

# Health and Life Sciences Advising Center

## INSTITUTIONAL DESCRIPTION

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) is a public urban research university serving approximately 30,000 students. IUPUI is located in downtown Indianapolis, in close proximity to several major hospitals and medical centers. IUPUI and Central Indiana are known for being a vibrant life-health science community for innovations in research, development, treatment, and manufacturing. IUPUI's strategic plan lays out clear objectives and actions around "leveraging our strengths in health and life sciences." IUPUI offers approximately 20 undergraduate health majors, and the highly competitive direct patient care majors are among the most popular. The Health and Life Sciences Advising Center (HLSAC) plays an important role in helping students find the right fit in health-related fields.

Students entering IUPUI are directly admitted into their degree-granting school or to University College (UC). Students remain in UC until they have declared a major and meet the admissions standards of their degree-granting school (ideally before their junior year). UC advisors help students efficiently (targeting on-time graduation) and effectively (choosing a degree program that is the best fit) transition to their degree-granting school. Approximately 5000 students are enrolled in University College each semester with over 1500 intending to major in a health field. These pre-health students are assigned to receive advising services from the HLSAC.

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The HLSAC opened in November 2013, and focuses on meeting the advising and career exploration needs of pre-health majors. The need for intentional advising for pre-health majors is great, and retention of pre-nursing majors, in particular, was one of the driving factor in the center's creation. The fall-to-fall retention rates for pre-nursing students in 2013 was an abysmal 64%.

Key administrators partnered with health schools to develop HLSAC's mission, and campus funding supported its establishment. The advising team has developed expertise in advising every health major, and also provides pre-professional health advising for students whose undergraduate major is not science. The center's vision is to become *IUPUI's home for exploring, planning for, and pursuing majors and careers in the health and life sciences.*

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The mission of the center is to: *collaborate with campus partners to provide students at all levels in a variety of academic disciplines with the information and guidance needed to explore, plan for, and enter fields in the life sciences as well as traditional health professions.* The following goals drive outreach and programming efforts.

**GOAL 1:** Increase the number of opportunities for students to engage with the Health and Life Sciences Advising Staff.

**GOAL 2:** Decrease the timeframe to certification/application to degree-granting school for continuously enrolled pre-health students

**GOAL 3:** Increase retention of students who are not admitted to competitive health majors.

**GOAL 4:** Decrease the number of students who are not admitted to a degree-granting school by their junior year.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The center employs a director, six Student Success Advisors, one Career Consultant, one part-time Student Success Advisor Graduate Assistant, six undergraduate Peer Advisors, and one undergraduate Team Assistant. The HLSAC staff's caseload totals approximately 1500 pre-health majors, which approximates a 1:250 advisor-to-student ratio.

Boldness and creativity define the HLSAC culture. The center's innovative, award-winning professionals focus on student success and continuously seek to improve their advising practice through training and professional development (each significantly exceeding the 10 hour annual minimum

required). Staff members are given freedom to approach advising in inventive ways, and each choose special projects based on their strengths and interests, encouraging professional growth and development (Appendix 1). The team's priority is providing academic and career advising to pre-health majors; however, because of our focus on collaboration and innovation, the team takes advising out of the office in inventive ways. The following sections outline these practices.

### **TRADITIONAL APPOINTMENTS**

The greatest challenges students face in the HLS area are 1) the competitiveness of the most popular majors; 2) the lack of knowledge regarding non-patient care majors; and 3) the steadfastness of some students to pursue a major that is not a fit personally or academically. Consequently, having a focus on career exploration and parallel planning is imperative. The unique team configuration of Student Success Advisors with a Career Consultant adds great value to our innovative programming and the seamless integration of career exploration and academic advising. In the center, students can flow from 30-minute appointments with a Student Success Advisor to a 60-minute appointment with the Career Consultant and back again, while our centralized notetaking system keeps the entire team informed about each student. A summary of results from the Post-Appointment Survey paint a picture of the quality of advising being given (Appendix 2).

The HLSAC team invites advisors from degree-granting schools to hold "visiting advising" office hours in the center to see pre-majors interested in their programs. This partnership has allowed for smoother referrals when students are exploring and parallel planning for other health majors. In 2016, Visiting Advisors saw over 200 pre-majors.

