

Academic Life Coaching

Strategic Plan Theme: Student Success

Funding Level: Below \$1 million

Facility Needs: No new facilities will be needed

Submitting Unit: Natural Science Dean's Office

Collaborating colleges/departments/units involved with this proposal.

The key collaborators in this pilot project would be Broad College of Business, College of Arts & Letters, and the College of Natural Science.

What is the proposal's big theme or idea?

Academic life coaching provides support to students in how to define their purpose, manage their time, set and achieve goals and actions, and to hold themselves accountable for their progress. It works in tandem with advising, wellness counseling, and other support structures and opportunities available through student and academic affairs. Academic life coaching is an empowering partnership between a student and coach where the student is able to take the lead in their educational and life journey. In academic life coaching the student is the expert. This differs from academic advising where advisors generally have the content knowledge and offer information to the student. Counseling also has a significant difference from coaching whereas coaching focuses on the future and counseling may often assist with past to present experiences. Finally, mentoring is an opportunity for someone who is an expert in a field to help guide and share knowledge with a student from their own previous and current experiences.

What is the proposal's goal?

The long-term goal is to launch a campus-wide Academic Life Coaching Center. The short-term goal and the purpose of this specific initiative is to pilot the feasibility of embedding academic life coaches into the student support network with coordinated relationships with colleges' offices of Undergraduate Academic and Student Affairs to promote student retention. We take inspiration from the following programs:

Texas A&M incorporates academic coaching into their campus-wide Academic Success Center. They have 10 professional academic coaches who work with undergraduate students spanning all demographics.

University of Oklahoma's Academic Coaching Program currently employs 44 professional academic life coaches to support student development and retention across campus.

Define the significance, or impact of your big idea.

Academic life coaching forwards an asset-based, opportunity-focused approach to student success in which students enter a relationship with a coach who provides resources and direction geared toward the student's academic achievement and broader life fulfillment.

Academic life coaching aligns with the strategic plan's student success objective four specifically in service of MSU's retention and time-to-degree goals. The objective discusses the importance of "Ensure [ing] all graduates develop leadership, entrepreneurial attitudes and skills". Academic life coaching allows an opportunity for students to work through these areas.

Does this idea/theme contribute to any ongoing/existing initiatives?

Academic life coaching supports current student success initiatives related to graduation rates/retention rates.

How does this advance the competitiveness and/or reputation of MSU?

At this time, we do not believe any institutions in the BigTen have invested in academic life coach training, programs, or centers. This allows other institutions to see that MSU is investing in both their students and their employees. Moreover, if desired employees may seek accreditation through the International Coaching Federation (ICF).

Potential Risks and Rewards

The reward is beneficial for both students and employees. First, students will have the opportunity to have another professional on campus to meet with to assist with academic and life goals. Coaches are professionals that students may meet post-graduation, therefore introducing students to this resource now can be a benefit for their future. Secondly, this can free time from other professionals so that they may focus on their specific roles such as academic advising and career services. Additionally, employees are always looking for professional development opportunities to add and the investment of the academic life coach training provides additional skills for listening and being able to interact with each other in better ways.

Possible measures/benchmarks of success

The pilot phase will allow a timeframe to have employees trained and students coached. During this time feedback will be received from both academic coaches and students. Data points can include qualitative and quantitative measures including students' term and cumulative GPA, retention from current to next year, time to degree, and sense of belonging. Employee measures may include academic coach training experience, use of time for academic coach appointments, and relationship with students. MSU's Coaching Center will establish a set of Learning Outcomes that will structure its understanding of success. An assessment protocol will be developed to facilitate a cycle of continuous improvement.

Who will be impacted?

As a pilot, this initiative will reside in the Broad College of Business, College of Arts & Letters and College of Natural Science. All students will be given the option to partner with an academic life coach within their college. Some students will be targeted and encouraged to utilize academic life coaching including students denied admission to limited enrollment programs, students on probation, and students considering stopping out. Coaching will also be presented as an opportunity for graduating students who remain unsure of their life path, honors students, exploratory students, and any other students identified by campus professionals on referral. We will scale strategically to serve more MSU undergraduates with a particular focus on students' intersectional identities and needs.

What does sustainability for your proposal look like?

Sustainability will necessitate determining how many colleagues will train and serve as coaches, and how intentionally colleges build these roles and forms of support into their undergraduate academic and student affairs offices as complementary to advising and other student support services. Moreover, in the future there could be an opportunity to establish a program for the coaches to train both colleagues and students. Support for continued professional development for coaches to move from associates, masters, to professional coaching should be provided. Please select what budget range you think your big idea fits within:

There are several programs that may be selected for coach training. The one that we currently have experience with, Coach Training EDU, does have individual and group rates ranging from \$3,150 each for groups of 3-5, or groups of 6-12 for \$2,950 per person.

Current undergraduate support staff do not have the capacity to add coaching to their list of responsibilities. We would seek to hire upwards of 9-10 new professionals who would be trained in coaching as a cohort and serve the needs of the 3 aforementioned colleges.

Please select facilities you think will be needed for your big idea:

For the pilot phase no new facilities will be needed. However, with the goal of having academic life coaches in each college and department, adjustments to existing facilities may be needed as physical space is limited.

Moreover, with the goal of a Academic Coaching Center, new facilities will be needed. The Coaching Center will need to be located in a space centrally located. However, academic life coaching may be completed in-person or remotely.

Evidence of Ongoing Work, Expertise, Existing Infrastructure

Currently academic staff in the College of Natural Science have started to participate in academic life coach training through Coach Training EDU. One Advisor has completed the training and two more are currently enrolled. Additionally, we are working to build an informational page on our website and have academic coaching as an option for student appointments.

MSU NSSC TRIO Scholar program uses an academic success coach model currently. TRIO utilizes undergraduate students as coaches, which is notably different than the model being proposed here.

The Charles Drew Science Scholars offers an Academic Coaching Program with the emphasis on discipline, coupled with subject content and conceptual understanding. The coaches are academic content experts in the areas of science and writing. This is a distinct use of coaches and different than what is proposed here.