UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE

Quality Initiative Final Report

Firm Footing:

Foundations for Student Academic Success

AUGUST 2015

Executive Summary

The overall goal of the University of WI-La Crosse (UWL) *Firm Footing: Foundations for Student Academic Success* quality initiative was to decrease barriers to student academic success. *Firm Footing*, responding to a principle goal of Inclusive Excellence, UWL and UW System's diversity initiative to close achievement gaps, addressed populations known to be at-risk (e.g., first generation students) and focused on analyzing the needs of other populations identified as likely to be at-risk (e.g., transfer students and students who show an early failure to thrive in courses). *Firm Footing* engaged the whole campus in a discussion of student success and the process of identifying how, when and why a student utilizes resources when experiencing academic challenges, and the role of faculty, staff, and the structure of the institution in helping to create conditions conducive to success.

Using student first-person information, and examining literature on best practices for student success, the following three task forces were employed: 1) development and implementation of an early alert system, 2) review of current academic advising practices, and 3) promotion and coordination of academic student success resources. Each task force consisted of a broad representation of faculty and student support services staff.

An early alert system (Eagle Alert), integrated within UWL's student information system and thus allowing efficient and systematic communication between instructors, students, and professional staff, was developed and first launched in Fall 2013. Instructors utilize this system to provide students with feedback early in the semester (~5th week out of 14) especially if academic concerns exist. Eagle Alert further allows instructors/advisors to provide feedback on academic or professional concerns, student potential, and/or advising sessions at any time.

The advising task force examined the current state of advising on campus, considered students' needs across their college careers, and determined gaps and overlaps that existed from a university-wide perspective. These efforts resulted in a number of action items including: formalizing relationships between different campus advising units to increase and improve communication, development of a new Advising website, and the generation of two advising documents with tips for faculty advisors and tips for students.

The task force for the coordination and promotion of student success resources found that UWL was already providing many strong student success resources, but there was not a coordinated and simple way in which to locate the services available. This led to the creation of an online tool to gather tutoring information from departments each semester, which is then included on an interactive tutoring website allowing for students to search for tutoring that fits their academic and scheduling needs. Furthermore, a Student Success website was implemented that includes information that affects all aspects of a student's life on campus, which in turn directly affects their academic success as a student.

Though student success has always been a focus at UWL, *Firm Footing* allowed the campus to take a more purposeful look at multiple aspects that affect student success. The initiative was successful in that an early alert system was created, the campus seriously engaged around the idea that students may struggle more than they "have to", the profile of UWL student success resources was increased, and student's awareness and use of these resources increased. This initiative fit the time frame well in that issues were discussed, recommendations were made, and purposeful actions were taken. The initiative was also accomplished with low resources at a time of limited institutional resources. Furthermore, the initiative facilitated meaningful communication around student success between faculty and student support services staff.

Scope and Impact of the Initiative

1. **Explain in more detail what has been accomplished in the Quality Initiative in relation to its purposes and goals. (If applicable, explain the initiative's hypotheses and findings.)**

The overall goal of the University of WI-La Crosse (UWL) *Firm Footing: Foundations for Student Academic Success* quality initiative was to decrease barriers to student academic success for every UWL student. *Firm Footing* addressed populations known to be at-risk (e.g., first generation students) and focused on analyzing the needs of other populations identified as likely to be at-risk (e.g., transfer students and students who show an early failure to thrive in courses). This initiative was designed to more fully engage the whole campus in a discussion of student success and the process of identifying how, when and why a student utilizes resources when experiencing academic challenges, and the role of faculty, staff and the structure of the institution in helping to create conditions conducive to success.

An essential starting element of *Firm Footing* was to more fully understand how students experience campus academic resources when the student encounters academic difficulty and or a sense of disconnect with the academic enterprise. A first-hand student perspective was critical to understand 1) when and how a student identifies that they may need to alter behaviors and 2) how a student who has identified a need acts on this realization and how they identify and potentially pursue resources offered by the university. This first hand student perspective was gained through multiple venues including multiple student focus group discussions and a student success survey targeted to first and second-year students.

