

Executive Summary

Task Force on Undergraduate Academic Advising

The Academic Advising Task Force offers the following recommendations to support and enhance undergraduate academic advising on the Twin Cities campus. These recommendations seek to provide an excellent and consistent advising experience for students across campus.

Recommendation #1 | ***Ensure undergraduate students have equitable and accessible advising across collegiate advising units.***

Recommendation 1.A Adopt the advising framework outlined in this report which includes principles of excellent advising, a common advising team structure and common service standards. Key to this framework is a consistent advising model built upon relationship-based and equity-minded practices that support the holistic development and success of all students. The Advising Framework being proposed includes:

- ***PRINCIPLES OF EXCELLENT ADVISING***
EXCELLENT ADVISING IS RELATIONAL, ACCESSIBLE, HOLISTIC, INCLUSIVE, INTENTIONAL, AND PROACTIVE.
- ***ADVISING TEAM STRUCTURE***
AS PART OF THE ADVISING TEAM, STUDENTS SHOULD BE ASSIGNED A COLLEGIATE ADVISOR FOR THE SPAN OF THEIR STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND HAVE ACCESS TO MAJOR ADVISING/MENTORING ONCE DECLARED IN A MAJOR.
- ***ADVISING SERVICE STANDARDS***
THERE SHOULD BE COMMON SERVICE STANDARDS ACROSS ALL ADVISING MODELS AND AS STUDENTS PROGRESS THROUGH THEIR UNDERGRADUATE CAREER.

Recommendation 1.B Implement a standard range of student-to-collegiate advisor ratio of 250-300 students per advisor across all colleges in order to implement and sustain the advising framework and service standards.

Recommendation 1.C Address the needs of cross-college and transitioning students by convening a committee to further investigate ways to provide an integrated, accessible, and consistent level of advising services.

Recommendation #2 | ***Prioritize the on-going support, development, and retention of a professional community of academic advisors that are satisfied in their roles and reflect the identities of our undergraduate student body.***

Recommendation 2.A Invest in centrally coordinated advisor training and professional development by creating a central position to coordinate these activities in conjunction with undergraduate colleges and other campus advising units. The central role will:

- collaborate and support unit-specific training and development
- provide training that enhances the capacity of advisors to work effectively with students from historically underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds
- ensure that training and resources also support the development of departmental advisors, faculty advisor/mentors, supervisors of advising, and peer advisors.

Recommendation 2.B Develop and implement a bold and intentional recruitment and retention plan to advance the diversity of our professional advising staff and advising leaders across all collegiate units.

Recommendation 2.C Create an equitable campus advising salary structure and professional pathways to support the retention and career progression of employees in the academic advising classification.

Recommendation #3

Continue to support the development of the essential infrastructure of advising. This includes investment in staff, key technology tools, data and reporting systems, simplified and transparent curriculum, as well as key campus service units.

Recommendation 3.A Elevate APLUS to an enterprise tool that is centrally supported, enhanced, and maintained, with common training and functionality across collegiate units. Expect all assigned advisors of record to log advising-related student interactions in APLUS in a timely manner.

Recommendation 3.B Provide curricular transparency for students and advisors by ensuring that all degree requirements are visible through PCAS and related systems, and arrange advising-related resources and information to be easily accessible.

Recommendation 3.C Establish common student progress and success indicators within advising tools and retention reports across colleges that includes a cycle of data collection and dissemination, and expected outreach.

Recommendation 3.D Establish clear relationships among campus committees and workgroups that support the continued improvement of campus advising practices.

Recommendation 3.E Establish a campus Advising Leadership Working Group that will serve as an advisory group for campus-wide undergraduate student advising including the implementation and assessment of task force recommendations and continuous improvement of advising across campus.

Advising Framework

■ *Principles of Excellent Advising*

Academic advising at the University of Minnesota is an educational partnership that encourages and supports students to be active and accountable in the creation and achievement of their academic, career, and personal development goals.

