QEP White Paper – Tutoring and Advising

ASPIRE:
Academic **S**uccess **P**rogram for **I**nspiring and **R**eaching **E**xcellence
A Partnership Model for Retention, Persistence, and Success

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I. Advising and Tutoring: Priorities at Murray State University

Murray State's mission statement articulates that the university "fosters an exciting and challenging learning environment" and "emphasizes student-centered learning and educational experiences." The values articulated by the university include "excellence," "integrity," "nurturing environment," and "student-centered learning." The strategic imperatives adopted by the university are "excellence through quality," "outreach with partnership," and "innovation for impact." Focusing the QEP on advising and tutoring embraces these values and strategic imperatives, and directly correlates with institutional planning efforts to improve student persistence, retention, and degree completion. This focus will increase student success while contributing to the transformation of campus culture to a partnership model for excellence to achieve the best results for every one of our students. It will model the kind of developmental advising that nurtures the whole student, and will increase the utilization of support services and other campus resources for students.

II. Partnering for Better Advising

The partnership model for student success helps students to take responsibility for their learning and growth in their university years and in their careers to come. When our students have the advocacy, resources, and services to promote their success, they are empowered to take control of their personal and educational growth, development, and success. According to the Noel-Levitz 2011 Retention Practices at Four-Year and Two-Year Institutions survey, academic support programs and services, programs designed specifically for first-year students, programs designed specifically for conditionally admitted students, and programs designed specifically for at-risk students are at the top of the list for student retention success. This QEP will emphasize all four of these important retention initiatives.

III. Institutional Needs

A QEP focused on advising and tutoring will fulfill institutional needs presented in the recommendation of the subcommittees of the President's Commission on Retention to strengthen academic advising, develop a center for advising and student success, improve success rates for students with academic developmental needs, increase utilization of tutoring and student support programs, and, overall, provide better support and communication with students. The retention rate of the institution usually averages 70-75%, but when looking at the retention rates for students admitted with conditions, the average drops significantly, for example, to 36% in Fall 2009. The six-year graduation rate for students with academic developmental needs was 52.4% according to the last cohort of 2005. These numbers reflect the necessity for support for these students.

IV. ASPIRE: A Plan for Student Success

ASPIRE, the acronym for Academic Success Program for Inspiring and Reaching Excellence, is intended to serve as a catalyst for the improvement of retention and graduation rates, particularly among students with academic developmental needs. The goals of this plan are to improve academic advising, increase the utilization of tutoring and support services, and strengthen retention efforts currently in place, by cultivating a climate of partnership between support services, faculty, academic advisors, and students.

ASPIRE is an intentional, comprehensive and collaborative model for student success involving team advising, tutoring, and a dedicated success course. The overall goal of ASPIRE is to use a partnership approach to enhance the student learning experience and the environment supporting student learning. ASPIRE will assist in forming and developing a partnership between students and the university's resources, which will increase their persistence, retention, and success. While the partnership effort will aim to improve the campus climate for all students, ASPIRE's dedicated support plan will focus on these student populations:

- All students admitted with conditions
- All unconditionally admitted students with two or more identified developmental needs
- Students returning from suspension
- New transfer students admitted on probation

For the first year of implementation, ASPIRE will concentrate on the 100-150 students who have not yet declared a major and who were admitted with conditions. Once the model is demonstrated to be effective, the ASPIRE program will be expanded to include the entire target population as well as any other students who wish to participate.

Components/Structure of the ASPIRE plan:

- *Team Advising: Success Advisor and Academic Advisor*

  Each student in the ASPIRE cohort will be assigned a Success Advisor along with an academic advisor. The partnership of the success advisor and the academic advisor is intended to provide the student with an enhanced support system to foster the best possible learning environment for that student.

  - The Success Advisor serves as a mentor/coach and advocate for the student.

  - The Success Advisor will continue with this student through graduation, even if the student's program of study changes. (Many students in this cohort will begin their academic careers without a declared program of study, and will change academic major or area, and thus academic advisor, more than once.)

- The Success Advisor, Academic Advisor, and student will use multiple means of communication, including MAP-Works, to ensure that each student has the support and reinforcement needed for success.

- The Success Advisor, Academic Advisor, and student will meet for conferences at least twice each semester, and more if needed.

- Two RUN codes, one for the Success Advisor and one for the Academic Advisor, will be assigned to each ASPIRE student, to ensure that each student's schedule each semester is designed for optimal student success, and that all available support services are in place.

- The Success Advisor will keep track of mandatory tutoring and   study hours.

- *The ASPIRE Success Course:*

  - The 3-credit Success Course will be taught by the Success Advisor.

  - The course focuses on academic strategies for success.

  - The course educates students on skills that strengthen intrinsic motivation, self-advocacy, and self-responsibility for academic success.

