

Organization Dimension Report
Eastern Wyoming College

Foundations Institutions provide a comprehensive, coordinated, and flexible approach to the new student experience through effective organizational structures and policies. These structures and policies guide and align all aspects of the new student experience. Through effective partnerships, critical stakeholders such as instructional, administrative, and student services units provide a coherent experience for new students that is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements.

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Current Situation:

2.1 First-Term Students

Identification of "first-time-at-your institution" students:

The student admission status on each course section roster is coded with of FH (first time post high school), FT (first time), or TR (transfer). Rosters are distributed to all faculty members prior to the first class meeting.

Opportunities for improvement: Although the codes are included in the section roster, most faculty members are unaware of the meaning of the codes or have not focused on the student status as an important element in identification of new students at the college.

Targeted communication to first time students:

Phone calls and personalized mailings are sent to students who have demonstrated an interest in attending EWC. Students admitted to EWC receive campus mail with information on summer registration sessions and fall orientation information. Follow up phone calls are made to students who enroll in summer orientation. In addition, there is a mass mailing to new students age 19 and older for transitional workshops. At the beginning of the fall semester, a "welcome back" event is held for all students. Also, at the beginning of the semester, there are numerous targeted population formal gatherings and orientations such as adult peer counselors and new student ambassadors. Outreach sites also hold numerous first week activities.

After registration, letters are mailed to enrolled online students with information on logging into and beginning online courses.

During orientation, all students are invited to meet with advisors. This activity ensures that students will know who their advisor is, their office location, and have the opportunity to ask questions about their schedule or starting college. The advisor has the opportunity to meet advisees, check that they are enrolled in the correct courses, and answer any questions.

Faculty survey results indicate that 63% believe that the institution has, at least to a moderate degree, developed an integrated approach to a first year that supports routine communication. Further, 86.9% of students surveyed felt that EWC moderately to very highly communicated the expectations related to financial aid.

Opportunities for improvement: Advisors have no set agenda for the orientation meeting with advisees. Students are often matched with an academic advisor outside their major. It is unclear who should advise "interdisciplinary students" and "undecided major students". Many new students choose to not meet with their advisor during the orientation session.

Early warning initiatives include special attention to first time students::

Students attending summer orientation sessions take placement tests if their ACT scores do not place them in college math or college English courses. At the end of the testing, students with low placement scores are identified and provided with information and the opportunity to enroll in the Bridge Program. Students who attend the Bridge Program come to EWC one week before all other students to review reading, math, English, and to enhance study skills and retake placement tests.

Opportunities for improvement: Advisors receive reports indicating students who have improved to a new course level after the Bridge Program, but no data is provided as to the overall success or failure of the student ultimately completing the required college level courses.

Advising includes special attention to first-time students:

Although all students meet with an advisor during summer registration or pre-registration, there is no documented special attention to first-time students. Faculty members normally explain the requirements of the program the student has chosen, help the student develop a schedule, and review the student's placement scores. The faculty member will then either register the student or give the student instructions on how to register.

Opportunities for improvement: Non-academic advisors do not always understand the program requirements or appropriate course sequencing, thus first time students are sometimes enrolled in the incorrect courses to begin their program. This may hinder the student from being able to complete their program in the specified time.

2.2 Continuing Students

Monitoring progress toward degree/certificate completion:

The college catalog is updated annually. It lists all of the certificates and degrees and the requirements for completion. Further, there is a recommended sequence of courses for each program. Students, in consultation with their advisor, choose their courses by referring to the assigned catalog. The general education courses are also listed in the catalog and each degree specifies which general education courses are to be taken.

Although each advisor has his/her own method of tracking student progress, the degree evaluation on LancerNet provides a documented map of courses which the student has completed and those which still remain.

Each new student should enroll in the "College Studies Course" in the first semester at EWC. As part of this course, the students investigate further the program of study they have chosen and the requirements for completing the program.

Students who enroll in 19 credits or more are required to complete petition overload forms which must be signed by the Vice President of Learning.

Midterm deficiency reports are completed by faculty members, although these are submitted on a voluntary basis. Students who have a D or F at midterm are sent a midterm deficiency report. The advisor receives a list of all of the advisees who have received a midterm deficiency. In addition, whenever a faculty member sees a student who is struggling in a class based on poor attendance, poor assignment submission, or poor grades, they may complete an advisor alert form.

Opportunities for improvement: Many advisors do not use the degree evaluation in LancerNet and the faculty lack training in how to interpret the evaluation. Although advisors receive advisor alerts, there is no specified procedure for follow-up. The same is true for midterm deficiency notifications.

