Academic Advising Summit

March 23, 2016 | OSU Fawcett Center

SUMMIT FACILITATORS

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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
VISION

Academic advising at The Ohio State University is an integral part of the teaching-learning enterprise, with a connection between advisor and student that is cooperative, responsive, and consistent, involving mutual understanding of shared responsibilities.

MISSION

Academic advising is an ongoing intentional collaboration between advisors and students, grounded in teaching and learning. Advising is based on students gaining accurate and relevant information and direction that guides them in seeking a coherent and meaningful education. It is a process that connects students to The Ohio State University, enabling them to make effective decisions related to their academic goals and the time in which they seek to complete a degree, and maximizing their educational and career opportunities. Quality academic advising is essential to the university’s vision of “Students First.”

SUMMIT GOAL

The goal of the Academic Advising Summit is to bring together a diverse group of university stakeholders to share perspectives, discuss best practices, and recommend ways to enhance advising and improve student success.

“Effective retention programs have come to understand that academic advising is at the very core of successful institutional efforts to educate and retain students.”

Vincent Tinto Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition
ACADEMIC ADVISING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Asks for advising help/actively seeks out relevant information
2. Collaborates with advisor by scheduling, preparing for, attending, and following up on appointments, ongoing degree planning, and other university business
3. Formulates and revises degree plans and selects appropriate courses based on academic goals
4. Uses university tools—Buckeye Link, the Degree Audit Report, Advising report, etc.—to seek answers to academic questions and assess academic progress
5. Takes increasing responsibility for own academic career and plans
6. Understands the value of academic enrichment and co-curricular opportunities
7. Understands university policies and procedures
8. Understands the curricular requirements for her/his degree program
9. Understands the connection between completing a degree and advancing personal development
10. Knows about university support services and uses them when needed
11. Values the process of academic planning and course selection as a means toward realizing academic goals
12. Understands and appreciates the role of the breadth component of the degree
AGENDA

8:30 a.m.   Arrival, Registration and Continental Breakfast

9:00 a.m.   Welcome – Wayne Carlson | Opening Remarks from President Drake

9:15 a.m.   Keynote Address – Dr. Jayne Drake, Temple University, Vice Dean For Academic Affairs, College of Liberal Arts, and Past President – NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising

10:30 a.m.  Break

10:45 a.m.  Breakout Sessions One
  • Perspectives on academic advising
  • Positioning academic advisors for success
  • Advising diverse student populations
  • Leveraging best practices for change

12:00 p.m.  Break

12:15 p.m.  Lunch Presentation Innovations in Academic Advising at Ohio State – Predictive Analytics, Quality Initiative, University Innovation Alliance, First in the World grant, Advisor Training and Technology

1:00 p.m.   Break

1:15 p.m.   Breakout Sessions Two (same topics as morning)

2:45 p.m.   Break

3:00 p.m.   Report Out and Next Steps
  • Breakout session facilitators report out
  • Facilitator Summary
Dr. Jayne Drake gave the keynote address, titled “Academic Advising as a Teaching and Learning Process.” Dr. Drake is the Vice Dean of Academic Affairs at Temple, and a Past President of NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. She started her presentation with the following useful observation from a 2014 paper:

*Advising needs flexible, eclectic practitioners able to adapt their advising strategies in accordance with the needs of their students. Being married to a single approach to academic advising, advisors potentially disregard the diverse ways in which students learn and presume a single, linear developmental path that is clearly more idealistic than realistic.*

Kimball and Campbell, *Academic Advising Approaches*, 2014

Dr. Drake gave a history of advising from 1636 to the present, while describing evolving models: from the old model of advisors as disseminators of information, to the new model that looks at advisors as teachers, mentors, facilitators, and guides, allowing for individual student differences. Her observation is that none of our students possesses a single identity factor, and we as academic professionals need to understand the multi-layered identities inhabited by our students. Her keynote made the following points:

Advisors must also have knowledge of:
- Curricular requirements
- Legal and ethical issues
- Assessment of advising
- Referral resources
- Transfer credit evaluation
- Academic support services
- Mandates from state legislatures
- Professional development
- Counseling and mental health issues
- Learning styles
- Enrollment and registration issues

Academic Advising is:
- Building intentional relationships with students
- Advising conversations that extend beyond course selection, scheduling, and registration
- Helping students connect their personal strengths and interests with their academic and life goals

Academic Advising is not:
- Primarily an administrative function or a paper relationship
- Providing signatures or a PIN number for students
- Registering students for courses or signing withdrawal slips
- A judgmental process or a dictatorship—it’s my way or the highway
- Personal counseling or psychotherapy sessions
- Something anyone can do or should do without specific training/professional development
- Different from Ohio State’s core values
What students want from their advisors:

1. Respectful
2. Knowledgeable
3. Approachable
4. Engaging
5. Communicative
6. Organized
7. Responsive
8. Professional
9. Humorous
10. Accessible

Delaney, Johnson, Johnson, and Treslan

_Students’ Perceptions of Effective Teaching in Higher Education_

Rights of advisees

- Access to accurate information
- Being treated with respect
- Needs addressed seriously and with confidentiality
- Accurate record of progress at the institution
- Assistance from advisors in decision making
- Referrals to appropriate support services
- Obligation to make the final decision

Responsibilities of advisees:

- To participate actively in the advising process
- Be responsible for their own actions
- Be on time for appointments
- Be prepared
- Be willing to discuss problems and challenges
- Respect advisors

Responsibilities of advisors:

- Provide accurate information
- Treat students with respect
- Address student needs with confidentiality
- Keep accurate records of student progress
- Assist students in decision making
- Refer student to appropriate support services
- Allow students to make final decisions

**LUNCHTIME PRESENTATION**

A panel from the Office of Undergraduate Education took time over lunch to discuss Innovations in Academic Advising at Ohio State. John Wanzer, Jennifer Belisle, and Derrick Tillman-Kelly detailed some of the recent and upcoming efforts to connect the advising community with students in pursuit of student success. Tillman-Kelly, who serves as Ohio State’s fellow for the University Innovation Alliance, presented the structure and goals of the UIA and how that partnership benefits our students, but through scaling projects, also benefits students at other institutions that can adapt best practices of Alliance members. One of the UIA projects resulted in an $8.9M award from the First in the World fund for a longitudinal study of the impact of predictive analytics driven interventions on first generation and low-income student retention and graduation. OSU is a subcontractor for that grant and will focus on campus change students from this population that are moving from our regionals to main campus. Our efforts toward the use of predictive analytics is centered on the implementation of the EAB Student Success Collaborative, or SSC, which is a software environment that uses success marker to measure student progress.
through marker courses, and assigning success measures that can be used to mount intervention campaigns if a student should show as at-risk. The system also has capabilities for student/advisor notes, appointment scheduling, and connections with support resources, such as tutoring or study skills. Wanzer discussed our progress with the Higher Learning Commission reaffirmation of institutional accreditation, particularly focused on our Quality Initiative, which is focused on advising. Belisle presented new activities in advisor training and new technology innovation.

**ATTENDEES**
A cross section of academic advising stakeholders was convened for the Summit. The facilitators invited 174 representatives from the following groups (number in parentheses). Total attendance across all categories was 144. Attendees chose two of the four breakout sessions to attend, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. We had a good balance across the sessions.

- University leadership (7)
- Deans/ Directors (17)
- Associate Deans (20)
- OAA leaders (7)
- Faculty (21)
- Students (26)
- Advisors (37)
- Advising Administrators (22)
- Support units (17)

**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**
Each breakout session was offered in the morning and the afternoon. Attendees chose two of the four to attend. After the sessions completed in the afternoon, the session moderators reported out the observations made in each session. Comment cards were collected for each session and for the summit in general, and different emerging themes were observed. Moderators then did a summary of the sessions and summit in written form. All comments and summaries are available for review.

