Executive Summary

The MIU investment in undergraduate advising continues to yield significant benefits, most notably in the areas of: (1) expanded advisor access, (2) improved advising technology (3) robust advisor training and (4) significant advisor community building. Creation of the Office of Undergraduate Advising and its ongoing operations have been central to the coordination and success of these efforts.

Advisor Access

Hiring of thirty-four advisors and advising leaders improved student access to advising and also led to the creation of innovative programs and campus collaborations. Most advising units with high caseloads are moving toward, or are now below, the nationally recommended maximum ratio of one advisor per 300 students. Students are more easily able to make appointments with advisors, access advising information through web and social media sources, attend group advising sessions and workshops, and work with advisors in specialty areas such as pre-health and pre-law preparation. The Cross-College Advising Service, a heavily-MIU funded program, realized an 86% increase in student appointments and walk-ins from pre-MIU levels.

Technological Advances

The Advisor Notes System (ANS) and the SOAR Advising Module (SAM), have improved the student experience by improving advisor effectiveness. Over 215,000 ANS records have been entered into the system since the system went live in 2010. There are more than 650 authorized ANS users in 160 units across 13 divisions at UW-Madison. The ANS strengthens the connections between divergent parts of our advising system and provides advisors with useful data about significant advising contacts. Over the 2013-2014 academic year 70% of undergraduates had a significant contact with an advisor documented in the system. Enhancements to the enrollment experience and the creation of a central repository for
academic and curricular information are on the horizon. These future technology enhancements will reduce the amount of time advisors spend helping students enroll in courses and locate information, thereby freeing time for higher value discussions and planning.

**Advisor Training and Professional Development**

One of the early successful initiatives for the Office of Undergraduate Advising was the creation of a comprehensive advisor training and professional development curriculum. In its first full year (2013-2014) almost 1700 total and nearly 450 unique advisors attended one or more of the 69 events offered. Events ranged from an all-campus advising conference to a monthly academy for new advisors. Events focused on four primary themes: cultural competency, career development, international students, and students facing academic difficulty.

**Advisor Community and Collaboration**

The MIU investment significantly enhanced community and collaboration among advisors, which is critical at a large and decentralized institution. Advisors report feeling valued, supported and well prepared to do their jobs. Advisors are increasingly collaborating across schools/colleges/programs to provide students with a more seamless advising experience. In the words of one advisor, who was reflecting on the creation of the Office of Undergraduate Advising:

*The impact of the Office of Undergraduate Advising has been strong, organized, and relevant to the needs of the advising community. The OUA provides valuable resources, communication, and coordination, all three of which are important pieces to success that many advising units and individual advisors were previously lacking. Some of the words/phrases that come to mind when thinking about the office's impact are: community/relationship building, diversification of input, competent/dedicated staff, practical/valuable outputs, and fun!*
The improvement of undergraduate advising is a centerpiece of the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates (MIU). In April 2011, the MIU Advising Work Team co-chaired by Don Woolston and Annette McDaniel issued the final recommendations regarding how the majority of the MIU funds set aside for advising improvements should be invested. This report highlights the significant impact of MIU funds for undergraduate advising and summarizes the individual reports of all the units that received funds and positions.

**Question A: For your specific project goals, what progress have you made? What impact is your project having on the quality of the undergraduate experience?**

**Project Goal #1: Improve Access to Advisors**

UW-Madison hired 34 new academic advisors and advising leaders as a direct result of the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates. In every case these hires have improved student access to advisors and reduced advisor loads. As a result, more students are being seen in individual and group advising settings and are also having email questions answered more quickly. The dramatic increases in access reported in earlier MIU Accountability Reports have been maintained across advising units. Here are a few notable highlights:

1. The MIU pre-business advisor at the Wisconsin School of Business held 741 individual appointments with pre-business students. Due to the additional advisor the office was able to open a resume review service for students applying to the business school.
2. The College of Engineering added a new type of advising option this year- a 15 minute peak enrollment time check-in appointment. The MIU funded advisors conducted nearly 250 of these types of appointments over a two-week period.
3. The Center for Pre-Health Advising (funded entirely by MIU) advised 2328 students in appointments and drop-in advising meetings this year.
4. The Exploration Center for Majors and Careers was able to realize a 35% increase in student appointments since hiring the two MIU advisors.
5. The Cross-College Advising Service has maintained it high level of MIU funded activity seeing approximately 20,000 students during the 2013-2014 academic year.
6. The Transfer Ambassadors, part of the Transfer Transition Program, conducted individual meetings with every new transfer student at SOAR (645 students).
7. The CALS Transitional Advisors recorded 2200 advisor note contacts with 1400 individual students to discuss major exploration and course selection.
8. During the 2013-2014 academic year approximately 70% of undergraduates had a documented contact in the Advisor Notes System with an academic advisor. Because not all advising interactions are documented 70% is a conservative estimate of the percentage of undergraduates who actually interacted with advisors. The heavily MIU funded Cross-College Advising Service saw 82% of their assigned first year students during appointments or walk-in advising in the fall of 2013.
In addition to increasing access to traditional advising appointments, MIU advisors have created new and innovative communications, workshops, partnerships, and assessments that allow them to reach more students in effective and efficient formats. This year’s reports documented an increasing number of these types of efforts. For example:

1. The Center for Pre-Law Advising coordinated the annual Law School Fair featuring admissions representatives from approximately 100 national law schools. In addition, the CPLA coordinated events with departments such as philosophy, psychology, Engineering, and the Cross-College Advising Service to provide group advising to pre-law students.
2. The Transfer Transition Advisor made nine site visits to four top feeder campuses to meet with students planning to transfer to UW-Madison.
3. The Exploration Center partnered with a variety of courses to present career exploration and development content to over 400 students as part of course curriculum.
4. The Biology Major began issuing a weekly electronic newsletter featuring relevant curricular, study abroad, and job opportunities in addition to other helpful college and campus announcements.
5. The CALS Transitional Advisors spearheaded the fall semester Academic Affairs Open House, the New Student Open House in January and a year-end social for all new CALS freshman and transfers.
6. The Center for Pre-Health Advising is using Facebook and Twitter to convey key information to students. CPHA also piloted a Google Map and created a LinkedIn network to connect current undergraduates with UW-Madison alumni in health professional programs.
7. The Communication Arts advisor engaged with students interested in creating a Communication Arts Student Association and took on the role of co-advisor for the organization.
8. The Theater and Drama academic and career advisor spent many hours with students by attending evening and weekend student performances. As the advisor for the Undergraduate Theatre Association (UTA), he was able to facilitate many events specifically for undergraduates, such as career workshops, field trips, showcases, and theatrical production work.
9. The psychology advisor re-launched the Psychology Peer Mentor Program that matches first-semester students with upper-class students in psychology. Mentors complete intense training and take a 2-credit Psych399 course during the fall semester to support their development as an effective mentor.
10. The Anthropology/Geography advisor developed and maintains a blog called “Anthropology and Geography Beyond the Classroom” (anthrogeog.blogspot.com).

Collaboration among advisors and advising units surfaced as a major theme in this year’s individual project reports. In every report, collaboration and community building among advisors and advising units was cited as an important result of the MIU investment. At a large and decentralized university, collaboration among advisors is critical to ensuring that students
are adequately connected to resources, that questions are answered accurately and that students do not fall through the cracks. Here are some notable examples of such collaboration:

1. The presence of the Historical Humanities Cluster advisor has facilitated an unanticipated level of faculty collaboration among the six departments and programs that make up the Historical Humanities Cluster. Because faculty from the programs have had to meet to figure out how they will pay for the advisor’s office, computer, and other expenses, they have brainstormed about other ways to improve undergraduate advising and education.
2. CALS and Engineering are collaborating on peer-advisor training and advisor professional development in math and chemistry.
3. The Cross-College Advising Service holds bi weekly staff development sessions that rotate regularly among the undergraduate schools and colleges and the academic and student service departments.
4. The Biology major advisors are able to regularly attend at L&S Adviser Consortium and CALS First Thursday monthly meetings as a part of their efforts to integrate into the advising communities in both L&S and CALS.
5. The Exploration Center formed a partnership with the Wisconsin Alumni Association and presented a keynote presentation at the Alumni Student Board’s Career Connection Event.
6. The Transfer Transition Advisor partnered with the Working Class Student Union to offer a financial aid workshop.

