Message from the Dean

Transitioning from high school to college can be fraught with many challenges, particularly in the general area of college success skills and the specific area of preparation for mathematics. In order to help create a pathway for transitioning successfully into college, the ASC is building upon last summer’s pilot Summer Bridge, “Expect Success” Program. The program offered this summer will be implemented for two sessions, instead of one session, and a Fall Expect Success Bridge Program will also be offered.

Over 140 students participated in the Summer 2012 program and a number of those students proved to be successful at college-level mathematics. This summer over 400 students will attend. “Expect Success” is part of the ASC’s tutoring program, and the Bridge provides online, self-paced reviews, as well as live tutors. Interested students may contact the Academic Success Center at 702-895-3177.

Hixson-Lied Success Scholars Wrap-Up a Successful Inaugural Year

The inaugural Hixson-Lied Success Scholars culminate their first academic year this May. The Hixson-Lied Success Scholarship Program provides awarded Nevada students academic and financial ($1,250 per semester) support and provides them with an opportunity to serve their peers. The Scholarship is geared toward students who are facing academic, financial, and/or personal challenges in their academic path. Hixson-Lied Scholar, Brittany Prescott, explains that this Scholarship “has given me a chance to go to college, persevere, and become the first college graduate in my family.” In addition, the Hixson-Lied Success Scholars can attest how this Scholarship is different than many other scholarships. “It requires more out of its recipients, which includes improving ourselves, completing service hours to help others, and essentially becoming better people,” says Victoria Mitchell. Since the beginning of the academic year, the Hixson-Lied Success Scholars have collectively completed over 1,000 service hours. Service hours include mentoring and tutoring other students, informing students of UNLV services and opportunities, and working with the COLA 100E First Year Seminar students and instructors. In addition to their service, Hixson-Lied Success Scholars meet regularly with an academic success coach, academic advisor, and faculty mentor. For more updates on the Hixson-Lied Success Scholars Program, visit the monthly newsletters written by the Scholars at http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu.
Chyna Miller, Tutoring Coordinator, and Adam Koebke, Math 126 instructor, presented “Improving Remedial Math Outcomes with Adaptive Technology” at the 2013 Nevada ACT Education Symposium in Reno, NV. The theme of the conference was “Show Me the Data: Advancing Standards to Measure Success” and their presentation fit in with this theme as they discussed the implementation and success of the 2012 Expect Success: Summer Bridge Program. Their presentation highlighted the personal challenges students deal with when doing math and how those are compounded with the financial impact of having to take one or two semesters of remedial math courses. Taking extra preparatory math courses can create an extra financial burden and delay graduation. The Summer Bridge Program used KNEWTON, an online adaptive math program, to help students who placed into remedial math refresh their math skills. Upon completing the Bridge program, students retook a placement exam and 85 percent of them placed into a 100-level math course, which allowed them to skip one or even two semesters of remedial math. The program was infused with mini-lessons on college success and how to manage math anxiety. The combination of adaptive computer lessons with live tutorials provided a rich learning atmosphere. This year, the Summer Bridge Program has been expanded to two sessions where we hope to serve upwards of 400 incoming and current UNLV students who place into remedial math. Students enrolled in this FREE program will spend three-hours a day/five days a week on campus over the summer reviewing their math skills.

For more information about the program, stop by the ASC or visit us online at academicsuccess.unlv.edu/learningsupport/bridge.
Academic Advising: Increasing Student Connections for New UNLV Students

As legislative and funding priorities shift, UNLV continues to refocus its efforts towards academic initiatives that help strengthen a new student’s initial connection to the campus (i.e. New Student Orientation) and resolve to finishing their degree at UNLV (i.e. graduation visualization).

Decades of research and our own institutional observations support the belief that “orientation can be the defining moment in the transition to college for the student” (Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student, 2005). With academics at the hub of the retention wheel, no other professional on campus is positioned more influentially for first-year students than are academic advisors.

Jayne Drake, past president of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), in The Role of Academic Advising in Student Retention and Persistence, sites researchers such as George Kuh, Vincent Tinto, and Richard Light, when making the claim that advising should be “positioned squarely as the vital link” in the retention equation. The earlier a campus professional (i.e. advisor) connects with a new freshman, in a meaningful way, the more likely they are to persist and graduate. The proactive service model the ASC has adopted “early and often” is based on experiences and data, supporting the findings of these renowned retention experts.

