



QEP Title: ADVISING FOR STUDENT SUCCESS: Achieving a Student-Centric Model for Academic Advising

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Executive Summary: Bluefield University is a Christ-centered learning community whose mission is to develop servant leaders to transform the world. Bluefield University is committed to academic excellence and life-long inquiry while embracing a liberal arts tradition through the study of humanities, sciences, professional studies, and graduate programs. We seek to help students understand and prepare for vocation and calling while becoming compassionate globally minded servant leaders through undergraduate degrees in twenty-two on-campus majors and eleven online majors.

One of the greatest challenges at Bluefield University has been student success and retention. A key data point is a four-year graduation rate (2022 data) of 31%, which is itself a product of our Fall-to-Fall retention rate of 54% (2010-22 average). The reported 58% retention rate in 2021 is significantly below the national average of 75.6% reported by IPEDS for 2021.

The University has partnered with Credo as part of the *Moving the Needle* project. Arising from the initial institutional assessments, it was determined that strengthening academic advising would be impactful toward increasing student success and retention and thereby our retention and graduation rates. This focus on academic advising aligns with the 2019 – 2024 institutional strategic plan goal #4 to “execute a comprehensive, integrated plan to promote student success, which begins before enrollment and continues after graduation., and focuses on retaining and graduating students.” In addition, enhancing academic advising also aligns with the University’s Board of Trustees’ commitment to create a student-centric model that came out of a charette held in January 2020 involving Bluefield administration, faculty, and staff.

The University’s Advising for Student Success Quality Enhancement Plan utilizes a three-pronged approach to enhancing the advising experience. The first prong is to develop student agency in advising. In conjunction with a reconfiguration of the General Education Program, the University has created a series of Career Pathways courses centered around skill development, professional dispositions, and academic and career readiness. One component of the Career Pathway is helping students develop agency in advising. This will help advising appointments to be less process oriented toward course selection and more identity shaping regarding career and graduate school. The second prong is the development of a University Advising Center for first-year students as they navigate the processes of major selection, major changes, and the business of being a university student. The third prong is faculty training in advising expectations and technology use to provide all students with a robust, future-orientated advising experience.