

## Eastern Wyoming College, WY

### Project: Eastern Wyoming College Project

---

#### Version 6.0- Project

**What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?**

**Q:** *To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.*

**A:** We continue to follow the University of Arkansas at Hope's project most closely. The opportunity to connect with this institution and its team at the Mid-Point Roundtable remains invaluable. As the summer concludes and our entire team is back on campus, it will be instructive for us to review additional projects to see how they are accomplishing the task of sustainability and integration of the project's efforts.

---

#### Version 6.0- Update

**Q:** **What were the most significant results from the Third Year Consultation?**

**A:** Our team had not yet participated in the Third Year Consultation. After responding to the survey about scheduling the Consultation, we did not receive communication from the HLC until notification that Version 6.0 Update Questions were due. Once we reached out, out consultation was scheduled and will take place next week.

**Q:** **Looking back at the tasks that you had outlined for your project following the Midpoint Roundtable, what tasks remain in order to accomplish your goals? What is your plan to address the remaining tasks in the next six months?**

**A:** The most significant task we need to address concerns creating sustainability of our

overreaching project goals. We are working institution-wide to determine where our project missives should become situated within the college once our project concludes. Additional changes in leadership at EWC have resulted in an opportunity to integrate persistence and completion efforts into an overall enrollment management plan spanning from recruitment to graduation. A clear focus on utilizing both the dearth of quantitative data already being collected at EWC and the additional qualitative data that has been the emphasis of this project is spreading throughout the institution. Plans to absorb persistence and completion tasks need to become more concrete and formalized.

**What challenges do you anticipate as you move ahead? How will you use the experience gained from the first two and half years of the Academy and the Q: discussion with your mentor in the Third Year Consultation to mitigate these challenges?**

**A:** Consistent with previous updates, challenges regarding our institution and project team being under resourced remain. Typical of many small institutions, our personnel fill multiple roles, and difficulty maintain momentum and focus arises at times when other tasks occur.

For example, a significant portion of our project team is comprised of faculty who work on 9-month contracts or others who may work 10- or 11-months. This presents a challenge during summer months. What might otherwise be an ideal time to focus exclusively on Academy project tasks becomes inaccessible.

**Is the project at the stage in which improvement of student persistence and/or retention can be documented? If not, what additional support and/or resources are needed to yield desired results in the future? Please explain.**

**A:** As our efforts remain focused on data development, we are not currently at a point in which improvement in student persistence and/or retention could be measured in any way relative to our project tasks. Delays in the implementation of our Student Planning model have hindered the implementation of our intrusive advising model. We have implemented considerable portions of the advising model, including ensuring that all students are correctly placed with program-specific advisors prior to the start of each semester; connecting advisors with new advisees at new student orientation; advisors reviewing students' schedules before the first day of class; and providing a framework for advisors to contact all advisees at designated points throughout the semester. Completion of the Student Planning Model will allow us to finalize implementation of our intrusive advising model and begin assessment of its impacts on student persistence and/or completion.

Further, the adoption of a new institutional strategic plan will allow us to align our project with college goals. Integrating portions of our efforts within various areas and initiatives of the college will lend to sustainability but may create difficulty in measures the efficacy of specific interventions.

### Version 5.0- Project

**What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?**

**Q:** *To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.*

**A:** At the Midpoint Roundtable, we were able to spend time with members from the University of Arkansas Community College at Hope. Theirs is a project we have followed on the Collaboration Network in the past, and their institution and efforts are similar to ours. We appreciated the opportunity provided at the Roundtable to meet in a dedicated session with just that team to mutually share our efforts. Their project centers on course drop rates, and we learned some new strategies for collecting data about drop rates. Several other situations they mentioned during the Roundtable were equally informing. Similar to our college, they employ their faculty as advisors, and we were able to gain insight into how they structure that approach. In addition to reading their written updates, the time spent in person with them was very valuable.

### Version 5.0- Update

**Describe your short-term plan for implementing and revising your project created at the Midpoint Roundtable. What tasks do you plan to accomplish in the next six months?**

**A:** 1) Meet with new President of Eastern Wyoming College prior to the end of the calendar year to bring her up to speed on goals and activities past, present and future. Ensure the committee's goals integrate with EWC's new (draft) mission and strategic initiatives. Her support will be key to legitimizing the Committee's progress and helping to garner institutional buy-in.

2) Disseminate updated plans and integration with mission to President's Cabinet also prior to the end of the year. Discuss progress and goals of the committee as well as plan institutional strategies for campus involvement.

3) Meet with full Persistence & Completion Academy committee to update members on Roundtable and outcome of meetings with President and Cabinet. Discuss goals for upcoming semester and year.

4) Update campus community of progress and goals at Spring In-Service presentation. Emphasize connection to college's mission and strategic plan and suggest ways individuals can get involved.

5) Meet with smaller groups for more in-depth communication of goals and how everyone is involved with contributing to student success.

**Q: Describe your long-term goals for the final two years in the Academy.**

- A:** 1) Continue work on the advising model. Get an assessment report from the pilot advising group of their results. Were their contacts with advisees productive? Was the timing of the contacts appropriate? Was there usable info? How can it be coded into the Colleague system and where?
- 2) Have the final student advising model prepared by early April 2018 to be able to expand to full faculty for advising and registration for Fall classes. All advisors will begin student contacts as designated by advising model pilot group and tracking contacts beginning Fall 2018 to help generate "soft data" on why students are not successful and/or leave classes or the college.
- 3) Evaluate process for assigning advisors to new students and create a better workflow for coordinating advisor/advisee contact. This will involve working with the Director of Instructional Technology to know if new "Ethos" product will communicate between Canvas and Colleague to generate better advisee lists for advisors and how to designate a placeholder advisor for non-degree students.
- 4) Continue work on implementing Colleague's Student Planning Module and coordinating with advising model and Committee tracking efforts.
- 5) Develop student focus groups, student surveys and gathering student opinion to determine what students think rather than what faculty/staff believe they think.
- 6) Look at data that we already collect and create specific processes for what we do with that data. Integrating existing data with new "soft" data we are trying to collect through the advising model. From this, we want to create a profile of our institution based on BOTH qualitative and quantitative data to be able move toward development side of the Academy pathway to cultivate informed processes for improving student persistence. Use the data to identify trends to make educated institutional decisions.
- 7) Communicate data and interpretations of it better institution-wide.

**Q: What steps do you need to take in order to achieve those goals?**

- A:** 1) Recommend the Persistence and Completion Academy become an approved standing committee and incorporate their work and oversight with the college's Strategic

Enrollment Management Committee.

- 2) Identify key qualitative performance data to be collected across the institution. Create processes for gathering, storing, tracking and analyzing this data to determine deficiencies in college practices in specific areas that can be targeted for improvement to enhance completion and student success.
- 3) Analyze the quantitative data identified in the data collection tool and compare with qualitative data to determine deficiencies in college practices in specific areas that can be targeted for improvement to enhance completion and student success.
- 4) Implement the intrusive advising model across the institution for the 2018-19 academic year.
- 5) Complete Student Planning Module and train faculty and staff on its usage.
- 6) Create and implement student focus groups and other ways to gather student opinion.
- 7) Work on marketing and disseminating info to campus employees to encourage buy-in, support and participation at all levels.

**Q: Is additional data collection required to move forward? If so, briefly describe the data you will gather and their source.**

**A:** The Persistence and Completion Academy has identified additional data that needs to be collected in order to move forward. The majority of the data identified is qualitative data from students in reference to their experience and reaction to the admission process; orientation; the registration model of the institution; effectiveness of institutional services; academic advising and counseling; as well as retention and persistence data. The aforementioned data allows the committee to qualify the student experience from recruitment through enrollment, retention, and completion.

**Q: What institutional stakeholders need to be involved in moving the project forward? How will the team engage these individuals and groups?**

**A:** As was discussed in the various sessions at the Midpoint Roundtable, all involved professionally with EWC are involved with student persistence and completion, from custodial staff to food service and from faculty to upper administration. If we have no students, we have no floors to clean, no food to serve, no classes to teach, and no strategies to plan. Everyone must be involved.

For the first two years of the academy, the EWC team has conducted their work primarily through a committee of representatives from across campus. This has worked fairly effectively, but to move forward, the EWC team hopes to integrate the work of student enrollment and retention with long-standing efforts already in place.

The work of the EWC Persistence and Completion committee, established to oversee the tasks of this Academy, will slowly die out as the Academy comes to a conclusion if not integrated into a broader initiative to increase enrollment and improve retention rates. This process of integration *is* the work of engaging all institutional stakeholders.

**Q: What challenges do you anticipate as you move ahead? How will you use the experience gained from the first two years of the Academy to mitigate these challenges?**

**A:** Coordination between departments and offices could prove to be a challenge as we move forward. The environment at EWC is like the environment in a movie theatre before the show starts. Everyone is gathered in the same place for the same ultimate purpose, but everyone is engaging in their own conversations. We need the lights to dim and the movie to start here on campus before we will all direct our attention, metaphorically speaking, in the same direction.

Who or what is going to be responsible for dimming these lights? That is the question. The Persistence and Completion committee has struggled to act as this unifying agent. Despite having representatives from all sectors of the institution, gaining that unified momentum has been a challenge.

