladder promotion, upon meeting measurable knowledge and skill sets, and receiving a recommendation by the supervisor based on certain considerations including performance evaluations, an advisor may receive approval to be promoted from one level to a higher level, thus maintaining the advisor's availability for students, without having to take on additional responsibilities. This enables the advising

centers to have the opportunity to reward and retain their excellent advisors, which leads to improved advisor quality and increased advisor availability as veteran advisors are more efficient and effective than new advisors. Approval of a career ladder promotion will be based on the strength of the supervisor's recommendation and the availability of funds. Retaining effective and experienced advisors will reduce the instances of advising errors.

The university credits the implementation of the career ladder with helping us to retain excellent advisors in advising positions. Since the fall of 2008, the university has retained 75% of its advisors over the almost four-year period, with some advising centers having nearly perfect retention of advisors, losing advisors only to retirements. Of course, other advising centers did experience some challenges in retaining advisors. Anecdotal evidence indicates that advisor retention suffered tremendously prior to the implementation of the advising career ladder.

Due to severe budget constraints due in some measure to the recent recession, the university implemented a flexible hiring freeze and placed advising career ladder promotions on hold beginning January 2010. We partially restored the career ladder in January 2012 giving overdue career ladder promotions to certain academic advisors, as recommended by their directors. We hope to fully restore the career ladder soon in order to continue to retain quality and experienced advisors.

During the career ladder promotion freeze, the university still was able to do a remarkable job of retaining advisors. We believe that this was the case since the advisors knew that the freeze was in place because of a severe economic problem in the state and nation and hoped that the career ladder would be reinstated when the economy improved. Moreover, the university has a core of academic advisors who are committed to their mission to serve our students well.

Timeline for Implementation:

    Fall 2012
- Fully restore the advising career ladder

Metrics to Determine Effectiveness:
- The percentage of advisors retained in advising positions over the next four years
- The number of advising errors reported through routine audits

Resources Required
- Funding to support salary increases for career ladder progressions

Source of funding:
- Advising fee

    b.   Enhance New Advisor Training

Although the university does its best to retain good and experienced advisors, it is inevitable that we must from time to time hire advisors who are new to the profession. Vacant advising positions are created when present advisors retire or resign from their positions for a variety of reasons or when new advising positions are created. For example, we hope to create 6 to 7 new advising positions beginning this fall. Each new advisor is required to attend mandatory new advisor training. Plans are under way to enhance the present new advisor training program. Part of the enhanced training plan encompasses the creation of online training modules which will contain information that advisors can access even after the training period has ended. Enhancing the new advising training is essential to ensure accurate advising by new advisors. Advising errors are more likely to occur with new, less experienced advisors. Reinstating the career ladder will contribute to having more experienced academic advisors, reducing the likelihood of advising errors. However, we do expect to have some turnover in advising positions in addition to the occasionally addition of new advisors. Effective training for new advisors will be essential to insure accurate advising and improved advisor quality.

Timeline for Implementation:

> Spring 2013
> - After consulting with various campus stakeholders, design an enhanced new advising training program

Metrics to Determine Effectiveness:
- The number of advising errors as determined by routine audits
- Student satisfaction with advising

Resources Required
- Staff time, including academic advising, Office of Registrar, Office of Student Financial Aid, Enrollment Services Center, and academic departments' personnel to help design a new training program

Source of funding:
- No new funding required

c.   Establish Annual Advisor Workshops

In order to reduce instances of advisor errors, one of the recommendations found in the Report of the Provost Task Force on Undergraduate Academic Advising is to establish annual workshops on academic policies and procedures with both academic advisors and administrators present. At these workshops, advisors would be able to get information, ask questions, and give input regarding existing, new, and proposed policies and procedures. In Fall Semester 2011, we conducted the first Annual Advisor Workshop. At the workshop, new policies and procedures were discussed, new degree programs and new university-wide degree requirements were introduced, and a speaker was hired to promote a sense of customer

friendly attitudes among advisors. The purpose of the workshops was not training, but rather a forum for an exchange of ideas between advisors and administrators, identifying those policies and procedures that seem to be working and addressing the issues for those that are not working well at all. Administrators would be able to hear directly from advisors who are on the front line administering policies and procedures.

At last fall's workshop, advisors were invited to ask questions about any topic of concern or potentially misunderstood by them. We intend to make these workshops an annual affair.

Timeline for Implementation:

    Fall 2012
- Based on last year's workshop, implement annual Advisor Workshops

Metrics to Determine Effectiveness:
- The number of advising errors as determined by routine audits
- Student satisfaction with academic advising

Resources Required
- Staff time to plan the workshops
- Funds to bring in appropriate speakers

Source of funding:
- Advising fee

6.   Other Advisor Improvement Initiatives

a.   Enhance Early Alert System

The present rudimentary early alert system at UTSA is based on midterm grades that faculty members are required to enter into the student record system for freshmen and all other undergraduates who are performing at the level of "D" or "F" at the time that midterm grades are submitted. Freshmen with midterm grade point averages of 2.00 or less are invited to participate in academic recovery programs conducted by advising centers. Such freshmen who have declared majors are invited to participate in a recovery program called Midterm Maintenance managed by the Colleges' Freshman Advising Center. Those who have not declared a major are invited to participate in Checkpoint managed by the Tomás Rivera Center.

We propose that the present early alert system be enhanced to a more robust system that would apply to all undergraduates. Academic advising is working with the Office of Institutional Technology to identify an effective electronic early alert system. The system would require significant participation by faculty who would be required to enter students' grades and assessments throughout the semester into the electronic system. The system would be able to send alerts to students, faculty, administrators, advisors, and other designated support staff

personnel when a student is detected to be in academic difficulty. One thought is to acquire a system that can be integrated with the Learning Management System which faculty already use to record grades and other assessments of students. This would relieve the burden on faculty to also enter grades into another separate system.

Once an electronic early warning system is selected, processes must be put into place to intervene with those student identified as being in academic difficulty. We expect that the academic advisors would be given some responsibility for providing the intervention programs, which may be similar to the ones that the CFAC and TRC presently use. However, if advisors are given this responsibility, we must do a good job with the initiative to improve advisor access, especially reducing those visits by students to advisors for help with routine advising matters.

