Summary and Further Research

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MLGCE Capstone Project

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When I started this research project, I had been working as the Assistant Registrar, transitioning to the position of Registrar. I wanted a project that would directly relate to my work in the Registrar's Office. Student retention was something I had heard about for many years, and I knew our student numbers were declining every year. I wanted to know if there was anything I could do to help increase student retention. When I started this project, I had yet to learn that the topic of student retention was so vast. I discovered student retention covers every department on campus, and our student retention plan starts as soon as a prospective student inquires about our college. The Registrar's Office is involved in many areas, and I could not cover everything. I realized that I had to limit it, and I chose to focus on academic advising as it relates to preregistration.

Preregistration can be confusing and complicated for students since there are many details they need to consider. In Cycle 1, I thought I could use digital technology to help students with preregistration, making preregistration more streamlined. I abandoned that direction when I realized that I was working outside of our student information system, creating far more work than I could maintain. The literature shows that technology cannot replace the advisor but should be used to enhance advising (Karp et al., 2020; Pardy, 2016). In Cycle 2, I focused on how to involve the program director as an academic advisor in the preregistration process. My research supported what the literature showed, that students want their advisors to care about all areas of their lives (Baird, 2020; Etway, 2017; Karp et al., 2020; McGill, 2021). Course selection and enrolling in courses are basic academic information, and anyone can help a student with it. However, an advisor who has already invested in the life of their advisee, knowing what they

like and what direction they plan to go after college, will be able to help the student better than anyone else. The way to streamline and simplify preregistration for the student is to have their advisor walk them through the process.

Previous to my project, program directors were not involved with preregistration. I asked them to lead a workshop before the end of the school year to provide all the information students needed to preregister for the fall semester. I provided the program director with the information they needed, and I trained them before they held the workshop. I also requested that they meet with their students one-on-one if necessary. I wanted all students to be enrolled in courses for the fall semester before they left college for the summer. I did not anticipate that some students would have barriers and be unable to enroll in courses. I realized that it is optional to have 100% of students enrolled in courses to help with retention. Instead, it is the process of working through preregistration with their advisor that will help with retention.

Further Research

If I were to continue for another research cycle, I would research more on training advisors. What do advisors need to know to be effective academic advisors? How could they be better prepared to help students with preregistration? My training with the advisors was just before the workshop. Some of the advisors still felt uncomfortable helping students with preregistration. Training must start well before the end of the year when advisors will hold the preregistration workshop. The training needs to start before the year begins.

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