Mid-Year Monitoring Report
of Florida Atlantic University's Improvement Plan

December 31, 2014

In June 2014, the State University System of Florida's Board of Governors (BOG) approved the *Improvement Plan for Florida Atlantic University's Performance Based Funding Model Scores*. At this time, the newly-appointed president of Florida Atlantic University (FAU), John Kelly, assured the Governors that the University embraced accountability measures and would be committed to improving its baseline scores in the BOG Performance Based Funding Model.

The BOG then established guidelines for the universities to develop an improvement plan that would be undertaken during the 2014-2015 fiscal year. The foundational theme for the guidelines was that "gains realized on these metrics will not be available for at least a year," and as such, "specific initiatives in the improvement plan must be measurable and verifiable" (BOG Budget and Finance Committee). By December 31, 2014, universities must submit a monitoring report to the Chancellor that documents the progress made on initiatives, as specified in the University's individual improvement plan. The Governors will review the report and determine if satisfactory progress has been made, subsequently releasing up to 50% of the baseline allocations that the state withheld ($3.5 million). FAU will submit a final report for review in June 2015.

As a reminder, FAU placed a strategic emphasis on improving the following two metrics:

Metric 4 - 6-year graduation rate for First-Time-In-College (FTIC) students; and

Metric 5 -

A. Increase the number of academic advisors

December 2014 – Expectation	December 2014 - Status Report
13 new academic advisors are hired and strategically placed in FAU's University Advising Services (5) as well as FAU's colleges and departments (8)	23 new academic advisors have been hired and strategically placed in FAU's University Advising Services (7), as well as FAU's colleges and departments (16)

As mentioned in FAU's original improvement plan, the National Academic Advising Association recommends a 300 student to 1 advisor ratio in order to offer students a personal connection to the institution. Before the hiring push, FAU was at roughly 400 students to every 1 advisor. In addition to the 7 placements in the central office, 16 advisors have been hired to work in academic colleges and departments.

Adding new hires has increased raw advising capacity, but FAU also had a clear need to increase the *effectiveness* of advising. The institution is improving efficacy by revitalizing the central advising office with a new mission, reorganizing staff, and revising position descriptions. A new Director (Mr. Joe Murray) hired in 2013 has been instrumental in effecting these changes. Our Freshmen Academic Advising Services became University Advising Services (UAS), a center for the advising of first and second-year students. All incoming freshmen are connected to a personal advisor prior to attending orientation, and that advisor stays with the students throughout their first two years. The Advisor also serves as an academic coach for students at risk. Advisors provide career guidance by connecting students to academic disciplines and promoting early selection of majors.

All advisors in UAS are certified as having completed *training* in Appreciative Advising, which is the intentional collaborative practice of asking positive, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experience and achieve their potential. The advisee and advisor, *as partners*, work together to discover the student's passions, design a plan to achieve their dreams, deliver on that plan, and make changes as necessary. FAU has become a national leader in Appreciative Advising; the director and staff have conducted webinars and presented at national conferences. Another significant innovation is the reach of advisors into the residence halls. *Every* first-year residence hall floor now has a UAS advisor assigned to it, and resident assistants are being trained in the proper referral information and skills needed to identify students in academic difficulty. In January 2015, FAU will launch a new academic and career counseling resource center in one residence hall, known as Get Wise @ GPT (Glades Park Tower). FAU is committed to hiring an adequate number of personnel to support our students, but the most important commitment is to *improving* the overall advising experience. The university advising experience is now exponentially more *effective*, as it has been improved through innovative advisor training and by promoting nationally-accepted best practices.

B. Purchase and implement advising software

December 2014 – Expectation	December 2014 - Status Report
Starfish advising software is installed on university servers, and training is coordinated	Starfish advising software has been installed and integrated with University systems; 100% of undergraduate advisors have completed training

While FAU's advising capacity is growing and the institution has implemented a number of measures to improve the overall effectiveness of academic advisors, it was also imperative that the advising system become more *streamlined*. After completing the procurement process per Board of Governors Regulations 18.002, 18.003, and University Regulation 6.008, the institution purchased software and integrated it with University systems. FAU's "Success Network" advising system, powered by Starfish Solutions, launched at the start of the fall 2014 semester. Since then, the institution attained the goal of training 100% of undergraduate advisors, as established in the improvement plan. The system is now available to *all* FAU undergraduates.

Previously, there was no common advising software in use university-wide. The first-year advising office and some of the colleges used one software system, but they operated independently of one another. Advisors were unable to view notes on students maintained by other offices. Now, regardless of the level of student or whether or not they have already declared a major, students use the Starfish "Success Network" system throughout their entire collegiate experience. Digital notes on the students will stay with them as they progress in their studies. Students can schedule advising appointments, communicate with advisors, track their academic progress, and learn how and where to find increased support, such as tutoring. FAU also launched a pilot study of additional Starfish features, such as an early warning system, in which instructors can flag students as "at-risk" if they have poor attendance—or even give "kudos" to students who excel. The pilot took place in the two highest enrollment courses, College Composition I and College Composition II. Faculty participation was impressive: 70 percent of the instructors in these courses submitted 1,134 early warning "flags." Advisors responded to these flags by *promptly* contacting the students and, when necessary, arranging in-person interventions.

