

# Counseling Services Program Review

Program Review Team



# Program Description

## Unique Characteristics



his/her first semester class schedule. The peer mentor explains each step in detail to the student, answers any questions, and then schedules the student for a placement test, an orientation date and then an appointment with a counselor. During the 2016-2017 AY, approximately 1,259 students were contacted and welcomed by peer mentors to begin the PG process.

All new students must complete the NSHE sanctioned Accuplacer placement test in reading comprehension, writing and math or submit ACT or SAT test scores. The ACT/SAT cut scores to determine placement in English and Math are set by NSHE. The Accuplacer cut scores are determined by the English and math faculties and are periodically updated by them. All students are directed by counselors to take English and math in their first semester. Counselors review placement test scores with students at their counselor appointment and explain the pre-requisite sequencing for both English and math.

During the 2016-2017 AY, counselors conducted 46 one-hour orientations serving approximately 800 new college students. Counselors begin the sessions by explaining that the better prepared new students are when they first begin college, the more likely they are to reach their educational goals. Students learn about the academic calendar, add/drop dates, financial aid and satisfactory academic progress standards, career exploration, the WNC student handbook, and Title IX rights. At the end of the orientation, students fill out a survey form. Results indicate that 92% of students strongly agreed or agreed that the orientation was helpful and 89% said they strongly agreed or agreed that they would recommend the orientation to a friend. The final question on the survey is used to determine whether students feel the outreach, guidance and initial steps of the Project Graduate program are intrusive or not. It reads, "I appreciate the call welcoming me to the college and letting me know about the three steps to get started." In response, 89% of students strongly agreed or agreed – indicating a clear appreciation for the way the program is structured to guide them from application to enrollment.

Students sign up for an appointment to meet with a counselor at the orientation session. At that meeting, the counselor and student discuss the student's educational goals and determine the correct degree/certificate to pursue. In addition, they review the student's placement test scores and build an appropriate class schedule for the first semester. The counselor then introduces the student to a peer mentor who sits down at the computer with the student and helps him/her register for classes. By the time the student leaves the counseling office, he/she is registered in the appropriate classes and is ready to start the semester.

Since Spring 2012, on average 1,000 students complete the entire Project Graduate program annually and enroll in classes. Thanks largely to the peer mentors and counselors staffing the program, new students feel welcomed, supported and informed before they begin their first semester.

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The Early Alert (EA) system is an intervention referral program that identifies academically “at risk” students as they move through the semester. The referral is initiated by an instructor and is sent to the counseling office. A counselor follows-up with each student. We reach out three times to attempt to contact each student through two phone calls and finally an email. If we are able to reach the student by phone, the conversation usually transitions into 20-30 minute counseling session. After communicating with the student (or attempting to contact three times), the counselor sends a follow-up email to the instructor who initiated the referral to give general information about how the student was going to approach the class for the remainder of the semester. Although these interactions are very valuable, they add up to a considerable number of work hours for each counselor.

The EA program was suspended 2012-2014 during which time the college used mid-term grades to alert students about their mid-term performance in classes. Beginning Fall 2015, mid-term grades were discontinued and the Early Alert program was reinstated. During Spring 2016, faculty submitted a total of 143 alerts and the Fall 2016 semester saw an increase with 317 alerts submitted. See the \_\_\_\_\_ section for more information about the Early Alert program.

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At Western Nevada College student veterans are met with a high level of support. Several departments and individuals work to foster their success such as: Counseling Services, the WNC Veterans Resource Center, Disability Support Services and the Financial Assistance Administrative Assistant IV Certifying Official.

Although all counselors in Counseling Services are qualified to assist student veterans, one primary counselor coordinates veteran related activities and aims to meet with the majority of student veterans. The primary counselor participates in quarterly Veteran Service Meetings and regularly communicates with student veteran support departments on campus. In addition to meeting with student veterans in Counseling Services, the primary counselor is also available to meet with students in the WNC Veteran Resource Center on a bi-weekly basis. Strong communication is the cornerstone of the veteran services network so that students are referred to appropriate resources to facilitate their overall achievement.

All student veterans receive a welcome phone call from Counseling Services during their initial application. Depending on their classification as non-degree seeking, degree seeking/new to

The below data represents veteran education benefit recipients by chapter in recent academic years:

	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Ch 30	24	31	33
Ch 31	13	7	6
Ch 33	115	143	97
Ch 35	18	14	16
1606/1607	6	12	10

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Counseling Services coordinated a new NSHE initiative called "Return to Earn" on the WNC campus. The goal of this initiative is to reach out to students who have not attended college in the last year, but who are within 15 credits of graduating, and to provide any support they may need to complete their degree. A counselor ran advisement reports for the 174 students who met this criteria, and 23 of those students had actually completed all requirements for a degree and just needed to apply for graduation. The remainder of the students on the list who still met the eligibility requirements (in good financial standing, etc.) received a phone call from the counselor to discuss the possibility of completing the degree. To date, 6 of those students have returned to WNC and are currently completing the requirements for their degrees.

