

Exploratory Advising and Academic Support

Division of Student Affairs

Administrative Activities Review

I. Basic Facts and Description of Unit

a. Mission and goals:

Exploratory Advising and Academic Support (EAAS) is an office within the Student Success Center. The Student Success Center includes the following: New Student Orientation, Learning Communities and Akron Experience, Tutoring Services, and Exploratory Advising and Academic Support. The mission of the Student Success Center is to acclimate, educate, and empower students throughout the Akron Experience by establishing connections and supporting their personal growth inside and outside the classroom. The mission of EAAS is to engage students as they explore career and major pathways and provide support while cultivating academic success.

One of the primary goals of EAAS is to orient and provide an intentional advising program for exploratory students. The office also assists students transitioning between majors and provides triage and academic intervention to students at risk. EAAS supports the degree granting colleges with enrollment and academic support initiatives and helps identify gaps in student academic support and provides remedy. The office collaborates with campus stakeholders on recruitment, retention, and programming efforts.

b. Services

i. **Advising Exploratory and Transitioning Students:** EAAS orients and advises all incoming exploratory students for up to one year to identify a career and major. All incoming exploratory students are required to participate in an Exploratory Learning Community and complete a hybrid Akron Experience/Career Planning course. The learning community integrates first year experience, career development, peer mentor, and advisor support in the classroom to increase student engagement and reflection in career decisions leading to increased retention. Advising functions include the following: **New Student Orientation, Exploratory Learning Communities, Required Advising Appointments, Akron Major Explorers (Career Peer Mentoring Program), Declaration Day, Career Planning Course Administration, Admissions Recruitment,** and providing transitional support to student switching programs or majors.

1. **Critical Partners:** New Student Orientation, Learning Communities and Akron Experience, Office of Admissions, Career Services, Degree Granting Colleges, College Credit Plus and Akron Early College. No overlap of services exists with our critical partners.
2. **Customers/End Users:** Incoming exploratory freshmen (approximately 120 students every Fall), transfer students (approximately 10 student every Fall), undecided college-credit plus students, prospective students and families (3-5 monthly appointments), and continuing students exploring career pathways. All appointments are scheduled as hour long sessions.

3. **Key Performance Analysis:** EAAS was established as an office in the Spring 2018 semester, after an advising transition to college based advising for declared pre-major students. As a newly formed office, the center is currently implementing performance metrics based on the development of our advising model. Below are 3 years comparisons on exploratory student enrollment and learning community growth. The plan will be to track fall-to-fall retention of exploratory students; the time elapsed to major declaration, grade point averages, and office visits under the new advising model.

3 year Exploratory Student Enrollment

	2016 (Census)	2017 (Census)	2018 (as of 8/1/18)
Freshmen	109	122	123
Adult	0	0	1
Transfer	9	9	7
Total	118	131	131

3 year Learning Community Enrollment

	2016	2017	2018
Number of Learning Communities	2	3	5
Total Students Enrolled	34	39	94 (141% increase from previous year)

4. **Brief Assessment:** A unique highlight of EAAS is an advising model that includes an individual hour-long orientation appointment and two required appointments in each student's first semester. These advising meetings are designed to provide exploratory students with more contact early in their academic career to decrease the amount of time to major declaration. Most advising models on campus require only one required appointment. EAAS has the opportunity to integrate with College Credit Plus and Early College to facilitate career and major exploration with students before they graduate high school. Additionally, EAAS has the opportunity to expand our admissions recruitment. One major challenge for EAAS is staffing. With an Academic Advisor, an Assistant Director, and an Assistant Vice President, EAAS is a smaller unit than like sized institutions. Despite a campus-wide decrease in new freshmen students, exploratory freshmen numbers have increased this year and already have surpassed the 2017 census. Exploratory learning community enrollment has increased 141% compared to 2017. As recruitment and retention grows, the center will likely need more staffing to be comparable to peer institutions.
- ii. **Academic Outreach and Programming:** EAAS provides centralized service to students in academic need by managing all Help-A-Zip Academic Referrals. Each student referral receives individualized outreach to address the student specific concerns. Additionally, EAAS develops programming for students needing academic assistance (organization, grade tracking, and study skills), major and