See Appendix II for a discussion by the Office of Information Technology regarding "Intervention and the Early Alert System."

Timeline for Implementation:

    Spring 2014
- Roll out the new electronic early warning system

Metrics to Determine Effectiveness:
- The number of interventions for students identified to be in academic difficulty
- Persistence rates for two, three, and four years
- Number of students accessing academic support services
- Course completion rates

Resources Required
- Funds to purchase a suitable electronic early warning system

Source of funding:
- Reallocated E&G funds

b.   Implement Peer Advisor and Mentor System for Freshmen

As part of the Freshman Focus, the university plans to implement a peer advisor and mentor system for incoming freshmen. Undergraduates who are juniors or seniors will be identified and hired to serve as the peer advisors for freshman. Recall that the freshman class will be organized into cohorts of 25 students each. A peer advisor will be assigned to each cohort. Students selected to be peer advisors would themselves be successful students who are two to three years removed from their own successful freshman experiences. The hope is that peer advisors will relate very well with new freshmen, showing them the ropes that led to their own successful experiences as freshmen and beyond. Peer advisors will essentially serve as mentors for their cohorts of freshmen as well as advisors.

Each peer advisor will be responsible for monitoring the academic progress of his or her mentees, directing them to take advantage of academic and student support services as needed and helping them to make the adjustment from high school student to college scholar. Moreover, the peer advisor will work closely with academic advisors to assist their mentees with the development of class schedules and the creation of individualized four-year semester-by-semester degree plans prior to the end of the freshman year.

The Tomás Rivera Center has been successful in providing academic coaching for students seeking its assistance. Academic coaching provides students with strategies for improving study habits, time management practices, organizational abilities, note-taking skills, and test preparation tactics. Academic coaching builds confidence, motivation, and self-reliance in students and has been shown to be effective in promoting student success. The university wishes to expand academic coaching activities to all new freshmen during their first semester as students. This will be accomplished though training peer advisors in the techniques of academic coaching and requiring that peer advisor provide appropriate academic coaching sessions for each mentee.

Timeline for Implementation:

Fall 2014
- Fully implement the peer advisor system to coincide with the roll out of the Freshman Focus

Metrics to Determine Effectiveness:
- The freshman retention rate
- The percentage of freshman completing at 30 semester credit hours in the first calendar year

Resources Required
- Funds to hire and train peer advisors

Source of funding:
- Advising fee

Incorporate *MyEdu* to Facilitate Improvement in Academic Advising at UTSA

UTSA faculty, staff, and administrators continue to meet with *MyEdu* personnel to discuss ways to involve *MyEdu* in promoting student success and improving academic advising at UTSA. UTSA faculty leaders, including representatives from the Faculty Senate, have initiated several meetings with *MyEdu* staff in order to discuss ways to enhance *MyEdu* tools to better meet the needs of UTSA students. Staff persons from the UTSA Office of Information Technology and the UTSA advising technology team have met with the *MyEdu* working committee to discuss the development and implementation of certain *MyEdu* electronic tools to help the university improve academic advising.

One MyEdu tool that we expect our students to use immediately is the integrated Schedule Planner. UTSA academic advisors spend quite a bit of time helping students develop suitable schedules. The schedule planner tool will go a long way to off-load these responsibilities from the advisors.

The university needs to enhance and make its degree audit system more user friendly. OIT is working with *MyEdu* officials to attempt to refine the MyEdu Degree Planner and the Graduation Roadmap tools to assist UTSA with the degree audit function for advisors and the semester-by-semester degree plans for our students.

The UTSA Office of Information Technology has conducted several meetings with UTSA academic advisors and other student success personnel in an attempt to understand their challenges and needs. As a result of these meetings, the Office of Information Technology has compiled its recommendations for using *MyEdu* to improve and enhance academic advising in its report "Implementation of *MyEdu* in Support of Improving Graduation Rates." This report can be found in Appendix I of this document. Moreover, the office also compiled the report "A Digital Campus Architecture in Support of Improving Graduation Rates" that details several proposed initiatives to use electronic tools to improve academic advising and student success at UTSA. Several of these proposed initiatives may be accomplished by partnering with *MyEdu*. This report can be found in Appendix II of this document.

Appendix I

IMPLEMENTATION OF MYEDU IN SUPPORT OF IMPROVING GRADUATION RATES

JUNE 2012

Kenneth R. Pierce
Vice Provost for Information Technology and CIO

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Improving UTSA's Digital Campus

In December 2012 UTSA released by request of the University Of Texas Board Of Regents a strategic plan for improving its four-year graduation rate (Graduation Rate Improvement Plan, a.k.a. "GRIP"). The adopted plan is now moving into the design and implementation stages. This report addresses several aspects of UTSA's GRIP related to:

- Implementation of MyEDU

This document has been prepared by Kenneth Pierce, Vice Provost for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer following extensive research and interviews of university senior management, vice provosts, advising center employees, Office of the Registrar, staff of the Tomas Rivera Center, the MyEDU team, and staff within the Office of Information Technology. The intent is to provide an overall approach towards implementing the aforementioned sections of the GRIP that is generally agreed upon as the integrated foundational roadmap for UTSA's digital campus.

