Personal Development Plan (PDP), Assessment

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the process and use of written Personal Development Plans (PDPs) for first-year students who were enrolled in First-year seminar (FYS) and Learning Community (LC) courses at IUPUI. Personal Development Planning is a process which enables first-year students at IUPUI to understand, implement, and mark progress towards a degree and a career goal by creating and following a personalized plan that is open to revision and reevaluation every semester in collaboration with an academic advisor. An assessment of this process will improve the method of asking students to complete the PDP and support faculty members’ and advisors’ perceptions of students’ learning outcomes associated with the process. Assessment results will also assist in the future training of advisors and faculty members while improving the overall PDP process for first-year students.

The assessment strategy of the PDPs included the following three components:

- A post PDP participation survey for students.
- A random sample of three completed PDPs by faculty members.
- A focus group discussion of faculty and advisors who used the PDP as a learning tool.

The implementation of multiple, varied assessment strategies allowed for the proper consideration of the five (5) PDP student learning objectives: self assessment, exploration, goal setting, planning, and evaluation. The strategies also permitted the two (2) PDP primary institutional objectives of increasing goal commitment and academic achievement to be evaluated. The objective of goal commitment focused on increasing students’ commitment and motivation to achieve a college degree through a personalized understanding and ownership of an integrated academic and career planning process. The goal of academic achievement refers to the aim of increasing students’ awareness and implementation of personal, academic, and career strategies to help them achieve their goals for college and beyond. A comprehensive list of PDP institutional and student learning objectives in addition to instructional team member functions are provided for further review (Appendix A).

This report will first provide a general overview of the sample of participants and the methods utilized in assessment. A section examining students’ responses to the quantitative portion of the survey will then be provided (Questions 1-15., 19-21). This will be followed by a section that investigates student responses to the qualitative portion of the survey (Question 16-18). Next, results from the analysis of faculty / staff focus groups will be discussed. Finally, a highlights section will conclude the report.

Sample / Method (General)

Student Survey

During the fall 2008 semester a total of approximately 1,500 students were enrolled in 55 separate FYS and LC course sections. A total of 800 first-year students enrolled in these course sections participated in a post-participation survey designed to better understand students’ perceptions of the PDP and PDP processes (Appendix B). Of the 800 survey participants, 769 students indicated that they had completed a PDP while 31 students responded that they had not finished a PDP. An independent sample t-test was completed to compare participant students who did not complete a PDP with those who did. Results of this analysis are included on page 5. It should also be noted that the number of valid survey responses
varied depending on the question being asked. For example, 648 students answered Question 17 while 399 students responded to Question 18. Both numerical and percentage response rates are provided where appropriate. All survey respondents were solicited for survey participation on a voluntary basis.

The student survey consisted of 21 questions designed to gauge student perceptions of the PDP and PDP process. The first section of the survey (Questions 1-15, 19-21) was quantitative in nature and asked students to respond to a series of questions using a Likert scale. Using a scale students rated their responses ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree with the midpoint representing (3) Neutral. Student responses were analyzed and then sorted within the context of the PDP desired student learning outcomes. Table: 1 (p. 7), shows the breakdown of questions by learning outcome, along with categorical means for each outcome. As the table shows, the learning outcomes of evaluation and exploration were not measured with any of the questions.

The second section of the survey (Questions 16-18) asked students who had completed a PDP as part of their FYS or LC course to identify both the most valuable aspects of the PDP and ways in which to improve the PDP process. This method of inquiry was designed to provide further evidence of whether learning outcomes were achieved and to capture student perceptions of the PDP through open-ended feedback. Student participants’ open-ended survey responses were analyzed and arranged into topical theme categories using a coding process. Categories were derived through team member review and scrutiny and examined through the qualitative analysis software program Atlas.ti. Topical theme categories were considered to be “emerge or notable” if 5% or more of students responded in a similar manner. The use of topical theme categories allowed for individual student perceptions of the Personal Development Plan (PDP) to be considered collectively. While this method of analysis essentially quantifies student comments, it does allow for the students’ key perceptions and feelings about the program to be identified.

Faculty and Staff Focus Groups

Faculty members and advisors were also asked to participate in the focus groups on a voluntary basis. Participation was requested by email. The focus groups were conducted separately with only advisors or faculty members participating in a particular group. Once participants were contacted by email, they then responded whether or not they would like to participate and then selected one of the pre-determined times to participate in the focus groups. Two sessions were held for faculty groups and two were held for advisor groups.

All focus groups sessions were recorded for accuracy and facilitator notes were taken. The qualitative data was analyzed by reviewing the comments and discussion responses for common themes, and then creating categories for those themes. Categories were named primarily based on their relevance to initial PDP objectives. While faculty and advisors shared a common experience in the delivery and implementation of the PDP, their perceptions of the process were markedly different. Please note, percentages associated with verbal comments were only provided in an effort to quantify the key experiences expressed by faculty and advisors and to compare across groups of participants for potential gaps. These percentages were taken from the total number of participants within each cohort (i.e. either all faculty or all advisors) as well as out of the total number of participants.
Results for PDP Survey (Quantitative Questions)

Independent Samples T-Test

To provide support that the results of the survey were due to completing the PDP process as opposed to other extraneous factors, an independent samples t-test was conducted comparing the survey answers of students who completed the PDP process with those who did not. A random sample of 31 students who completed the PDP was chosen to compare to the 31 students who answered that they had not completed the PDP. The criterion measure was the categorical means for each of the learning outcomes. For two of the three learning outcomes assessed by the survey, differences between the groups were significant at the 90% confidence level, suggesting that the scores of the students’ who completed the process were higher than the scores of those that did not. These included goal setting (p=.076) and planning (p=.024). The differences between the groups for the learning outcome of self-assessment were not found to be significantly different. This should be considered when assessing the scores for self-assessment below.

Self-Assessment

On average, questions related to self-assessment were answered most favorably (Mean = 4.08) when compared to the other learning outcomes. Five questions were related to this outcome. The specific question garnering the most positive reactions was “I have chosen a major or career that supports my interests and personal values” with a mean of 4.17. Collecting slightly less support was the question “I know what obstacles I have to overcome to succeed in college” with a mean of 4.13. This question was followed by “I have chosen a major or career that matches my strengths, skills, and competencies” which received a lower mean of 4.06. The question “I clearly understand my academic strengths, skills, and competencies” received a similar mean of 4.05. The least positive reactions for this section came to the question “I feel that I have a sense of purpose at IUPUI” which received a mean of 3.87. The relatively high means for all of these five questions suggests that students agree that they are correctly self-assessing.