The student focus group discussions revealed the following four main points.
1. Even though students are told beforehand, it was in experience that they really learned about the challenge of college. Students commented that there was not more UWL could do overall to help with preparing students for this "life lesson".
2. Students perceive a social stigma regarding seeking tutoring services, which was learned from high school (tutors only used if remedial). Students need a push by another student, an incentive of extra credit, or a huge failing to get them over this stigma.
3. UWL overall has the resources necessary for students. Students are told about resources but they do not always listen until they have a need for them or are told about them by someone they are connected to (parent, older sibling, upper class students, RA).
4. Success leads to success. For example, once a student uses the tutoring center/writing center, and that subsequently brings success on an exam/paper, then student is more likely to use it again.

Students' first-hand acknowledgement of a perceived social stigma behind using the tutoring center, and their lack of awareness regarding resources until needed, were particularly revealing, and subsequently informed further direction of the *Firm Footing* initiative. Furthermore, to gain an additional first-hand student perspective, a Student Success survey was administered to approximately 300 students in the spring of their first or second year at UWL.

Using all this student first-person information, and examining literature on best practices for student success, task forces focusing on 1) development and implementation of an early alert system, 2), promotion and coordination of academic student success resources and 3) review of current academic advising practices were developed. Below are summaries of the work of each task force and the main outcomes from each part of this initiative.

Development and Implementation of an Early Alert System

In Spring 2013 a working group containing representation from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions, examined the need for an early alert system and made a recommendation that UW-L should proceed with developing a system that would

1. enable instructors to provide an early warning to individual students, advisors and other instructors regarding students' academic performance in a course.

2. enable early identification of students who experience academic challenges in courses and allow instructors to create notes on students' records in order to communicate with one another and/or the students regarding concerns and positive comments.
3. be linked directly to WINGS, UWL's student-information system.

The definition of "early" for the purposes of this discussion was at week 5 or prior in the semester. Such a system was developed by the IT division, in consultation with the HLC Executive committee and units within the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. A webpage containing information on the system, "how to use" videos, along with FAQs, was also developed. The campus community was kept informed about the development of this system through multiple venues, such as email messages, presentations at all-faculty college meetings and student association meetings, announcements at Faculty Senate meetings, etc… The Eagle Alert system was first launched in Fall 2013.

Eagle Alert serves two primary goals 1) to provide students an early alert during the semester if there are academic concerns by their instructors and 2) to facilitate communication between a student and their instructors and advisors throughout the college career. This centralized system is designed such that class lists are sorted into three levels of students.

> Level 1: Students potentially most in need of early feedback regarding their progress as indicated by research literature and UWL data and programming.
> Level 2: Students enrolled in professional education programs where accreditation standards require an assessment of students' professionally-related behaviors.
> Level 3: The vast majority of UWL students - those not included in Level 1 or Level 2.

Instructors are particularly encouraged to provide feedback to Level 1 students and other students during the 5th week of classes, especially if there are concerns. After an instructor provides feedback, the student receives an email and can access the feedback through WINGS. The text of the email encourages the student to discuss the issues with the instructor and provides a link to the student success resource website. Feedback this early in the semester may allow for improvement and student success in the class. The Eagle Alert system also allows instructors/advisors to provide feedback on academic or professional concerns (especially important for School of Education (SOE) students), student potential, and/or advising sessions at any time in the semester.

Eagle Alert has been continually monitored to review usage, increase functionality, and improve communication. Below is a summary of usage for the four semesters that the system has been utilized at UWL. This information has and will continue to inform specific improvements to the system.

