

## Academic Navigator Team Spring 2023 Summary Report

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 Spring 2023, from January 1st to May 31<sup>st</sup>.

In Spring 2023, 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:

**Math Department Collaborations:** Math continues to be a strong collaborative partner with the AN team. AN's visit Math classes at the start of the semester to introduce themselves and their work. Math shares early indicators such as the Course Readiness Activity Results and first exam grades with the AN team that show a student may be beginning to struggle in the class. Additionally, members of the AN team have developed graphics to help describe to students the correlation between class attendance and homework completion with success in the class.

**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. This Spring the number of instructors that have opted into the performance pilot has increased significantly with some colleges opting to have all courses included.

**Holds Outreach and Elevation:** 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 courses. The AN team's work on this helped elevate concerns about the use of enrollment holds and identified barriers in the hold removal process.

**Unenrolled Outreach and Students Not Returning:** Immediately following priority registration, the AN team began unenrolled outreach efforts to promote class registration. These efforts are ongoing and will continue until the beginning of Fall term. The AN team is piloting the use of a new indicator that allows them to flag when a student is not returning. This indicator will allow

for more efficient tracking and outreach of unenrolled students and should help with projecting student retention.

**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.

**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.

**Salesforce CRM Text Messaging**

As part of the Salesforce CRM launch in Spring 2023, Academic Navigators are piloting Text Magic to conduct outreach via SMS message to students. Each Navigator is assigned a local phone number and when student responses are sent via email to the AN and automatically logged into the student’s case record.

**Table A: Text Messages Sent by College**

Text Messages Sent by College	CASNR	CAS	CoB	CEHS	COE*	Explore	FPA/JOMC /CARCH	Total
Text Messages Sent	592	1366	820	669	1999	1985	261	7692
Response Rate	48.1%	56.2%	60.2%	71.2%	64.2%	72.3%	62.5%	63.8%

\*Does not include texts sent to students on Scott Engineering Campus in Omaha

**Increase in Student Appointments**

One area identified for improvement in the Fall 2022 Semester Report was to increase the number of in-person interactions. In Fall 2022, AN’s were successful at identifying at-promise students and engaging them in communication, but in person engagement trailed text/email engagement significantly. In Spring 2023, we saw an increase in appointments across all colleges, and an overall increase of 159%.

**Table B: Student Appointments by College**

Student Appointments by College	CASNR	CAS	COB	CEHS	COE*	EXPLORE	FPA/JOMC /CARCH	Total
Fall 2022 Appointments	68	88	170	45	106	188	49	714
Spring 2023 Appointments	70	533	395	215	289	238	110	1850

\*Appointments do not include those from Scott Engineering Campus in Omaha

### **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:** Co-presenting at college session during orientation, preparing Start Smart course, facilitating dismissal and financial aid appeals.

**CAS:** Coordinating college Start Smart course, assisting in CAS Care student emergency assistance fund, working with students placed on probation.

**ARH/FPA/JMC:** Assisting students on probation, participating in all three colleges' orientation presentation, collaborated with CAST to develop and present a time management workshop for CARCH students.

**COB:** Acting as recovery coaches for students on probation, developed and leading a program to assist students who do not pass BSAD 111, working with students who at-promise students during New Student Enrollment.

**CEHS:** Meeting 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 met with students on probation for "Spring into Success." Teaching section of ENGR 10. Helping students with enrollment following new student orientation.

**Explore:** Teaching POWER seminars for at-promise students, coordinating and teaching Start Smart course,

### **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 Spring 2023. 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, 37.1% of AN's meetings were with first generation students. Similarly, 6.1% 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**

	<b>Spring 2023 Count</b>	<b>Spring 2023 Term GPA</b>	<b>Spring 2023 Average Credit Hours Earned</b>
Texts Sent	7692	2.597	12.83
Appointments Held	1850	2.585	12.75

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

1st Gen Status/Race Ethnicity	Text Messages Received (% of overall texts received)	Met with Navigator (% of overall meeting with AN)	Overall UNL demographics of student population
First Generation	2611 (34%)	686 (37.1%)	24%
Hispanic	1130 (14.7%)	355 (19.2%)	8.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	326 (4.2%)	114 (6.1%)	0.1%
Black	563 (7.3%)	125 (6.8%)	2.9%
American Indian	26 (0.3%)	7 (0.4%)	0.2%
White	4967 (64.6%)	1079 (58.3%)	76.0%
2 or more races	344 (4.5%)	101 (5.5%)	3.6%
Unspecified	60 (0.8%)	17 (0.9%)	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.

