President's Council on Retention
North Dakota State University
2022-2023 Annual Report

Submitted by:
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Charge

The President's Council on Retention was formed to improve NDSU's student retention rate through the development of structures, strategies, and resources that help us meet changing student needs.

Committee Membership

Becky Bahe (co-chair)	Director of Career & Advising Center
Phil Hunt (co-chair)	Registrar & Special Assistant to the President
Carrie Anne Platt (co-chair)	Interim Dean – Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Nadeje Alexandre	Assistant Dean – Science & Mathematics
Marc Bauer	Associate Professor – Animal Science
Emily Berg	Director of Institutional Research & Analysis
Jeff Boyer	Director of Assessment and Accreditation
Stacy Duffield	Director of the Office of Teaching & Learning
Andrea Hein	Associate Director of Academic Advising
Warren Christensen	Associate Professor – Physics
Eric Gjerdevig	Lecturer – Management & Marketing
Alan Kallmeyer	Interim Dean – Business & Engineering
Angela MacAdams	Senior Lecturer & Director of Allied Sciences
Jennifer Momsen	Professor – Biological Sciences
Lisa Montplaisir	Professor – Biological Sciences
Kaelen Napoleon	Program Coordinator of Multicultural Programming
Michelle Pearson	Assistant Director for Learning Services
Scott Pryor	Associate Dean – College of Engineering
Kristi Steinmann	Communications & Strategic Partnership Lead - ITS
Michael Strand	Director - School of Design, Art, & Architecture
Kaylee Weigel	Student Government Liaison
Ron Werner-Wilson	Dean – Human Sciences & Education

Institutional Student Success Goals and Retention Metrics

The council developed its work to support the current NDSU Strategic Plan, specifically supporting Goal 1: Diversity, Inclusivity, and Respect, and Goal 2: Student Success and Achievement. The goals outline the areas in which to focus as will be seen in the summary of council work and future recommendations, while the metrics below will be our initial quantifiable metrics to measure progress.

In looking at Retention Metric 1 (Decrease Opportunity Gap), a historical view shows how the identified subgroups have been retained in relation to all students. The overall goal with this metric would be to decrease the gap between identified groups and the overall student population by 25% for the next four years. Deploying strategies that support our most at-risk students is not only the right thing to do but will result in helping all students at NDSU. Not only will these strategies reduce the opportunity gap, but simultaneously should increase the overall retention rate of our first-year students.

Retention Metric 1: Decrease Opportunity Gap
First-to-Second-Year Retention, by Fall Cohort Subgroups

Freshman (FTFT) Cohort						
Group	**Fall 2019**	**Fall 2020**	**Fall 2021**	**Fall 2022**	**Fall 2023**	**Fall 2024**	**Fall 2025**
Students of Color	-8.9%	-9.2%	-13.3%	-9.98%	-7.48%	-5.61%	-4.21%
Pell-Eligible	-6.6%	-11.3%	-11.8%	-8.85%	-6.64%	-4.98%	-3.73%
First-Generation	-3.7%	-9.2%	-9.7%	-7.28%	-5.46%	-4.09%	-3.07%

Historically, NDSU has maintained an average first-to-second-year retention rate of 80%. The dramatic decrease can be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic, so the goal is to not only return to the average rate but to increase our retention rate percentage. This will be accomplished by deploying multiple strategies to improve the student experience, particularly in the freshman year. Retention Metric 2 is showing a goal of a 3% increase annually for the next four years.

Retention Metric 2: Increase First-to-Second Year Retention
First-to-Second Year Retention, by Fall Cohort

Freshman (FTFT) Cohort						
Group	**Fall 2019**	*Fall 2020*	*Fall 2021*	*Fall 2022*	*Fall 2023*	*Fall 2024*	*Fall 2025*
All Students	82%	76.1%	75.2%	*77%*	*80%*	*83%*	*86%*

President's Council Summary of Progress

Activity	Timeframe
Created a repository of retention strategies and retention resources that can be used by unit leaders.	Spring 2023
Created a definition of advising at NDSU and developed expectations for advisors and students.	Summer 2023
Proposed and implemented a new professional advising model.	Summer 2023
Identified a comprehensive advising and analytics tool from Civitas Learning.	Fall 2023
Began addressing policy issues that hinder enrollment and retention.	Spring 2023
Held a joint presentation with President's Council for Diversity, Inclusion, and Respect (PCDIR) on how to infuse diversity, inclusion, respect, and belonging into curricula.	Spring 2023
Created a Teaching Support Plan system to support instructors' and units' teaching quality efforts.	Fall 2023

Professional Academic Advising

The first step to improving academic advising across campus was to ensure everyone with this role (faculty and staff) was working under the same philosophy, vision, definition, and expectations as seen below. Further, we created expectations and learning outcomes for students taking part in academic advising so there is an understanding of this being a mutual relationship.