Goal Setting

Goal Setting was measured by six questions on the survey (Mean = 3.91). The most positively answered question in this section was “I have goals that are measureable, achievable, and realistic” with a mean of 4.19 which was the highest individual mean for any question in the survey. The second question for this category was “I have clear career goals” with a mean of 4.03. The next most agreed upon question was “I have a time frame for achieving each of my goals” which received a mean of 3.89. This question was closely followed by “I have clearly defined academic goals for at least the next two years” with a mean of 3.87. The question “I can think of specific IUPUI learning experiences that will help me achieve my goals” received a mean of 3.82. The least agreed upon statement for this category was “My academic goals are connected to IUPUI's Principles of Undergraduate Learning (the PULs)” which had a mean of 3.68. These results suggest that students agreed more strongly with having clear, achievable goals, but less strongly when putting those goals down into a specific timeline or timeframe. Likewise, they suggest that students felt more strongly that they chose the major or career that fits with their interests and values, but they felt less strongly when asked about specific co-curricular options or connections between their goals and the PUL’s.

Planning

Planning was measured by four questions, and received a similar category mean (Mean = 3.92) to goal setting. The most agreed upon statement for this category was “I have developed a preliminary plan of study for my possible major” with a mean of 4.01. The next most agreed upon question was “I am able to
identify specific action plans for overcoming potential obstacles” with a mean of 3.90. This was followed by the question “I have identified options for gaining experience outside the classroom” with a mean of 3.88. The least agreed upon of the category was “I have detailed academic plan with specific action steps” with a lower mean of 3.86. This suggests that the students agreed more strongly with the broad idea that they had a preliminary plan of study, but agreed less when identifying more precise elements such as detailed academic plans and specific action steps.

**Other – Sustainability**

The last three questions of the survey did not specifically address any learning outcomes, but were included to assess the sustainability of the program. These questions received lower means than any of the learning outcome related questions. Two questions: “I will utilize my PDP throughout my college career to help me make educational and career choices” and “I will collaborate with my academic advisor in updating my PDP in future semesters” both received means of 3.56. Additionally, the question “I will continue to update and consult my PDP in future semesters” received the lowest mean of any question in the survey at 3.34. However, it is important to keep in mind that these results still indicated a strong level of overall agreeance. For instance, the question with the lowest mean (3.34) still had 82% of students either agreeing or answering neutral.

**Conclusion**

The results of the quantitative analysis of the survey indicate that, on average, the students do agree that they are achieving the learning outcomes set by this program. For instance, the average score for all questions related to learning outcomes was 3.96, with a score of 4 indicating that the student agreed. The outcomes most supported in the survey were self-assessment and exploration. The outcomes less supported were goal setting and planning. The questions regarding sustainability were rated lower by students, but still generally agreed upon. This mirrors the results of the focus groups in which both faculty and advisors felt the students were not seeing the PDP as a long-term tool. This is a potential area for improvement.
Table 1: PDP Survey Questions Sorted by Relevant Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree = 1</th>
<th>Disagree = 2</th>
<th>Neutral = 3</th>
<th>Agree = 4</th>
<th>Strongly Agree = 5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. I know what obstacles I have to overcome to succeed in college.</td>
<td>Self Assessment</td>
<td>N=13</td>
<td>N=7</td>
<td>N=6</td>
<td>N=44</td>
<td>N=24</td>
<td>792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I clearly understand my academic strengths, skills, and competencies.</td>
<td>Self Assessment</td>
<td>N=10</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=14</td>
<td>N=45</td>
<td>N=20</td>
<td>792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I have chosen a major or career that matches my strengths, skills, and</td>
<td>Self Assessment</td>
<td>N=19</td>
<td>N=28</td>
<td>N=34</td>
<td>N=325</td>
<td>N=41</td>
<td>798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I have chosen a major or career that supports my interests and personal</td>
<td>Self Assessment</td>
<td>N=19</td>
<td>N=24</td>
<td>N=32</td>
<td>N=346</td>
<td>N=44</td>
<td>799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I feel that I have a sense of purpose at IUPUI.</td>
<td>Self Assessment</td>
<td>N=24</td>
<td>N=37</td>
<td>N=354</td>
<td>N=211</td>
<td>N=326</td>
<td>795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have clearly defined academic goals for at least the next two years.</td>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>N=20</td>
<td>N=48</td>
<td>N=148</td>
<td>N=382</td>
<td>N=197</td>
<td>795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have a time frame for achieving each of my goals.</td>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>N=14</td>
<td>N=38</td>
<td>N=145</td>
<td>N=414</td>
<td>N=177</td>
<td>788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My academic goals are connected to IUPUI's Principles of Undergraduate</td>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>N=18</td>
<td>N=37</td>
<td>N=261</td>
<td>N=339</td>
<td>N=138</td>
<td>793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I have goals that are measureable, achievable, and realistic.</td>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=6</td>
<td>N=62</td>
<td>N=438</td>
<td>N=269</td>
<td>790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I can think of specific IUPUI learning experiences that will help me</td>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>N=13</td>
<td>N=41</td>
<td>N=192</td>
<td>N=383</td>
<td>N=167</td>
<td>796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I have clear career goals.</td>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>N=19</td>
<td>N=26</td>
<td>N=334</td>
<td>N=334</td>
<td>N=326</td>
<td>792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I have detailed academic plan with specific action steps.</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>N=23</td>
<td>N=38</td>
<td>N=392</td>
<td>N=24</td>
<td>N=199</td>
<td>799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have developed a preliminary plan of study for my possible major.</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>N=17</td>
<td>N=30</td>
<td>N=59</td>
<td>N=432</td>
<td>N=217</td>
<td>795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I am able to identify specific action plans for overcoming potential</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>N=13</td>
<td>N=11</td>
<td>N=165</td>
<td>N=459</td>
<td>N=146</td>
<td>794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I have identified options for gaining experience outside the classroom</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>N=18</td>
<td>N=34</td>
<td>N=151</td>
<td>N=418</td>
<td>N=175</td>
<td>796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I will utilize my PDP throughout my college career to help me make</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>N=35</td>
<td>N=54</td>
<td>N=212</td>
<td>N=311</td>
<td>N=106</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I will continue to update and consult my PDP in future semesters.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>N=40</td>
<td>N=89</td>
<td>N=260</td>
<td>N=249</td>
<td>N=81</td>
<td>719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I will collaborate with my academic advisor in updating my PDP in future</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>N=34</td>
<td>N=63</td>
<td>N=213</td>
<td>N=285</td>
<td>N=123</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results for PDP Survey (Open-ended Responses)

