

WICHE



Western Interstate Commission  
for Higher Education

Western  
Academic  
Leadership  
Forum



# Post-COVID: How Do We Improve Retention, Persistence and Completion?



# OREGON-- Student Success Initiatives During COVID

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# Student Support

(CARES/GEER/ARPA Funds)

Support students by providing funds directly to those students most in need for:

- Technology, including equipment, internet access or hotspots, and broadband;
- Health care, including gaps in health insurance and immediate medical costs;
- Childcare needs, for adult learners and students, particularly those who work in low-wage sectors;
- Financial aid, including supplemental awards to students for both new and existing programs; and/or
- Short-term, non-cash, in-kind emergency disaster relief.



Promote student resiliency during remote learning:

Help students persist in their education

Complete their postsecondary degree or credential

Funded through the Governor's Education Emergency Relief to support historically underserved and economically disadvantaged students who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prioritized to assist students in need who have not previously received CARES Act funding and students most acutely impacted by the pandemic.

# Distance Learning

(CARES/GEER/ARPA Funds)

**Support students by providing funds directly to those students most in need for:**

- **Technology, including equipment, internet access or hotspots, and broadband;**
- **Professional development of faculty for online learning delivery;**
- **Instructional design to develop online courses.**



Provide funding to overcome systemic barriers exacerbated by COVID-19 impacts and better serve students through equitable and innovative approaches to distance learning.

Support for:

Faculty professional development, instructional design, student supports for online/remote courses, or essential hardware or software for online delivery of educational content.



# Strong Start

(federal/state funds)

- **Focus on serving BIPOC and students from underserved communities**
- **Summer bridge kick-off and continuing wrap-around services throughout the school year**
- **Strong academic skill building focus**
- **Provision of other student success skills**
- **Creation of a community of support for students**



**Support students' transition from high school to college.**

**Targeted at 2020 high school graduates who did not attend college in 2020-21 and high school graduates who enrolled in college and were adversely impacted by the pandemic with reduced academic load, financial distress and poor grades.**

**Address each community's unique needs, encourage students to seek meaningful coursework to help them complete credentials, acclimatize them to university life, increase retention, and improve student success.**

**Elements include intensive academic supports especially in math and writing, academic advising, note-taking skills, time management, early move-in to campus, peer mentoring, tutoring, and financial literacy.**

# Benefits Navigator

(State Funds)

To assist students with applying for, and receiving need-based financial benefits provided by deferral, state, and local programs.

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medicaid
- Housing Assistance
- Childcare
- Financial Assistance
- Textbook Assistance
- Food Insecurity



HB 2835 (2021) requirements of each community college and public university:

Employ a benefits navigator to assist students in determining eligibility and applying for federal, state and local benefits programs.

Establish statewide consortium to enable Grantee's benefits navigator to coordinate with benefits navigators at other institutions and to develop best practices.

Develop internal processes to enable students to provide feedback and recommendations on how institution can better assist students in determining eligibility for benefits programs and applying for assistance under benefits programs.

# Post-Covid: How Do We Improve Retention, Persistence, and Completion?

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Claudia Lampman, Ph.D., Vice  
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Dean of the Honors College  
University of Alaska Anchorage



# University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA)

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- A regional, comprehensive open access institution with 15,500 students on 5 campuses
- Offers associates, bachelors, masters, and several doctoral degrees plus occupational endorsement certificates
- A dual mission institution in a state that does not have a community college system
- A commuter campus; approximately 5% of students live on campus





# Main Challenges During Pandemic (and before)

- In our open admissions environment, 4 in 10 freshman place into pre-GER level writing; 6 in 10 into pre-GER level math, yet 2 in 3 freshman are seeking Bachelor's degrees
- Significant equity gaps in persistence, retention, and course pass rates – especially in entry level courses that are gateways to success in STEM and Health
- As a commuter campus, UAA has always faced challenges helping students connect to the institution, support programs, and faculty, advisors, and peers
- These challenges were magnified by the pandemic

