

Responding to Substantive Institutional Change: The Case of a First-Year Experience Program

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Institutions

Berklee College of Music

- Focus on popular music
- Number of students: 4,500 undergraduate; 215 graduate
- Degrees offered: Bachelor and Master of Music
- Unionized, ranked faculty. No tenure system
- Student Information System: Colleague
- 84% first-year retention rate ; 60% undergraduate graduation rate
- Indicators of diversity* at undergraduate level
 - ALANA = 20%
 - White = 33%
 - International = 37%
 - 36% female, 64% male

*10% did not report ethnicity

Institutions

Boston Conservatory

- Classical music, dance, musical theater, theater
- Number of students: 575 undergraduate; 220 graduate
- Degrees offered: Bachelor of Fine Arts, Master of Fine Arts, Master of Music
- Non-union, unranked faculty. No tenure system
- Student Information System: PowerCampus
- 90% first-year retention rate; 72% undergraduate graduation rate
- Indicators of diversity* at undergraduate level
 - 18% ALANA
 - 54% White
 - 10% International
 - 64% female, 36%male

* 18% did not report ethnicity

Merger

Goals:

- Increase curricular and co-curricular experiences
- Provide opportunities for collaboration between the arts
- Diversify the curriculum and student body at both institutions
- Financial and physical plant considerations

Timeline:

- June 2016 - Merger
- August 2016 - Student Affairs, Advising and Success merged
- August 2017 - Liberal Arts became first integrated academic department and curriculum

Opportunities with the Merger

- Develop a common student experience
- Create and enhance pathways for academic opportunities
- Revise advising models
- Revise and strengthen first-year experience
- Focus on community building
- Integrate the academic experience

Process - New Advising Model

Goal: Move from highly decentralized and uncoordinated to more intentional model at the College.

- External review
- Department chair, Dean, and student meetings
- Co-creation exercise with students
- Opportunity to coordinate and collaborate with FYE, career communities, and new student orientation and early alert systems.
- Best practices from professional organizations (NACADA, EAB and others)
- Challenge of differing advising models, curriculum and academic policies at College and Conservatory.

Process - First-Year Experience

Goal: Provide academically challenging FYE that is an “experience” rather than a course

- External review of existing First-Year Seminar
- Subcommittee of faculty at both institutions
- Backward course design method
- Meetings with academic leaders and offices across campus
- Collaborations with partners across campus to design co-curricular pieces
- Participation in AAC&U Institute on High-Impact Practices
- Pilot in summer of 2017; required of all students in fall of 2017
- Assessment at end of fall of 2017

Results: LENS

Model: At the core of LENS is an Engaging Seminar, in which students investigate ideas through the lens of a focused topic, selected by a faculty member. Complementing their course work, students engage in a variety of activities in and out of class designed to connect them to Berklee and the resources offered, and to help them thrive academically, artistically, and personally.