  - The Success Advisor as instructor, and the class cohort, provide support for the "whole student," that is, for the student's academic and social needs.

  - Built into the course will be required Tutoring and Study Hours, which will be facilitated by one or more of the following:

    Lowry Center—Tutoring Services
    Racer Writing Center
    Oral Communication Center
    Math Lab (future possibility)
    Other tutoring and support centers on campus.

- *Pairing of ENG 105 and ENG 111*
  Because ENG 105, Critical Reading, Writing, and Inquiry, is a course identified as a retention and success indicator, ASPIRE students who are enrolled in ENG 105 will be required to take ENG 111, Fundamental Writing Skills, a course that has been shown to improve student success in ENG 105.

- *Offices to be included as part of the ASPIRE team*:
  Center for Academic Advising, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Student Support Services, Community College, Student Disability Services, Lowry Center --Tutoring Services, Athletic Department, and Retention Office.

Students who are identified as part of the ASPIRE cohort will receive a letter or e-mail congratulating them on their inclusion in this success initiative. The letter or e-mail will include a link to a questionnaire that will help the ASPIRE Advisor Team to decide which support service office will best serve as the "home" coaching office for the

student, and from which the student's Success Advisor will be chosen. The student will receive a follow up communication introducing that student's success team, and presenting more detailed information about the program. ASPIRE will begin 1-3 days before student Move-In, to provide opportunities to build and establish relationships between students and their team members (success advisors, academic advisors, and student support personnel from other ASPIRE team offices), to familiarize students with campus life, resources, and environment, and to establish the primary skills and resources for success that the success course and the advising partnership will reinforce in the semester to come.

Ideally, a Center for Advising and Success (CAS), that could be an extension of the currently-developing Center for Academic Advising, and a Success Coordinator, would coordinate the success teams, courses, and advisors, and will serve as the agent of referral for students who need assistance in academic advising or any of the numerous services that are available to students on our campus. The CAS would house the Academic Advising Resource Center (AARC), which would provide support and training for academic advisors, not only in their positions as team members for ASPIRE students, but generally in their role as team members for student success campus-wide.

V. Summary of Institutional Data on the Students that ASPIRE Will Impact Directly

In Fall 2011, 419 first-year students were admitted to the university with conditions or restrictions. An additional 49 students were admitted without conditions or restrictions, but with at least two ACT scores below 18. The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education's Performance Scorecard for Murray State University indicated that underprepared students graduate at a rate 22 percentage points below that of students who are identified by test scores and academic history as prepared to enter college. Roughly 50% of our first-year students are at high risk of leaving the university without a degree, according to these indicators. ASPIRE will ensure that students in this demographic will have support and resources that will increase their retention, persistence, and success.

VI. Recent Research and Best Practices

The following presents a sample of colleges and universities across the United States that have positive, effective first-year student success programs. Inherent in these models is a structured first-year experience that includes, in addition to a strong advising system, a dedicated success course and tutoring or supplemental instruction. Among the oldest and most effective is the University of South Carolina's First Year Experience Program. USC has created the National Resource Center for First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, a comprehensive resource website for first year programs, at http://sc.edu/fye/.

Further information on success models might be gathered from schools whose programs

have been noted for their effectiveness. Some examples are:

University of South Carolina
Student Success Center http://www.sa.sc.edu/ssc/
University 101 http://www.sc.edu/univ101/

University of Texas at San Antonio
Tomas Riveria Center for Student Success http://utsa.edu/trcss/

Marquette University
Freshman Frontier Program
http://www.marquette.edu/programs/freshman_frontier_program.shtml

Miami of Ohio
First and Second Year Programs http://www.miami.muohio.edu/student-life/first-and-second-year/index.html
Rinella Learning Center http://www.units.muohio.edu/saf/lrn/

Purdue University
Horizons Program (TRIO SSS) http://www.purdue.edu/odos/horizons/

VII. Resources Needed for Implementation

This proposed QEP aims to use both current university resources as well as new resources for students, faculty, and staff. The implementation of MAPWorks is already enhancing current retention, persistence, and success efforts.

Needs:

- **Personnel:** Initially, it is likely that existing student support specialists and advisors will serve as success advisors and success course instructors, although some additional specialists will be needed. As the program expands to include a greater number of students, additional success advisors will need to be added. Since tutoring will be a component of the success classes, it is likely that additional tutors will be needed as well.

- **Professional Development:** In order to create a well-planned and successful first year success course, professional development for success advisors is imperative. Equally important will be professional development for academic advisors. Professional development may include on-campus trainings, webinars, conferences, site visits, and consultations.

- **Course Development:** Resources for training, materials, and evaluation to develop the success course will be needed.

