Academic Navigator Team
Fall 2022 Summary Report
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The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Academic Navigator (AN) Team was formed to help close equity gaps in retention and degree completion for first generation, low-income, and ethnic and racial minoritized students in keeping with the N 2025 vision. In summer 2022, 10 fulltime staff members were hired to join a team that is centrally coordinated while embedded within each of UNL's undergraduate colleges. The Academic Navigator team intervenes with students who show early signs of falling off track in their first and second year at UNL. They work one-on-one with these students to identify and make appropriate referrals to campus/community resources as needed. This report summarizes the work of the AN team during fall 2022, from August 15th to December 22nd.

In fall 2022, ANs utilized a variety of systems and alerts to conduct outreach towards students who may be experiencing barriers toward their academic success. The AN team's initiatives conducted to drive student outreach included the following:

Start Smart Outreach: Start Smart is an online college transition module that most UNL students complete before the start of their first semester. Failure to pass a college's start smart module has proven to be a reliable indicator that a student could benefit from extra support in their first year.

Math CRA Outreach: Math Course Readiness Activity is administered in many first-year math courses to ensure students review and master foundational material before advancing to new lessons. On most occasions, failure of the CRA foreshadows failure of the entire course and academic probation. ANs introduced themselves in intro level Math classrooms as staff who may be reaching out to students and then conducted outreach to students who failed the Math CRA.

Performance Outliers: Chad Brassil, Faculty Director of Undergraduate Analytics, and the AN team are piloting an initiative that highlights students who are performance outliers according to their live Canvas scores. A Tableau dashboard displays students whose Canvas scores are less than 50% of their course section's average. ANs monitored this dashboard throughout the semester to offer support to students.

Husker Power Survey: The AN team responded to students with negative responses to three Husker Power Survey items: 1) I am considering not returning to UNL next semester, 2) I have questions but do not know where to go for answers, and 3) Somebody at the University cares about me. They also outreached to first-generation and underrepresented ethnic minoritized students who did not respond to the survey.

Holds Outreach: Leading into priority registration, the AN team used Tableau reports created by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics to alert and assist students in removing holds that would prevent them from registering for Spring courses. While students had a variety of holds on their accounts, the most common were for missing Health and Admission documents and balances in Student Accounts.

Unenrolled Outreach: Immediately following priority registration, the AN team conducted unenrolled outreach to promote students need to register for classes, assist in scheduling students on advisors' calendars, and identify students who would not be returning.

Pre-Session Outreach: First-year and sophomore students who enrolled in the Spring 2023 three-week pre-session were contacted in December to remind them that they had enrolled in a course that begins prior to the start of the regular Spring semester and to assist them with schedule changes if they had enrolled in the class accidentally.

Incomplete Outreach: Occasionally students who take incompletes are unaware of the implications of receiving this grade. Incompletes require a student to take action on their future schedule as well as to reach out to the faculty member to coordinate completing the course. The AN team contacted students who received incompletes to assist and answer questions regarding these processes.

Referrals/Follow Ups/Check-Ins: Other outreach conducted by the AN team was driven by referrals from faculty, staff and parents. ANs routinely followed up to check-in with students with whom they had been meeting or who had shown up on multiple lists and not responded. These communication attempts are outlined in this category.

Table A: Outreach by Initiative

Outreach Initiatives	Start Smart	Math CRA	Outliers	Husker Survey	Referrals & Follow	Holds	Unenrolled	Pre-Session	Incompletes
Attempts	88	367	188	521	1155	1917	1404	699	81
Student Notes with Replies embedded	1	14	9	138	249	114	195	25	9
Students with Multiple Notes about initiative	12	41	19	9	140	410	198	7	1
Student Meetings for students on outreach list	71	79	56	131	322	210	66	15	5
Unique Students on outreach list with AN Meetings	63	62	49	167	207	140	60	15	5

ANs were assigned to colleges proportionate to the number of first and second year-students based on enrollment in April 2022. CAS, COB, and Explore received two ANs, CASNR, CEHS, and COE received one AN, and CARCH, FPA, and JOMC shared 1 AN.

Table B: Student Engagement by College

Student Engagement by College	CASNR	CAS	CARCH	COB	CEHS	COE	EXPLORE	FPA	JOMC	Total
Appts with Navigator	68	88	11	170	45	106	188	20	18	714
Outreach Texts/Emails Sent	703	1032	62	1083	430	1527	1158	341	108	6444

*4 PAC Students participated in AN meetings

Academic Navigators College-Specific Responsibilities

While the AN team is centrally coordinated, ANs are embedded in UNL's eight undergraduate colleges and the Explore Center. In addition to centrally coordinated initiatives, the colleges utilized their ANs for college-specific retention initiatives. Examples of these initiatives include:

CASNR: Coordinated Start Smart course and a member of CASNR Student Success Working Group.

