Student Success Center
Fall 2022/Spring 2023 Frequently Asked Questions

Why are we creating a student success center?

For many years, our small student success team has focused solely on first-year programs aimed at helping students get a great start at Pitt State and reenroll for their second year. However, we know we must expand support to all students to help them persist to graduation and fulfill our commitment to their success. KBOR also recognizes this, and contracted with the National Institute of Student Success (NISS) to identify ways to improve graduation rates in Kansas. We submitted data to NISS and answered many questions, and the result is a custom playbook for student success at Pitt State. KBOR expects us to implement the NISS recommendations, which are tailored to Pitt State but based on proven strategies for improving retention, persistence, and graduation among all students, with even greater success among historically marginalized students. One of those recommendations is the creation of a student success center.

What is the structure of the Student Success Center?

The center is comprised of three functional areas that work together to create a comprehensive, full-service network of support for students from initial enrollment to post-graduation career placement.

- **First-year programs** – the getting started experience remains a critical component of student success. Our typical retention rate is 75%, meaning a quarter of our freshman class will not return as sophomores. First-year programs are designed to address the challenges specific to first-year students, and our year 1 goal is to improve our retention rate to 85%.
- **Academic advising** – the center will be home to a team of professional academic advisors who are 100% focused on ensuring students are persisting to graduation. They'll help students manage their roadmap and path to graduation, identify students who have fallen off pace and implement outreach and strategies to get them back on track, lead students through a change in major, help navigate financial aid, and more.
- **Career development** – the career development team will continue the good work of our Career Services programs, in lockstep with academic advising and in partnership with academic departments. The center will prepare students for careers in their chosen field, and cultivate relationships with industry partners that will connect with and hire our graduates.

What does this mean for students?

Students will now have a one-stop shop for the advising and support they need to persist to graduation. It also means professional advisors are closely monitoring their progress, and proactively intervening as needed. This on-demand service will be available a minimum 8:00-4:30 Monday-Friday, and the team is working to identify extended hours that serve students best. Data shows that comprehensive support from start to finish improves student persistence and graduation rates, and provides a more positive and rewarding university experience for students.

What does this mean for faculty?

Though the Student Success Center will take responsibility for academic advising, faculty remain a vital component in student success. With their discipline expertise, industry knowledge, and personal investment in their students' progress, faculty will serve as mentors to our students, providing a critical level of support and guidance as they make their way through Pitt State and into fulfilling careers in their chosen professions. In the 2023-24 academic year, the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology and the Student Success Center will launch a series of professional development events for faculty mentors.

When is this the Student Success Center launching?

The first phase is well underway. As of November 2022, the directors for all three areas (first-year programs, academic advising, and career development) are in place, as are several other new team members. The career development team is complete. By January six of the anticipated 16 academic advisors will be in place. The first-year programs team will add an assistant director, and all three areas will hire graduate assistants and student peer mentors/advisors.

Where is the Student Success Center?

A project is underway to transform the current student success office in Axe Library into a space housing the entire Student Success Center. The buildout is expected to be complete by fall 2023. For the spring semester, the team will take space in Axe, Horace Mann, and other buildings. Communication with students and campus will be frequent during this time of transition, to ensure everyone is aware of locations for student support.

Will faculty continue to meet with prospective students?

Yes, faculty will continue to meet with prospective students and participate in new student recruitment events. Promotion of an academic program by the faculty who are teaching the classes and who will mentor students once they are here is key to successfully recruiting new students to PSU and to the individual academic programs.

What is the planned timeline for phasing in centralized and advising, and how will it occur? For example, will the transition begin with new students, with faculty advising phased out gradually as current students graduate, or will it occur by major or some other grouping? Or will the change occur simultaneously for all students/all majors? Specifically, for spring/summer 2023, what role, if any, will faculty have in advising for early enrollment and Pitt Cares?

The Academic Advising component of the Student Success Center will be implemented in phases. Phase one hiring has begun. For the fall 2022 freshman cohort, assignment to an advisor in Academic Advising will occur early in the spring 2023 semester, and these students will work with their new advisor in preparation for enrollment for the summer and/or fall 2023 semesters.

Continuing students not in the fall 2022 freshman cohort will be advised by their currently assigned academic advisor through their graduation unless the student's major changes or the student stops out for more than one term and must apply for readmission.

