

Policies and Procedures Content Area Recommendation

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- What areas within your Content Area have you looked to enhance?

University-Wide Use of Academic Plans

- Why are you looking to enhance these areas (pull in historical context if applicable)?

Students are currently reliant on advisement appointments so they can register for their next semester. A majority of the advising conversations surround course selection. If each student receives an academic plan that maps their course requirements for each semester, the students will see a clear pathway to graduation and reduce the number of dogmatic advisement sessions needed. Students will register earlier because they do not have to wait for an advisement appointment. Instead, upon the opening of course registration, the student can refer to their academic plan and register early. This will also reduce the unnecessary caseload for advisors so they can focus on the students that need true advisement. Students that withdraw or fail courses in their plan are at risk of stopping out or transferring out of Kean. The use of academic plans will help our advisors engage these students to revisit their academic plan, provide support, and reinforce their pathway to graduation.

- What are your recommendations to enhance these areas and why (please pull in the research that you found, the best practices and what other institutions are doing)?

Kean currently utilizes a decentralized advisement model in which different groups of students receive advisement from different areas of the University. For each student, the department and/or individual responsible for advising each specific student will create their academic plan. This is a significant workload for the first semester, but will reduce the workload significantly for the subsequent semesters. To streamline this process, the academic departments will create course sequence templates for the advisors to utilize when building the individualized academic plan. The responsible advisor will update the academic plan as needed in the case of transfer credits, remedial needs, or DFW grades. The academic plan will be visible to the student through an online portal.

Academic plans–St. Peter’s Student Planning Overview (Advisors) Tutorial 10:35
<https://www.saintpeters.edu/case/advisement/student-planning/>

Student Planning 101–Middlesex College
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFCbCk4RWTo>

Student Planning for Advisors–Seattle University
<https://www.seattleu.edu/media/advising/Getting-Started---Student-Planning-for-Advisors-PDF.pdf>

- What areas within your Content Area have you looked to enhance?
 - University-wide use of academic plans

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- SAP
- Declaration of major process
- Leave of Absence
- Why are you looking to enhance these areas (pull in historical context if applicable)?
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- What are your recommendations to enhance these areas and why (please pull in the research that you found, the best practices and what other institutions are doing)?
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Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

Financial aid is an essential component that enables students to achieve their educational goal of earning a college degree. A major obstacle to degree attainment for many students is insufficient finances, almost half of U.S. college and university students drop out before receiving a degree (Waldron, 2012). *The federal Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy states that* an institution must establish a reasonable satisfactory academic progress policy for determining whether an otherwise eligible student is making satisfactory academic progress in his or her educational program and may receive assistance under the Title IV, HEA programs (The Federal Register, 2020).

The [SAP policy at Kean University](#) requires all financial aid recipients to (1) be in good academic standing and (2) be making academic progression (pace) toward a degree in a reasonable amount of time before the Office of Financial Aid disburses any federal funds for the subsequent semester (Kean University, Office of Financial Aid, 2019).

SAP is assessed at the end of the Spring semester. Students not meeting SAP are contacted by the Financial Aid Office informing them of their status and their right to appeal. Appeals are reviewed by Financial Aid staff and an outside consultant. When an appeal is granted, financial aid is reinstated and students are required to create an academic plan. If an appeal is denied, students can pay out of pocket or seek private loans, which often have high-interest rates. Given these options, students often choose to stop out. Both options appear to have detrimental effects on student success, particularly for low-income, first-generation, and students of color (Talusán, L. & Franke, R. 2019).

The SAP appeal narrative statement must include:

- Events/circumstances that directly contributed to you not meeting the satisfactory academic progress requirements
- Specific dates, in cases of illness, accidents, etc. (with supporting documents)
- An explanation of how things are different or have been resolved that will allow you to be more successful academically

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Note*: All university students can see their pace (progression) via Financial Aid Self-Service in Kean WISE.

The federal government gives institutions the flexibility to be more restrictive in their SAP policies. The current University policy only allows for one approved SAP appeal during the student's educational career and does account for a large range of extenuating circumstances. Many institutions go beyond federal requirements by imposing additional standards not required by law, such as evaluating SAP based on both cumulative and individual term measures; imposing limits on the number of times a student may request an appeal; and creating strict limitations on appeal circumstances (Raucher, 2021).

Best Practices:

- [Montclair State University SAP Policy](#)
 - MSU has a committee comprised of trained financial aid staff and academic advisors. They are tasked with reviewing appeals/supporting documents.
 - MSU has a progression rate for students <30 credits attempted of 60% while students with >30 credits attempted must maintain a 67% progression rate
- [University of Maryland- Financial Aid Warning And Suspension](#)
 - Students who fail to meet the minimum quantitative standards for the first time will be placed on Financial Aid Warning. Students will continue to receive financial aid during the warning period. Students who fail to meet the minimum quantitative standards after the warning period will be placed on Financial Aid Suspension and will not qualify for financial aid.
- [UMASS Lowell](#)
 - Meet with academic advisor and develop an academic plan. Both students and advisor must sign SAP appeal form.
- [Stockton University](#)
 - SAP Pace Calculator
 - SAP GPA Calculator