- The number of students who received feedback via the system has been relatively consistent each semester. Feedback is greater in Fall semesters than in Spring semesters (1281 in Fall 2013, 972 in Spring 2014, 1167 in Fall 2014, 916 in Spring 2015).
- Approximately 10-13% of the undergraduate student population at UWL received feedback in any given semester.
- Most students receiving feedback (~85%) received feedback in just one class; however, about 12% received feedback in two courses, with a few students receiving feedback in four to five classes.
- The majority of the feedback (~60%) was provided to Level 1 students.
- Approximately 24% of the UWL student population is classified as a Level 1 student in the fall semester and approximately 16% in the spring semester. Of these Level 1 students, approximately 28-37% received feedback in any given semester.
- In Fall 2014, 64% of the academic feedback focused on a negative student behavior that could impede success in the course, with the remaining feedback identifying that there was "no concern thus far in the semester". However in the Spring 2015 semester, only 48% of the academic feedback focused on a negative behavior, with much more of the feedback overall indicating no concerns.

In the first year of implementation, Eagle Alert was overseen by the HLC Executive Committee. After the initial roll-out, and based on both student and faculty feedback, improvements were made to increase functionality of the system and increase communication to all stakeholders regarding the system. Oversight of Eagle Alert is now the responsibility of the Academic Advising Center, a unit of the enrollment management division of Academic Affairs. The unit has dedicated a staff member to oversee Eagle Alert and to follow up with students who have received multiple feedback reports. The Eagle Alert staff member transitioned from another role in Academic Affairs. Important student and instructor information regarding the system can now be accessed from the Academic Advising Center webpage, including "how to videos" for both instructors on how to provide feedback and for students to access the feedback, frequently asked questions, and guidelines to instructors regarding providing comments to students through the system.

Promotion and Coordination of Student Success Resources

In Spring 2014 a working group, containing representation from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions, including members from the Murphy Learning Center, Office of Multicultural Student Services and Student Life, were asked to examine student success resources on campus, especially in regards to promotion and coordination of those resources. Specifically the working group was charged with the following items that led to the stated action items.

Review of how/when students learn about resources.

The working group's review of how/when students learn about resources began with viewing and discussing the results of the Student Success Survey. The survey revealed the top three choices of where/with whom students would seek academic assistance from if they were struggling: course instructor, a fellow student in class, and the Murphy Learning Center or a tutor/TA.

Using this data, the working group determined that resource information needs to be easily accessible by faculty, staff, and students at the time that they are seeking assistance.

Discuss most effective/efficient ways to promote known resources.

In discussions, it became apparent that UWL already offered many resources, but these were only known by pockets of individuals on campus. Access information for the resources were either unknown, not current, and/ or the information was not easily located. The desire of the working group was to put the access/tools at the "fingertips" of the faculty, staff and students when they might need them the most. The group determined that providing a centralized, web-based "one-stop-shop" for all student success resources would be the most effective, as the information would always be easily accessible for the entire campus community. Using the "one-stop-shop" approach, allows for information to be updated quickly and efficiently. Thus the Student Success website and the Interactive Tutoring Page were created, offering access to information for success resources 24/7.

Action items:

i)   A direct link to the Student Success site is provided for students under "Help" on D2L.

ii)   Site was featured and discussed at College meetings at the beginning of the academic year.

iii) Student Success site syllabus statement is included in New Faculty Handbook.

iv) Eagle Mail, a monthly parent newsletter, is utilized to educate parents on available student success related resources.

Discuss "what" is needed in terms of coordination – mechanisms for communication and structure of coordination.

Action items:

i)   An advisory council provides continued oversight of the Student Success site. The First Year Experience Coordinator convenes the council each semester and the membership of the council consists of the original members of the Promotion & Coordination of Student Success Resources working group and additional campus entities as partnerships are established.

ii)   The Murphy Learning Center maintains the online resource that publishes tutoring information for each department each semester.

iii)   Student Success site content is updated monthly through Student Life: First-Year Experience.

iv)   Monthly Student Success site web traffic reports, which indicate where the viewer accessed the page from, as well as which page they visited off of the site, are reviewed regularly.

Discuss the connection between the new early alert system and the promotion of resources.

The Eagle Alert message received by the student provides a logical connection between the two initiatives.