Philosophy

North Dakota State University is committed to an advising experience that assists students in reaching their full potential. The successful development of our students will be an intentional outcome of a partnership between advisor and advisee that provides accurate, supportive, and quality information.

Vision

We envision an advising process that is:
- Consistent and student-centered from matriculation through graduation
- Holistic, exploring academic, career, and life decisions
- Integrated and designed to encourage advising relationships and services across all units of the university (Academic, Career, and Well-being)
- Developmental, meeting students where they are and supporting them in the various aspects of college
- Continually evaluated and responsive to data
- Committed to accessible, inclusive, and equitable practices

We envision advisors who are:
- Knowledgeable
- Accessible and approachable
- Caring and responsive

We envision advisees who are:
- Engaged in the advising relationship
- Responsible and prepared for advising discussions
- Aware of resources regarding campus policies and procedures

Definition of Academic Advising

Academic advising is a holistic and collaborative process in which the advisor and student focus on the student's academic aspirations, career goals, and overall well-being.

Academic: Providing students guidance related to academic policy and procedure with the goal being navigation through a degree program culminating in graduation	Career: Guiding students through a process beginning with clarification on the choice of major, learning professional etiquette, citizenship, networking, and culminating in securing gainful employment	Well-being: Providing opportunities for students to develop healthy life skills (e.g. relationships, wellness, mental health, finances) and study skills that will help support them in achieving their goals

Foundational Expectations for Academic Advising (internal document)
1. Develop a relationship with your advisee: (a) engage in their development, (b) listen empathically to their concerns, (c) understand their goals, (d) respond in a timely manner (e) be available and accessible, (f) utilizing campus advising platform for scheduling appointments and maintaining student records/notes.
2. Understand and communicate curriculum and graduation requirements. Assist with major and career exploration and academic planning. Refer to other campus resources as needed (career center, study abroad, counseling, etc.).
3. Be knowledgeable about university policies and procedures and assist students in accessing and understanding them.
4. Monitor student academic progress and reach out if a student falls below good academic standing or needs support.
5. Encourage student participation in organizations, experiential learning, and student engagement opportunities.
6. Be a role model to students and other advisors. Provide inclusive and equitable best practices in advising. Participate in professional development.

Expectations for Students
1. Regularly check NDSU email.
2. Actively participate and take responsibility for your educational experience.
3. Understand degree and graduation requirements (i.e. general education, major, electives, total credits required). Learn how to select courses that best fit your major and interests.
4. Understand the university and academic department's policies and procedures; be familiar with the academic calendar and important deadlines.
5. Use OneStop to find information on campus resources and to access academic information.
6. Meet with your advisor at least twice a semester to discuss academic, career, and other goals. Reach out to the advisor thereafter with questions, or concerns or to connect and touch base.

Student Learning Outcomes
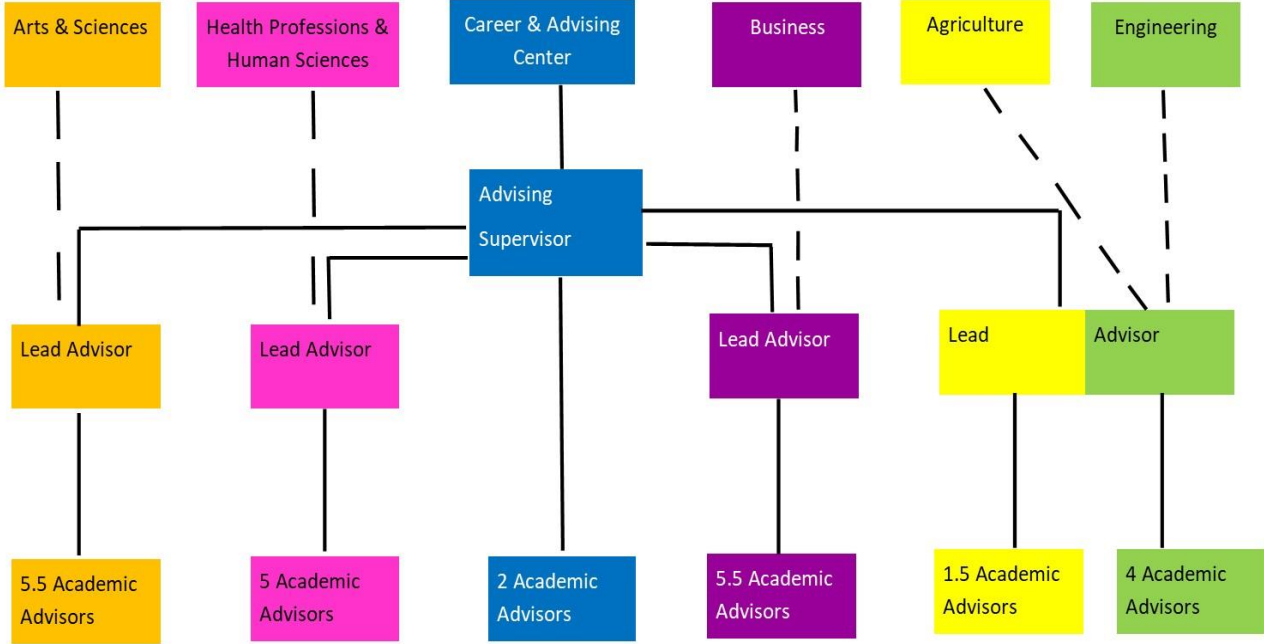As a result of engaging in academic advising, students will
1. Learn planning skills for academic schedule and career.
2. Learn self-responsibility and manage school, work, social and personal responsibilities.
3. Develop problem-solving, adaptability, emotional, and time management skills.
4. Develop decision-making and life management skills.

