NMHU Persistence and Completion Academy

November 18, 2016: NMHU applied to participate in the Persistence and Completion Academy

March 31, 2017: Brandon Kempner and Edward Martinez attended the Persistence and Completion Academy Introductory meeting in Chicago

May 15, 2017: The Persistence and Completion Academy Mentor, Dr. Susan Wood, visited NMHU and met with administration, faculty and staff

June 19 and 20: The NMHU Retention Team participated in the Academy Round Table in Oak Brook, IL. Team members who participated include:

- Edward Martinez, VP SEM
- Casey Applegate-Aguilar, Director of Academic Enrichment and Retention
- Elizabeth Ratzlaff, Director of ARMAS
- Kimberly Blea, Dean of Students
- Maxine Salas, Institutional Effectiveness and Research Associate
- Thomasinia Ortiz-Gallegos, Registrar
- Juan Gallegos, Assistant Professor of English / Director of the Writing Center

Team members that were unable to participate in the round table include:

- Carol Linder, AVPAA
- Benito Pacheco, Director of Academic Support

Academy Overview

The purpose of the academy is to "provide participating institutions a structured, mentor-facilitated, four-year program aimed at evaluating and improving student persistence and completion rates." The academy is structured in cohorts, where a group of institutions progress through the four years together. Each institution is assigned a Mentor and a Scholar that provide assistance and feedback to their assigned institution based on project information that each participating institution provides on the Collaboration Network site. The Collaboration Network also allows institutions in the Academy to build connections and maintain dialog with other institutions in the Academy and share strategies and ideas to improve their persistence and completion initiatives.

The NMHU Retention Team developed a Data Book prior to attending the Academy Roundtable. At the roundtable, the team used the data book to discuss potential issues in retention at NMHU as indicated by the data. Some of the issues that surfaced include:
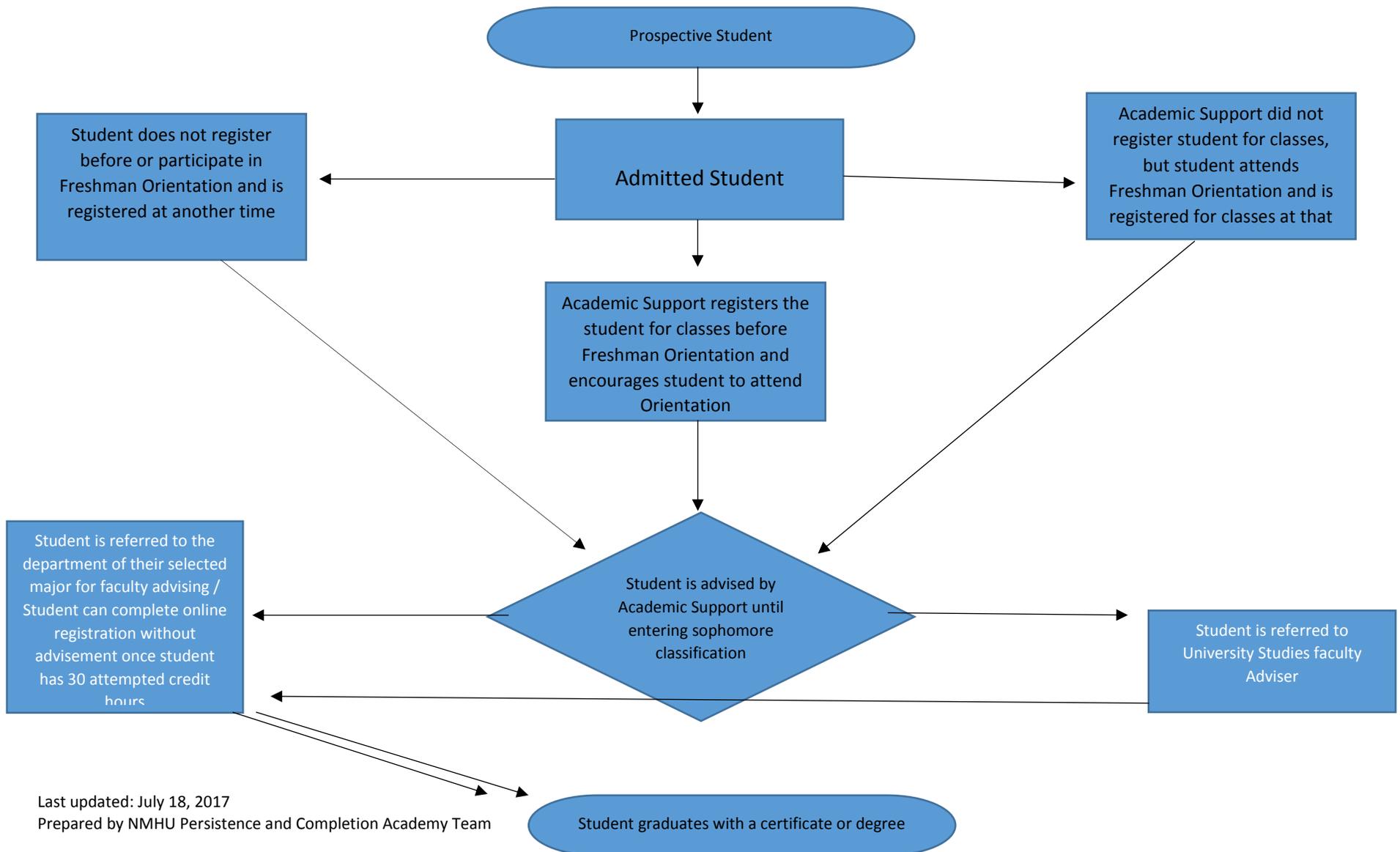
- The lack of a data warehouse where standardized data can be queried by the various stakeholders
- The lack of a standardized process of obtaining data
- The need to collaboratively identify key retention indicators and develop reports on each of the indicators
- The lack of a set of standardized reports and data definitions that can be used across the institution to analyze and use for retention strategy decision making
- The need for more communication and collaboration among students, faculty, staff and administration in regards to retention, persistence and completion
- The need for a web landing page specifically for retention, persistence and completion