The goal of the PDP is to increase efficacy in promoting student learning and development. Students, who completed a PDP as part of their course, were asked three open-ended questions from an end of the semester questionnaire designed to assess whether learning outcomes were achieved. Additionally, students were asked to identify valuable aspects of the PDP and the ways in which to improve the PDP process. Most students responded to the three (3) open-ended items included in the questionnaire. Student participants’ open-ended survey responses were analyzed and organized into major topical and categorical themes. These emergent categories allowed for individual student perceptions of the Personal Development Plan (PDP) to be considered collectively. Theme categories were considered to be “emerged or notable” if 5% or more of students responded in a similar manner. In a number of instances a singular student comment addressed more than one topic or category. In these occurrences, student comments were considered in multiple areas of discussion and were included in multiple categories. An understanding of student comments in the aggregate facilitates a greater understanding of the Personal Development Plan (PDP). While this method of analysis essentially quantifies student comments, it does allow for the students’ key perceptions and feelings about the program to be identified. Many of the comments are concise statements and may not fully reflect the entirety of students’ opinions. The number of student responses varied depending on the question asked.

Questions
16. Please list three specific things that you learned from completing a PDP: (N= See Below)
17. What was the most valuable aspect of completing a PDP? (N=648)
18. What specific suggestions do you have for improving the PDP process? (N=399)

Student Perceptions of the PDP – Question 16

The PDP end of semester questionnaire, asked students: “Please list three specific things you learned from completing a Personal Development Plan?” A total of (N=694) student survey participants provided response(s) to the question (86%). Ninety percent (90%, N=633) of students supplied three responses as requested. Furthermore, Ninety-Six percent (96%, N=671) provided two specific responses and eighty-seven percent (87%, N=610) of respondents provided only one response in answer to the question. The results indicated that 106 students did not respond to the open ended questions. While respondents were not asked to rank items in order of importance, the survey numbered the items, which could create a tendency for participants to order the items.

Table 2, attempts to separate variables to provide a clear picture of what students expected to learn from completing the PDP process. Each table is divided by first response, second response, and third response. Nearly 2,000 separate open ended responses were reported on the questionnaire, nine strong themes emerged in each of the three responses. They included:

- Student Self Assessment
- Setting and Accomplishing Goals
- Academic Planning
- Managing Time and Balancing Academic Schedules
- Choosing Majors and Understanding Program Requirements
- Importance of Work Experience and Career Planning
- Navigating College Environment
- Importance of Future Planning
- Learning Study/Life Skills
Most Valued Aspects of the PDP – Question 17

Students’ responses were also collected for the following question: “What was the most valuable aspect of completing a PDP?” A total of (648) student survey participants (81%) responded to this question. A wide variety of responses to this question were received, leading to a number of topical theme categories. Through analysis nine (9) major themes emerged as being notable (≥ 5%). A listing of major theme categories in conjunction with student response rates and examples of student comments are included in Table 3.

Improving the PDP Process – Question 18

Survey respondents were also asked, “What specific suggestions do you have for improving the PDP process?” A total of (399) survey participants (50%) responded to this question. Similar to Question 17 a wide variety of responses were received, again leading to a number of topical theme categories. Through analysis (14) major themes emerged as being notable (≥ 5%). A listing of major theme categories in conjunction with student response rates and examples of students’ comments are included in Table 4.

Co-Occurrence

As previously noted, in a number of instances a singular student comment addressed more than one topic or category. In these occurrences, student comments were considered in multiple areas of discussion and were included in multiple table categories. For example, a singular student response could address the thematic categories of academic planning, long term planning, and goal setting simultaneously. This singular student response would be considered in multiple analyses (and accompanied tables). In examining student data holistically it was found that several thematic categories experienced this phenomenon, also known as a high rate of Co-Occurrence. A few instances of high Co-Occurrence are worth noting in regards to Questions 17 and 18:

- In response to Question 17, 248 student responses spoke to academic planning and were subsequently coded with the thematic category of Academic Planning. A total of 48% of the singular student responses that were coded as Academic Planning were also coded as Planning a Course Schedule. Similarly, (29%) of singular student responses that spoke to Academic Planning also spoke to Long, Term Future Planning and (12%) of these responses specified developing a 4-Year Plan.

- In response to Question 18, 65 student responses suggested for improvement that the PDP process be more structured. These responses were coded with the thematic category of, More Structured PDP Process. A total of (15%) of student singular student responses that were coded with the suggestion of improvement, More Structured PDP Process, were also coded with the suggestion to Start or Complete Program Earlier. Similarly, (18%) of singular student responses that suggested, More Structured PDP Process, specified the suggestion of having – More Definitive Due Dates and Assignment Timelines.
Table 2: Spring 2009 PDP Student Learning Outcomes

Question 16: “Please list three specific things you learned from completing a PDP”:

Response #1 N=694; Response #2; N=671; Response #3 N=633

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learned</th>
<th>Response #</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Examples of Actual Student Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Assessment (i.e. Self Learning, Self Awareness, Personal Development)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>“It’s important to set realistic goals for myself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>“How I see myself and where I want to go.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>“Sense of self.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total N / %</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>“I learned to fully understand what I value.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“More about the PULS and how to develop them in my life.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I’ve learned why I am in college.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I am capable of doing college level work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s easier to see how your values/personality relates to your goals.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting and Accomplishing Goals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>“Goals seem easier to achieve when you have a step by step guide to complete them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>“It’s important to set realistic goals for myself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>“How I can achieve my goals through internships.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total N / %</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>“That my goal to graduate college in four years is realistic.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s easier to see how your values/personality relates to your goals.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“By setting goals I was more organized with my plans.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“That having a written out plan and idea of what I want to achieve here will help me on track.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“How hard I have to work to achieve my goal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Planning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>“My academic plan for the next few years.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>“Learning how I am can make my semester different from last.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>“I didn’t realize that I had a lot of class choices to take.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total N / %</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>“I must take summer classes to graduate in 4 years.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Advisors that force students to plan ahead is encouraging”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It made me get out and explore my possible major.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I need to take a large course load each semester to make it through in 4 years.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I have learned how long it is going to take me to finish college.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I am aware of what my 4 year schedule will be like.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Time and Balancing Academic Schedule</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>“Time is the most important thing in college and need to be managed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>“I need to work on my time management skills.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>“Better ways to manage my time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total N / %</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>“Created career timeline.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I learned how to manage my time wisely.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Timeline for degree.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“How to manage time more efficiently.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“How much time I need to devote to studying.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2 (Continued): Spring 2009 PDP Student Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learned</th>
<th>Response #</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Examples of Actual Student Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Choosing Majors and Understanding Program Requirements | 1          | 59 | 38% | • “What courses I need to take for my major.”  
• “Amount of credit hours needed to graduate.”  
• “Who helped me map out next semester and put me in a career class that will then help me make a plan for my major.”  
• “I also ended up changing my major from doing my PDP.”  
• “What steps I need to take to get into my major.”  
• “I learned to choose back up majors and careers.”  
• “I now know what I need to do to complete the major of my choice.”  
• “Narrowing down my major and career choices.” |
|                                                      | 2          | 51 | 33% |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                      | 3          | 44 | 28% |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                      | **Total N / %** | **154** | **22%** |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Importance of Work Experience and Career Planning    | 1          | 39 | 28% | • “That I have a majority of skills need for the career I want.”  
• “Understood my career plan more in depth.”  
• “Where my career choice is going to lead me.”  
• “I have a better sense of my future career.”  
• “A career that correlates with my strengths.”  
• “My values and how they relate to my career.”  
• “Volunteer/internship job shadow resources and opportunities.”  
• “That I need to look into organizations to help gain experience.” |
|                                                      | 2          | 49 | 36% |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                      | 3          | 49 | 36% |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                      | **Total N / %** | **137** | **19%** |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Navigating College Environment                       | 1          | 32 | 24% | • “I learned helpful resources on campus.”  
• “That my advisor is very helpful.”  
• “Tips on surviving on campus.”  
• “How to get involved at IUPUI.”  
• “I learned different scholarship opportunities to aid me.”  
• “All the different places that help you, like the writing center.”  
• “To keep track of my advisor and a social network.”  
• “I have to work on getting an internship.”  
• “How I can succeed in my college life.” |
|                                                      | 2          | 38 | 29% |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                      | 3          | 61 | 46% |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                      | **Total N / %** | **131** | **19%** |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Importance of Future Planning                        | 1          | 30 | 28% | • “How to set a plan for future.”  
• “What I should be focusing on in the next year.”  
• “My interests and skills, jobs for the future.”  
• “I have an idea of what I wanted to do after college.”  
• “My future aspirations, goals and dreams.”  
• “Organizing my college plans for the future.”  
• “I learned it was good but difficult to plan that far ahead.”  
• “I discovered an alternate plan.”  
• “Learned what I want to do with my life.” |
|                                                      | 2          | 40 | 37% |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                      | 3          | 38 | 45% |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                      | **Total N / %** | **108** | **16%** |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Learning Study/Life Skills                           | 1          | 14 | 13% | • “What I need to do to improve my study habits.”  
• “How to work as a group.”  
• “I learned time management skills that kept me going this semester.”  
• “How to deal with stress.”  
• “How stick to schedule.”  
• “How important it is to network.”  
• “I learned to respect other cultures by completing the diversity assignment.” |
|                                                      | 2          | 43 | 42% |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                      | 3          | 46 | 45% |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                      | **Total N / %** | **103** | **15%** |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
Table 3: The *Most Valued Aspects of Completing a PDP*

**Question 17:** “What was the *most* valuable aspect of completing a PDP”? (N = 648, 81%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Valuable Aspect</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Examples of Actual Student Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *Academic Planning (General)*                     | 245 | 38% | “Academic plans for my college year.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “I will be able to use this for the rest of my academic career.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Academic plan.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Creating a college plan.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Getting my academic plan figured out.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Planning out my college career.”  
| *Self – Assessment & Reflection.*                 | 191 | 29% | “Looking back over the whole thing I was able to see how I have grown as a student.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Learning about myself.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “It softly forces self evaluation.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Knowing my strengths and weaknesses.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Finding my real values and interests and looking at them in depth.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Reevaluating why I m here and how to be successful.”  
| Planning a Course Schedule                        | 118 | 18% | “The most valuable thing was having my classes planned out in advance.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Planning your schedule.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Getting a schedule done for next year.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Allowing you to layout classes and timeframe.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Helping me map out my classes I have to take.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Getting my schedule done.”  
| Long Term, Future Planning                        | 94  | 15% | “Planning out the future so it doesn’t come as a surprise when it is already here.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Organize my goals for the next 3 years.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Planning for the future.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Thinking ahead about my classes and knowing what I will need to complete to graduation in 4 years.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Setting up a plan for the future.”  
| Goal Setting                                      | 87  | 13% | “Learning how to set and achieve goals.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Talking about and recognizing my goals.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Setting goals.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “The PDP clearly laid at a plan for me to reach my career goals.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Understanding goals and how to achieve them.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Setting some achievable goals.”  
| Major and Career – Discovery / Planning           | 62  | 10% | “Talking about my major and why I want to pursue it as a career.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Finding a major.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Finding a career.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Researching majors and careers.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Deciding/committing to a major.”  
| Developing a Written / Paper Outline              | 35  | 5%  | “Getting all my thoughts on paper.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Having an actual plan on paper.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “The ability to write your goals out instead of just thinking about them.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Goal setting and career planning not just in my head but on paper for better use.”  
| Developing a 4-Year Academic Plan                 | 30  | 5%  | “The 4 year plan.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Planning 4 years in advance, helps keep you on track.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Scheduling my next four years of school.”  
|                                                   |     |     | “Having a 4 year plan.”  

*Academic Planning (General) – Refers to student responses that spoke to the broad spectrum of academic planning.*
### Table 4: Suggestions for Improving the PDP Process

**Question 18:** “What specific suggestions do you have for improving the PDP process”? (N = 399, 50%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions for Improvement</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Examples of Actual Student Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| More Structured PDP Process                                   | 65 | 19%| • “More organization.”  
• “More structure.”  
• “Better planning.”  
• “Streamline it make it more fun.”  
• “Needs to be more organized.”  
• “Putting more structure things into it more steps into helping and less writing papers.” |
| Additional Guidance and Instruction                          | 65 | 19%| • “More guidance.”  
• “More information and help.”  
• “Better explain how to fill it out, have more one on one student time.”  
• “We should be helped a little more of how it should all go together. A little confusing.”  
• “Give us more instruction on how to do it.”  
• “Make the directions cleaner.” |
| “Nothing” & “N/A”                                            | 33 | 8% | • “N/A.”  
• “Nothing.”  
• “I don’t have any suggestions right now.” |
| *Positive – “Nothing”                                         | 30 | 8% | • “I like the way it is.”  
• “It’s already great!!”  
• “None that I can think of, I think the PDP is a great tool for freshmen.”  
• “No specific suggestions, I think it was very beneficial.” |
| More Definitive Due Dates and Appropriate Assignment Timelines | 29 | 7% | • “More specific guidelines on what and when it’s due.”  
• “The homework due dates should be posted.”  
• “Doing it as you go and not all at once.”  
• “Make sure you explain what needs to be turned in.”  
• “Have certain parts of it due during the fall semester. Not just at the end.”  
• “Spread it out more thoroughly the semester so it is all not jam packed at the end.” |
| More Fun & Interesting                                        | 24 | 6% | • “Make it more fun to do.”  
• “Make it more interesting.”  
• “Everything seemed repetitive.”  
• “Make less boring.”  
• “Different formats other than journals might be helpful in getting creative answers.” |
| Less Time Commitments and Restraints                          | 23 | 6% | • “Make it shorter.”  
• “It takes too much time.”  
• “Don’t make it so long.”  
• “Not having it be so long and time consuming.”  
• “Scale it down, they become extremely tedious and lengthy. If they were more concise they would have been more helpful.” |
| Fewer Writing Assignments                                     | 23 | 6% | • “Make less journals due for PDP.”  
• “Essay wasn’t helpful.”  
• “No journals more class activities.”  
• “I think they should make less writing assignments in the packet.” |