CAS: Coordinated Start Smart course, assisted in CAS Care student emergency assistance fund, and conducted student probation intakes.

ARH/FPA/JMC: Taught a section of JOMC 100: first-year seminar, developed and presented a degree planner workshop for FPA students, and working with CAST to develop a time management workshop for CARCH students.

COB: Met with students enrolling after New Student Enrollment, created recovery plans for students who failed Start Smart and BSAD 111 courses, engaged in winter break retention calling campaign, Start Smart recovery, and BSAD 111 recovery.

CEHS: Met with students on probation for 'Spring into Success" and drafted newsletter for CEHS first-generation students.

COE: Worked with faculty to identify at-promise students in Early Alert program and meeting with students on probation for "Spring into Success."

Explore: Taught POWER seminar for at-promise students, assisted those experiencing enrollment issues during priority registration, and advised Future Health Leaders student organization.

Student Outcomes

The primary goals of the AN team are to assist at-promise students who may be experiencing barriers and to lower equity gaps in achievement, particularly for UNL's first generation and underrepresented ethnic and racial minoritized students. The tables below provide a snapshot of who the Academic Navigators communicated with and/or met with during Fall 2022. Table C describes the academic performance outcomes of the students while table D shows a breakdown of both first-generation status and race/ethnicity of students who received communication from or met with an AN. For the most part, the tables show that AN's interactions are serving these targeted student populations. For instance, while first generation students make up around 24% of UNL's student population, 39.9% of AN's meetings were with first generation students. Similarly, 6.4% of student meetings were with Black students who make up 2.9% of the student body.

Table C: Academic Performance Outcomes for Students with Outreach and Appointment

	Unique Students	Fall 2022 Term GPA	Fall 2022 Percentage of Attempted Credit Hours Earned	# on Probation for Spring 2023
Students with Attempted Outreach	5629	2.38	84.9%	718
Students with appointment	768	2.33	75.2%	199

Table D: First-generation and racial/ethnic status of students who engaged with AN team

1st Gen Status/Race Ethnicity	Received Outreach	Met with Navigator	Overall UNL demographics of student population
First Generation	33.3%	39.9%	24%
Hispanic	4.1%	4.6%	8.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.6%	0.1%
Black	5.8%	6.4%	2.9%
Asian	5.5%	6.1%	0.1%
American Indian	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%
White	66.6%	65%	76.0%
2 or more races	14.7%	14.7%	3.6%
Unspecified	2.9%	2.1%	1.0%

Students Lived Experiences

Students who engaged with the AN team were experiencing a broad array of issues and lived experiences. Oftentimes, students are navigating multiple issues that require multiple touchpoints and referrals. These interactions and scenarios are difficult to represent statistically, so in addition to quantitative data, it's helpful to understand the full complexity and lived experiences of the students with whom the AN team is meeting. Below are five examples of the AN's ongoing work with students. These stories showcase how AN's work with students to process their complex issues and collaborate with campus partners to support them within the framework of the validating ecology we are trying to build at UNL. In this framework, rather than just refer students to websites and offices, the AN team strives to address students' holistic needs in an asset-focused manner that provides follow-up support and encouragement.

- James had popped up on our tableau report for a math class. Once I met with him, he mentioned really struggling to focus, and had some trouble adjusting to college. After some time had passed, I checked back in with him and he had decided he wanted to drop his math class, we talked about that and walked over to Husker Hub together to get more clear answers about the potential aid impact. James also had to complete his loan counseling to get the rest of his aid as well as had to find a work study job. I was able to walk him through the process and talk about what happens next. About a month or so later James met with me again after discovering that his aid package was not going to be enough to cover his bill. We talked about the Plummer Loan process, and I connected him with a member of the CASNR student success team who handles that process in conjunction with Dr. Karr.

- Laura was referred to me by her advisor. Her advisor had me sit in on their meeting to introduce me to Laura. Laura has been struggling academically this semester. She shared with me that she had academic accommodations in high school. I assisted Laura in filling out an application for SSD. Laura has been unable to get accommodations, as her mother will not give her access to her diagnosis paperwork. We connected with the health center about Laura getting a new diagnosis. This has not been an option either, as this is not covered by student fees. Laura and I meet on average once a week, and multiple times in a week during peak assignment times. I work with Laura in identifying resources and asking guiding questions as she works through assignments. Laura was especially struggling with a research assignment. We met at the library that week, and I coached Laura in how to ask the staff for help in finding materials. She was able to connect with the staff and find the sources that she needed for the assignment.