Make it easy to connect to appropriate sources of campus-based assistance:

Signs and posters on campus alert students to campus-based assistance and the location of various offices. Students also see signs each day at each major entrance indicating the location of special events, meetings, and exams. In addition, faculty and staff are helpful in personally directing students to resources. As part of student visitations prior to enrolling and during orientation, students are taken on campus tours led by EWC trained ambassadors.

Students expressed a high degree of confidence in being directed by faculty and staff to the right office when they have questions. (81.4%)

Administrative assistance: Students surveyed indicated that 77.4% highly or very highly understood how the college is organized to answer administration questions. From the faculty survey, it is important to note that about 73.6% of faculty feel at least highly confident they can correctly refer new students with administrative questions. This seems to correlate with the student survey understanding of where to go to answer administrative questions.

Non-academic assistance: According to the FOE faculty survey, about 58.3% of faculty feel at least highly confident they can correctly refer new students for help about personal issues. For non-academic matters, only 49% of the students know where to go for money management, family matters, etc. According to a survey completed when students take the COMPASS placement tests, 78% of the respondents (135/173) requested help with financial aid, 44% requested help with finding work, and 23% wanted help with personal concerns. Smaller percentages requested help with physical disabilities, health concerns, commuting, work experience, and day care. Interestingly, 71.8% of students surveyed indicated that EWC moderately to very highly connected them with community resources and support services to alleviate household issues.

Though the web site is in transition, it contains links to various campus services. Students receive information for SmartThinking, an online tutoring program, and the Learning Skills Lab for on-campus tutoring assistance. Course syllabi for many instructors also list available resources for academic help. All online courses have a standardized link to services such as the library, tutoring, or technical help.

Coursework assistance: The FOE faculty survey revealed that 74.5% of faculty feel at least highly confident they can correctly refer new students for help with coursework and 71.7% of the students feel highly confident that they know where to seek help with coursework. COMPASS demographic survey data revealed that 30% of the students surveyed (N=173) requested help with reading skills, 57% with study skills, 54% with writing skills, and 66% with math skills.

Academic rules assistance: Of faculty surveyed, 74.5% feel at least highly confident they can correctly refer new students with questions about academic rules. 69.3% of students surveyed highly or very highly understand the organization well enough to know where to go to answer questions about academic rules.

Involvement in college organization/event assistance: Students lack an understanding of the organization of the college in seeking information about being involved with a college-sponsored organization or event (51.8% had moderate to no understanding). Faculty similarly lack confidence in directing students to these experiences (43.4% had moderate to no understanding).

Opportunities for improvement: The orientation process lacks effective coverage of information for new students who would like help with non-academic matters or assistance with becoming involved with college-sponsored events or organizations. There doesn't seem to be a systematic referral of students to staff (agents) on campus to assist students with these identified areas. New faculty members no longer participate in episodic training sessions which ensure that they learn about sources of assistance to students.

Special attention for students repeating courses:

Registration forms flag repeated courses with "R". However, this could include a student who registered for a course and then deleted it without ever attending.

Opportunities for improvement: The "R" notation is ineffective in specifying students who are actually repeating a course. No specific procedures exist for monitoring students who are repeating courses.

Special attention for students with grade point averages below 2.0:

Students are sent a letter to attend "Project Stay", a retention strategy workshop, and are told of a requirement to attend tutoring and meet with their advisor. Project Stay works with students to understand the ramifications of poor grades, financial aid questions, and probation status.

The Student Retention Team gets a list of midterm deficiency students, advisor alerts, and referrals from housing, counseling, and other concerned parties. They meet and assign a contact person who individually follows-up on the student of concern.

Opportunities for improvement: Letters are sent to those students on "academic probation;" however, there is no follow-up provided and no interventions unless students seek it. Tutoring is often not used and students do not always contact advisors. Further, the designated contact person on the Student Retention Team does not always make contact or follow-up with the students.

Special attention for returning students after a break in their enrollment:

EWC does not identify students returning to college after years of absence, although the Academic Amnesty procedures may benefit returning students. In addition, if financial aid or the business office has a "hold" on registration, this may alert the college of a returning student.

2.3 Partnerships

Eastern Wyoming College has an organizational chart which highlights the interrelationship of administration, faculty, and staff.

Partnerships are formed in the following areas:

The leadership team builds collaboration with the various functions on campus. The newly formed Faculty Council is composed of faculty members only, and collaboration with outside parties only occurs when issues discussed affect them.