We are not sure at the moment how the first two years of the Academy will help us mitigate this challenge. Our first two years were spent focusing perhaps too narrowly on a specific initiative to help us improve our data collection. The result will hopefully be a much improved plan for student advising. We'll celebrate that victory for now, but perhaps in the future we will direct that focused energy and diffuse it somewhat across a wider swath of the institutional landscape.

---

### Version 5.0- Response

**Q: Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).**

**A:** Doc Arnett

docarnett@gmail.com

816.341.3572

Reviewed by **Doc Arnett** (Primary Mentor)

Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

[niedensr@newmanu.edu](mailto:niedensr@newmanu.edu)

**Q: What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?**

**A:** The revised plan is specific, comprehensive, concrete, logical and attainable. The group has responded with perhaps the best structured plan that they have accomplished to date. This shows a maturing in the process, focused thought that can lead to focused action, and what strikes me as reflecting an even greater awareness of the need for diverse inclusion and effort. The plan seems to incorporate virtually every layer of leadership and stakeholders.

I am particularly impressed and pleased to see the desire for a greater investigation of the advising process and its effectiveness. The devotion to drawing out both qualitative information and quantitative data should yield a very rich vein of evidence that can be exploited for the mutual benefit of students and EWC. Similarly, examining currently collected data and creating processes for deliberate interpretation and use of the data should be similarly beneficial. I love the statement and commitment to "cultivate informed processes for improving student persistence."

Yet another strength that I perceive in the refined plan is the goal of data analysis to probe for weak areas in current processes and operation. A rugged self-examination ethos is critical in sustained quality improvement and hopefully will not be limited to this project nor its projected timeline. Inclusion and communication are vital pieces of drawing others into the project and are important both in the immediate next-step phases and throughout the duration of the persistence and completion initiative. I especially like the awareness that this effort truly does involve "marketing," a realization that can be easily bypassed or overlooked. This awareness will be integral to success in integrating the campaign throughout all aspects of the College operation.

Reviewed by **Doc Arnett** (Primary Mentor)

From Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

Together with this response from Doc Arnett, kudos to the Project team. You have achieved what you set out to do in the first two years in the Academy and have put forward a logical map for the next!

- The Project plan seeks to be very inclusive. This is a definite key to student success. Having a worker in the cafeteria take interest in a student is extremely effective in reaching students at a different level than an advisor, for example. To use a commonplace quote, "it takes a village..." Your plan recognizes that fact acting to bring all stakeholders into the process.
- There appears to be a corollary commitment to strong communication from Administration through the entire community. Good job!

- There is also a desire to review all processes to find areas for improvement. Although this can be threatening to some, there is a large potential to improve as well.

**What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to improve student persistence and completion?**

**A:** There is a particularly powerful epiphany expressed in the update: *"As was discussed in the various sessions at the Midpoint Roundtable, all involved professionally with EWC are involved with student persistence and completion, from custodial staff to food service and from faculty to upper administration. If we have no students, we have no floors to clean, no food to serve, no classes to teach, and no strategies to plan. Everyone must be involved."*

I think it might be worthwhile for the team to consider the possible truth and implications of a reciprocal statement: *Unless facilities are clean, comfortable and appealing, unless we consistently serve excellent food, unless administrators, faculty and staff consistently demonstrate a positive, student-centered and engaging culture... we will have fewer students to serve.*

So, the questions I have arising from that include:

- What processes are in place to recognize, reward and reinforce excellence in all areas of student service?
- In what ways are employees empowered and supported to provide excellent service to students and to one another?
- In what ways do we celebrate our achievements?
- In what ways are we establishing a positive and progressive environment that encourages employees to take sensible risks to improve service to students and one another?

Reviewed by **Doc Arnett** (Primary Mentor)

From Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

As mentioned in the previous section and stated here by Doc Arnett, holistic involvement is very powerful in engaging and retaining students. I 100% agree with Doc Arnett's questions here. What is asked in this quote from the update is a culture that is totally committed to excellence in the student experience resulting in student success. Without this ubiquitous commitment, there will be gaps that students will experience. So Arnett is asking questions, that taken together, will build this commitment.

Another question to ask (this may be somewhat self evident,) "Are students learning? Are they learning what they attend EWC to learn? Are they gaining the skills or knowledge that was the reason they chose EWC?" These might be additional queries for your student focus groups.

**What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?**

**A:** My input on this particular question is very simple: just be sure to do the things that you've mapped out in your timeline. And... always remember to celebrate progress and positive steps. Teams that wait until the project is completed to celebrate anything will often find they have very little to celebrate.

Again, I want to say how impressed I am with the comprehensiveness and concreteness of this revision. As the Aussies say, "Good on ya!"

Reviewed by **Doc Arnett** (Primary Mentor)

From Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

As may be apparent from the earlier responses, you have accomplished a lot and mapped a very attainable timeline of goals. With the addition of consideration of student expectations and perceived achievements, your plans appear to move your Project forward. I agree with Doc Arnett in that you should definitely celebrate along the way. Keep up the good work. I look forward to following your progress!

Scholar(s):	Rosemary Niedens
Primary Mentor(s):	Doc Arnett

### Version 4.0- Project

**What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?**

**Q:** *To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.*

**A:** During the update cycle, several team members reviewed projects from other colleges within the Collaboration Network. Community colleges within close geographic distance and similar student population and demographics were of particular interest. One of the consistent themes across projects, and of reassurance to our team, was the encouragement

from Mentors and Scholars to remain focused on our project. Maintaining a narrow scope and near-consistent adherence to our specific initiatives has been challenging at times for the team, and it was helpful to see that other colleges received similar feedback.

It has been helpful to follow begin following some colleges on the other data track because it has provided us ideas of where the holes are in our data gathering. We anticipate it will help us identify ways to gather further data using initiatives such as student focus groups, with the prospect of tracking cohorts of students, climate surveys, and exit interview with non-returning students. We have struggled with techniques to gather qualitative student data, and following different projects have allowed us to see the types of data being gathered and the various mechanisms being used to obtain them.

Another overall observation from other projects was the importance of campus-wide communication. We have begun efforts to publicize our Academy project efforts on our institution web page and formalize communication with stakeholders by engaging our College Relationship department to disseminate project information. We also observed the importance of involvement of more staff and faculty beyond the core members of the initial project group. If our goal is also to encourage a culture of data-based decision making or campus-wide support for retention/persistence, we may need to involve and incentivize more staff and faculty.

---

### Version 4.0- Update

**Your team has reached the midpoint in the Academy. Summarize your team's three Q: most significant accomplishments thus far.**

**A:** Our three most significant accomplishments for the Persistence and Completion Academy thus far include the development of our piloted academic advising model, the creation of the institution's Data Notebook, and the purchase and beginning implementation of the electronic student-planning tool.

The academic Advising Model was developed and piloted during the 2016-17 academic year by a sample of faculty members. They designed an instrument to collect student data in relation to the academic advising model. The institution continues to pilot the advising model for the 2017-18 academic year here at Eastern Wyoming College.

The Databook was developed and completed by a sample group of faculty and staff during the 2016-17 academic year. It identifies and defines specific data that to be collected by the institution.

The Student Planning Module from Colleague was purchased in 2016-17 and the college is in the process of uploading courses and program information for all academic and career-tech programs. The goal for implementation for the student-planning tool for the fall of 2018.

**Describe the significant challenges that you have encountered thus far. How Q: effectively have you been able to address these challenges?**

**A:** Despite progress in some areas of the project, both the team and institution have encountered challenges in the first half of the Academy. The most significant challenge to our project has likely been growing inertia in times of institutional stress. For most of the time that we have been engaged in the Academy, external factors have influenced the resources that are dedicated to our project.

Last year, our institution, along with most others in the state of Wyoming, faced significant budget cuts. A reduction in force was enacted, and the institution continues to deal with reduced staffing, increased workloads, and severely depleted morale. These factors have made it challenging to devote good and consistent energy to our Academy projects.

Additionally, changes in leadership at EWC have created some challenge for our team and project. Our current Interim Vice President for Academic Services is the third person in that position since EWC entered the Academy. We also have a new President this year. Inconsistency in leadership has, at times, resulted in a lack of oversight and implementation at the institutional level. This is a particular challenge to project areas that require collaboration across various college divisions.

For example, the Advising sub-committee is comprised almost entirely of faculty advisors, with the exception of the Director of Enrollment Management. While the sub-committee developed a detailed modified intrusive advising model and piloted the project in the Spring 2017 semester, several aspects of the plan were not enacted because they required action among leadership, some of whom were in transitioning roles.

It currently appears that both our new President and Interim Vice President for Academic Services are dedicated to Persistence and Completion efforts. They have communicated the shared goal of back mapping both our Academy project and our comprehensive evaluation. This administrative support and additional structure will greatly benefit our team's efforts. The Vice President for Student Services remains engaged in the team's work, and multiple team members from Student Services remain key advocates and contributors.

Another challenge affecting the Advising model project has been the delayed timeline in implementing Colleague's Student Planning Module. This implementation has taken longer than anticipated. The Advising sub-committee is assessing the efficacy of the model with both advisors and students but cannot proceed with additional implementation until the Student Planning Module is fully implemented. To combat this challenge, the pilot has simply been extended through the Fall 2017 semester.