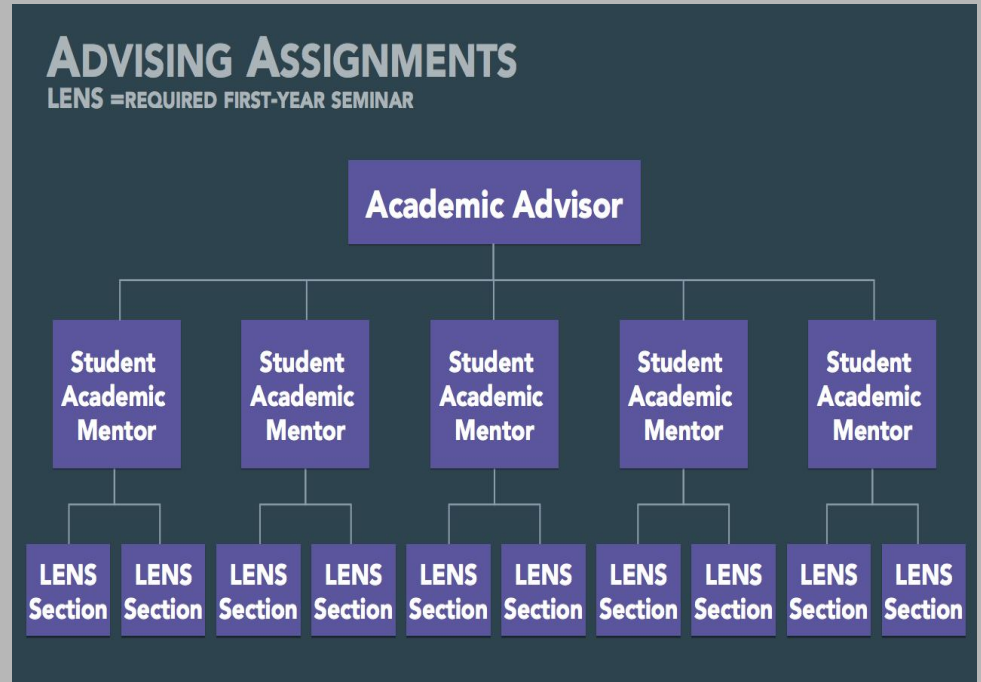
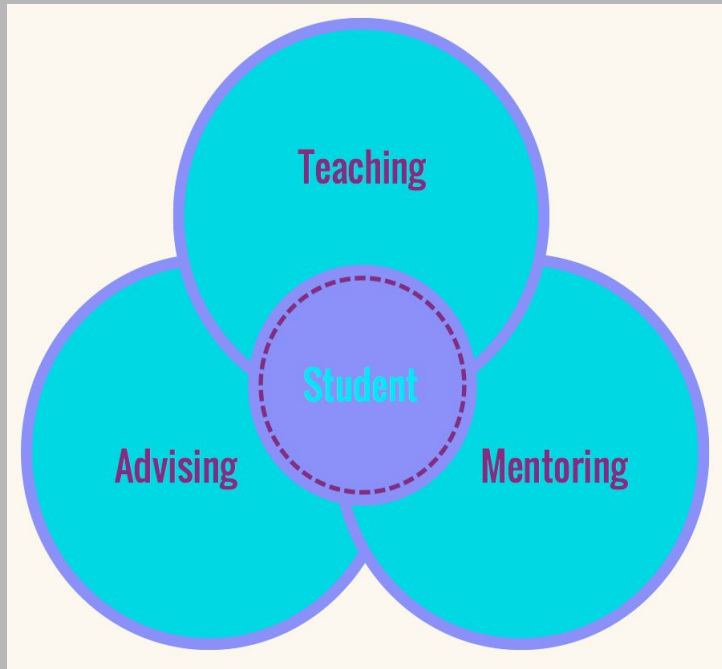
- Menu of five course options including one specific to campus in Valencia, Spain, and one service-learning option
- Co-curricular activities overseen by Student Academic Mentors (SAMs)
- Living-Learning Community
- Sections for ESL students
- First semester of program: 70 sections offered in Boston, including 5 ESL sections and 4 LLC sections; and 2 sections offered in Spain

Results: LENS

Preliminary Data:

- Student satisfaction seems largely based on their professor
- “Kitchen sink” phenomenon continues
- Conservatory students feel College bias in co-curricular pieces

Results: New Advising Model



Results: New Advising Model

ADVISORS

semester

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

Assigned Academic Advisor

**Student
Academic
Mentor**

Career Coach/Career Community

Major Advisor

Results: New Advising Model

Preliminary Data:

- All entering students introduced to academic advisor via video, Orientation and in-class introductions
- 140+ advisor visits to LENS classes
- Integration with Early Alert systems and responses
- 1500+ 1:1 advising appointments in fall 2017 compared to 550 in fall 2016
- SLO's and assessment
- Enhanced tracking and reporting

Continuing Challenges with LENS/Advising

- Two student-information systems
 - Rooms
 - Courses (scheduling, grading, class lists,...)
 - Faculty/students
- Faculty on two contracts
- Two advising models with one centralized office
- Student housing is not yet integrated
- Two philosophies about end-of-semester final exams/evaluations
- Policies and processes
- Faculty training, development, and expectations
- Different cultures