Counseling Services also oversees and staffs the following access and outreach programs:

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The Bridge to Success program was created in 2004 to address the problem of a relatively low high school to college going rate. Recognizing that a big part of this problem resulted from high school students being spread out across WNC's expansive rural service area, the Bridge program was specifically designed to address this challenge.

The Bridge program provides general "outreach" to all of the high schools in the WNC service area. These include:

- ASPIRE Academy
- Carson High School
- Churchill County High School

A counselor travels to every high school multiple times during the spring semester to bring the full range of services a high school senior needs to successfully transition to Western in the following fall semester. This counselor becomes the "cohort advisor" for every high school student who participates in the Bridge program – connecting and guiding each individual through the process. This is accomplished by:

- Bussing students to the WNC campus to attend a College Day where they visit different academic departments and get to meet faculty from these areas

- Discussing the student's educational and career goals

- Identifying an appropriate degree program

- Administering the placement test and reviewing the scores with the student

- Building a class schedule that will meet requirements for the student's major as well as accommodate their work/life needs

- Teaching students how to navigate the myWNC registration system

- Helping students enroll in fall classes

- Following up with students during the summer to answer any questions and to encourage follow-through with starting classes in the fall semester

Since its inception in 2004, the Bridge to Success program was primarily responsible for more than doubling WNC's high school to college going rate.

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In Fall 2014, WNC launched the Jump Start program, a partnership between the college and 19 western Nevada high schools. It offers high-achieving junior and senior high school students the opportunity to earn up to a college associate degree prior to high school graduation. Almost 200 students from local high schools participated during the pilot academic year. During the 2015-2016 AY, 321 students participated. The increase was due in part by incorporating students from



other JS professionals provide all the academic advising for Jump Start students including course selection and transfer advising. During Fall 2016, the number of Jump Start students rose again to 410 students. Fall 2017 data indicate that 500 high school students are participating in the program. See the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ sections for more information about the Jump Start program.

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Gear Up is a grant program awarded by the U.S. Department of Education and administered through the State of Nevada. The objective of the grant is to increase the number of low income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. The Gear Up Ambassador Program at WNC serves 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade public high school students in Lyon County exclusively. The service area is dependent upon meeting the low income standards set by the Department of Education grant. A WNC counselor oversees the program and supervises a half-time Gear-Up Ambassador and a Near-Peer Mentor who travel weekly to the Lyon County high schools to meet with students on college and career readiness and financial literacy. During these meetings and through workshops, students receive mentoring, information about college and careers and knowledge on financial options for pursuing a college degree.

## Concerns and Trends

There are a number of concerns and trends that impact Counseling Services. These include:

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Evaluating a department and the efficacy of its services is central to the mission of the department and the college. Counseling Services is committed to implementing strategies to obtain more evaluative data, to use that data to improve services, and to communicate those outcomes to a broader college audience. The anticipated end result will not only be to improve the department, but also to clear up some confusion, erroneous assumptions and inaccurate data about the effectiveness of Counseling Services which currently exist.

For example, the Associate of Arts program review (2016, Faculty Advisement Recommendations) recommended that all students should be assigned a faculty advisor, stating "The results of the 2014 Community College Survey of Student Engagement clearly show that our students believe academic faculty are, by far, the best source of academic advising." This statement is in reference to Custom Survey Items #6 (written by WNC) which asked, "While attending this college, what has been your best source of academic advising (academic planning, course recommendations, graduation requirements, etc.)? (Choose only one). Students could choose: 1) Academic advisor (not faculty); 2) Academic advisor (faculty); 3) Friends, family or other students; 4) Online college registration/advising system; 5) I have not had any academic advising. There was no option for the student to choose "Counselor", which is the title of all administrative faculty in the Counseling Services office who provide academic, career, and personal advisement to students. The results to this question indicated that only 6.5% of students use an "academic advisor (not faculty); whereas on the same survey, 57% of students reported using "academic advising/planning" often or sometimes. In addition, in the short span of 4 months (December 2016 – March 2017), \_\_\_\_\_ students came into the counseling office on the Carson campus and met individually with a counselor. Students use a kiosk to check-in and the data is recorded in OnBase. This sizable number does \_\_\_ include the 242 students who were advised through the Bridge to Success program or the 421 students advised through the

Jump Start program. It does not include students who were advised on the Fallon campus. It does not include the advising counselors conduct through email or over the phone. Clearly, there is a huge disconnect between these pieces of data. Our department will collaborate with Institutional Research to clarify the custom questions and terms used on the CCSSE and Noel Levitz surveys and we will change our department name to "Academic Advising and Counseling Services".

