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ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

Susan W. Maxey

The Graduate School

Morehead State University

April 10, 2014

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPPORT SERVICES IN A GRADUATE ADVISING CENTER

Abstract of capstone

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
College of Education
at Morehead State University

By

Susan W. Maxey

Morehead, Kentucky

Committee Chair: Dr. Sam Wright, Professor

Morehead, Kentucky

April 10, 2014

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ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPPORT SERVICES IN A GRADUATE ADVISING CENTER

This capstone examined the differences in support services provided for undergraduate versus graduate students. From the research, a centralized advising system was designed and implemented for graduate students at a public state supported university in Kentucky to help students be more satisfied with their graduate school experience and increase graduation rates. In addition, a survey questionnaire was developed to determine customer satisfication with the core components of the graduate advising center, the capstone project. The components include: satisfication with support services, satisfaction with admissions processes, satisfaction with registration, and satisfaction with advisor services. It was determined that a majority of the graduate students enrolled in the fall, 2013, semester and who responded to the survey questionnaire were satisfied with the support services provided.

KEYWORDS: GRADUATE SUPPORT SERVICES, GRADUATE ADVISING, GRADUATE ADVISORS, GRADUATE STUDENT SUCCESS

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Candidate Signature

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Date

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPPORT SERVICES IN A GRADUATE ADVISING CENTER

By

Susan W. Maxey

Approved by

_____
Deborah Abell
Committee Member Date

_____
Carol Christian
Committee Member Date

_____
Sam Wright
Committee Chair Date

_____
David Barnett
Director of EdD Date

_____
Chris Miller
Department Chair Date

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DEDICATION

This capstone is dedicated to my supportive husband John. You were my sounding board who listened and offered suggestions for my research. To my wonderful sons, Dilan and Weston. May you always persevere and face your challenges with courage and wit.

In memory of my mother Doris Whitt who was the first in her family to attend college and paved the road for me. She instilled in me the value of a college education and that it would not always be easy, but that she had faith in me that I was strong enough to pull through whatever obstacle was in my path. Last but not least, to my Heavenly Father in whom all things are possible.

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What is the core of the capstone?

This capstone examined the differences in support services provided for undergraduate versus graduate students. Traditional undergraduate models of support address students who are physically located on campus and have the ability to schedule appointments and meet with program faculty on a one-to-one basis. These support structures are built on the premise that most students are enrolled full-time and can devote the time necessary to chart an educational plan for program completion as well as future employment goal setting in collaboration with an assigned advisor. These models provide on-going avenues for undergraduate students to seek and receive support and are provided safety nets that ensure improved student success, retention and higher graduation rates.

Systems for insuring success available to graduate level students are minimal at best in most higher education institutions. For the most part, graduate students have been chronically under-served. Higher education institutions can no longer afford to ignore the needs of these students or assume, because they are college graduates they do not require assistance. In this ever changing, global economy students are forced to re-invent their professional goals and aspirations. Higher education institutions can provide the avenues for pursuance of advance degress and additional certifications that make one more employable. In turn, colleges and universities must be prepared to help these students with their unique challenges and barriers as they re-enter college classes on a full-time or part-time basis.

According to Gonzales, Allum, and Sowell (2013) who authored the Council of Graduate Schools annual report, total graduate enrollment fell 2.3% between fall 2011 and fall 2012. This is the first time since fall, 2007 that enrollment has not increased. At the local level, graduate enrollment at Morehead State University fell 10% from fall 2012 to fall 2013. Our traditional methods do not appear to be making progress. We have to start thinking outside the "box." The market is customer driven; therefore we have to tailor programs to meet the market demand.

Of particular interest in this capstone is the number of graduate students who apply each year for graduation only to find out they have not met the minimal requirements for completion. Clearly, this indicates a mismatch in perception and reality. If graduate students are unaware of the program requirements for graduation and no pro-active institutional procedures are in place to notify students of deficiences, a break-down occurs.

According to Polson (2003), the typical graduate student requires rethinking and restructuring of student services. They have diverse needs that require multiple service providers, including individual online advisors, university-wide graduate schools and specialized campus student service providers. As was acknowledged by Polson (2003), graduate student demographics are as diverse as their lifestyles, values and attitudes. If higher education is to respond effectively to these students, traditional student services will need to be revised and extended and become untraditional.

Similarly, Bloom, Cuevas, Hall, and Evans (2007) found that graduate students have extensive outside the classroom responsibilities that make quality advising very important for them. They are more mature and more academically focused than they were as an undergraduate student.

Because they are not physically present on campus, it is important to notify graduate students of critical points in their program completion. They require assistance with registration, program evaluation review, fee payments, financial aid, library resources, and general advising about university policies and procedures. Faculty and staff are recommended to make use of all the many forms of social media to correspond with graduate students and use them as opportunities to advise as well as teach. Graduate students are busy professionals who take advantage of online and distance learning programs. At "Morehead State University 71% of all graduate students in the fall 2012 semester were enrolled exclusively in online classes" (T. Johnson, 2013, p. 10). They are more likely to be employed full-time with careers and extensive family commitments. Graduate students often must juggle time with their families, employers, coworkers, and friends to establish priorities, time commitments, and responsibilities.

Problem Statement

Limited research is available on graduate level support systems of advising that ensure graduate student success and completion rates. At Morehead State University (2013) there are 11 support programs to assist undergraduate students and two support programs for graduate students. At this state supported institution of

higher learning, the differences in support systems that are designed to assist undergraduate students versus graduate students are very evident. Graduate students do not have access to the same support system resources as undergraduate students. The two support programs that exist at MSU to assist graduate students include the Early Intervention Program and the recently created Graduate Advising Center.

The Early Intervention Program consists of reviewing each of the currently enrolled graduate student's degree audit checksheets. The program is utilized in the beginning of the fall, spring, and summer semesters. After approximately the fourth week of classes, a list of currently enrolled graduate students is requested from the Office of Institutional Research that includes first name, last name, student identification number, and preferred email address. The review is conducted by staff members in the graduate school to determine if the student has fallen below the required 3.0 GPA, needs to complete a course substitution/transfer form, or is eligible to apply for completion. If one of the conditions have been met, an email message is mailed to the student's preferred email account.

The second support program which began in January, 2013, is the Graduate Advising Center. The center is designed to improve graduate student academic achievement and success. The advising center facilitates students' transition to graduate school by serving as a liaison between graduate students and the academic colleges. The professional advisors meet one on one with students by appointment, drop in, telephone, and email. The objective of the advising center is to develop a roadmap for graduate student success as they pursue their academic and personal

goals at Morehead State University. The Graduate Advising Center offers the following services: personalized career and academic advising, development and implementation of an educational success plan, advise with the development of course schedules and assistance with registration. The staff assists with completion of required academic forms, facilitates navigation of the financial services process, and informs students of University resources and services.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the mixed methods study was to examine the different systemic approaches to successfully advise and support graduate students. Based on the research and best practice models, a centralized advising system was developed. The advising system is the capstone project named, the Graduate Advising Center. It emerged to assist graduate students at Morehead State University with support services. The graduate students receive support with advising, course availability and registration, deadline and scholarship notification, policy interpretation and assistance with program completion.

Research Questions

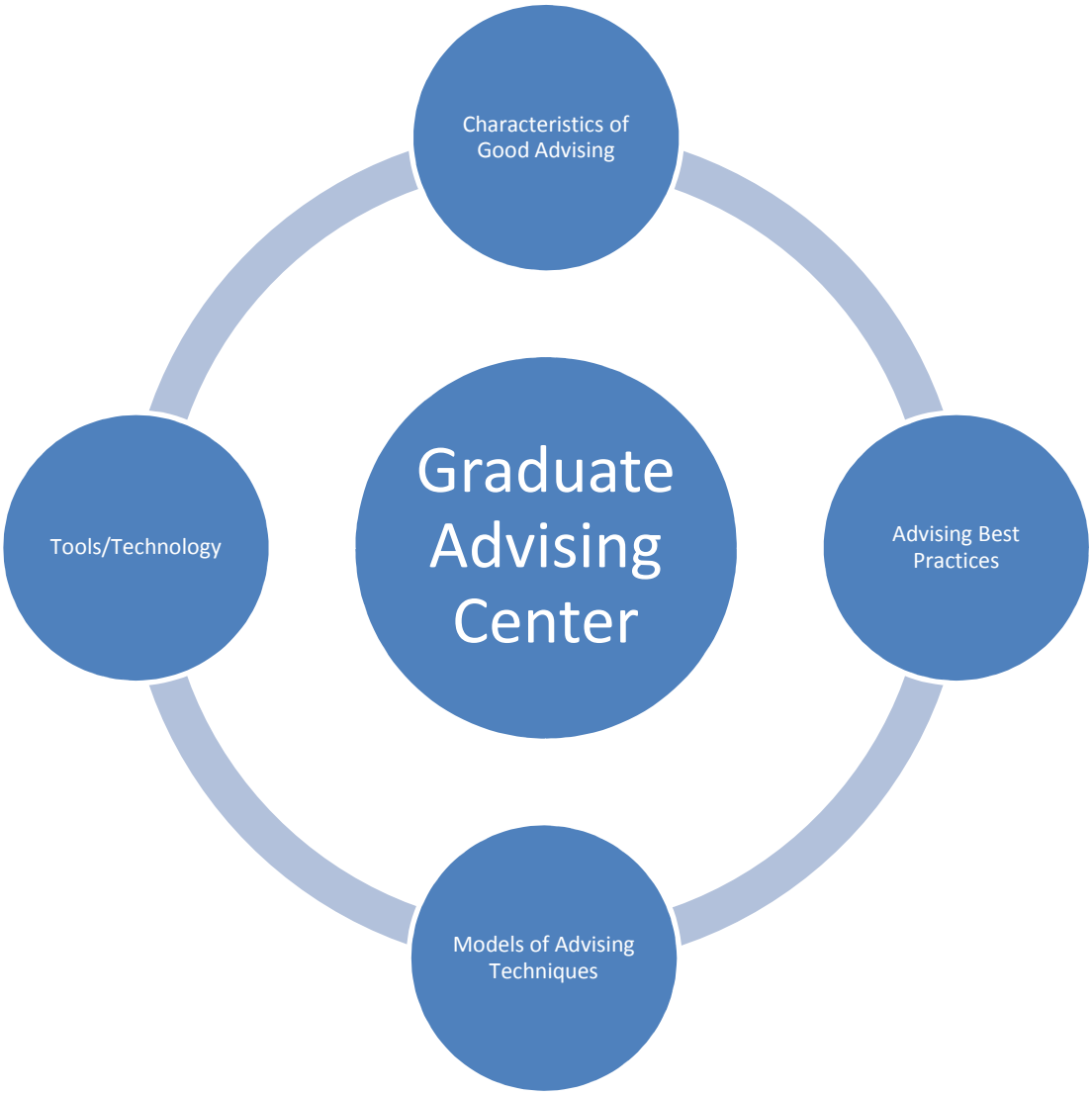
The two research questions of this capstone project are:

1. What advising and support services are currently available for graduate and undergraduate students in a selection of small public universities?
2. Do graduate students express satisfaction with support services provided as part of a newly developed Graduate Advising Center?

Review of Literature

The review of literature is based upon four areas of research: characteristics of good advisors/advising, advising best practices, models of advising techniques, and tools/technology. These four areas were used as the basis to form a centralized advising model to be used in the Graduate Advising Center in the Graduate School at Morehead State University. With the creation of the Graduate Advising Center the goal was to provide support to the graduate students and to ensure their satisfication with their graduate school experience and increase graduation rates of those students.

Conceptual Framework



Characteristics of Good Advising/Good Advisors

In addition to having a plan for a comprehensive graduate advising program, the capstone is meant to impact the skills and behaviors of graduate advisors. Vick and Furlong (2009) found that the common characteristics to be a successful advisor were strong communication skills, sound judgment, excellent problem solving skills, a good knowledge of university processes and being an advocate for students. Other characteristics of a good advisor described by Hughey (2011) included: genuineness and caring, strong listening skills, knowing when to use appropriate interventions, the ability to address change, and enhanced interpersonal relations skills. It was also determined that when advisors are more self-confident about their own skills and credibility, they are more prepared to nurture the success of students.

In a graduate student study by Schlosser, Knox, Moskovitz, and Hill (2003) it was found that what made graduate students dissatisfied with their advising relationship were advisors that were unapproachable and were not interested in the student as a person. Schlosser et al. (2003) also found that successful advisors were accessible and responded in a timely manner.

Likewise, Packard and Jeffers (2013) reported that students want their advisors to be knowledgeable of the institution's policies, be familiar with demographic trends, respond and be available when contacted and be resourceful. If advisors do not know the answer to a question, they need to be able to point the student in the right direction.

