PROGRESS ON COLLABORATIVE STUDENT SUCCESS EFFORTS

Based on UAA's March 2020 *Ad Hoc Report to Address Recommendations 1 and 2 from the NWCCU Fall 2018 Year Seven Evaluation Report*, on July 22, 2020 NWCCU informed UAA that both recommendations have been fulfilled.

Recommendation #2: *Continue the focus on collaborative student success efforts to raise low graduation and retention rates and support Mission Fulfillment. (Standard 5.B.1)- Fulfilled*

Although UAA fulfilled Recommendation 2, the March 2020 ad hoc report listed several initiatives and their outcomes (or expected outcomes). The below lists the initiatives, outcomes (or expected outcomes), and an analysis of the effectiveness of the measures.

Initiatives for AY2019

AY2019 Initiative 1: Developed, Staffed, and Implemented the Office of Student Success

- **Outcome 1:** Improved retention rate and, in the long run, graduation rates.
- **Outcome 2:** Better academic performance in subsequent classes.

  Current Data: Following several years of low retention (66.4% in fall 2019), the Office of Student Success contributed to a nearly two percent increase in the 1st fall to 2nd fall retention rate among first-time, full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students (68.2% in Fall 2020). Additionally, UAA is narrowing the equity gap in the 1st fall to 2nd fall retention rate among first-time, full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students. From fall 2017 to fall 2020, UAA reported positive retention trends for African American (+24%) and Alaska Native/American Indian (+12%) students. On better academic performance in subsequent classes, refer to AY2020 initiative 5.

AY2019 Initiative 2: Designed and Implemented Academic Pathways (i.e., Meta-Majors)

- **Outcome 1:** Decrease Drop, Fail, and Withdraw (DFW) rates for courses due to more accurate placement, better advising, and data-driven course recommendations.
- **Outcome 2:** Increase in students taking mathematics, writing, and communications Tier 1 GERs in the first year.
- **Outcome 3:** Increase in (or even comparable) student pass-rates because first year advising places students into courses better matched to their placement level.
- **Outcome 4:** Decrease in students switching majors, which often increases total credits per degree.

  Current Data: Academic performance for fall 2019 first-time freshman showed the following gains since fall 2015: an increase in full-time course load (+3.5%), an increase in first term mathematics (+8%) and writing (+32%) enrollment, an increase in Tier 1 GER enrollment (+5%), an increase in the number of students passing lower-division courses (+2%), and a decrease in the number of students dropping all classes (-1%). Since fall 2015, major switching has decreased among first year bachelor's degree-seeking students (-3.3%), second year bachelor's degree-seeking students (-9.2%), first year associate degree-seeking students (-1.9%), and second year associate degree-seeking students (-2.7%). In spring 2020, the Office of Student Success hired an advisor specifically for exploratory/undeclared bachelor's degree-seeking students and designed exploratory Academic Pathways that allow students to identify a broad category of interest (business; STEM; humanities and the arts; health, social, service professions; industry and

technical fields) in order to more accurately place exploratory students on the appropriate mathematics sequences in their first year. Institutional Research designed a first year student success dashboard, which allows the Office of Student Success to easily track and analyze these metrics with demographic, financial, and enrollment timeline data.

AY2019 Initiative 3: Partnered with Education Advisory Board (EAB) on Best Practices and Tools

- **Outcome 1:** Improved retention, persistence, and ultimately graduation due to better student advising and greater ongoing contact with students.
- **Outcome 2:** Created a consistent student experience across majors, including for students who do switch majors.
- **Outcome 3:** Identified institutional barriers for students close to completion.

Current Data: In UAA's spring 2021 *Quarterly Progress Update*, EAB reported that UAA students who made an advising appointment through the Seawolf Tracks enrollment campaign had a 14.6 percent increase in persistence to spring 2021 compared to those who did not. Students who were identified through the campaign had a 4.6 percent increase in persistence over the overall student population. While 100 percent of professional advisors utilize the platform for caseload management and appointment reporting, UAA continues to provide training opportunities and encourage more university-wide adoption of the appointment campaigns. The recent addition of student success markers and institutional predictive analytics offers advisors more tools to design strategic outreach and services based on student risk levels. The Seawolf Tracks faculty/staff platform and student mobile app greatly contributed to UAA's ability to quickly adjust to remote advising services and identify/assist at-risk students with technology limitations or decreases of engagement during COVID-19 terms. For more information related to outcomes 1 and 2, refer to AY2019 initiatives 1 and 4.

AY2019 Initiative 4: Established the Academic Advising Steering Committee

- **Outcome 1:** Created a consistent, uniform student experience that makes it easier for students to navigate the range of academic processes.
- **Outcome 2:** Established a central communication hub so all advisors receive timely and consistent information in order to do their jobs effectively.

Current Data: The Academic Advising Steering Committee continues to advance its establishment of academic advising roles and responsibilities. Currently, the committee is creating a common academic advising training program, advising philosophy, and advising unit transition processes as students move from community campuses to Anchorage, from first year advising to college units, or between college units through change of major processes.

Initiatives for AY2020

AY2020 Initiative 1: Building-Out the First Year Experience

- **Outcome 1:** Increased academic confidence, belongingness, and career exploration opportunities for first year degree-seeking students.
- **Outcome 2:** Improved first year pass rates and fall-to-fall persistence, and decreased major switching rates for students in returning years.

