



JULY 2024

Senior Leadership  
Guidebook for

# Holistic Advising Redesign



Credit: Athens State University (AL)

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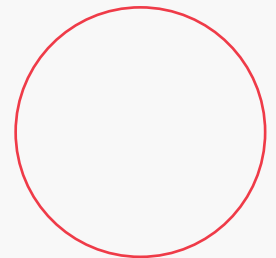




# About the Advising Success Network

This report was commissioned on behalf of the Advising Success Network (ASN), a dynamic network of five organizations partnering to support institutional change and improved student outcomes through a holistic approach to addressing the operational, programmatic, technological, and research needs of colleges and universities in direct support of a more equitable student experience. The ASN's mission is to help institutions build a culture of student success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds and racially minoritized by identifying, building, and scaling equitable and holistic advising solutions that support all facets of the student experience. The ASN envisions a higher education landscape that eliminates race and income as predictors of student success. To achieve this goal, the ASN believes that a reformed approach to advising will support all students through a seamless, personalized postsecondary experience that creates better personal, academic, and professional outcomes.

Advising as defined by the ASN encompasses more than student interaction. It also involves the structure and operations of academic advising, the roles and responsibilities of primary-role and faculty advisors, and advising pedagogies, approaches, and models. As such, this report is designed to inform institutional leaders, advisors, faculty, and staff of how current institutional structures and processes need to change to better integrate academic and career advising practices. This report's authors and partners believe that material and concepts captured can help communicate and engage with many campus stakeholders to plan and implement holistic advising redesign.



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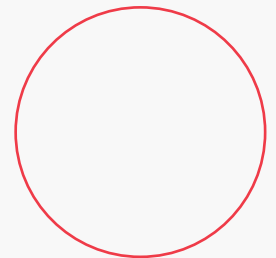
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Credit: Fitchburg State University (MA)



# Executive Summary

**The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the Advising Success Network (ASN) have developed this Senior Leadership Guidebook to support holistic advising redesign. It proposes action-oriented strategies, resources, and tools that will advance advising redesign, employ data utilization strategies, and encourage the use of equity-based principles to yield tangible improvements in student success outcome.**

The guidebook will provide key opportunities to develop an advising model infused with best practices that are derived from fluctuating enrollments, tuition revenue, and technology capacity for virtual and in-person operation. These include mapping advising processes centered on student success, ensuring equitable outcomes for all students, to accelerate transformation with a continuous quality improvement culture.

The elevation of academic advising's role allows senior and mid-level leadership teams to integrate policies and practices to mitigate inequities and generate positive shifts in processes, policies, and procedures to customize advising service delivery systems that benefit all students.



Historically, higher education researchers have studied the relationship between academic advising and retention and asserted a correlation between effective advising and increased retention.<sup>1</sup> Retention and graduation rates are institutional key performance indicators (KPIs) and defining measures of student success. As a leading indicator for other long-term outcomes, institutions focus on retention to affect graduation rates and cohort default rates, and advising's role is critical to retention.

Further, commitment to continuous quality improvement (CQI) initiatives foster a platform for institutions to strengthen and improve retention through effective holistic advising programs. Research has found academic advising positively influences retention through student support services, advisor and faculty interactions beyond the classroom, student satisfaction with college experience, and effective education guidance and career planning.<sup>2</sup>

Academic advising structures are determined by institution characteristics, student needs, and demographics based on population, infrastructure, and capacity. Institutional leadership teams should determine the best-fit model for their institution type (e.g., public, private, community, research, liberal arts, historically Black colleges and universities [HBCUs]) and are encouraged to factor first-year students' critical adjustment and transition issues into the first-year advising experience design. Holistic advising is most effective when institutions operationalize it in strategic planning with related goals and KPIs.

The sustainability of holistic advising redesign requires vision and capacity building in policies, processes, and resources to achieve future goals. Strategic planning and budgeting processes reflect an institution's highest priorities.

**The fiscal ramifications of retention gains and losses make a compelling case for investing in advising redesign for a return that justifies the expense.**

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1. Tinto, V. (1987). *Tinto Increasing student retention*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Retrieved from <https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/Clearinghouse1/retention.aspx>.

2. Cueso, J. (2003). *Academic advisement and student retention: Empirical connections & systemic interventions*.

Retrieved from <https://www.shawnee.edu/sites/default/files/2019-01/Academic-advisementv-and-student-retention.pdf>.

### Using this Guidebook:

- Contains strategies to address gaps in systemic coordination.
- Provides cross-functional collaboration opportunities.
- Trains stakeholders to integrate academic advising data into the strategic planning process.
- Provides a framework to implement transformative and sustainable advising changes.
- Connects academic advising to the campus mission, vision, and goals.