# Harnessing the Power of Peers

- We've made significant investment in peer-to-peer programs to increase sense of belonging, improve academic success, and close equity gaps:
  - peer mentorship programs
  - peer learning assistants
  - virtual peer studying platform

# Embracing Technology to Foster Connection

- Launched [Seawolf Mentor](#) in Spring 2020
  - Volunteer peer mentorship programs in partnership with [Mentor Collective](#)
    - 1st Year program matches incoming freshman with a sophomore, junior or senior with common majors or life challenges
    - Career program matches sophomores+ with alumni in their fields
- Launched [CircleIn](#) in Fall 2020
  - Virtual student community within a course section
  - Gamified platform to encourage remote peer to peer studying and self-management of coursework
- Virtual Advising via [Seawolf Tracks](#) (EAB Navigate)
  - Increased advising campaigns, text messaging campaigns and all virtual advising

# Who is Participating?

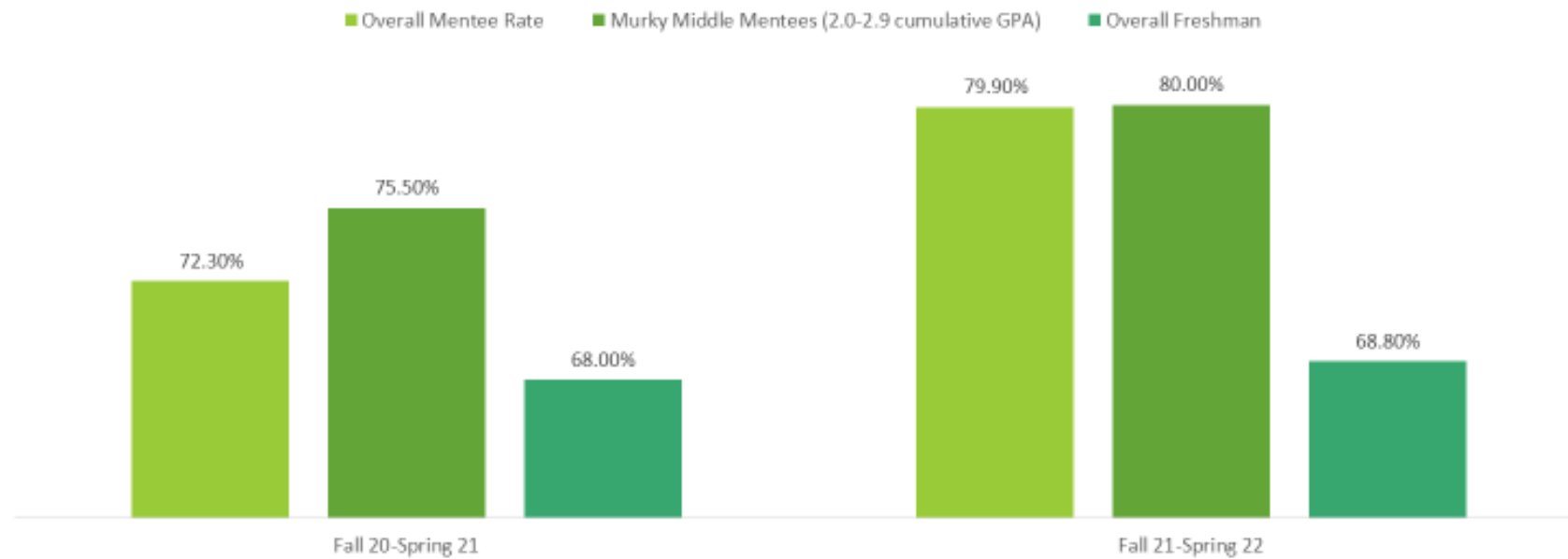
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- 2020-2022: 1840 Matches
  - 63% from historically underserved populations
  - 16% first generation
  - Need for support/risk level
    - Low: 42%
    - Moderate: 21%
    - High: 13%
    - Unknown: 25%