Bloom et al. (2007) found that graduate students can sometimes need more assistance than they did as an undergraduate student but the process to advise undergraduate students is not the same as advising graduate students. They found that graduate students need more individual support. The majority have already chosen their career paths. Graduate school is a method to further hone their skills and will most likely assist them in progression of career advancement. In their study, the following characteristics of graduate advisors were found to be the most helpful, "demonstrated care for students, accessibility, role models in professional and personal matters, and individually tailored guidance" (Bloom et al., 2007, p. 28)

According to Creeden (1990) there is a huge disparity between what advisors think their role is and what the student thinks the advisor should do. Advisors in his study felt they should be utilized for their expertise and professional credentials, not for incidentals like registration, dropping and adding a class, or for providing policy interpretation. The student's perception of good advising included the advisor's ability to get to know them personally. They also wanted assistance with course planning and brainstorming job and career opportunities. It was also discovered that students thought advisors were a secondary source for information. Their preferred method of information was from friends and printed information such as catalogs and brochures.

Recommendations from the study included development of clear guidelines for advisors and instituting an advisor handbook. Other suggestions were publishing "clear up-to-date guidelines for their majors, designation of special academic

advisors, and training paraprofessionals for dissemination of routine information" (Creeden, 1990, p. 35).

Once the key characteristics of good advising and good advisors have been identified, then the individual specifics of graduate program requirements need attention with an emphasis on program retention. The resounding characteristic of a good advisor was responding to emails and contacts in a reasonable timeframe. It was also evident that institutions need a set of advising guidelines and should provide training opportunities reported Creeden, (1990).

As was reported by Smith (2013), the university curriculum development process usually involves a set number of courses that leads to a degree. There is a university process where the courses that make up a program are developed through a curriculum proposal that incorporates an approval process. "A more expansive view of curriculum also includes pedagogical philosophies, co-curricular experiences, the culture of discipline, and what it means to be learned, proficient, and knowledgeable in a particular area" (Smith, 2013, p. 2). Because we take such care and time to craft a course or develop a new program of study, the same time and effort should be used to advise a student.

Advising Best Practices

According to Erlich and Russ-Eft (2011) historically, graduate student advising has not been assessed at the department level therefore causing gaps in graduate student program completion. The tenure and promotion process at most universities typically does not measure the faculty member's role in advising. It is a

decentralized process where more than one entity has responsibility for different parts. Scheduling takes place in one unit, academic progress in another and completion in yet another. Many times, the three do not communicate with each other.

Erlich and Russ-Eft (2011) wrote that student learning outcomes in the academic advising process should be used to measure and assess self-efficacy and advising program success. June (2011) reported that faculty at Beloit College established a task force to focus on how to push advising beyond the generic standards, noting that the advising role should be part of the tenure and promotion process, regularly assessed, and more than, "students lined up outside of their advisors office each semester to get guidance on what courses to take next" (June, 2011, p. 1). The task force developed language to implement in the faculty tenure and promotion review process. Part of the review process required submission of self-evaluations of how the faculty have helped students and advised them. The self-evaluation demonstrated how the faculty member helped "students connect with the mission, goals, programs, and resources of Beloit College, what advising material they've constructed or tweaked to make better, what assessment instrument they have used in advising and mentoring, and how they have responded to advising and mentoring challenges" (June, 2011, p. 1).

Campbell and Nutt (2008) wrote that when viewed as an educational process and done well, academic advising can play a critical role in connecting students with learning opportunities to foster and support their engagement. They found that

campuses are developing assessment plans for academic advising that identify what students are expected to learn as a result of participating in academic advising.

I. Johnson (1996) proposed that buddy programs and specialized support groups would benefit students and that faculty mentoring programs were very important tools for retention. He theorized that part of what is learned in graduate school is not cognitive, it is socialization to the values, practices, and attitudes of a discipline and university, and it transforms the student into a colleague. Loneliness and poor self-esteem often influence graduate students' decisions to leave the institution. Johnson explained that faculty advisors must assist students in choosing course work that meets their needs and interests without unnecessarily extending their programs.

Schwartz and Holloway (2012) pointed out that in the context of graduate education, in particular master's degree seeking students, their biggest influences and support systems lie within their professional ties and networks. They generally do not take face-to-face classes and therefore the opportunity for interaction must take place through email and other social media outlets. The other barriers for professor influence exist in the structure of graduate level programs that can usually be completed in a year or, at the most two years. In such a short time span the opportunity to provide contact and mentoring is hard to achieve. However, master's degree seeking students are generally professionals and practitioners who bring a lot of knowledge to the class and can assist the professor with keeping current and network-building for the participants in the class.

Lovitts and Nelson (2000) found that the single most important factor in student decisions to continue or withdraw from graduate school was the relationship with a faculty advisor. Students who complete their degrees are twice as likely to express satisfaction with their faculty advisors as are students who leave. Polson (2003) thought that considerable attention needed to be focused on socialization needs. When students felt part of the group they were more comfortable asking questions and were less likely to be intimidated by a professor's scholarly work. Socialization activities also provided opportunities for questions and answers and the mechanism to build upon advisor and student rapport. It was also a way for students to be kept in the loop of deadlines. It was identified that orientation programs could be used in a way to organize and to assist with academic and social transitions.

According to Bloom et al. (2007), advising graduate students is a major cornerstone to retention. If graduate institutions are to be successful in growing enrollment and retention, strategies must be implemented to train the graduate faculty and not assume that because faculty are experts in their field of study they will be experts at advising.

It was also reported by Polson (2003) that a lack of adequate mentoring and advising caused graduate students to have trouble completing the degree in a timely manner. Graduate education is less structured and more individualized than undergraduate education. It was noted that graduate students often have commitments that interrupt their educational process. They stop taking courses or stop their research and then a couple of years later re-enroll. During this absence,

policies and procedures are likely to change and the graduate student needs to be apprised of the changes and procedures.

In a study by de Valero (2001) of departmental factors affecting time-to-degree and completion rates, several recommendations resulted. It was highly recommended that a formal orientation and advising program from beginning to the end of the program be implemented and it was suggested that the orientation be part of an organized course. The topics would include: degree requirements, professional development, writing and publishing, and applying for grants. Another recommendation was to host periodic seminars to discuss issues related to the field. The seminars would give students and faculty time to socialize and discuss their research fields. Workshops where students could share their preliminary results, or concerns with the research they are conducting and the opportunity for feedback from the faculty and their peers was another recommendation. Additionally, de Valero thought that regular evaluation of the student's progress was beneficial. Finally, designing and implementing evaluation policies to continuously monitor departmental performance and plan actions to improve the success rates is crucial. Advance planning to implement a step-by-step or year-by-year plan would keep the students on the department's radar.

In a study by Schwartz and Holloway (2012) of the relationship between master's degree seeking students and teachers, they indicated students want a timely response to their emails. They are anxious for feedback and the quick turnaround is very important. Their first interaction with faculty is when assistance is sought out or

when comments from the professor suggest support when struggling. It was also determined that meaningful relationships with students are beneficial to both parties. It enhances the student's learning experience and renews the passion for the subject for the professor.

According to Teasley and Buchanan (2013), assessing the advising functions is one way to determine what is successful and what is not. They found that the instrument used to assess the advising outcomes is critical to analyzing the data. The only way for administrators to determine student expectations is to tailor an evaluative tool. The questions on the surveys should be indicative of where the advising took place, contentment level and satisfaction with support services offered.

Models of Advising Techniques

According to Barnes, Chard, Wolfe, Stassen, and Williams (2011), research indicates that many graduate students are not satisified with their past advising scenarios. Their research revealed advisors can be the most important support systems for graduate students. They reported research regarding the psychometric properties of graduate advising surveys, but an overwhelming amount of the research is devoted to dealing with undergraduate students. The studies that do deal with graduate students involve teaching and relationships with students in the traditional realm of face to face classes when interactions happen in person and not in the online arena. Additionally, research regarding advising that is specific to totally online programs is unavailable. The advising techniques for an online student are very different from the traditional fact to face interactions. Also, going forward and producing excellent

graduate student advising techniques will take more buy-in from the professors who often have a different definition of what a graduate advisor is. Advisors need to have accountability in order take the role seriously and be compensated for outstanding advising practice.

Advising in some models can be treated and developed a lot like teaching. Even though advising is similar to teaching it is also a service to the students on a college campus that is distinct from that of anything else, acknowledged Lowenstein (2005). In the case of teaching, there are steps to develop the curriculum, create student-learning outcomes, develop a timeline and implement a course syllabus. "If the methodical steps are used with advising, two possible models to be used include: prescriptive advising and developmental advising" (Lowenstein, 2005, p. 1).

The term prescriptive advising was coined by Crookston (1972). The model involves giving directives to students who then follow the command. Examples include giving the student a list of courses and then the advisor checks the student's schedule to ensure the directions were followed and that the student was able to register for the classes. According to Lowenstein (2005), once students are provided with assistance the first time, they are then expected to register the next time on their own using the tools the advisor has given them. This model can also be used by staff since a faculty member would not have to be the person to give the directives. It is a one directional flow of information. The automated check sheet can also be utilized and the need for an advisor is totally removed from the equation. However, for some students prescriptive advising is what they expect. This is especially true for graduate

students, who want to know what class to take next. They expect a prompt direct answer and do not necessarily need to use the opportunity to discuss career goals and aspirations. They have limited time and need real time answers for specific questions. These students do not require higher-level philosophical interactions with their advisor.

Developmental advising involves more than the transfer of information. Lowenstein stated, "It is an opportunity to enhance the student's personal development" (2005, p. 2). It is the advisor's responsibility to contribute to the student's growth. Some characteristics of a good teacher and advisor include being prepared and knowledgeable, and possessing a caring attitude. The advisor needs to be a good listener. The developmental advising model involves assisting with career advising and offering the analytical skills necessary to keep the student on track and using the time to teach independent thinking and self-sustainability. The advisor develops activities that encourage engagement and rapport (Lowenstein, 2005).

There are limited research studies involving graduate student advising but, it is possible to incorporate some strategies that are successful for undergraduate students into developing graduate advising support. Appreciative Advising is one method that could be used for advising and assisting graduate students. "Appreciative Advising is a reciprocal approach to advising where both the student and the advisor benefit and learn" (Bloom, Hutson, & Ye, 2008, p.13). The model has six major themes including: Disarm, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver, and Don't Settle. According to the authors Bloom, et al. (2008) when using Appreciative

Advising, program and professional advisors encourage positive interactions with questioning and active listening to make students comfortable. They work to create a safe learning environment in the Disarm phase. In the next phase, Discover, questions are more focused on learning about the abilities and strengths of the students. It is also a time to determine their interests and their passions. In the Dream step, the advisor assists students with developing career and life goals. To actualize dreams the Design step is followed. The goals and plans have been established, now it is time to set timelines and devote thought processes to the responsibility of achieving the goals. Next, in Deliver, the students are encouraged and supported as they implement their plans and goals. This is also a huge coaching opportunity for the advisor to show support by helping with refinement as the students' progress.

The final step in the Appreciative Advising model is Don't Settle and involves issuing challenges to the student and building self-esteem and confidence. By building confidence, the student is able to make sound decisions without their advisor's help and they become more self-sustaining.

Bloom et al. (2008) contended that when practicing Appreciate Advising there are many important key characteristics that advisors need to exhibit. It is important to let the student make the decisions about their goals and objectives. Advisors need to discuss pros and cons of decisions and help the students research their options. The final important characteristic of advisors is to stay informed about the latest research and technology.

Glennen (1975) was one of the pioneer's to introduce the model of Intrusive College Counseling. In the traditional models of advising the student seeks the counselor/advisor for assistance and intervention. In the Intrusive model the counselor seeks the advisee and develops proactive measures to help remedy consistently occurring problems. The techniques in the model involve being proactive instead of reactive. The researcher found that the tools were extremely helpful for student populations that were on probation or at-risk, but the methods could be used successfully on any student population.

Recently, Varney (2012) wrote that the term Intrusive Advising has been changed to Proactive Advising to be more reflective of the positive nature of the methods. The original motives to assist students before they ask for help have remained unchanged. Proactive advisors check student records at critical intervals in their graduate school tenure, notify the students about upcoming deadlines and anticipate roadblocks before they happen. Proactive Advising involves five key techniques for involving students in the advising process:

1. "Deliberate intervention to enhance student motivation.
2. Using strategies to show interest and involvement with students.
3. Intensive advising designed to increase the probability of student success.
4. Working to educate students on all options.
5. Approaching students before situations develop" (Varney, 2012 p. 1).

According to Varney (2012) the strategies can be used when developing a communication plan for online students, planning frequently asked questions on a website, and implementation of a graduate recruitment and retention plan.