Student Degree Plan Tracker (SDPT)

Within the UTSA Digital Architecture document, one of the components identified in the architecture is the Student Degree Plan Tracker (SDPT) which is intended to provide students with an easy to use interactive interface for managing and tracking their degree plans. The SDPT is a completely separate interface for students only that focuses on the information and actions they need to successful manage their degree plan.
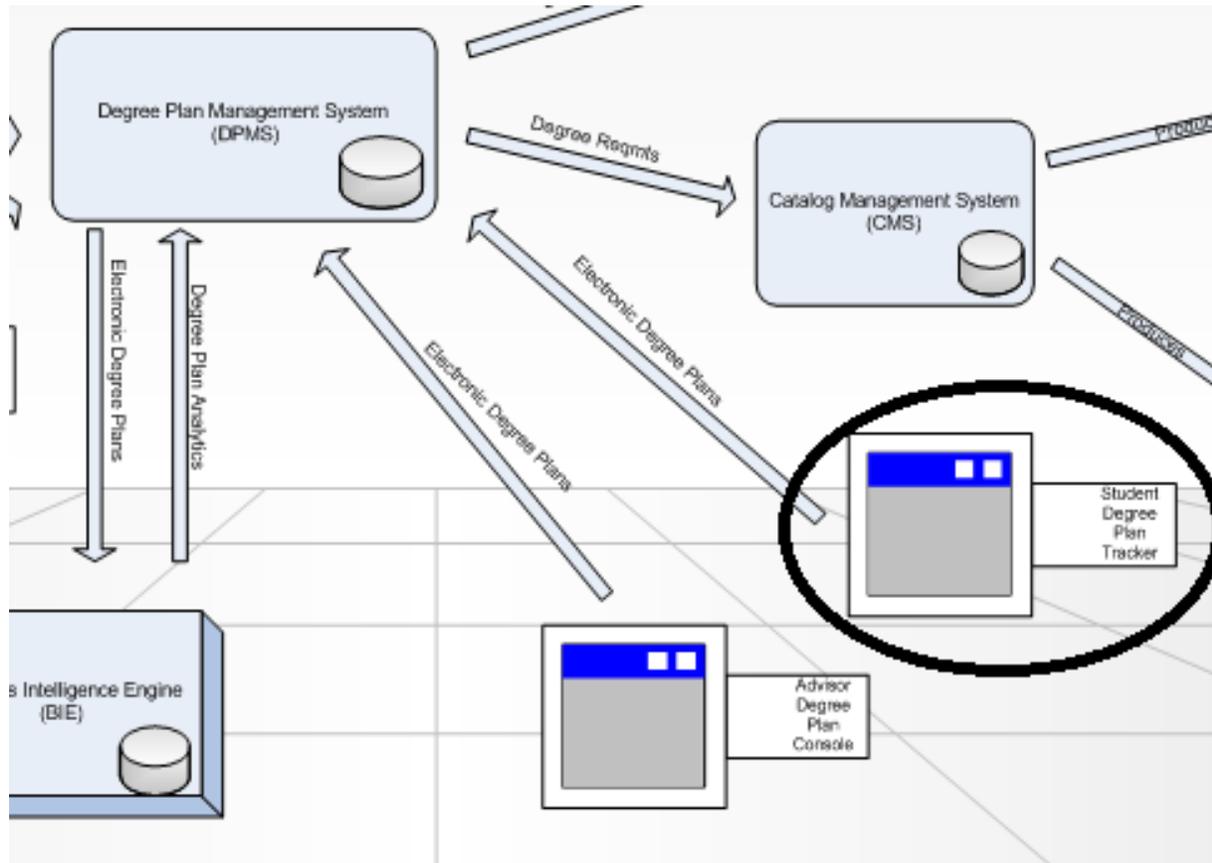

Figure 1 - Student Degree Plan Tracker within the Digital Architecture

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As outlined in the architecture document, key elements of the new Degree Plan must include:

- Semester by semester plans for all students. Students start with a template degree plan for their desired major and modify from that point.
- The degree plan should support applicable minors
- Recalculates when things change, providing an estimate of completion
- Changes to the degree plan trigger alerts to students, advisors, faculty, etc. as required. Alerts are in email, text messages, etc.
- Provides alerts when the need for alternate plans and reprioritization arises
- Intelligence relating to course schedules, registration priorities, prerequisites and co-requisites
- Created electronically, approved electronically
- Version controlled
- Recommendations for completing each course requirement
- Performance predictions based on predictive analysis and student preferences

Utilization of MyEDU is referenced in various sections of the GRIP, as it is assumed that use of MyEDU will allow UTSA to make swifter progress in the area of degree planning. As part of the research for this document, OIT and the senior staff at MyEDU met to discuss our strategies and directions, and to begin the formulation of our partnership.

MyEDU has a good start at the interface and functionality necessary for the SDPT, and UTSA should leverage it to the fullest. However, there still needs to be a lot of work to enhance this interface to UTSA's standards.

A few key themes emerged from the MyEDU meeting:
1. Implementation of MyEDU will be different at each of the UT System institutions. It will probably vary from some institutions simply advertising that students can use MyEDU and making data easier for MyEDU to get all the way to MyEDU being a critical component of the institution's infrastructure. It is recommended that UTSA pursue the latter; which is the proposal set forth in this document.
2. MyEDU and UTSA have very similar ideas on the student side as to direction and functionality necessary for student success. The synergy between the proposals in this document and MyEDU's direction is significant.
3. MyEDU has a large initiative to extend the use of the degree plan beyond graduation and into a student getting a job. They have partnered with various other entities such as Facebook and Linked In with this initiative.

Adoption of MyEDU for student degree planning will be a complicated implementation as there are many aspects that need to be designed and implemented. Additionally, for the in-depth integration to take place, MyEDU will need to complete their efforts to be certified for FERPA compliance of the infrastructure and processes (they have started this work).

Implementation Strategy

Strategically, UTSA and MyEDU should adopt a phased approach in delivering value to the student and UTSA – one that at the completion of each phase provides a "win" for each partner. Keeping each phase concise will increase the possibility of overall success, and will help in delivering value earlier as opposed to having a long single phase project that delays any short-term value. These faces are proposed as follows:

Phase	Overview of Activities and Deliverables	UTSA Value Add	Estimated Timeframe
I	1. Provide customized branding of MyEDU for UTSA (potentially something like "MyEDU, Roadrunner Style") 2. Provide UTSA students with login to MyEDU using their MyUTSA ID and password (offered through Shibboleth) 3. Provide MyEDU with the following data feeds: a. Course schedules b. Course data from Banner c. Faculty Evaluations 4. Marketing to students to use MyEDU services provided through UTSA	We will be able to provide students early access to the MyEDU platform in an unofficial manner. They will be able to take advantage of existing functionality with hopefully more accurate data.	July, 2012 – December, 2012
II	1. Development of the Degree Plan Template Manager (DPTM) application. 2. Population of the degree plan templates into the DPTM 3. Data sharing of the DPTM data with MyEDU 4. Provide MyEDU with UTSA data regarding which courses are offered in each semester 5. MyEDU will incorporate functionality to restrict/alert students when they attempt to plan to take a course in a semester when it is/may not be offered.	We will have a tool for managing all of the degree plan templates in a consistent manner. Our students will have a better degree planning tool.	January, 2013 – August, 2013
III	1. Integration of a student's degree plan and degree plan progress within MyEDU. 2. Automated degree plan synchronization between official degree plan at UTSA and student's degree tracker application 3. Electronically link course data	This will represent the point in time when we will want to require all students to have an official semester by semester degree plan. We should be able at this time to extract semester course load data from degree plans.	July, 2013 – July, 2014

		from the new catalog management system to MyEDU		
IV	1. Implementation of data from the Business Intelligence Engine (BIE) into the degree plans 2. Implementation of all remaining functionality not already implemented.	This represents the point in time when the degree plans are at their peak functionality and value.	July, 2014 – March, 2015	

Barriers to Implementation

1. The UTSA / MyEDU partnership will be one that is new and different for UTSA. Essentially, UTSA and MyEDU will work together to produce the student degree plan tracking tool. It will take some effort to get through the teaming stages together.
2. MyEDU is perceived by many faculty members as a "Pick a Prof" type service (which it is not). UTSA will need to work to eliminate that perception, and create a positive one throughout the university.
3. Some items that UTSA may need from MyEDU may not be seen as valuable to them, and there may be issues with gaining the necessary functionality.
4. There may be competing projects in MyEDU's queue that would take precedence over UTSA's project requirements.
5. MyEDU's ability to become certified in regards to FERPA certification
6. Integration of UTSA's degree plan information and MyEDU will potentially be very complicated, and may require additional design and architecture on both sides. It is unknown at this time what these might be.
7.

Appendix II

A DIGITAL CAMPUS ARCHITECTURE IN SUPPORT OF IMPROVING GRADUATION RATES

JUNE 2012

Kenneth R. Pierce
Vice Provost for Information Technology and CIO

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Improving UTSA's Digital Campus

In December 2011 UTSA released a strategic plan for improving its four-year graduation rate (Graduation Rate Improvement Plan, a.k.a. "GRIP") by request of the University Of Texas Board Of Regents. The adopted plan is now moving into the design and implementation stages. This report addresses several aspects of UTSA's GRIP related to:

- Four-Year Degree Plans of Study
- Implementation of Online Degree Audit System
- Implementation of an Electronic Early-Alert System

Separate documents will be provided for the following items:

- Implementation of Wait-Lists for Courses
- Implementation of Alternative Course Delivery

This document has been prepared by Kenneth Pierce, Vice Provost for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer following extensive research and interviews of university senior management, vice provosts, advising center employees, Office of the Registrar, staff of the Tomas Rivera Center, and staff within the Office of Information Technology (OIT). The intent is to provide an overall approach towards implementing the aforementioned sections of the GRIP that is generally agreed upon as the integrated foundational roadmap for UTSA's digital campus.

Affected Areas of the GRIP
This report deals only with a portion of the GRIP. The following areas represent a summary of the GRIP sections addressed in this report.

Four-Year Degree Plans of Study (OIT— Ken Pierce)
- Construct four-year degree maps for each major curriculum (Academic departments)
- Examine third-party software platforms for creating four-year degree plans (OIT, Advising Centers)
- Create degree-plan data uploading capability to a database accessible by departments to plan curricula (OIT, Advising Centers, Undergraduate Studies)
- Train freshman advisors in counseling students about four-year plans (Advising Centers, Dean of Undergraduate Studies)
- Create a course database that can respond to student queries for meeting core requirements, major requirements, Q-course requirements, free electives (OIT)

Online Degree Audit System
- Examine third-party software platforms for suitability for online degree audits (OIT, Advising Centers, Colleges, Academic departments)
- Implement degree audit system (OIT, Advising Centers)
- Train advisors in use of online degree audit (OIT, Advising Centers)
- Provide resource web site that guides students through online degree audits (OIT)

Electronic Early-Alert System
- Examine third-party software platforms for suitability as an early-alert system (OIT, Institutional Effectiveness)

- Establish policies for keeping grades in LMS (Provost Office, Colleges, Academic departments)
- Design system for porting sensitive grade information securely between LMS and early-alert system (OIT)
- Train advisors in use of early-alert system (Advising Centers, OIT, Registrar)

The Need for Integration

While the areas addressed in this report are individual elements from within the GRIP, they cannot be accomplished individually unless they are integrated in a fashion that allows for their results to be leveraged by other areas. Unfortunately, this approach has not been followed for many of the system and software acquisitions at UTSA resulting in disparate systems with gaps in functionality that has been patched in a way that is usually very manual in nature. Software systems in place at UTSA, and the general mindset towards purchasing new systems has been to purchase a system that fixes a problem for one group, but doesn't fit into a larger picture.

Just as UTSA has a master plan for the physical campus, it also needs a master plan for the electronic campus. While the master plan for the entire campus might be out of scope for the GRIP, it can be started by looking at the systems supporting the academic mission and ensuring those systems are integrated in an optimal manner.

Four-Year Degree Plans

Currently at UTSA, all student degree plans are paper-based. Advisors work with students to create a degree plan using information from the course catalog and the Curriculum Advising and Program Planning (CAPP) system. The final degree plan is in paper form, and depending on the advising center it may be scanned and stored electronically.

