

COMPASS Exploratory Advising Program

Program Abstract

In fall 2014, the Explore Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) launched a new advising program called COMPASS that targeted undeclared students at sophomore or above class standing. Prior to this program, students could remain undeclared within the university for an unlimited amount of time. This led to poor student outcomes including low retention and credit hour completion rates. Major declaration by the undeclared student population was delayed due to students pursuing unrealistic majors and not seeking academic advising.

The COMPASS program required students to meet with their academic advisor in the Explore Center to develop individualized major exploration strategies, including career assessments, major exploration workshops, and meeting with academic advisors and faculty across campus. The Explore Center pioneered the use of college/major-specific registration holds at UNL. Students had registration holds placed on their accounts that required them to meet with their academic advisor and actively engage in the major exploration process. Students could explore majors for two semesters after reaching sophomore standing before being required to declare a major.

Through this program, the Explore Center shifted its advising culture to be more proactive and developmental with impressive student results. Students are now declaring majors earlier in their academic careers, completing a higher percentage of their attempted credit hours, and engaging with their academic advisors more than ever before. Students are being retained to their new majors, and the number of undeclared juniors and seniors at UNL has been cut in half.