New freshmen for summer and/or fall 2023 semesters and beyond will be assigned an advisor in the Academic Advising office; this advisor will work with the student through graduation unless the student's academic major changes at which point a new advisor in Academic Advising may be assigned. All undergraduate programs, except for completion programs (RN to BSN for example), will be included in the new model.

New transfer students for summer and/or fall 2023 semester will be assigned to and advised by faculty in the students declared major academic program.

Phase two hiring will occur in summer 2023, and phase three hiring will occur in summer 2024. Advising and enrollment of new transfer students entering in spring 2025 and beyond will be assigned to an advisor in the Academic Advising office.

Pitt CARES advising for new freshman entering in the summer or fall 2023 will be assigned an advisor in the Academic Advising office going forward. New transfer students attending Transfer Pitt CARES and those who do not attend Transfer Pitt CARES will be advised in their department of major until enrollment for spring 2025.

Faculty fellows will be sought to assist with Pitt CARES (beginning in June 2023) and Transfer Pitt CARES (beginning in November 2024). The details and process for this program are still being developed. The Academic Advising Fellows will be an important part of the transition to this new advising model and for continuous communication between the academic advising office and the academic programs. Suggestions for the development of this program are welcome (email dhogard@pittstate.edu).

When the transition to centralized advising is complete, what advising functions, if any, will remain with faculty?

Faculty will continue to serve as academic advisors to graduate students.

For undergraduate students, faculty members will serve as mentors and every student will be assigned a faculty mentor. Faculty mentors will provide an additional layer of guidance based on their expertise, industry knowledge, and relationships with students.

In the new centralized advising model, will individual advisors be assigned students from specific majors?

Individual advisors in Academic Advising will be assigned to each student. The advisors will each become specialists for and maintain close communication with specific academic programs. As the phases are implemented, additional advisors will be assigned to teams based on majors and enrollment trends.

In the new model, will a student who declares a major and remains in that major to degree completion have the same advisor from Pitt Cares to graduation?

This will work in the Academic Advising office in the same as it does now in the academic departments. Students will be assigned an advisor; students may request reassignment; and/or an advisor may leave PSU and that advisor's students are assigned to another advisor.

Will the new centralized advising model affect undeclared students in any way, or will undeclared students continue to be advised by the director and associate director of First Year Programs?

The Exploratory Studies Program (undeclared) students will continue to be advised by Heather Eckstein, Ashley Wadel, and B.B. Stotts (plus the Assistant Director of First Year Programs once hired and trained). Others who currently advise undeclared students (due to teaching a section of Gorilla Gateway that is designated for undeclared students) will continue in that role only until the number of eligible Student Success Center staff allows for those sections of Gorilla Gateway to be taught by SSC staff members.

What is the plan for bringing advisors up to speed on PSU's majors and minors, admission requirements for programs such as education and nursing, and Writing to Learn?

Planning for advisor training is being developed and will include the information in both the Advisor Introduction and Development (AID) and Master Advisor Training (MAT) workshops. Training in using the Student Information System, GUS Classic, Degree Audit, Road Map, academic policies, and graduation requirements will occur. Additionally, communication with each academic department will occur so that the faculty who have advised in those programs can share information that will assist the Academic Advisors in successfully advising students in each program. Current members of the Gorilla Advising Academy Council will assist with the initial training and that group will serve as an advisory council for the Academic Advising office.

How will the advising workload be managed so that a small number of advisors are able to work with all students each semester?

A variety of strategies will be utilized to provide academic advising in the Student Success Center: individual advising, group advising, peer advising, canvas communities, earlier outreach, collaboration with Gorilla Gateway, email, texting, phone, zoom, and extended hours are some of the strategies and tools that will be utilized. To assist in caseload management, the Student Success Center, and in fact all of campus, will be utilizing EAB Navigate. Navigate is a comprehensive student success management system that links administrators, faculty, staff, and advisors in a coordinated care network to support students. Navigate is being implemented now with launch expected by August 2023. To learn more about this tool, please visit https://eab.com/colleges-and-universities/student-success/.

Will centralized advising require any changes in the existing timeline for posting the following semester's schedule of classes?