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Currently, only new to college, degree and certificate seeking students are required to meet with a counselor for academic advisement as well as assistance with developing an educational goal and for detailing a plan on how to accomplish that goal. Student success research conducted by Noel Levitz and others conclusively states that course completion and graduation rates increase dramatically when students begin college prepared with a goal and a plan. However, all (those who have completed one or more courses at WNC – excluding high school students) and all (those who have completed one or more courses at any other college or university) are not required to meet with a counselor. As a result, they may not have clarity about their educational goals and they are very unlikely to be aware of how to use the degrees or resources WNC offers to achieve those goals.

Students who do not voluntarily seek out counselors for academic advice also miss critical information about transferring credits and often don't know about essential prerequisites for courses that have not been "hard-flagged" in the system. Consequently, these students who self-advise may have enrolled in courses lacking the prerequisite knowledge they need to be successful. See the section for more information.

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The rapid expansion of the Jump Start program has created a number of concerns which need to be addressed as the program continues to grow and evolve.

impact on course completion and retention. See the \_\_\_\_\_ section for more information. A potential way to expand the faculty advising role would be to revise the Early Alert program so that faculty members are the first group to reach out to students struggling in their classes and then counselors would provide back-up as needed.

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As counselors assume increasing responsibilities for coordinating new and existing enrollment and retention programs, the time they have available to counsel students diminishes. Additionally, those programs are designed to drive students to the counseling office, which causes an increase in student traffic and corresponding need for more counselor availability. These two factors combined result in too few counselors being available to serve a growing clientele of students. Students are already feeling this pinch during peak registration periods and they are complaining about three hour wait times. Since Counseling Services began tracking student traffic in OnBase last December, by mid-March over 1,200 students met in person with counselors. This number does not include the numerous students counselors have advised via email and over the phone. Again, NACADA recommends a student to advisor ratio of 300:1 for 2 year colleges and our student to advisor ratio is 628:1.

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The Division of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences communicated an interest in faculty assuming more of an active role in advising students. Representatives from Counseling Services have met with faculty representatives to create the program and outline a set of roles and responsibilities for faculty advisors which complement the academic advising, career and personal counseling supplied by counselors.

## Significant Changes or Needs in Next Five Years

Challenges for Counseling Services in the next five years include:

Staff sufficient counselors to meet student need and to get nearer to the student to advisor ratio recommended by NACADA.

Change the department name to "Academic Advising and Counseling Services".

Develop and staff a career center to provide students with essential career guidance.

Continue to use the new OnBase kiosk to track student appointments and drop-ins to provide accurate on-going data on the number of students who use Counseling Services. In addition, some questions will be added to the check-in screen to assess student satisfaction with Counseling Services.

Expand outreach efforts to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ students, many of whom are non-traditional, to encourage them to use the services available in Counseling.

Evaluate the Early Alert system and develop a strategy to revitalize it.

Partner with all Jump Start program stakeholders to strengthen and streamline communication. Use the \$180,000 of funding from the College and Career Readiness grant to facilitate better communication by assigning a Lead Jump Start Faculty member and a Lead Cohort Coach who will meet regularly with the Jump Start Coordinator to share ideas and collaboratively problem-solve any program challenges.

Coordinate with faculty to implement a Faculty Mentoring/Advising program that complements the counseling/advising provided by counselors.

Update and clarify the language used in the survey questions related to Counseling Services in the           u           and           u           assessments to clearly identify Counselors as Academic Advisors.

, M.A. Clinical Psychology

- Over 30 years experience in vocational rehabilitation and disability support services. Certified Rehabilitation Counselor since 1992.
- At WNC since 2005:
  - Designed, developed and implemented a comprehensive program of services to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Awards include:
    - 2010-2011 - Administrator of the Year, WNC
    - 2011-2012 - WNC, Academic Advisor of the Year
    - 2013 - Board of Regents, Regents' Academic Advisor of the Year for Nevada

, M.A. Counseling and Educational Psychology

- 11 years combined experience as a mental health therapist and community college counselor. Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, State of Nevada. Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, State of Nevada
- At WNC since 2012:
  - Provides academic advising, career and personal guidance to WNC students
  - Primary counselor for veterans and functions as a liaison with the Veteran's Resource Center

, MSW, Master of Social Work

- Over 7 years combined experience counseling community college and social work clients
- At WNC since 2014:
  - Provides academic advising, career and personal guidance to WNC students
  - Coordinates the State of Nevada Gear Up grant program for WNC