Project Goal #2: Create a System for Campus-wide Advising Leadership and Coordination

The year’s accomplishments continue to validate the 2011 MIU Advising Working Group’s recommendation to create a central coordinating body for undergraduate advising. With resources devoted to campus-level leadership of advising the following advancements have been made:

1. Four advisory committees continued to provide input and guidance to the Office of Undergraduate Advising. The Academic Advising and Policy Leaders (AAPL) committee consists of the assistant/associate dean or director of each school/college advising unit. The Council on Academic Advising (CAA) has representatives from all types of campus advising. The Advisory Board for Advisor Training (ABfAT) provides advice and implementation support for advisor training efforts and the Advising Architecture Review Board (AARB) provides advice regarding advising technology and information/data access. The four groups met regularly throughout the year and met twice at a Committee Summit to integrate the work of all four committees around critical issues. At the end of the academic year the OUA staff surveyed the committee members about their experience. Ninety-five percent of the 64 committee members who responded felt the meetings were a good use of their time.
The Office of Undergraduate Advising assumed co-leadership of the *Orientation Advising Committee (OAT)*, responsible for the planning and implementation of the Student Orientation Advising and Registration (SOAR) advising program. Through SOAR, advisors provide individual advising and enrollment support to 7300 new students each summer and January.

Wren Singer, Director of Undergraduate Advising, met personally with every new advisor who started during the academic year (approximately 20 meetings). These 30-minute meetings were designed to convey expectations about the advising role at UW-Madison and welcome the advisor to the community. Wren also began conducting exit interviews with advisors leaving UW-Madison or leaving the advising community for another role at UW-Madison.

In partnership with the Registrar’s Office, the Office of Quality Improvement, and the Division of Information Technology the Office of Undergraduate Advising is leading two major projects designed to simplify information and technology resources to allow advisors to spend more time in high value conversations with students and less time navigating information and tools. These projects include (1) the design of a single reliable source for academic and curricular policy information and (2) the redesign of the enrollment experience tools and process (see below).

The OUA has turned its attention to the assessment of advising by drafting an advising assessment strategic framework. OUA is currently seeking feedback from stakeholders on the framework and is gathering baseline data. Overall goals of the assessment strategy are to create a positive culture of assessment, support advising units in conducting meaningful assessment and understanding the impact that a quality advising relationship has on student learning (see below).

The training, professional development and advisor communication efforts are flourishing and one of the most highly visible and recognized efforts of the OUA (see below).

The OUA is examining a possible expansion of scope to include coordination and support of career advising and of academic support/tutorial services.

In spring 2014 members of the advisory committees were asked to comment on how the advising community has changed since the creation of the Office of Undergraduate Advising. Here are some highlights:

*OUA is completely altering advising on this campus by providing continuous organization, leadership and momentum. There were fears that OUA would try to direct advising units. Instead of asserting authority, OUA is creating transparency, increased communication, a forum for voicing concerns, and creates avenues to actually SOLVE campus advising problems.*

*Oh, it's good. Having a centralized hub for coordinating advising efforts, initiatives, etc., is awesome. We've seen a jump in the number of candidates that come in to interview for advising positions that talk about how much they'd like to be at an institution that values advising as much as ours does.*
The contributions to community building, professional development, SOAR coordination and competency development have been simply outstanding. The community seems united as never before and your leadership in collaborating with administrative partners has also set a very positive tone!

I feel that we actually have an advising community now that encompasses a greater percentage of those involved in advising and related functions; new advisors now have onboarding and are welcomed in to the community from the very beginning; I feel that the profile of advising as a profession has increased.

The role of advisors on campus has been professionalized, spotlighted, and celebrated more than ever before, from increased technologies, professional development opportunities, and networking, there is a lot to be celebrated. There is more coordination and collaboration between schools/colleges than ever before and the engagement of other campus partners (financial aid, registrar, admissions) is also great.

The impact of the Office of Undergraduate Advising has been strong, organized, and relevant to the needs of the advising community. The OUA provides valuable resources, communication, and coordination, all three of which are important pieces to success that many advising units and individual advisors were previously lacking. Some of the words/phrases that come to mind when thinking about the office's impact are: community/relationship building, diversification of input, competent/dedicated staff, practical/valuable outputs, and fun!

OUA has invigorated the advising community and elevated the level of importance of advising for the entire campus. Since its inception, OUA has developed and successfully implemented several essential advisor training modules, helped to define advising and advisor roles at UW, greatly enhanced communication about advising/advisors/advising units, and has begun some critical work in simplifying advisor tools to maximize advisors' time with students. I'm sure I'm missing something.... (PS GREAT JOB, FOLKS!)

Project Goal# 3: Improve Advising-related Technology and Assessment

The Office of Undergraduate Advising (OUA) is charged with providing coordination and support for improvements in advising technology and assessment. The OUA continues to serve as the administrative home of the campus Advisor Notes System (ANS) and also coordinated final development of the SOAR Advising Module (SAM) before handing over administration of that system to the Center for the First-Year Experience.