There are numerous problems with this approach:
- The agreed upon plan is not updated regularly
- The plan may not always reflect current requirements
- The plan cannot be mined for useful data
- This method is decades old in its technology and does not meet general expectations of students or administrators.
- Students lose their copy

It is extremely important for UTSA to implement systems and processes that address these issues as outlined in the GRIP:

> *"These degree plans will be based on four-year degree maps prepared by departments, and will be maintained in an online database that will be updated periodically as students' enrollment needs change. In each plan, critical courses that represent potential bottlenecks to progress will be identified as gateways in students' studies. Most importantly, these plans will encourage students to think of their studies at UTSA more holistically and will provide a mechanism for students to assess their progress toward completing their degrees, as described in Strategy 3 below. As indicated above (in section B, #5), the four-year plans of study will also aid departments in developing class schedules each semester as they will have an early indication of the expected enrollment demand for courses. By registering their degree plans, students' progress*

may be monitored. These online degree plans will also assist departments in projecting enrollment demands for courses so an appropriate number of sections can be planned." (UTSA GRIP, December 2011)

As students come to the university, they generally come in with aspirations of leaving with a college degree in four to six years. For this to happen, both the student and the university need to work together towards that goal. **Degree plans serve as the mutually agreed upon roadmap towards successful degree completion and is the key linkage between student and university. Therefore, it is important that the degree plan become the center of the universe for the student as well as the university**. This represents a dramatic shift in the way we treat the degree planning process and the importance placed upon it. Today it is but a piece of paper that is held stagnant in a student's backpack or in a file share on a server somewhere on the network; only to be resurrected at some point when the student is required to look at it again because of a 45 or 90 hour advising rule. It is for all practical purposes an unintelligent document whose value rises and sinks over time. We can overcome these shortfalls with a mixture of technology and process changes.

With the proposed change in emphasis on the degree plan, we are required to rethink all of the structural components we have in place today and make significant changes if necessary. Without such changes, we most likely will not see significantly improved results. We seek to graduate students in four years (and many in six years or less) who leave UTSA with a valuable degree and a feeling that we did everything we could to help them succeed, and we consistently addressed their needs and expectations. With success in these areas will come stronger alumni pride (and support).

Step aside, ASAP
ASAP needs to step aside as the center of the universe for our students! Today, students essentially use the web-based ASAP tool (a part of the Banner platform) to handle most of their university transactions. ASAP is not a user-friendly system, and is plagued with issues due to its aged technology that does not stay up to date (vendor issue) and its inflexibility in delivering functionality. Few (if any) on campus would characterize ASAP as an elegant application; yet we put it in front of students and direct them to it for nearly everything they need to do. On the other hand, ASAP is so well known among students that it will probably take a transition period for something else to become their one-stop shop. One possibility would be to put the degree plan in the home screen of ASAP when a student logs in. This could provide for a good transition without disruption.

The New Paradigm
While we still will need ASAP going forward for many transactions and processes, we must replace its prominence with the UTSA community with something different: the degree plan, front and center, and in an elegant fashion. It should provide self-service for students to develop their academic plans, a tracking system for advisors and students to monitor progress toward those goals, and automated assistance for students to help achieve their goals. The system design must use an architecture that is flexible and can (in the future) integrate fully with registration processes.

Key elements of the new Degree Plan must include:

- Semester by semester plans for all students. Students start with a template degree plan for their desired major and modify from that point.
- The degree plan should support applicable minors
- Recalculates when things change, providing an estimate of completion

- Changes to the degree plan trigger alerts to students, advisors, faculty, etc. as required. Alerts are in email, text messages, etc.
- Provides alerts when the need for alternate plans and reprioritization arises
- Intelligence relating to course schedules, registration priorities, prerequisites and co-requisites
- Created electronically, approved electronically
- Version controlled
- Recommendations for completing each course requirement
- Performance predictions based on predictive analysis and student preferences

Degree Auditing

While the creation of the degree plan by students will represent a significant advancement, it is imperative the degree plan follow new processes. These new processes require the establishment / development of new systems and functionality not currently present at UTSA. Examples of functionality include:

- Degree plan verification – validates that a given degree plan successfully fulfills degree requirements. This basic functionality does not exist today.
- Degree plan approval – provides for multiple mechanisms of approval of a particular degree plan which most likely includes automated (no touch) approval, online review and approval (without in-person requirements), and online (in-person) approval. A set of rules must be created and implemented relating to when each of these mechanisms can be used.

These degree auditing capabilities alone should result in more valuable advisor sessions and decrease the load on advisors and advising centers.

While we may be using CAPP today, it does not have the capabilities to perform the functions necessary at UTSA for the future. CAPP is not easy to keep up to date, is not user friendly to advisors, and definitely not user friendly to students. Given this, CAPP could not be a system we place in front of students for reasons outlined above. Additionally, the way CAPP manages, stores, and retains degree plans is unacceptable under the requirements of the GRIP. Furthermore, after a thorough analysis and demonstration of DegreeWorks (a higher end product offered by Ellucian (formerly Sungard), the determination is that it would not be (solely) an acceptable replacement for CAPP on the student side. It was also concluded that there is a large overlap of functionality between DegreeWorks and MyEDU. However, there may be opportunities to leverage the underlying CAPP/DegreeWorks technology on the advisor side, and create the student-facing component separately with MyEDU. That analysis and strategy will need to be investigated more thoroughly.

The Global Advising System (GAS)

An issue made abundantly clear after multiple interviews with advisors throughout the university is the tools UTSA makes available for them to work with are wholly inadequate. Advising is a paper and labor intensive process which adds to the student frustration. All advising centers rely on manual paper-based processes. COLFA digitizes all of its information, but that process provides little if any business intelligence or efficiencies. The only electronic system currently available to the advising centers is AdvisorTrac, but has mostly been used by the Freshman Advising Center until recently.

While AdvisorTrac (AT) by its name sounds to be an advising tracking system, it falls short of that mission. AT is mainly used for its advisor scheduling functionality, although all it does for advisors is to make notes after advising sessions. Unfortunately, AT does not (and is not capable of) maintaining a complete history of interaction and history, resulting in incomplete records and inconsistent advising practices.

From a technology perspective, AT is not designed to handle an institution the size of UTSA. The architecture is antiquated, and the security of the system is most probably a FERPA incident waiting to happen. Under no circumstances would UTSA want to extend the use of AT beyond its current implementation; meaning that it cannot act as a central system for all advising activity.

The proposal for an improved advising infrastructure is to implement an advising platform that would be required for all advising activity at UTSA. In this report, such a system will be referred to as the Global Advising System (GAS).

