

One-Time Non-Base Investment Proposal: Step 2

(Please limit the proposal narrative and attachments to 10 pages)

Proposal Name: Improving Advising: Realizing the 2011 Taskforce's Three Main Recommendations

1. Provide a description of the project being proposed. (5 points)

The three main recommendations of the taskforce, which we propose to realize, are:

- A. An interactive, self-enhancing, natural-language advising website (development covered through base funding) through which students can find correct answers to most questions online
- B. A communication structure through which all advisors, which is to include all faculty engaged in academic advising, share information about recent program and policy changes, developments, trends, and opportunities for our students
- C. An "advising czar", a central advisor whose main responsibilities will be keeping up the website, organizing student information events, facilitating communication with all advising faculty and staff on campus through newsletters, brownbags, forums, website etc. This person would serve as a liaison between the Registrar, Academic Affairs, the CDC, the SRCs, Student Support Services, and advising faculty and staff; we propose that he or she be located within the new Advising Gateway (if it were to be built) and report to the Registrar, and that the Registrar's Office website host this new, interactive advising website.

2. Describe how the project will drive positive transformational change. (5 points)

The role of advising for a successful and positive academic experience cannot be overstated. Studies such as the recent Noel-Levitz analysis of our students' experiences, polls by the MSSA and various offices and workgroups on campus, as well as standardized student feedback reports (e.g. NSSE) show that our students often find it hard to find the right office to go to, that they are given the "run-around", or that the information received is incorrect. Advising stands out as one of the things we do less well.

The Advising Taskforce 2010-11, which had student, staff, and faculty members and regularly met with the Dean of Students and with Academic Affairs, carried out a comprehensive and comparative study of advising structures on our campus that resulted in a report and a set of recommendations.

This project seeks to implement a set of three such recommendations that are cost-efficient, would help us utilize our ample existing advising resources better, and that together could quickly make a difference:

1. The creation of an efficient communication strategy and structure between advising faculty and staff, the student relations coordinators, student support services, the Registrar, and Academic and Student Affairs administrators could go a long way to create clarity and order in the flow of information.
2. An advising website on which students, their parents, and their peers (their two main sources of advising) could find correct and up-to-date, jargon-free information quickly would help students get correct information, find the easy answers out themselves, and point them to the right offices and persons to approach for further assistance. A state-of-the-art, interactive, feedback-driven

website which is regularly and purposefully maintained by a person connected to the Registrar and to Academic and Student Affairs would assure its accuracy and continuous improvement.

3. A centrally placed advisor, an "advising czar", would facilitate the creation and maintenance of these two main objectives.

Please see the attached sheet at the end of this proposal to illustrate our current advising structure.

3. Explain how the project addresses student recruitment, retention, persistence, and/or completion or one or more of the 12 Challenges. (10 points)

The "intelligent" advising website may impact student recruitment in that also students seeking information about admissions, transfer, or registration would be pointed in the right direction. The webpage we have in mind as a model has greatly increased traffic from prospective students as well and made that university's advising model famous.

We believe it will definitely have an impact on retention and persistence. Few things are more frustrating to our students than discovering that they are registered for the wrong courses, or that the ones for which they earned credit won't apply toward their degree. It is easy to forget that such mistakes represent large financial liabilities as well. Further, relying on outdated information or being unable to locate relevant data can be very discouraging, too; especially information about the most basic questions can be hard to find on the www.mnsu.edu website. Investing in a very good online advising tool will draw traffic to a widely advertized one-stop site and show the students that the University is making efforts to serve them in their preferred format.

Time to degree as well as the decision to transfer out or drop out or stay can be positively impacted by good advising. Ensuring that all our advisors have easy access to accurate and up-to-date information and that we create a system of accountability in advising will enable them to intervene successfully in more cases.

Challenge 1 – Budget: This project will cost only the price of one advisor, plus a moderate budget for printing and mailing (we propose \$2,000 p.a.) – the website, like CDS, will be developed without additional costs through a collaboration between ITS, Academic Affairs, and faculty and staff stakeholders.