Excellent advising is defined as:

- ***Relational*** - the advising relationship is at the center of excellent advising and is built upon mutual trust and respect that is developed over the span of each student's undergraduate experience.
- ***Accessible*** - Students are able to connect with an academic advisor in a timely manner for required developmental appointments, regular curricular planning, and urgent or crisis situations.
- ***Holistic*** - Advising is student-centered, developmental, and learning-focused, incorporating a concern for the growth and needs of the whole student, beyond curricular planning.
- ***Inclusive*** - Advising recognizes and supports the diverse backgrounds, interests, and needs of the University of Minnesota student body by establishing practices and relationships that are culturally relevant and effective at addressing barriers for students and communities facing social, cultural, economic, physical, and attitudinal barriers.
- ***Intentional*** - Advising includes an educational and purposeful approach to help students plan, reflect, learn, and take action in ways that are appropriate to their individual and developmental needs.
- ***Proactive*** - Utilizing technology and data analytics, advising incorporates timely outreach and targeted interventions to anticipate student challenges and support students in the pursuit of their educational goals.

These components of excellent advising are embedded in the advising structure and advising service standards outlined below.

■ ***Advising Team Structure***

The advising structure recognizes the need for an advising team to support the needs of students from matriculation through graduation. The advising team is comprised of staff and faculty who work with students in areas where they are the most knowledgeable, and assumes a network of support that expands beyond the formal advising role. (See Appendix G for the vision, mission, and core values of advising from the perspective of the professional advising community.)

Collegiate Advisors

Students are assigned a collegiate academic advisor through the span of their undergraduate career, from matriculation to graduation. The collegiate advisor seeks to establish an effective relationship with students, providing advocacy and holistic development to support each student's degree progress and retention. Collegiate advisors work closely with students in regard to their degree progress, including liberal education and major requirements. As students transfer between colleges, they are assigned a new collegiate advisor upon enrollment to the new college. Collegiate advisors are professional advisors and are part of the student service offices in the undergraduate colleges or University Honors.

Major Advising

Once students declare a major, they are provided access to a major/departmental-specific advisor or faculty advisor/mentor who supports students in their course planning for their major plan of study and progression toward their chosen profession. The purpose of this function is to provide mentoring related to the student's specific discipline, as well as expertise in their academic major requirements. In colleges where there are no departmental or faculty advisors/mentors, the mentoring related to the discipline and academic major requirements must be provided in other ways.

Faculty as Mentors/Advisors

Faculty members play a key role in opening up their academic discipline to students. Once students declare a major they are provided access to faculty advisors/mentors who can support them in their major planning and progression toward their career. As they consider research and internship opportunities, future careers, as well as graduate and professional schools, students often seek the expertise and insight only faculty can provide. Faculty who serve as formal advisors are expected to have a knowledge of University policies, work closely with collegiate or departmental advisors, and document student contacts as a member of the student advising team.

Department Advisors

Students may be assigned a department advisor once they are accepted into a major program. The department advisor has a deep understanding of the major curriculum and can assist students in meeting their upper division degree requirements. Like collegiate advisors, they advocate holistic development and support each student's degree progress and retention. Department advisors work closely with the advising office in their college to assure students graduate in a timely manner and to document student contact as a member of the student advising team.

Differentiated Advising

Students in particular populations will receive differentiated advising and/or appropriate curricular and co-curricular programming based on their unique needs. This may be embedded in the primary advisor role or be in addition to the primary advisor. Example populations include students who are first-generation, low-income, honors, international students, or student athletes. The scope of differentiated advising is generally the same as a collegiate advisor, described above.

Complementary Advising Support

Additional advising support complements the formal advising role by offering coaching for students in matters that relate to their academic goals and success. University staff members in these roles do not advise students on the curriculum, but may support students in conjunction with a collegiate advisor. Complementary advising support is found in campus resources that provide counseling, advocacy, learning support, support for undecided students, multicultural students, international students, students with disabilities, adult-learners, and those with other specific needs.

