

Review Process Recommendation*

	Printed Name	Signature	Date
Department Head:	_____	<u><i>Sarah R Gordon</i></u>	_____
Recommend		Not Recommended	(please provide a brief rationale)
Dean:	_____	<u><i>Linda Bean</i></u>	<u>5.21.2021</u>
Recommend	✓	Not Recommended	(please provide a brief rationale)
VPAA:	_____	_____	_____
Recommend		Not Recommended	(please provide a brief rationale)
President:	_____	_____	_____
Recommend		Not Recommended	

*A recommendation at the department head or dean level is considered as full support of the pre-proposal. If a pre-proposal is not recommended at the department head or dean's level it should not be sent forward to the VPAA.

Note: Recommendation for a pre-proposal should not be considered as a tacit approval of a program proposal. A pre-proposal is preliminary approval to move forward with completing a program proposal. Program approval is not final until all requisite bodies and accreditation entities have approved.

Certificate in Online Student Support

The Graduate Certificate in Online Student Support is designed to allow academic support administrators to develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies that can prepare them to assume leadership roles in the development and implementation of online student support services and related programming at their institutions. The *ACPA/NASPA Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators* lists Technology in its most recent revision, stating that “Student learning and success spans environments that are both physical and virtual; thus, student affairs educators must proactively engage students within these settings. ... student affairs work is dynamic and must use a variety of tools to engage students in learning (2015, p. 5).”

Justification/Need for Program

The past year’s major pandemic event provides the impetus for the development of this certificate. In March 2020, essentially every institution of higher education “pivoted” to remote teaching and learning. For the most part, this movement to virtual instruction was far easier for faculty than the move to provide the services that support the academic enterprise. Resources to assist faculty in moving to online delivery has been operational for years. The Office of Information Services and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning offer training in technology and distance education for faculty. Other than forwarding phone calls and using the often hastily acquired web conferencing/meeting/texting software to hold virtual meetings, academic support services had to develop completely new operating structures that had not previously existed. Anecdotally, many student affairs administrators were adrift, not knowing how to continue to provide the support for students that was typical in a face-to-face setting.

A survey on the Remote Work Experience administered in April 2020 sent to faculty, staff, and students at ATU shows that after addressing service issues related to working from home (21.14%), the main challenge for staff members at 19.92% was a lack of familiarity or comfort using remote technologies/applications. (Only 3.14% of faculty and 12.94% of students relayed that they were unfamiliar or uncomfortable with online applications/tools.)

Cursory examination of similar master’s degree programs in student affairs administration and/or higher education administration yielded less than five similar certificates. None of these programs are located in Arkansas or the surrounding region. A recent Shareholder’s Meeting held with alumni employed in the field garnered support for such a certificate in hiring decisions.

While the College of Education provides for a Certificate in Online Teaching, there is no comparable program of study for individuals involved in academic support work. This would be a unique program within the state. This certificate will also draw on the expertise of faculty in the Professional Studies program who have successfully incorporated online student services into their program and have active research agendas concerning these models.

With an increasing number of programs providing online instruction accreditors are requiring comparable support services be provided to distance students. Currently this type of support is offered through phone lines or web forms. An understanding of the specific needs of distance

students in the design of basic services is spotty, there is even less expansion of student services in the more traditional student development functions and co-curricular experiences to provide a holistic student experience. As the demand for online access to college-level curriculum grows, it is the responsibility of institutions of higher education to ensure equity in access to academic and social support programming. The Certificate in Online Student Support will provide practitioners with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to develop, implement, and lead online student support initiatives.

No impact on existing internal or external programs is foreseen.

Projected Certificate Enrollment

- Based on the enrollment in the current Certificate in Academic Advising, it is possible to have from 5 - 10 students immediately opt to include the certificate as part of their MS in Student Affairs Administration degree, with an unknown number of those who currently hold the MS returning to add this certification to their credentials.

Curriculum Outline

In line with ADHE requirements (12-21 credit hours) the certificate would comprise 15 hours of graduate level work. All 15 credits from the certificate could contribute to the MS Student Affairs Administration degree, as well as stand alone.

Major Courses and Credit Hours (denote new courses with an asterisk)

Counseling (CSP 6043)	3 cr.
Legal Issues in Higher Education (CSP 6053)	3 cr.
Online Support Practicum I (CSP 6083)	3 cr.
*Supporting the Online Student	3 cr.
*Academic Support Technology & Systems	3 cr.

*Courses that will need to be developed, in part or whole by Student Affairs Administration and/or Professional Studies faculty.

Support Courses Required from Other Departments/Programs

None

Resources

Startup costs for this degree would be minimal as the majority of the coursework is currently being offered as part of the MS Student Affairs Administration degree or has been offered as elective credit in past years with the exception of Supporting the Online Student. All coursework in the MS in Student Affairs Administration degree is delivered online as well as face-to-face, so there are no extra costs associated with delivery either

All library resources currently available to students in the MS Student Affairs Administration program would be appropriate and available for students in the certificate program, although additional online resources may be requested as part of the support of the certificate and degree program in future.

No additional space needs are foreseen, as current faculty are sufficient to teach the courses in this certificate and already have offices and equipment for that task.

Faculty

Impact on Workload

The MS Student Affairs Administration degree is delivered completely online, and SAA faculty are well-versed in the technology necessary to address student learning in a higher education setting. At least two if not three of the courses named above could also be taught by colleagues from the Professional Studies program who teach in fully online degrees and have expertise in supporting online students in areas of academic advising, transfer, and online engagement and community development.

Similar programs

Graduate Certificate in Online Student Services Administration from Fairleigh Dickinson University – Teaneck, New Jersey

<https://www.fdu.edu/program/graduate-certificate-online-student-services-administration/>