Tools/Technology

For the part-time and online graduate student population, online support tools were created. These students may never set foot on campus and the majority of their classes are taught via the online delivery system of BlackBoard. Robins and Webster (2002) predict that the future of higher education is directly connected to the global-virtual university. With technology and social media, the borders are blurred and your location is not a factor in the opportunites that are available. In order for the traditional model of higher education to continue and be sustainable, it must incorporate online avenues side by side with the traditional ones. Students today have more choices than ever to pursue their advanced degrees. They want convenience, affordibility, and a direct approach to complete their degree. The new hot button word is "global." In Kentucky, according to Holliday (2013), the commissioner of education worked to revise the education reforms with the Unbridled Learning initiative. One of the goals was to ensure that high school graduates can compete in the global arena. The global initiative carries forward from high school to higher education.

For the fall, 2012 semester, the "majority of graduate students, 1,141 (78.9%), attended MSU as part-time students" (2012-2013 profile). For the fall, 2013 semester, the number increased to 83% of the graduate students that were registered

as part-time. The increase in enrollment numbers of part-time students demonstrate the need to support those students who are not traditional and do not attend school as full-time face-to-face graduate students.

Exter, Korkmaz, Harlin, and Bichelmeyer (2009) conducted a study to evaluate the sense of community in online programs. Eighty percent of the students surveyed worked full time. The graduate students reported satisfaction with individual interactions and reported as working professionals they have work and personal commitments which makes the online environment very inviting. The students also recorded that they had enough support and social networking through their employment. Some common reasons for the desire to enroll in the online environment were for career advancement and learning about the field from expert faculty members. Others viewed that there were benefits for future professional networking opportunities in the online model. For those who wanted a more personal sense of community, the class projects could lead to individual emails and in some cases face to face meetings, teleconferencing, chats, social networking sites, discussion forums and blogs. Some suggested improvements included offering a Skype session or other form of teleconferencing to kick off the start of the class to meet faculty and peers face to face. “Regular email newsletters, online colloquia, teleconference workshops, and virtual orientation sessions” (Exter et al., 2009, pg. 192) were other suggestions for improvement. The students recommended more frequent contact with their advisor to make up for the lower sense of community that is common in the online environment.

What started out as a method to explore the library service and space needs of graduate students at Oregon State University resulted in focus group findings that were outside of the library's realm. Rempel, Hussong-Christian, and Mellinger (2011) recruited focus groups to assist their librarians in determining the best use of space and resources to support the graduate student population. What they found was that graduate students required their assistance, especially online learners, because of the geographical limitations and the demands outside of the classroom. Graduate students want their library to be functional, to have easy-to-use equipment, to document delivery services, and to have library instruction on demand. They want space and online forums to connect with fellow researchers across campus. It was evident to the researchers that there was an uneven number of support services campus wide and departmentally that were offered to graduate students versus undergraduate students. They found that graduate students need a more general overview of campus services.

According to Rempel et al. (2011), focus group participants reported feeling isolated and suggested advisor listservs, subject library networks, and daily campus news email forums to meet other graduate students. Their requested technology needs were whiteboards and other basic office supplies. They voiced that they needed access to free printing and basic technology. Also requested, were satellite student lounges as well as improvements be made to the advisee/advisor relationship. The participants felt that advisors just do research and are out of touch about pertinent information about graduate school policies. Other suggestions included developing a

clearinghouse of research in order for graduate students to make connections with other researchers and including a database where examples could be reviewed. Development of a virtual graduate center to disseminate communication and information would also be helpful.

According to Varney (2012), Proactive Advising can be used to develop a communication plan for the online learner, part-time professional, and the full-time on-campus graduate student. Some strategies recommended included framing outreach activities, determining the frequency and mode of emails and timed news releases, targeting populations and message topics. Welcome messages from newly assigned advisors were suggested in addition to webinars created for online orientations.

Technology and social media such as Twitter and Facebook should be utilized to notify students of deadlines and up-coming opportunities for guidance. Emails can be used to reinforce the advisor/advisee relationship and build support to promote trust. It also gives students a "go to" person and the feeling they have someone to contact if they have questions (Varney, 2012).

In a recent report by Noel-Levitz, the most effective practices for attracting and enrolling master's students were maintaining, "Web pages with up-to-date information, follow-up by email to students with incomplete applications and open house and campus visits" (2012, pg. 7). Some other methods of technology that were ranked as very effective were faculty from the student's desired major contacting the admitted student with a welcome message. Ways to cause your institution to be the

top selection when using a search engine was an additional highly recommended process.

Hanover Research (2014) in January, 2014, released their Best Practices in Online College Application Systems. The best practices that were featured included: "simplicity, technical flexibility, security, and administrative efficiency" (Hanover Research, 2014, pg. 3). Recommendations included one to two page applications that only ask for the required information. A large percentage of students do not complete the application once it has begun, so if the questions are limited they are more likely to complete the form and submit it for consideration. The research also found that "apply now" buttons should be prominent and easy to find as well as access to frequently asked questions available as a drop box in the application feature. Because technology is available in multiple formats, the application needs to be accessible via smartphones, IPad, tablets, and various platforms.

Just as the application for admission must be available in current technology formats the advising of graduate students must use that same notification system. Advisors should utilize the BlackBoard delivery system for course content as well as notifying students of key information and resources.

Summary

According to the literature, the common themes of good advising include proactive notification systems, individual contacts, and tailored resources. The notification systems help with contacting students before they reach critical points in program completion. Possession of good communications skills help students feel

valued and build a good advising relationship. Student's want their advisor to be knowledgeable of the institution's practices so they can give sound advice regarding program requirements. Advisors need good training programs that keep them abreast of new policies and assist with best practices.

Some advising best practices include setting up assessment plans, response to email or other communications methods in a timely manner, buddy programs and support groups, mentoring and network building, and establishing good advising relationships. Other best practices include implementation of orientation programs for advisors and advisees.

Advising techniques recommendations included using the same time and preparation efforts used in developing and teaching a course to nurture the advising relationship. Utilizing support staff for course registration and processing paperwork to free up the advisor time to develop communication plans and enhance personal development. Review student records at critical intervals and notify students before a problem arises.

Use of tools and technology are the only methods for communication for totally online programs enrollees and for students who do not attend full-time and live in residence. Use of social media is recommended along with blogs and discussion boards. The majority of graduate students have a cell phone. Technology can assist with notifications and creations of listservs to keep them from feeling isolated. Students want convenience, tutorials for technology portals, and ways to connect with their fellow classmates.

When developing the Graduate Advising Center the Proactive Counseling model was used extensively. The graduate student checksheets were reviewed without requests, to determine when students get off track early in their graduate studies. The currently enrolled students are contacted by a Graduate Advising Center advisor to establish a contact person for help with policy and procedures. The currently enrolled students are emailed reminders of upcoming deadlines. All correspondence the students received began by stating our appreciation for their choice to attend MSU, to follow the Appreciative Advising model.

An online step-by-step video was created to instruct students about where to find their checksheet and how to register for a class, as well as development of an online orientation component added to the Graduate Advising Center website.

Who is the Capstone Meant to Impact?

The capstone is meant to specifically impact graduate completion and retention rates at Morehead State University. If students are satisfied with their graduate school experience, customer satisfaction of students will help promote and recruit others to the university. Student success that leads to program completion will improve graduation rates and help more students complete degrees and certifications within expected timeframes. The program completion in-turn helps save students both time and money.

Context

Morehead State University is a small, rural, public university located in the foothills of Appalachia. MSU is located in the town of Morehead, Kentucky with a

population of approximately 10,000 residents. The university began as a teacher's college and has a long history of educating public and private school teachers as well as school administrators. The total graduate enrollment averages 1,400 students per semester. The university offers 74 master's degree programs, five education specialist degrees, one doctoral degree program and 36 non-degree graduate certification programs. The university graduate school also offers 13 totally online graduate degree programs. Degree programs are housed in one of four colleges: Caudill College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, College of Business and Public Affairs, College of Education, and College of Science and Technology.

Why is a graduate advising center important to Morehead State University? Outlined below are examples of the numerous undergraduate advising opportunities, services and resources and the few graduate programs offered at Morehead State University. One can easily detect an inequality in the number of support services for graduate students. It is interesting to note, Morehead State University's graduate resources were greater than all other universities involved in this study. That information will be identified later in detail in this capstone.

Undergraduate Advising

At Morehead State University, each college has a professional advisor or advisors to assist undergraduate students with advising, registration, and retention. There are 11 programs designed to support undergraduate students including: Academic Recovery Program, Student Orientation, Advising and Registration (SOAR), New Student Days, Success Academy, First Year Seminar, Advising

Central, Retention Alert, AdvisorTrac, TudorTrac, Project Graduate, and Minority Retention programs (Morehead State University, 2013). The Academic Recovery Program is for undergraduate students who have been identified as needing assistance with study skills and tutoring to improve their overall academic performance. The criteria to qualify for additional assistance is based on the student's cumulative GPA and recommendations from the faculty and staff. Students in the program are eligible to use the tutoring and learning labs that are located in the library and offer services everyday including the weekend if necessary.

The Student Orientation, Advising and Registration (SOAR) program is an orientation program designed to provide an opportunity for new undergraduate students, or those that are transferring to the institution, an overview of the campus. Students are provided assistance with registration of classes, housing, financial aid, and financial services. The students also receive guidance with technology services and a tour of the facilities.

The New Students Days are a support program to introduce incoming freshman to the campus community and explore the various programs and services available. It is a three-day event that is also an opportunity for students who normally go home on the weekend to stay in Morehead and explore the area. There are social events scheduled each day to keep students interested as well as information gathering sessions about how to access your advisor and using the student information system.

In 2010, the Success Academy was implemented to give undergraduate students a head start on their college career. The program was designed to encourage students to enroll in classes the summer prior to the fall semester. The program was instituted to help students graduate on time and ease themselves into the college curriculum. The benefits of the program include: academic advising and early start of the college career, carefully monitored activities, tutor support, and a discounted tuition and housing rate. Students are accepted through an admission process into the program. They receive one-on-one advising and their schedules are carefully crafted to ensure success.

FYS 101- First Year Seminar is a required course of all undergraduate students. It is designed as an introduction to university life. Course instructors have great latitude in development of their individual course syllabi. For the fall, 2013 semester some descriptions and titles included: Chocolate and Other Survival Tools, Geography of Global Events, Online Culture: More Than Facebook, and Bounding Irrationality. Undergraduate students explore local, national, and global issues in the course. While in the course, students learn about university resources, policies and procedures as well.

In addition, a new support program has been developed and is titled Advising Central. With Advising Central students can access their academic advisor information, select from academic program options, review their academic profile, and schedule tutoring. Additional links to undergraduate curriculum maps, frequently

asked questions, and advising topics are also available. All of the support areas are located in one portal.

Retention Alert was developed as a way to improve the undergraduate retention rates by systemically implementing a process of monitoring, identifying, and ranking student retention issues. Some triggers of the alert are GPA issues, poor class attendance, and family or financial issues that may arise. If it becomes apparent that a student may leave school, the alert system can be utilized to provide support immediately and assist with getting the student back on track. Faculty and staff access an input area in the MyMorehead State portal where they enter the name of the student having issues and then select the type of problem such as, "low grade at midterm" or "non-academic issues." The report is received by a counselor in the Academic Advising and Retention Office who then creates a case file and number and deploys the appropriate relevant assistance to the student.

AdvisorTrac and TutorTrac are software programs that allow undergraduate students a quick way to schedule tutoring and advising appointments. For AdvisorTrac a menu appears and the student is directed to select the date, time, and preferred advisor. The actual meetings take place in the advisor's office. The process is the same for TutorTrac. The only difference is in the location. All tutoring is conducted in the university's library.

Project Graduate provides undergraduate students who have completed more than 80 credit hours incentives to come back to school and finish the degrees they

started. The support program provides individual advising, tuition assistance, and priority enrollment in classes.

Minority Retention support programs include individualized advising, tutoring, study groups and assistance with university policies and procedures. Included as part of the program is the Minority Leadership Caucus that gives students an opportunity to gain leadership experience and provide community participation.

Graduate Advising

The two support programs that exist at MSU to assist graduate students include the Early Intervention Program and the recently created Graduate Advising Center.

The Early Intervention Program consists of reviewing each of the currently enrolled graduate student's degree audit checksheets. The program is utilized in the beginning of the fall, spring, and summer semesters. After approximately the fourth week of classes, a list of currently enrolled graduate students is requested from the Office of Institutional Research that includes first name, last name, student identification number, and preferred email address. The review is conducted by staff members in the graduate school to determine if the student has fallen below the required 3.0 GPA, needs to complete a course substitution/transfer form, or is eligible to apply for completion. If one of the conditions have been met, an email message is mailed to the student's preferred email account.

The second support program which began in January, 2013 is the Graduate School Advising Center. The center is designed to improve graduate student

academic achievement and success. The advising center facilitates students' transition to graduate school by serving as a liaison between graduate students and the academic colleges. The professional advisors meet one on one with students by appointment, drop in, telephone, and email. The objective of the advising center is to develop a roadmap for graduate student success as they pursue their academic and personal goals at Morehead State University. The Graduate Advising Center offers the following services: personalized career and academic advising, development and implementation of an educational success plan, advise with the development of course schedules and assistance with registration. The staff assists with completion of required academic forms, facilitates navigation of the financial services process, and informs students of university resources and services.