  Current Data: Please refer to AY2019 initiatives 1 and 2 and AY2020 initiatives 3 and 5. The Office of Student Success continues to build the first year experience framework and recently studied the efficacy of the optional first year seminar course, UNIV A150: University Studies. Most (95%) of students taking UNIV A150 are taking pre-GER-level writing and/or mathematics courses (95%), an at-risk group. Enrollment in UNIV A150 is correlated with taking a full-time course load (84%), and improved second semester (+9%) and third semester (+9%) retention in fall 2019 compared to all first time degree-seeking students. Alaska Native student enrollment in UNIV A150 has increased 12 percent since fall 2015. These data demonstrate the benefits of a first year seminar. Implementing the national best practice of a required first year experience student success course taught by the university's best faculty will provide students with skills needed to be successful in college. The Office of Student Success is currently seeking resources and faculty support to expand this option as a mandatory requirement for first year students.

AY2020 Initiative 2: Implementing a Peer Learning Assistant (PLA) Program

- **Outcome 1:** Increased course pass rates for sections that have an assigned PLA.

  Current Data: For the past several semesters, UAA has hired a team of 10 to 15 PLAs to work in some of our high DFW/high enrollment gateway courses in biology, chemistry, mathematics, physics, and psychology. Evaluation will be conducted post-COVID-19, as these semesters are far from usual. In AY2021 the university also adopted CircleIn, an app for remote peer-to-peer studying and collaboration; peer educators (tutors and PLAs) are added to the platform and can interact with students in a section. Following a fall 2020 pilot, UAA adopted CircleIn campus wide in spring 2021. A survey of students in the pilot found 59 percent thought CircleIn had a positive impact on class performance, 61 percent felt it helped them be more productive in the class, and 55 percent said it made them feel more confident about their chances of success in the class. An analysis of student success in classes where they used CircleIn will be done soon.

AY2020 Initiative 3: Implementing a Peer Mentoring Program for First Year Students

- **Outcome 1:** Increased persistence from 1st fall to 1st spring and then to 2nd fall for participating first-time freshman.
- **Outcome 2:** Improved belongingness for students who participate (both mentees and mentors).

  Current Data: AY2021 enrollment in the new Seawolf Mentor program exceeded expectations resulting in over 600 matches, over 10,000 peer-to-peer text messages, over 2,000 logged conversations, and 112 insight flags for student success outreach. The anticipated AY2021 post-program survey to participants will provide data specific to belongingness, measuring comfort at school, feelings of importance at the university, and feelings of support by the university. While the impact on persistence is pending, Mentor Collective conducted a midyear survey in December 2020 which showed promising indicators of impact. Mentees reported a 4.18/5 positive experience with their mentors, and mentors reported a 3.97/5 positive experience with mentees. These data suggest that improved belongingness might be higher among mentees than mentors.

To this end, UAA is extending the mentoring program to include mentee opportunities for sophomores, juniors, and seniors to connect with UAA graduate student and alumni mentors.

AY2020 Initiative 4: Refining the UAA Student Profile

- **Outcome 1:** Create a more accurate picture of students' commitments outside of school (e.g., working, caring for dependents).
- **Outcome 2:** Identify additional barriers to student success.

Current Data: In spring 2020, UAA launched its inaugural annual Revealing Institutional Strengths and Challenges survey with Percontor research firm. Administered in a random sample of courses with more than 25 students enrolled, the survey yielded a 50.2 percent response rate (397 students). The survey assessed student-identified barriers to success, views of their UAA experience, and realities as a student. Of the respondents, 25 percent reported working more than 30 hours a week in an off-campus job, 42 percent reported challenges related to work, 44 percent reported challenges paying for college and living expenses, and 34 percent reported challenges related to family. The detailed, actionable data also reveal student perspectives of UAA's institutional strengths and challenges related to affordability, campus environment, and social support.

AY2020 Initiative 5: Incorporating the NWCCU Retention, Persistence, and Student Success Academy

- **Outcome 1:** Develop more accurate placement with fewer students into pre-GER/0-level mathematics and writing courses, and have them successfully complete the classes, saving students time and money.
- **Outcome 2:** Increase the number of students taking mathematics and writing in the first 30 credits.
- **Outcome 3:** Increase coordination with UAA's K–12 partners.

Current Data: Through the NWCCU Retention, Persistence, and Student Success Academy, writing, mathematics, and quantitative studies faculty collaborated with the Office of Student Success to create a Course Matching Survey. Launched in spring 2020 and fast-tracked due to COVID-19, the Course Matching Survey incorporates additional measures (e.g., writing samples), assesses students' confidence, and determines students' willingness to commit to an Accelerated Learning Program or emporium model for the course. Early results are very encouraging; 70 percent of students who completed a writing sample were placed into a higher-level course than recommended by ACCUPLACER alone, and students who completed accelerated writing courses showed higher pass rates than students taking the GER alone. Plans for AY2021 show additional signs of progress. The writing department is increasing faculty placement development, accelerated course offerings, and writing sample review capacity. The quantitative studies department is dedicating faculty service hours to multiple measure data analysis, mathematics sequencing and pathway reviews, and accelerated course planning.