In response to the other challenges discussed above, EWC has experienced some success in addressing issues. The team has consistently revisited and focused on feedback from our project Mentor and Scholar. We continue to maintain a narrow project focus and are attempting to rapidly finalize the Data Collection Tool Inventory. We believe that successfully completing this task will provide motivation for moving on to more meaningful action in our data collection efforts.

A team member recently reviewed projects from colleges near our school and identified several relevant data collection strategies that would contribute greatly to our current methods. An ongoing and overreaching challenge of the institution's has been gathering and extrapolating meaning from non-academic qualitative data. Strategies such as coding data obtained from advising form into fields that advisors can use to categorize the content of their advisee contacts and conducting focus groups are recommended practices that we hope will foster reengagement with the Academy projects.

**Q: How have you incorporated feedback from your Mentor and Scholar?**

**A:** In response to feedback provide by our Primary Mentor and Scholar, the project team has met consistently to review feedback and align future efforts with the suggestions and guidance provided. "Assessment measures toward assessing a future advising model have been or are being developed and a Data Collection Inventory Group has renewed their intent to move forward, both of these could have a large impact on the success of the students at EWC," Doc Arnett, our Primary Mentor, stated. This feedback helped to solidify the central goals of our Academy team, reinforcing our belief that these two areas would be critical to persistence and completion efforts.

Additionally, our Mentor acknowledged the concerns EWC has with "the lack of tangible progress and / or sustaining momentum." Rosemary Niedens, our Scholar, echoed this concern. They understand it can be problematic when the process stretches out over time and some members may become overwhelmed. Dr. Arnett commented that we should focus on one or two aspects to show accomplishment. He wondered if we could pilot test one or two advising models and share them with the rest of the campus community. He advised interviewing 10 – 20 non-returning students. Sharing any trends seen would be of great importance. In response to this feedback, the Advising Model will continue to be piloted for a second year. Assessment of the model is currently in progress, with participating advisors and advisees completing surveys about their experience in the pilot. A second year of data will allow us to further adapt the model to best fit advisor and advisee needs. Also, EWC is allowing three graduate students to conduct study of non-returning students, interviewing them about their reasons for leaving, as Dr. Arnett suggested. The graduate students will share the results of their study with the project team. It is expected that the information provided will reveal important information about persistence, retention, and completion.

In other feedback, Ms. Niedens questioned if we had a timeline that has been adjusted as out project progresses. Do we have a communication plan that will increase awareness, share trends, give assignments or share outcomes? She wants to know what we have done about software concerns, do we know what our LMS can or cannot do? Do we have a way to grow or update? Could we create a data template in the interim? In response to this feedback, we have or will be initiating several efforts. With our new Vice President for Academic Services, the project team with begin back-mapping the Academy team efforts, attempting to provide a timeline for our efforts and beginning to align with our overall accreditation cycle. Additionally, the recent involvement of our College Relations department in our Academy efforts serves to initiate a communication play to share information identified by Ms. Niedens. Finally, our institution is working to adopt both a new Learning Management System and Colleague's Student Planning Module.

Both our Mentor and Scholar felt it was vital that we “demonstrate tangible progress” in the next 6 months even if it is not substantial. “Doing twice as much with one-tenth of the available data is better than doing nothing with one hundred percent.” This feedback has sustained us during challenging times and allowed us to realize some meaningful progress. The completion of the Data Collection Tool Inventory and results of the Advising Model Pilot study will be available for review at the Mid-point Roundtable, providing us motivation and new work.

**Q: Describe your campus’s level of engagement in your project.**

**A:** The level of engagement of campus members at Eastern Wyoming College has varied in the past two years. The main Persistence and Completion Academy Committee, comprised of representatives from all levels and areas of faculty and staff, has had several member fluctuations due to transitions in personnel, and we had a change in Team Leader shortly after our first Roundtable. We have also tried to have two student representatives involved on the committee, but it can be a challenge to work meetings around their schedules, and since we are a two-year college and our emphasis is on completion, we hope they do not stick around long enough to be a part of the entire Academy project.

We have a new college president who started July 2017, and underwent a change in the Vice President of Academic Services position around the same time, but despite those significant shifts in personnel, we continue to have committed support from the upper administration. The Vice President of Student Services is also a member of the committee, so we are well-represented at the higher levels that can influence change the most. The challenge has been that constant changes have impacted the committee’s productivity and has delayed timelines for completion of tasks that required approval, oversight and/or a sense of purpose communicated by leadership.

Participating in the Complete College Wyoming and Complete College America initiatives will help keep our institutional emphasis on the same goals. With the Wyoming Legislature and Wyoming Community College Commission moving toward performance-based funding models, our motivation to be successful with our efforts comes into even higher focus.

The committee meets at least twice a semester to discuss progress, work on tasks, and refocus our energies. The ongoing process is communicated primarily during the kick-off to each semester at in-service presentations. The Team Leader provides a summary of tasks completed since the last forum, details project developments, and expands upon upcoming goals for the entire campus community. Faculty and staff are encouraged to ask questions of the committee and to get involved in the project. While not many have volunteered to serve on the committee itself, the committee feels that frequent communication and shared ownership is key to keeping our objectives in the forefront and encouraging buy-in along the way.

Representatives from all areas of the institution have contributed examples for our Data Inventory Tool of items they use to collect info about students’ persistence, completion, and any other data that may indicate a contributing factor to completion or lack thereof (e.g., first-generation, lives on-campus, veteran status). We experienced some lack of

response to email queries for data collection, but this was probably due more to a lack of understanding of what the committee was requesting and for what purpose. We have also faced some difficulty coordinating between different committee members because of the cross-departmental collaboration required.

The Advising Subcommittee has probably been the most active and engaged recently since it implemented a pilot program of its intrusive advising model in 2016-2017 and continued its use into Fall 2017. All subcommittee members are actively engaged and providing feedback to the main committee on their progress and results. So far the student data they have collected remains on individual computers because of a lack of a central storage solution, but we are working to identify a location in our Student Information System or through the Student Planning Module where this info can be entered and housed. The subcommittee intends to survey students and participating instructors for feedback on their program.

While the implementation of the Student Planning Module was delayed from the committee's original objectives, substantial behind-the-scenes progress has been achieved. The committee did not understand the significant work involved by multiple offices in setting up this system when the original timeline for completion was established. Academic Services, Student Services, IT, and other committees have all been involved in coordinating and providing input for this monumental task, and accuracy in initial formatting is imperative for the system to function properly.

We anticipate a higher level of comprehensive campus involvement once the advising model is used by all faculty and the Student Planning Module is fully implemented. Completion of the Data Collection Tool Inventory will also likely yield areas where other members of the campus community can get involved with consolidating processes, coordinating data input, and setting outcome priorities. We hope that by completing and communicating these steps and results, it will help to engage staff campus-wide in efforts to improve persistence and completion as well as encourage a culture of data-based decision making and student success.

**Q: The Midpoint Roundtable will offer an opportunity to review, refocus, and recharge the Academy team's efforts. How will the midpoint roundtable function in the life-cycle of your project?**

**A:** The Midpoint Roundtable hopefully will re-energize the Academy team's sense of purpose and direction. Leadership turnover at Eastern Wyoming College has created an environment in which attention needed to be redirected for a period of time toward more urgent matters. Now that that has settled down, more energy is available to be expended on the college's persistence and completion efforts. This may also be a good time to resurrect certain components of our academy experience. The Databook has been left untouched since the day it was compiled. We are all uncertain as to what role that book, which took significant effort to create, should or will play in future activities related to our academy experience or our goals pertaining to student success. Having received little feedback on the quality or usefulness of our Databook in the form it currently exists, perhaps at the Roundtable we can revisit this and determine what needs to be done in

order to turn it into an important asset as we move forward after our time in the Academy is over.

### Version 4.0- Response

**Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone Q: number).**

**A:** Doc Arnett

docarnett@gmail.com

816.341.3572

Reviewed by **Doc Arnett** (Primary Mentor)

Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

niedensr@newmanu.edu

**Q: What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?**

**A:** As I reviewed this update, I was initially very concerned: the degree of changeover and the significance of the institutional challenges including budget reduction and RIF are quite significant, to put it mildly. I was afraid that there was going to be nothing but bad news!

Instead, I found several very positive aspects.

- Support by new leadership at both the president and chief academic officer level, which is crucial to provide both tangible and moral support.
- Continued supportive involvement of the chief student services officer, which is strategic in helping to coordinate both the academic and student support sides.
- A degree of continuity in purpose, focus and involvement. Even though there have been changes in personnel and membership, there does seem to still be a dedicated core group which helps provide some level of continuity.
- A continuing narrow focus which helps keep efforts from splintering and faltering.