One can easily detect an inequality in the number of support services for graduate students. It is interesting to note, Morehead State University's graduate resources were greater than all other universities involved in this study. That information will be identified later in detail in this capstone.

Summary

It is the intent of this capstone to develop an effective advising system through a Graduate Advising Center that improves graduate student success. Increased student success will hopefully enable students to attain advanced degrees and certification that will positively impact the individual, Kentucky's economy and, on a global perspective, the United States economy. A highly skilled workforce is needed to compete in the global market and in order for the United States to be competitive in

the global market it is essential that the workforce be educated. A quality graduate education requires highly skilled, innovative and creative workers. Undergraduate education builds the foundation of knowledge but graduate education plays a critical role and "provides students with advanced knowledge and skills that will secure our future intellectual leadership in the knowledge economy" (Wendler et al., 2010, p. 2). Collaborative programs and polices between industry, government and educational institutions are required.

According to Wendler et al. (2010) graduate education must be nurtured to be strong and is an investment in our future. Challenges for graduate preparation programs have been identified. Those efforts include improving completion rates, choosing the right students to admit to programs, and offering mentorships and opportunities outside the college curriculum to gain experience that is relevant to the workforce.

Graduate students come to MSU from a variety of institutions and a myriad of different backgrounds. Their composition is as varied as their need to further their education. The students come to obtain the graduate coursework necessary to enter professional programs and doctoral studies. They need the advanced degree to excel in their current profession and be promoted. They are professionals who are choosing to train for a second career to be more employable. They are educators who are mandated by the state of Kentucky to complete a graduate program within 10 years. Other characteristics include International students that comprise a small percentage of the enrollment and give those students an edge when they return home with a

degree from the United States. Finally, the enrollment is marked by life-long learners who take classes for enrichment and the joy of life-long learning.

A centralized advising center should focus on recruitment, advising at integral points, assuring a good match of students and advisors and implementing evaluation policies. Orientation programs need to be developed to assure socialization needs were met and that the graduate student gets all the support needed. Careful consideration of the most appropriate delivery system for the orientation program would also need to be developed. According to Polson (2003), rather than relying on exit surveys, advising centers should conduct ongoing student assessments throughout the graduate student's program completion and develop activities that communicate to students that their opinions matter and are very important.

Quality advising centers that incorporate many of the characteristics of the four bodies of research in this study; good advising, advising best practices, models of advising and tools/technology that improve advising, communication and support provide the systems that have the potential to better insure student satisfaction and student success.

How was the capstone project implemented?

This section describes the methodology, instruments and procedures used to collect and analyze data. A mixed methods approach was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the two research questions of this capstone.

This study used one instrument to collect the quantitative and qualitative data; The Student Satisfaction Survey. Additional archival documents were retrieved from undergraduate and graduate catalogs, bulletins, and handbooks of each university to determine the types of support programs offered to each population of students. The websites of each university were further examined to get a detailed description of their support programs and activities.

Procedures: Archival Documents

Results were determined by analyzing the existing archival information of the support programs offered to undergraduate and graduate students at five Kentucky regional post-secondary institutions including Morehead State University and five of Morehead State University's benchmark institutions. The five Kentucky regional institutions are:

- Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond Kentucky
- Morehead State University, Morehead, Kentucky
- Murray State University, Murray, Kentucky
- Northern Kentucky University, Newport Kentucky
- Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky

The benchmark institutions analyzed included:

- Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas
- Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, Arkansas
- The University of Central Missouri, Warrensburg, Missouri

- Clarion University of Pennsylvania, Clarion, Pennsylvania
- Delta State University, Cleveland, Mississippi

The initial sets of benchmarks were assigned to Morehead State University by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) in an effort to establish comparison institutions for goal setting and evaluation of progress on state-wide initiatives. "The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education is Kentucky's statewide postsecondary and adult education coordinating agency. The Governor appoints the Council members, including 13 citizens, one faculty member, and one student member; the Commissioner of Education is an ex-officio member." (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2013)

According to B. Patrick (personal communication, October, 2013) the benchmark associations were part of a funding distribution methodology for allocation of state appropriations for operating. The benchmarks were determined from a very comprehensive review of a large number of variables that were developed to profile Morehead State University. Some of the variables included data on institutional demographics, student characteristics, program offerings and likeness, budget similarities, Southern Association of College and Schools (SACS) classification, and economic indicators for our region. Those variables were used to statistically match Morehead State University with other universities across the United States that most closely matched our profile based on those data variables.

Procedure: Quantitative Data – Student Satisfaction Survey

Quantitative data were collected using the Student Satisfaction Survey. All Morehead State University full-time and part-time currently enrolled (fall, 2013) graduate students (N=1,288) were surveyed. The survey used a 5 point Likert scale rating with five questions rated; (1) Very Dissatisfied, (2) Dissatisfied, (3) Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied, (4) Satisfied, and (5) Very Satisfied. Quantitative data helped determine the satisfaction rate of currently enrolled graduate students and conclude if graduate students use the newly implemented Graduate Advising Center. The survey was also designed to assist graduate school administrators, graduate faculty, and advisors to assess how well support services components are performing in five categories considered essential to customer satisfaction. Those categories were:

Student Services Used

Satisfaction with Support Services

Satisfaction with Admissions

Satisfaction with Registration

Satisfaction with Advisor

To ensure all graduate students were represented rather than a sample of randomly selected graduate students, the survey was issued to all currently enrolled graduate students as of September 10, 2013. A data request was made to the Morehead State University, Office of Institutional Research for the list of qualifying graduate students. To qualify they had to be enrolled in the fall, 2013 semester. The

delimiters were: first name, last name, and preferred email address. The Office of Institutional Research staff queried the information from the Enterprise Resource Planning system, Ellucian Colleague, and a staff member emailed this researcher an Excel spreadsheet listing the names and preferred email addresses.

Next, the survey was created in the Content Management System with a direct link to the Graduate School individual website. On September 12, 2013, a letter of instruction (see Appendix A) with the website survey link was emailed to 1,288 currently enrolled graduate students in all graduate degree and non-degree programs. To keep from overloading the email server, the students were grouped in sets of 100 from the spreadsheet and the preferred address was pasted in the blind copy section of the email to maintain anonymity. On September 30, 2013, a follow up email (see Appendix C) was sent to the same list of currently enrolled graduate students using the same process of sets of 100 with a deadline of October 4, 2013, to complete the survey. The survey and link to the survey were removed from the website at 4:30 pm on October 4, 2013.

The survey was conducted online using the Content Management System that is part of the Morehead State University Web interface. By using an online medium, the survey could be completed quickly and submitted to the principal investigator's email account. The survey was embedded in the Graduate School website that was created specifically for the survey, using the Graduate School mastiff and static content.

Procedure: Qualitative Data – Student Satisfaction Survey

Qualitative data were collected on the Student Satisfaction Survey through an open response portion of the survey (see Appendix B). The one open response question inquired: What types of programs or services would be helpful? Comments were recorded by the author of this capstone. Patterns and recurring themes of responses were noted to inform the researcher of programs and services the students deemed beneficial.

Why were this capstone and related startegies selected?

As a result of this review of literature, the researcher of this study elected to begin the MSU Graduate Advising Center by incorporating a Phase I of the center. Phase I of the new Graduate Advising Center included the implementation of a proactive counseling approach. Modeling the Proactive Counseling approach from the review of literature, all currently enrolled graduate students received a welcome email (see Appendix D) with "go to" information on their Graduate Advising Center advisor. The assigned Graduate Advising Center advisor also reviewed the program evaluation for possible problems and notified the students periodically through the semester of important deadlines and program specific information (see Appendix E). Graduate students checksheets were reviewed to determine when students get off-track early in their graduate studies. Off-track students are contacted by a Graduate Advising Center advisor to establish their role as contact person for help with policy and procedures. The currently enrolled students are emailed reminders of upcoming deadlines. All correspondence the students receive began by stating our appreciation

for their choice to attend MSU, mirroring the Appreciate Advising model from the literature review.

As suggested in the review of literature, the Graduate School maximized the use of technology in totally revising the website to state-of-the-art, user friendly features that also included market researched specific recruitment targets. Profiles and features were added in addition to a www.moreheadstate.edu/gradschool landing page.

Further utilizing technology, a Graduate School feature video debuted on the university's home Web page with locations also available on the Graduate School website and archived on the Internet site YouTube. A graduate video was developed that emphasized the services offered by the Graduate Advising Center and introduced the new director. Twenty-first Century learning tools included Twitter accounts and a Facebook page was established to assist students and advisors with social network advising. Electronic sites were developed to publicize key deadlines and provide graduate students with information on admission and program completion in a timely manner.

Incorporating best practices from the review of literature, the Graduate Advising Center advisors made personal contact with graduate students who had been enrolled in the fall term who had not registered for the spring term. Inquiries were made as to barriers hindering continued enrollment. Needed guidance and assistance for program completion was provided to graduate students who were in jeopardy of their classes being dropped because they had not selected a tuition payment plan.

Assistance was also provided on navigating registration and problem solving mechanisms to ensure students remained registered for their courses or gain admission to the university.

Building on the models of advising techniques, advisors are expected to meet one-on-one with students by appointment, drop in, telephone, and email. Advisors help develop a roadmap for graduate student success as students pursue their academic and personal goals at Morehead State University. Additional resources provided by the Graduate Advising Center include the following services: personalized career and academic advising, development and implementation of an educational success plan, advise with the development of course schedules and assistance with registration. Center staff assist students with completion of required academic forms, facilitating navigation of the financial services process, and serves to inform students of university resources and services.

For the promotion of strong communication from the university to the student, the first Graduate School newsletter "The Grad School Review" (see Appendix F) was launched on September 4, 2013, to the college deans, department chairs, graduate faculty members, and currently enrolled graduate students. The information in the newsletter included new initiatives, policy and procedural changes and newsworthy events to keep the graduate community abreast of graduate school issues.

From the Graduate School website an online graduate student orientation was developed with answers to frequently asked questions and a step by step registration

and account access video was produced. Also developed on the Website was a graduate student campus visit link to schedule campus tours.

Resources were provided to graduate students through a partnership with ProQuest. This company offers a repository for digital dissertations and theses held by the Library of Congress. MSU student research will now be indexed and searchable for global inclusion.

When was the capstone implemented?

The Graduate Advising Center, the outcome of the capstone was developed in the summer, 2012 and implemented on January 2, 2013 when Morehead State University had reopened from the fall break. The design and implementation of the Graduate Advising Center was to facilitate graduate student enrollment, progress, and program completion. The purpose of the accompanying research study was to gain a better understanding of the types of student support available to graduate students at MSU and in other universities similar in nature to MSU. The research provided evidence that graduate students do not have access to the same support resources as undergraduate students. An additional purpose of the research was to determine satisfaction of MSU graduate students with various types of student support. The research was to determine satisfaction of MSU graduate students with various types of student support. The research helped clarify the types of problems that students encounter which informed the continuing development of systemic support systems within the MSU Graduate School.

Impact of the Capstone

Data Analysis and Results – Archival

As noted in Table 1 of the benchmark institutions, each institution recorded more undergraduate support programs than graduate support programs. The range of undergraduate support programs was from three to eight with Angelo State University reporting the most undergraduate support programs with a total of eight and Delta State University offering the least with three.

Table 1

Benchmark Institutions

	Undergraduate Support Programs	Graduate Support Programs
Angelo State University	8	1
Arkansas State University	5	1
The University of Central Missouri	6	1
Clarion University of Pennsylvania	4	1
Delta State University	3	1

According to Angelo State University (2013), the undergraduate programs offered included: Fresh Start, Tutoring Center, and Study JAM. In addition, they offered SMART online, SMART tutor, Writing Center, Freshman College and First Year Experience.

Delta State University offered the fewest number of undergraduate support programs with a total of three. Their programs included a study skills program, summer development, and tutoring.

According to Arkansas State University (2013) the students were offered the following undergraduate support programs:

- New Student Orientation program
- Leadership Program/Center
- First Year Studies
- Early Alert

At University of Central Missouri (2013) the following six undergraduate support programs were offered:

- Advising Center
- Writing Center
- College of Education advising center
- New Student Orientation
- Student Success Center
- Week of Welcome (WOW)

Clarion University of Pennsylvania (2013) offered the following:

- Tutoring Center
- Learning Skills Lab
- Summer Orientation and Registration Program

- Writing Center

All the benchmark institutions had one support program for graduate students. For students at Angelo State University (2013) the only graduate support program listed on the website or catalog was the Educator Preparation Information (EPI) center for education students. The program serves as a guide to graduate students who want to pursue a career in the education field.