Action items:

i)   Student Success site link is included with suggested syllabi statement regarding Eagle Alert.

ii)   Student Success site is linked in Eagle Alert message received by students.

iii)   Student Success site is promoted during time period of Eagle Alert messaging.

Discuss the role of the web in promoting resources and how/when to connect to one another among resources.

Action items:

i)   Student Success website, a one-stop-shop of student success resources, was created

    a)   Utilized student focus groups to determine site design and organization of content

    b)   Created interactive tutoring services webpage

ii)   Dedicated Student Success "action" button on Current Students page

iii)   New student orientation leaders, Eagle Guides, are educated about site and resources, so they in turn can educate new incoming students about available resources and where to locate the information.

iv)   Student Success site is included in each of the college's academic overviews provided to new students and their families during the Freshman Registration and Family Orientation program in June.

Summary

    In summary, UWL has many high-quality resources available to students to improve their academic success. Through work of the Promotion and Coordination of Student Success Resources task force the communication among units offering these resources has improved. The newly created advisory council will once a semester 1) review content of the Student Success website and determine campus resource information that should be modified, removed, or added and 2) review the promotion of the site to students, faculty, and staff. These steps will ensure that continual review and communication take place.

University-Perspective of Academic Advising

Academic advising is a critical component of student academic success at UWL. In Fall 2013 the Advising Task Force, including faculty, college dean's office advisors, and Academic Advising Center (AAC) representation, was created to examine the current state of advising on campus, consider students' needs across their college careers, and determine gaps and overlaps that may exist from a university-wide perspective. Specific charges and action items are listed below.

Discuss academic advising at UWL in light of students' college careers and critical junction points. Identify strengths/weaknesses of the current state of UWL academic advising.

The Advising Task Force began its work with a broad discussion of academic advising on campus and then compiled an inventory of advising strengths and weaknesses as perceived by the group. It was acknowledged that UWL recognizes the importance of academic advising and has made clear investments to support advising at multiple levels: the AAC, College Deans' Office advisors, and faculty advisors. However, the group noted multiple concerns including lack of coordination between different advising units, need for better communication to students about advising, and variability in faculty advising.

(A) Need for better coordination between advising units

Action items:

(i) A representative from the AAC will serve on the Technology, Records, and Advising Committee (TRAC) which consists primarily of the College Deans' Office Advisors and representatives from Records & Registration.

(ii) An AAC liaison has been assigned to each College, as well as the School of Education to be the first point of contact at the AAC for academic departments and programs regarding questions or further communication about advising in particular majors.

(iii) Once a semester before advising, an email will be sent to all faculty advisors with a summary of key points from the La Crosse Academic Advising Association meeting.

(B) Need for better communication to students about advising

Action Items:

(i) A new [Advising website](#) was developed to help guide students to the correct advising unit, depending on their needs at any point during their undergraduate career. This website also links students to critical information on preparing for advising sessions, planning for commencement, etc. Students can access this site directly from the UWL Current Students home page and it can also be found through the advising link on some department websites.

(ii) A few advising terms within the course management system were changed.   For example, the "Academic Requirements" report was renamed the "Advisement Report", which more clearly communicates to students that this contains important information for advising.

(iii) An email notification system has been created whereby both the academic advisor and advisee are notified when a new advising relationship has been created. Although advisor information is available to a student through WINGS, many times newer students are not familiar enough with WINGS to retrieve this information. Also, faculty members expressed interest in knowing when new advisees were assigned, in particular, transfer students.

(iv) The Director of the AAC and Career Services will review the Advising website regularly to ensure updated information and links.

(C) Variability in faculty advising

Action item:

(i) A new document entitled UWL Academic Advisor Quick Tips, a how-to guide for advising meetings, was created and is distributed to faculty in once-a-semester advising emails and also housed on the AAC website. Although this will not satisfy the clear need for more training and resources on advising, it will provide some guidance, in particular for new and inexperienced advisors.

Review known data on advising at UWL and indicate what data would be helpful to know.

