CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
LONG BEACH
Office of Academic Programs and Graduate Studies

Memorandum of Understanding

This MOU has been read and approved by:

Department Chair: _Tanisha Peoples_____ Date: 10/4/2024
Tanisha Peoples

Dean, College of Liberal Arts : _Deborah Thien_____ Date: 10/6/2024
Deborah Thien

Interim Vice Provost Academic Programs: _____ Date: 10/6/2024
Pei-Fang Hung

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Program Review Summary
Memorandum of Understanding
College of Liberal Arts Advising Center (ATLAS)
October 2024

This document serves as a summary of the Program Review findings and a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the consensus reached by the College of Liberal Arts Advising Center (ATLAS), the College of Liberal Arts, and the Division of Academic Affairs, based on the recently conducted program review with a Self-study received in June 2022. Dr. Andrea Villegas (CSULA) completed the external review in May 2024. This report and MOU is issued in August 2024, and it describes the goals to be achieved and the actions to be undertaken by all parties to this MOU to achieve these goals during the next program review cycle. Progress toward goals is to be addressed in an annual report.

The ATLAS Network (Advising and Teaching Liberal Arts Students) officially opened in 2012. The *Network* also includes CLA's Learning Community Programs and a Career Readiness & Internship Program. ATLAS uses a split-advising model, with professional advisors working with lower division undergraduate students, and faculty advising students in some programs once they enter the discipline. The breakdown of ATLAS advising is as follows:

1. CLA Major Departments:
    a. American Studies
    b. Economics (Economics, Business Economics, & Mathematical Economics)
    c. Chicano & Latino Studies
    d. Classics
    e. Philosophy
    f. Political Science
    g. Psychology
    h. Religious Studies
    i. Women's Gender, & Sexuality Studies
2. Incoming transfer students during SOAR:
    a. Africana Studies
    b. Comparative World Literature
    c. Jewish Studies
3. In addition to the above departments, ATLAS is also the primary advising center for the following CLA student populations:
    a. All First-Time, First Years (Freshman)
    b. Pre-Majors (students not fully declared in their discipline)
    c. Reactivation of Graduation students

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    d.   Returning students that left CSULB and would like to return to complete their degree requirements.
    e.   Students on Academic Warning with GPAs below a 2.0.
    f.   Disqualified students that would like assistance with developing a plan to return to CSULB.

The ATLAS Center that encompasses undergraduate advising will be the focus of this report. This is the first program review for ATLAS, therefore there is not a previous MOU. The Center has established the following goals: 1) Provide comprehensive, accurate, and supportive advising to CLA students; 2) Support University initiatives and goals; 3) Implement CLA initiatives and goals; and, 4) Grow and retain competent, highly-trained, and student-centered staff.

Resources reviewed for the report:
1. Self-study 2022
2. External review 2024
3. ATLAS website

Strengths were identified in the reports:
1. The team has established over 100 major and minor checklists for students to clearly understand curriculum requirements. In addition, degree roadmaps were developed to show disciplinary in addition to GE requirements.
2. Active participation in SOAR, serving ~ 1/3 of all admitted students each year to CSULB.
3. Commitment towards practicing empathy, care, understanding the intersections of their own and students' identity, proactive, personalized, and holistic advising practices and approaches. During the external review some students "felt their identity was honored, respected, and represented in the ATLAS advising center. Students disclosed how ATLAS advisors asked about their personal lives, campus involvement, and remembered details about them."
4. Commitment to use EAB Navigate (student success management system) to conduct proactive campaigns, identify student populations that need to be prioritized, create appointment availability, and document student advising interactions. This advising technology has enabled cross campus collaborations and student equity work.
5. Professional development is available for all advisors.
6. ATLAS is participating in CSULB Student Success initiatives by:
    a.   conducting pre-major and graduation preparation proactive campaigns each term to improve retention, major declaration, and graduation.
    b.   identifying pre-majors who are near or under the major declaration required GPA prior to 60 units to support students staying on track for declaration.

c. Implementing an organized plan to clear and prepare seniors for graduation starting at 90 units, by examining degree audits, submitting substitutions, following up with students regarding outstanding transfer course work, and submitting a list to the Registrar for students missing the link in their student portal to apply for graduation.

d. intentionally outreaching to specific student populations using text messages, emails, campaigns, and phone calls.

7. The new ATLAS center in LA1 includes individual office spaces for each academic advisor, Directors, and front desk staff, meeting rooms, and a student waiting room. These resources have contributed to higher visibility, increased team communication and morale.

Concerns were noted in the reports:

1. There is a positive and productive relationship between ATLAS professional and faculty advising teams that has enabled the split advising model to be as effective as possible. However, although the mixed staff/faculty model of advising has benefits, it also has detriments. Many students tend to return to ATLAS for advising once they are in their discipline, which leads to excess burden on the ATLAS staff. Some students develop a relationship with at least one ATLAS advisor and continue to seek out the same advisor regardless of assignment. Per the External Reviewer, "some faculty advisors may be less knowledgeable about general education, substitution possibilities, graduation requirements and process, advising policies, and forms. Additionally, some faculty advisors may be less prepared for personalized and holistic advising practices for diverse student populations".