- Identification of new data strategies that hold promise of ferreting out actionable information for decision-making and possible identity of effective intervention and strategy.
- The blending of efforts with the P&A initiatives together with the Complete College efforts at both state and national levels. This should provide some benevolent "double-dipping" instead of the fragmentation that occurs when institutions take on--voluntarily and involuntarily--so many efforts that people get frustrated and exhausted and give up on all of them.
- The Advising Subcommittee continues to function.
- The development of a revised timeline accompanied by persistence and flexibility. Virtually every project proceeds at a different pace and often in different directions than anticipated. It is easy to become exasperated when that happens. Your choice to adapt to emerging circumstances while continuing to pursue the goal is both noteworthy and inspiring!
- The use of graduate students to conduct interviews with students who "opted out!" What a terrific "win-win" solution! This provides the grad students to gain real-world experience in qualitative research, provide EWC with useful and potential valuable information and conveys to the departed students that their opinions matter. (Maybe we should call this a "win-win-win" solution! If the research yields useful insight and actionable information, it will benefit current and future students as well. If it also helps EWC increase the persistence and retention rates significantly, it will yield multiple benefits to the College and the surrounding area, impacting many lives for years to come.

Reviewed by **Doc Arnett** (Primary Mentor)

From Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

I cannot agree more with the very detailed listing of the strengths of your project as outlined by Doc Arnett. I especially want to commend the team on the dedication that you have demonstrated for this work through a myriad assortment of difficulties and setbacks. Not only are you persevering but you are modeling the concept of persistence. You all rock the definition of commitment! There is great potential that your students will benefit from this dedication.

In emphasis, the connecting your work with other initiatives as mandated by outside entities definitely will help the sustainability of your work. Also of special note is your continuing efforts in communicating the project and the importance of this work to your community.

**What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to**  
**Q: improve student persistence and completion?**

**A:**

I would like to know more about any specific data collection ideas gleaned from other colleges that EWC is planning to utilize.

I would also be happy to provide answers to any specific questions over the Data Book and/or take another look at it to make suggestions if that is desired. However, my recommendation is that the institution carefully examine what they have in the Data Book to identify the information that is most important to them and evaluate it for possible action items.

Reviewed by **Doc Arnett** (Primary Mentor)

From Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

Doc Arnett again asks a pertinent question. In addition,

- I wondered how the delay of roll out of the Colleague Student Planning Module is affecting the overall timeline.
- With the significant administrative turnover, has the timeline been impacted as well? I understand the delays that have been caused by software implementation issues but wondered what other impacts?
- You mention that the group meets twice a semester. Are actions occurring and these are primarily report and intervention development meetings? With the reduction in workforce, are severe time constraints impacting the timeline and rollout as well?
- With the turnover and reduction and resulting impacts on work assignments, is there a diminishment of zeal for the work throughout the community? (see more below)

**What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?**

**A:** I think it would be very worthwhile to share across the campus as planned any insights and findings from their special interview project (conducted by the graduate students) and immediately solicit proposed responses and projects from employees and students. Naturally, you would follow up then by carefully selecting and implementing ideas that hold the greatest promise.

It will also be very important to continue the communication as outlined in this update. In short, I think the best summary from my perspective is to just be sure and do what you have planned to do!

It would be difficult for me to overstate how pleased and impressed I am to see the resilience and determination that EWC team members have demonstrated in the face of institutional turmoil and financial adversity! I commend you and congratulate you that even though you may feel disappointed that the project has not proceeded as you had originally hoped, you have nonetheless made progress and have refined your plan based on the situation as it has developed.

Reviewed by **Doc Arnett** (Primary Mentor)

From Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

Doc Arnett emphasizes exactly what I would in this section. It will be especially important for you to continue to be very careful about constant communication to all constituents of EWC. Everyone wants student success--your work will aid each in reaching that goal regardless of status--faculty, administration, staff and students. Communication and celebration of any interim success stories will help build the zeal and commitment in all.

The story of how you are employing the work of graduate students can be very helpful...work is being accomplished that can help all achieve this goal of student success but it is not yet another task for staff and faculty who are stretched. This is an example of how you can celebrate this project in progress.

I 100% agree with Arnett--congratulate yourselves. You are making considerable progress (even through adversity!)

I was glad to be able to meet you at the Midpoint and look forward to learning of your additional progress.

Scholar(s):	Rosemary Niedens
Primary Mentor(s):	Doc Arnett

### Version 3.0- Project

**What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?**

**Q:** *To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.*

**A:** We continue to follow the project presented by the University of Arkansas Community College at Hope (UACCH) as they are consistent with Eastern Wyoming College's (EWC) large service area, student population and recent second campus addition. Moreover, we share their interest in advising as an important tool in data collection.

As both of our projects move forward, it is apparent we also share the realization that our progress toward adequate data collection is slow and cumbersome. Both of our institutions are in the process of acquiring new platforms to track data (Blackboard for UACCH and a Student Planning Module for EWC), and both institutions have met similar struggles in either the timeliness of implementation or the ease in incorporating a new platform into current, long-standing institutional practices.

We also share similar challenges in organizing personnel to help us move forward in our data collection goals. Although the importance of our mission is shared across our college and the willingness for all to contribute is not in question, time and resources are, in reality, limited. Engagement within the Collaboration Network relative to successes and challenges reinforce our efforts to continue working toward our goals. Considering the magnitude of the undertaking, it is encouraging to know we are not alone in our struggles as we build a foundation to move forward.

---

### Version 3.0- Update

**Q: If you have collected additional data since the Roundtable, what data have you collected and how has it impacted your project scope? If you have not, what data are you finding most helpful in developing/piloting your Academy project?**

**A:** As we continue to progress methodically along the data development track, we have yet to collect any project-specific data. We have not discontinued any regular practices, so all data that has normally been collected continues to be assembled and utilized as usual. It is our expectation that once we have cataloged all relevant data sources in the Data Collection Tool Inventory we are in the process of amassing and identified gaps, we will be able to apply that data to questions we have about why students stay or leave our institution. As we have regularly noted, we enjoy a fairly data-rich environment at Eastern Wyoming College. Our challenge is more significantly analyzing the data in order to draw conclusions about persistence and completion.

The data that we are currently finding most helpful in developing and piloting our programs are related to our two specific project goals:

1. The Advising Sub-Committee has designed assessment measures with which to evaluate their ongoing intrusive advising model. These mechanisms are tools that will aid the committee in determining not just the overall efficacy of the advising model pilot, but also which specific elements should be retained and which element need further development. Once the pilot and evaluation process has concluded, the sub-committee will be able to make an informed recommendation to the institution regarding adopting an updated advising model. The evaluation tools they develop will continue to be relevant and useful for continued assessment of the fully-integrated advising model.
2. Renewed effort has been dedicated to completing the Data Collection Tool Inventory. The committee has worked hard to regain some of our earlier momentum

to complete this task. It is currently in process, with representatives from all areas of the institution contributing examples of items they use to collect data about students' persistence, completion, and/or lack thereof. At this point, the Inventory will simply consist of a listing of each item with a short description. We anticipate this being sufficient to complete the task of analyzing the Inventory for gaps in data and then creating mechanisms to collect missing data.

**What were your goals for the previous six months? Did you achieve them? Why or Q: why not?**

**A:** Our goals for the previous six months were to continue to develop and roll out a new advising model and complete our data tool inventory. Our advising sub-committee has remained on task with their project. We can report that our goal for this aspect of our project is now easily within reach. The Data Collection Tool inventory is a different story, however. We have been slow to accomplish this portion of our project for a variety of reasons. Coordination between different committee members has been our biggest challenge, considering the completion of the inventory requires significant amounts of cross-departmental coordination. Since our advising project is nearing completion, we have been able to take up our Data Collection Tool Inventory once again. At our last meeting, the committee brainstormed together about ways to make this inventory a reality.

**How did you incorporate the consolidated feedback that you received for version Q: 2.0?**

**A:** To address the feedback you provided regarding 1) accessing the existing data, and 2) how we plan to utilize the data, we plan to use the data by creating a strategy to address our institution's specific items of interest.

As suggested by our Scholar, the committee will integrate information about each data collection tool that is included in our Data Collection Tool Inventory in order to provide context for the purpose or intent of the tool and data obtained through its use. This will allow us to gain a better understanding about what questions we can ask and what we might expect from the data we currently possess. It will also assist us in determining what tools are missing. For example, we have noted that we do not attempt to collect information from non-returning students about why they left EWC. This is a critical tool missing from our inventory—an obvious gap—and we intend to work with our Student Services Office to contact students who initiate total withdrawals from school and administer a brief survey. Survey questions will be developed after we complete our assessment of what data is missing from our repertoire.

Additionally, the committee is currently examining the role and relationship advisors have with advisees and its impact on their persistence and retention. Based on feedback from our Mentor and Scholar, the Advising Sub-Committee has defined methodology for evaluating the Advising Model Pilot.

The Advising Sub-Committee will evaluate the pilot study by utilizing the following methods:

1. Surveying the faculty advisors who volunteered to advise students using the pilot model
2. Survey students who are advised by the faculty advisors participating in the pilot study
3. Evaluate persistence and completion data of students involved in the study, and compare the data to the persistence and completion data of students not involved in the pilot study. This data would include degree and certificate completion, and transfer data from primary transferring institutions.

Based on this data the sub-committee will determine the effectiveness of the new advising model and make a recommendation to the larger committee of whether to continue with the advising model long term.