The Advising Task Force reviewed the Student Success survey administered by the HLC Executive Group, focusing on questions related to advising. In short, most students had met with an advisor either in the AAC, a College Deans' Office, or in a department once or twice a semester. Students reported visiting an advisor for a variety of reasons, emphasizing, once again, the many dimensions of advising. Importantly, students overwhelmingly reported good advising experiences. There was some confusion about what advisor to visit for a particular task, reaffirming the need for a clear delineation of advising roles, which the new Advising website should fulfill.

Recommend changes (if any) to UWL advising that would be university-wide.

Through discussions of the Advising Task Force and review of survey information, it was determined that UWL students seek advisors and are generally pleased with their experience. Furthermore, each advising unit has distinct strengths that contribute to the overall picture of campus advising. The problems, then, center on the ability of students to discern what advising unit is best suited to help with a particular problem and inconsistencies between advising units. The task force did not recommend any major overhaul of advising structure on campus, but instead, took action to improve the identified problems.

New Student Registration recommendations

The task force encouraged all advising units to work in collaboration to ensure the accuracy and consistency of advice given to students under the format of summer advising/course registration, where students meet with an available advisor instead of their assigned advisor. In addition, continued attention should be paid to the best ways to advise all students who are "new to UWL" and when/where it would be helpful to distinguish new first year students from new transfer students.

With respect to transfer students, specifically, the task force recommended that the Provost, Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management, and other interested parties continue to explore ways to improve this process that is complicated and particularly problematic for students transferring to high demand departments.

Summary

In summary, academic advising is a critical component of UWL's mission as a university to promote student success. UWL has many dedicated and talented academic advisors, and the Advising Task Force's work and recommendations will strengthen existing structures in support of UWL's common goal of helping students.

Focus on Transfer Students

UWL has seen a large increase in transfer students, a group *Firm Footing* identified as a potential "at-risk" group in terms of student success. Thus in Spring 2013, the HLC Executive Committee initiated a campus-wide discussion around experiences of advising transfer students and recommendations focusing on transfer students regarding credit equivalencies, advising, communication and student experience were generated. Furthermore, there is now an option for transfer students to attend one of the new summer student orientation sessions with conversations also occurring as to potentially implementing a stand alone registration/orientation

event for transfer students. The Admissions unit has also added a Transfer Counselor to their staff to work on the transfer credit evaluation process.

2. Evaluate the impact of the initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, student learning and success that are now in place in consequence of the initiative.

As a result of the Firm Footing initiative many processes at UWL related to advising and student success were closely examined. This review resulted in modification of some existing processes and creation of new processes. The changes resulted in increased efficiencies and responded to discovered deficiencies. These processes are described in detail above. Examples are:

- Creation of an advisory council that meets regularly to discuss the Student Success website and ways to increase communication around student academic success resources.
- Creation of a systematic method to gather tutoring information offered through various departments and make available to students in a searchable format.
- Increased communication and coordination related to academic advising, such as cross representation between academic advising units within various committees, AAC liaison representative assigned to each academic College, and a once-a-semester communication of key curricular changes important to academic advisors.
- Creation of a new advisor/advisee email notification system.
- Modification to the advising list within the student information system to include more information regarding advisees (admit type, level, etc…) to aid advisors.
- Creation of a new university policy to ensure connection between students on academic probation with their academic advisors.
- Promotion of the student success website and resources to students on academic probation.

An underlying impact of this initiative was greatly increased communication between members of the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions and thus perspectives, experiences, and knowledge was shared extensively between these divisions.

