Bridging The Gap

The development of an innovative, cross-campus partnership

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The Two Challenges

• Student retention numbers needed to be improved

• Advising structure didn’t work
Improving Student Retention

- Explored the issues around student retention
- Identified timing of major declaration as a factor that influenced retention
- Approach to declaration different than comparator institutions
Advising issues

• At same time started to develop relationship with Student Affairs

• Recognized Student Affairs as a partner in Academic Advising Centre but not retention
Advising Background

- Dual delivery model launched in January 2012 when Academic Advising Centre moved to Student Affairs
- Faculty members provide program advising within academic units
- Central professional advising centre support program, faculty and university requirements
Academic Advising Committee

Academic Advising Committee formed in 2012 developed advising vision and philosophy to guide and inform implementation of change and was an open forum for discussion. Membership included:

- Deans and Associate Deans from Humanities, Science and Social Sciences
- AVP Student Affairs, Executive Director Student Services
- Associate Dean and Director Academic Advising
History of Early Declaration at UVic

- A small academic working group developed a discussion paper on declaring a major
  - AVP Academic Planning sub-committee with membership focused on academics in the faculties of Humanities, Science and Social Sciences
  - Produced recommendations for transition towards earlier declaration to support student retention
  - Proposed process that would require changes in policies and practices in other areas of campus
History of Early Declaration at UVic

- Academic working group:
  - Enhanced engagement at the unit level
  - Recognized wide-ranging disciplinary perspectives
  - Instigated cultural change
History of Early Declaration at UVic

• Working group expanded in preparation for implementation:
  – New members included Office of the Registrar and Student Services, including Academic Advising Centre
  – Initial focus of broader committee was to inform on implementation plans
  – Expanded membership brought forward new perspectives on issues that had to be navigated
Transition of Focus

• Moving to implementation highlighted areas that would require further consideration to ensure project success
• The group had to step away from the proposed solution to look more broadly at the desired outcome
• Came together to decide there was a common goal
Moving Forward

• Moving forward started when we stepped away from the proposed solution and engaged with the issues
• Established project as priority in both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs
• Recognized different cultures and priorities and worked together to find commonalities
• As a committee we were able to develop a solution that addressed individual and collective goals and concerns
Technical Contribution

- Establishing clear set of priorities first allowed for the development of technology that supported the solution
- Reviewed where automation would enhance service to students
- Balanced benefits of technology and people in advising practice “tech reality check”
- Discussion on technology was neutral ground
Academic Advising Centre Involvement

- Timely declaration informed and was informed by new structure which was fully implemented in April 2015
- AAC developed new leadership structure, roles and responsibilities
- AAC also introducing new Enterprise System – another influence on implementation planning
- Restructuring supported a culture that was open to changing processes in response to Timely Declaration
AAC Culture Change

- Culture change was supported by professional development for core team members
- NACADA connections and campus visits demonstrated success of other advising models – opened the door for further discussion with advisers to support implementation
- Additional internal research and assessment of practices supported growing vision for changes in practice
Implementation

• Revising policies, procedures, and practices to streamline the process allowed people to adapt to the solution prior to the implementation of the new technology

• Phase 1 – introduction of online application process supported streamlining and better understanding of opportunity created by future portal

• Full technological solution – DeclareMe portal – launched in June 2015
Implementation of solution needed to bring all parties to the table to create buy-in and consensus on key implementation issues:

- Calendar entries and declaration requirements – removal of impediments approved by Faculties and academic units
- Senate approved changes of declaration process and requirements for Academic Calendar
Communication with Students

- Changes introduced by Deans of Faculties in communication to students
- New event – Programpalooza Majors Fair
- Continuing communication campaign that included targeted strategies to support early declaration
- Portal accessed through MyPage, a familiar interface for students
- Communication vehicles included classroom announcements, emails, digital signage
- Shared key messages
Lessons Learned

• Collective goals break down barriers and facilitate conversations
• Building trust and respect are key
• Breaking down silos has moved us forward and strengthened relationships
• Future success can build on this new way of working together that begins with collaboratively identifying the goal
• A best practice is to engage people from the right level at the right time
Questions? Thank you

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