*Positive (Nothing) - Indicates responses where a student conveys a positive attitude about the PDP while stating that nothing concerning the program should be changed.
Table 4 (Continued): Suggestions for Improving the PDP Process

Question 18: “What specific suggestions do you have for improving the PDP process”? (N = 399)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions for Improvement</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Examples of Actual Student Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Complete PDP Assignments – “In-Class” | 21 | 5% | • “Maybe implement an easier PDP process by doing some of it in class.”  
• “Have more time in class to work on it.”  
• “Spend more time in class develop the PDP.”  
• “Complete assignments during class.”  
• “Go over the section in class a little more.”  |
| More Class Scheduling Assistance | 19 | 5% | • “A day for just scheduling.”  
• “Giving more resources to know what classes are necessary.”  
• “Go over how to find prerequisites.”  
• “Post the electives.”  
• “Help students figure out where to find classes needed.”  
• “Provide a place where we can see the required classes we will need for our major.”  |
| Start or Complete PDP Program Earlier | 17 | 4% | • “Completing earlier in the year.”  
• “Start ASAP and gradually drag it out less stressful.”  
• “None, just don’t procrastinate.”  
• “Using your time wisely and starting early.”  |
| Program Ineffective / Cancel Program | 17 | 4% | • “Remove it from the curriculum.”  
• “I do not feel that is a successful academic planner. You never know what could happen in your future.”  
• “It wasn’t very helpful. I didn’t learn anything I didn’t already know. I felt it was busy work.”  
• “To not have one at all. It was useless and a waste of my time.”  |
| More Activities and Discussions | 15 | 4% | • “Maybe just talking about it a little bit more.”  
• “More activities.”  
• “No journals more class activities.”  
• “Make it more activities so students can get more involved.”  |
| Further Major and Career – Discovery/Planning | 14 | 4% | • “Focus more on majors and careers.”  
• “Require more research on major and career.”  
• “Go a little more in-depth about the career focus or the degree focus.”  
• “It might be a good idea to focus on job opportunities or volunteer opportunities to gain experience in one’s chosen career.”  |
| Additional Student Input | 14 | 4% | • “Adding things that we want in it.”  
• “Maybe add more personal views to it.”  
• “Not so specific. Make to fit individual needs.”  
• “Make it work for everyone”  |

**Note 1:** Percentages rounded to the nearest whole.

**Note 2:** The remaining responses were so varied that no major themes emerged.
Highlights – Open Ended Responses

Question 16: Please list three specific things you learned from completing a PDP:

- 64% of student survey participants learned how to assess their learning and development during their first year of college by completing a PDP. Students were able to identify various aspects of self assessment such as self awareness, self learning and/or personal development.

- 47% of student participants mentioned learning how to set and accomplish goals as part of completing their PDP.

- 35% of survey participants learned various aspects of academic planning (i.e. four-year plans, planning semester/yearly schedules to complete major coursework, and the importance of future and/or alternative academic plans) by completing the PDP.

- 24% of student survey participants learned to manage time and balance academic schedules as part of completing a PDP.

- 22% of students learned how to choose a major/program of study and comprehended program of study requirements by completing the PDP process.

- 20% of students learned the importance of choosing and planning for a career. Students also learned that work or internship experience was an essential component of learning beyond the classroom as part of completing the PDP process.

- 19% of students learned how to navigate their college/academic environments by participating in a PDP.

- 15% of students learned the importance of future and life planning as part of completing a PDP.

- 15% of student learned and improved study skills and were able to identify their learning styles and personality traits. Additionally, students were able to learn valuable life skills by completing the PDP process.

- Other minor themes that emerged from student responses included the importance of peer or reference groups and overall support systems. Students also reported learning teacher and/or college expectations at IUPUI. Others identified learning specific content such as the Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PULS), Plan B, or PDP and/or valuable lessons from course assignments (i.e. cultural diversity assignment). Additionally, some students revealed what they liked and dislike about college in general, programs of study and/or participating in the PDP process.
Question 17: What was the most valuable aspect of completing a PDP? (N = 648)

- 38% of students responded that general academic planning was the most valuable aspect of completing a PDP.
- 29% of students indicated that self-assessment and reflection was the most valuable aspect of completing a PDP.
- 18% of student respondents specified that planning a course schedule was the most valuable component of completing a PDP.
- 13% of students responded that participating in goal setting was the most valuable aspect of completing a PDP.
- 5% of survey participants specified that developing a written/paper outline was the most valuable piece of completing a PDP. Similarly, 5% of students specified that developing a 4-year plan was most valuable.

Question 18: What specific suggestions do you have for improving the PDP process? (N=399)

- 19% of student survey participants suggested for improvement implementing a more structured PDP process.
- 19% of students suggested improving the PDP process by providing additional guidance and instruction.
- 8% of students indicated nothing when prompted for suggestions for improving the PDP process, while 8% of students responded nothing (Positive).
- 7% of students responded that having more definitive due dates and appropriate assignment timelines would improve the overall PDP process.
- Student responded with a highly stratified list of suggestions for improving the PDP process courses: 6% of students suggested making the process more fun and interesting, requiring less time commitments and restraints, and involving fewer writing assignments. Students also suggested completing the PDP assignments in class (5%), more class scheduling assistance (5%), and starting or completing the PDP process earlier (5%). Only 4% of students indicated that they found the PDP program to be ineffective or suggested its cancelation.
Results: Focus Groups

Section A: Benefits

Self – Assessment / Evaluation

Faculty
The faculty expressed multiple opinions supporting the suggestion that the PDP process helped foster increased student self-assessment. Many felt this reflection was so important because it was a new process for incoming students; “...the self discovery piece of it is super important because these students have never been asked questions before about their own strengths at this point. And to do the self reflection opens them up a lot to new possibilities and new ideas.” Naturally, these assessments led to instances where students began to make tough choices. “Some of them were making a choice to see if they were going to get that 3.80 or above to get into that school of nursing, in which case I maybe can’t play soccer anymore.”