As related to *Firm Footing*, two surveys were conducted to assess undergraduates' experiences and perceptions related to student success resources. The first survey was conducted in Spring 2013 prior to the launch of several key student success activities (most notably, the early warning system Eagle Alert, an increased web presence regarding academic advising, and a focus on promoting student success resources). The second survey was conducted in Spring 2015 after several initiatives had been launched. Most of the indicators associated with the assessment of resources and experiences with resources (advising, tutoring, etc.) were very similar between 2013 and 2015. However, statistically significant changes were noted in two areas. First, the 2015 students indicated a higher awareness of "resources available at UWL associated with the ability to be academically successful" (rising from 68 to 74 on a scale of 0-100). Second, the 2015 students indicated a higher ability to access the resources (rising from 65 to 69). Of particular note, this trend was stronger when comparing first year students than second year students, indicating initiatives focused on first year students may have a larger impact. Generally, the two cohorts were similar in positively evaluating UWL resources and perceiving UWL's commitment to student success. For instance, the average response to the statement "I believe that UWL wants students to succeed academically" was 88 out of 100 for the 2015 students. Another positive trend was a larger percentage of students in 2015 (75%) indicating use of the Murphy Learning Center compared to the 2013 students (58%). Overall, the results suggest a small but consistent trend toward an improvement in the awareness and use of student support services by UWL's undergraduates.

3. **Explain any new tools, data, or other information that have resulted from the initiative to date.**

   As described in detail above, the main tools that were created or significantly improved as a result of *Firm Footing* were the Eagle Alert System, the interactive Advising website and the Student Success website. The Eagle Alert system allows efficient and systematic communication between instructors, students, and professional staff. Instructors mainly utilize this system to provide students feedback early in the semester, especially if there are academic concerns. The interactive Advising website helps guide students to the correct advising unit depending on the advising issue needing to be addressed. The Student Success website provides a one-stop-shop in providing information to students and staff related to student academic success resources. Like the Advising website, the link to the Student Success website appears on the main Current Student webpage and is promoted to students and parents in multiple venues.

4. **Describe the biggest challenges and opportunities encountered in implementing the initiative.**

   Firm Footing provided the following main opportunities at UWL.
   - Meaningful discussions and actions around the topic of student success.
   - Increased conversation on campus about the importance of providing students early feedback.
   - Extending and better defining the group of students who are most likely to benefit from early feedback.
   - Increased contact between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions and thus increased communication between faculty and student support service staff.
   - Use of technology to maximize the impact in terms of communication of available resources for students at UWL.
   - Institutionalizing the main components of the initiative such that they will be continually reviewed and improved.

   The following were the main challenges encountered in the *Firm Footing* initiative.
   - Faculty usage of the Eagle Alert system to provide early feedback to students. Approximately 30% of the instructors at UWL currently use the system each semester. To maximize benefits from the system, more instructor use of the system is necessary.
   - Full awareness of various aspects (purpose and intent) of the initiative to the full university community, even with continual communication that occurred in multiple formats and shared governance input on selection of the quality initiative.

Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative

1. **Describe the individuals and groups involved in the initiative and their perceptions of its worth and impact.**

   The *Firm Footing* quality initiative was overseen by the HLC Executive Committee, which consisted of UWL personnel in the following roles:

   - Quality Initiative Coordinator (now serving as Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs)
   - Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
   - Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
   - Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management
   - Director of Institutional Research, Assessment & Planning
   - Assessment Coordinator
   - Faculty Assistant to Provost

- First Year Experience Coordinator
- Representative from Faculty Senate Executive Committee
- Former Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Four of these members were active faculty within an academic department. The executive committee typically met every two weeks, especially in the beginning stages of the initiative.

Each of the three task forces contained a broad university representation, typically from both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions as described above, and was chaired by an HLC Executive Committee member. The executive committee was thus provided routine updates by each task force. Task forces met regularly and sought additional advice, as needed, from various members of campus, including students, staff and faculty.

The campus community was updated regularly in regards to the overall *Firm Footing* initiative as shown in the following table.

