

## Project Details

Title	Improving Academic Advising through an Online Degree Audit System	Status	ACTIVE
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated	
Timeline		Reviewed	
Planned Project Kickoff	04-01-2010	Created	03-25-2010
Target Completion	05-31-2013	Last Modified	03-30-2010

**1:** Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:

**A:** The purpose of this project is to develop an online Degree Audit System for use by students attending IU Northwest. A degree audit system will significantly enhance academic advising and thus student retention and success by allowing students and advisors to track student progress towards individual degrees. It will also allow students and advisors to engage in "what if" scenarios related to changing majors and the impact on degree progression. Students transferring in from other IU campuses would be able to use this same utility in planning their degrees as they move from campus to campus within the IU system.

**2:** Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities:

**A:** Based on Feedback from our original Systems Appraisal Feedback Report and our NSSE results we created an Advisors Council. Members include the main academic advisors from each academic unit on campus. With their help, we developed a Lead Advisors list which has been shared with all Academic and Student Services employees. We also conducted a survey of advisors focused on what tools would enable them to enhance student advising and the most common request was a degree audit system. The Student Government Association (SGA) have collected qualitative student data on academic advising that indicates that the most frequent issue students have is related to delays in academic progress due to misunderstood requirements. Additionally, the state of Indiana (through the Indiana Commission on Higher Education) has indicated that an electronic degree audit system is essential to enhancing student transfers, degree progress and success.

**3:** List the organizational areas -- institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units - - most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

**A:** Academic Affairs, all academic units and departments, and student services

**4:** Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:

**A:** The key organizational process that this Action Project will improve is Academic Advising. The Degree Audit System will be a component of the Student Information System (SIS). SIS is a University-wide computing environment for student administration at IU. It is comprised of a) the PeopleSoft student administration software, b) PeopleSoft self-service modules, and c) the IU Information Environment (IUIE) for reporting. The PeopleSoft product includes a database, a Web interface, and software to process student data in an integrated way. The SIS addresses such key functions as student recruitment, admissions, records, registration, grades, transcripts, advising, financial aid, student accounts (bursar), and data analysis and reporting of student-related information. The key component relevant to this action project is academic advising. The following functions are potentially available to our campus through SIS: assigning groups of students to academic advisors or faculty based on given criteria; saving and accessing stored "what-if" degree audits; and students and advisors will be able to create "what-if" scenarios for various programs or plans (i.e., schools and majors); tracking advising session information, notes and enrollment planning, and providing university-wide access to notes for advisors among other functions. However, these functions are only available after significant academic consultation and programming have been completed. Currently degree audits are done by hand by faculty advisors and verified during graduation checks with the recorders of individual academic units. It is our belief that moving to an electronic degree audit system will be beneficial to both students and advisors and should result in increased student satisfaction with the advising process as well as impact persistence and time to graduation rates. This project will focus campus attention on the importance of creating a degree auditing process. Significant campus resources will need to be committed to this project. A fulltime position entitled Degree Audit Specialist will be hired in the Fall of 2010 pending budget approval. This individual will work fulltime programming degree audits. Academic Affairs with the assistance of the Academic Units will select faculty representatives from each degree program to work with the Degree Audit Specialist to ensure that the degree requirements for their particular degree are accurately represented during programming. Once a particular degree audit has been programmed and debugged with the assistance of the academic unit and degree audit specialist, hands-on training will be provided to all academic advisors in that unit regarding the use of the program and information will be provided to students on how to access the degree audit component of SIS as well. How-to materials will be produced and available in hardcopy and on the web for students and advisors to utilize. Finally, updates will be required as new courses and curricula are developed and existing curricula is modified.

**5:** Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):

**A:** The rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project is related to the amount of time needed to produce the Degree Audits for each academic degree (63 currently), provide training to advisors on how to use the system and produce educational materials on how to use the system. It has been estimated that producing a working degree audit system for a particular degree within the SIS system will take between 40 and 80 hours. If a degree audit specialist is hired and trained by fall 2010 we can expect approximately 20 completed degree audits per year. By the end of academic year 2013 we expect all degree audits to be complete and in use.

**6:** Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:

**A:** The Degree Audit Specialist will report to the Office of Academic Affairs. The Office of Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Deans of each Academic unit, will develop a development timeline and will seek out regular reports on progress and satisfaction from both the programmer and academic units in question. We will keep our institution's attention and energies focused on this Project and its goals by: providing funds for degree audit development; involving faculty from every degree program in the process of creating the individual degree audits; providing institutional/administrative support for the project.

**7:** Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals:

**A:** The outcome measures will include the completion of each audit for the 63 current degrees at IU Northwest, satisfaction with the degree audits by academic advisors as well as students and an evaluation of use by both students and advisors.