Faculty work with the tutoring program to recommend student tutors and to refer students who need tutoring. In addition, students on probation receive a letter telling them that they must attend mandatory tutoring. Likewise, advisor alerts are the link between faculty members in the various courses and advisors. The Learning Skills Lab offers seminars in various study skills throughout the semester which are heavily advertised.

The Adult Peer Counselors announce upcoming events and programs in the classrooms and faculty are also given announcements about those programs to share with their classes. Faculty often support student involvement in student services educational programming by offering extra credit for participation. Faculty members agree to serve as workshop presenters in student services educational programs. Faculty also allow integration of student services educational programming in classroom presentations.

The athletic department partners with faculty by having periodic athletic grade reports submitted by faculty. In this way, students involved in activities and athletics are monitored for eligibility for participation and scholarships by their coaches. Faculty members also help schedule athletes so that their schedules are a "best fit" for when they are most heavily involved in their athletic season.

Faculty work closely with student services during summer pre-registration days and regular registration during the semester. Faculty also make many informal referrals to counselors on campus when students are in distress. The Eastern Wyoming College web site hosts home page announcements to keep the college community linked and informed.

Outreach Coordinators meet annually on campus to connect the outreach program initiatives with campus initiatives.

Opportunities for improvement: Only 26.5% of faculty feel there is at least a high degree of institutional organization which allows collaboration between academic and student services.

There appears to be a feeling of disconnect between academic services and student services which could hinder the ability of continuing students to make adequate progress toward degree/certificate completion. 40.4% of the faculty/staff felt that student services and faculty partnerships were only slightly or not at all encouraged by senior institution leaders. Further, 63.6% responded that they do not have a voice in decisions about new student issues.

2.4 Financial Resources

Financial resources to support effective management of the new student experiences: Support for students in relationship to tuition, fees, and books as well as additional living and transportation expenses is initiated through our Financial Aid Office.

Students must apply for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA). For the 2007-2008 year, data supporting financial resources allocated to the new student cohort indicated the following: 76.6% of the new student cohort were awarded financial aid and those students received 46% of the accepted awards. 39.2% of all awards went to the new student cohort.

The faculty/staff survey indicated that 88.5% of faculty and staff rated the college as moderate to very high in providing adequate resources (personnel and fiscal) for entry-level courses. The results were similar for academic support services (86.9%) and extracurricular activities (79.1%)

Certain areas were identified as lacking adequate funding. Discussions with personnel included the need for an increase in recruiting material and orientation funding. For example, the current budget for orientation is \$3,000, yet it is estimated that the expenses total \$8,000 for approximately 250 students. Presently, the entertainment cost must be covered from the activities budget. Orientation attendance has grown steadily over the last five years (2005: 187, 2006: 191, 2007: 215 and 2008: 227). In addition, Technology Day as a recruitment strategy has also grown from 104 participants in 2005 to 189 in 2008. The budget is approximately \$3,000 for 175 students and a funding increase is being requested to \$5,000 to help with the materials expenses. Presently, GEAR UP funds the food, and Perkins Grant monies fund the material expenses.

Opportunities for improvement: Though survey results indicate a high level of satisfaction with adequacy of funding in many areas, the funding is not always consistent from year to year. Further, the adequacy of funding is lacking in certain areas, such as orientation and recruiting.

Recommended Action Items:

- Advising Initiatives (*High priority*)

- Provide professional development for faculty on the use of status codes on course rosters and the importance of recognition of first-time students.
- Set an advisor agenda for topics discussed with advisees at orientation meeting.
- Determine who advises "interdisciplinary students" and who advises "undecided majors" as two separate student needs populations.
- Improve advising by "non-academic" staff.
- Provide professional development for advisors on the use of the degree evaluation in LancerNet or revise the evaluation so that it does not require additional analysis by student services personnel.
- Create in-house professional development for faculty advising
- Review the "R" designation for repeat courses and develop a stated procedure for assistance to students repeating courses.

- Early Warning Initiatives (*High priority*)

- Determine effectiveness of Bridge program in ultimate success of participants completing college-level required math and English courses.
- Develop a stated procedure for advisor alert follow-up.
- Develop a stated procedure for midterm deficiency follow-up.
- Determine the effectiveness of the Student Retention Team
- Create in-house professional development for early warning initiatives

- Targeted Communication Initiatives (*High priority*)

- Restructure the orientation information process to include non-academic assistance and college-sponsored organization/event assistance.
- Develop a systematic referral of students to appropriate campus personnel for assistance.

- Financial Resources (*High priority*)

- Increase funding levels for orientation and recruitment activities, such as technology day.