**What are your goals for the next six months? What internal and external challenges Q: do you anticipate in reaching those goals?**

**A:** Our first goal is still to keep testing the advising model and the Student Planning Module. To improve them, we need feedback from everybody who is accessible: faculty, employees, and students. Insightful feedback might not be available to us until our advising model and the Student Planning Module have been used over a period of time. Thus, this testing process won't stop until our system is mature.

Our second goal is to keep training the people.

The obvious reason is that, misunderstanding and misusing of the system might result in reporting wrong data. Another reason, which might not be obvious, is that essentially our goal is to make more people use the data collection tools and the data. Training and learning are also forms of using. Data become more valuable when more people use them. Moreover, during using them it would be easier to tell what kind of data reflects our reality and what kind does not.

Training process is also a good opportunity to hear feedback. What people don't want to say in surveys might appear in the complaints about learning our new advising model or student planning module. So, it would be clear to us what need to be improved.

Training is not only a process of teaching students or employees how to use that student planning module, or teaching advisers how to advise students, but also a process of getting everybody involved. Data are like snowballs, the more people use and contribute to them, the more valuable they become.

Our third goal is to reduce the workload of collecting and using data. The third goal complies with the spirit of the second goal. Making the process of collecting and using data more convenient would make people more willing to use data and data collection tools. And right now much of our data are collected manually and the data are saved as paper copies. This reduces the data collection efficiency and generates errors. Our

challenge is that our software system might not be powerful enough to replace all the manual work. And the inconsistency of the formats of data increases the difficulty in sharing and compiling the data.

### Version 3.0- Response

**Q: Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).**

**A:** Dr. Harold W. "Doc" Arnett

[harold.arnett@Cowley.edu](mailto:harold.arnett@Cowley.edu)

Reviewed by **Doc Arnett** (Primary Mentor)

Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

[niedensr@newmanu.edu](mailto:niedensr@newmanu.edu)

316.942.4291

**Q: What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?**

**A:** Assessment measures (citing specific examples would strengthen the update report) have been and/or are being developed with an eye toward future assessment of the advising model. Specific elements will be selected based upon demonstrated efficacy for their specific purpose(s). This will help assure useful and usable indicators for continuous quality improvement.

A simple structure is identified for the Data Collection Tool Inventory. Ease of use in developing and using this inventory will encourage its adoption and implementation. This pairs well with the state goal of reducing the workload of collecting and using data.

Inclusiveness: all areas are represented in the renewed effort which builds support and increases likelihood of a sense of ownership and involvement.

Another perceived strength is the awareness of the need for sustained training for employees who will use and/or interpret the results of the data collection tools.

Reviewed by **Doc Arnett** (Primary Mentor)

From Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

The update from EWC clearly outlines many strengths of the project which are listed by Doc Arnett.

- The work of the advising subcommittee has led to implementation of a pilot of the intrusive advising plan. There is a plan to assess the impact on the retention/success of students served in this way compared to those who were advised through the previous program. Such a process has the potential to make a large impact on the success of the students at EWC.
- The Data Collection Inventory group has renewed their intent to move forward on this. Again, this project may have a large impact beyond the accumulation of data. First, the manifest reason of finding out what data is available and relevant is obvious. Next, EWC will be learning what you still need to know to put the puzzle of retention/attrition together. Less apparent but important will be the raised awareness of the project and the need of internal data to impact student retention and success. There will also be an increased understanding of the need for data in formats and locations that make it usable in a timely, efficient manner.
- Both of these strengths also impact the entire community in training and awareness.

**Q: What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work improve student persistence and completion.**

**A:** EWC acknowledges concerns with lack of tangible progress and/or sustaining momentum. This aspect may become more problematic as the process stretches out for a longer period of time. Sometimes, large and ambitious projects become overwhelming and the lack of perceived progress becomes counter-motivational, even for those who at one point were relatively enthused. Focusing in on one or two particular aspects in order to show some accomplishment can be helpful.

Would it be feasible to pilot test one or two of the advising assessment measures and share those results with the campus community? Maybe you could interview at least ten-to-twenty non-returning students and share those results, especially if common factors are revealed. If that were accompanied by a specific plan of action to address a revealed opportunity for improvement, that could be a useful spur to move things forward.

Reviewed by **Doc Arnett** (Primary Mentor)

From Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

Doc Arnett raises an excellent point about project fatigue. Do you have a workable timeline that has been adjusted as the project as progressed? Structuring that with assignments and outcomes will help keep the work ongoing. Does EWC have a communications plan for the entire project? Raising awareness (buzz) will also keep interest alive as well as building enthusiasm for the project. In such a communication

plan, you can celebrate any gains or interim information that would as Arnett says "spur" things forward--especially if you discern trends or simple actions from focused groups as Arnett suggests.

Your third goal for the next six months may be the most formidable. You stated that "our challenge is that our software system might not be powerful enough to replace all the manual work. And the inconsistency of the formats of data increases the difficulty in sharing and compiling the data." Are there plans to explore what your LMS system can and cannot do? Is there possibility of updating/growing capability? Finally, could a data reporting template be created in the interim to lessen the diversity in reporting formats?

**Q: What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?**

**A:** It seems vital that the project demonstrate tangible progress in the next six months, even if that progress is not as substantial as might be desired. Perhaps consider that if you can't survey all of the faculty advisors, survey five or six and use that to help refine the survey as well as provide preliminary results. Similarly, if you can't survey all of the students, survey ten percent of them. If you can't survey ten percent, convene a focus group of ten students.

As another element of shaping the data structure, consider reviewing the data being collected to determine if there is redundancy. Is any data being collected that is really of no use? Quit collecting it. Is data being collected that cannot yield actionable results and is not necessary for required reporting? Anything you can do in the next six months to show your employees and colleagues that you are serious about reducing the workload of collecting and using data will gain good will. As some people say regarding data collection, "Doing twice as much with one-tenth of the available data is better than doing nothing with a hundred percent."

It is easy to get discouraged when a project does not move forward as intended and hoped. EWC's project team is commended for their commitment and determination to keep this one going forward!

Reviewed by **Doc Arnett** (Primary Mentor)

From Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

Doc Arnett has again provided excellent guidance. I commend your goals for the next six months. It is important, however, to build in the communication sharing and positive outcomes that you see along the way. While you do not, understandably, want to start something about which you are not 100% convinced, try to find efficiencies and updates that you can share and celebrate. You have made significant progress but it becomes all too easy to become discouraged! The timeline and communication plan noted above may help keep you moving forward.

I am looking forward to watching your progress as the EWC project continues to build momentum!

Scholar(s):	Rosemary Niedens
Primary Mentor(s):	Doc Arnett

### Version 2.0- Project

**What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?**

**Q:** *To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.*

**A:** We have followed the project undertaken by the University of Arkansas Community College at Hope. UACCH is similar to Eastern Wyoming College in that it has both a large service area and also recently opened a second campus. The student population is also similar to our student population in significant ways, UACCH, like EWC, has identified advising as an important part of their data collection process.

Some of the feedback that UACCH received from their mentor has assured us that our current focus on gathering and organizing data prior to developing a retention plan has not been misguided. Our primary motivation so far has been to improve and streamline our data collection process at the expense of seeking solutions to student persistence and completion problems. According to the feedback UACCH received, this appears to be a wise course of action considering the current state of data collection at EWC.

To ensure that we continue to engage with and benefit from the Collaboration Network, we have recently designed a protocol to review and report on various projects within the network. Formalizing this process should allow our team to systematically interact with the efforts of other schools and apply learning from their experiences.

### Version 2.0- Update

**Q: Based on the data you have at your disposal, what preliminary hypotheses have you developed about student persistence and completion issues on your campus?**

**A:** As we have focused exclusively at assessing our mechanisms and practices associated with data collection, we have not adopted formal project hypotheses. However, through investigation into how we currently collect and use data, we can postulate the following:

Our current inability to effectively utilize collected data to generate information beneficial to EWC is inhibiting our ability to generate future goals.

While we have not formulated a hypothesis concerning the matter, some of our current work is guided by anecdotal evidence and both faculty and student survey results indicating an opportunity to address the effectiveness of our existing advising model.

**Q: How have your hypotheses altered your project scope since the Roundtable? If you needed to focus on data development, comment on your team's efforts to collect and/or refine data.**

**A:** At the Roundtable, we hypothesized that gaps existed in our current methods of data collection. In investigating this, we have been overcome by the realization that EWC is a data-saturated environment that is not maximizing our Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, Colleague® by Ellucian. The addition of a Student Planning Module in late fall 2016 and campus-wide training in the features of the ERP will aid in the translation of data to usable information.

In addition, as an institution, we have noted that we collect a vast amount of data through paper forms and documentation. We do not have an effective means of transferring that information to a digital format that would allow for greater manipulation and access. This issue is complicated not only by the lack of training and experience in Colleague®, but also by the significant decrease in staffing and budget. The EWC faculty and staff who continue to work on persistence and completion efforts are facing exponentially heavier workloads.

As the team works diligently to collect and refine data, we have discovered that we have forgotten some of the data we have collected. The team has determined that EWC has a culture of collecting data and not disseminating the information. As was revealed in the early stages of the Academy, we fell into the same pattern of 'data rich and information poor.' We have since made a conscious decision to be intentional about data collection and to collect only information that will serve a specific purpose. This will ensure the data will divulge pertinent information for informed decision-making.