For the project, the retention team also identified NMHU's current advising model and the gaps within the model that may be contributing to our low retention numbers. See flow chart of NMHU's current advising model.
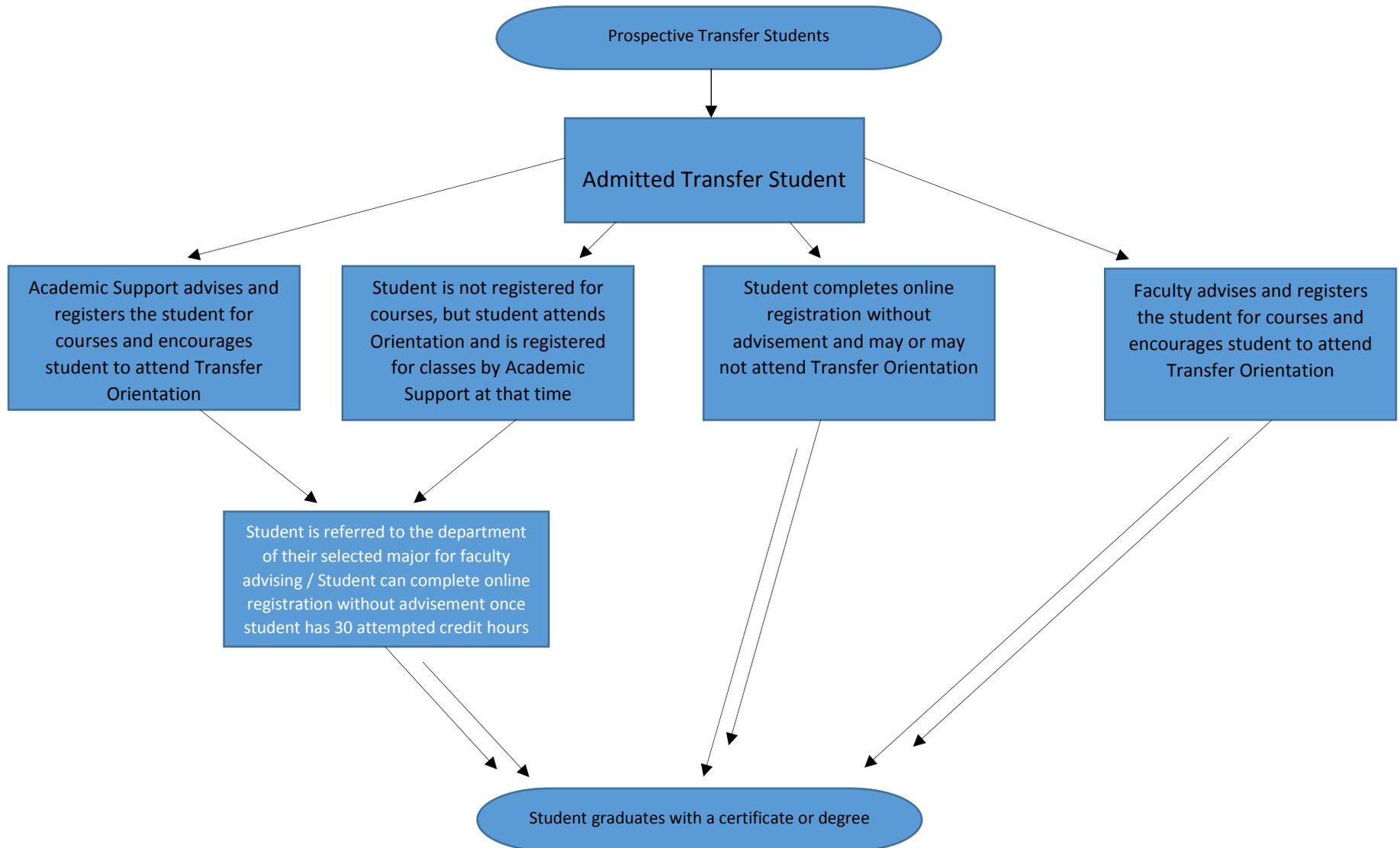
NMHU FRESHMAN ADVISING MODEL