Recommendations:

- a. A University committee comprised of financial aid staff (SAP coordinator), faculty, and staff (academic advisors, student accounting representatives) to review SAP appeals.
- b. Include a broad range of extenuating circumstances in the SAP Appeals Process including but not limited to:
 - Illness (self or family member)
 - Work conflicts
 - Transportation Challenges
 - Lack of Childcare
 - Housing insecurity

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- c. Training for Faculty/Staff Advisors about the SAP policy/timeline
 - Communicate with Faculty/Staff Advisors regarding the SAP process in real-time.
- d. Workshops teaching students how to write a successful appeal
 - Understanding SAP Workshops
 - [Hartnell College SAP Workshop \(Quiz\)](#)
 - [Howard University SAP Virtual Workshop](#)
- e. If an appeal is granted, the committee can require:
 - Restriction of credit hours
 - Mandatory Advising
 - Course Restrictions
 - Adherence to an academic plan (currently in place with no oversight from advising areas); Provide advisors with (i.e. EOF, Bridge to Success, Supera, & Athletics) access to academic plans (for approved appeals) to ensure that the student is following the plan.
 - Change of Major * (restricted majors)
- f. Allow students to appeal more than once if the extenuating circumstances are different from the initial appeal
- g. Code students in Colleague who are on SAP or SAP Warning
 - i. SAP Warning (67% to 75%)
 1. Create action plans and outreach to students informing them of their status.
 2. Early warning system for students at risk of losing their aid
 - ii. SAP Probation

References

Satisfactory academic progress policy. Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy | Kean University. (n.d.). Retrieved January 11, 2023, from <https://www.kean.edu/offices/financial-aid/satisfactory-academic-progress-policy>

Raucher, D. The overlooked obstacle: How satisfactory academic progress impedes student success and equity for Foster Youth. Home. (n.d.). Retrieved February 3, 2023, from <https://naspa.org/blog/the-overlooked-obstacle-how-satisfactory-academic-progress-i-mpedes-student-success-and-equity-for-foster-youth>

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Talusan, L. & Franke, R. (2019). (Un)fulfilling requirements: Satisfactory academic progress and its impact on first-generation, lowincome, Asian American students. *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs*, 5(1), 15-28.

The Federal Register. Federal Register:: Request Access. (n.d.). Retrieved January 12, 2023, from <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-668/subpart-C/section-668.34>

Waldron, T. (2012). Study: Nearly half of America's college students drop out before receiving a degree. ThinkProgress. <https://thinkprogress.org/study-nearly-half-of-americas-collegestudents-drop-out-before-receiving-a-degree-68867634fa5e/>

What areas, within your Content Area, have you looked to enhance?

There were three areas, or tenets, that the Declaration of Major subgroup looked to enhance. All three were reviewed because they have a significant impact on how students are advised as well as move towards degree completion. The first tenet reviewed was the student process of being an Intended Major to ultimately Declaring a Major. During the admissions process, students place the major they want to be in on the application. It is at that moment, students are considered intended. Often times, students are unaware that they have to complete an additional step and additional form in order for them to declare their major. The second tenet reviewed by this subgroup was the Grade Point Average (GPA) requirements to get into or be approved to study in each major. Every major has a different GPA requirement, with some or very little historical context or backing as to why or how the GPA became what it is. The exceptions to this finding are the programs that have accreditation and state mandates governing their curricula. The third tenet reviewed was the GPA requirements to complete or graduate out of the major. Similarly, each major has a different GPA requirement. Again, the exception to this finding are the programs that have accreditation and state mandates governing their curricula.

<https://www.kean.edu/media/change-majorminor-form-093020>

<https://www.kean.edu/offices/registrars-office/curriculum-sheets>

Declaration of Major

Why are you looking to enhance these areas (pull in historical context if applicable)?

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Overall, the declaration of major is an area that is being looked to enhance for three reasons. The first reason is that students are confused about the process of declaring a major. The second reason is that there is a need for more efficient ways students can declare a major at Kean University. The last reason is that the declaration of major process can be a way to increase degree completion.

When looking at students being confused about the declaration of major process, the subgroup cited that there is a need for our students and University community to be educated about what it means to be Intended vs. Declared. Both faculty and staff have experienced upperclassmen, with extensive credits, having not declared their major or even some students changing into a major without the GPA requirements.

When looking for more efficient ways to declare a major, members cited the change of major form being paper and manual, increasing the room for human error as well as causing extra steps for students to be approved.

When looking at the declaration of major process and how it can be a way to increase degree completion, this subgroup found that there is no standardization of GPA's to get into or approved to study in each major or completing a major. For many students, this variation in GPA poses as a barrier, particularly for students looking to change their major. The subgroup conducted and disseminated a brief survey to representatives in academic areas across the University gathering information about declaring a major ([place link to results here](#)). When asked, "Are the declaration of major requirements connected to an outside entity?" Over 70% of respondents posited, no.