**PERSPECTIVES ON ACADEMIC ADVISING**
Facilitators:
Prof. Andrew Martin – Faculty Honors Advisor, ASC; Andrea Evans – Prof. Advisor, Fisher College of Business; Samer Abusway – Undergraduate Student (USG)

**Goal:** increase the understanding of what advisors do, while learning what stakeholders think they do
- What do you wish the various stakeholders know about advising?
- Viewpoints of administration, faculty, staff, students and advisors
- Explanation of current distributed advising model

**Discussion Summary**
Coming soon

**ADVISING DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATIONS**
Facilitators:
Brad Fittes – Prof. Advisor, Military and Veteran Services; Chila Thomas – Ass’t Director, YSP-ODI; Chad McClellan – Academic Counselor, SASSO

Goal: raise awareness about the complexity of academic advising different populations, and the breadth/depth of knowledge needed
- Academic advising challenges that come with special student populations
- Student athletes (SASSO)
- Student-veterans (Office of Military and Veterans Services)
- Undecided students (University Exploration)
- Campus change students
- Low income/First Generation students
- Honors and Scholars
- Incoming students with college credit (may or may not be college ready)

Discussion Summary
Coming soon

POSITIONING ADVISORS FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS
Facilitators:
Emily Carpenter – Prof. Advisor, ASC; Suzanne Dantuono – Advising Admin, Engineering; Emily Underation – Undergraduate Student (USG)

Goal: identify ways we can help advisors be more effective while raising awareness of existing obstacles
- Identify and manage competing demands for advisor time
- Institutional barriers
- Enhancing academic advisors’ roles in the business of the university community through participation in governance, curriculum discussions etc.
- Better utilize advisors’ talents and expertise
- Recognize advising as a career path, through rewards, professional development, career progression

Discussion Summary
Our discussion centered around the expanding demands on time of academic advisors. There was agreement from all stakeholders – faculty, administrators, advisors, leadership, and students – that advising plays an important role in the success of students and academic programs. Advisors provide value to the university through their support of undergraduate student success, expertise to faculty and administrators which can inform curricular and policy considerations, and outreach through recruitment. There was also agreement that the current advising staff work incredibly hard, adapt to new demands, but have hit a wall in terms of the type of support they can provide to an increasingly diverse and academically engaged undergraduate staff. The university faces limitations in leveraging academic advising when it is understaffed and in many ways ignored as a strategic factor in student success. For example, when strategic plans involve an expansion of student enrollment, planning for additional advising staff/time is not included in the budget. “Scope creep” in advising roles arose as a common theme in the discussion: advisors are asked to perform roles in recruitment, data analysis, faculty support, program administration, course management, facilitation of new initiatives, etc. However, these additional responsibilities are not offset by a reduction in an advising load. Also, these areas are oftentimes added to an advisor’s current position without any recognition of the expanded responsibilities and an appropriate position/salary change.
Administrators and leadership stated that this ever-expanding set of responsibilities leads to difficulty in determining current advising loads, so advising loads are not monitored. This exacerbates the problem. In other areas of the university, advisors are not allowed to explore new responsibilities to expand their skills and grow as a professional. A lack of recognition of an advisor’s career progression and difficulty creating position descriptions through human resources which match the role advisors currently fulfill at the university was also brought up.

The discussion led to a variety of recommendations for the university. Faculty administration and leadership recommended that they should make advising a high-priority budgeting item in their own programs. The university should explore ways to leverage technology to handle the clerical aspects of advising and student services to release more time for advisors to provide the type of support that technology cannot. However, this technology cannot be another burden for advising staff to create and maintain. An investment in more advising staff and more technology to support advising staff must be done in tandem. The university needs to find champions in the faculty and leadership for professional advising, to recognize it as a field and career and not a perfunctory administrative function. Human Resources administrators should be included in conversations so that position titles, descriptions and structure reflect what advisors actually do and is current with the professional field. Human resources can also act as consultants in evaluating current responsibilities to address the issue with determining advising loads. The university must decide whether or not advisors serve a processing, clerical, and customer service role, or a value-added, student success driven role. Advisors strive to provide the latter, but the current structure at Ohio State leads to the former.