Regarding our advising efforts, a new model has been researched and designed by a subcommittee focused exclusively on advising. The new model centers on intrusive advising where the faculty take the initiative to contact students instead of waiting for students to contact advisors. As the subcommittee is working on the logistics, we have a small group of faculty piloting the new model, and we are working with the IT

department to ensure all data is captured in the ERP so that data is ‘attached to a student’ thus making analysis easier.

**Q: How did you incorporate the feedback that you received on your previous posting?**

**A:** The feedback administered by Doc Arnett, Primary Mentor, and Rosemary Niedens, Scholar, was helpful to us in highlighting areas of strength in our project as well as providing direction for growth and continuation.

Based on the feedback, we have remained committed to maintaining a narrow project focus, and we have consistently monitored and readjusted our actions to align with the specific goals of our project. When it seems that we have begun to move forward with an idea before we have completed our initial tasks of evaluating existing data collection tools, reworking our advising process, and expanding or better utilizing existing mechanisms for data collection, we have consciously refocused on fully addressing these primary areas before moving forward. Occasionally, the need to refocus has necessarily impeded some forward momentum. While our progress may have been slowed at times, we are being diligent in progressing systematically and with purpose.

Additionally, we have maintained frequent communication within the college community about the status of the project. We continue to recruit and add new members, and we have included sessions detailing progress at each of our in-services. Additionally, those directly impacted by our initiatives are either involved with the process or updated frequently. For instance, the subcommittee addressing advising reform has begun piloting an updated model involving faculty from multiple disciplines and reports progress to the larger faculty body at faculty meetings.

We have started to address comments on the need to identify and utilize tools for gathering student data. Finalizing the existing data tool inventory will allow us to evaluate the functionality of each item and provide insight into what mechanisms should be added. Several pieces of information have emerged from the early phases of this task including that we frequently collect data that are shelved and never analyzed or applied, and that we are thoroughly under utilizing our ERP. Both of these discoveries will drive future initiatives to maximize our data collection efforts.

Finally, we have continued to share ownership of the project by including membership from all areas of the college, including students. The advising subcommittee comprised entirely of faculty have been responsible for developing and piloting a faculty advising model, and their input is central to the mission of the central committee. Their efforts are endorsed by the Vice President for Academic Services, increasing institutional buy-in. We have added to key members to the team, including our Data Analyst and Webmaster. It is anticipated that our Webmaster can assist with publicizing the team’s efforts by developing a project webpage linked to the EWC website.

The feedback we received was both affirming and encouraging. It has allowed us to maintain a clear focus and progress with our project with clarity and enthusiasm.

**What are your goals for the next six months? What challenges do you anticipate in reaching those goals?**

**A:** Goals within two distinct areas will drive our work in the next six months: Advising and Data Collection Tool Inventory. Specific objectives and challenges pertinent to each are discussed in greater depth below.

**Advising**

Goals:

1. Continue piloting the new student advising model through Spring 2017.

Evaluation of the pilot study will be ongoing during the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters so potential changes to the advising model can be identified and implemented prior to the full roll-out. This process started smoothly with a handful of enthusiastic volunteers. Thus far, the participants have engaged in and documented communication with advisees at designated points during the semester. As each participant at this point is a volunteer, buy-in has not been an issue. Faculty academic advisors may face challenge in maintaining and documenting the level of communication required by the model. In addition to completing the advising duties as designated, they will also be tasked with evaluating the model.

An additional element of this model addresses the assignment of faculty academic advisors. It is expected that advisees will be assigned to faculty academic advisors from disciplines specific to their major. This will require cross-training additional advisors from low enrollment programs to assist with advising duties in high enrollment programs. Additionally, appropriate faculty academic advisors will need to be identified and linked with Interdisciplinary Studies and Undecided majors. Converting existing practices to the new model will require effort on the part of involved parties and may face opposition by staff and faculty who have not yet accepted the new advising model.

1. Train members of the advising subcommittee in the Colleague® Student Planning Module by Spring 2017.

The opportunity for faculty academic advisors to fully utilize the Student Planning Module will depend of the institution's ability to efficiently bring the Student Planning Module into functionality. The challenges to this task are noted in previous discussion. Our current underutilization of the entire ERP and a college-wide reduction in staffing will likely test EWC's resources. Further, learning any new technology will challenge the college as a whole. Time and commitment will be required from all users as we bring this tool closer to student use.

1. Train all faculty and implement use of the Student Planning Module by all faculty academic advisors beginning Summer 2017.

Faculty academic advisors will be responsible for training students in using the self-service features of the Student Planning Module. This will require great familiarity with the product as well as a time and energy commitment. In the past, expectations that

students self-advise and self-register were inconsistent among advisors, and students rarely experienced uniform practices. It is the intention of the new advising model that all faculty academic advisors provide advisees a consistent advising experience.

### **Data Collection Tool Inventory**

Goals:

1. Identify and assemble all mechanisms of data collection currently utilized at EWC.

We currently use a wide variety of data collection tools, and there is little cohesion between systems. Additionally, independent areas of the college may collect and store data that is not disseminated and therefore not maximized. As noted previously, our ERP is not utilized by employees campus wide, so data is not warehoused in one collective location.

1. Evaluate and enhance the tools used to gather student feedback and reasons for leaving the institution.

In conjunction with the challenges discussed above, frequently student data is collected through paper forms handed out to students, mailings of forms, and SurveyMonkey. Emailed surveys have not been successful in the past because of incorrect addresses.

Currently, students are asked enter a “Reason for Leaving” on full drop cards. This information can be entered into the Colleague® system via the Registration Changes form (RGCS). The “Status Reason” field allows for a pull-down menu of options, which includes: Block Class Not Started, Changed Mind, Too Difficult/Failing, Financial Difficulties, Other, Time Conflict, Institutional Withdrawal, Instructor Withdrawal, Correction of Error, Change of Grade Card, Conflict with Instructor, Health/Medical, Never Attended, Military Active Duty, and Midterm/Instructor Drop. As is evidenced by the list, it is not comprehensive, nor does it allow for open entry of reasons that might not be indicated in pull-down menu options. “Other” is the most frequent reason entered, which does not assist with understanding retention issues. Another challenge is that students often do not enter an answer on the form, or are not completely forthcoming with their reasoning. Withdrawal from individual courses can be tracked in the same manner, but typically are not.

Instructors have the option of completing a paper Advisor Alert form for students presenting with attendance or other issues in class. Currently, these paper forms are turned into Student Services and the issue is noted in a comment screen in Colleague, but the data is not tracked. Students are called about the issue and referred to appropriate services for assistance, but any resolution is also not tracked. Advisors receive a copy of the form. Discussion has taken place about keeping the entire Advisor Alert form and process strictly with the advisor, and an electronic version of the form is being developed now.

Students are given a paper exit survey to complete when they submit their “Intent to Graduate” cards. December graduates must submit the card and survey to the Registrar by April 15; May graduates must file by November 15. While this “Survey of Graduates” collects useful information about the student’s experience at EWC and some indication of his/her future plans there are multiple deficiencies with the process: data from forms has to be manually entered into a database for tracking; the survey is only for potential

graduates, so non-completers (the main group we are trying to gather data on to deal with persistence issues) are not reached; and, the forms are due a half a year (or more) prior to the student's actual graduation, during which time his/her plans can change significantly.

Another issue with the "Survey of Graduates" is that there is another graduate survey with the same title mailed to students *after* graduation that also collects information. The first survey came out of the Outcomes Assessment Committee as a way to try to capture student satisfaction with services offered by EWC; the second one is used more for reporting and uses the address obtained on the first for mailing. The second graduate survey typically only has around 4% response rate, however. Both offer more insight into where students go after graduation than the "why students leave" persistence question this committee is trying to focus on.

The Institutional Research Office also administers many surveys of students and processes reports from Colleague data that could yield answers to persistence questions. The Complete College Wyoming report gathers completion and retention information from Colleague and outside databases as appropriate for state reporting purposes, but is not mined internally for data toward revealing completion issues.

Students in the residence halls who leave between the fall and spring semesters will this year be presented with an online exit survey that will try to capture reasons for leaving on-campus housing, which could also reflect a cause for leaving school.

The main challenges we face in all the tools we currently use and hope to implement are: 1.) the myriad of paper forms that require time-consuming manual entry to track, 2.) the need to consolidate and evaluate data from all forms and processes, and 3.) students' unwillingness to complete forms and surveys and/or be forthcoming with their real reason for departure.

We hope the new Student Planning Module will provide more opportunity for early entry of student issues by any involved party (instructor, advisor, housing, Student Services staff, etc.), as well as tracking within the system of reasons for dropping and survey responses. Once we can collect and catalog more usable information, we can begin analyzing the data and formulating a plan to solve recurring issues with the goal of improving persistence.

