Team Progress: Matador Momentum

Two years ago, in late November, 2015, CSUN sent in our campus application to participate in “Re-imagining the First Year of College,” an initiative directed by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

We learned in early December 2015 that we had been selected as one of the 44 participating institutions, and in February 2016, four of us attended the kick-off conference in Austin, TX.

What have we accomplished since then?

1. We chose a team name, “Matador Momentum,” to represent our goal of fostering forward motion for our students through cross-divisional cooperation including student members.
2. We supported the revision of the campus’s letters to students on probation.
3. We supported the revision of the letters informing students that they had not achieved Satisfactory Academic Progress.
4. We launched a Communications Makeover initiative (still under way) to disseminate best practices for student-facing websites and other messaging including automated email replies and phone greetings and recordings.
5. We supported the reset of the Satisfactory Academic Progress threshold (to bring it in line with others in the Cal State system)
6. In partnership with the Advising Resource Center and Undergraduate Studies, we renamed the “undecided/undeclared” major as “exploratory” to acknowledge the role played by student agency and activity in that major and to remove the stigma attached to being an “un-“ major.
7. We persuaded the campus to create a student portal pagelet providing one-stop information about all on-campus jobs. (Previously they had been posted on six separate campus websites, none of which referred to any of the others.)
8. In partnership with the office of Marketing & Communications, we launched a student success campaign, Matadors Rising. In addition to banners, signs, buttons, postcards, emails, pens, and other items promoting students success, the campaign includes the Matadors Rising website (https://www.csun.edu/matadorsrising) with these elements:
   a. An opening message from the campus president.
   b. A short video (2:40) highlighting the campaign themes around Matadors Rising and student success: “We can do this,” “Finish with 15,” and “Think 30.” This video was shown as part of all New Student Orientation sessions in late summer 2017.
   c. A “How can we help?” Web form allows students to request information or assistance.
   d. The “Campus Essentials” list links to key campus offices, programs, and service providers.
   e. A collection of “Celebrations of Student Success” offers brief profiles of recent CSUN graduates.
   f. “Save more,” “Earn more,” “Do more” data points emphasize the benefits of a college degree.
9. We have provided ongoing support to the campus’s GI 2025 initiative, which took on the name “Matadors Rising.”
10. We developed the idea of “data champions,” members of the faculty supported with funds to examine and share student success data to guide curricular and classroom changes with their colleagues.

11. To forward our goals, we launched a series of faculty/staff workshops:
   a. Teaching faculty to teach students how to “do” office hours—and explaining why students don’t already know how.
   b. Applying Dr. David Yeager’s “psychological friction” model at CSUN by customizing his powerful graphic to the challenges our students encounter.

12. We shared a suggestion that resulted in new “MataCare” emergency grants for students with unexpected urgent financial needs.

13. In partnership with Academic Technology, we helped develop “Matador Moments: Freshman Challenge,” an online competition inviting all current CSUN students to share their success stories about challenges they addressed during their freshman year.

14. We advocated successfully for the expansion of two existing programs:
   a. ExCEL: Experience Confidence & Enjoyment in Learning.
   b. RAISE Your GPA: a two-unit course offered to students who need to improve their GPA.

15. We suggested that the registration dates for continuing freshmen shift to permit them to register during their spring (second semester), allowing them to build on their ongoing momentum and potentially register for classes with current classmates. (This suggestion will be implemented in spring 2018.)

16. We partnered with the Office of Student Success Innovations to develop messages for a series of laminated placards displayed by faculty and staff (and duplicated in digital form as part of email signatures) for the “CSUN Connects” campaign.

17. We established the CSUN Mentorship Program in the Office of Student Involvement and Development. To date, 1100 (of 5000+) new freshmen have signed up to indicate their interest in the program and have been sent an email newsletter each month with important deadlines, an invitation to participate in a designated campus event, the profile of a selected campus resource, and (for a subset of the 1100) peer mentoring, with one-on-one mentoring available on request.

18. We supported the expansion of New Student Orientation for new transfer students from one session each summer to three separate dates, thus allowing the program to triple in size.

19. We participated in the New Student Orientation Resource Fair (multiple dates in August).

20. We have collected informational data on campus mentoring and peer programs (46 of them and counting). We hope to be able to share the information online in a searchable database to encourage participation by students in both roles (mentor/mentee, advisor/advisee, etc.).

21. Team members presented two sessions at the July 2017 Academic Affairs Summer Meeting of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities in Baltimore, MD: “Belonging Intervention for Faculty and Staff: Changing Hearts and Minds” and “Student Affairs and Academic Affairs Partnership: What the Student Affairs Side of the House Wishes You Knew.”

22. We suggested that the Terry Piper Lecture Committee bring Dr. David Yeager to campus as their 2017 keynote speaker.