Professional Academic Advising Model

The second major component related to academic advising was to create a structure that allowed enough staffing and coordination to fully support students within their first two years at NDSU, transfer students within their first semester, and ongoing interventions for students that end up in poor academic standing. The most efficient and effective way to do this was to reconfigure reporting lines to allow for training,

development, and coordination, and to hire additional staff to make more equitable caseloads. Below is the organizational chart for the new structure effective May 16, 2023.

Academic Advising Structure

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Arts & Sciences    Health Professions &    Career & Advising    Business    Agriculture    Engineering
                    Human Sciences          Center

                                            Advising
                                            Supervisor

Lead Advisor        Lead Advisor                                 Lead Advisor    Lead    Advisor

5.5 Academic        5 Academic          2 Academic              5.5 Academic    1.5 Academic   4 Academic
Advisors            Advisors            Advisors                Advisors        Advisors       Advisors
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Lead Advisor-Supervise 5-6 professional staff and advise 100-150 students.

Academic Advisors-Caseload of 250-275 students per advisor

Updated: February 2023

Quality of Instruction

We recognize that teaching is essential to NDSU's institutional mission and retention efforts. We also know that the learning needs of students have changed significantly over the past few years. Refining our approach to teaching supports both the retention of current students and the recruitment of future students. To that end, the council has developed a plan for continuous improvement of teaching quality that aims

to (1) clarify expectations for teaching, (2) provide the support and resources needed to meet these expectations, and (3) give instructional staff more credit for the effort put into teaching.

Through consultation with campus stakeholders and scholarship on teaching and learning, we have established five expectations for teaching quality at NDSU:

> All instructional staff at NDSU are expected to demonstrate:
>
> 1. Continued development of expertise in their subject areas.
> 2. Use of evidence-based teaching strategies.
> 3. Identification of and responsiveness to students' learning needs.
> 4. Accessibility to students.
> 5. Timely feedback on course performance.

Understanding that many instructional staff in higher education have limited training in the current best practices for teaching, we must invest in teaching-related professional development. Advancement includes strategic visions for supporting teaching at the unit level, more opportunities for departments and instructors to learn from one another, and evaluation and accountability of teaching in line with stated expectations.

The university can support teaching quality by:

- Creating an AVP position dedicated to coordinating retention efforts across the university, including supporting quality instruction, among other student success-based responsibilities.
- Funding Office of Teaching and Learning mentorship and consulting program.
- Investing in high-quality professional development resources for instructional staff.
- Organizing a year-long pedagogical luncheon series to provide an opportunity for faculty to exchange ideas and teaching strategies related to the five expectations.

Colleges can support teaching quality by:

- Creating positions specific to supporting instruction in the classroom (or incorporating this responsibility into an existing administrative or fellowship position).
- Developing Teaching Support Plans (as outlined below).
- Forming task forces focused on teaching-related policies, training, feedback, and evaluation.

Departments can support teaching quality by:

- Developing Teaching Support Plans (as outlined below).
- Prioritizing teaching preparation/support for instructors teaching first-year courses, and/or strategically assigning instructors to first-year courses based on their ability to meet expectations for teaching quality.
- Revising evaluation processes to support instructors' teaching quality efforts.

