

Proposed Universal Tracking Extended through Upper Division UCC, November 21, 2017

UF Established Universal Tracking in 1996: UF adopted Universal Tracking (UT) in Fall 1996 to address the observed problem of students taking more hours than was actually required for a degree. UT included three enhancements—tracking through Semesters 1-5, improved advising, and guaranteed core classes. As written in a 1998 report on the progress of UT at UF (see References below), UT “is designed to assist students in finding the best path toward completion of their degree, to advise them in the most appropriate major, and to provide feedback on their academic progress.”

A tracking audit provides a comparison of the student’s current record in Semesters 1-5 with what it should be in their degree program, also known as “critical-tracking criteria.” Students who are off-track because of insufficient grades or inappropriate classes have a hold placed on their registration, only lifted after the student meets with an advisor to devise a plan to get back on track. Two semesters of off-track status render the student ineligible to continue in her/his current major, and advisors counsel them to a new major.

When this system was established, the hope was that upper-division students would benefit from course availability caused by the University more accurately predicting course demands, increased advisor engagement, and timely graduation reminders. Two years after adopting this UT system, the University reported improvements in retention, academic performance, course availability, and change of majors.

Status of Universal Tracking in 2017: The system established in 1996 serves UF students well. Unlike Summer B and Fall admits who are “audited” in the Fall and Spring semesters, Innovation Academy students are “audited” in the Spring and Summer semesters. “Critical tracking” is part of the lexicon of academic advising. Students understand the concept and consequences of being “off track”.

Rationale for Universal Tracking in the Upper Division: Incorporation of Universal Tracking in the first five semesters does not foster a timely graduation mentality but, rather, emphasizes the importance of being in the right major by the end of Semester 5. In fact, because of the dramatic change that Universal Tracking presented to campus when it was first proposed, limiting it to the first five semesters was considered a first step. Extending tracking to Semesters 6-8 is a natural continuation of the philosophy of this program.

Including tracking in Semesters 6-8 would better emphasize a path towards timely graduation, starting in the student’s first semester. Extending Universal Tracking into the upper division will provide a tool to statistically measure the progress of students to 4-year graduation while also allow us to identify any systemic problems in units that may hinder progress towards 4-year graduation.

This all-semester tracking system will support programs and colleges in their efforts to increase timely graduate rates. As was experienced after launch of the current University Tracking system, the university-wide tracking provided support to academic advisors in their efforts to keep students on track to degree. Their difficult conversations about changing majors were validated by the UF-wide rule of Universal Tracking while also assisting them in specific guidance for students. We

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anticipate the same level of support for advisors in their efforts to keep students on track to graduate in 4 years with the inclusion of tracking in the upper division.

Finally, given the increased academic success of students observed with the Semester 1-5 tracking, their continued academic success to 4-year graduation is also anticipated. The expansion of tracking to the upper division, therefore, is a university service that our students deserve.

Proposal for Upper Division Tracking:

- Students should meet certain minimum requirements in Semesters 5-8.
- Each degree program will determine what these minimum critical tracking requirements will be.
- These should be minimum requirements for progression to degree.
- All requirements must be evaluated through the University Curriculum Committee to ensure accurate transfer to the UF Catalog.
- An off-track student will have a hold placed on his or her registration to require a meeting with an advisor. The student should work out a plan to get back on track to graduate on time, if possible.
- If a student is off-track for 2 consecutive terms, she or he must undergo more intensive academic counseling to be determined as UF works with advisors in developing this process.

Proposed Next Steps:

- Faculty feedback (**November 2017-January 2018**):
 - Discussion in the University Curriculum Committee
 - Deans engage in conversations among Undergraduate Coordinators in each college
- Programs develop Upper Division Tracking Criteria and semester plans, and colleges approve each (**January 2018-March 2018**)
- Colleges submit all of its Upper Division tracking plans through the Approval System (**April 2018**)
- University Curriculum Committee completes evaluation of all plans (**April 2018-October 2018**)
- Upper Division Tracking Criteria are programmed into the University Tracking system (**November 2018-May 2019**)
- Upper Division Tracking takes effect (**Fall 2019**)

References

"Academic Progress," 2017. 2017-2018 UF Undergraduate Catalog. Available online at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/academic-progress.aspx>. Date last accessed: November 13, 2017.

Capaldi, Elizabeth D., Lombardi, John V., and Yellen, Victor. July/August 2006. "Improving Graduation Rates: A Simple Method That Works," Change, pp. 44-50. Available online at http://jylone.com/A%20Simple%20Method_Change2006.pdf. Date last accessed, November 14, 2017.

"Universal Tracking," February 1, 1998. In: Measuring University Performance Series, Issue IV:1. Available online at http://www.ir.ufl.edu/mups/issue_0298.htm. Date last accessed: November 12, 2017.