Over the past year two guiding documents were developed by the OUA: the Advising Technology Strategic Framework and the Strategic Framework for the Assessment of Undergraduate Advising.
The *Advising Technology Strategic Framework* serves as the guiding document for efforts that will support and enhance the work of undergraduate advisors across campus by improving the information technology (IT) tools and systems they need to do their work while also improving access to the information and data advisors require to best meet student needs.

Major steps taken toward the advising technology strategic goals this year include:

1. Development and deployment of the “Advising Resources for Faculty and Staff” website (advising.wisc.edu).
2. Coordination and support for the development/upgrading of four campus-wide advising unit websites: the Office for Bioscience Exploration, the Center for Pre-Health Advising, the Center for Pre-Law Advising and the Undergraduate Academic Awards Office.
3. Identification of faculty and staff who have an undergraduate advising role as a component of their work.
4. Development of visual representations of undergraduate advising at the institution – the “Undergraduate Advising Organizational Chart” and the “Advising Compass” (a dynamic radial organizational chart).
5. Initiation of a joint project between the Office of the Registrar and the OUA on the “Enrollment Experience” which began the process of simplifying and integrating the three systems currently needed by students to identify and enroll in classes.
6. Coordinating and launching a year-long effort to identify needs and define requirements for a campus-wide curricular and academic policy repository that will serve as the data source for a 21st Century Undergraduate Catalog.
7. Progress toward the deployment of the Curricular and Academic Operational Data Store (CAOS) that will serve campus systems (including advising systems) as the single source for operational student curricular and academic data.
8. Initial concept development and early prototyping of an integrated advising user interface that will provide advisors with direct and intuitive access to the information and data they need to work with students.

The Advisor Notes System continues to provide high value to the university, the advising community, and students. About 215,000 advisor notes (records) have been entered into the system since it went live on June 1, 2010. ANS users enter almost 70,000 new records each year. There are 657 authorized users of the system in almost 160 units across 13 divisions at the university.

The new *Strategic Framework for the Assessment of Undergraduate Advising* serves as the guiding document for campus efforts to: 1) ensure compliance by the UW-Madison advising community with Madison Initiative for Undergraduates (MIU) funding requirements; 2) enhance and continuously improve the quality and the delivery of undergraduate academic advising at the university; and 3) facilitate the creation and maintenance of a positive, healthy “culture of assessment” within the institution’s undergraduate advising community in order to normalize assessment as part of routine practice.
The OUA has begun stakeholder engagements around this strategic framework beginning with the OUA’s advisory committees – particularly the Academic Advising Policy Leaders (AAPL) committee and the Council on Academic Advising (CAA). Once the advisory committees have vetted the framework and their input been incorporated into the document, broader advising community engagements will be conducted over the coming year.

**Project Goal #4: Improve Advisor Training, Professional Development and Communication**

The OUA-lead efforts to create new advisor training and continuing advisor professional development have flourished and dramatically changed the experience of serving as a UW-Madison advisor. Highlights of the year include:

1. The Office of Undergraduate Advising sponsored 69 training and professional development events (up from 20 events last year and 0 the year before).
2. Launched a campus-wide New Advisor Training Series designed to give newly hired advisors the foundation they need to be successful in their first year and beyond.
3. Sponsored four professional development grants for advisors to complete Career Development Facilitator Training. Grant recipients shared their learning with others by collaborating to develop a workshop offered to the advising community on three occasions.
4. Honored five advisors with Outstanding Achievement in Undergraduate Advising Awards. More than 100 award nominations were submitted by staff, faculty and students. Award winners receive a stipend for advising professional development.
5. Hosted the second annual UW-Madison Advising Conference, attended by 220 advisors. Chancellor Blank served as the welcome speaker.
6. The Advisory Board for Advisory Training (ABfAT) met monthly throughout the year to plan and implement training and professional development events and the advising conference. The ABfAT group focused on priority training/professional development topics: (1) cultural competency (2) career development (3) international students and (4) students facing academic difficulty.
7. 1693 total and 441 unique advisors attended a training or professional development event during the year.

**Question B: If you made new hires how have you increased the diversity of your unit/department faculty and staff? Describe efforts to increase the diversity of your recruiting pool.**

Each advising position hired through the MIU project used its own recruiting, interviewing, and hiring plan. The individual reports detail these plans. In summary, the positions were widely posted, the search committees were composed of a diversity of faculty, staff, and students and the pools were both wide and deep. The positions have been filled by a mix of men and women and by individuals from a variety of racial, ethnic, and experiential backgrounds.
Question C: How have you considered the achievement gap among students based on demographic characteristic as relevant to your project? What elements of your project are directed to reducing the achievement gap? What impact are you making?