Challenge 2 – Enrollment Management, Graduation, and Advising: Advising will be streamlined and enhanced, and graduation planning will be greatly improved.

4. Describe the impact this project will have on students and/or others whom we serve. (10 points)

Through the intelligent design and natural language ability of this new website, students will have a better time finding comprehensive and correct answers to their questions.

Students will know more about advisors, resources, degree programs, policies and procedures, upcoming deadlines, and the many opportunities we offer.

Professors and other advising staff will find it easier to stay up-to-date; they will know whom to ask and where to send students.

Campus-wise advising strategies can be shared more effectively.

The central advisor can, in collaboration with stakeholders, make recommendations to simplify rules and procedures.

The central advisor can also, in collaboration with the Faculty Resource Center, provide advising training and resources for interested faculty.

5. Identify the “SMART” outcomes for the project (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound). (5 points)

A workgroup of IT staff, advisors, and faculty led by Academic Affairs will be formed to build the content, structure and functionality of the website in collaboration. A project timeline will provide specific, measurable, time-bound and achievable milestones by which the progress toward completion can be evaluated.

The effectiveness of this web tool will be measurable by a variety of direct and indirect measures such as hit counts, answer and user feedback analysis, information updates, and user focus groups.

The work of the central advisor would have SMART outcomes, too, among them communications, newsletters, information events, meeting and advising minutes, reports on the website’s effectiveness and development, and feedback from students and advisors on campus.

Altogether, we would hope that these measures, in tandem with some of our other planned interventions, will lead to improved student feedback in NSSE and other reporting tools, and express itself in a rising number of retained and graduating students.

6. Discuss what this project will do for the university that warrants the investment. (5 points)

Students have complained for many years about advising. We do have great advisors but students bemoan the difficulty of finding accurate and reliable information. Most of them are digital natives, and they go online in search of answers, not to see faculty or staff. This project will create a place for us to communicate information we want students to have, and an additional way to identify their problems and find appropriate ways to intervene.

This project could make us a leader in effective advising. It will improve our position as a leader in retention and graduation rates in the system. We want this institution, quite simply, to be known as the Minnesota university that offers the best advising on transfer, program and course selection, degree completion, and graduate education and career choices!

7. Describe how the activities generated by this project would be sustained after one-time funding has ended, or if applicable, explain why the project does not need to be sustained. (5 points)

After its initial creation, the web advising tool would have to be maintained by a person or an office that is charged with keeping it up.

If this intervention is successful, the position we are proposing to lead the website construction, create these changes in communicative structures, and introduce new advising strategies will have to become a part of the base budget, as one of our core investments in student advising and satisfaction.

If, after two years, there are no measurable improvements in the perception of the advising situation on campus among staff, faculty, current and prospective students, parents, and/or other external stakeholders, we may have to discontinue the “experiment” and consider this a failed intervention. We will, however, have learned a good deal in the process that will help us to try new avenues to solve this major problem.

8. Budget (5 points):

Outline the funding requested using the categories listed below. Please identify any additional or matching funds that may available to support the project. Please note, budget revisions beyond 10% total change from the initial proposal require approval. Budget revisions of more than 20%, constitutes a major change in the project scope and will not be approved.

The expected expenses cover a full-time MSUAASF C-range employee beginning work on May 1, 2012, and some expenses for setting up a computer workspace and giving a moderate printing budget to the position.

Matching funds are difficult to tally but would entail, e.g. the work of the IT department (see attached email from Tedmund Johnson).