Teaching Support Plans

These plans identify strategies that colleges and departments will use to support their instructors' continued development as teachers. Plans should inform how instructors report on their teaching efforts during annual reviews and focus on creating more opportunities to discuss teaching challenges.

During the first year of the Teaching Support Plan initiative, the Council will provide department leaders with a list of teaching support strategies that other campus leaders and faculty have found helpful. Departments will be asked to indicate strategies they plan to use in the next year, selecting one in each category. An open-ended response section will allow departments to report strategies they are already doing that appear in the checklist. This approach will save leaders time in generating a plan, provide departments with evidence-based ideas, and help to create a record of commitment for reference throughout the year. These initial teaching support plans will be built out in more detail in subsequent years.

Benefits of Teaching Support Plans for Faculty
- Improved professional development.
- Opportunities to talk with others teaching in the same department or college encourage collaboration on solutions to shared challenges.
- Increased effectiveness and efficiency for instructors (Example: A department discussion on strategies for providing timely feedback to students may result in learning how to use rubrics more effectively, getting grades to students faster, and reducing grading time).

Benefits of Teaching Support Plans for Department Leaders
- Shared expectations help leaders give more credit for good work, intervene when needed, and provide more specific advice to instructors.
- Shared frameworks for communicating about teaching help instructors provide timely feedback on teaching to one another.
- Shared resources help save time and increase the effectiveness of the plans (e.g., teaching team discussion guidelines, classroom observation protocols, midterm course surveys, best practices for "student hours," etc.).

Timeline
> **August 2023:** Colleges will be asked to develop their teaching support plans.
> **December 2023:** Departments will be asked to submit their checklists.

College-level teaching support plans should be developed with input from the college's instructional staff and the Director of the Office of Teaching and Learning. Deans should consider forming and charging a time-limited task force with this work. Deans are responsible for submitting the college's teaching support plan to the provost.

Required Elements
Teaching Support Plans should contain:
1. Teaching expectations for instructional staff in the college/department, with university-level expectations made more specific to the teaching and learning needs of the unit
2. Performance indicators for each expectation (see example on next page)
3. Identification of strategies the department will use to:
    a. facilitate conversations on teaching within the unit,
    b. provide instructional staff with feedback on their teaching,
    c. match teaching needs with professional development resources.

Teaching Support Plans should be inclusive of all individuals teaching courses for the department. Mentorship and teaching teams should include:
- Graduate teaching assistants
- Part-time instructors
- Lecturers
- Professors of practice
- Tenure-track and tenured faculty

Sample Performance Indicators for Teaching Expectations

Expertise in subject matter	*How have I continued to develop my knowledge of the subject areas I teach?* Evidence might include relevant research/creative activity, professional development, community partnerships, consulting, and/or other forms of updating knowledge/skills in subject areas.
Use of evidence-based teaching strategies	*What evidence-based teaching strategies did I use in the classroom? How did I know if a teaching strategy succeeded?* Evidence for the first question includes any course design or classroom strategy supported by the scholarship of teaching and learning (including but not limited to active learning). Evidence for the second question might include formative assessment, summative assessment, participation in program assessment, external review, peer review, etc. Scores for SCES Q1 and Q2 can be used for student perspectives on course design and classroom teaching strategies.

Identification of and responsiveness to students' learning needs	*How do I identify and respond to students' learning needs?* Evidence might include DFW rate analysis, start-of-course surveys, midterm course surveys, SCES scores for Q4, SCES comments, learning accommodations, universal design, and/or other means of identifying and responding to student learning needs. Instructors are encouraged to explain how they have responded to the needs identified.
Accessibility to students	*How have I made myself accessible to students who have questions or need additional support?* Examples might include email response timelines, promotion of office/student hours, multiple forms of contact (e.g., Zoom option during office hours), arriving early to or staying after class, SCES scores for Q5, and/or other evidence of accessibility to students.
Timely feedback on course performance	*What do I do to ensure students know how they are doing in my courses and can use that information to make improvements?* Examples might include grading timelines, feedback practices, using Blackboard's Grade Center, submitting midterm grades, holding student conferences, conducting in-class critiques, SCES scores for Q3/Q6/Q7, and/or other evidence related to the provision of feedback.

Tracking   ***Progress***

Department chairs/heads will be asked to include an update on department activities/progress related to their Teaching Support Plan in the annual activity reports they submit to the dean. In this update, department leaders should include persistent teaching challenges identified by instructors in the department and resources needed to support teaching quality.

