So What?

- One of the biggest factors in the retention of students from First-Year to Second-Year is students feeling a sense of belonging to their institution and its faculty and staff.
- Students have reported concerns transitioning from undeclared students to declared, including:
  - Perceived lack of institutional support
  - Diminished networking opportunities
  - Lack of excitement in college
- The stakes are higher for institutions as well:
  - Public policy changes
  - State government funding allotments
- These challenges have resulted in:
  - Students enrolling in fewer hours per semester, lowering overall FTE.
  - Students taking “Gap” semester/years in between first/second year, which decreases overall retention rates.
  - Students feeling uneasy about major choices, and feeling “forced” to make a decision.

References


Now What?

We have shifted our focus on the retention and persistence of our first-year students through the second year and beyond. These changes have included:

- **Reorganization of the Advising Structure** - Leadership with one executive director, ensuring all information is consistent within all advising departments.
- **Changing the Advisor Assignment** - Shifting to an alphabetical assignment of students, rather than an arbitrary assignment.
- **Advisor Appointments** - Changing the mindset of students to an understanding that they make an appointment with their advisor, prepare questions, and plan for the meeting. This increases the student’s accountability for their education.
- **Creating Advisor Checkpoints During the Semester** - Placing enrollment holds on all undeclared students, requiring them to meet with an Academic Advisor every semester, discussing enrollment, 4 year degree planning, teaching systems, etc.
- **Increasing Advisor-Student Communication** - Creating a 7-contacts-per-semester system of communication for all students, and developing an increased system of communication with our “At-Promise” student population to create stronger advisor-student relationships
- **Redesigning the Process of Major Declaration** - Requiring First-Year Students meet with their Undeclared advisor to discuss remaining general education and prerequisite requirements. This occurs prior to a mandatory appointment with their new College/Major Advisor to discuss program-specific requirements and develop a path to graduation.
- **Partnering with Faculty** - Collaborating with faculty by assigning every student with a declared major a faculty mentor, who serves as their link to the academic department and works with the students on long-term goals, including post-graduation plans such as future education, internships, and career exploration.