There are a number of issues that need to be solved by the GAS. These are:

1. Each advising center essentially works on its own, and is independent of all other advising centers.
2. There is no oversight ensuring that the proper rules and protocols are being followed
3. There is no standardization of forms and reports
4. Many processes need to be standardized, and potentially automated, such as transfer credits
5. Reduce student confusion with mixed messages on advising from different tiers
6. Provide a single, secured repository for advising information and history.
7. Advising records need to be more accessible as students change majors and potentially move between colleges (more consistency)

In reviewing various GAS options for UTSA, there are no systems within the academic software community that stand out as having the functionality UTSA requires now and in the future. Such functionality should consist of:

- Integration with Banner for complete student record data
- Integration with other proposed degree plan management tools implemented at UTSA
- The ability to store artifacts from all advising activity, including notes from face to face sessions, emails, telephone calls (recordings or notes), chat sessions, and potentially text messages.
- Chatting capabilities
- Storing of any scanned documents relating to advising
- Schedule of appointments
- Capable of receiving student alerts from external systems
- Potential alerts to advisors for discussion with a student
- Mass communication capabilities (emails, text messages, etc.)

In reviewing these requirements, it is recommended that UTSA pursue acquisition of a commercial Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to fulfill the need for a GAS. CRM's have the above functionality natively built in, and when we consider that advising is essentially customer relationship management, the fit becomes obvious. Advisors agreed that such a tool would greatly enhance their ability to properly advise students.

Intervention and the Early Alert System

As part of the process for improving advising through more timely information, the GRIP proposes the implementation of an Early Alert System (EAS). The function of the EAS is to gather data from one or more sources (usually the Learning Management System (LMS) which in UTSA's case is WebCT (Blackboard) and within the next 9 months will be Blackboard Learn, and utilize that information to determine whether a student is in need of intervention.

Current policy at UTSA is for faculty to enter mid-term grades for all freshmen, and for non-freshman (undergraduate only) only those grades that are a D or an F. Information obtained from the university shows that about 80% of mid-term grades are entered for freshman and essentially 0% is entered for non-freshman.

The technical aspect of implementing an early alert solution is very straight-forward and would be considered a small to medium sized project. A hosted solution would require less work than an onsite solution, and either could work for UTSA. Examples of EAS products are Starfish, DropGuard, as well as built in functionality in products like Banner and Blackboard.

The Tomas Rivera Center (TRC) has their own manual process for attempting to identify students who may need intervention, but it cannot scale to meet the full requirement. TRC's effectiveness could be greatly enhanced with a more automated system to identify and recommend students for counseling. The Freshman Advising Center has implemented a process they call "Mid-term Maintenance" which is very similar.

For an EAS to work at UTSA, it will require cooperation from multiple groups: faculty, advisors, department chairs, and Tomas Rivera Center staff. The support from faculty is critical, as we would need them to increase their participation in grade posting as well as utilizing a common mechanism for maintaining grades throughout the semester. Grades entered on a weekly basis would be the most effective, with mid-term entry second, and status quo third. Another option does exist whereby faculty members refer students to the system through online referrals without out any linkages to online grades.

The recommendation in this area is to acquire a technology solution to handle EAS for UTSA, and integrate it with the Blackboard Learn grade book. It is also recommended that once Blackboard Learn is implemented new policies be put in place to require grade book use so UTSA can benefit from the single grading source with its EAS.

The Digital Campus Architecture (DCA)

This section contains the first draft of our Digital Campus Architecture (DCA) as it relates to the GRIP and UTSA's academic mission. This section includes the following information:

- A master layout of the systems making up our digital campus
- A description and identification of key functions of each of the components of the DCA
- Identification of integration requirements between each of the components of the DCA
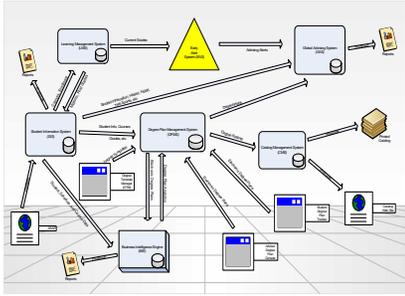
Figure 1 - GRIP Digital Architecture Diagram

Student Information System (SIS)

Purpose

The purpose of the **Student Information System (SIS)** is to manage student data. The common functions of the Student Information System are to support the maintenance of personal and study information relating to: Handling inquiries from prospective students, handling the admissions process, enrolling new students, creating class & teacher schedules, and handling records of examinations, assessments, marks, grades and academic progression.

Attributes
1. Banner enforces prerequisites at registration time.
2. Students register through ASAP, which contains the class schedules

Current State
The current SIS is Banner version 9.1.
Hosted by OIT in the JPL data center, with backup infrastructure in the BSE building

Data Interactions
1. Provides class schedules and enrollment data to the Learning Management System.
2. Provides student data such as demographics, grades, and test scores to the Business Intelligence Engine
3. Provides student information, courses to the Degree Plan Management System
4. Provides student data to the Global Advising System.

Products
Ellucian (formerly SCT, Sungard Higher Education) Banner.

Comments / Notes
Banner only contains the most recent prerequisite requirements. When students register only the most recent requirements are used. This is opposed to enforcing prerequisite requirements from prior catalogs, etc. Banner does not know which catalog a student falls under.

Learning Management System (LMS)

Purpose
The role of the Learning Management System (LMS) is to provide a single repository for current semester learning activities and status. The LMS is the host of course information (lectures, notes, syllabi, tests, etc. for each course taught at UTSA. Additionally, the LMS contains a grade book which is kept up to date by faculty for each grading event in the course.

Attributes
1. Uses the single login mechanism for UTSA (MyUTSA ID)
2. Capable of storing grades, and calculating mid-term and final grades
3. Grade export capability
4. Maintains current list of enrolled students based on integration with the SIS

Current State
UTSA is currently using Blackboard Campus Edition 8 (CE8) which was originally a WebCT product. CE8 is end of support at the end of spring, 2013. UTSA has a new contract in place to move to Blackboard Learn 9.1, hosted by Blackboard. Learn 9.1 will be used for all courses for the spring 2013 semester and in a low level pilot mode for the fall 2012 semester.