### First Year Program Mentees Persist at Higher Rates than all Freshman





# Who is Participating?

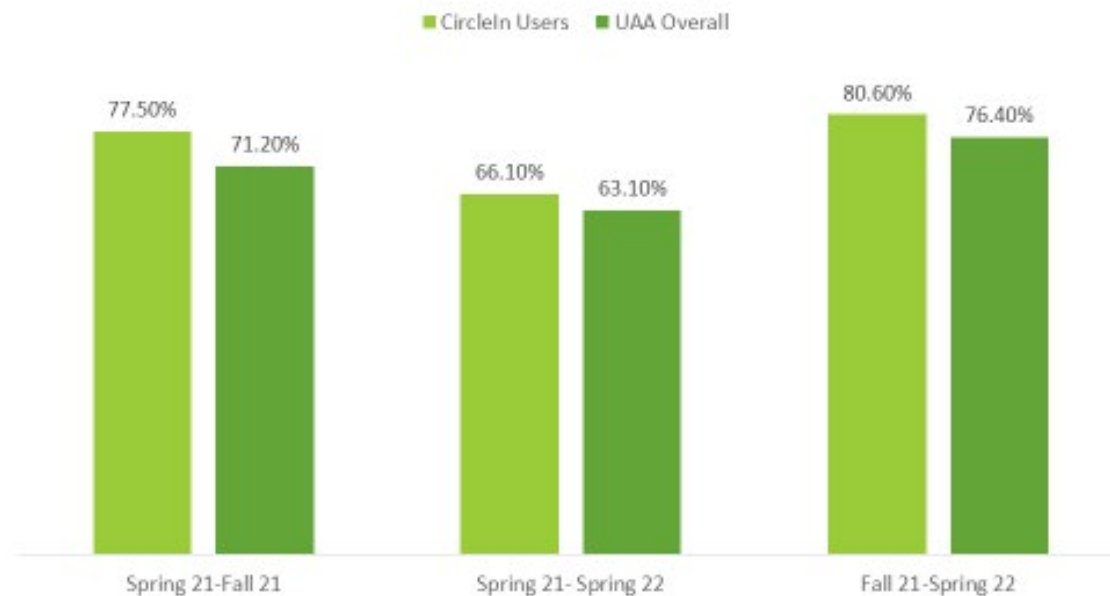
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- 2020-2022: 2500+ regular users
  - Low: 50%
  - Moderate: 12%
  - High: 3%
  - Unknown: 35%





### CircleIn Users Persist at Higher Rates



#### Spring 21 CircleIn Users:

- Average cumulative GPA increased from 2.8 to 3.03 (+8.2%)

#### Fall 21 CircleIn Users:

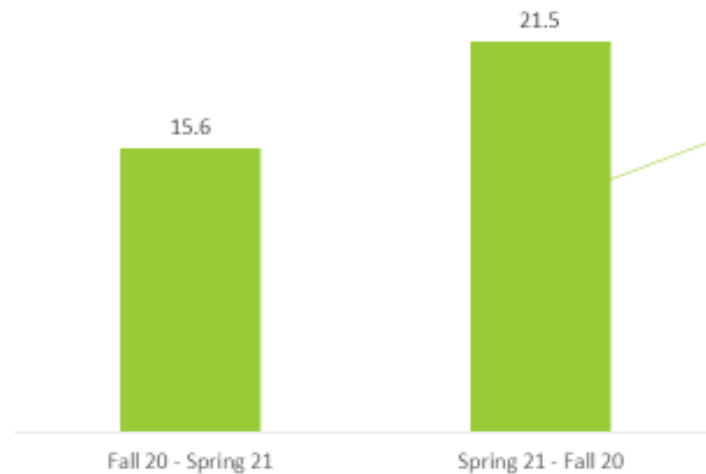
- Average cumulative GPA increased from 2.54 to 2.65 (+4.3%)

## Seawolf Tracks and Advising Appointment Campaigns



Students with appointments through advising appointment campaigns had higher persistence rates than peers without appointments

■ % Persistence Gains



Advisor initiated appointment campaign outreach increased by **21.5%** from Fall 20 to Fall 21.