- **Technology:** We will need to establish a web presence for ASPIRE, and to update, augment, and build advising and/or teaching modules for students and success course instructors. A dedicated classroom/tutoring lab with white board, short throw projector, speakers for audio, would enhance success course delivery. Support for MAP-Works for all students in ASPIRE would be needed. Online tutoring software would help to accommodate students with limited access to campus tutoring.

- **Consumable Supplies:** To promote the ASPIRE program, marketing materials will need to be developed and distributed on and off campus. Teaching, learning, and advising assessment tools will be needed, as well as general office and classroom supplies.

- **Space:** A Center for Advising and Success would require a centralized suite of offices. These offices need to be in proximity to other support services on campus and need to provide a welcoming environment and "one-stop shopping" for all students, but especially current and potential ASPIRE students. This space might include a "smart" classroom for the common success course and meeting space for success advisors and other partners.

VIII. Campus-Wide Involvement in ASPIRE

Support programs at Murray State University provide assistance, transition, and follow-up services for students. These programs provide services for all students, but especially those who encounter obstacles that create barriers to persistence and success. Services are provided by means of tutoring, counseling, consultation, advising, and individual assessment. Support services for academic success are important for the retention of students. These services help students navigate the college system and provide students with access to the resources they need for success in their academic programs and courses.

The following support services are available for students at Murray State University, and would participate in this initiative.

- Career Services
- Center for Academic Advising
- Departmental and College/School Academic Advisors
- Counseling Services
- Health Services
- International Student Services
- Lowery Center Tutoring Services
- Office of Multicultural Affairs
- Emerging Scholars Institute-Mentoring Program
- Academic Skills Program-Tutoring Services
- Special Support Clubs

- Office of Student Affairs
- Residential College System
  - College Heads
  - Resident Directors
  - First Year Leader Program
- Ronald McNair Scholars program
- Services for Students with Learning Disabilities
- Student Support Services
- Waterfield Library
- Subject Librarians
- Oral Communications Center
- Racer Writing Center
- Women's Center
- Retention Office

Visit www.murraystate.edu/offices.aspx for details information on the above listed programs.

X. Outcomes and Assessment

ASPIRE has the potential to enhance the Murray State University community at large in the following ways:
- improve retention and graduation rates
- increase the utilization of tutoring services and other academic resources
- increase utilization of support services on campus
- increase communication between faculty and students
- increase communication between faculty and support services.

Potential Student Learning Outcomes as a result of the ASPIRE Program may include any or all of the following:
- Students will be directly engaged with trained advisors and support personnel.
- Students will have increased exposure to academic, success, and career advising.
- Students will have increased input in developing their courses of study and in planning their class schedules to augment their learning needs.
- Students will be aware of the resources available to them and the appropriate utilization of these resources to achieve individual academic goals.
- Students will earn passing grades in their University Studies courses.
- Students will enroll in classes that satisfy their developmental and departmental requirements.
- Undeclared students will select a major at or before earning 45 credit hours.
- Students will earn a degree within six years.

Methods of assessment for the above outcomes: tracking of student retention rates,

success rates in developmental courses and courses such as ENG 105, graduation rates, for students in the ASPIRE cohort and beyond; tracking of student utilization of support services and other campus resources, both among the ASPIRE cohort and in the general university population; surveying student satisfaction with advising and support services, both among the ASPIRE cohort and beyond.

Potential Student Learning Outcomes as a result of the ASPIRE Success Course may include any or all of the following:
Students will be able to:
• apply appropriate strategies in their academic work and learning experiences to enhance student success.
• apply strategies to effectively manage time and priorities.
• identify relevant academic policies, processes, and procedures related to advising, course planning, and program of study exploration and definition.
• identify campus resources and opportunities that contribute to their academic success, goal achievement, and campus engagement.
• identify and apply skills that contribute to building positive relationships with peers, staff, and faculty.
• demonstrate principles of responsible citizenship and ethical behavior within the campus community.
• identify healthy behaviors that contribute to academic success.
• demonstrate personal responsibility for their learning, and academic achievement and success.

Methods of assessment: student journaling (time management, behavior, resource utilization, etc.), written reflections (ex.: Blackboard Discussion Board posts), self-evaluation and instructor evaluation of student work (written, oral) using rubrics, collaborative learning activities; among others.

XI. Concluding Remarks

The student population that ASPIRE will serve has needs that are not being met, despite all of the campus resources that are dedicated to help these students. The ASPIRE program will provide the partnership and support systems that will foster learning, persistence, and success, not only for the ASPIRE cohort, but also for students campus-wide. Linking campus resources, partnering advisors and support services, dedicating personnel to a success model for students, providing training, and focusing on optimum utilization of all that Murray State University has to offer, will enhance the quality of a Murray State University education for all students, while helping the university reach its goals for improved retention, persistence, and success.

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