Arkansas State University (2013) offered the A-State Graduate Page. This is a portal where graduate students can login and tailor their content for specific news, events, and track their application status. At Central Missouri State University (2013), the graduate school offered a Graduate Student Orientation program for their graduate students. A Graduate Student Orientation program was the lone support program offered to graduate students at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. Finally, Delta State University offered a graduate student newsletter to support graduate students in their educational endeavors.

As noted in Table 2, when compared with the other Kentucky regional institutions of higher education, Morehead State University (2013) recorded the most undergraduate support programs with a total of 11. Those undergraduate support programs include the following: Academic Recovery Program, Student Orientation, Advising and Registration (SOAR), New Student Days, Success Academy, First Year Seminar, Advising Central, Retention Alert, AdvisorTrac, TudorTrac, Project Graduate, and Minority Retention programs.

Table 2

Kentucky Regional Universities

	Undergraduate Support Programs	Graduate Support Programs
Eastern Kentucky University	9	1
Morehead State University	11	2
Murray State University	10	1
Northern Kentucky University	8	1
Western Kentucky University	7	1

Western Kentucky University (2013) recorded the lowest number of undergraduate support programs with seven. The programs were:

- MASTER Plan Orientation Program
- Academic Transitions Program (ATP)
- One Day Orientation
- Advisor Trac
- Advisor of Excellence Program
- Exploratory Program
- MyMajors
- Master Advisor Certification Program.

Northern Kentucky University (2013) offered the following eight undergraduate support programs:

- Tutor Trac
- First Year Programs
- Writing Program
- Student Achievement Center
- Learning Experience and Parenting (LEAP)
- Early Alert
- Student Support Services (SSS)
- Welcome Wednesday.

Eastern Kentucky University (2013) offered College Readiness, First Step to Success, and Freshman Orientation. In addition a Transfer Orientation and Colonel Camp were offered. Other support programs included: New Student Days, Peer Mentors, Student Success Seminar, and Multi-Culture Programs.

Murray State University (2013) offered:

- Racer Week
- Emerging Scholars
- Connected
- Academic Achievement Program
- FLY (Find the Leader in You)
- Study Tables
- Multi-Cultural Programs

In a comparison of support programs for graduate students, Morehead State University accommodates graduate student support via an Early Notification System. In addition, the recently implemented Graduate Advising Center which served as the central portion of this capstone project is also now available.

Eastern Kentucky University (2013) offers one mode of assistance to graduate students in the form of a graduate student handbook. Northern Kentucky University offers an online open house with a general list of programs and contact information. A checklist of dates and deadlines is the program of assistance available at Murray State University. At Western Kentucky University (2013) the graduate school offers a graduate Blog on Facebook to assist their graduate student population.

Additional archival data revealed Morehead State University's graduate student completion rates. In Table 9 below, data were compiled from the last five years of the students who applied to complete their degree. The first column is the semester/year the graduate student applied to graduate. The next column labeled "Applied" is the total number of students who applied to graduate, the third column labeled "Graduated" is the total numbers of graduate students who applied to graduate and were able to graduate. The next column labeled "% that did graduate" is the percentage of the graduate students who completed and graduated from their graduate degree program. The last column labeled "% that did not graduate" is the percentage of the graduate students who applied to complete but were unable, due to a deficiency. It is a goal of this capstone to create an advising center that better informs students in a proactive manner on graduation requirements. Too many students

believe they are ready to graduate, apply for graduation and then find out that all program requirements have not been met.

Each semester when graduate students at Morehead State University complete the application for graduation, the Director of the MSU Graduate School compiles the student's information on an Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet includes the student's identification number, first and last name, the program they are completing, date they are graduated and the reason they are unable to graduate. The most common reasons vary from not scheduling the exit exam, not completing a course requirement, not successfully completing an exit exam, and not meeting the exit GPA of 3.0. The incomplete records are one indication of weak academic advising and ineffective support services.

The highest percentage to graduate was in the fall of 2010 with 82%. The lowest percentage to graduate was in summer I, 2013 with 37%. For the five year period a total of 3,116 applied, 2,192 graduated, 70% did graduate, and 30% did not graduate.

Table 9

Graduate Student Completion Rates

Semester/Year	Applied	Graduated	% that did Graduate	% that did not Graduate
Summer 2009	209	153	73%	27%
Summer I 2009	108	56	51%	49%
Summer II 2009	132	85	64%	36%
Fall 2009	118	95	80%	20%
Spring 2010	171	125	73%	27%
Summer I 2010	113	63	55%	45%
Summer II 2010	157	117	74%	26%
Fall 2010	162	137	84%	16%
Spring 2011	194	136	70%	30%
Summer I 2011	118	47	39%	61%
Summer II 2011	163	95	58%	42%
Fall 2011	170	143	85%	15%
Spring 2012	233	179	76%	24%
Summer I 2012	60	39	65%	35%
Summer II 2012	126	85	67%	33%
Fall 2012	190	157	82%	18%
Spring 2013	246	187	76%	24%
Summer I 2013	97	36	37%	63%
Summer II 2013	126	85	67%	33%
Fall 2013	223	172	77%	23%
Total	3,116	2,192	70%	30%

Because the rate of completers varied so much, it was speculated that there was a breakdown in communication to the students. Why did students think they were ready to graduate? How could the process be improved to inform them about

key points? By developing a graduate advising center, each graduate student receives a professional advisor who is employed on a 12- month contract and has regular office hours of 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. The center staff also has the ability to offer assistance and to register students for open courses. These services and resources can serve as a check and balance system of communication in order that students can correct any deficiencies or missing pieces.

Data Analysis and Results – Quantitative Student Satisfaction Survey

The quantitative results of the Student Satisfaction Survey are reported in this section. Of the 1,288 graduate students who were emailed the questionnaire, 264 graduate students responded yielding a 20% response rate. The total number of responses varied per question because not all respondents responded to all questions.

In Table 3, the results from question one on the survey "Which of the following graduate student services have you used?" is summarized. A total of 264 graduate students answered this question with most students (174 respondents = 71%) reporting they "Did not use any support service." Of the 90 students who reported using a support service, most reported using the graduate advising center (17%). This was followed by use of Facebook (9%), online orientation (8%) and Twitter (1%).

Table 3

Question 1: Which of the following graduate student services have you used?

Type of Service	n (% of total respondents)
Did not use any support service	174 (71%)*
Facebook	24 (9%)
Twitter	3 (1%)
Graduate Advising Center	42 (17%)
Online Orientation	21 (8%)

*Because of rounding, percentages may not total 100%

Table 4 displays the responses to question two "If you used a support service, how satisfied were you with the support services provided to graduate students?" A total of 233 graduate students responded to this question. Most respondents (159 at 65%) reported that they did not use any support service. This response was not used as a factor in calculating the results of those who did use a support service. The categories were converted to a 5 point Likert scale rating with five questions rated; (1) Very Dissatisfied, (2) Dissatisfied, (3) Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied, (4) Satisfied, and (5) Very Satisfied. Graduate students responded that they were satisfied (44%) with the support services provided to them. A total of 31% were very satisfied with support services. An additional 14% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 5% were dissatisfied and 4% were very dissatisfied. The Likert scale mean and median of the respondents were 3.93 and 3 respectively with the mode a 4 and standard deviation 1.02.

Table 4

Question 2: If you used a support service, how satisfied were you with the support services provided to graduate students?

	Likert Equivalent	Number and Percent Responded	
Very Satisfied	5	23	(31%)
Satisfied	4	33	(44%)
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	3	11	(14%)
Dissatisfied	2	4	(5%)
Very Dissatisfied	1	3	(4%)

Note: n=74, M=3.93, Mdn=3, Mo=4, SD=1.02

“How satisfied were you with the admission process?” was the survey question number three shown in Table 5. The categories were converted to a 5 point Likert scale rating with five questions rated; (1) Very Dissatisfied, (2) Dissatisfied, (3) Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied, (4) Satisfied, and (5) Very Satisfied. A total of 245 graduate students responded to the question. Ratings of 46% were satisfied with the admissions process. Very satisfied (38%) were next, followed by 11% neither satisfied or dissatisfied and last was dissatisfied at 3%. The mean of the respondents for the survey question was 4.2, the median was 3 the mode was 4 and standard deviation was 0.83.

Table 5

Question 3: How satisfied were you with the admission process?

	Likert Equivalent	Number and Percent Responded	
Very Satisfied	5	93	(38%)
Satisfied	4	113	(46%)
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	3	28	(11%)
Dissatisfied	2	9	(3%)
Very Dissatisfied	1	2	(.008%)

Note: n=245, M=4.2, Mdn=3, Mo=4, SD=0.83

Survey question number four is displayed in Table 6, "How satisfied were you with the registration process?" A total of 242 graduate students answered this question. A total of 41% responded that they were satisfied with the registration process. For the very satisfied response, 40% selected this answer. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied response was 11% followed by dissatisfied (5%) and very dissatisfied at (1%). The categories were converted to a Likert scale equivalent with very satisfied equaling a 5 and very dissatisfied equaling a 1. The mean was 4.1, the median 3, the mode was 4 and standard deviation was 0.91.

Table 6

Question 4: How satisfied were you with the registration process?

	Likert Equivalent	Number and Percent Responded	
Very Satisfied	5	98	(40%)
Satisfied	4	100	(41%)
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	3	28	(11%)
Dissatisfied	2	13	(5%)
Very Dissatisfied	1	3	(1%)

Note: n=242, M=4.1, Mdn=3, Mo=4, SD=0.91

For survey question number five reflected in, Table 7, 242 graduate students responded to the question "How satisfied are you with your current advisor services?" A total of 88 students (36%) responded that they were very satisfied with their current advisor services. The next highest rating was 30% for those that were satisfied. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied response was 21% followed by dissatisfied (9%) and very dissatisfied at (2%). The categories were converted to a Likert scale equivalent with very satisfied equaling a 5 and very dissatisfied equaling a 1. The mean score was 3.9, the median was 3, the mode was 5 and standard deviation was 1.09.

Table 7

Question 5: How satisfied are you with your current advisor services?

	Likert Equivalent	Number and Percent Responded	
Very Satisfied	5	88	(36%)
Satisfied	4	72	(30%)
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	3	52	(21%)
Dissatisfied	2	23	(9%)
Very Dissatisfied	1	7	(2%)

Note: n=242, M=3.9, Mdn=3, Mo=5, SD=1.09

Data Analysis and Results – Qualitative Student Satisfaction Survey

Question number 6 summarized in Table 8, asked "In your opinion, what types of programs or services would be helpful to graduate students? A total of 91 (34%) graduate students left a comment on the satisfaction survey. Comments ranged from dissatisfaction with their advisor to wanting more classes offered traditionally in the face-to-face mode. The comments were grouped by category and are listed below in Table 8.

Table 8

Question 6: In your opinion, what types of programs or services would be helpful to graduate students?

	Number and Percent Responded	
More Services Offered	24	(26%)
Dissatisfaction with Advisor	20	(21%)
Orientation	14	(15%)
Satisfied	13	(14%)
Internships/Organizations	10	(10%)
Dissatisfied	5	(05%)
More Communication	3	(03%)
Prefer Face to Face Classes	2	(02%)

Note: n=91

A total of 24 (26%) of the graduate students commented that they needed more information on the support services offered to them. Many commented that they did not know Morehead State University offered a Graduate Advising Center and did not know what the services provided entailed. The students also stated that they needed email alerts and timelines regarding deadlines.

Dissatisfaction with their advisor was listed by 20 (21%) of the graduate students who completed the survey question. “Advisors don’t answer emails or return telephone calls,” is an example of open response comments. Graduate students

suggested introductory contact is made when a student is assigned an advisor. Students also expressed the need for advisors to be up-to-date on the various program requirements.

A total of 14 (15%) of the graduate students made a comment that they would like to see an orientation program established. Some requested that the orientation be face-to-face and some listed that an on-line version would be very helpful. Students suggested the following be included in the orientation; introduction to library services, BlackBoard usage, career services, and where to find the needed resources to be successful at MSU.

Thirteen students (14%) were satisfied with their experience thus far and did not make any suggestions of programs or services. "The services provided are sufficient, no additional services needed." "I really like the online classes," and "I don't have any complaints so far," were indicative of patterns of responses.

Graduate students commented a total of 10 times (10%) that internships and graduate student organizations would be helpful. Internships could lead to job placement were some of the comments that were made as well as graduate clubs and organizations like undergraduate students have could help with social networking and support.

A total of 5 (.05%) graduate students left comments that they were dissatisfied. Customer service was a concern as well as feedback in courses. Not being informed in a timely manner on requirements for program completion were also complaints that led to graduate student dissatisfaction.

More communication was a suggestion made by 3 (.03%) of the respondents. It was suggested that improvements be made to financial aid correspondence as well as admission processes. Technology issues rounded out the comments that were received for the comments section of the survey.