	FY12	FY 12 Matching Funds	FY13	FY 13 Matching Funds	FY14	FY14 Matching Funds
Personnel						
Unclassified Salary (in-load, overload)	8,334		50,000		50,000	
Classified Salary						
Fringe ^a (Classified and Unclassified)	1,550		9,300		9,300	
Graduate Assistant Salary						
Graduate Assistant Tuition Reduction/Waiver ^b						
Non-Salary						
Student Help						
Purchased Services/Travel Expenses						
Supplies and Materials	200		1,000		1,000	
Building Improvement/Construction Costs						
Equipment	6,000					
Total Budget Requested						

^a Note: All current employees must be paid fringe benefits. Fringe should be estimated based on salary and position classification: Unclassified 30%, Classified 37%, Adjunct 7.65%.

^b Estimated Tuition Reduction/Waiver for full-year enrollment: Masters \$5,858, Doctoral \$10,000.

9. Identify any special considerations or needs required for this project (e.g. physical space, contractual obligations, IT support, or collaborations with/implications for other units). (5 points)

The project would need IT support. As confirmed in emails from Tedmund Johnson, given full staffing levels, Ted declared that his department would have the bandwidth to support this project, in a similar way to the CDS system project.

The person we seek to hire would need a work space. The "Advising Gateway" proposal contains a proposed work space for this person. We propose that the person be physically located in the central advising location we seek to establish but that he or she report to the Registrar as the central hub for academic and policy information.

The project depends on the support of key stakeholders but given the enthusiastic support from all holds for the Advising Taskforce, this should be a very lively and fruitful collaboration.

10. Provide a project timeline outlining key tasks, milestones and dates for completion. (5 points)

Academic Year 2011-2012

Create job description for central advisor

Hire for this new position

Publicize the planned IT project, search for supporters through the established channels

Establish some key descriptors for the web tool and the associated programming/support needs

As a stop gap measure, do over and update Maverick OneStop.

Academic Year 2012-2014

Create and populate central advising web page

Write up relevant information for publication in various places on the www.mnsu.edu website

Establish project timeline and deliverables with IT and stakeholders

Lead development team for the non-IT side

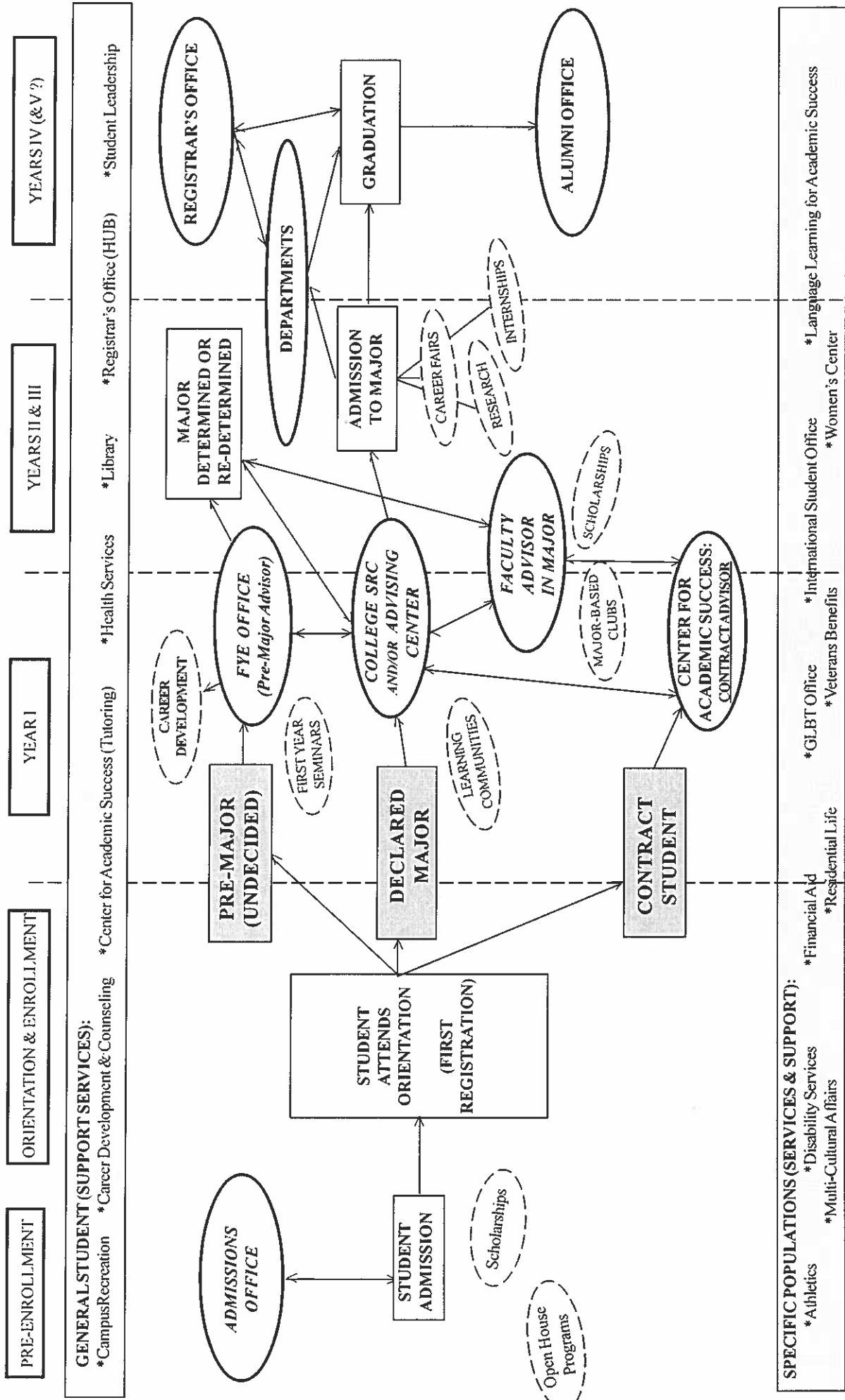
Establish actual and desirable communication structures