### **MOBILE ADVISING**

Mobile Advising takes advisors out of the office and into student spaces. Armed with mobile technology, advisors spend about 25 hours a month at the campus coffee shop, outside popular pre-health classes, and in the residence halls. Mobile Advising offers students' opportunities to become

more familiar with advising staff, learn about HLSAC services, get answers to simple questions, and schedule advising appointments. Although response rates to a Qualtrics survey introduced in fall 2016 are low, those who have responded expressed high levels of satisfaction and made insightful comments that encourage staff to continue this outreach effort (Appendix 3).

### **UNDERSTANDING THE APPLICATION AND MOCK INTERVIEW WORKSHOPS**

The team collaborated with school partners to create application workshops for each competitive major. The purpose of these workshops is to 1) increase understanding of the application process, 2) ease student anxiety, 3) build trust and reinforce parallel planning, and 4) to be efficient with advisors' time by presenting common information in a group. These workshops are offered multiple times in the weeks leading up to each application cycle and are created and often co-presented in partnership with the schools. As an example, in January and February 2017, the Understanding the Nursing Application workshop was offered four times and served 103 students. (See Appendix 4 for survey results.)

Some competitive programs require students to interview as part of the application process. Our Career Consultant developed a workshop for students who were invited to interview. The content of the interview workshop was informed by interviewing best practices and input from the respective programs. Following the workshop, students participated in mock interviews with the HLSAC staff. (Survey results, Appendix 5)

### **UNDER-REPRESENTED AND UNDER-RESOURCED STUDNETS**

Noticing few Black/African-American Pre-Nursing students being admitted to the School of Nursing (1 in a class of 90 in fall 2016), a mentoring group was developed and led by a staff member to attempt to mitigate this problem. Forty-five students were invited to participate and around 13 regularly attend meetings where the demands of the application process, the importance of parallel planning, how to set goals, and what to expect in Human Anatomy were discussed. More important

than the meetings, however, were the connections made with the individual students as most continue to communicate and meet with the coordinator individually for guidance or support. We continue to look to improve and scale this so that we better meet the unique needs of students from under-represented and under-resourced backgrounds.

### **CREATIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES**

The center's digital presence has been transformed, with a complete overhaul of website content ([hls.iupui.edu](http://hls.iupui.edu)) and the creation of a site on the course management system Canvas. The Canvas site allows staff to communicate pertinent information in a format that students are accustomed to receiving information from their classes; this eases advisors' reliance on email. The site features a weekly newsletter, a calendar of events, and information about majors. Our social media presence creates community among HLS students, dispenses advising information in fun ways, and educates students about health-related topics; for example, during Black History Month, all posts identified significant contributions that African Americans have made to healthcare. The responsible staff member has summarized strategies, analytics, and impact and has submitted a proposal to present at the NACADA National in 2017.

### **RESIDENCE-BASED LEARNING COMMUNITY (RBLC)**

In fall 2016, the center launched a new partnership with Residence Life to open a 76-bed Residence-Based Learning Community (RBLC) for pre-health students. The RBLC filled well before the deadline. Staff collaborate with two resident assistants (RAs) in creating programming for the residents. The RAs have been guided on forming and managing study groups for common classes on the floor. The RAs and HLSAC staff have coordinated major- and career-focused panels and provided breakfast for students during finals week. As preparations are underway to begin filling the RBLC for next year, it continues to be a popular option for pre-health majors and RA applicants alike. Impact assessments of this first year will occur toward the end of the spring 2017 semester.

## **PEER-TO-PEER ADVISING**

A robust Peer Advising (PA) program has evolved from simple front-desk work to true peer advising. A diverse team of 5-6 undergraduates (typically work-study), are responsible for staffing the front desk and advising students during Drop-In Hours, during which more transactional issues are addressed. This allows full-time professional staff to focus on developmental advising. PAs are required to have knowledge of health majors and academic success resources. PAs choose projects (Appendix 6) based on their strengths and goals that advance the center's mission and help students in new and exciting ways. The center also employs a student Team Assistant who supports our marketing and communications efforts and the creation of student success stories for our website ([hls.iupui.edu/Explore/Success-Stories](https://hls.iupui.edu/Explore/Success-Stories)).

A staff member hires the team, trains them in content knowledge, provides professional development opportunities, and gives regular performance reviews. The coordinator has presented at the IUPUI National Mentoring Symposium on how the appreciative advising approach is used in PA development. The student team helps the center run more smoothly, and their work is being recognized through a nomination for the Student Employee Team of the Year (Appendix 7).