Two (.02%) of the respondents commented that face-to-face classes would be helpful to graduate students. Students commented certain subject areas are easier to comprehend in a face-to-face medium as well as the personal preference to take a physical class as opposed to an online class.

Findings

Archival Findings

Each benchmark institution recorded more undergraduate support programs than graduate support programs. The range of undergraduate support programs was from three to eight with Angelo State University reporting the most undergraduate support programs with a total of eight and Delta State University offering the least with three. All benchmark institutions had one support program for graduate students. A comparision of the Kentucky regional universities resulted in undergraduate students being offered a range of seven support programs at Western Kentucky University to 11 support programs being offered to undergraduate students at Morehead State University. Morehead State University offered the most graduate support programs with two and the remaining four instiutions offered one each.

Quantitative Student Satisfaction Survey Findings

In this study 1,288 graduate students were sent via email a six item survey. Of the 1,288 graduate students who were emailed the questionnaire, 264 graduate students responded yielding a 20% response rate. The majority of students reported not using any support services 159 (64.63%). But those who did use support services most reported using the graduate advising center (46%). Fewer students used Facebook and online orientation and almost no students used Twitter. Students who used support services reported being satisfied or very satisfied with those services. In addition to general satisfaction with support services, most students were satisfied or very satisfied with the admissions process, class registration and help from their advisor.

Qualitative Student Satisfaction Survey Findings

Of the 1,288 graduate students who were sent via email the six item survey, 91 responded to question number six. The question asked "In your opinion, what types of programs or services would be helpful to graduate students?" The majority or 26% wanted more services offered to graduate students. The smallest number of respondents or two stated in the comments that they prefer face-to-face classes.

Limitations of the study

All studies have limitations. The following are limitations inherent in this capstone project:

1. Inability of the researcher to verify if one user completed more than one survey. This would impact accuracy of the data.

2. Data were collected from a limited number of similar demographic regional and national benchmark institutions.
3. The student survey was administered to one rural institution, MSU. Results may differ if the survey was administered to multiple institutions in various settings.
4. There was limited diversity within the student population surveyed. Students at MSU, the one, rural institution surveyed is predominantly of Caucasian decent.
5. A greater number of students at MSU are from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Many students are first generation college students. The "social capital" afforded to students who have parents who have previously graduated from college and or completed graduate school may warrant a greater need for a Graduate Advising Center at MSU compared to other regional areas or other institutions. This may skew generalization of the impact of the study.
6. Confidentiality. Although participants were instructed that their information was confidential, some graduate students may have elected not to participate in completing the survey in fear their identity would be tied to their responses.
7. There was no concrete way to know if a survey was misguided in reaching the intended email inbox. This would change the percentage of returns.

8. Archival information from similar demographic national benchmark institutions and the regional universities involved in this capstone may not have the most current data in the published information that was reviewed.

Reflections

Implications of the capstone

This capstone project will positively impact MSU graduate students by providing effective graduate resources, support services and information to help graduate level students be more successful in completing degrees or certifications that can further advance their career. It is a goal of this researcher to continue developing a longitudinal study on the impact of this newly developed Graduate Advising Center in order to better inform the MSU Graduate School of what works, what services and resources are needed and what needs to be eliminated or refined.

This capstone can inform other universities of the need for offering more graduate level services and provide them with a review of the literature in support of such programs. If this capstone initiates discussion and leads other universities to do self-examination of their existing programs to make improvements, this project will have an unintended, positive outcome on other institutions.

With regard to future research, the author of this capstone, in projecting forward, will examine each phase of services and resource offered with a follow-up survey and collection of data to determine the impact of the services provided. It is expected that this capstone will become a living document with continued studies on

the impact of this center and the services and resources offered in promoting student success in improving graduate degrees, certifications and completion rates.

Capstone Project

The foundation for the Graduate Advising Center was developed in July, 2012. Discussions were taking place on the campus regarding the possibility of instituting a centralized advising system in the four colleges for undergraduate students. It was realized that the same model could and should be established to benefit graduate students. Many undergraduate models were researched. The components regarding assistance to distance learning students were extracted due to a large number of graduate students utilitizing the online programs and classes.

The center was designed to improve graduate student academic achievement and success. The advising center facilitates graduate students' transition to graduate school by serving as a liaison between them and the academic colleges. The professional advisors meet one-on-one with students by appointment, drop in, telephone, and email. The objective of the advising center is to develop a roadmap for graduate student success as they pursue their academic and personal goals at Morehead State University.

After streamlining the graduate advising center's structure, the job description for the Graduate Recruitment and Retention Coordinator was developed by this researcher and approved by the Human Resources office.

Next, meetings were held with the Provost at Morehead State University to discuss plans for the position and the graduate student need for assistance and

support. The role of directing the graduate student advising center was discussed in addition to the services that the new center would provide. The Provost then approved the position funding. The next step was to submit the paperwork to request a job search be initiated. There were five candidates interviewed for the position. The final selection was made and the person chosen was scheduled to start the position of Graduate Recruitment and Retention Coordinator on January 2, 2013.

Once the coordinator was in place plans were developed for online tools, social media strategies were created and orientation programs were developed. Next, the Graduate Advising Center physical office was created in an office area in the Graduate School located in 701 Ginger Hall on MSU's main campus. Tables and chairs were made available for a study center in addition to a laptop computer that is available for graduate student use to complete the online application, register for graduate courses, access their student records, and submit assignments.

The next step to implement the Graduate Advising Center was to establish a presence on the graduate school website. An icon was created and several pages were devoted to information about the services available from the Graduate Advising Center. Also implemented were state of the art user friendliness features and market research specific recruitment targets. Profiles and features were added in addition to a "gradschool" landing page. The website was created to continue to support graduate student recruitment and retention initiatives as well as continued graduate faculty support resources.

The Morehead State University videographer filmed the director of the center giving a welcome message in addition to instructions for registering for a class, accessing student records, and locating the graduate student check sheet or evaluation. The video emphasized the services offered by the Graduate School, introduced our new Recruitment and Retention Coordinator and featured graduate student testimonials. The orientation is divided into three categories: registration information, student resources, and links and contacts. There is also a section for frequently asked questions that will regularly be updated. Students may schedule a campus tour, locate the next recruitment event, and request more information.

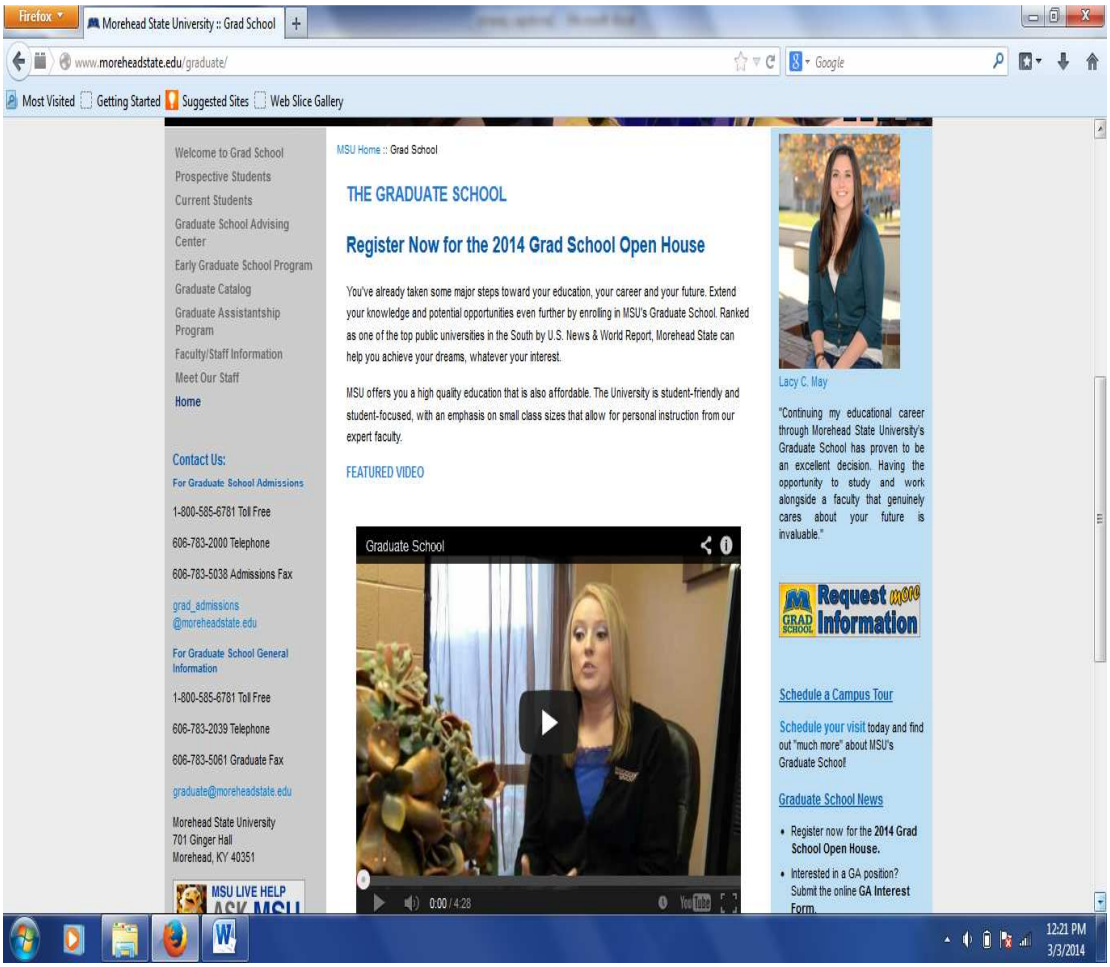
Once the support tools were developed, an email campaign was sent to the currently enrolled student email accounts notifying them of the Graduate Advising Center and listing the services that are provided. The social media sites Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn were established as well to assist with social network recruiting. The sites are used to publicize recruitment events, announce key deadlines and provide graduate students with information on admission and program completion. A new recruitment brochure was developed and printed for the spring recruitment season and the totally online graduate programs were highlighted. In addition, graduate success stories were featured and important tools for admission were included.

A flyer was also developed and it will be inserted in each newly admitted graduate student's admission packet of information that is mailed. The director of the center is also assigned as the professional advisor to each graduate student. Every

newly admitted graduate student is assigned an academic advisor and a professional advisor. This role is explained in the official admission letter with both advisors' contact information listed. Some retention activities include checking each student's evaluation in a process that is called Early Intervention. The director also travels to other institutions for career and graduate school days, makes class presentations, and serves in the role as a graduate student recruitment and retention coordinator. In that role the coordinator is responsible for Morehead State University's graduate recruitment and retention plan and major marketing initiatives.

The following URL location www.moreheadstate.edu/graduate details the website and the newly designed functions of the Graduate Advising Center.

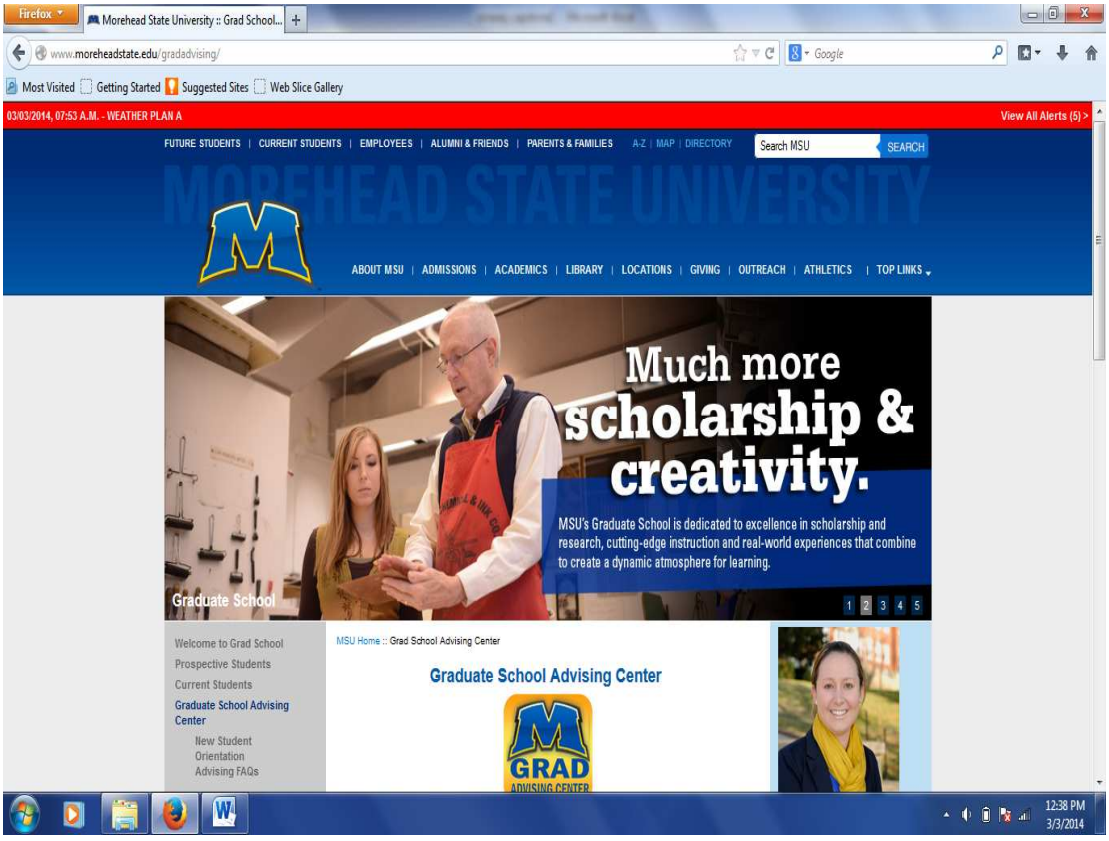
The landing Webpage features an introduction from Carlie Preece the Director of the Graduate Advising Center. When a student clicks on the video feature they