2. The large student to advisor ratios in ATLAS is resulting in a triage approach and in more transactional advising practices than are desired.

3. Assessment:
    a. There is an emphasis on student contact totals, rather than proactive, developmental interactions, and student success outcome metrics from these meaningful and intentional interactions.
    b. Graduation rates are being directly correlated with advising in the ATLAS self-study, however there isn't any evidence of this direct relationship. Rather, advising is one of the many contributing factors and impactful practices for retention and graduation. Advising in the research literature has demonstrated empirically to have an indirect contribution to retention and graduation rates.

4. Current use of advising tools (degree planners, schedule planners) are inconsistent.

5. The high student to advisor ratios* for ATLAS professional advisors can be overwhelming and difficult to conduct proactive and personalized advising. Some ATLAS advisors expressed feeling overwhelmed, burned-out, and speculate that high ratios and

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workload are contributing to advisor turn-over. In addition, the ATLAS center has experienced advisor turn-over at a higher rate since the pandemic for various reasons, including higher salary at local community colleges.
(*Note: current ratios not provided)

Opportunities for Development were noted in the reports:
1. The Center has identified priorities for the future:
    a. *Refine the hybrid advising model*
       ATLAS is a high-volume center, reaching nearly 48,000 student contacts in 2021-22. The model for delivery of services has gone from mostly in-person, to online during COVID, to its current hybrid model. Students now have multiple avenues to seek support including booking appointments, drop-ins, advising emails, or participating in a campaign. This often leads to students being advised multiple times for the same issue.
    b. *Develop cluster advising wherein advisors serve specific disciplines*
       In a "cluster advising" model teams of specialized advisors could be led by more senior Student Services Professionals, and the advising center could be directed by a Management Personnel Plan administrator, as is the practice on some other CSU campuses. That would offer an opportunity to elevate the entire advising staff and enhance their career pathways.
    c. *Expand High Impact Practices (HIPs)*
       The College of Liberal Arts has offered learning communities for first-time first-year and transfer students to support student success. These programs offer a 2-3 course package that allow students to function as a cohort. Students learn about college and campus resources, are encouraged to form study groups, and develop a sense of belonging to a community. Over the years these programs have included a peer mentor process, community service opportunities, and assigned advisors.

Recommendations:
It is therefore agreed that the CLA Advising Center (ATLAS) will collaborate with the College of Liberal Arts and Academic Affairs to:
1. Continue to implement the program's comprehensive assessment plan in order to complete annual assessments using direct and indirect methods and report on closing the loop activities to illustrate that continuous learning outcome data are used to inform decision making. If resources permit, assessment innovations could include an undergraduate advising survey instrument and/or focus groups to be deployed every several years, complemented by analyses of institutional data. To support those efforts, ATLAS is encouraged to participate in the university's Data Fellows program. Provide an

annual update (due June 1) on progress made towards MOU actions to the CLA dean, the Vice Provost for Academic Programs, and the Coordinators of Program Review and Assessment. Your review cycle will be from 2022-2029. A comprehensive self-study will be due June 2029 for a 2029-2030 Academic Year review process.

2. Decrease the number of ways students can request advising assistance and streamline it through EAB Navigate service reasons (for example: add minor/major declaration, graduation application support).
   a. Continue to develop how drop-in advising sessions are different from advising appointment sessions; define what are the topics that are appropriate and not appropriate for quick 15 min sessions.
   b. Continue to explore how to redirect students towards appointments for less urgent items that do not need to immediately be addressed the day they walk into the center.

3. As finances allow, develop a plan to increase the ATLAS professional advising staff to achieve 300 students to 1 academic advisor ratio to facilitate proactive, holistic, and consistent advising interactions that can contribute to beneficial student success outcomes including contributing to persistence, graduation, closing the equity gap, and students' sense of belonging. If able to increase staffing, share office spaces by rotating ATLAS advisors with remote work schedules, unless doing so significantly and adversely impacts staff morale and retention.

4. In addition to increasing advising staff to achieve manageable student-advisor ratios, explore alternative organizational structures such as cluster advising, refining the staff/faculty advising model for disciplines, and/or MPP administration of the center to promote retention and improve career pathways for advisors. The College will report on this exploration by the end of the 25-26 AY to AA, and subsequent planning will commence in Fall 2026.

5. Continue to develop the faculty advisor institute to include additional training and professional development opportunities and expectations.

6. Assess faculty advisor training needs via survey instrument. The results could inform a possible certificate training program for faculty advisors to include in their submission for tenure and/or be publicly acknowledged.

7. Continue to explore how advising technology and tools, and university centralized policies and processes can streamline and reduce manual work in advising. Develop working meetings to understand how ATLAS is processing declaration, substitutions, articulations, graduation, and advising forms to see if peoplesoft, HighPoint degree and schedule navigation tools, EAB Navigate, or DocuSign can save time, and create coordination and cohesion for advising processes.

8. Develop an academic year proactive campaign calendar that is shared between ATLAS and faculty advisors to promote consistent and cohesive proactive advising interventions for pre-majors, majors, reenrollment, and graduation preparation.

This MOU has been read and approved by:

Director of Advising for ATLAS: Tanisha Peoples
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Interim Vice Provost Academic Programs: Pei-Fang Hung
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