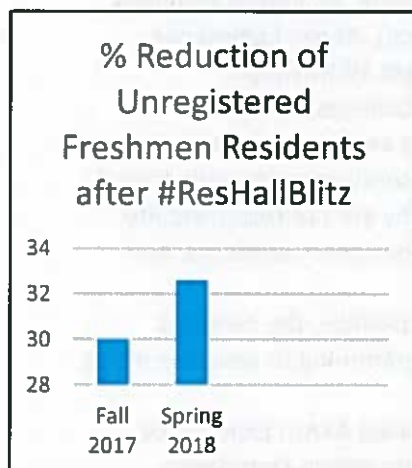
minor exploration, and advising/course registration. EAAS Academic Outreach and Programming functions include the following: **Help-A-Zip Academic Referrals, Interim Grade/GradesFirst Progress Reporting, Academic Progress Review, Majors and Minor Fair (Illuminate Conference), Akron Experience Presentations, and Academic and Career Development Workshops.**

1. **Critical Partners:** ZipAssist, Degree Granting Colleges, University Registrar, Student Life, Learning Communities and Akron Experience, and New Student Orientation. No overlap of services exists with critical partners. Help-A-Zip referrals are separated by area of responsibility.
2. **Customers/End Users:** Current students, probationary students, and new freshmen in Akron Experience Courses.
3. **Key Performance Analysis:** As a newly formed office, the center is currently developing assessments for all programming to assess learning outcomes.
4. **Brief Assessment:** With the shift to college based Akron Experience courses, the center will have fewer requests for Akron Experience presentations. The shift will enable a focus on career and major oriented programming, as well as dedicate more time to Help-A-Zip referrals. Help-A-Zip referrals have increased dramatically over the last year as more faculty, staff, and students have utilized the referral system.

iii. **Campus-Wide Services:** EAAS as a centralized unit provides campus wide support to both students and other advising units. To uniformly track student enrollment and retention, the office sends updates to university administration and degree granting colleges to identify students who need outreach. The reporting helps identify students by class standing, college/program, non-payment holds, and grade point average. Additionally, the office supports New Student Orientation and campus-wide advising by evaluating and communicating with every incoming freshmen to UA for placement testing. Placement testing services to the campus include, evaluating each student specifically based on their entrance criteria and major, communicating placement needs to incoming students, training campus advising and support units, and managing the Placement Testing Committee comprised of deans, faculty, and testing support offices. Campus-wide services include the following: **NOW Reporting, Placement Testing Administration, Advising Administrators Oversight, Enrollment Initiatives, and Residence Hall Support.**

1. **Critical Partners:** New Student Orientation, Degree Granting Colleges, Academic Advising, University Administration, Residence Life and Housing, ZipAssist, Faculty, and Computer Based Assessment and Evaluation. No overlap of services exists with critical partners.
2. **Customers/End Users:** Confirmed freshmen (approximately 3,800) and their families, Advisors Administrators, Advisors, and continuing students.
3. **Key Performance Analysis:** The center evaluates the effectiveness of our enrollment initiatives, including #ResHallBlitz, by tracking student contacts and registration post contact. Included is a chart demonstrating a 32.6% drop in unregistered students following our program and 30% drop in the previous fall 2017 semester. Likewise, the

center tracks services rendered with campus-wide placement testing including the volume of testing and testing needs assessment.