- Megan met with an advisor because she wanted to withdraw from all classes. She was experiencing mental health issues, homesickness, roommate difficulties, and wasn't going to class. I stopped in while she was with her advisor to introduce myself and let her know I was here to help support. After she was done meeting with her advisor, she came to my office and we talked about how things were going, what her goals were, and how I can help support her through the semester. At the end of the meeting, she decided to drop one class rather than all her classes! We agreed to meet on a weekly basis as a touch point for accountability and support. We have met every week this semester, and she has been much better about going to class. She still continues to struggle with mental health issues, but feels supported and cared about by staff in the Explore center. She is enrolled for spring and plans to continue her education here at UNL!

- John had a problem with their visa and was still in home country. They e-mailed all professors but did not hear back from math. I e-mailed the math professor and student. The professor said he thought he had replied but it was still in his outbox. I was able to connect John with the professor and I continued to meet with them regularly. John is still in India and hopefully will arrive in December.

- Erin is a first-year student from Omaha, who was referred to me for a Late NSE appointment because of her ACT score. After one of the longer NSE appointments I've had due to technical difficulties, cohort requirements, and scheduling conflicts with her potential Husker Athletics Manager position, we found her a schedule that she felt she'd be able to be successful with and balance her other commitments. Throughout the meeting, it became clear to me that Erin had high aspirations. Her excitement for her position within Husker Athletics radiated through the Zoom appointment. We have met several times throughout the semester to check in and refer out to resources (such as the Math Resource Center and CAST) in order to maintain her grades. She has updated me on how much she loves her position. She works with the men's basketball team every single morning at practice and at every game; offering water, wiping up sweat, and feeding bounce passes. At points where she has lost motivation for schoolwork, we have discussed how the classes are helping her get to where she wants to end up in the future: a career in sports business, preferably with the NBA. The resilience she's shown against the transitional challenges of the first semester of college would suggest that she'll get where she wants to be someday, and I'm excited to watch that happen for her!

Lessons Learned and Spring Plans

The AN team has been able to identify barriers to student success and respond to them: Working with UNL's at-promise student population has allowed the AN team to identify student barriers that may be occurring on a large scale. One example includes the timing of registration holds which is being reviewed by the Retention Leaders Council.

Training needs to be extensive and ongoing: The broad array of issues and complex situations has meant the AN team has had to adopt a generalist approach by knowing a little bit about a lot of topics. The AN team has met with many campus units including but not limited to CAST, CARE, SSS, Student Advocacy and Support, Military/Veteran Success Center, and OASIS. However, there are still has many more connections to build that are necessary to make effective handoffs to campus partners including CAPS, SSD, SLICE, Honors and Big Red Resilience.

Central coordination has led to cross-pollination of ideas: Focus group feedback from the AN team expressed that members valued having teammates to rely on for support, assistance, and connection. Additionally, ANs have been able to share approaches and initiatives they are seeing in other colleges and incorporate them into their own work.

There are opportunities to improve communication between colleges and AN team: Feedback from the AN team and co-supervisors referenced that communication between the centralized team and colleges could be improved. Communication was described as "top down" by the colleges. Remedies discussed for this spring include a monthly meeting with all co-supervisors in addition to monthly one-on-one meetings.

Role delineation remains challenging: Since the grant approval, the AN team has tried to delineate between Academic Advisors and Academic Navigators. While inroads have been made, overlap between the two positions has caused some confusion for units outside of Academic Affairs. Talking points on role delineation were developed and should become clearer as the AN team meets more campus partners.

Methods of student engagement vary by Initiative: The AN team found that quite a bit of student engagement occurred outside of traditional in-person interactions. Many student issues were resolved via text including student registration holds and answering questions spurred from the Husker Power Survey.

Commuting students present challenge: Throughout the semester ANs were able to incorporate Residence Life and/or Sorority and Fraternity Life to assist in student interventions for students un-responsive to outreach. Off campus unresponsive students have proven much harder to engage.

Aiming to increase in-person interactions: While the data shows that the AN team has identified metrics that show many students could benefit from extra support, the next challenge will be identifying ways to increase in-person interactions which best allow ANs to identify holistic student needs.

New tools to assist in case management: In Spring 2023 the Student Success Hub will enable ANs to add students to a cohort that is easy to track and can includes success plans that students can see in their SSH portal. IEA has developed a Tableau dashboard that will allow the AN team to create a custom view that allows them to easily monitor an entire cohort's student success metrics.