Advisors
The advisors echoed many of the same thoughts as faculty regarding students’ self assessments. “Some students walked into my office this semester and say ‘well I know I made a 4 year plan, but I know I’m not going to graduate in 4 years, and I know that’ and they can own it.” One unique point that the advisors made was that completing a project of the scope of the PDP might be new to many students. “I think that overall awareness of it and introducing it in a freshman seminar class kind of gave them the heads up of a comprehensive college level project could be like or look like.”

Goal Setting

Faculty
The faculty members noted that through the PDP process, the students began to evaluate their values and goals. “They start to see that my values are over here, and my goals are over here, and they see that they really aren’t compatible with one another.” The faculty also suggested that students found that completing their goals in college would not necessarily be as easy as completing similar goals in high school. “And we discovered through the PDP that it kind of gave them a roadmap and they could see that the journey was not as easy as they thought, even though most of them were pretty good students.” Beyond that, the faculty felt that student’s were able to connect to a larger sense of personal values and life purpose. “So it wasn’t just about career development and experiential learning. Not just about career development, but there is a broader role for education, there is a broader role for you as a person. And all these things fit together.” Another faculty member put it this way, “Ok you have a major and career thing going here, but there is more to life, there is more to you.”

Advisors
The advisors agreed that the PDP process led to student’s creating more detailed and articulated goals for their majors and ultimately their careers. “…not just goals academically, but goals for major and career…If they are exploratory, to really explore all the avenues and resources to help them establish those goals through the process.” Also, it was suggested that the PDP brought together what the students’ own goals were and what the University’s goals for them were, and how those two interconnect. As one advisor put it, “a connection to what the University’s goals for what their education is.” Additionally, Multiple advisors referred to students asking what co-curricular activities they could get involved in. “Besides taking classes, what other things may I get involved in, take advantage of, what types of experiences might there be out there? And we could explore those more in depth.” This seemed to be
particularly true in regards to study abroad. “And they have solidified ideas… before it was just saying I want to study abroad. Now they have found a program, and they know what semester they want to go”.

Planning

Faculty
The faculty supported the notion that the PDP process helped students in their ability to locate the resources they needed to plan out their futures. “So, to get them thinking about the general courses needed through your sophomore year, so you will be ready to move into a major... I find it very beneficial for them. And most of them do too.” One faculty member noted that the planning became strategic, picking courses that went towards multiple majors the student might be interested in. “One thing I liked about exploratory students was the students at the end were able to say I may not know what my major will be, but the courses that I’m taking next semester are going to go towards several things that I may be interested in. So they were already starting to get strategic.”

Advisors
The advisors seemed to agree that students made significant strides in their ability to plan out their coursework. “Really understanding their degree and their classes and what comes next after this semester. Just feeling and understanding their major and how they go into it and how they apply and what they need to take.” This included not only their ability to plan out the courses they needed to take, but also in locating the appropriate resources to find new information should their situations change. “Even though the plan changed, they knew how to go ahead and start the process of making those decisions and where they can find those answers.” Many linked this to a broader sense of empowerment. They suggested the students were beginning to feel more in control of their own experiences. “Well, it’s a little more empowerment too…I feel like they felt like they were in control. They didn’t have to come to you to say I want to major in sociology, they knew how to find it on their own and figure out what they need to take.”

Planning (as advisors)
One, perhaps unintended, consequence of going through the PDP for the advisors themselves was more effective and detailed planning on their part. “So, I actually learned a lot as an advisor and I was able to help them on how they should be taking their classes.” More specifically, they noticed that they were thinking farther into the future and asking the students those questions. “So, they are coming to me to talk about spring classes, but I’m also going to talk about summer and fall classes.” The advisors were providing more detailed guidance not only to those students currently completing the PDP, but to all of their students; “…in the PDP we did 2 years out, so I helped them plan those 2 years. But, now I help everybody.”

Section B: Challenges

Lack of Purpose

Faculty
This was by far the most mentioned challenging aspect of the program, with both advisors and faculty mentioning that some students were at times unable to see the utility of their work on the PDP. The faculty noted that students seemed to find four year planning especially challenging in terms of usefulness. This was particularly true of undecided freshmen. “I teach students that haven’t chosen a major and because they haven’t they feel like they don’t want to commit on paper to even a tentative plan… because they feel that they haven’t made up their mind yet.” However, one faculty member suggested that these perceptions could have changed once the students moved beyond their first semester.
“When you are in the middle of it, you don’t necessarily get the benefit of it because you are just trying to get it done.”

**Advisors**
The advisors pointed repeatedly to the student’s perceptions of the project as “busy work”. “Not taking it seriously was a challenge because some students were just doing it because it was an assignment that had to be done…and you could really see a difference in the students who did it because they were told and it was an assignment and the students that actually got something out of the experience.” The heart of the problem seemed to be that student’s were unable to connect the day to day work with their ultimate goals, at least at first. “I think they saw it as busy work and not something that they are valuing as each day went by.” One advisor pointed to the overall workload as being a possible mediator of the negative reactions. “Their first semester they felt like it was already a lot of work and it seemed to overwhelm them.”

**Locating Resources**

**Faculty**

Both groups made some mention of the fact that students found it hard to locate resources. This is not surprising as this was a new process for many incoming freshmen, having most of their schedules created for them in high school. One faculty member put the situation quite bluntly: “They would say things to me like ‘I’m a criminal justice major, how am I supposed to know what I’m supposed to take?’…So they had no idea that it was something that was available or that they should go look for it.”

**Advisors**

Beyond just acknowledging that scheduling was their responsibility, the consistency of available information for different majors seemed to be a common issue that students brought up with advisors. “I felt like my students struggled the most…with creating a four year plan and really being able to access the resources they needed to do it in a quality way to make sense of it, so they could go back and use it.” Consistency of available information was an issue brought up by some advisors. “Well, creating a four year plan but yeah getting to be able to do that was hard for them because the school that they were part of or the major they chose to be a part of did not have consistent information posted anywhere.”