Several strategic data elements are valuable for decision-making and supporting student success. These data should reflect the advising delivery population, service quantity, service quality, and measures of overarching student success goals. Lastly, knowing where the institution stands overall is essential to shaping student success outcomes. Monitoring early momentum indicators and progression helps students get off to a good start in their educational journeys and supports timely completion.





# Introduction

**The ASN Senior Leadership Guidebook supports a student-centered academic environment by outlining five foundational principles for prioritizing and aligning operations and outcomes to the institutional strategic plan. Most importantly, it guides senior and mid-level leadership teams through the creation of an advising model that is synchronized to the institution's strategic plan and process.**

# Users of the Guidebook

The guidebook is designed for strategic use across stakeholders, including leadership and middle managers in academic and student affairs. Principal groups who can benefit from using the guidebook as an operational framework are illustrated in Figure 1.

## Senior-Level Cabinet Members

Chancellors, presidents, and vice presidents can use the guidebook to help:

- Convey a clear vision and call to action.
- Develop strategic direction of institutional policies.
- Establish advising values and principles of equity.

## Academic Affairs

Provost, deans, and department chairs can use the guidebook to help:

- Integrate teams in the strategic planning cycle for student success initiatives.
- Develop strategic planning goals and key performance indicators.
- Operationalize strategy and tactics with metrics to achieve performance goals.
- Increase cross-functional collaboration in areas that impact students, such as bursar, registrar, and faculty committees.

## Student Success Administrators and Work Group Teams

Enrollment and student affairs teams, strategic planning work groups, advising and retention teams can use the guidebook to help:

- Communicate holistic advising redesign efforts campus wide.
- Implement operations to support strategy and student success goals.
- Create professional development opportunities for academic advisors.
- Establish continuous quality improvement initiatives.

Figure 1.

### GUIDEBOOK USERS

- Senior-Level Cabinet Members
- Academic Affairs Deans and Department Chairs
- Student Success Administrators
- Enrollment and Student Affairs Teams
- Strategic Planning Work Groups
- Advising and Retention Teams



## How to Use This Guide

The guidebook is organized into five sections and offers action-oriented strategies and adaptable resources for each section. Senior leadership may refer to the first page of each section.

- 01. Scan of Existing Institutional Practices**  
Presents key findings based on broad-based learning questions that focus on the approachability and depth of academic advising practice and its integration as a key institutional priority. *Key audience: senior leadership and stakeholders*
- 02. Strategic Alignment Planning Dimensions**  
Offers leading dimensions for a framework to plan and organize strategic alignment of academic advising. *Key audience: deans and academic affairs*
- 03. Implementing a Comprehensive Academic Advising Framework**  
Provides recommendations to implement an academic advising framework to support student success. *Key audience: directors of advising and advisors*
- 04. Institutional Effectiveness and Data Utilization**  
Provides a framework to measure student success outcomes impacted by academic advising operations. *Key audience: senior leadership, deans, and stakeholders*
- 05. Planning for Long-Term Sustainability in Academic Advising**  
Provides a high-level synopsis of planning for long-term growth and sustainability. *Key audience: senior leadership, deans, and stakeholders*



Credit: Lewis-Clark State College (LD)



## SECTION 1

# Scan of Existing Institutional Practices

**Campus leaders recognize that advisors guide students who face mounting universal challenges that originate from socioeconomic, emotional well-being, financial, and other personal factors that impact their degree completion journeys. Equally concerning are the unique pressures students experience while learning to navigate college bureaucracies, policy barriers, and campus procedure complexities.**

Senior leadership should gain a comprehensive understanding of existing student success practices deployed across the higher education landscape. We interviewed student success administrators and observed a sequence of advising service of concepts that examined similarities and differences in new, emerging, and distinctive advising practices.

The questions focused on the approach and depth of academic advising practice and its integration as a key institutional priority. Throughout the interviews, we asked questions to assess academic advising's impact on student success outcomes, data utilization, and sustainability strategies.

Based on these specific objectives, we sought to obtain greater insight and knowledge related to advising in the following learning constructs and questions:

## Learning Concepts



**DELIVERY,  
INTEGRATION, AND  
TRANSFORMATION**



**CONTINUOUS  
QUALITY  
IMPROVEMENT**



**USE OF STUDENT  
SUCCESS DATA AND  
ANALYTICS**



**SUSTAINABILITY OF  
ADVISING SERVICES**

### **Prioritization of Advising and Creating Vision**

1. How does your institution incorporate the importance of academic advising into a shared vision for student success?

### **Equitable Academic Advising Outcomes**

2. Please describe your approach to establishing equitable academic advising outcomes for all student populations.
3. How does this approach support a culture of transformation at your institution?