Advising Support

Students' advising experience extends beyond advisor interactions to include the process of setting up an appointment, email inquiries, front desk reception, caseload management, and behind-the-scenes support. These roles and/or functions lay the foundation and set the tone for a positive advising experience, allowing advisors to focus on working with students. Advising support done well ensures an effective and efficient advising experience.

Advising Leadership

Effective advising services require effective leadership and supervision. The role of advising supervisors and leaders is to create an equitable and effective advising organization that supports excellent advising and maintains a healthy work environment.

Peer Advisors

Students may receive assistance by peer advisors who assist collegiate and departmental advisors by answering basic questions about requirements, curriculums, schedules, and campus resources. Effective peer advising services require that students be properly trained and supervised, and that they have a very clear understanding of the appropriate scope of issues with which they can assist students.

Career Services

Academic advising and career development often overlap as students explore and develop their major and career path. Career services and services for undecided students should be integrated and accessible to students early in their academic career. Specific recommendations relating to career services were outside the scope of this report but should be considered as a next step in developing a comprehensive approach to student success.

■ **Advising Service Standards**

Students should expect and experience common service standards, across all advising models. These interactions should be intentional, and learning outcome-based, in order to provide a focused and cohesive advising experience. The following service standards are based on best practices and serve as a guide to service delivery minimum expectations.

IN THE FIRST YEAR

Academic advising focus: Transitioning to the University of Minnesota and the academic unit; getting off to a good start, and developing relationships.

- *STUDENTS ARE INTRODUCED TO THEIR ASSIGNED ADVISOR AND UNDERSTAND HOW TO CONTACT THEIR PROFESSIONAL ADVISING TEAM.*
- *ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE ADVISING RELATIONSHIP ARE CLEARLY OUTLINED. (SEE APPENDIX G)*
- *STUDENTS MEET WITH THEIR COLLEGIATE ADVISOR ONCE PER SEMESTER.*
- *ADDITIONAL FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ARE EMBEDDED IN THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE, AND ADVISING AND ACADEMIC PLANNING ARE INTEGRATED.*
- *PROACTIVE OUTREACH TO STUDENTS WHO ARE OFF-TRACK, OR EXPERIENCING BARRIERS TO SUCCESS BASED ON KEY INDICATORS.*

IN THE SECOND YEAR

Academic advising focus: Deciding on a major path and staying on course to apply, be accepted, and declare; determining parallel plans to implement if needed; engaging in curricular and high impact activities; staying on track for graduation in four years.

- *STUDENTS CONTACT THEIR COLLEGIATE ADVISOR AND AT LEAST ONE OTHER MEMBER OF THE ADVISING TEAM AT LEAST ONCE DURING THIS YEAR. STUDENTS MAY BE WORKING WITH THEIR PROFESSIONAL ADVISING TEAM, DEPARTMENT/MAJOR ADVISOR, CAREER STAFF, OR CAPE, FOR INTENSIVE EXPLORATORY COACHING.*
- *PROACTIVE OUTREACH TO STUDENTS WHO ARE OFF-TRACK, OR EXPERIENCING BARRIERS TO SUCCESS BASED ON KEY INDICATORS.*

IN THE THIRD YEAR

Academic advising focus: Working with curriculum experts and preparing for careers; optimizing both undergraduate experiences and progress in the major; engaging in curricular and high impact activities.

- *STUDENTS CONNECT WITH THEIR MAJOR/DEPARTMENT ADVISORS AT LEAST ONCE DURING THIS YEAR. IN ADDITION, STUDENTS SHOULD CONNECT WITH THEIR COLLEGIATE CAREER STAFF AT LEAST ONCE DURING THIS TIME.*
- *ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ARE INTEGRATED IN THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE FOR CAREER EXPLORATION, PLANNING, PREPARATION, AND ENGAGEMENT.*
- *PROACTIVE OUTREACH TO STUDENTS WHO ARE OFF-TRACK, OR EXPERIENCING BARRIERS TO SUCCESS BASED ON KEY INDICATORS.*

IN THE FOURTH YEAR

Academic advising focus: Confirming graduation and transitioning to career or graduate/professional education.