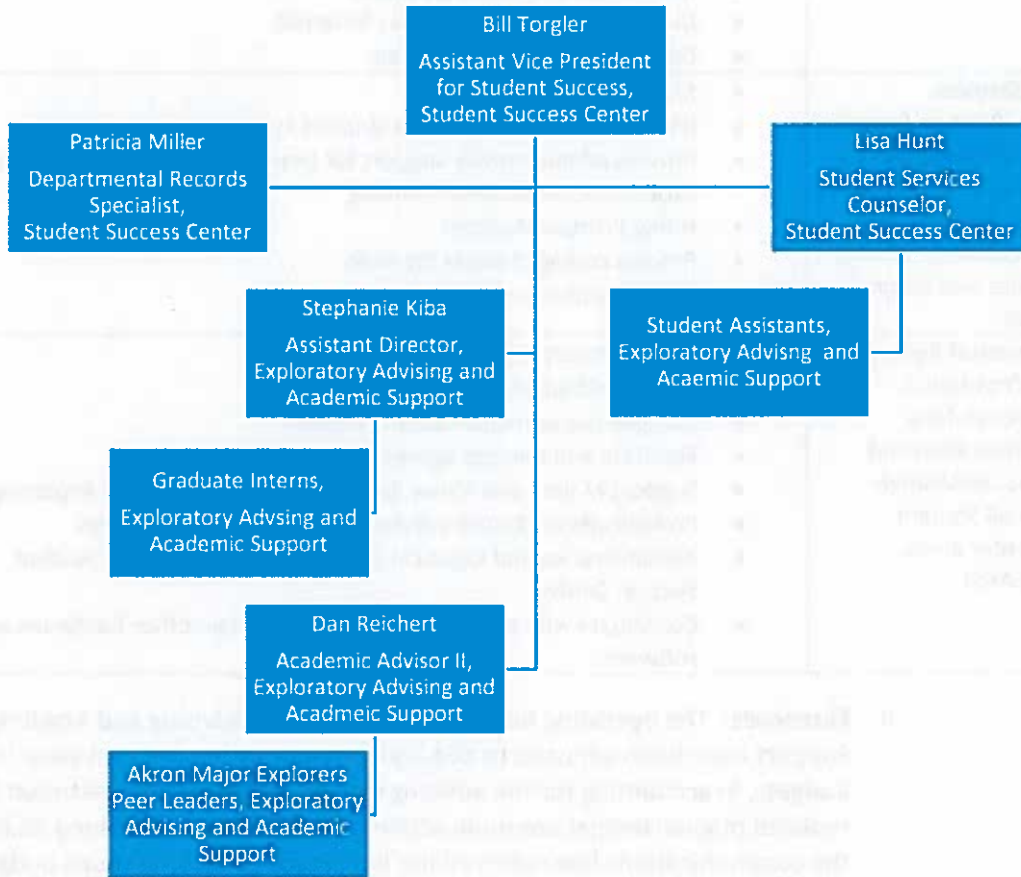
Placement Testing Evaluations by Year

	2017	2018
Total Students Evaluated for Testing	3,628	3,277
No Testing Required	1,252 (34.5%)	1,448 (44.2%)
Testing Required	2,376 (65.5%)	1,829 (55.8%)
<i>Math Testing</i>	2,164 (91.1%)	1,620 (88.6%)
<i>2 or more areas</i>	1,198 (50.4%)	817 (44.7.9%)

4. **Brief Assessment:** It is important to highlight, the enrollment data demonstrates a continued need to provide intervention and opportunities to interact to with students to promote continued enrollment. With a targeted intervention, over 30% of students subsequently enrolled in their courses for the next term. Developing targeted programs to intervene benefits the campus community as departments adjust to budget and resource reductions. Another key highlight is the change in admissions criteria has impacted the volume of students needing placement testing. Without preparatory students, the number of students required to complete math placement testing and multiple placement tests has decreased. Only students who do not meet the college level requirement for writing, reading, math, and computer literacy are selected for testing; demonstrating the institution is admitting higher qualifying students. Math testing administration remains the predominant need for incoming students. We hope to collaborate with critical partners to address student needs as our population changes.