### **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) in Academic Advising**

4. What processes do you employ to ensure academic advising services are part of a CQI cycle that enhances efficiency and improves advising service delivery?

### **Utilization of Student Success Data**

5. What strategies have been effective in broadening the use of student success data on your campus?

### **Data and Analytics Strategy to Support Student Success Outcomes**

6. How has your institution developed a campus wide data and analytics strategy to support student success outcomes (e.g., retention, progression, graduation, career placement)?
7. Which components of your data strategy have been most impactful in improving student success?

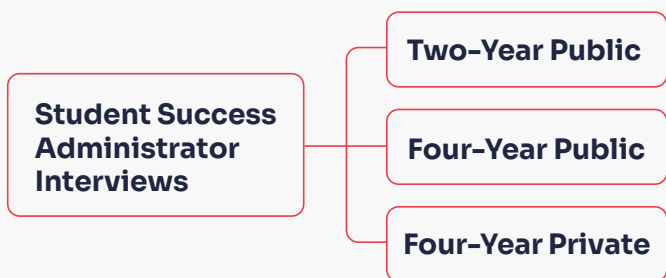
### **Sustainability of Academic Advising Services**

8. How have you structured your academic advising model to ensure sustainability?

## Key Findings

The institutional scan presents key findings that include a situational analysis of the role of academic advising on select college campuses and the extent to which it is integrated as an institutional priority. Interviews were conducted with a diverse set of institutions to gain insight and perspectives through the lens of senior student success administrators. Their responses reflect data about academic advising operations at a consortium of 11 two-year public, four-year public, and four-year private institutions, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2.



### 01. **KEY FINDING** Prioritization of Advising and Creating Vision

A review of how institutions prioritize academic advising in a shared vision for student success revealed varied and unique approaches. Leaders described the criticality of advising to student success and shared important strategies that focused on delivering holistic advising services, training, ensuring quality, and collaboration.

**“It takes everyone to make students successful. Advising is central to everything.”**

*- Student Success Administrator*

#### OBSERVATIONS

- A high degree of advising is deployed between primary-role and faculty advisors.
- A standard practice of holistic advising is embedded in student success operations.
- Nearly half reported the use of advising training, resource commitment, and CQI practices.
- Few institutions have an advising model that is customized for first-year academic advising.

## 02. **KEY FINDING** Equitable Academic Advising Outcomes

Participating institutions described their approach to establishing equitable academic advising outcomes for all student populations. Aspects of collaboration grounded in equity research, training to support minoritized populations, and assessing perceptions of barriers at the point of entry were observed.

**“ Provide cultural competency training to academic advisors.**

- *Student Success Administrator*

### OBSERVATIONS

- Several institutions employ a holistic advising approach and use data to understand needs, service impact, and outcomes.
- More than half of the institutions offer advising training and cross-functional collaboration among departments interacting with students.
- Half of the institutions indicated that they are in the development phase of establishing equitable advising processes for all student populations.
- A few institutions deploy targeted outreach to subpopulation groups, utilize early alert, or use a differentiated approach to subpopulations.

## 03. **KEY FINDING** The Role of Advising in Transformation

Student success leaders described their approach to supporting a culture of transformation at their institutions. Commonly shared practices of transformation were highlighted, demonstrating clear knowledge of student populations, understanding student needs, increased focus on improving early momentum, and a collaborative approach with faculty to understand their role in student success and persistence.

**“ The advising model has worked well to transform the idea of what academic advising and student success means on campus.**

- *Student Success Administrator*

### OBSERVATIONS

- Several institutions create buy-in and foster attitudinal shifts to create change among campus stakeholders.
- More than half of the institutions are implementing changes and making progress toward transformation.
- Many institutions highlight challenges to create a sense of urgency in resolving these challenges.
- Few institutions indicate they are making measurable gains toward a shared vision.

## 04. **Continuous Quality Improvement in Academic Advising**

KEY FINDING

The participants offered perspectives on how CQI is demonstrated in academic advising. Primary themes focused on processes of collecting data regularly to assess advising service delivery and customer service. Additional commonalities observed include the frequent examination of data in time for improvement opportunities and regular reporting processes for assessment linked to accreditation.

**“ Academic advising is a critical part of the Quality Enhancement Program for the university’s accreditation process.**

- *Student Success Administrator*

### OBSERVATIONS

- Many of the institutions review and reflect on data to pinpoint issues.
- Half of the institutions perform assessments at the program or department level.
- Few institutions use a standard process aligned to accreditation methods.
- Annual advisor training and development was offered at a few institutions.