- *STUDENTS MEET WITH THEIR COLLEGIATE ADVISOR EARLY IN THEIR FINAL YEAR (OR IN THE PRIOR YEAR FOR SOME ACADEMIC PROGRAMS) FOR A "GRADUATION CHECK" AND DISCUSSION OF FUTURE PLANS. IN ADDITION, STUDENTS CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THEIR COLLEGIATE CAREER STAFF AS THEY PREPARE FOR THE TRANSITION BEYOND COLLEGE.*
- *PROACTIVE OUTREACH TO STUDENTS WHO ARE OFF-TRACK, OR EXPERIENCING BARRIERS TO SUCCESS BASED ON KEY INDICATORS.*

TRANSFER STUDENTS

Academic advising focus: Assist with a smooth transition to chosen degree path, promoting opportunities to fully engage in academic major; encouraging early connection with career services.

- *STUDENTS MEET WITH THEIR PROFESSIONAL ADVISOR AT LEAST ONCE DURING THEIR FIRST TERM OF ENROLLMENT.*
- *ADVISING TEAM AND/OR OUE UNITS WORK WITH STUDENTS TO SECURE APPROPRIATE TRANSCRIPTS, AS WELL AS REQUESTED SYLLABI, IN A TIMELY MANNER.*
- *WITH THE COOPERATION OF EACH STUDENT'S UMTC COLLEGE, MAJOR DEPARTMENT, AND THE OFFICE OF ADMISSIONS, TRANSFER CREDITS ARE EVALUATED IN A PROPER AND TIMELY MANNER AND CLEARLY APPLIED TO THE RELEVANT DEGREE PROGRAM.*
- *ALL WORK HAS BEEN FULLY EVALUATED, AND ENTERED INTO STUDENT DEGREE PROGRAMS BY THE START OF REGISTRATION FOR EACH STUDENT'S SECOND TERM OF ENROLLMENT (ASSUMING STUDENT HAS SUBMITTED ALL PREVIOUS COURSEWORK IN A TIMELY MANNER).*
- *STUDENTS CONSIDERING AN INTER-COLLEGE TRANSFER SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO ADVISING SUPPORT.*

ADDITIONAL SERVICE STANDARDS

Common service standards should continue to be developed for key academic flags. The Task Force suggests the following areas to be addressed in the near future:

- *EARLY ALERT INDICATORS*
- *STUDENTS ON PROBATION*
- *STUDENTS SUSPENDED FROM THE UNIVERSITY*
- *ADVISOR OF RECORD TRANSITIONS*

Best Practices for Advising Delivery

The Task Force recognizes the importance of implementing best practices in the area of advising delivery and endorses the following:

- A standard expectation for email and phone response time for collegiate and departmental advisors and students within two business days, with the exception of peak registration times.
- Advising units will provide a mixed delivery method of in-person and technology-enhanced advising to address various needs.

In-person advising:

- *STANDARD APPOINTMENTS*
- *EXTENDED APPOINTMENTS*
- *DROP-IN ADVISING*
- *PROSPECTIVE TRANSFER ADVISING SERVICES (OPEN TO STUDENTS OUTSIDE OF THE COLLEGE IN QUESTION)*

Technology-enhanced advising:

- *ONLINE ADVISING APPOINTMENTS (VIA GOOGLE HANGOUT, SKYPE, ETC.)*
- *EMAIL ADVISING TO ADDRESS QUICK QUESTIONS OR TIMELY CORRESPONDENCE*
- *ONLINE ACCESS TO ADVISING INFORMATION RELATING TO DEGREE PROGRESS*