iv. **Services Conclusion:** Throughout the academic year the workload within the office transitions based on the events occurring. One of the primary services, Advising Exploratory and Transitioning Students, is at peak demand during scheduling for Fall and Spring and through the Summer as the office orients the incoming freshmen class. Likewise, our Academic Outreach and Programming, such as our Help-A-Zip Academic Referrals are at peak demand during the Fall and Spring semesters. As a way to balance the strategic priorities, the office operates and plans programming around our largest services to best serve our exploratory students and the larger campus body utilizing those services (see Appendix II: EAAS Yearly Planning Calendar). EAAS does not generate revenue from any major services. Larger programming, such as Illuminate Conference, generates funds to cover the cost from program sponsors and ticket sales.

c. Resources
i. Personnel



Position Title	Description	Number of FTE's
Assistant Vice President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage Student Success Center: Tutoring Services, New Student Orientation, Learning Communities and Akron Experience, and Exploratory Advising and Academic Support • Manage campus wide NOW Reporting • Manage Career Planning Course Administration • Manage Campus Committees: Advising Administrators, Placement Testing, and General Education Advising Committee. • Maintain exploratory advising student caseload 	1
Assistant Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate New Student Orientation for EAAS • Coordinate Enrollment Initiatives • Manage Placement Testing Screening • Coordinate Explore Learning Communities • Manage Academic Progress Review for EAAS • Complete Monthly Reporting to University Administration • Maintain exploratory advising student caseload • Serve as the Point of Contact for incoming prospective students with the Office of Admissions recruitment events • Supervise Graduate Advising Interns 	1

Academic Advisor II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain exploratory advising student case load • Coordinate Akron Major Explorers (AME) Program • Supervise AME Leaders • Coordinate Akron Experience Presentations • Maintain Social Media Accounts • Manage Help-A-Zip Academic Referrals • Coordinate Major/Minors Fair 	1
*Student Services Counselor (Position funded through EAAS and provides administrative support to Student Success Center areas, particularly Learning Communities and Akron Experience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage front office • Recruit, train, and supervise student assistants • Provide administrative support for Learning Communities, Akron Experience, and Career Planning • Hiring Process Manager • Process coding changes for EAAS • Order supplies and services 	1
**Departmental Records Specialist (Position is funded through New Student Orientation and provides administrative support to all Student Success Center areas, including EAAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring Process Manager • Fiscal and budgetary review • Compile departmental activity reports • Facilitate and manage agreements and contracts • Support Majors and Minor Fair and campus-wide NOW Reporting • Provide administrative support for Learning Communities • Administrative and logistical support for all units in the Student Success Center • Coordinate with technical support to maintain office hardware and software. 	1

- ii. **Financials:** The operating budgets for Exploratory Advising and Academic Support have been adjusted to size and function within the past year. Within its budgets, in accounting for the advising reorganization, the department for FY18 reduced original budget amounts within operations by a combined 36.6%. With the communications line removed (no longer added to operations budgets), the amount is a reduction of 27.4%. Moving into FY19, with an additional 5% operations reduction, those reduction amounts are 41.8% and 32.4% respectively. Reductions into FY19 are intended to remain functional within operations, with the 5% reductions coming from Hospitality (7040). The additional 5% reduction amounts were identified while preserving Student Assistants (5400) and Supplies and Services (5700). Also to be noted is that operations are facilitated with a conservative philosophy in expenditures, as carryover amounts have existed within these budgets for the past three budget cycles.

Additionally, with the announcement in June of vacancies no longer falling on budgets, there is an additional savings of \$55,488 from Administration, along with corresponding fringe benefits.

With the associated reductions in budget, expenditures have been adjusted into a more programmatic emphasis. Areas of expenditure moving into FY19 include the new Illuminate Majors Conference, creation of the new Akron Major Explorers (AME) peer major mentor student group, as well as to campus-wide support through the Academic Support functions of the department (campus-wide placement testing, pre-admission Engineering advising, among others).