One final point: throughout each breakout session, issues impacting advising were almost always centered on the impact those issues had on the student experience at Ohio State. High turnover of advisors was discussed in terms of the negative impact to students, both in personal relationships and in institutional knowledge. Increased technology was brought up as a way to “smooth out” the experience for students as they move between programs. Engaging more with faculty was discussed as a way to ensure faculty would connect students with advisors when the faculty member notices an issue, which can lead to the advisor and student finding resources to help the student be successful and persist. As one of our student participants stated in our discussion: “I thought this session was going to be mostly about advisors and their experiences, but the entire conversation keeps coming back to students and our experiences. You all really care about us and our success, and it makes me feel really important, like I really matter to the University. I think that’s the best thing about advising. Even when it’s supposed to be about you, it’s really about us students.”

LEVERAGING BEST PRACTICES FOR CHANGE
Facilitators:
Amy Treboni – Advising Admin, University Exploration; Prof. Jeff Hattey – Faculty, FAES; Patrick Riley – Undergraduate Student

Goal: identify best practices that can help Ohio State elevate its academic advising
- What alternative models are being used at other institutions?
- Use of predictive analytics
- Example of the proactive advisor

Leveraging best practices for change
While we covered many different topics related to best practices during each session, several underlying themes were identified. These areas were related to: curriculum, communication, resources, and assessment.

While many things are going well in advising at Ohio State, limited resources came up again and again. Academic advising occurs between individuals and is a time intensive practice. Areas which had more robust resources and lower student to advisor ratios (such as SASSO) were referred to as potential models for professional advising at Ohio State. High student to advisor ratios, scope creep and additional responsibilities outside of advising, as well as lack of time and funding for training, professional development, and career progression were cited as hurdles which can negatively impact the quality of academic advising. Advisors indicated that they are committed to students and want to do their best, but found that competing demands decreased time available to work with individual students, limited opportunities for training to fully utilize advising resources and technologies, and centered their focus on students who were ‘polished’—those who know to come in and meet with an advisor without prompting.

The demand on university resources has been increasing, but the availability of funds has decreased in recent years, forcing everyone to ‘do more with less’. While we leverage technology to enhance advising and better allocate our human resources, advising staff indicated that their jobs were complicated by having a variety of technology tools. The various tools don’t always work together well and training for some advising tools has been limited—in some cases advisors do not have the time or training to use these resources to their full potential. Advisors face overwhelming caseloads as they try to combat steady increases in responsibilities outside of advising and a constant demand to adapt to address the changing needs of our student populations. These competing demands do not set advisors up for success in keeping with our value of commitment to excellence. Combined with current salaries and a lack of clear career progression opportunities, this can lead to burnout and reduced retention of quality advisors.

Participants also identified a need for additional centralized support for academic advising. Undergraduate Education houses one advising resource coordinator, which is insufficient for addressing the complexities of a decentralized advising system at a large university. Advising staff specifically cited the need for clear information on how to locate, interpret, and apply university policies and procedures. Because professional development funds for advising are generally limited (only two regional campuses mentioned having dedicated funds), professional development and training opportunities offered by Undergraduate Education and ACADAOS were considered to be of great value to staff and could be expanded. Advising and faculty administrators concerned with staff retention also identified the need to create non-traditional professional development opportunities for advisors. Centralized staff could also support the creation of better tools for student use that are in keeping with simplicity in our processes. Participants identified that websites and mobile applications could be a potential best practice: students would get answers for their transactional questions and this would free up advising appointment time for the relationship building required to develop openness and trust with students, and for more complex matters.

