2013-2014 Academic and Career Advising Assessment

Career Awareness using TypeFocus for Students on Academic Standards

College Priority II: Improve student access and success

Goal: Understanding the effect of taking TypeFocus, online career exploration guidance, for students with GPA's below 2.0.

TypeFocus is a career exploration product available to all students through their MyPage account. It includes self-assessments that measure three interactive concepts: personality, interests and values. The combination of these three assessments provides the student with insights about possible career choices. Students have to utilize that knowledge in exploring occupations and deciding on a career path. Even if they do not arrive at a decision at the end of the exercise, they should have better knowledge of themselves and their career options, for future reference.

Student use of TypeFocus is projected to increase once Advising launches the Online Career Training because students are directly linked to it. Understanding the effectiveness of TypeFocus on students' academic progress is important at this phase of the project.

The participants for this assessment are students with GPA's below 2.0 and who completed all the self-assessments in TypeFocus. We chose this population because if advisors intentionally intervene with them, it may be possible to increase their opportunities for completing a degree. Intervention may consist of identifying additional resources, one-to-one sessions, promoting the product, etc.

Methodology

We invited students with GPA's below 2.0 and less than 14 credits to participate in this assessment by taking TypeFocus and providing their educational plan embedded in the product. We requested their participation during the Spring break in 2014 without success. We had zero response. Rather than insisting and rewarding students for their participation, which may have been construed as unreliable information, we opted to use data already available to us.

When students take TypeFocus, they have to create an account with a login. They provide their full name, and email address. That information is collected from the administrator site of TypeFocus. There were 700 students registered during the period September 2013 – April 2014. Students who partially completed the assessment were eliminated from the list. With the assistance of Information Technology, the names of these students were merged with our student database to identify additional information that we needed from this group of students; we obtained the student ID number, date of birth, major of study and GPA. It was not an easy task, since some students have similar names. If there was not a perfect match, those students were eliminated. We also eliminated from the list non-matriculated students. With this additional information, students with GPA's below 2.0 were selected for the study. After scrutiny, our sample population was 57 students.

To understand the effect of TypeFocus on students with GPA's below 2.0, we considered three variables: continuing registration, change of major and GPA. Is the student registered for Spring 201420, 201430 or 201440 classes? Did they change majors? If they took classes in SP 2014, did they improve their GPA? We also added another variable; did the student visit with an academic advisor anytime during 2013-2014? This was to identify if the advisor may have had an influence on the student taking TypeFocus and whether they received career advising. This information was not provided by IT but rather was collected one by one using Banner screens SHASUBJ, SHACRSE, SMARQCM and SFAREGS. Once the information was prepared in Excel format, the data was tabulated and analyzed.

DATA ANALYSIS

**Major Change and Impact on Persistence:**

Of 57 students, 20 changed majors and 13 of them (65%) continued their registration for 2014. Of the 37 students who did not change majors, 14 (38%) continued their registration for 2014.

We may understand from this data that students finished their exploration with TypeFocus and 65% decided to keep their initial major or continue exploring. At the same time, we infer that 47% of the 57 students decided to stop registration for future enrollment.

Habley, W., Bloom, J., and Robbins, S. (2012) affirm that "Career exploration and development also is an element of student-environment fit, drawing attention to students' strengths and encouraging persistence by aligning students' educational goals with their interests and their values." Even though, 47% may seem to be a small gain in persistence of students returning to the College, the fact that students with low GPA's, who had abandoned their schooling, decided to return to College may be credited to their career exploration process through TypeFocus.

Grade Point Average (GPA) Effect:

Of the 14 students who came back to study in Spring 2014, seven students improved their GPA and two of them earned grades that placed them above 2.0 GPA, taking them out of Academic Standards. However, it is necessary to point out that of this group of students who studied in Spring 2014, nine of them have been absent from college for a year or more. They may have had the motivation to come back to school but they may not have been ready. In addition, we may argue that there is no significant relationship between exploring careers with TypeFocus and high performance upon returning to the College, without follow-up with an academic advisor.