Each college dean will provide the provost with a summary of progress on their college's Teaching Support Plan as a separate document accompanying their annual statement of accomplishments and goals. This document – which should draw evidence from the department reports, highlight common teaching challenges, and identify resources needed to strengthen teaching in the college – may be a collaborative effort by the dean's leadership team (associate deans, assistant deans, school directors, etc.).

President's Council on Retention Recommendations

Institutional Investments

The Council humbly asks and recommends the institution invest in the following as we strive to achieve the stated goals of the NDSU 2021-26 Strategic Plan.

1. Form a subcommittee of the Council (beginning summer 2023) to include other appointed individuals with insight and expertise to begin developing a vision and comprehensive strategy around the "First-Year Experience" for NDSU students to improve retention and increase a sense of belonging. This strategy should include but not be limited to:
   a. Student mentorship
   b. The development of institutional first-year seminar course
   c. Re-envisioning general education
   d. Evaluating learning services available on campus and coordination
   e. Scaling applied learning in first- and second-year courses.
2. Invest one-time money (~$100,000) in the Gardner Institute to guide us through a full assessment and implementation of a comprehensive First-Year Experience at NDSU. Utilize the above-mentioned subcommittee from the PCOR to work through this process and include partners from both curricular and co-curricular areas of campus. https://www.jngi.org/foundations-of-excellence
3. Provide funds (~$100,000) to support the increased focus on quality of instruction including:
   a. Monthly pedagogical luncheons ($20,000).
   b. Funding Office of Teaching and Learning mentorship and consulting program ($50,000).
   c. Investing in high-quality professional development resources for instructional staff ($30,000) to focus on embedding diversity, inclusion, respect, and belonging into curricular and co-curricular offerings; coaching instructors toward shared expectations;
4. Develop a leadership position to coordinate, at an institutional level, curricular and co-curricular initiatives related to increasing retention and student success. Examples include:
   a. https://www.spelmanandjohnson.com/position/vice-president-for-student-success/
   b. https://www.higheredjobs.com/executive/details.cfm?JobCode=178263105&Title=Associate%20Provost%20for%20Student%20Success%20%26%20Dean%20of%20Undergraduate%20Studies
5. Conduct a comprehensive review of NDSU Policy 352 to account for quality classroom teaching in the promotion and tenure review process.
6. Increase staffing in the Office of Multicultural Programs to ensure both programmatic and individual student support is available. Consider organizational structure to better align with other student-facing offices.
7. Develop consistent position descriptions, expectations, and training for department heads/chairs to address accountability and institutional priorities (i.e. student success, DIR, etc.).

Future Steps for President's Council on Retention

1. In collaboration with the Office of Teaching and Learning, develop a repository of resources/training for department and college leaders to support teaching quality in their units.
   a. Consolidation of current resources, many of which are underutilized.
   b. Development of new resources as needs are identified, including Best Practices and communication templates (e.g., for promoting student support hours)
   c. Development of resources specific to the assessment of teaching and documentation of feedback (for unit leaders).
2. In collaboration with the Office of Teaching and Learning and the Provost's Office (PTE portfolio guidelines), develop feedback mechanisms for teaching that:
   a. Help instructors identify their strengths and growth areas in relation to teaching expectations
   b. Help departments identify courses needing intervention (e.g., DWF rate analysis)
   c. Help department leaders/instructors find resources that can assist them in addressing growth areas and courses needing intervention
   d. Create motivation and accountability for teaching quality
   e. Create evidence that can be used to demonstrate teaching quality for formal evaluation (annual reviews, PTE portfolios, etc.)
3. Address curriculum issues, structures, and complexity.
4. In conjunction with the new academic advisor model and student success platform, create a sustainable re-enrollment campaign for current students.
5. Develop strategies to address class attendance.
6. Create retention-related mentorship opportunities.
7. Design an assessment plan to understand the motivations behind students who are retained and those who are not retained.
8. Solidify a plan to holistically address the first-year experience.

Conclusion

The work of the President's Council on Retention has been an important step in designing the future of NDSU. In the next year, as we start to see the benefits of a more consistent academic advising model and clearer guidelines, training, and support for quality of instruction, we know there are many more areas to tackle. Retention and student success are not one-solution problems, which is evident as we continue to pull back the layers of complexity. As the list of next steps is lengthy, it will be important to evaluate the council membership to ensure we have enough people in the right places to accomplish the next set of goals. The council is on the right path and with continued support and strategic engagement of campus partners, the multiple solutions and overall culture of the institution will evolve.