“Murky Middle” students (2.0-2.9 cumulative GPA) with these appointments persisted to Spring 21 at **11.4% higher rate** than peers without the appointments



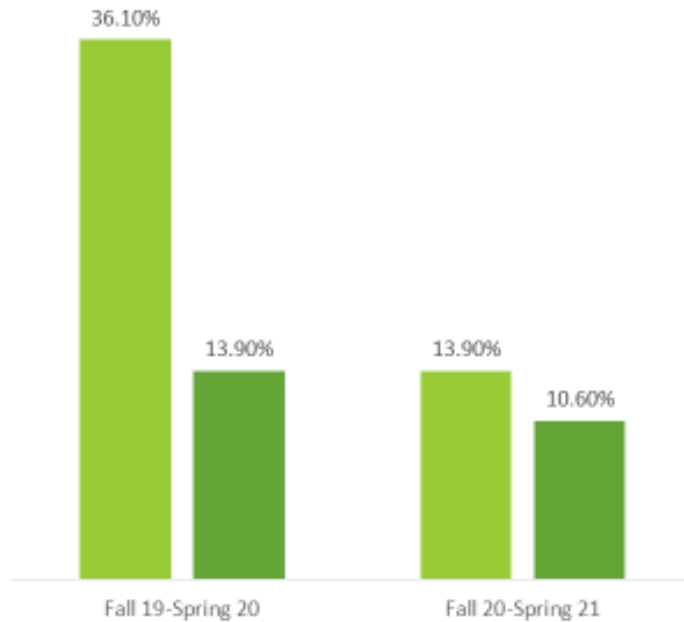
In Fall 2020, first year students and sophomores with the mobile app had a **5.3% higher** Spring 21 persistence rate than all first year and sophomore students.



## Faculty Early Alerts + Staff Outreach Makes a Difference on First Year Students Academic Success

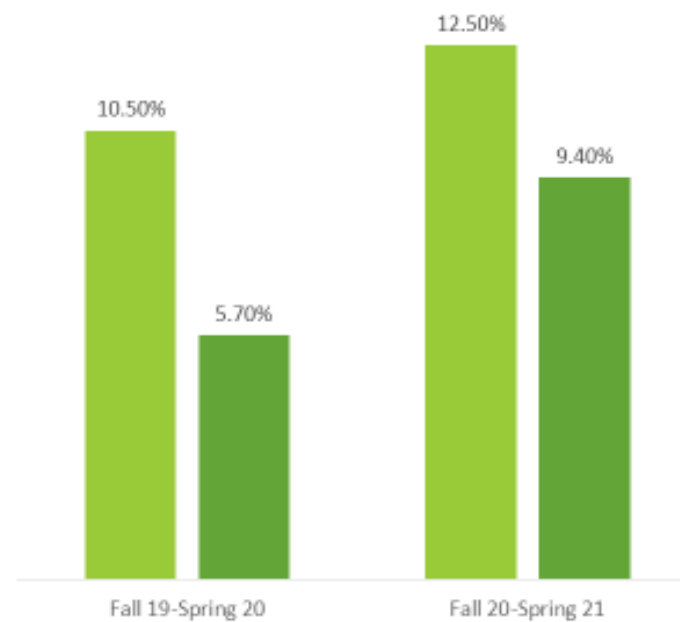
% Gains in Average Term GPA

■ 1st Years with Staff Outreach ■ 1st Year Overall



% Gains in Average Credit Completion

■ 1st Years with Staff Outreach ■ 1st Year Overall



# Discussion Questions

- What pedagogical shifts did we see – evaluation and delivery?
- To what extent did the influx of state or federal resources enable the implementation of these pedagogical adjustments? Which are sustainable beyond the influx of resources?
- Increased use of technology for proctored exams. What did you do?