Prospective Student

Admitted Student

Student does not register before or participate in Freshman Orientation and is registered at another time

Academic Support did not register student for classes, but student attends Freshman Orientation and is registered for classes at that

Academic Support registers the student for classes before Freshman Orientation and encourages student to attend Orientation

Student is referred to the department of their selected major for faculty advising / Student can complete online registration without advisement once student has 30 attempted credit hours

Student is advised by Academic Support until entering sophomore classification

Student is referred to University Studies faculty Adviser

Student graduates with a certificate or degree

Last updated: July 18, 2017
Prepared by NMHU Persistence and Completion Academy Team

NMHU TRANSFER ADVISING MODEL

Prospective Transfer Students

Admitted Transfer Student

Academic Support advises and registers the student for courses and encourages student to attend Transfer Orientation

Student is not registered for courses, but student attends Orientation and is registered for classes by Academic Support at that time

Student completes online registration without advisement and may or may not attend Transfer Orientation

Faculty advises and registers the student for courses and encourages student to attend Transfer Orientation

Student is referred to the department of their selected major for faculty advising / Student can complete online registration without advisement once student has 30 attempted credit hours

Student graduates with a certificate or degree

The team realized that little to no hard data exists to support why the team believed there were gaps in the current advising model. The team realized that many of the gaps were being identified using anecdotal data based on our own experiences and student testimonials when they visit our offices with a concern. Below is a list of some of the anecdotal evidence.

1. Lack of knowledge in course sequence (some classes are only offered in fall, spring, every other year, etc.)
2. Sequence of courses are not followed
3. Specific electives not met (certain electives are required by department and staff advisers are not aware)
4. Programs change (staff advisers not notified, Degree Audit is not reflective of changes)
5. Co/Pre-requisites are not being advised
6. The lack of a standardized transfer matrix requires the department to decide upper division transfer credits
7. During some semesters, core is not reflected on student's course schedule
8. Course time conflicts are not addressed
9. Faculty are unavailable to advise (in class, no office hours listed, unavailable in the summers)
10. Student feels like a bother to faculty
11. Lack of rapport between student and faculty
12. Not all roadmaps are available (not created for students who come in need of developmental coursework)
13. Roadmaps for some departments are not created for transfer students
14. Articulation agreements with community colleges are not always shared with admissions office
15. No particular office/person is identified as responsible for articulation agreements with community colleges
16. Upper division of 45 hours is not always discussed/addressed by faculty advisers
17. No response from email and voicemails between faculty and staff advisers
18. Communication is limited between faculty and staff
19. Many substitutions for required courses / some majors intend for substitutions to be used on a regular basis
20. Students, faculty and staff unsure of which students are assigned to which faculty advisers

Based on this discussion, we all agreed that anecdotal evidence indicates there is a breakdown in our advising model, that we have little to no hard data regarding advising, and that we could not know for certain what issues exist within our advising model and processes without collecting data. Therefore, the team developed the below four year plan, which begins with in-depth exploration of advising at NMHU, as NMHU's Persistence and Completion Academy Project.

