

## Summary Review: I-AM Advising Model and Implementation

Des Moines Area Community College

Reviewed by: Dr. Wendy Robinson

### Overview of I-AM Model

The Iowa Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (I-AM) was designed to equip eligible Iowans with the skills and training needed to meet the current and future needs of the advanced manufacturing sector. Given that participants seeking a post-secondary credential through this initiative would have varying levels of academic preparedness and familiarity with navigating the sometimes complex environment of higher education, a specific strategy for participating institutions was to implement and provide intensive advising.

The intensive model is meant to be holistic and to help students succeed by focusing on recruitment into an appropriate program, retention in that program, and navigation to a career following completion. By utilizing a trained professional (known by a variety of titles, including Career Pathway Navigator, Academic Advisor, or Completion Specialist) colleges participating in the I-AM model were able to ensure that students were given timely information, connection to campus and community resources, and assistance with exploring career or further educational options.

Elements of the I-AM model include focused outreach to prospective participants and area businesses, assistance with application and enrollment tasks, new student orientation, on-going advising services throughout the duration of the student's enrollment, and assistance with career related tasks such as interview preparation and developing related job seeking skills.

### Merits of I-AM Model

It has long been held that advising, properly delivered, can have a powerful impact on a student's post-secondary educational experience and their likelihood to persist until the completion of their chosen program of study (Cuseo, 2003; Drake, 2011). Regardless of institutional type, size, or location, research indicates that solid academic advising can dramatically influence how a student views their education experience. As Pacarell and Terenzini (2005) note, students who are the most academically successful when they have a connection to the institution who can help them navigate, both academically and socially.

The I-AM model demonstrates a comprehensive and holistic approach to providing advising services. This model, which begins prior to enrollment and lasts through the entire duration of a student's program, provides support that is more robust at the front end of a student's experience when a student is most likely to stop out. As a student continues in their program, the focus of advising shifts from how to navigate the college environment, a skill that should be mastered by that time, to how to prepare for the career of their choosing.

High quality advising must recognize that there are non-academic reasons that students will fail to persist. The I-AM model addresses life outside the classroom by providing resources and referrals to both on-campus and community supports. These supports include, but are not limited to, assistance

with financial aid, mental health counseling, accommodations for disabled students, and career coaching such as interview practice and resume writing assistance.

The I-AM model is designed so that there are stable checkpoints along the way and for students to have one-on-one interactions with a concerned representative of the institution. While recognizing that not all students will require all services, the I-AM model is robust enough to account for the fact that students will have both academic and non-academic needs and that those needs will shift as the student moves from prospect to enrolled to alumni.

The development of the I-AM model allows for it to be implemented in a way that is flexible enough to fit the needs and resources of all participating campuses, as will be further discussed in the next section.

### **Implementation of I-AM Model**

Elements of the I-AM model were consistently, though not universally, adopted by the majority of the colleges receiving U.S. Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career Training (TAACCCT) funds.

Having mandated or “intrusive” advising was a part of the model at 87% of the I-AM colleges, though there was significant variation in the amount of advising required. For example, while North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC) mandated a meeting with a Program Specialist upon entry and then again at the end of the program, Iowa Central Community College (ICCC) required weekly meeting with a Case Manager. There was also variation in the titles and responsibilities of the college staff in place to provide advising services, with 80% of colleges hiring a dedicated staff member to work with signature programs.

One element of the advising model that appeared to be an integral part of the adopted model at participating campus was assistance with tasks related to on-boarding: assistance with navigating the assessment and enrollment process, explanation of available and appropriate programs, and providing orientation and course registration assistance.

The complete I-AM model has multiple elements designed to promote recruitment, retention, and career connection. The model, elements of which are found at the majority of the TAACCCT program campus sites, is both comprehensive and adaptable. I-AM model schools are finding success at supporting students through recruitment and enrollment and to persist through program completion and the start of professional careers.

### **Summary**

The I-AM model for advising is aligned with current research on how to provide effective advising services and allows for flexibility in adoption so that individual campuses/programs are able to best meet the needs of their population.

Dr. Wendy Robinson

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## References

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