**Balancing Workload**

**Faculty**

Another theme shared in both groups was the heavy workload for a class worth only one credit hour. The faculty proposed that balancing the work was hard for both the students and themselves. “…how to balance the student’s workload from the other workload we are expecting from them. So that was a challenge for both them and for us. They did tell us that they had way too much work to do for a 1 credit hour course.”

**Advisors**

The advisors mentioned that the students’ procrastination might have been at the heart of the problem. “For my students, they looked at it as the project that’s due at the end… they waited until the end, which I think is just students in general.”One advisor pointed to the overall workload as being a possible predictor of the negative reactions to the PDP by some students. “I think I got a lot of moans and groans and blank stares. Just a negative reaction to already a lot of expectations for a one credit hour class in their opinion… it seemed to overwhelm them.”
Section C: Suggestions for Change

Integration and Continuation

Faculty
A major area of discussion between the faculty members was the integration of the PDP throughout the university, and similarly the continuation of the PDP throughout the students’ time at IUPUI. “I guess I had a question of implementation at the campus level and is that long term. I think we can talk about process, but at the end of the day, does there need to be some product based components that are intelligible across schools that students can carry with them...” Some faculty pointed out the need for consistency, noting that many students’ change majors. “But if they are changing their majors and going to different parts of the campus, the issue is how do they talk about this experience?...Are the faculty and the advisors going to be ready for students who may have started this process under different circumstances?” Other faculty disagreed, pointing out that students in certain programs could benefit from more personalized PDP’s. “I think the key to any changes is up to the instructional team where they can look at everything and then pick and choose what they think is appropriate for their class, their students and their planning process.”

Despite disagreements regarding consistency, most of the faculty agreed with the need for a continuation of the PDP. “It shouldn’t just be first year and first semester. We need to come back and bring the intentionality and say ‘Hey how are you? How’s it going?’” A suggestion by many faculty members to increase continuity was moving the project online. “Oncourse, that would be more helpful. That would also help save the documents, where they could drop them in the drop box, store them and then retrieve them if we needed to print a document at a later time.”

Advisors
Unlike the faculty, the advisors suggested almost unanimously that the PDP should be more consistent. “Yeah, and if it’s a consistent end result then they have to return to it later that makes it easier on whoever is facilitating.” Furthermore, they urged faculty to make it a more integrated part of their learning communities. “So integrating the learning outcomes of your learning communities and are those appropriately matched up with the learning outcomes of your PDP’s...” Like the faculty, the advisors also stressed continuity and university buy-in. “And if we could link it to later and do something with it later in their college career here then it takes on a little extra weight too. It’s not just I turned it in once and I never have to look at it again.”

Roles of the Instruction Team

Faculty
One thing that was mentioned repeatedly in both groups was the need for increased communication among the members of the team, especially the faculty and advisors, on what their roles would be. “I think that during this next year we have to find that nice happy medium and working together with collaboration and especially with the advisors to find that.” The faculty also suggested that the ultimate grading of the project should rest on their shoulders. “I do think the faculty’s responsibility is the grading...So definitely they [the advisors] could help in the coordination of the projects is very important. But the actual grading should be left to the actual responsible person.”

Advisors
The advisors also felt the need for increased communication, especially in regards to grading. “There needs to be some communication of who is solely responsible for the grading of the PDP and also the grade at the end of the semester.” The problem for the advisors was that they felt the grading was
inconsistent with their role as advisors. “Just in general if students see us as at the end as someone who could have a say in what their grade is going to be, it could maybe hinder them from coming to us if they have other things going on.” On a more practical note, the advisors felt they did not have the time to grade. “I think a lot of us enjoy doing this stuff… we just don’t have the time to plan and grade and reflect that faculty members do have and get paid to do.” Despite feeling that grading responsibility should rest with the faculty, the advisors did enjoy being part of the process and want to continue to be involved. “I think advisors can do a lot of facilitation and we can be utilized in that way as long as the amount of time we are spending is respected.”

**Increasing Perceived Value**

**Faculty**
The faculty had a few suggestions regarding how the PDP could be altered to encourage students to see the value in what they are putting together. One faculty member mentioned pointing out the cost and time savings of strategically planning classes. “Especially today when the cost of education is so high, you know students can’t start and stop and start and stop and waste a lot of time and effort.” Another faculty member suggested making the PDP more important to the overall grade of the class. “My class their grade on the PDP was one third of this semester grade. So 150 points, 50 points was the PDP…So it did have that additional thing of being rewarded for the work they put into it.”

**Advisors**
The advisors also had many suggestions regarding making the project appear more valuable to the students. “So, just really having them understand why we are doing it and it’s not just a project.” One advisor proposed framing the project as providing skills essential in the workforce. “For PUL’s I think it’s important to convey to them that job employers will look for a lot of these things.” Getting all members of the instructional team to buy-in to the process and really understand the process was also brought up as an essential element. “So going into it we understand it and what our purposes and outcomes are so that all of us can be educated to talk about it and we can help the students buy into it as a process.” Some advisors pointed to short term goals as a way to connect to at-risk students in particular. “I know for me, long term goals are great, but I can be so overwhelmed by the long term goals that like I need the small successes along the way. So I think a lot of times that’s what our students need.”

**Section D: Conclusion**

It is reasonable to conclude that the PDP process was valued by both the faculty and advisors. Both groups, the advisors and the faculty, addressed many of the same themes when assessing the benefits of the program. Reassuringly, the perceived benefits shared by both the faculty and the advisors matched closely to the PDP learning outcomes.

Many of the challenges brought up by both the faculty and the advisors were areas that many first year students naturally struggle with as they transition into college life. In fact, many of these areas were also the areas that they made the most growth. In that way, the challenges were not necessarily detrimental to students’ overall achievement. For instance, locating resources was a challenge for the students in the program, but was also a key benefit students noticed after the PDP process.

Nonetheless, the faculty and advisors gave some appropriate suggestions to improve the PDP process. In some instances, the suggestions given were already being considered and awaiting implementation. One example is bringing the PDP online, which was stated as a goal of the program from its inception. Thus, the focus groups provided a clear assessment of the benefits and challenges facing the PDP, and some important suggestions for improvement as we move the program forward.
Appendix A:

PDP – Personal Development Planning

A. One Definition: Personal Development Planning is a process which will enable first year students at IUPUI to understand, implement, and mark progress towards a degree and a career goal by creating and following a personalized plan that is open to revision and reevaluation every semester in collaboration with an academic advisor.

B. Two Institutional Objectives
   1. Goal Commitment: Increase students’ commitment and motivation to achieve a college degree through a personalized understanding and ownership of an integrated academic and career planning process.
   2. Academic Achievement: Increase students’ awareness and implementation of personal, academic, and career strategies to help them achieve their goals for college and beyond.