---

### Version 2.0- Response

**Q: Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).**

**A:** Primary Mentor

Dr. Harold W. (Doc) Arnett

harold.arnett@cowley.edu

620-441-6584

Scholar

Rosemary Niedens

[niedensr@newmanu.edu](mailto:niedensr@newmanu.edu)

**Q: What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?**

**A:** From Doc Arnett

Small volunteer group involvement

This permits the initial inclusion of those most committed to the project and with sincere interest in it. In the face of shrinking fiscal resources and increased duties, it is especially vital to have the project in hands that desire it. In addition to cohesion, this should make communication somewhat easier. It will be good, however, to be especially cautious not to create an "us versus them" mentality.

Intrusive Advising

This model has demonstrated effectiveness in many situations, especially when advisors "buy into" the approach. By being proactive and deliberately engaging with students early on, advisors can help create the sense of belonging and early identification with the institution that contributes to increased persistence and completion.

Deliberateness

This self-conscious approach of deliberately working out evaluation, data collection and data analysis prior to commencement of next steps helps assure focus and avoids the "retro-fitting" challenges that could otherwise overtake and complicate the project. It tangibly reinforces the commitment of the group and their allegiance to those key concepts. The awareness that this sometimes frustrates perceived progress also shows realistic understanding.

Frequent Communication & Shared Ownership

Even people who are not directly involved with the project—and perhaps even those not truly interested in it—appreciate the courtesy of being informed. This will be especially important and beneficial as EWC continues to draw in additional participants

in the project. Being sure to solicit feedback by those affected by the initiative *in advance* of decision making will provide additional respect and cooperation. Even when their input does not control the eventual decision, the practice of including them will help prevent resistance to some degree. Having the faculty develop and pilot the advising model is seen as wise and effective.

#### Realistic Anticipation of Issues

It is easy for us to be overly optimistic and even blind to likely challenges. The EWC team seems to have a very good grip on those and to also be proactively developing ways of successfully resolving or even avoiding those. Most likely with some restraint, the report honestly admits but does not overplay the issue of reduced staff and increased loads.

From Rosemary Niedens

Doc Arnett clearly outlines the considerable strengths of EWC's Academy Project as listed in the update. The methodical implementation of your project is a definite plus. Moving forward with your advising model while still in the data stage also shows the commitment to making a difference in student success as defined by retention. What I most would like to applaud, however, is the commitment to providing a very solid advising experience for your students. Advising is often viewed as merely prescriptive but in many situations it is the only common experience that all students share. This makes it an opportunity for improvement that can reach ALL students. It becomes, at its most effective, teaching to a class of one.

Also, I commend your definite communication plans for various aspects of your project. This is not only the quickest way to implement change, it is the best way to build buy-in.

**Q: What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work improve student persistence and completion.**

**A:** From Doc Arnett

Although the update clearly addresses the need to develop and utilize data sets that will help assess and guide EWC, it is not clear that those means have been identified. This does, however, seem to clearly be a key part of the initiative as it continues.

From Rosemary Niedens

The EWC update was thorough and answered most questions. How you intended to assess the impact of EWC Intrusive Advising, however, was not clear. In addition, you mentioned the myriad types and sources of data that already in existence. Are you

planning to attempt to utilize this data. While going forward, thoughtfully consolidating data collection is a good strategy, there is likely valuable info in these treasure trove of data. Obviously, this data was collected for a purpose. Could the data "owners" provide info about content?

**Q: What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?**

**A:** From Doc Arnett

Special focus on clearly identifying and beginning to utilize manageable means of collecting and analyzing data. Even though it may be the hardest one on which to collect truly reliable and valid data, interviewing non-returners can provide vital, actionable information. Be sure to maintain focus on the "actionable" part. If there is nothing the College can do about particular factors, there is little point in spending much time on them. The funding issue is something that does deserve some time.

One of the hardest challenges is to convince administration in lean times that spending money may ultimately be the best way to save money. Like the old story of the highly successful hot dog stand that begins cutting corners to save money and eventually goes out of business, colleges that scrimp in the wrong areas often exacerbate financial difficulties.

Increasing persistence saves money on recruiting and orientation. Concurrently, it generally decreases loan default rates since completers are more likely to repay loans than are those who drop out of college. It may well be that spending a couple of hours to look realistically at the cost savings/revenue generation of a 5% reduction in dropout rate.

Providing some sort of recognition through even small stipends or an occasional "free day off" to project participants sends a clear message of support and appreciation. Deliberate appreciation, even in less tangible ways, is crucial to sustaining and fostering momentum. An occasional "thank you" from the president and/or board members could be a good investment. Also, remember to celebrate the successes and significant strides forward accomplished by the group. When employees feel genuinely valued and appreciated, they will go farther than the second mile and will accomplish great things!

From Rosemary Niedens

You mentioned in your update that you were proceeding with the advising initiative without actual data. Rather it is based on some existing survey and anecdotal data. This is important valuable data! As Arnett states about gathering data from non returning students, individual interview data, while difficult to gather, is frequently rich in meaning. Systematically gathering anecdotal data will enhance your other sources of information. I agree strongly with Arnett as he mentioned the need to winnow out the actionable data. This will also help as you choose how to spend your valuable human and financial resources.

Most of all, I agree with Arnett's suggestion to celebrate stories of success. This may help convince budget makers of the efficacy of your work while building buy-in in the entire community. You have made considerable progress and I look forward to watching your success over the coming months. Keep up your good work.

Scholar(s):	Rosemary Niedens
Primary Mentor(s):	Doc Arnett

### Version 1.0- Project

**Q: Select your Track:**

**A:** Data Development

**Q: How did your discussions with other teams at the Roundtable help you identify data that might be useful to your team as you begin to understand persistence and completion on your campus? What ideas did you get for obtaining that data?**

**A:** Even though our interaction with other teams was brief, we engaged in valuable discussion within our own team and with the Scholars. The directed discussions were particularly beneficial to us in narrowing our focus. After determining that it was essential to our persistence and retention efforts to identify gaps in our data, we worked to identify the key areas within our institution in which data was lacking or missing entirely.

We selected three areas of focus: existing tools, advising practices, and the expansion of data collection efforts to non-academic areas. For each area, our team identified current mechanisms for gathering relevant data and generated ideas for obtaining missing data. Some of the specific strategies we considered for our focus areas were

1. Better utilizing existing tools to provide data about students who leave our institution,
2. Surveying students about their experience with the advising process,
3. Implementing advising partnerships between students and advisors to improve the process,
4. Developing a data collection mechanism for advisors to utilize for providing information about students' behavior, including why they might leave our institution, and
5. Gathering information from students about non-academic services on campus such as housing, food services, athletics, clubs, etc.

### Version 1.0- Update

**Describe the plan for data development that you crafted at the Roundtable. Describe Q: the specific steps that you will be taking in collecting data and building/improving your data infrastructure.**

**A:** The goals of the plan we developed are outlined above. At the Roundtable, we developed a timeline for the identified strategies. We would like to conduct the advising survey in shortly after the advising session for the Spring 2016 semester that is currently taking place. So, it requires immediate attention. We identified the Spring 2016 semester in-service prior to the start of classes as a time in which to present faculty and staff with key information on persistence and retention efforts. Also, we set the Fall 2016 pre-registration sessions (conducted from May through July 2016) as the target date for piloting the bi-directional advising practices.

In order for the identified measures to occur in line with the desired timeline, the core team, as well as our larger committee, will need to further develop strategies for gathering the data we are lacking.

**Q: Is there other relevant data that might exist on campus?**

**A:** While preparing our Data Book, we focused our efforts on several key categories and then identified existing data that is applicable to those categories. We recognize the possibility that some data that we desire exists on campus but is not currently being collected. One example is the personal knowledge that advisors, instructors, housing staff, financial aid staff, and other institutional personnel possess but have no avenue for sharing. Our

efforts will include developing a method to collect and compile this information in a manner that better informs retention efforts.

**Q: What challenges do you anticipate? How will you deal with them?**

**A:** At the Roundtable, our team identified anticipated challenges. Some of these include resistance from within the institution, providing adequate training in new practices, transparency, coordination across areas in the institution, and acquiring sufficient financial and personnel resources to support our efforts. Identifying potential challenges has helped us to begin addressing them. We believe that increasing transparency and maintaining open communication will address several of the challenges we discussed. Working creatively to function within budget and personnel constraints will aid in overcoming those challenges, as will involving the efforts of existing employees.

**Q: Now that your institution knows more about the Academy experience, how do you think participation supports your institution's strategic plans? Revisit the answer provided in the application to the Academy to see how your response may have changed.**

**A:** Eastern Wyoming College joined the Academy to help address retention and persistence issues which aligned with the College's strategic plan.

While the issues identified in the original application are still significant and relevant to the College to improve student services and increase the number of students achieving completion goals, after attending the Academy, it was determined that the college has additional work to accomplish before analysis can take place. Specifically, the College needs to understand the implications of gathering, measuring, and interpreting data better so that decisions are data informed rather than guessing at what might work.

This new strategy of 'planning the plan' fits into the College's strategic plan specifically by "empowering and enhancing student success" and broadly, as the commitment to continuous improvement.