Data Interactions
1. Receives course and instructor information from the SIS on a periodic basis in an automated fashion
2. Receives student enrollment information on a near real-time basis (every hour, etc.) and enrolls or de-enrolls students accordingly
3. Sends mid-term and final grades to SIS once each semester through an automated feed
4. Sends grades to the Early Alert System (EAS) on a daily basis

Products
Blackboard Learn Version 9.1, including Learn Mobile and Connect for Learn (messaging).

Comments / Notes
As stated above, UTSA is moving to a hosted environment for Blackboard, which will include the mobile version as well as Connect for Learn to provide additional communication and messaging functionality between faculty and students.

As part of the implementation, we need to re-create the interfaces between Banner and Blackboard.

Early Alert System (EAS)

Purpose
The purpose of the Early Alert System (EAS) is to generate alerts to any / all necessary individuals, organizations, or software system in UTSA when a communication or intervention with a student seems necessary due to academic performance.

Attributes
1. Hosted environment preferred, but may be locally installed and administered.
2. Can send alerts to students, faculty, administrators when a student's academic performance during the semester becomes an issue
3. Interacts with the LMS grade book

Current State
This system will need to be procured and implemented through an RFP process. Permanent funding has been provided to OIT beginning FY 13 ($43k/year).

Data Interactions
1. Receives student grades from the LMS grade book
2. Pushes alerts to the Global Advising System (GAS)

Products
Potential products include Starfish, Ellucian's Course Signals, and Blackboard's Student Performance Module.

Comments / Notes
None

Global Advising System (GAS)

Purpose
The purpose of the Global Advising System (GAS) is to provide advisors with a single system for managing and scheduling all student interactions. The GAS is capable of storing advisor notes, chats, emails, scanned images, and telephone conversations. All pertinent documents would also be scanned and stored within the GAS.

Attributes
1. Stores all interactions between students and advisors
2. Stores all documents created between students and advisors
3. Integrates with the degree planning components
4. Stores alerts from the Early Warning System
5. Provides scheduling capabilities for scheduling advising sessions
6. Provides notes and triggers to advisors

Current State
UTSA currently does not have a system such as this. The closest system in Advisor Trac, but it is wholly inadequate. This system would need to be procured through an RFP process most likely.

Data Interactions
1. Receives student related information from the SIS
2. Receives alerts from the Early Warning system
3. Receives information from the Degree Plan Management System.

Products
There appear to be no products that have been reviewed that have this functionality within the higher education space. However, there is a high probability that this component can be satisfied with off the shelf / hosted Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems such as Microsoft Dynamics CRM.

Comments / Notes
None

Catalog Management System (CMS)

Purpose
The purpose of the Catalog Management System (CMS) is to produce the official UTSA Catalog. All degree plans or course related data must be sourced from the DPMS and not authored or updated in the CMS

Attributes
1. All surrounding textual data is sourced within the CMS
2. The CMS will produce the online (HTML) and printed (PDF) versions of the UTSA catalog
3. Workflow, approval, and routing capabilities between faculty, departments, and the individuals responsible for the production of the official catalog.
4. Ability to freeze or snapshot a catalog once it is complete.
5. Notification capability to provide notifications to stakeholders of the data when there is a change to the catalog.

Current State
UTSA recently completed a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to select a vendor and product for the Catalog Management System (CMS). The vendor chosen is LeapFrog.

Data Interactions
Receives course information (course numbers, descriptions, prerequisites, credit hours, department information, etc.) from the Student Information System (SIS)

Products
The CMS produces the Online Course Catalog and the Printed Course Catalog.

Comments / Notes
None

Online Course Catalog

Purpose
The purpose of the Online Course Catalog is to provide students, parents, faculty, and staff with an up-to-date web version of the UTSA Course Catalog.

Attributes
1. Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) formatted catalog
2. Open to the public without login or site registration
3. Multiple versions available
4. Produced and certified annually, but with a current working version always available

Current State
UTSA recently completed a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to select a vendor and product for the Catalog Management System (CMS). The vendor chosen is LeapFrog.

Data Interactions
The Online Course Catalog receives its course information (course numbers, descriptions, prerequisites, credit hours, department information, etc.) from the Catalog Management System (CMS).

Products
LeapFrog.

Comments / Notes
None

Printed Course Catalog

Purpose
The purpose of the Printed Course Catalog is to provide students, parents, faculty, and staff with printed or downloadable version of the UTSA Course Catalog.

Attributes
1. Portable Document Format (PDF) formatted catalog
2. Downloadable from web site, printed from web site, or sent away for professional (mass) printing
3. Multiple versions available
4. Produced and certified annually.
5. More up to date versions may be available in the Online Course Catalog.

Current State
UTSA recently completed a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to select a vendor and product for the Catalog Management System (CMS). The vendor chosen is LeapFrog.

Data Interactions
1. The Printed Course Catalog receives its course information (course numbers, descriptions, prerequisites, credit hours, department information, etc.) from the Catalog Management System (CMS).

Products
LeapFrog.

Comments / Notes
None

Degree Plan Management System (DPMS)

Purpose
The purpose of the Degree Plan Engine (DPMS) is to provide a single, authoritative source for degree plans at UTSA.

Attributes
- Contain all courses, their descriptions, prerequisites, and other necessary attributes
- Stores degree plan "templates" defined by departments
- Produces all degree plans at UTSA
- Performs validation of a student's degree plan
- Generates degree audits

Current Status
Currently, there is nothing like the DPMS at UTSA. The closest we come to would be CAPP, but it falls very short of the requirements for managing degree plans.

Data Interactions
1. Receives student information from the SIS
2. Provides the data for the Advisor Console and the Student Degree Plan Tracker
3. Provides degree plan data to the GAS
4. Provides course and curriculum-related data (prerequisites, etc.) to the Course Catalog System
5. Provides degree plan data to the Business Intelligence Engine

Products
It is possible to break up this function into multiple related components. This might open the door for UTSA to take advantage of something like DegreeWorks to perform the degree audits, a custom application for degree plan templates, etc.