Academic advising is part of the teaching and learning process at Ohio State. Additional centralized staffing is needed to move to the implementation and assessment phases for our academic advising Student Learning Outcomes (SLO). These SLO were developed using NACADA Core Values and CAS Standards, two organizations that have defined the standards for quality academic advising programs. Currently, we do not have a university-wide, systematic, and routine plan for assessment of academic advising, which forces reliance on anecdotal stories and use of data collected for other purposes. Academic advising can be better understood through
formal assessment. Assessment results and advisor feedback would then lead to centralized recommendations and support/initiatives for advising, which could be in a variety of areas including: advisor to student ratios, methods of delivery for advising, involvement in curricular and/or policy development, career progression and development, etc.

Additionally, nearly every conversation included concerns about current communication in advising. These concerns were not limited to communication between units and campuses but also discussed communication hurdles within units that limit advisor effectiveness. Collaborating as one university requires good communication. Inconsistent use of advising connect/shared notes systems and inaccurate curriculum information were often cited as areas with significant communication issues. Shared notes help advisors work with students across units and can assist in making transitions smoother for students. Access to accurate and up-to-date curricular information is an obvious necessity for academic advisors. Briefly mentioned was the idea of including advisors in curriculum committees from the beginning to help bridge this gap. The implementation of meta-majors for less decided students was also discussed—meta-majors and degree roadmaps (which include course sequencing and offering information) are nationally recognized as best practices by Complete College America.

Discussions on communication also centered on outreach from advisors to students. Students do not seem to understand the role and potential value of working with an academic advisor and better messaging in this area seems warranted. Advising staff and students were intrigued and excited that the new student success platform may allow for text communications and also discussed using our learning management system as an additional method for communicating with students. Several participants mentioned using weekly email newsletters for reaching out to students and there were a few units that reach out to parents using email newsletters sent after orientation.

Overall, advising at Ohio State is effective and accurate for students despite the challenges advisors face. With proposed changes to the fair labor standards act and an expectation of continued changes in demands of advisors, it is especially important that attention be paid to the role quality academic advising plays in student retention and completion. With the appropriate resources, information, strategies and support, academic advising—already well positioned at Ohio State—could grow much stronger.

**OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SUMMIT**

A review of the Session Summaries, the Keynote, and the comment cards from attendees results in a number of observations related to academic advising here at Ohio State.

1) All stakeholders acknowledge the importance and criticality of academic advising and the role it plays in student success
2) Academic advising is often ignored, or at least downplayed, in the University, College, and support unit strategic planning process
3) With the exception of a few units, faculty have by and large moved away from academic advising responsibilities
4) While advisor – student meetings are important, some transactional activities can be made more straightforward
5) We have made great progress with a centralized Notes system (AdvisingConnect)
6) There is disparity in advising load and delegated responsibilities across units
   a) Some advisors have student loads as great as 600:1, and some as low as 100:1
7) There is a disparate pay schedule across units
a) Starting salaries are relatively low, with few levels of advancement
b) Salaries across units (for similar skills and job expectations) vary by as much as $20,000

8) “Scope Creep” has raised its head in many units, in the form of broadened expectations for academic advisor responsibilities. Academic advisors in some units have been asked to participate in:
   a) recruitment and orientation
   b) data analysis
   c) support for faculty administrative and classroom activities
   d) program administration and staffing
   e) course management
   f) career counseling
   g) facilitation of emerging initiatives

9) Appropriate staffing levels have not kept pace with increased enrollment
10) While the decentralized structure of advising is important for adequate major advising, a centralized oversight structure is necessary for the overall integrity of the advising process
11) Advising resources have not kept pace with changing student needs
   a) Dual and double majors
   b) Increased number of minors and specialized study areas
   c) High impact practices, such as study abroad, service learning, and UG research
   d) Impact of College Credit Plus, or dual enrollment, on general education requirements

BROAD RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on feedback from the attendees, and interviews with the session moderators, and considering the observations described above, the following are recommendations that our team is bringing forward for consideration. We feel strongly that these recommendations will have a positive impact on student success.