C. Three Components of a Personal Development Plan (PDP)
   1. Semester in Review: Reflect on individual strengths, long term goals, challenges faced during the first semester, and IUPUI resources utilized.
   2. Principles of Undergraduate Learning: Identify how IUPUI’s learning outcomes (PUL’s) are connected to personalized academic and experiential goals.
   3. Peak Performance Plan: Outline specific action steps, courses, and extracurricular activities targeted for the undergraduate experience.

D. Four Roles on the Instructional Team
   1. Faculty will develop the learning community curriculum in collaboration with the advisor on their instructional team in order to integrate the PDP process into instructional activities.
   2. Advisors will conduct classroom interventions and activities to support the PDP process and consult individually with students to help them develop their PDP.
   3. Mentors can share examples of their own Personal Development Plan.
   4. Librarians can participate by providing resources to support career exploration.

E. Five Learning Outcomes in the PDP Process: In order for students to successfully complete the three components in their PDP (see above) they will need to have opportunities in their learning communities to experience some form of:
   1. Self Assessment: Students identify success-related competencies that are natural strengths they already have as well as other skills that they need to build.
   2. Exploration: Students research and develop a realistic, informed, and detailed vision of related academic and career goals.
   3. Evaluation: Students analyze their academic progress over the semester in terms of academic and career success strategies.
   4. Goal Setting: Students connect a larger sense of personal values and life purpose to the motivation and inspiration behind their academic and career goals.
   5. Planning: Students locate programs, information, people, and opportunities to support and reality test their goals. They identify specific short term steps to reach their long term goals.
Appendix A (Continued):

PDP Learning Outcomes for UC Task Force

Submitted November ’08 by the Subcommittee on Learning Outcomes

(Janet Meyer, Joan Pedersen, and Ingrid Ritchie with input from Cathy Buyarski)

Self Assessment: Students identify the aspirations and strengths they already have, as well as other skills they need to build to support their success in college. Students will:

1. Identify their reasons for seeking a college degree.
2. Describe the personal traits and beliefs that make up their identity.
3. Discuss how their cultural background influences their aspirations.
4. Identify their strengths, skills, and competencies.
5. Determine their preferred style for optimal learning.
6. Identify academic skills that complement their learning style.
7. Reflect on potential challenges to college success.

Exploration: Students research academic and career goals and develop an informed, detailed, and realistic vision of related majors and careers of interest. They will:

1. Determine the program/course requirements (including prerequisites, credit hours, and electives) involved in a major of interest.
2. Reflect on the academic and other strengths they bring to a selected major.
3. Identify careers related to a major of interest.
4. Identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA’s) needed to pursue a specific career.
5. Relate the KSA’s needed to pursue a specific career to IUPUI’s PUL’s.
6. Research basic facts (salary, projected growth, job requirements, etc.) about a career of interest.

Goal Setting: Students connect a larger sense of personal values and life purpose to the motivation and inspiration behind their academic and career goals. They identify both long term and short term goals. Students will:

1. Develop long term academic and career goals based on self assessment and major/career exploration.
2. Specify short term goals that support long term academic and career goals.
3. Develop a time frame for achieving both short and long term goals.
4. Connect academic and career goals to personal priorities.
5. Connect academic and career goals to IUPUI’s PUL’s.

Planning: Students locate programs, people, and opportunities to support and reality test their goals. Students prioritize their action steps to implement their goals. Students will:

1. Build a semester-by-semester course plan through at least the fourth semester of enrollment.
2. Outline options for gaining experience outside the classroom through involvement in student employment, volunteer work, campus activities, research projects, international travel, service learning, and experiential learning opportunities such as internships.
3. Identify skills needed and IUPUI resources available to support achieving academic and career success.
Evaluation: Students analyze their academic progress over the semester in terms of academic and career success strategies. Students will:

1. Estimate their grades in each of their classes and identify the behaviors and consequences associated with their current academic performance.
2. Describe the ways that they handled the personal and academic challenges they faced this semester, how they succeeded (or did not succeed), and what they have learned from these challenges.
3. Identify the aspects of their college experience that they can build on to achieve success in future semesters.
4. Identify career planning actions accomplished this semester and specify their next steps to continue their career development next semester.
Appendix B

IUPUI Personal Development Plan (PDP) Questionnaire

The purpose of this survey is to assess your thoughts about the Personal Development Plan (PDP) process. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. Your opinions are important! Results of this survey will be used to improve the PDP and enhance our knowledge of how the process benefits students. Responses are confidential. In other words, your responses will be used for research purposes only and only summary responses will be reported. Your name and other identifying data will not be used in any reports. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you may discontinue this survey or simply skip items.

Did you complete a Personal Development Plan (PDP) this semester? □ No  □ Yes

DIRECTIONS: Fill in only one response per item. Please read each statement carefully then select one of the five alternatives.

CORRECT:  □  INCORRECT:  □  □  □  □  □  □

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement:

1. I have a detailed academic plan with specific action steps. □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
2. I have clearly defined academic goals for at least the next two years. □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
3. I have developed a preliminary plan of study for my possible major. □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
4. I have a time frame for achieving each of my goals. □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
5. My academic goals are connected to IUPUI's Principles of Undergraduate Learning (the PULs). □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
6. I have goals that are measurable, achievable, and realistic. □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
7. I can think of specific IUPUI learning experiences that will help me achieve my goals. □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
8. I know what obstacles I have to overcome to succeed in college. □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
9. I am able to identify specific action plans for overcoming potential obstacles. □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
10. I clearly understand my academic strengths, skills, and competencies. □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
11. I have clear career goals. □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
12. I have chosen a major or career that matches my strengths, skills, and competencies. □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
13. I have chosen a major or career that supports my interests and personal values. □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
14. I have identified options for gaining experience outside the classroom (e.g., involvement in student employment, volunteer work, campus activities, research projects, international travel, service learning, and experiential learning opportunities such as internships.) □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree
15. I feel that I have a sense of purpose at IUPUI. □ Strongly Disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Strongly Agree

Continued on other side

Questionnaire drafted by Michele J. Hansen, Ph.D., Director of University College Assessment
Please answer the following questions only if you completed a Personal Development Plan (PDP):

16. Please list three specific things you learned from completing a PDP:

1. 

2. 

3. 

17. What was the most valuable aspect of completing a PDP?

18. What specific suggestions do you have for improving the PDP process?

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement:

19. I will utilize my PDP throughout my college career to help me make educational and career choices.

20. I will continue to update and consult my PDP in future semesters.

21. I will collaborate with my academic advisor in updating my PDP in future semesters.