Comments / Notes
The DPMS should have several "layers" to its architecture. These are:
- Degree Plan Storage – stores the most current and previous versions of a student's degree plan
- Degree Plan Validation – validates degree plans
- Degree Audit - Performs degree audits

Advisor Degree Plan Console (ADPC)

Purpose
The purpose of the Advisor Degree Plan Console (ADPC) is to provide advisors with capabilities to perform degree audits, what-if scenarios, and additional information required for advising students.

Attributes
1. Provides appropriate on screen and printed reports necessary for advising students
2. Generates degree audit reports to assist with ensuring students meet degree requirements

Current State
At present, this tool would be CAPP. However, due to the complexity of CAPP, it may be necessary to create or purchase a different tool capable of this function.

Data Interactions
1. The ADPC retrieves degree plan information from the DPMS

Products
It may be possible to use a tool such as CAPP or DegreeWorks to fulfill this requirement. However, since DegreeWorks lacks some key functionality related to verification of a degree plan for achieving a degree, this may not work.

Comments / Notes
One of the ideas is that we can use DegreeWorks for this console, and MyEDU for the student interface. Both systems have the infrastructure of storing degree plans and performing the audits.

Degree Template Manager (DTM)

Purpose
The purpose of the Degree Template Manager (DTM) is to create and manage the default degree requirements (templates) for each major offered at UTSA.

Attributes
1. Web-based tool for use by department chairs and department administrators
2. Used for managing the default semester-by-semester degree plan for a particular major
3. Has ability to have multiple degree plans for the same major (4 year, 5 year, 6 year) and / or plans that vary by concentration
4. Stores its data in the DPMS, which provides data to the course online catalog

Current State
While some departments have documented their degree plan templates, there is currently no common mechanism for their storage / management such that they can be used more effectively.

Data Interactions
1. The DTM receives and stores its data in the DPMS

Products
There are no known products available to satisfy this requirement.

Comments / Notes
This component of the architecture will most likely need to be built in-house. It will most likely be used only by administrators or chairs of academic departments.

Student Degree Plan Tracker (SDPT)

Purpose
The purpose of the Student Degree Plan Tracker (SDPT) is to provide students with an easy to use interactive interface for managing and tracking their degree plans. The SDPT is a completely separate interface for students only that focuses on the information and actions they need to successfully manage their degree plan.

Attributes
1. Works on browsers, tablets, and mobile phones
2. Can be shared with others (parents, etc.)
3. Highly interactive
4. Displays alerts, and current status of the degree plan to the student
5. Refer to separate document regarding degree plan design

Current State
MyEDU has some of the functionality necessary for this, but there still needs to be a lot of work to enhance this interface.

Data Interactions
1. Receives degree plan information from the Degree Plan Management System (DPMS)
2. Publishes information to the DPMS

Products
It is anticipated that UTSA will outsource this function to MyEDU. MyEDU has a good start at this interface and functionality, and UTSA should leverage it to the fullest.

Comments / Notes
We should ensure the interface works well on mobile devices. MyEDU needs to make significant changes to their interface to make this work as proposed.

Business Intelligence Engine (BIE)

Purpose
The purpose of the Business Intelligence Engine (BIE) is to perform analyses of degree plans based on past student performance and academic events, previous, future, and current course schedules and historical data. This information becomes a part of a student's degree plan.

Attributes
1. A large statistical data warehouse
2. Produces student grade predictions
3. Produces student GPA predictions
4. Produces student positions in course sections based on total credit hours
5. Calculates cost, etc. of individual courses and degree plans
6. Updates data based upon current semester grades

Current State
This does not currently exist at UTSA.

Data Interactions
1. Receives grades, testing scores, enrollment and scheduling data from the SIS
2. Sends grade, cost, and enrollment predictions to the Degree Plan Management System (DPMS)
3. Receives Degree Plan Data from the DPMS

Products
We will need to investigate if there are any products out there that can do this, or if we will have to build this infrastructure ourselves. We know we can use such tools as SAS or SPSS to produce data stored here.

Comments / Notes
This is a very strategic part of the infrastructure, but would not be built until later

Appendix 1 - Barriers to the Recommendations
The following are barriers to the successful implementation of and attainment of the desired outcomes from the implementation recommendations in this report.

Barrier 1 – Getting data to the Early Alert System
In order for an early alert system to be valuable, it needs data. The systems are generally designed to extract data from the learning management system (in our case, Blackboard - Bb) and utilize that data in its analysis and alerting. This means to UTSA all grades being entered into the Bb grade book in a timely fashion by all faculty members. As there is currently fairly low participation with this currently, it will be a significant achievement to change the culture within the faculty community to utilize that tool for grading. One positive is that beginning in spring 2013, the new LMS will bring with it a greatly enhanced electronic grade book which may reduce some of the push back from UTSA faculty. Without a success in this area, the EAS would not be a value-added component to the architecture or to the graduation rate goals of the GRIP.

Barrier 2 –Resource Availability for Software Development
While OIT has been allocated funding for some aspects of the GRIP, there remains a significant level of effort to implement all of the components of the architecture that require internal resources. The current OIT development staff may not be enough to complete the components of the architecture, and it may be necessary to increase staffing levels temporarily. Since at this point the level of effort and exact resource requirements have not been established, it is difficult to understand the extent that staff would need to be increased.

Barrier 3 – Changing Advising Processes
The advising processes at UTSA are very decentralized and customized for each college or advising entity. They use different tools, have different methods, and approach their jobs in different ways. While it is assumed that the GAS will make everyone's job easier and more effective, it will be imperative that consistency in processes and procedures be maintained across the institution. Each advising group is passionate about their methods, which is not usually a negative thing; however, it can inhibit gaining consensus on issue resolution and process changes.

Barrier 4 – Alignment of Initiatives
From the GRIP alone, there are over 20 strategies in the planning and implementation stage. Some of these strategies overlap and have significant implications for other strategies. It will be critical that all initiatives get aligned and stay aligned.

Barrier 5 – Resistance to Change
It is without a doubt that the GRIP strategies represent significant change within the university. Changes at the levels being proposed are usually met with resistance – not because they are bad changes, but simply changes. In order for the areas identified in this documented to be accepted, barriers to change must be eliminated through awareness, communication, training, and ensuring there is a common vision for the future.