Develop regular meeting schedule with key stakeholders

Begin to implement new and more comprehensive methods of information distribution

Work with MSSA/ student focus groups to receive regular guidance and feedback on student needs

Work with Faculty Development Center on Advising Certificate for faculty



PRE-ENROLLMENT

ORIENTATION & ENROLLMENT

YEAR I

YEARS II & III

YEARS IV (& V?)

GENERAL STUDENT (SUPPORT SERVICES):

*Campus Recreation *Career Development & Counseling *Center for Academic Success (Tutoring) *Health Services *Library *Registrar's Office (HUB) *Student Leadership

SPECIFIC POPULATIONS (SERVICES & SUPPORT):

*Athletics *Disability Services *Multi-Cultural Affairs *Financial Aid *Residential Life *GLBT Office *Veterans Benefits *International Student Office *Women's Center *Language Learning for Academic Success

Tomany, Maria-Claudia

From: Johnson, Tedmund E
Sent: Monday, October 31, 2011 7:40 PM
To: Tomany, Maria-Claudia
Subject: RE: Estimated cost for Advising website?

yes, that's right.

"Tomany, Maria-Claudia" <maria-claudia.tomany@mnsu.edu> wrote:

So... is there a dollar amount that you are requesting from the Big Ideas fund for this project, or will it be covered out of the general fund?

Thanks!

Claudia

From: Johnson, Tedmund E
Sent: Monday, October 31, 2011 16:50
To: Tomany, Maria-Claudia
Subject: RE: Estimated cost for Advising website?

Claudia,

Here's my quick answer: when we are fully staffed, I believe we should pursue this project in the same way we did CDS: engage key stakeholders (in this case, the advisors on campus and others who will represent the faculty advisor perspective) and begin regular meetings to determine requirements and get feedback on iterative developments. I believe we can use Application Development staff (Brenda's team), Web Development staff (Alexey and Jeff's team), and the Integrated Marketing staff (Kris Isaacson, who does most new web development design) to accomplish this goal.

