

## My Learning Plan

Decades of research document the value of the attainment of a college degree in improving the quality of one's life (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005). However, college graduation rates for students nationally, especially at-risk students, are dismayingly low. According to ACT, the three-year graduation rate for two-year public colleges nationally is an appalling 28% (ACT, Inc. 2010). However, there are programs and practices that can significantly improve student graduation and retention rates. These include orientations, first year seminars, advising, and early alert systems (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek 2006).

All of these programs are essential, but advising is one of the most important for success, especially for undecided students (Tinto 2004). Students need guidance and assistance to navigate the complexities of the higher education environment. This is particularly the case for first generation students who lack family members to provide guidance and direction. However, finding the resources to support effective advising is challenging. This year SPC will serve more than 40,000 students; developing an advising system that will meet their needs requires thoughtful deployment of resources and the use of technology to leverage the skills of advising staff. An Individualized Student Learning Plan (ISLP) developed in conjunction with an advisor can provide students with an online, anytime, anywhere roadmap to graduation while maximizing the resources of skilled advising personnel.

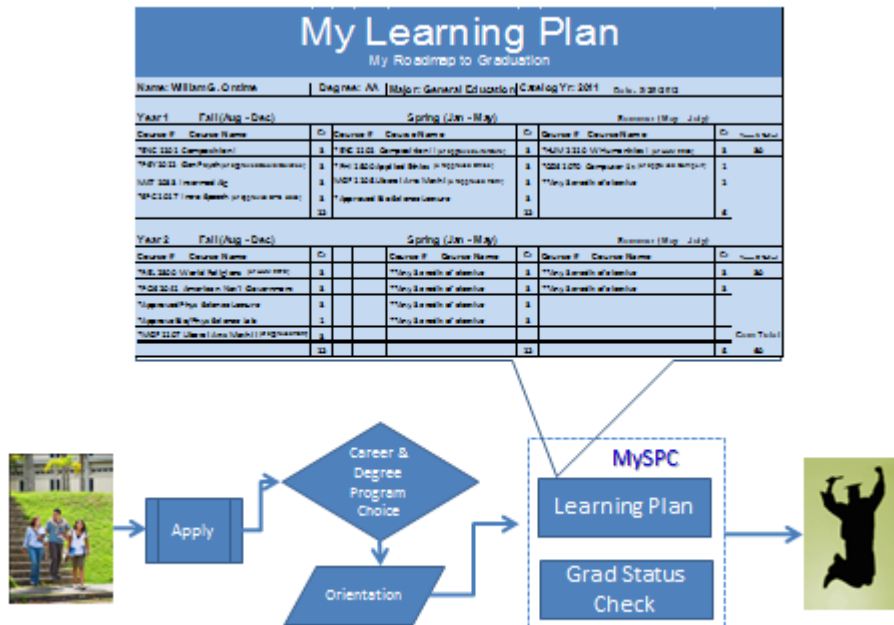
The goal of the ISLP is to increase student graduation rates and progression towards graduation. The strategy is to assist our students in identifying and mapping out all the courses they will need to complete their degree or certificate and to walk (or run) across the graduation stage finish line. The ISLP will be a clear pathway to graduation and "a game-changer" for increasing SPC student success.

SPC career specialists, advisors, counselors and faculty members will assist our students in mapping out their ISLPs semester-by-semester basis. Once completed and personalized to the student's career choice and degree major, students will call it "My Learning Plan" (MLP). This branding of "My Learning Plan" is important so that everyone will know that "My Learning Plan" is the pathway to graduation. The branding of "My Learning Plan" is also important to build college-wide excitement about it.

In addition, the PeopleSoft Student Portal, known as MySPC, will be enhanced to provide students and staff some very important "My Learning Plan" features. Among the new features will be features for students to check their graduation status and progress (My Graduation Status), and the capabilities to save and print their learning plans. In some cases, due to financial aid or lack of consistent progress or success, students may be restricted from changing their "My Learning Plan".

The first phase of new features, called MLP 3.0, will be available in July 2012 in time for Fall 2012 classes. Another set of new features, called MLP 4.0 and focusing on "student life plan" capabilities, will be available in November 2012 in time

for Spring 2013 classes. The Student Life Plan features will help students understand and reach a better balance among classes, family, work, and other life activities. A simple diagram depicting MLP 3.0 features and process is shown below.



For the fall term of 2012, all students who test into two or more developmental classes will be required to take the student success course, SLS 1101. One of the required outcomes of the course will be to complete a learning plan, approved by an advisor, in the My Learning Plan system. For the spring term 2013, all students testing into one or more developmental classes will be required to take SLS 1101 and complete a learning plan in My Learning Plan. In addition, selected groups of at-risk students will be strongly encouraged to complete their “My Learning Plan” including those who are financial aid recipients or are not meeting standards of academic progress.

My Learning Plan is closely integrated with advising and out-of-class support and will be the core tool for students and college support staff to plan, display, saves, print, track, update and maintain the student’s roadmap to graduation. My Learning Plan, together with the underlying student registration system (MySPC), will also provide college staff with important reports and metrics to track student success statistics. Among the reports are:

- The number of students who have fully or partially completed their learning plan,
- The number of students who followed or deviated from the course in their learning plans
- Success rates for students who use their learning plan versus those who do not

At the end of the Fall 2012 semester, we will begin to use these statistics to assess the success of this important, game-changing initiative. The statistics will be displayed in quantitative summary form in the College’s Business Intelligence (BI) system with integrated access to more detailed advising and counseling information. Today, such information is recorded in the Who’s Next system.

As we continue to develop and perfect the My Learning Plan initiative, and to work with our students in fully utilizing it, it will become a “student graduation engine” and propel SPC to even greater heights in student success and achievement.

Pascarella, E .T., and Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How College Affects Students: A Third Decade of Research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

ACT, Inc. (2010). *2010 Retention/Completion Summary Tables*.

[http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/10retain\\_trends.pdf](http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/10retain_trends.pdf) (accessed April 21, 2012).

Kuh, G., Kinzie, J., Buckley, J., Bridges, B., and Hayek, J. (2006). *What Matters to Student Success: A Review of the Literature*. Commissioned Report for the National Symposium on Postsecondary Student Success: Spearheading a Dialog on Student Success. National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.

Tinto, V. (2004). *Student Retention and Graduation: Facing the Truth, Living With the Consequences*. (Occasional Paper 1). Washington, DC: The Pell Institution for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education.