Spring 2012	Ideas for a major quality initiative were vetted with governance groups and students. Campus-wide email regarding the choice with a brief description.
Fall 2012	Campus-wide email with link to the proposal that was submitted and notice when proposal was accepted. Proposal presented to Faculty Senate, Academic Staff Council, Student Senate and Student Affairs Directors.
Spring 2013	Update to governance groups, Provost's Council, Academic Department chairs, Campus Climate and Student Affairs' Directors.
Summer 2013	Eagle Alert system designed - vetted with OMSS; SOE; Campus Climate & Diversity; Records and Registration, Assistants to the Deans, Common Systems Workgroup.
Fall 2013	Eagle Alert system presented to faculty in SOE and Colleges and to Student Senate. Modifications made to Eagle Alert based on initial implementation and subsequent feedback.
Spring 2014	Advising work group final report presented to Provost Council and Faculty Senate. Provost Council and Chairs provided update on *Firm Footing*. Email from Provost to campus regarding *Firm Footing.*
Summer 2014	New advising portal highlighted to first year students in Eagle Mail newsletter.
Fall 2014	Provost highlighted *Firm Footing* actions and updates to campus at opening chair's meeting, College meetings, and SOE meeting.
Spring 2015	The three main elements of *Firm Footing* initiative highlighted in a university communication - HLC Updates.

Individuals most closely involved in *Firm Footing* (e.g. HLC Executive Committee members, task forces members, assistants to the deans, etc…) were asked to reflect on their perspective regarding the most effective component(s) of the initiative. Overall the development and implementation of the early alert system and the focus on academic advising at UWL were considered extremely important elements of the initiative to aid in student success.

Below is a sample of their comments.
- I personally think that the Eagle Alert System is the most significant and effective component of *Firm Footing*. The ability of professors, advisors, and students to share in the same information is so important and has been missing for some time.
- Getting information to students via Eagle Alert in a more formal way that seems to make them take notice. The tutoring is phenomenal, and advising will come once students become more aware of it.
- Trying to support harder to retain students.
- The in depth assessment of academic advising on campus has been the most effective, I believe. Each student is benefited by academic advising. Quality academic advising has the potential to positively affect our students (retention, time to completion, student

success). Promotion of Student Success and Eagle Alert are both components of academic advising on campus.

- Facilitating conversations across units on similar topics such as advising. Troubleshooting junctions where "things" used to get caught up.
- The increased communication and work between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs staff. More work can be done on this front but the *Firm Footing* initiative helped to increase contact and communication between these units.

2. Describe the most important points that have been learned by those involved in the initiative.

Individuals most closely involved in *Firm Footing* were also asked to reflect on their perspective regarding what has been learned as a result of the initiative. Overall the importance of faculty involvement in student success, and the need for all members of the university to be involved in this goal, were considered the main aspects learned from this initiative.

Below is a sample of their comments.

- We have really great students who could benefit from more intentionality on the part of the institution.
- It takes more work from all of us to help students succeed.
- There are a lot of great faculty who want to be involved with improving student success. We need them because academic staff can make all the noise they want about student success but it will go nowhere without the support of faculty.
- I think more people need to be included as we look at ways to promote student success. It seems to be always limited on who gets involved. We need broader perspectives.
- Student success is a more multi-faceted topic than it was 30 years ago. Also it needs to be a concerted process, involvement of many at different level, to seriously address student success.
- There's always room for improvement, UWL benefits every time our students experience success, there are a variety of ways to define student success. This touches on philosophical beliefs, which determine our attitude about how to best foster student success.

Resource Provision

1. Explain the human, financial, physical, and technological resources that have supported the initiative.

As described above, many members of the UWL community were involved in this initiative, including members of the HLC executive committee, members of the three task forces, IT staff, and website development staff. Beyond the human resources, minimal financial resources were utilized for this initiative, which was important due to limited institutional resources.

Plans for the Future (Optional)

1. Describe plans for ongoing work or goals yet to be accomplished related to the initiative.

As described above, there are many aspects of the *Firm Footing* initiative that resulted in actions that are now part of UWL's institutional process. However, there are certain aspects of the initiative that are being actively reviewed and improved, particularly the Eagle Alert system. There is a concerted effort to improve the Eagle Alert system such that ease of use by instructors and students is increased, use of the feedback provided by instructors to students is better utilized, and analysis of the usage data is more easily available to facilitate constant review of the system. The overarching goal is to increase faculty use of the system and awareness of their role in the larger system of components to bolster student success.