

## **Academic Advising White Paper**

### **Professionalization of Advising**

In the earliest days of the University of Utah, President Park spent the first several days of each semester meeting with each student to talk with them about their academic plans and enrolled them in the courses in which they were interested. By the beginning of what is now the Academic Senate, in 1915, President Kingsbury had delegated much of this task to department heads. With the G.I. Bill and the tremendous growth in undergraduate enrollment after World War II, a University Guidance Center was established which assumed the responsibility of advising new students exploring majors, while each department chair had for the most part delegated advising undergraduate students to a separate, often newly tenured, faculty member. By the early 1970s, academic advising had come to be recognized as a separate endeavor coordinated by a central office, the Office of the Dean of Academic Counseling. The institutional identity of the University of Utah at this juncture placed increasing stress on the need for faculty to focus on teaching and research, often to the exclusion of some of their former roles interacting with undergraduates outside of direct classroom interaction and graduate school mentoring.

In the 1980s and 1990s, many faculty advisors had delegated the day-to-day advising of undergraduates to administrative staff, some of whom, depending on the size of the undergraduate population in their departments, came to spend most of their time doing academic advising. Nationally, a trend towards professionalization of academic advising was underway with the founding of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) in 1979. NACADA was founded by academic advisors – both faculty and staff – who were concerned that the advising enterprise receive proper scholarly attention and its practitioners have ample opportunity for professional development.

The last five to ten years of the University have witnessed an acceleration of these trends towards specialization. To cite one example, the College of Science in this time has moved from all-faculty advising to all-professional staff advising. Today, faculty continue to advise students in terms of the disciplines in which they are experts, inculcating the standards, norms, and expectations of their fields, and work in tandem with staff advisors who are primarily advising students in terms of navigating the curriculum and larger institution where they are studying. Both of these approaches are necessary for undergraduate student success. The complexity of the twenty-first century university makes a vital relationship between the faculty and professional advisors critical for student success. Regular communication between faculty and professional advisors can be facilitated by formal relationships between the University Academic Advising Community and the Academic Senate.

### **Academic Advisors' Role as Collaborators**

Academic advising, inside and outside of the classroom, has long been known to be an effective way to increase student learning, improve retention and graduation rates, and enhance student satisfaction with their college experience. Academic advising is a campus-wide concern. Faculty play a distinct role in student advising since they are uniquely equipped to assist students in developing a cohesive curriculum, offering advice on curricular emphases within the major, as well as recommending postgraduate options and opportunities.

Professional advisors also serve an important function in the advising process. They specialize in providing students with information on admission to and requirements for majors, minors, emphases, certificates and programs. This includes specialized training in the use of advising technologies such as PeopleSoft and My Degree Dash Board as well as in-depth training on policies and procedures at the departmental, college, university and national levels. Advisors are also trained to help students overcome personal and academic difficulties that affect their academic performance and assist undecided students in exploring majors in order to engage with quality signature experiences. Academic advisors at the University understand the important role they have as collaborators with faculty in student retention and graduation rates and strive to strengthen this collaboration in order to provide quality advising experiences for students.

### **Academic Advisors' Role in Promoting Student Success, Retention and Graduation Rates**

"Academic Advising is the only structured activity on the campus in which all students have the opportunity for one-to-one interaction with a concerned representative of the institution (Habley, 1994). Through University programs and processes such as the Mandatory Advising Program, major declaration process, and scholastic standards advising, academic advisors provide students with the needed connection to various campus services and supply essential academic connections between these services and the students. In addition, academic advisors offer students the personal connection to the institution that the research indicates is vital to student retention and student success" (Nutt, 2003).

High-quality, holistic, and widely-available advising is an investment in student success. The University has made a significant investment over the past five years in increasing the number of advisors, and in providing them with the tools and training necessary to deliver advising that integrates emerging technologies and approaches, especially the data analytics available through our newly acquired data analytics platform, CIVITAS. In conjunction with improved advising caseloads in most academic colleges, these analytics will enable advisors to proactively identify students in academic difficulty, and reach out to them appropriately with targeted resources to assist them.

### **Structure of the University Academic Advising Committee (UAAC)**

In August of 1997, what was then called the Center for Academic Advising proposed establishing a campus-wide academic advising committee. The University was facing a number of challenges, one of which was the transition from quarters to semesters. These transitions spurred many collaborations, among them an increased collaboration between administrators, faculty, and academic advisors. After there was no longer a need to meet regarding these transitions, many who had been part of the collaboration saw a need to continue conversations about other challenges such as low enrollments and high undergraduate attrition rates. The structure of UAAC started as an informational sharing committee where issues and strategies were discussed, as well as a platform for providing advising professional development. UAAC evolved to hosting an annual academic advising conference for U of U and SLCC advisors and became the vehicle to provide training when new technologies for advising were implemented. UAAC now has six sub-committees: Advisor Position, Appreciative Advising, Assessment; Awards, Marketing and Training & Development. UAAC continues to evolve in

order to support the changing landscape of advising as advisors support student retention and graduation rates. This includes the creation of committee and sub-committee bylaws to be voted upon in 2017 (see Appendix).