When asked, "What is the historical context of this policy, if any?" The responses were broken into several categories:

- 1) The entrance criteria was accreditation driven
- 2) The entrance criteria was increased because the academic areas were getting underprepared students from other majors
- 3) The entrance criteria was increased to align with graduate school requirements or get a job after college
- 4) Academic areas simply decided to increase rigor and raise the standards to declare major
- 5) Many did not know why the criteria or GPA's are what they are

When asked, "How were the requirements for the declaration of major established?" The responses were also broken into several categories:

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- 1) There was a faculty vote or consensus
- 2) There was a completed program assessments and or reviews
- 3) The academic area followed the accreditation requirements
- 4) Some of the respondents highlighted that they were not sure

The findings of this brief survey, overall, indicate the declaration of major GPA criteria were due to either accreditation purposes, a collective group believed the standards should be increased for rigor or folks were not sure why or how the criteria came about.

The various GPA requirements also poses a barrier for students attempting to graduate or complete these academic programs. Institutional data highlighted there were a significant number of students that had in excess of 90 credits or more, but may not have had the GPA requirements to graduate from their major. This, in turn, illustrates the need for enhancements within this policy.

What are your recommendations to enhance these areas and why (please pull in the research that you found, the best practices and what other institutions are doing)?

Recommendation #1

As retention and graduation rates continue to be a part of the discussion to increase student outcomes and student success at Kean University, one of the indicators that looks to encourage students to complete their degree in a four-year timeframe is declaration of major by the time a student accumulates 60 credits. The subgroup's first recommendation is to make sure that all advisors are trained and educated on the institutional declaration of major policy. Noting the differences between being Intended vs. Declared. The goal would be to educate the University community and then ensure those students that are undeclared actually declare their major by the spring semester of their Sophomore year. This would help with creating a pathway of increasing degree completion.

Research shows that students that do not declare a major by the time they have accumulated approximately 60 credits or Junior status decrease the opportunity to finish their degree on time or within a four-year period (Allen & Robbins, 2008; Onink, 2010; Simon, 2012). A significant amount of researchers stand out to superimpose that early degree declaration, along with a commitment to complete a degree increases the likelihood that a student can complete their degree requirements on time or within four-years (Graunke, Woosley & Helms, 2006).

Recommendation #2

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The subgroup's second recommendation is to adjust the declaration of major policy in a way that decreases the number of steps for a student to declare a major.

One way of decreasing the number of steps is to automate the process. Students that come into the University as Undecided majors must select and be admitted into a major prior to earning 60 credit hours. If a student has not been admitted into a major by the time they have earned 60 credit hours, the student will be placed into Liberal Arts major automatically via the Office of the Registrar. Thereafter, the student will follow the Liberal Arts curriculum until they have consulted with their primary academic advisor and officially changed their major with the Office of the Registrar.

Another way of decreasing the number of steps is by creating restricted and unrestricted categories for majors. Most of the majors and minors at Kean University would be considered unrestricted, meaning there are no specific requirements for entry. You may declare these unrestricted majors and minors at any time throughout ones academic career. Therefore, the majority of students (freshmen, transfer, readmit and second degree) are, initially, admitted into their requested majors and minors. However, some majors at Kean University are Restricted, which means they have specific requirements for entry into the academic program (i.e. GPA, prerequisite coursework, auditions, portfolio, etc.). Undecided students and students looking to declare a restricted major have to formally apply and be admitted into their requested major by the Academic Department (College) or School. Declaration of Major requirements may vary across respective Academic Departments (Colleges) or Schools. After meeting all requirements, the executive director/department chairperson or designee will sign a Major/Minor Status Change Form indicating the change in status to declared major. This would limit the use of the Major/Minor Status Change Form. This would ultimately adjust entry GPA's to be standardized or be eliminated in unrestricted majors. This would also create a more efficient way to declare for a major.

The third way of decreasing the number of steps is to create electronic workflows for the Major/Minor Status Change Form. This would lessen the amount of moving around students would have to do in order to obtain necessary signatures.

Recommendation #3

The subgroup's third recommendation is to standardize GPA requirements for students attempting to complete or graduate from majors. The standard University GPA is 2.0. All majors, with the exception of the programs that have accreditation and state mandates governing their curricular or restricted majors (see above), would have a 2.0 GPA. This would help with creating a pathway of increasing degree completion.

Limitations

One of the major limitations of these recommendations is that they are all dependent upon the direction of the revamp on the General Education Curriculum. One model that may work as the

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University is reviewing its core curriculum is the University of Chicago. The University of Chicago does not allow students to declare majors on their university application, so everyone comes in undeclared. The school also does not expect students to declare a major until the spring semester of their third year of college. While it might seem like delaying declaring a major until the third year of college could result in wasted time and superfluous course credits, the University of Chicago safeguards against this through its core curriculum. All students take courses in the core curriculum during their first three years of school. The core curriculum is specifically designed so that the core courses a student takes will be applicable to the major they eventually choose at University of Chicago.

<https://collegeadmissions.uchicago.edu/academics>

Leave of Absence