Budget 200620	FY 19	FY 18	FY 17
Operations Total Budget	\$49,647	\$57,822	\$80,000
Actual Expenses		\$36,019	\$109,006.33 (adjusted – budget maintained available balance at end of fiscal year of \$27,852.76)

Budget 200618	FY 19	FY 18	FY 17
Operations Total Budget	\$14,799.50	\$15,696	\$36,363
Actual Expenses		\$15,839.39 (adjusted – budget maintained available balance at end of fiscal year of \$7,092.33)	\$19,757.63

iii. **Equipment and Technology: Not Applicable.**

iv. **Space:** The Exploratory Advising and Academic Support office suite has been recently reconfigured to support the broader Student Success Center. A majority of the Student Success Center units, including EAAS, New Student Orientation, and Learning Communities and Akron Experience, are now located within the Simmons Hall 201 and 205 office suite. The space provides two entrances: one for EAAS and one for New Student Orientation, Learning Communities and Akron Experience leadership. Sharing a centralized location has enabled EAAS to share resources and administrative support to save additional costs. The centralized location also provides space for the following EAAS functions: Akron Major Explorers, advising space for pre-admission engineering, a computer lab/remote placement testing lab, and overflow proctored testing space for Office of Accessibility.

II. **Future Plans**

a. **Potential changes:** As a newly formed unit, Exploratory Advising and Academic Support plans to evaluate our services and programming based on our established goals and learning outcomes. Specifically, we will be measuring the effectiveness of our program to decrease the amount of time to major declaration, reduce the number of major changes, and increase exploratory student retention. We will use formative and summative assessments to inform any changes and enhancements in our advising appointments, learning communities, and programming.

Over the next 3 to 5 years, we plan to develop a one-credit special topics course for continuing students transitioning to exploratory and/or exploratory students remaining

undecided into their second semester. We feel this course is necessary to facilitate intentional exploration of career and major selection, as many students become exploratory in their second semester. The curriculum and learning outcomes will be distinct from the Explore Learning Community.

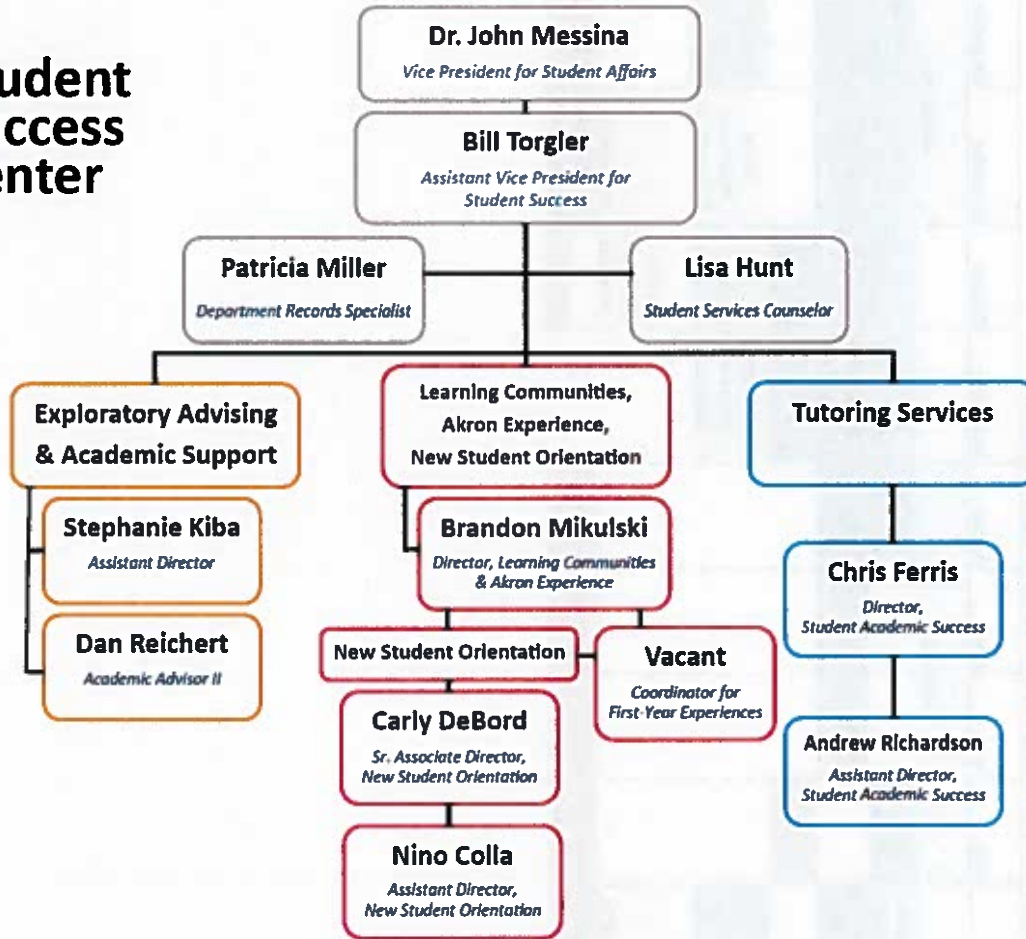
As previously mentioned, freshmen exploratory student enrollment has increased while overall freshmen enrollment has decreased. If exploratory enrollment continues to increase over the next 3-5 years, we will need to expand our Akron Major Explorers (AME) peer mentor major exploration program. We plan to recruit upperclassmen students to serve as AME leaders. Program expansion may also facilitate transitioning AME into a fully recognized student organization at UA.