## **IN THE CLASSROOM**

The center supports a health career exploration course, taught by the Career Consultant, which regularly enrolls 15-20 students each semester. In 2015, a service-learning component was piloted with great success and, to date, the center has partnered with 15 organizations in the Indianapolis community to provide experiential opportunities to students. The Career Consultant was awarded grant money from IUPUI's Center for Service and Learning to support the initiative. We have also been able to offer a second section of the course; prior to our management, enrollment numbers only supported one offering. A summary of recent course evaluations can be found in Appendix 8.

Every fall semester, Student Success Advisors are assigned to up to 5 sections of a First Year Seminar courses where they spend 10-15 hours a semester per section providing in-class instruction in collaboration with the instructional team. The advisor's role in the course is focused on major and career exploration, preparing for registration and learning to use registration technology, and the process for transitioning/applying to degree granting schools.

### **HEALTH CAREERS CLUB**

HLSAC's involvement in the resurrection of the Health Careers Club is a creative way that staff are collaborating with students and influencing students' exposure to health careers and providing support to students' exploration. Staff have provided leadership development and advisement since spring 2015, and student membership has grown from a handful of members to a listserv of over 200. This year, the club has engaged in service events and has hosted a wide variety of speakers, including a nurse, an epidemiologist, a physician assistant, and an expert on inter-professional collaborations within healthcare.

### **HEALTH AND LIFE SCIENCE EXPERIENCE EXPO**

Created and developed by the center's Career Consultant in 2015, the Expo is the center's signature annual event. This cross campus and community collaboration is open to all student but specifically targets first- and second-year pre-health students. Mimicking a career fair, the event brings together health-related academic departments, student organizations, and community organizations that have opportunities available for early-career college students to gain marketable experience. Students also have the opportunity to interact with organizations that impact the health of individuals in non-traditional ways, exposing them to career possibilities beyond direct patient care.

In just two years, the Expo has nearly doubled in size and has become one of the pillar events for IUPUI's annual Fall Career Week. In 2016, the event attracted 250 students, up from 150 in 2015, and

the number of exhibitors grew from 34 to 46. Survey results from both years have been overwhelmingly positive (Appendix 9).

### **PRESCRIPTION FOR SUCCESS**

The center's single largest population is pre-nursing students. Each year, IUPUI admits approximately 500 pre-nursing students, but only 180 will be admitted to the School of Nursing.

*Prescription for Success: A Pre-Nursing Conference* developed as a collaboration with HLSAC staff and School of Nursing advisors to educate students about the realities of nursing school. The conference filled to capacity within 12 hours of posting the registration link, and 71 of 80 registered students attended. Survey results and a program for the event are included in Appendix 10.

### PROCEDURES USED IN PROGRAM EVALUATION

The center's staff intentionally evaluate programs and interventions to learn if objectives are being met and identify areas for improvement. Those individual efforts were reported above in the PROGRAM DESCRIPTION. Additional data from IUPUI's Institutional Research and Decision Support (IRDS) and University College's Assistant Director of Student Information and Assessment helps us glean additional insights on our successes and areas for improvement.

### RESULTS/OUTCOMES

**GOAL 1:** Increase the number of opportunities for students to engage with the Health and Life Sciences Advising Staff. (Appendix 11)

**GOAL 2:** Decrease the timeframe to certification/application to degree-granting school for continuously enrolled pre-health students. (Appendix 12)

**GOAL 3:** Increase retention of students who are not admitted to competitive health majors. (Appendix 13)

**GOAL 4:** Decrease the number of students who are not admitted to a degree-granting school by their junior year. (Appendix 14)

The HLSAC is seeing positive outcomes for HLS students. In three years, quite a lot has been accomplished in terms of outreach and programming. An area of particular concern that the team

would like to focus attention is in our work with students from under-represented and under-resourced populations. Students who saw a HLS advisor had higher high school GPAs and average SAT scores than the students who did not and were less likely to be African American and/or Pell Grant recipients.

(Appendix 15). New partnerships with campus support services are being explored.

#### POTENTIAL FOR ADAPTATION BY OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Collaboration and innovation! These are the principles we believe are the keys to HLSAC's success to date. Because of our partnerships, staff are more knowledgeable, can more effectively advise and teach students about programs and resources, and have developed cooperative programming that has been very successful in educating and preparing students. Keeping staff energized by encouraging professional development and giving permission to take risks and run with new ideas helps keep things fresh and engaging for staff.