

GCC Advisement Process Tracking

A Nomination for the Innovation of the Year Program, 2004

A Description of the Innovation [The Team](#) [Executive Summary](#)

Advisement Process Tracking began as a way to allow visitors to the Advisement Center at Glendale Community College to “sign in” at a computer kiosk to await assistance. Advisors could then correctly read their names aloud from a screen display, plus learn the forms of assistance expected by each visitor (provided during sign-in) prior to the advisement meeting. During its setup at the beginning of 2000, this service was unique to Maricopa.

The design of APT quickly expanded to serve multiple purposes. When a visitor signs in to wait for the next available advisor, the system informs the visitor of the expected waiting time, automatically calculated from current advisement activity. A second public screen displays a waiting list of first names, so that visitors can tell how many people are “ahead” of them at any given time.

Restricted APT screens allow front desk employees to assist with sign-ins as needed, manage the “virtual line,” and assign specific advisors to visitors upon request. Academic advisors at their individual workstations monitor the ever-changing “line” and view past information regarding specific visitors (when available) in addition to the assistance requested by the visitors upon sign-in. This allows each advisor to make appropriate preparations before calling the next name. Each advisor records the forms of assistance provided, referrals given, and other notes during the advisement session itself. The same interface is also used to log sessions by appointment and by phone.

Visitor sign-ins, their purposes for seeking advisement, advisor log-ons, start and end times of advisement sessions, services provided, and other forms of information are all recorded in a common database to which dozens of computers on the campus network are linked via APT. This means the Advisement Center can use this wealth of information for statistical applications. For example, part of the program allows managers to generate graphs that compare Advisement activity in any series of dates, months, weeks, days of week, and/or times of day, affording a clear picture of staffing needs and other scheduling concerns.

Because the program is an original invention of the college, it allows for continuous improvement and expansion adapted to the needs of the campus. As of February 2004, over 100,260 advisement sessions with over 50,000 students and prospective students have been tracked via APT since March of 2000.

The GCC Advisement Process Tracking system has had a positive impact on the education of students according to the following criteria, relating to the Values, Mission, Vision, and Goals of Maricopa Community Colleges as follows:

- **Quality** (*Value Education*): The goal of Academic Advisement is to assist students in making an educational plan; APT facilitates the success of this service for students and helps the Advisement Center plan for future improvements in the process.
- **Efficiency** (*Value Responsibility*): APT saves time and effort for visitors and Advisement personnel alike by providing a self-service sign-in mechanism, and by displaying shared information about the

process “live” over a network even when the environment is too busy for traditional means of communication. The statistics obtained through the system also help Advisement plan for efficient staffing and scheduling.

- **Effectiveness** (*Value Responsibility*): The APT applications are Web-based, i.e. running on the existing infrastructure of campus workstations connected to the Internet, rather than requiring the purchase and maintenance of any specialized networking equipment, PCs, or client software for the sake of this system.
- **Learning** (*Value Students*): Because the APT applications were custom-made by GCC’s own Innovation Center, the program allows for further expansion to help students in new ways. For example, now that the Advisement and Counseling departments work more closely together at GCC, the next step in the continuous development of APT is to facilitate this interdepartmental cooperation to benefit students. I.e., upgrades of APT will aid in directing students to Counseling personnel as needed. The APT plan in whole also has been shared with Advisement personnel at other campuses for their consideration.
- **Creativity** (*Value Excellence*): The sign-in process was brainstormed by the Advisement Center, then developed into a multi-purpose system by the Innovation Center, as an entirely original program making unique use of existing campus network resources.
- **Timeliness** (*Value Excellence*): Visits to the Advisement Center have been facilitated by APT every semester during the nearly four years that the program has been on-line. It is a platform-independent system, making it possible for the program to survive changes in standard work-stations (whether Mac or Windows), operating systems (such as from Windows 95 to 98 to XP as the years have passed), and even the Web server at the heart of the system, which was replaced last year.
- **Collaboration** (*Value Excellence*): As mentioned above, the planning, implementation, and progress of APT has involved the cooperation of at least three separate campus areas (the Advisement Center, the Innovation Center, and for server support, Network Services), and presently a fourth (Counseling Services), which are all focused on serving students.
- **Replication** (*Value Excellence*): Because the program is Web-based, written as a series of ColdFusion scripts (a common server-side programming choice), and integrated with a Microsoft Access database, a replication of the files, with minor changes, could be made to work on any other compatibly equipped Web server for the custom needs of another campus.