Lastly, the potential partnership with Stark State College may expand the student populations serviced by EAAS. As generalist advisors trained in all degree programs, EAAS may assume advising dual enrollment students attending Stark and UA campuses as well as transient/guest students. Working closely with dual enrollment students will ensure a smooth transition to the UA Campus and provide students needed support to navigate campus policies, curricula, and resources.

- b. Trends: Exploratory Advising and Academic Support leads trends in the field of advising. The academic outreach, programming, and campus-wide services provided by EAAS surpass comparable exploratory advising offices both statewide and nationally. Most exploratory advising units lack functions that service their broader campus community, such as academic support referrals, placement evaluations, and centralized enrollment reporting. Compared to other public institutions within the state of Ohio who are like size, EAAS provides additional services with similar or fewer resources.**

Organizational Chart

Student Success Center



EAAS Yearly Planning Calendar

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Exploratory	Orientation	Advising Appt 1	Orientation Registration	Required Advising Appt	Declaration Advising Appt Celebration	Orientation	Orientation	New Roo Weekend	Required Advising Appt	Registration	Required Advising Appt	Orientation Declaration Celebration
Academic Outreach and Programming	Academic Programming	Altron Experiences	AME Recruitment	AME Interviews	Academic Progress	Explore LC Development	Explore LC Development	AME Training	Academic Programming	Aluminate Conference	Explore Learning Communities	Academic Progress Review
Campus Wide Services	Now Reports	Unsatisfactory Progress Reports	Grades First Reports	Academic Programming	Placement Testing	Placement Testing	Placement Testing	Campus Enrollment Initiatives	Unsatisfactory Progress Reports	Grades First Reports	Altron Experiences Presentations	Academic Progress Review
			Campus Enrollment Initiatives	#ResHailblitz	Placement Testing	Placement Testing	Placement Testing	Placement Testing	Campus Enrollment Initiatives	#ResHailblitz	Placement Testing	Placement Testing

- Monthly/Seasonal Recurring Items:
- Help-A-Zip Referrals
 - Newsletter to Current Students
 - Advising Walk-ins/Appointments
 - Monthly Reports
 - Recruitment Events