**Version 1.0- Response**

**Q: Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).**

**A:** Primary Mentor

Doc Arnett

Harold.Arnett@Cowley.edu

620.441.6584

Scholar

Rosemary Niedens

niedensr@newmanu.edu

316.942.4291

**Q: What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?**

**A:** From Doc Arnett, Primary Mentor

The team from Eastern Wyoming College has conducted a realistic self-appraisal of its status and preparation and restrained from outlining an overly ambitious response. Narrowing the focus seems quite appropriate for their situation. In particular, gathering information directly from the students in regard to areas of concern is especially on target. This will furnish them with from-source information that should reveal specific, actionable issues which is much better than proceeding based on assumptions and anecdotal evidence.

Even within this narrowed focus on student advising and student, the proposal uses an appropriately comprehensive approach by collecting additional information on the total campus experience. Additionally, the team has already noted its need to develop strategies for gathering their data. Furthermore, they have accurately anticipated challenges and begun working on strategies to successfully meet those challenges.

From Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

I concur with Doc Arnett in his summary of strengths of the EWC plan. I also commend you on your efforts at communication and transparency as you outlined. You speak of developing communication strategies that will allow existing knowledge to be shared across the institution. This will further a fundamental move toward persistence being in the forefront of the minds of those who are interacting directly with students. Such persistence awareness is likely to be key in moving toward your goals.

**Q: What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work improve student persistence and completion.**

**A:** From Doc Arnett, Primary Mentor

What strategies are going to be used for collecting student information? Web-based surveys? Paper surveys? Interviews? Focus Groups? (If possible, please consider conducting preliminary focus groups to use as a basis for then constructing specific item surveys, ratings, etc.)

What particular questions, items, etc., have already been identified?

From Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

Doc Arnett raises valid points about gathering data. Further than the how, consideration of the what is critical. What do you want to learn from these surveys? Are you asking why students persist? Do you have a mechanism to learn from students who have left, why they did so? Finally, what do you already know and have? For example, do you have exit surveys in place? If students cancel registration before the start of classes are they asked why? If a student has not completed a FAFSA and the Fin. Aid folks are contacting, do they learn why? If so, has this data been reviewed? Even if it is a short online response form or database collection this might provide a starting place for developing further questions.

**Q: What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?**

**A:** From Doc Arnett, Primary Mentor

It is critical that the team quickly establish the final frameworks and begin immediately on getting at least preliminary feedback from students. I urge them to not be afraid of failure; if gaining further information from students shows that something important or useful is missing from the surveys, revise them and move on!

Another key factor is continuing to build momentum. Remind employees of the benefits they themselves identified in August of 2015. Identify and deliver tangible reinforcement to employees who answer the call! Acknowledge each step attained and celebrate key points of progress.

Identify, support and reinforce ownership and participation. Share the preliminary information and give interested employees additional opportunities to contribute to the effort. This forthrightness will help build trust and shared ownership.

The immediacy of the project is a double-edged sword: it promises to help sustain momentum but also places a challenging time frame on the College team. With minimum turnaround time, specific surveys, questions for focus groups, etc., will have to be developed. That said, I am confident that the EWC team is fully capable of accomplishing that.

From Rosemary Niedens, Scholar

I concur with Doc Arnett's summary. You have identified and begun an ambitious plan for retention and persistence. You have, admirably, developed a plan to enlist and communicate with the folks who have the day to day student interactions. It will be essential that you continue to build allies for your plan. Arnett suggests that you should acknowledge and celebrate key points of progress. I cannot emphasize the validity of his point enough. Identify your success. Spread the good news! This will create an atmosphere of excitement about student persistence--which is student success--at EWC.

Certainly gather data, analyze and use it. Just, as Arnett states, start, regroup and evaluate and start again as necessary.

I also agree with Doc Arnett in believing that you are well on your way to success in this project. You have great enthusiasm to move towards achieving your goal--I am excited to follow your project and look forward to your next update.

Scholar(s):	Rosemary Niedens
Primary Mentor(s):	Doc Arnett

### Context

**Q: The Collaboration Network is the Academies online project management tool that serves to help institutions track the progress of their work and facilitate a shared learning experience amongst Academy institutions. Please introduce your institution to other Academy Teams. Provide contextual information on your institution including but not limited to institutional type, size and student populations served. Note: You may use portions of your application responses to answer this question**

**A:** Eastern Wyoming College (EWC) is a two-year, state-supported, comprehensive

community college. The main campus is located in Torrington, Wyoming, with a branch campus located in Douglas, Wyoming. Both communities have populations of about 6500 people. Torrington and Douglas are the largest towns in the EWC service area, spanning 16,343 square miles which includes six counties on the eastern side of Wyoming. The college has outreach sites in 12 smaller communities within the service area staffed by either part-time or full-time outreach coordinators. See a map of the service area marked by orange on the Wyoming Community College Commission website: <https://communitycolleges.wy.edu/>.

Annualized (sum of summer, fall, and spring divided by two) headcount over the last ten years has grown 19 percent and with full time equivalency (FTE) increased by 31 percent. Fifty-seven degrees and certificate programs are offered leading to associate of arts, associate of science, associates of applied science degrees, and certificates. A few of the degrees/programs include Criminal Justice, Welding and Joining Technology, Veterinary Technology, Cosmetology, Business, Education, Agriculture, and Interdisciplinary Studies.

Fall 2014, headcount was 1846 and FTE was 1324. Sixty percent of declared majors were in academic transfer programs with the remaining 40 percent in career and technical education programs. High school students comprised 36 percent of FTE while distance education students represented 12 percent of FTE.

The ethnic makeup of the student body was seven percent Hispanic, four percent other ethnic minority, and 89 percent White, which is representative of EWC's service area. The average age of EWC students was 25.01, with 74 percent under age 25 and 26 percent over age 25. Forty-eight percent of all students self-reported as "first generation." In the 2013-14 year, 90 percent of the first-time full-time, degree-seeking students received financial aid of some type, with 39 percent of all students receiving some type of aid.

**Having compiled a Data Book following the Data Discovery meeting, please describe**

**Q: what data sets were chosen to be included in the book and how those data sets will help you define and address persistence and completion issues.**

**A:** We chose the following data sets:

1. Program Completion: Here, we looked at how many first-time, full-time students graduated or transferred (transferred to two and four year schools) within 200% of time, the percentage of those students who took remedial course work, their age at entry, gender, ethnicity, and the percentage receiving Pell grants; and, the number of students who changed advisors or programs. We also looked at non-completers (those who did not graduate or transfer from EWC within 200% of time). We looked at the cohort of first-time, full-time students, the percentage of those

students who took remedial course work, their age at entry, gender, ethnicity, and the percentage receiving Pell grants; and, the number of students who changed advisors or programs.

2. **Course Success:** This category involved percentages of students and their success in all classes, internet classes and non-internet classes; success of first-generation compared to not first generation; success of students on the Torrington campus compared to the Douglas campus and all locations; the success of students by academic standing; and, all grades earned in all classes by all students by cumulative GPA range. We also looked at the success rate of particular courses and included information about: courses with 200 or more students enrolled and those with 50-199 students that have less than a 75% success rate. Finally, we looked at faculty with less than 60% success rate with 10 or more students.
3. **Persistence and Retention:** In this category, we compiled data about students who returned for a subsequent semester (retained) or in the next academic year (persisted). We looked at the percentage of students we retained or who persisted, took remedial courses, and received Pell. We also reported their gender and ethnicity, and finally, advisor or program change.
4. **Advising:** In this section, we provided the results of a survey of faculty on perspectives and practices about advising, midterm grading and withdrawals.

The above data sets will help define and address persistence and completion in several ways. Primarily, this data will allow us to focus on key areas in which we already collect data and identify those areas where data collection needs to be implemented. The information will help improve services to students and increase the number of students who complete. In particular, a defined set of variables will be used to identify trends and allow the College to implement necessary changes or practices.

**Q: Are there data sets that you believe will be important to your work which are not currently available? In what ways do you think will these data be important to your persistence and completion efforts?**

**A:** Presently, data included in the Data Book is existing institutional data that was immediately available for compilation. In the process of identifying objectives related to persistence and completion efforts at EWC, several additional data sets were identified as potentially significant to the process. A chart detailing major categories of data relevant to our mission was included in the Data Book, with multiple variables identified for future study.

One category in which additional data was deemed advantageous related to advising practices. No institutional data exists measuring students' experience with the advising process. Currently, EWC only obtains feedback on the advising process from graduates. Since this population only represents a portion of all students and likely doesn't include many students who had dissatisfactory experiences, we would like to expand our survey population to all students who have engaged in advising. We intend to develop and administer a student survey following registration for the Spring semester. This will allow evaluation by students who have participated in at least two advising sessions. Additional desired data sets related to advising include the number of advisees assigned to each faculty advisor and the graduate rate of students assigned to each advisor. It is expected that this data will inform on desirable advising loads and guide us in identifying advising best practices.

Beyond data sets mentioned in the Data Book, we have noted that most available institutional data relates to academic practices. In order to form a complete institutional picture, it is expected that data relating to student services, other support services, and extracurricular activities would be valuable. One proposed project is a campus climate survey offered to faculty, staff, and students. We have significant interest in examining practices in each area of the institution to facilitate improved completion and retention.

In closing, the process of compiling the Data Book was a great opportunity to amass data and evaluate our ability to address persistence and completion. It also allowed us to note voids or inadequacies in our database and will guide us in future data collection.