The team determined that:

- During year one, data will be collected to allow for the development of a shared campus-wide understanding of advising. The data will be analyzed to identify issues and develop strategies for improved advising.
- During year two, potential strategies and/or pilot programs will be identified based on the year-one exploration of data. The strategies/pilot projects listed in the table below are examples of what may be developed.
- During year three, the below identified strategies/pilot programs will be implemented, including formative evaluations and adjustments of the projects based on these evaluations.
- At the end of year three and beginning of year four, the data for each pilot will be analyzed to determine if goals were met. These data will be disseminated to the campus community for feedback. Based on feedback, recommendations will be made for moving forward.

YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4
Exploration	Pilot Program(s)	Implementation	Assessment

Exploration:
➢Campus Discussions/Focus Groups/Survey Questions
   o Determine how "advising" is defined by faculty, staff, students, and administration at NMHU
➢Collection of data:
   o Determine number of applications for degree are incomplete
   o Determine number of substitution forms submitted
   o Determine number of major/minor forms submitted
   o Determine number of credit hours at graduation by major
   o Determine number of junior and senior students seeing staff advisor
   o Determine number of students seeing faculty advisor before registration [question of registration screen]
   o Determine student use of degree audit by class
   o Determine Time to Degree completion by program
   o Determine NSSE Advisement question results
   o Determine amount of Degree Audit use by student
   o Determine number of faculty commenting in degree audit
   o Determine number of incorrect adviser listings on Degree Audit
➢Research Centralized/De-centralized models
➢Research advisement best practices
	Pilot Program(s)/Strategies
	  (Dependent on data from first year)
	➢ Planning and soliciting buy-in/approval from all campus stakeholders
	➢ Registration codes (require students to meet with an adviser prior to registering every semester)
	➢ Develop process on how to determine which students are leaving prior to their departure
	➢ Develop follow-up plan and administer exit survey
	➢ Course release for faculty adviser per department
	➢ Advisement training for faculty and staff
	➢ Staff adviser assigned to school/college (1/2 time in Academic Support)
	➢ Logic model for each project
	➢ Provide Degree Audit training to faculty and staff
	➢ Revise current Faculty Advising Manual to reflect campus-wide advising processes and procedures based on NMHU Persistence and Completion Project recommendations
		Implementation
		• Formative Assessment and Revision
		• Develop a working timeline
		   o Implementation time
		   o Responsibilities
		   o Formative assessment time(s)
		   o Revisions
		   o Pilot completion date
		• Forums
			Assessment
			• Assessment of pilot project(s) and sharing results
			• Findings/Limitations/Recommendations
			• Develop Proposal
			• Disseminate
			• Forums

During the Academy, the team met with other institutions to discuss our plan. Below are some of the advice/recommendations that some of the individuals provided.

Notes/Practices from Pair/Share Session

➢ Caution with faculty passing all advising over to staff (can be overwhelming if not enough staff resources)
➢ Faculty to Adviser ratio
➢ Prohibit probationary students from registering on their own (an idea to explore)
➢ Require all students to meet with an advisor before they are allowed to register for classes
➢ Share Data books with other Academy cohort participants to get ideas of how other institutions are querying and analyzing data
➢ Developmental Reading and writing / math
➢ Buy-in from faculty and support from administration (invested)
➢ Keep core team together from inception (IR staff)
➢ Changing some of our programs from Bachelor's to Associate's degrees or minors
➢ Prohibit students from enrolling in a class that has already met
➢ Academic withdrawal form to Registration (ten-day headcount)
➢ Secret information – make explicit some of the practices that "people in the know" use to navigate the system and share with everyone