GPA Comparison
Attended 201420
N=14
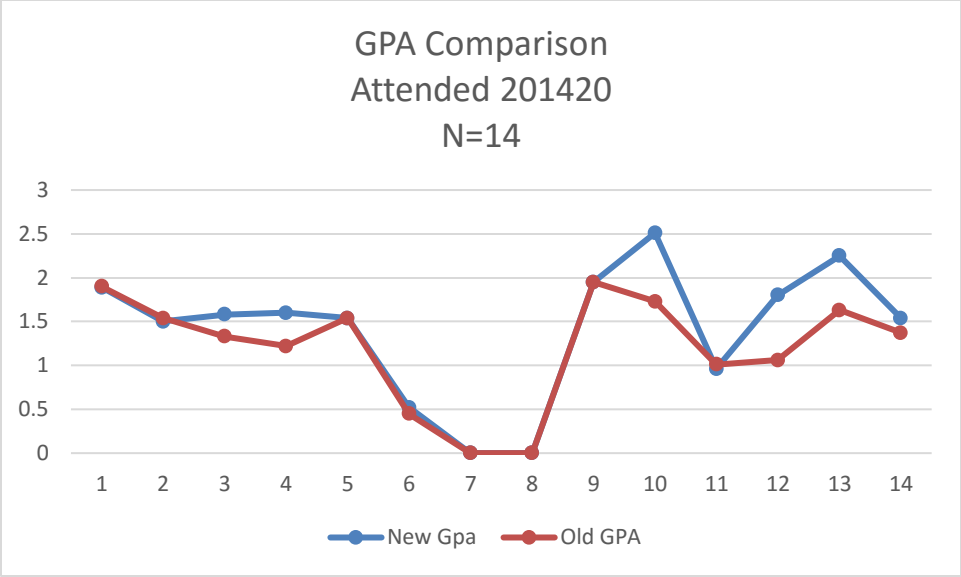
Persistence through registration for School year 2014:

Of the 57 students, 27 students (47%) have registered for school in either 201420, 201430 and/or 201440. Thirty students have not taken action toward registration for future semesters. Of this last group, 11 of them have registration holds that may prevent them from taking future classes until their problems are solved.
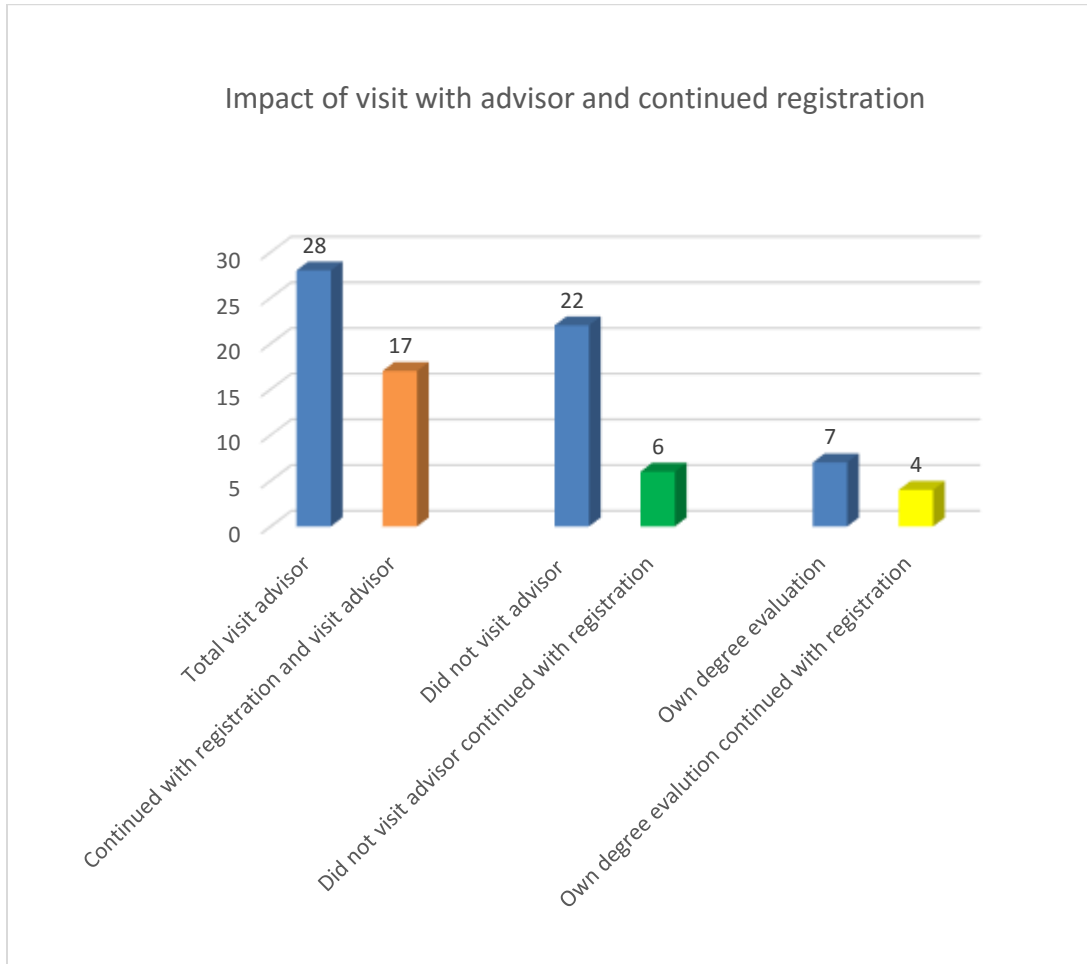
Persistence
2014 School Year
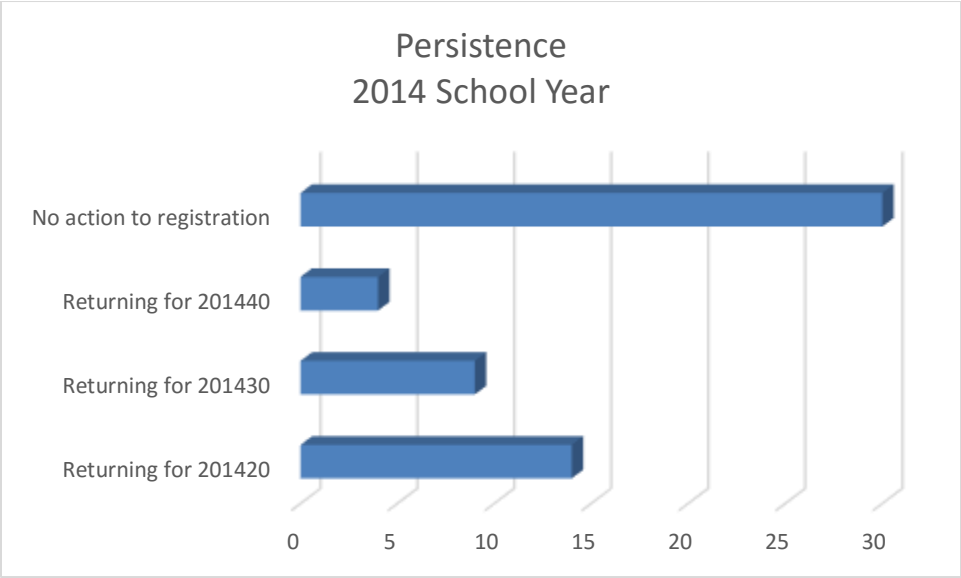
Impact of visit with advisor and continued registration:

Of the 57 students in our sample, 28 of them visited with an academic advisor, 22 did not visit with an advisor and 7 produced their own degree evaluation.

Of the 28 students who visited with an advisor, 17 of them (60%) continued their registration at the College. Of the 22 students who did not visit with an advisor, six of them (27%) continued with registration.

From the 7 students who did their own degree evaluation, four (57%) continued with registration.

Impact of visit with advisor and continued registration

The academic advisor and student interaction seem to be important for persistence at the College.

Attempted credit hours and persistence

There were 38 students with 15 or more attempted credit hours. Of this group of students, 22 of them (58%) have continued their registration in 2014. Twenty-four students have visited with an advisor (63%).

Of the 19 students with attempted credit hours 3-14, five (5) of them (26%) continued their registration in 2014. Three students visited with an advisor (16%).

It seems like the students with more attempted hours want to obtain additional information or have a reason to come back to school and do better. It may be a reason why they took TypeFocus, to "stimulate their thinking about transitioning issues" (Hettich and Helkowski, 2005), such as returning to school.

The role of an Academic and Career Advisor seems to be critical in the decision of the student to take the career assessments as well as planning their return to College.

Use of results

According to Roudebush (2013), one of the common mistakes in Career Assessment Programs is "failure to properly orient students to the purpose of the test being administered and to acquaint them with testing procedures (p. 14)." Students are invited to take the assessments in TypeFocus at their leisure but data informs us that the TypeFocus exercise is more effective when it is accompanied with a visit to an academic and career advisor. This may not be an issue for students taking the Online Career Training, because it will have additional components and opportunities for reflection built into it, but it is an issue for those who take TypeFocus in isolation.

The current TypeFocus welcoming web page refers students to contact our main phone number but it can be more intrusive and intentional. It should explain why their assessment should be followed by a visit with a career advisor and provide the name and contact information of that advisor. We should also work with our TypeFocus vendor to add another identifier of the student taking the assessment and automatically send an email to the student encouraging a visit with a career advisor. There were many students who did not complete all the assessments and the final report. They also need a follow-up. The page, *Resources*, in TypeFocus should include the resources available at the College, such as the Career and Student Employment Office.

Students on Academic Alert, 14 credits or less, should be required to take TypeFocus with an advisor's guidance. The only intervention proposed in the Academic Standard Policy is to notify students by email of their status, encourage them to read the policy and make them aware of the learning support and tutoring resources available at SLCC. This and previous assessments indicate that this student population discontinues school when they experience academic failure and have not visited with an advisor. This is a population that we would like to require to complete the Online Career Training.

Advising would like to explore the possibility of requiring students, who request Continuation of Funding Appeals or Satisfactory Academic Progress, Appeals for Financial Aid, to complete TypeFocus or the Online Career Training, in order for us to complete their forms for extended financial resources. Similar requirements should be made of students who are scholarship or tuition waiver recipients but fail to sustain the required criteria.

There are several career advising programs that we plan to implement as we welcome new staff to our pool of advisors.

References:

Hettich, P.I., and Helkowski, C. (2005). *Connect College to Career: A Student's Guide to owrk and Life Transitions* . Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Roudebush, S. (2013). *Facilitating College Student Career Development. SLC, UT.*

Habley, W.R., Bloom, J., and Robbins, S. (2012). Increasing Persistence: Research-based Strategies for College Student Success. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.