Joe is a first generation, underrepresented student from Nebraska. He showed up on several initiative lists throughout the first semester. Second semester, he spent most of the first few months away from campus, not attending classes. On April 13<sup>th</sup>, I received a message from our CoB Inclusive Business Leaders Coordinator asking me to meet within the afternoon about Jon because he had "finally responded to their messages". Jon had been in contact with the program's director about returning to

campus and finding any sort of way to finish classes this semester despite the family emergencies he had been tending to throughout the first half of the spring, explaining his absence and lack of communication. Together, we all put together a plan to figure out the best logistical way for him to collaborate with his professors, earn credits for the courses he was enrolled in, and set himself up as well as possible to return in the fall. Jon has an uphill battle in front of him, but he has a lot of advocates in his corner, and I'm happy to be one of them.

Tim is a student who had a really difficult fall semester. He acknowledged that he made many bad decisions and made friends with people who were bad influences. He was on probation 1 and had a long talk with advisor about making changes for spring. His advisor introduced me to him, we decided to meet on a weekly basis to hold academics accountable, getting re-connected on campus, and starting off on new fresh foot. The student has joined several new RSOs, made friends with students living in dorm, and is set to come off probation at the end of the semester.

Sarah scheduled an appointment with me. We had texted the prior semester following unregistered outreach, but I had not had any contact with her since then. Sarah missed her initial appointment with me. When I texted her to see if she was still able to meet, she sent me a picture of a totaled car, and said she would need to get back to me. Sarah later rescheduled her appointment. Sarah shared that she was not enjoying her time at UNL. She lives in Omaha and commuting to UNL campus had already been a bit of a hurdle. With her recent car accident, she had no transportation to campus. Sarah was already not passing her current classes and saw no way to improve before the end of the semester. Sarah wanted to transfer to UNO but had hit several barriers. First, she experienced technology issues when attempting to send her transcripts. After working through that, Sarah said she was told she was not eligible to transfer due to being on academic probation, and she would need to get that sorted out at UNL first. Sarah said she felt stuck and didn't see any way forward. She wanted to withdraw from all her classes. We talked through some things to be aware of before dropping, mainly connecting with Husker Hub to see impact on financial aid. I also encouraged Sarah to meet with her advisor. She missed her last advisor meeting and was hesitant to try and meet again. I contacted UNO to advocate on her behalf and see if there was a path towards being able to transfer. I connected with Jonathan Acosta, director of advising at UNO. Jonathan clarified that Sarah was able to transfer, and steps she needed to take. I connected Sarah to Jonathan, and he looped in the admissions team to help support her.

### **Lessons learned and Future Plans**

**New Student Enrollment:** The timing of the hiring and onboarding of the AN team last summer did not allow for much promotion of the Academic Navigator team to the incoming UNL class. This summer, AN's will be mentioned throughout the day in various presentations. Additionally, the AN team is represented at the information fair every morning at the beginning of orientation where they are given a handout introducing them to their colleges' AN team.

**There is an opportunity to connect more strongly with student affairs:** Because they are located within the colleges, the AN team has built strong relationships within the colleges. Opportunities exist to build stronger relationships with our Student Affairs campus partners. We are looking to build stronger relationships with residence life prior to the Fall term to improve collaborations. Additionally, we will be working with Student Advocacy and Response

and Services for Students with Disabilities to better outline for faculty when to make a referral to which service.

### **Academic Navigator Representation across the University**

Beyond the job duties and responsibilities outlined for them, members of the AN team are representatives on cross-campus committees and user groups. These include:

- CRM User Council
- Academic Advising Association (AAA) Executive Team
- AAA Diversity and Inclusion committee
- AAA Conference Planning Committee
- Undergrad Education and Student Success' Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee
- Probation Language Sub-Committee

**Monthly Co-supervisor meetings:** We implemented these meetings beginning December 2022. They have made it easier to share data among the co-supervisors, share ideas among colleges, get feedback on AN initiatives, and norm processes for all the Academic Navigators such as shadowing and performance evaluations.

### **Increase in Campus Recognition and Role Delineation**

Role delineation proved to be a challenge for the implementation of the AN team on campus, but we have seen an increase in referrals from faculty and staff in Spring 23. Campus partners in Title IX, Military and Veterans Success Center, Admissions, and the Office of Sorority and Fraternity Life have sought assistance from an AN team member to help a student navigate complex barriers. Additionally, in Spring 2023, we received 83 referrals from faculty members through our online referral link. We also found that students have begun to understand the nature of the Academic Navigator role. For example, one student preemptively texted their Academic Navigator about a grade of incomplete they received acknowledging that the Academic Navigator would eventually notice and reach out to them.