Academic Advising by it’s very nature is a strategy to reduce the achievement gap, so there is inherent focus on this principle in every part of this project. The hiring of more academic advisors, thereby reducing advisor loads and increasing accessibility, is the primary reason the MIU advising investment will help reduce the achievement gap. In addition to improved accessibility to advisors, lower case loads provide advisors with additional time for appointments and more opportunities to provide individualized, proactive, and high-touch advising. Continued focus on advisor training and professional development will allow advisors to learn more about working with students with different backgrounds, experiences and needs. Beyond the reduction of advisor loads and the addition of targeted professional development for all advisors, here are a few specific examples cited in the department reports.

1. The OUA director served as lead writer for a grant to the Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation requesting funding to enhance our early-warning system for students at risk of academic difficulties. Although the grant was not funded, the relationships built and the ideas generated through the process are continuing to influence our ability to work on achievement gap issues.

2. The Advisor Notes System permits easy sharing of information between faculty and staff who work with under-represented students. Staff from programs that specifically support these students can read notes from and write notes to be read by other advisors and deans. Similarly, all of the student/academic affairs units in all of the undergraduate schools and colleges actively use the ANS. Shared advising notes permit staff to reinforce common messages, help identify and resolve discrepancies in advising, highlight potential problems early, and track referrals and student follow through. While important for all students, these capacities can be critical to the success of under-represented students.

3. The increase in intentional collaboration between academic program advising and under-represented student programs was noted in almost every individual report again this year. This community and trust building across different advising roles will provide a stronger and more consistent support network for under-represented students.

Question D: Unintended or unanticipated benefits

Three years into the advising investment many of the benefits that initially seemed unintended are now expected outcomes. In particular, greater levels of collaboration among advisors and advising units, which initially seemed like an unintended benefit, is now a routine and expected way of doing business. Increased advisor morale, stronger relationships between departmental advisors and faculty, and strong professional development and professional contributions of UW-Madison academic advisors are all now a routine part of the culture.
In summary, UW-Madison is incredibly fortunate to have funds from the MIU initiative invested in academic advising for undergraduate students. While many peer institutions are cutting their advising resources, we had the opportunity to strategically deploy resources to assist our undergraduate students through a stronger advising system. Without funding from the MIU none of the many accomplishments detailed in this report, and the many other examples not included here, would have happened. The impact on students is best shared in the voices of students themselves.

I feel very good after today's appointment. I feel like I have a better understanding of where I need to go to plan out my future better.

My advisor helped me clear up any concerns or worries I had about not meeting the correct amount of credits needed or not knowing 100% what I wanted to major in.

Thank you very much for help! You helped me to identify my academic interests and strengths, and to explore my major options. Thank you for being so friendly, professional, attentive to details and helpful.

I really appreciate how knowledgeable my advisor is on all of the different topics I asked her. She was very considerate with everything I had to contribute and had answers to all my questions.

My advisor did a great job of addressing my concerns and helping me narrow down my major ideas!

My advisor is really helpful. She introduced me to some potential majors that I'm interested in. Now, I have more choices and am much clearer about my major and career.

My advisor helped me explore my current academic interests and strengths and provided me with resources to take the next step in choosing a major. Overall, the meeting was very helpful, and I feel like I am getting closer to picking my major.

Thanks again for everything throughout this process. I cannot adequately express my gratitude for all of your help. Applying to law schools is stressful, and I always left your office feeling incredibly encouraged. The new pre-law advising center was such a useful resource for me.

You were easily the best advisor I had while at UW-Madison. I will forever be grateful for your wisdom surrounding the entire law school process over the last year and a half - thank you a million times over!

Thank you so much for your help and advice this application cycle - from advising me to
postpone the LSAT to helping with the final stages of the application process; I still can't believe I got into Yale and am so grateful for everything and everyone that helped make this possible.

Stephanie is an amazing advisor, for Christ's sake give her a raise. I have never felt as empowered upon leaving an advising session as I do when I leave an appointment with her.

Chican@ Latin@ Studies Gatherings are an amazing way to bring together a large certificate program. Initially felt out of place but I now feel very integrated into the program. I’ve utilized some of the resources who that come to speak at the gatherings and my grades have improved. Keep them going!

The past three years have been excellent for the academic advising community at UW-Madison- raising its stature and empowering its members. The years to come will be excellent for undergraduate students, who will have the benefit of working with knowledgeable and personable academic advisors who can help them make the most of their Wisconsin Experience.