

Council of Directors of Student Academic Services

Minutes | September 17, 2025 | 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Excessive Absences Alerts – Dr. Shannon Baker

The meeting focused on excessive absence alerts, noting an increase in alerts compared to previous years, with a higher number of unique students affected. It was observed that first-year students showed lower self-efficacy and self-sufficiency, along with defiant behavior in dorms, which could contribute to absences. Larry highlighted that 255 out of 5,160 first-year students had academic alerts, suggesting a need for more faculty participation in reporting academic alerts. A research group is working to understand why faculty do not use academic alerts and aims to provide recommendations by the end of the semester.

Trails Updates – Dr. Shannon Baker

The trails are progressing through the approval process with 8 trails approved by the board, 3 of which are awaiting secondary approval, while additional trails are under review. The website and related materials are in a holding pattern, awaiting completion of the catalog process, though advisors have received training to advise on trails for non-first-year students. The team is developing tools including a heat map for course availability, an e-print report tracking student progress on trails, and a potential new Degree Works dashboard feature to display trail completion percentages, with plans to implement these tools once the website is ready.

Amy asked for course scheduling for these courses. Shannon shared that a course matrix was developed to find holes for the fall semester, and this approach will likely be replicated for future semesters. IRA will work towards a report that helps monitor seat capacity for courses that contribute to trails.

6-Weeks Data Group Updates – Dr. Shannon Baker

The group discussed in detail student engagement and outreach efforts during the first six weeks of the semester. Various teams, including the OSS team and Student Affairs, have been conducting outreach to students with low engagement or academic concerns, using data from Cowboy Charlie and other metrics. All the outreach is being documented as slate advising notes. The group discussed the need to update an academic alert dashboard and create new mechanisms to support online students, who are performing poorly and growing in number. The conversations in this group have led to better cross-unit collaboration and timely interventions for students of concern.

The group discussed strategies to improve engagement and support for online students, including weekly newsletters, a Canvas community, and virtual interaction opportunities. They agreed to organize monthly meetings for advisors of distance students to share best practices and address challenges. Amy suggested collecting the names of advisors for distance students and including them in the Canvas community. The team also discussed initiatives for first-generation college students and promoting Timely Care, a mental health resource. They noted that first-year students are receiving more attention in the first 6 weeks of the semester, but some students continue to struggle with engagement.

Meeting adjourned at 11:54 am.

Minutes recorded by Audrey Pinion