The University will expand this intervention feature in spring 2015 to *all* general education courses. Faculty will be asked early in the semester to raise flags on attendance concerns in their classes (especially important in mathematics, the sciences, and foreign languages) and, later in the semester, to address any concerns about students who are underperforming. FAU is also working with Starfish Solutions to include data on *all* student tutoring sessions, attendance at Supplemental Instruction, and participation in review sessions. Finally, we are developing mechanisms to *assess the effectiveness* of advising overall through data provided by Starfish. FAU wishes to ensure that there is a

clear system of *accountability* in place: in the advising offices, ensuring that the advisors are meeting with students and making the necessary interventions to ensure student

Previously, FAU had no standardized study plans for its undergraduate students. While some of the colleges, departments, and degree programs independently established step-by-step roadmaps to track academic progress, the reliability and thoroughness of these plans varied greatly. This complicated the advising process, making it difficult for advisors to tell when students had deviated

350 students, with special emphasis on recruiting working professionals. A coordinating committee, comprised of one faculty member from each undergraduate college, will oversee the program. The committee will report to University Faculty Senate in 2015 and 2016 on the number of students graduating with the degree, their concentrations, their status upon entry to FAU (FTIC or transfer), and their previous major. If enrollment increases significantly by the fifth year of operation, FAU will hire an additional advisor.

F. Launch "Major KnOWLedge" early career exploration module

December 2014 – Expectation	December 2014 - Status Report
400 students have fully completed module	1,314 FTIC students have fully completed module

Students who have declared a major are less susceptible to attrition than undeclared students. Historically, FAU loses over 75 percent of those undecided entering freshmen who are still undecided by the end of the second year. The goal of the Major KnOWLedge module, offered through the Career Development Center at FAU, is to help all incoming undecided students determine majors and subsequently decrease time-to-degree and increase degree completion. The Career Development Center has also developed an assessment plan to measure the impact of the Major KnOWLedge model. The institution will have concluded the assessment of the program prior to May 2015 in order to ensure adjustments can be made to the module for all incoming FTICs.

To reinforce the insights students gained from the Major KnOWLedge module, University Advising Services launched in fall 2014 the Owl Nation Exploration (ONE) program, which involved more than 15 exploratory activities related to career and major exploration (see www.fau.edu/uas/one.php

Above and Beyond – FAU's Ongoing Commitment to Student Success

Student success is not a new topic for the academic leadership team at FAU. Prior to the release of the scores for the SUS performance based funding initiative, the University engaged in a number of self-assessment activities and operational improvements to ensure that students are graduating in a timely manner. Perhaps the most influential action taken was engaging the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) in a consultation regarding the operations of the enrollment management units. The primary goal of the review was to determine if these areas were providing effective, efficient, and student-centered service in support of students and student success. As a result of the AACRAO report, the University took a number of important steps towards improving its admissions procedures and academic operations. The Provost conducted a reorganization of the Offices of Undergraduate Admissions, the Registrar, and Student Financial Aid so that the three units reported to a newly-formed Enrollment Management and Oversight Committee (EMOC).

The Provost also charged Associate Provost Dr. Michele Hawkins with chairing EMOC and overseeing the daily operations of these units, which are so integral to student success. The team initiated reviews of burdensome registration holds, overhauled the transfer credit evaluation process, conducted surveys of non-returning students, and implemented technological upgrades to the degree audit reporting system. Academic advisors made phone calls to students who were nearing their final term but had not yet registered for their last fifteen credit hours in order for the institution to better understand and *remove* any obstacles to graduation. Lastly, the University initiated a customer service improvement effort, which is currently being conducted in collaboration with partners like the Ritz-Carlton Leadership Center.

While the academic operations are improving, President Kelly has committed to recruiting high-ability students who are adequately-prepared and interested in staying at FAU and graduating in a timely manner. Students who are not quite ready for university study are referred to the local state college partners and encouraged to articulate to FAU after completing the associate's degree. FAU has strong connections to Palm Beach State College and Broward College through vehicles such as "2+2" degree packages, the LINK program wherein state college students are served by FAU advisors, and the BOG TEAm grant-funded CAPTURE initiative to meet workforce demands in computer science and computer engineering fields. Following changes to the University's admissions standards for Fall, 2015, the average weighted high school grade point average of FTICs entering in fall 2014 was 3.77, compared to 3.51 in fall 2013. When considered alongside the institution's student success initiatives, these changes will greatly and positively impact academic progress rates and six-year graduation rates at FAU.

In order to showcase the incredible undergraduate opportunities available to prospective local students, FAU hosted two expos for high school students prior to home football games – October 18 for Palm Beach County students and November 1 for Broward County students. A combined 16,000 prospective students and family members attended these two events, where they learned about the variety of degree programs and student life offered by FAU. The ten academic colleges and various student and administrative offices were present to answer questions on topics ranging from the classroom experience, to admissions, financial aid, sports, and residential life. Both faculty and student researchers were able to exhibit their works, while high school students