I'm sorry to say that after our App Development team got raided (I'm sure you know we've had two resignations in the past month), and because of my perspective that the solution for a new advising website can be built using our fully staffed resources, my obligation to reply to you slipped between the slats. Please forgive me.

More detail if you wish:

Earlier this month I called the developer who created the University of Washington advising site and spoke with her at length about how they created their system. I was convinced after the conversation that their site isn't as automated as we thought it was, and she mentioned their desire to build a system that presented rich data from their student information system.

Although certainly not fully functional, I believe our existing Student Master module of the COE [SIMS system](#) is a start for the database functionality for an advising site. In addition, Brenda created a mobile website that permits students to log in to see their class schedule on their handheld device.

At their request, I'm meeting with the SRCs next Wednesday morning to demonstrate this [mobile student website](#) to them, and enlist their support in going forward with planning an advising website. What we need to accomplish with a stakeholders group is to determine the rest of the content around the expanding functionality that we will develop, and the common and unique needs for different colleges and departments.

I'd like to discuss this further when you have time.

Ted

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From: Tomany, Maria-Claudia
Sent: Monday, October 31, 2011 4:04 PM
To: Johnson, Tedmund E
Subject: Estimated cost for Advising website?

Hi Ted,

As you may remember, we met with the Provost three weeks ago to discuss the possible development of a new and vastly improved advising website.

I know that you are very busy right now but the deadline for proposals is tomorrow. Could you maybe give me just a ballpark figure - 20k, 200k, ??

Thanks!

Claudia

Note on Advising Proposals:

The following proposals are all submitted on their own merit, and each of them would make an enormous difference for academic advising at Minnesota State Mankato. Together, they address most of the main recommendations of the 2010-11 Advising Taskforce and provide a complete concept for the improvement of advising at our University.

B 11 (Big Ideas; Jason Westman et al.): Academic and Advising Gateway

Bringing together the Center for Academic Success, student support services, disabilities, and possibly also counseling and FYEX in a single location would not only allow most of the offices that help first year students to be successful to work closer together, it would also reduce the “run around” that students often bemoan - there would only be two main locations for them to look for answers: the CSU/Wigley first floor complex with the Hub, Cashier, Financial Aid, and the Registrar, and the proposed Advising Gateway.

B37 (Big Ideas; Nicole Dose et al.): Sophomore and Transfer Success Program

Creating a program and advising unit specifically for sophomores and incoming transfer students would give us great intervention options to improve retention and perseverance during the critical second year after which we see especially worrisome drop-off rates at our campus.

← B39 (Big Ideas; Claudia Tomany et al.): Improving Advising: Realizing the 2011 Taskforce’s Three Main Recommendations

Academic Advising is largely decentralized at our University. Creating a central advising position (housed in the Advising Gateway but reporting to the Registrar’s Office) would go a long way to better disseminate information on academic program and policy changes among advisors on campus and create a nexus between the SRC’s, advising faculty, FYEX, student support services, the Registrar, Diversity, and Academic and Student Affairs administration. This central advisor would also supervise the creation and maintenance of an “intelligent” advising website with a self-improving algorithm based on user feedback.

B50 (Big Ideas; Becky Copper-Glenz et al.): Bachelor Completion Advisor

While the student population at 7700 France is growing, no advising services have been established for them. This bachelor completion advisor would address an especially urgent need and serve this specialized population for which there are no existing resources available on campus.

F15 (Facilities; Karen Bunde et al.): Renovate CSU 117 Hub/MavCard/CSU Info Desk

This redesign serves two purposes: to reduce long lines by creating more service stations, and to reorganize the counter space set-up so that students and staff can look at each other while sharing the same screen view.

F28 (Facilities; Joan Roca et al): Library Connection to the Centennial Student Union

If the Advising Gateway in Margaret Preska Hall was connected to the Library and the Library to the CSU, all students would have unprecedented, safe, and ADA-compliant access to residential housing, communal work and recreation spaces, advising, counseling, and library services all around campus.