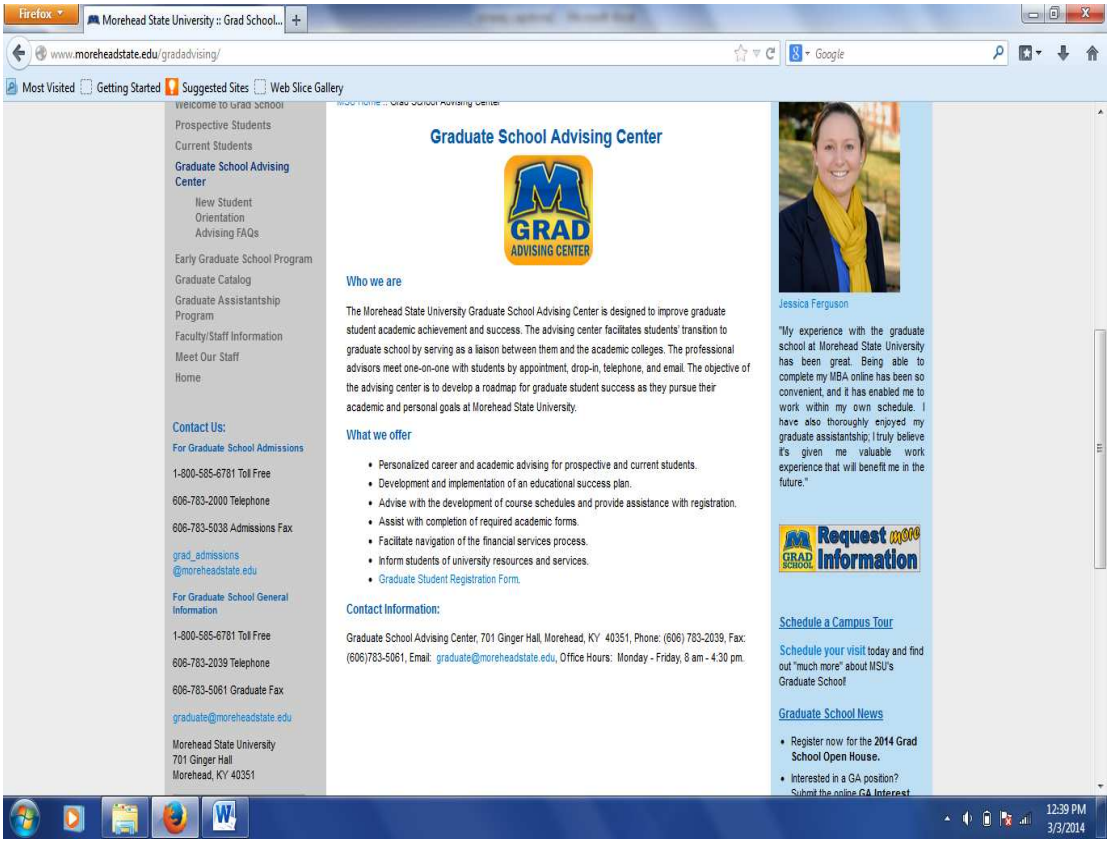


receive an introduction to the services that are provided by the Graduate Advising Center as well as a tour of the facility. Two graduate students are featured. One is a traditional student who is attending graduate school full time in the MA in Clinical Psychology program. The other featured student attends as an online student and he speaks about the convenience of distance learning. Our online and social media account on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter are discussed as well.

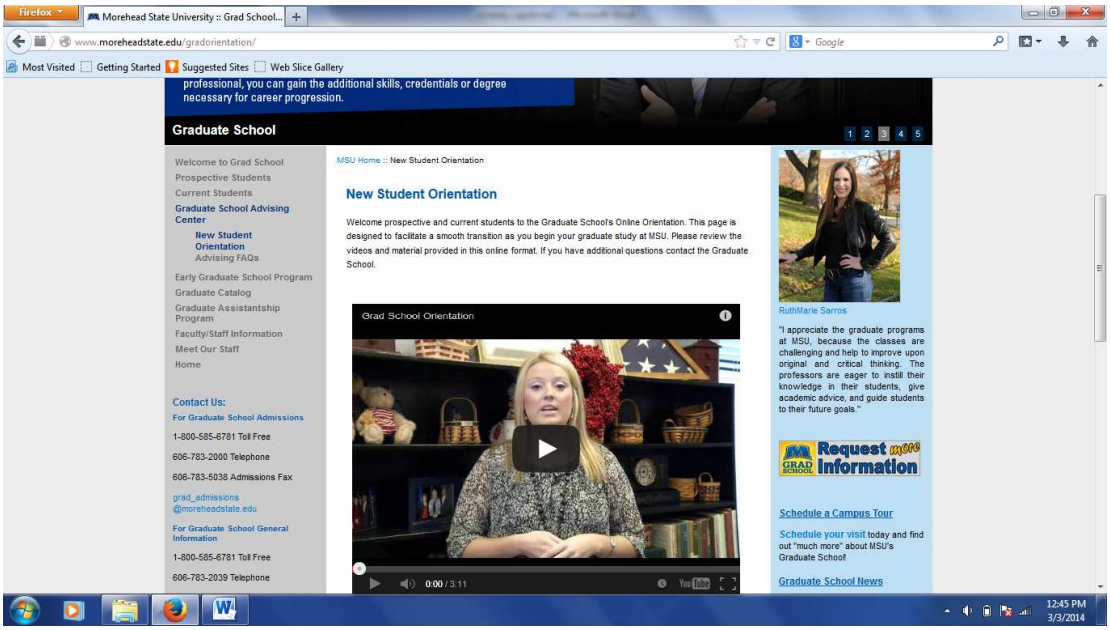
The left hand side of the website indexes the information for prospective students, current students, the graduate advising center, early graduate school program, the graduate catalog, graduate assistantships, faculty/staff information, and meet our staff. The contact information for the Graduate School is listed next.

The right hand side of the Graduate School Website landing page features a profile of a current or former graduate student. There is a box to request more information, schedule a campus tour, graduate school news, upcoming deadlines, a suggestion box, and our Grad School Review newsletter. The current edition is available with archived editions as well.