, M.A. Counseling and Guidance Personnel Services

- 20 years experience counseling high school and community college students.
- At WNC since 2013:
  - Provides academic advising, career and personal guidance to WNC students
  - Outreach Counselor and JumpStart Program Coordinator since 2017. Awards include:
    - 2018 - Board of Regents, Regents' Academic Advisor of the Year for Nevada

, M.S. Education, emphasis School Counseling

- 3 years experience counseling college and high school students
- At WNC since 2017:
  - Provides academic advising, career and personal guidance to WNC students

(Fallon Campus), M.S. Student Affairs and College Counseling

- 5 years experience in student affairs and academic advising in higher education
- At WNC since 2016:
  - Provides academic advising, career and personal guidance to WNC students
  - Point of contact for counseling, financial aid and admissions questions for students on the Fallon campus
  - Conducts rural outreach and recruitment for the JumpStart and Bridge to Success programs

## Evidence of Effectiveness

To assess the effectiveness of programs, we can track the number of program participants by year (and note the related impact on FTE). We can also describe specific services that were delivered and project reasonable outcomes.

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Mandatory college entry process for new to



AY	# of Students	Completion - Fall	Completion - Spring	# of Associate Degrees
2014-15	199	97.5%	96.3%	0
2015-16	321	92.6%	95%	27
2016-17	421	96.2%	93.9%	89

2014-15	12.2%	1.1%	0%
2015-16	18.5%	1.7%	1.4%
2016-17	21.2%	1.5%	1.0%

## Evidence of Satisfaction

Evidence for how satisfied students are with Counseling Services can be found in the data from the most recent Noel Levitz student satisfaction survey (2016). Here is a link to the document containing this data: <https://www.wnc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2016-Noel-Levitz-Summary-Report.pdf>

Academic Advising/Counseling (Overall)	Student satisfaction rating of 5.4. National community college rating is 5.36. The gap between importance and satisfaction demonstrates a +.04 rating for WNC.
My academic advisor is approachable.	Satisfaction = 5.46. National = 5.52. Gap is -0.06. We scored slightly lower than the national mean.
My academic advisor helps me set goals to work toward.	Satisfaction = 5.19. National = 5.18. Gap is +0.01. We scored very slightly higher than the national mean.
My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.	Satisfaction = 5.20. National = 5.22. Gap is -0.02. We scored very slightly lower than the national mean.
My academic advisor is knowledgeable about my program requirements.	Satisfaction = 5.43. National = 5.52. Gap is -0.09. We scored slightly lower than the national mean.
My academic advisor is knowledgeable about the transfer requirements of other schools.	Satisfaction = 5.44. National = 5.28. Gap is +0.16*. We scored much higher than the national mean.
Counseling staff care about students as individuals.	Satisfaction = 5.48. National = 5.39. Gap is +0.09. We scored higher than the national mean.
This school does whatever it can to help me reach my educational goals.	Satisfaction = 5.57. National = 5.39. Gap is +0.18**. WNC scored much higher than the national mean.

Another way we measured student satisfaction is analyzing data from the New Student Orientation survey results. Every new to college student must attend an orientation and before leaving each student must fill out a brief survey (a copy is attached). We use survey results to improve the orientation and to track student satisfaction on the mandatory Project Graduate process.

I found the orientation helpful.	92%
I'd recommend this orientation to a friend.	89%

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Our five year action plan ties directly to our  
of this report:

*u* section

Strengthening and streamlining communication among all Jump Start program stakeholders will greatly enhance program effectiveness. This process has already begun with the inception of two Jump Start program committees on campus which facilitate open sharing and discussion about the program. In addition, the College and Career Readiness grant program is designed to further communication and collaboration by funding two JS Lead Faculty and two JS Cohort Coach positions who meet regularly with the Jump Start Coordinator to share ideas and collaboratively problem-solve any program challenges. This action item will be thoroughly assessed through the grant reporting requirements which include 1) administering end-of-semester surveys to JS and SI to evaluate the efficacy of the SI sessions and to measure their satisfaction with the program overall; 2) administering an end-of-year survey to all JS to assess their level of satisfaction with the program in general and to offer "what went well" and "what could be better" feedback; 3) comparing the survey results from 2017-2018 with those of future years to demonstrate a marked increase in instructor, SI coach and student satisfaction.

Working in cooperation and collaboration with faculty on creating and implementing a faculty mentoring/advising program which complements the counseling and advising provided by Counseling Services will be a tremendous boon to supporting students and their success at WNC. This action item will be assessed by coordinating with faculty to track the number of faculty and students participating in the program and to create and administer an end-of-semester satisfaction survey to all participants.

Recognizing that there is generalized confusion about the terms and

Expanding outreach efforts to continuing and transfer students to encourage them to meet with a counselor to receive crucial information on educational planning and degree requirements will have a positive impact on their retention and goal completion. This action item will be assessed by tracking the