All the more reason why the Academic Success Center has adopted a comprehensive academic advising strategy to enhance meaningful student connections for Exploring Majors who attend New Student Orientation (NSO). Students, through this strategy, will benefit from the following three-pronged approach:

1) Pre-New Student Orientation – The Unit will employ an academic advising tutorial that will serve as a pre-orientation tool in which newly admitted Exploring Majors will be directed to complete prior to attending New Student Orientation. Through this online tool, students will be introduced to the ASC and their primary academic advisor, provided an outline of the general requirements to obtain a degree at UNLV (General Education Requirements), and offered instructions on how to use MyUNLV. The tutorial is designed to better prepare students for a more academically meaningful experience during NSO by giving them the information in a self-paced interactive learning environment; utilizing familiar technology.

2) New Student Orientation – The current content for our NSO presentation will be revamped to ensure it is consistent with established learning outcomes and encourages meaningful interactions between academic advisors and advisees. Students will have the opportunity to review the General Education Requirements in a fun and interactive environment. The utilization of active and collaborative learning pedagogies will enhance the student experience and will build deeper student connections. Additionally, academic advisors will spend more time with students on graduation visualization and connection to the ASC during the New Student Orientation.

3) Post-New Student Orientation – Student and academic advisor contacts will continue beyond NSO. Exploring Majors who have earned fewer than 30 credits will be required to meet with their advisor during the semester mastering the advising curriculum and course sequencing. Further connections will be fostered through the implementation of the First-Year Seminar COLA 100E academic advising presentation and assignment. Each semester, Academic Advisors will teach one session of COLA 100E, covering critical academic advising topics, reminding students of important dates, and discussing career exploration tools. The presentation will culminate with an assignment that will help prepare students for their next academic advising session. The Academic Success Center is excited about the academic advising initiative because it takes a student-centered approach providing advising touch points at the most critical times for first-time freshmen. It utilizes research-driven methods to connecting students to “high-impact” learning experiences. With this thoughtful strategy, UNLV Exploring Majors will engage in academic advising activities that value deeper connections. In addition, the academic advising initiative complements the efforts of campus units such as Admissions and the Office of the Executive Director for Advising by increasing NSO registration, decreasing no-shows, and improving the quality of the student experience during NSO academic advising sessions.

References
Drake, J. K. (2011). The role of academic advising in student retention and persistence. Wiley Online Library, Wiley Periodicals, Inc.
The Academic Success Center welcomes Sydney Lisy as an Athletic Academic Advisor for UNLV Student-Athlete Academic Services. Sydney will be the advisor for Volleyball, Men’s Tennis and Men’s Soccer. Her additional responsibilities will include tutor coordination and rules education. Prior to joining UNLV, Sydney served as the Compliance Coordinator at Chicago State University and Arkansas State University. Sydney graduated Cum Laude with her Juris Doctor in 2011 from Valparaiso University. She was a Honors Program Scholar and member of the Moot Court Honors Society at Valpo. Sydney was admitted to the Illinois Bar in November of 2011. In 2007, Sydney earned her Bachelors of Science in Chemistry with a minor in Atmospheric Science from the University of Illinois where she was a member of the Fighting Illini varsity softball team.

ASC Launches Academic Transitions Unit

The Academic Success Center has launched a new unit entitled, Academic Transitions. This unit is committed to providing outstanding services and programs dedicated to students in or approaching transitional stages, such as the transition from high school to college, from the first year to the second year, and other junctures in the educational pipeline. Led by Dr. Dan Gianoutsos, this unit encompasses the First- and Second-Year Programs for Exploring Majors, the Early Studies Program, the ASC Testing Center, and the Hixson-Lied Success Scholarship Program. Dean Ann McDonough explains, “As our First-Year programs have expanded, it became clear that the ASC needed to form a distinct unit to both manage the growth and help to address the unique needs of First-Year students. We, therefore, are pleased to launch the Academic Transitions unit within the ASC to foster the growth of our First-Year programs. Dr. Gianoutsos is doing a great job developing this important area.”

For more information on Academic Transitions, visit http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/Transitions/.

ASC 2013 Awards

The Academic Success Center hosted its annual Honors Ceremony on April 11, 2013. In addition to honoring the Dean’s Honor List Recipients and Exploring Majors Scholarship Recipients, the following faculty, staff, students, and community partners were awarded:

ASC Student Awards
- Jad Khalil, ASC Student Award
- Victoria Mitchell, ASC Student Award
- Sasha Scott, Graduate Student Employee Award
- Nick Eggen, Undergraduate Student Employee Award
- Adam Rowan, Special Recognition

ASC Staff Awards
- David Wedley, Student-Centered Award
- Mary Belletti, Service Award
- Dan Gianoutsos, Service Award
- Tiffany Trass, Special Recognition

ASC Faculty Awards
- Christopher Heavey, College of Liberal Arts
- Brackley Frayer, Department of Theatre
- Campus Community Partner Awards
  College of Engineering
  Lee Business School

Dr. Chris Heavey, Dr. Ann McDonough, and Dr. Dan Gianoutsos