In the interest of student success, the University Academic Advising Committee would like to partner with the Academic Senate in a more formal manner. In addition to UAAC's designated representative on the Undergraduate Council, Beth Howard, UAAC is asking the Academic Senate to consider a request for designated representatives of UAAC to serve as *ex officio* members of the Academic Senate.

### **References**

Bulletin of the University of Utah (vol 61, no 3). (1970-1971). Salt Lake City, Utah.

Chamberlin, R.V. (1960). *The University of Utah: A history of its first hundred years, 1850-1950*.

Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press.

Nutt, C.L. (2003). *Academic advising and student retention and persistence*. Retrieved from

<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/tabid/3318/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/636/article.aspx>

University of Utah Catalogue (vol 38, no 18). (1948-1949). Salt Lake City, Utah.

## **Appendix**

### **University Academic Advising Community**

#### **Bylaws**

##### **PREAMBLE**

As educators and problem solvers, we advocate for students as they navigate their personal journey of higher education and attain their academic goals. Through inclusion and connection, we open doors to new opportunities for self-awareness and growth, empowering students to define their roles as citizens within local and global communities.

##### **Article I – Name**

1. The University Academic Advising Committee (UAAC) exists to serve the needs of University of Utah advisors and their campus partners.

##### **Article II – Purpose**

1. UAAC provides professional development opportunities for advisors and advocates on behalf of advisors with the university administration.

##### **Article II – Membership**

1. All advisors at the University of Utah and interested campus partners are members of UAAC.

##### **Article IV – Meeting**

1. UAAC Meetings will be held on the third Thursday of each month except for June and July.
2. Executive Committee meetings will be held at least twice a semester in Fall and Spring, and at least once in Summer.

##### **Article V – Leadership**

1. UAAC has two Co-Chairs, chosen by secret ballot at the May monthly meeting preceding the expiration of their three year terms. The Co-Chairs set the direction for UAAC as a whole and preside at Executive Committee meetings. The Co-Chairs are not members of any UAAC subcommittee.
2. UAAC has a Recorder, also chosen by secret ballot at the May monthly meeting preceding the expiration of their three year term. The Recorder maintains the records of UAAC: taking minutes at meetings, distributing announcements, and maintaining the running total of the annual budget.
3. If a Co-Chair or Recorder vacancy arises before the expiration of a term, the remaining Co-Chair(s) may appoint replacements from among the membership for the remainder of the term.

4. UAAC has an Executive Committee, composed of the Co-Chairs, Recorder, all subcommittee co-chairs, and two Members-At-Large from the wider UAAC membership. The Executive Committee is the primary body representing UAAC to the University of Utah campus. The Members-At-Large are chosen by secret ballot at the May UAAC meeting and serve three year terms.

## **Article VI – Funds**

1. The Recorder will present the annual UAAC budget to the Executive Committee from the Associate Dean of the Academic Advising Center. The Executive Committee will decide on disbursement of the funds in accordance with UAAC needs. In accordance with university policy, the Executive Committee may also raise funds for UAAC activities through other means.

## **Article VII – Sub-Committees and Task Forces**

1. Members of UAAC are encouraged to join a subcommittee to advance the work of the Community. UAAC members should not join more than one subcommittee. UAAC members typically join or change subcommittees at the beginning of each Fall semester by application to the co-chairs of the subcommittee.
2. The standing subcommittees of UAAC are: Assessment, Advisor Position, Marketing, Training and Development, Appreciative Advising, Advisor Awards. The Executive Committee will develop charges and roles for these subcommittees and may create or dissolve subcommittees by majority vote.
3. Task forces may be created by the Executive Committee for specific actions and will typically sit for no more than one year. At the conclusion of the term, the co-chairs of the task force will submit a report on their findings to the Executive Committee.
4. The subcommittee co-chairs will serve for a term of three years and the task force co-chairs for one year. The members of the subcommittees and task forces will elect their co-chairs from within their membership.

## **Article VIII – Ratification**

1. The by-laws will be ratified by majority vote of the UAAC membership.

## **Article IX – Amendments**

1. Amendments can be presented at by UAAC membership to the Executive Committee and ratified by a two-thirds majority of the Executive Committee.

Adopted on (date) 2017