Centralized advising does not require changes in the existing timeline for posting future term course schedules. However, there has previously been discussion/consideration of having course schedules available sooner. A recommendation to provide course schedules farther in advance and full-year enrollment has been made to enhance planning opportunities for students and for academic programs.

Is there any chance that advising and enrollment for international exchange students could be streamlined in conjunction with this change to centralized advising?

Exchange students are an important, but unique group. Academic Advising, Academic Departments, and the International Programs & Services office will confer to determine the best possible enrollment plan for these students. At this time, advising and enrollment of exchange students will remain with the

academic departments due to the unique nature of each student's goal in attending PSU for a limited amount of time as a non-degree seeking student.

Is there any way that centralizing the advising roles can help the university be more responsive to issues that cut across majors, departments, schools, and colleges?

Enhancing responsiveness to student needs is the goal. Challenges and opportunities that students face can cut across majors, departments, schools, colleges, jobs, home-life, family responsibilities, student life, and more. The Student Success Center, as a whole, can provide a place where a student, regardless of the issue, will find someone whose job it is to listen and assist, when possible, across campus and the community.

Who is in charge of student accommodations? Or how is it being handled?

Students seeking accommodations will continue to be served in First Year Programs (currently Student Success Programs). Facilitating the process is B.B. Stotts. This service has been facilitated in this unit since Fall 2019 and relocated to Axe Library from Russ Hall in January 2020.

Where can faculty find their list of mentees?

What's coming:

- creation of the role of faculty mentor in the SIS (done)
- assignment of faculty mentors for students advised in the Academic Advising office (done for all but 23SP new freshmen)
- location of mentor name in GUS Classic on Advise an Individual Student (for advisors to see) and on students' Personal Information GUS Classic homepage, Enrollment and Student Information menu, now the "Advisor, Mentor, and Degree Information" option (for students to see) (done)
- creation of an option for academic schools/departments to assign mentors (in progress)
- creation of an option for mentors to see list of assigned student mentees (in progress)
- communication (emails) for notification of new mentees, mentor assigned (to students), and need to change or add mentor (due to change of major) (in progress)
- creation of an option for students to be assigned an advisor in the Academic Advising office via GUS Classic with appropriate automated notifications (in progress)

Creating something that did not previously exists has risks in our aging student information system. ITS staff are working carefully to put in place the mechanisms needed to facilitate this change without breaking something else in the SIS. This work is challenging and takes time.

When will freshmen be assigned a faculty mentor?

Assignment of faculty mentors for students who are in the fall 2022 freshman cohort and advised in the Academic Advising office has been completed for students in majors in the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Education, and Technology; students were assigned to the faculty member who had been assigned as their academic advisor. The College of Business is choosing not to allow assignment of mentors for their majors at this time (2-17-23).

Several students in the spring 2023 freshman cohort still need to be assigned faculty mentors. Because this is a manual process completed in Secure Shell (the SIS that is the basis for what most people see as GUS Classic) and because, in most cases, the student was not assigned to a faculty advisor previously, these will be assigned at some point during this semester.

How were faculty notified that their freshman advisees have been reassigned?

Information about the new advising model was and is provided via the Student Success Center FAQ page, which was shared in the Pitt State Daily on multiple occasions during the fall term; that page continues to be available. Anyone can submit questions to social@pittstate.edu with the response added to the FAQ page. Additionally, representatives met individually with department/school leaders to discuss the new advising model and the planned reassignment of advisees in the fall 2022 freshman cohort; at the request of these individuals, all information regarding the changes taking place are to be directed to the appropriate department/school leader.

Will faculty receive email notifications when an advisee is reassigned?

Faculty were not sent the automated email that an advisee had be reassigned. Reassignment of advisees occurred over time beginning in early February in Secure Shell (not GUS Classic). The automated communication that occurs when a reassignment happens in GUS classic does not happen when the change is made in Secure Shell. There is not currently a way to assign Academic Advising office advisors to a student other than via secure shell.

Should faculty in an academic department give out advisement codes to students assigned to an advisor in the Academic Advising office?

The assigned academic advisor should advise students assigned to them and then provide the student with the Advisement Number (code). While advisors in an academic department can see the advisement numbers of a student not assigned to them, this number should only be shared by the assigned academic advisor at the point advising is provided.