When students click on the Graduate School Advising Center they are directed to a summary of the mission statement, the services offered by the center, and contact information. The left hand navigation tools list the new student orientation and advising frequently asked questions.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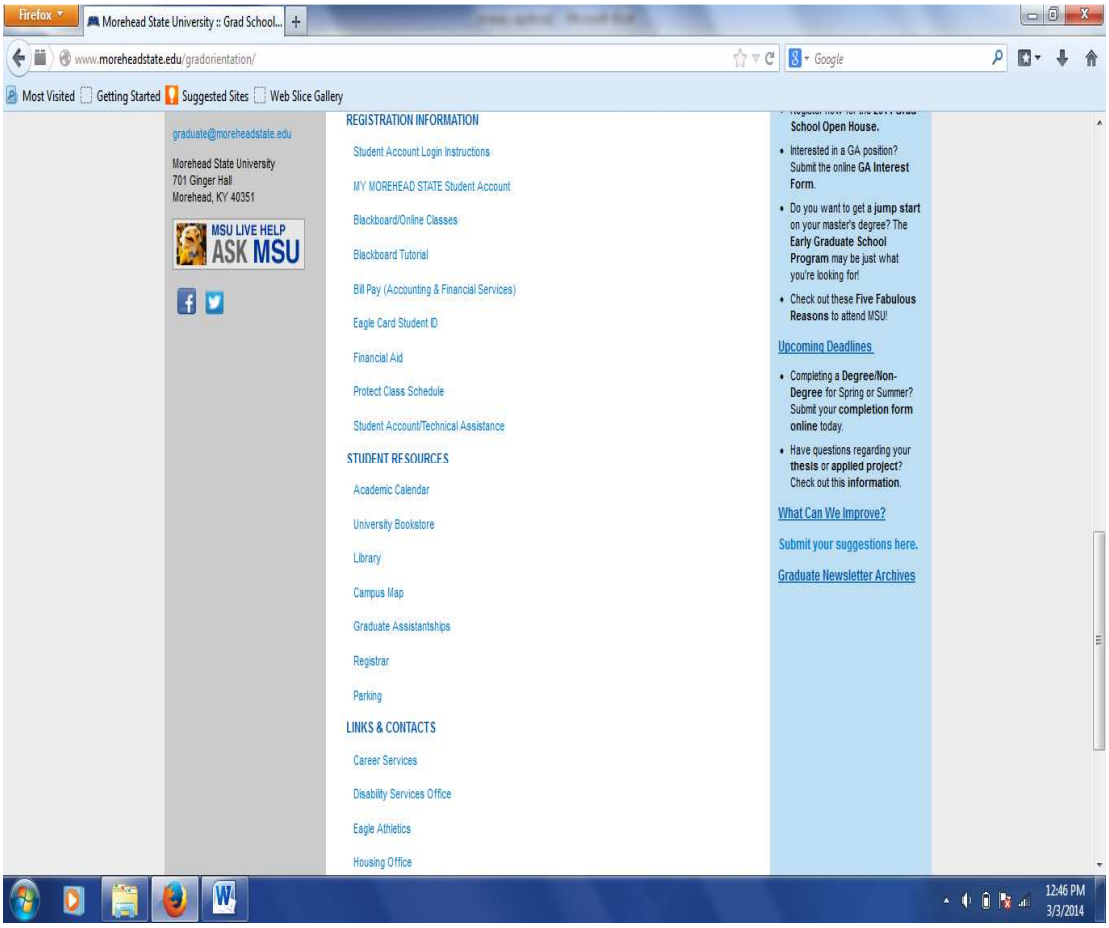
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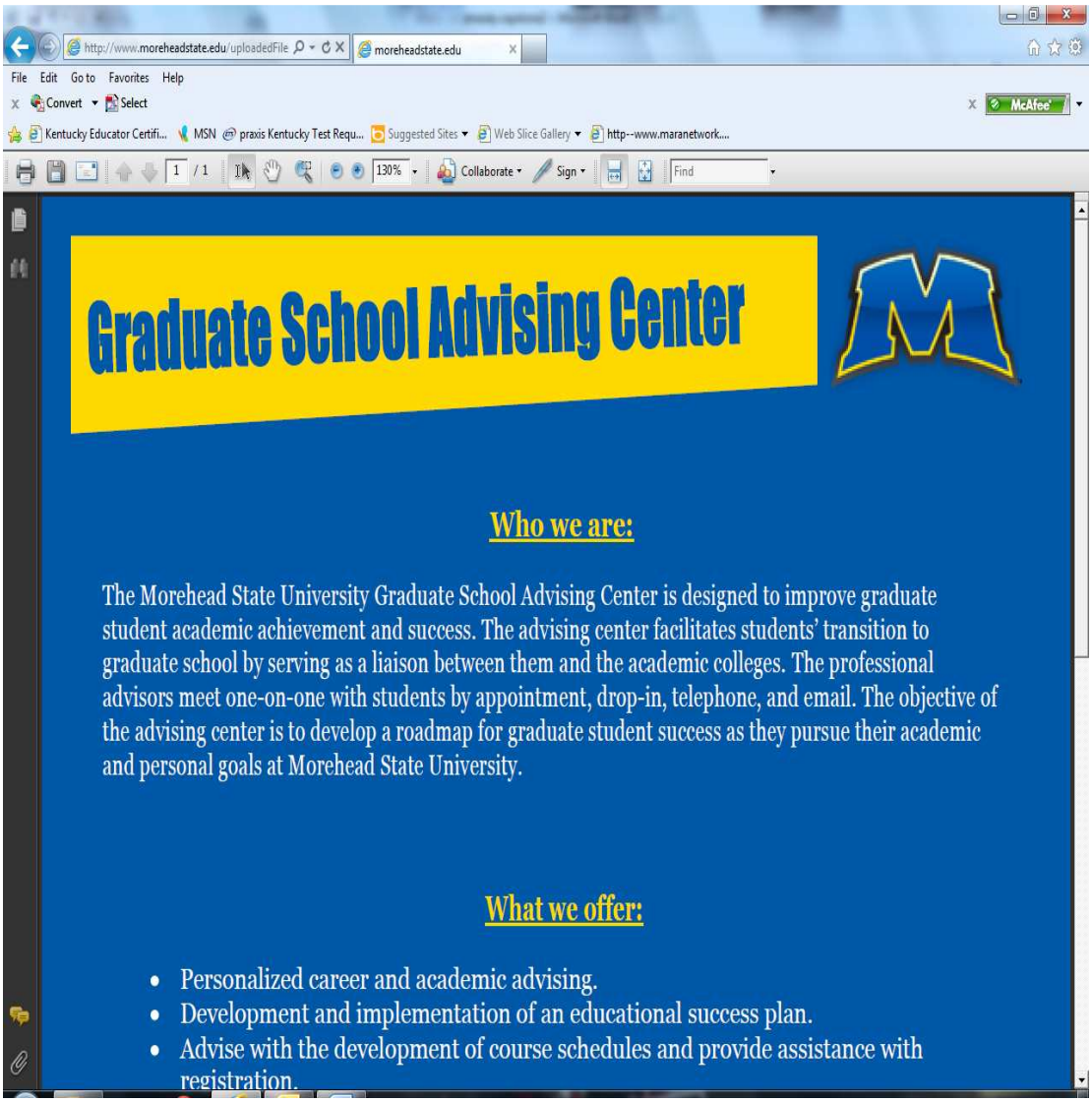
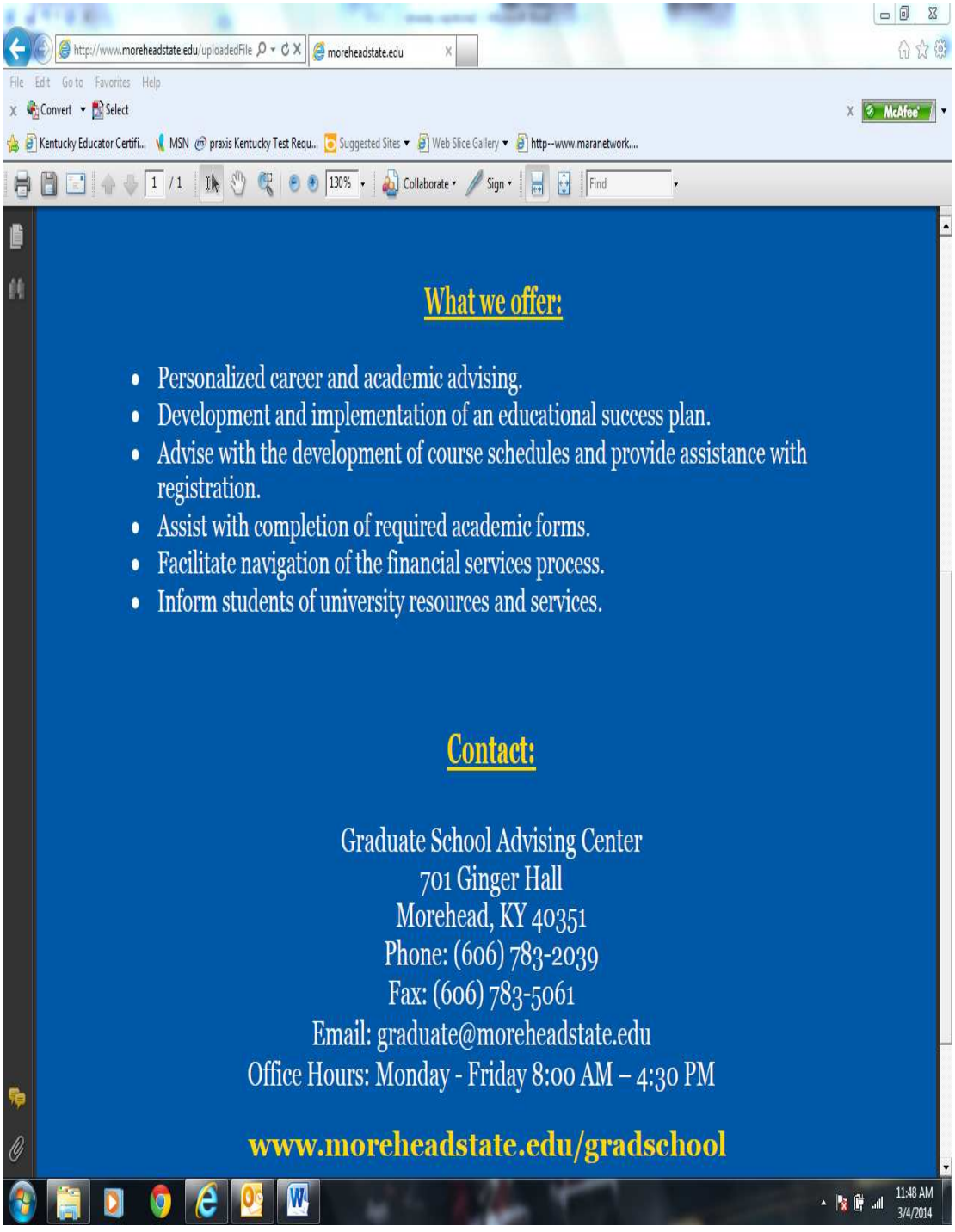
When students click on the video labeled Grad School Orientation they receive the message “I am admitted, what is next?” Next, the graduate students receive step by step instructions to set up their MSU account, course registration, and access to their official MSU degree audit check sheet. The director of the center logs into the MyMorehead State portal and demonstrates the links and functions. Below the orientation video there are links to the student account login instructions, MyMorehead State student account, BlackBoard for online classes, the BlackBoard tutorial, bill pay, eagle card student ID, financial aid, protect class schedule, and technical assistance.

For student resources there are links to the following: academic calendar, university bookstore, library, campus map, graduate assistantships, Registrar Office, and parking information.

The helpful links include: career services, disability services, athletics, housing and the MSU calendar of events. The Webpage concludes with a Graduate School Advising FAQ’s section.

Below is an example of the PDF flyer that is distributed to potential graduate students informing them of the services offered in the Graduate School Advising Center.

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Development and implementation of an educational success plan.
Advise with the development of course schedules and provide assistance with registration.
Assist with completion of required academic forms.
Facilitate navigation of the financial services process.
Inform students of university resources and services.
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Morehead, KY 40351
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Email: graduate@moreheadstate.edu
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Appendix A

Dear MSU Graduate Student:

An Investigation of the Implementation of Support Services in a Graduate Advising Center

You are being invited to voluntarily participate in the above-titled research study. The purpose of the study is to obtain information that will be used to develop graduate student support programs and procedures in the Graduate School at Morehead State University.

If you agree to participate, your participation will involve answering a six item electronic survey which will be submitted to the principal investigator's email inbox. Your name or email address will not appear on the survey.

You may withdraw from the survey at any time without penalties. There are no known risks from your participation. There is no cost to you except about five minutes of your time. You will not be paid for your participation.

Only the principal investigator (Susan Maxey) will have access to the information collected. In order to maintain your confidentiality, your name or email address will not be included in any reports about the results from this project. The surveys will be kept in a locked box in the principal investigator's office until data are entered into a computer program.

You can obtain further information from the principal investigator, Susan Maxey who is an Ed.D. student at Morehead State University at 606-783-2317. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject you may call the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 606-783-2010.

By completing the survey, you are giving permission for the investigator to use your information for research purposes.

Please click the following link to take the survey.

http://www.moreheadstate.edu/gss/

Sincerely,

Susan W. Maxey, MA
Principal Investigator

Susan W. Maxey, MA, GCO
Director, The Graduate School
Morehead State University
Ginger Hall 701
Morehead, KY 40351
606-783-2317 office
606-783-5061 fax

Appendix B

Student Satisfaction Survey Questions

Which of the following graduate student services have you used?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Graduate Advising Center
- Online Orientation
- Did not use any support service

If you used a support service, how satisfied were you with the support services provided to graduate students?

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied
- Did not use any support service

How satisfied were you with the admissions process?

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

How satisfied were you with the registration process?

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

How satisfied are you with your current advisor services?

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

In your opinion, what types of programs or services would be helpful to graduate students?

This was a free form box that survey takers could use to write suggestions of needed services or programs.

Appendix C

Dear Currently Enrolled Graduate Student,
Recently, you received an email that requested you to complete a satisfaction survey. If you have responded already, thank you so much. If you have not responded, the survey will remain open until Friday, October 4, 2013.

Please click the following link to take the survey.

http://www.moreheadstate.edu/gss/

Sincerely,
Susan W. Maxey, MA, GCO
Director, The Graduate School
Morehead State University
Ginger Hall 701
Morehead, KY 40351
606-783-2317 office
606-783-5061 fax

Appendix D

From: Susan Whitt Maxey <s.maxey@moreheadstate.edu>
Sent: Monday, February 3, 2014 7:50 PM
To: Susan Whitt Maxey
Subject: Graduate School Success

Dear Graduate Student,
Thank you for choosing MSU. I hope your semester is progressing well. We are trying a new initiative in the Graduate School. This semester I will be your "go to" person for questions and general help. So, feel free to contact me if you incur any problems this semester. I will also be reviewing your records to make sure you are on track. I look forward to helping you succeed in your endeavors.

Sincerely,
Susan

Susan W. Maxey, MA, GCO
Director, The Graduate School
Morehead State University
Ginger Hall 701
Morehead, KY 40351
606-783-2317 office
606-783-5061 fax

Appendix E

On Thursday, March 6, 2014 11:25 AM, Susan Whitt Maxey <s.maxey@moreheadstate.edu> wrote:

Dear Graduate Student,

The following are important deadlines you need to finish the semester. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions.

March 15, 2014 - Last day to apply for Spring & Summer 2014 graduation ***without penalty***

March 31, 2014 - Last day to drop a full-term course or withdraw from school with automatic grade of "W"

April 2 – 14, 2014 – Advance Registration for Summer & Fall 2014

May 10, 2014 – Commencement at 10:00 am for Caudill College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and College of Education. The 2:00 pm ceremony is for College of Science & Technology and College of Business and Public Affairs.

Sincerely,
Susan

Susan W. Maxey, MA, GCO
Director, The Graduate School
Morehead State University
Ginger Hall 701
Morehead, KY 40351
606-783-2317 office
606-783-5061 fax

Appendix F

The Grad Review

Morehead State University Graduate School Newsletter

FALL 2013 OLLIE FLOYD, NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Dean's Message

We take great pleasure in sharing recent news from the Graduate School in this first issue of "The Grad Review." 2013 has been a busy year and as you can see, because of innovative new initiatives like an advising center dedicated to the special needs of graduate students, an improved user-friendly website, and our new Early Graduate School Program, a LOT is going on in *YOUR* Graduate School to suggest continued growth and success.

I am especially pleased that since we have recently been joined by Carlie Preece, Graduate Recruitment and Retention Coordinator, and Angela Ross, Graduate Programs Completion Coordinator, even greater attention can be paid to facilitating the success of the students who choose Morehead State University to gain the real-life skills and expertise necessary to reach their professional goals.

Graduate School Advising Center

The Graduate School Advising Center is now officially open. The center, under the direction of Carlie Preece (pictured right), is designed to improve graduate student academic achievement and success.

"At the Graduate School Advising Center we support MSU students in pursuit of their advanced educational goals. We strive to combine personal assistance with up-to-date resources. We want our students to have a positive and fulfilling experience and the advising center plays a key role in that objective." —Carlie N. Preece

The advising center facilitates students' transition to graduate school by serving as a liaison between them and the academic colleges. Designed as a "one-stop" advising shop, the center assists with questions related to admission, academics, preparation for graduate school and graduation, and just general questions or concerns about your program.

The objective of the advising center is to develop a roadmap for graduate student success as they pursue their academic and personal goals at Morehead State University. The center offers the following services: personalized career and academic advising, development and implementation of an educational success plan, advice with the development of course schedules and provide assistance with registration, assist with completion of required academic forms, facilitate navigation of the financial services process, inform students of University resources and services. The professional advisors meet one-on-one with students by appointment, drop in, telephone, and email.

VITA

SUSAN W. MAXEY

EDUCATION

May, 1992	Bachelor of Arts Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
May, 1997	Master of Arts Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
Pending	Doctor of Education Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

January, 1998 - Present	Director of the Graduate School Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
August, 1996 - 1998	Student Services Officer Physician's Assistant/ Nurse Practioner Programs The University of Kentucky Lexington, Kentucky

HONORS

August, 2012	Major James Scott DeHart Fellowship