1) Develop an instrument for advisor assessment, providing for student evaluation
2) Work with HR to define clear and consistent job classifications for each advising position
3) Work with HR to define clear and consistent compensation guidelines, including minimum pay bands
4) Organize an adequately staffed central support team to provide oversight of policy guidelines, training, technology development and deployment, and data analysis and reporting
5) Work with advisor employing units to provide more time for career professional development opportunities and ongoing training activities
6) Communication
7) Clarity of focus
8) Faculty partnerships
9) Integrated technology solutions
10) Adequate budgets for staff support
PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the above broad recommendations, with input from the summit organizing team and feedback from attendees, the following recommendations and action items rise to the top of a priority list.

It is important that a message be sent by the central administration (President and Provost) that underscores the importance of consistent and effective advising across all academic units. This statement could include recommendations related to: each unit should have a concise advising mission and vision statement; students should be able to expect and experience common service standards, across all advising units; all advisors are expected to use an advising notes documentation system; units should have clear statements regarding both advisor and student responsibilities related to the academic, career, and personal development goals related to the students’ progress in their major.

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| 1 | Define clear and consistent job classifications for each advising position, across all distributed advising units | • Do a market analysis of academic advising positions in peer institutions  
• Charge the Compensation and Classification personnel in Human Resources to review these job titles on a priority basis  
• Create a compensation pool so that equity adjustments are possible |
| 2 | Define clear and consistent compensation guidelines, including minimum pay bands, across all distributed advising units | • Allocate funds that can be made available for supporting these activities  
• Create training resources for incoming and reassigned advising staff  
• Provide adequate orientation sessions for new advising staff  
• Provide release time for continuing staff to attend training sessions and personal development opportunities. |
| 3 | Provide opportunities for advising staff to participate in training activities, professional development, travel to relevant conferences or workshops, and purchase related materials. | • Create a centrally coordinated advisor training and professional development focus by establishing a central position to coordinate these activities in conjunction with colleges and other campus advising units. This person will:  
• Collaborate with and support unit-specific training and development activities  
• provide training that enhances the capacity of advisors to work effectively with students from underrepresented and marginalized... |
| 3 | Organize an adequately staffed central support team to provide oversight of policy guidelines, training, technology development and deployment, and data analysis and reporting | • Create a centrally coordinated advisor training and professional development focus by establishing a central position to coordinate these activities in conjunction with colleges and other campus advising units. This person will:  
• Collaborate with and support unit-specific training and development activities  
• provide training that enhances the capacity of advisors to work effectively with students from underrepresented and marginalized... |
| 4 | Adequately staff advising offices | • Implement a standard range of student-to-advisor ratio of 250-300 students per advisor across all colleges in order to implement and sustain the advising goals and service standards. |
| 5 | More efficiently utilize technology, with integrated user interfaces whenever possible | • Review and implement effective replacement options for the existing degree audit system  
• specify technology solutions to transactional advising activities |
| 6 | Implement recommendations from the HLC Accreditation Quality Initiative | backgrounds  
• ensure that training and resources also support the development of departmental advisors, faculty advisor/mentors, advising administrators, and peer advisors.  
• Create a centrally coordinated Advising Analytics and Technology director position. This person will:  
• oversee the ongoing operation of the EAB-SSC predictive analytics system (OnCourse)  
• develop and maintain a central website that can be used to disseminate information about advising, and to provide a dependable communications resource  
• collect, analyze, and provide data to distributed advising units  
• research, implement, and maintain technical advising solutions (third party and/or university managed enterprise systems)  
• manage the HLC Quality Initiative (QI) projects  
• Develop and launch an annual Advisor Assessment process, including an instrument that can collect student feedback and advisor self-assessment responses |