

## **The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Post-Traditional Holistic Advising Model - Abstract**

### The Challenge

Traditional academic advising models do not adequately address many non-academic factors that ultimately impact academic and post-graduation success. UTEP students are predominantly first-generation (51%) and low income (73% Pell eligible, 37% from households with an annual income of less than \$20,000). In response to this student demographic, UTEP uses, with considerable success, a proactive and integrated advising framework for specific student populations, such as athletes. Scaling the use of a proactive, integrated framework for all students requires the use of new advising tools and a greater number of advisors with more specialized and advanced knowledge and skills (e.g., understanding how to help students address financial challenges).

### Addressing the Challenge

UTEP's advising redesign will provide each student with seamless, personalized support through an integrated approach, from admissions to graduation. This integrated approach includes a "financial social work" dimension that will bridge students' academic and financial realities, which will increase students' retention, decrease time to degree, and enhance post-graduation success.

UTEP will use grant funds for this initiative to strategically redesign advising campus-wide to deliver centralized, cohort-based advising that is:

- initiated in the Academic Advising Center (through a student's first 45 credit hours)
- completed in their discipline-specific college advising center
- focused on both academic and financial elements of a student's career
- dedicated to promoting and elevating students' engagement in high impact practice activities, including:
  - o Research and scholarly activity
  - o On-campus student employment
  - o Community engagement
  - o Capstone experience
  - o Creative activity
  - o Learning communities
  - o Internships
  - o Student leadership opportunities
  - o Study abroad/Study away
  - o First-year experience

Specifically, UTEP will use a structured, individualized framework to shape the academic and co-curricular plan for each student based on the student's unique characteristics (e.g., aspirations, non-academic commitments, expected academic engagement, financial need). The plan will be

developed during students' first-semester enrollment and will be designed to ensure success (as measured by retention) during the critical first term and first year. UTEP advisors will utilize statistical insights and advanced advising tools that have been developed and piloted throughout the last decade.

#### Impact on Students

In 2015, our student success models moved from "risk" groups to explaining and predicting the success of each individual student. Our new approach to advising focuses on understanding each student's situation and providing the right conditions for her/his success. In doing so, we will be in a position to provide support for all students, especially those from historically underserved populations. This is a fundamental change in how we think about student success and UTEP's role within this process.

UTEP's new integrated approach is engaging students up front through holistic advising that will empower students to cultivate individual agency and develop a competitive edge. At an institutional level, this approach will positively impact retention rates, degree completion, and time to degree.