## 05. **Democratizing the Use of Student Success Data**

KEY FINDING

Institutions shared strategies for broadening and democratizing the use of student success data on campus. All colleges demonstrate data transparency by holding annual discussions about student success metrics with the board of trustees. Most notable is the practice of data literacy and team segmentation to review and share data frequently. Further, institutions engage faculty and other stakeholders to understand the data. Institutions are also employing an effective strategy of providing comprehensive equity updates and monitoring progress against benchmarks.

**“ Data is infused into everything we do and is segmented by teams to review.**

- *Student Success Administrator*

### OBSERVATIONS

- Most institutions are broadening report distribution and increasing data transparency.
- More than half of the campuses are increasing the use of actionable data and building capacity with data.
- Half are establishing data teams and increasing data literacy with campus stakeholders.
- A few institutions are showing the impact of services on outcomes.

## 06. **KEY FINDING** Data and Analytics Strategies for Improving Student Success

Interviewees described their most effective campus wide data and analytics strategies that support student success outcomes. These strategies reflected making published data widely accessible and establishing methods to collect data from focus groups. Developing approaches include structured ways to capture qualitative data to understand the factors affecting early momentum and pinpointing insights about equity and persistence.

**“Our data and analytics strategy is evolving in layers by first ensuring everyone has access to and can disaggregate the data.**

- *Student Success Administrator*

### OBSERVATIONS

- Nearly all institutions use dashboards, reports, and data in operations and planning.
- Slightly less than half of the institutions deploy or outsource predictive analytics.
- Some institutions apply an incremental strategy approach for actionable data understanding and integration.
- Several institutions communicate the value and impact of data on outcomes.

## 07. **KEY FINDING** Most Impactful Data and Analytics Strategy

To further understand the impact of institutional data and analytics, participants were asked to describe their most effective strategy for utilizing data and analytics to improve student success. Responses revealed institutions' movement toward the increased use of structured data and dashboards for decision-making and long-term planning. One of the most intriguing strategies is having a dedicated and structured team to examine key student success data points and provide comparative measures for individuals, units, and institutions.

**“A dedicated and structured group examines key student success data.**

- *Student Success Administrator*

### OBSERVATIONS

- More than half of the institutions use dashboards, reports, and data in operations and planning.
- Slightly less than half of the institutions indicate better use of data and data integration.
- A few institutions use a student success platform.
- A few institutions have increased analytics capacity, data literacy, and collaboration around data.



**KEY FINDING**

## 08. Sustainability of Academic Advising Services

Institutions shared perspectives on their methods of structuring academic advising to ensure sustainability. Approaches included cultivating extensive support for advising, holistic advising (including wraparound student support services), and learning how to use data to enhance the quality of student experiences. A promising aspect includes recognizing the need for K–12 community partners in college advising practices.

**“ Use of public-private (external) partnerships.**

*- Student Success Administrator*

### OBSERVATIONS

- Most institutions are building out advising capacity and infrastructure.
- Half of the institutions provide ongoing training and professional development for advisors.
- Approximately half of the institutions demonstrate the efficient use of staff and technology.
- Few institutions are engaging in cross-functional collaboration.
- A few institutions show an assessment of outcomes and CQI methods.



Collectively, institutions emphasize the need to identify gaps in systemic coordination and cross-functional collaboration strategies. While participants acknowledged access and data availability, methods to train the campus community on data use and academic advising integration were wide-ranging across the interviews.

Similarly, few institutions assertively integrate academic advising in strategic planning efforts. Additional observations point to a few institutions experiencing systemic operational challenges where competing demands juxtapose large advising caseloads.

These key findings were instrumental in formulating the action strategies and recommendations for the guidebook. We included impactful solutions to integrate academic advising practices and institutionalize strategic alignment.

Retention and graduation rates are key performance metrics of student success. Yet, data published by the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System indicate that the six-year graduation rate at four-year institutions is 62%.<sup>3</sup> This means nearly one out of every three new students who enter a four-year institution will not graduate within six years. Retention rates, a leading indicator of graduation rates, have become the focus of institutions that want to impact their student success outcomes. The growing accountability measures attached to performance-based funding motivate presidents and provosts to expand and prioritize student success initiatives

Enhancing academic advising and its effectiveness on college campuses starts with understanding its impact on student success outcomes. It is prudent to establish a vision of how teams, processes, equity standards, technology, and data use contribute to student success.

Institutions can take targeted action to strengthen holistic advising to improve the student experience and impact performance measures. This guidebook provides strategies to elevate the academic advising organization into the strategic planning process. Institutionalizing this framework requires commitment and support from senior leadership that extends beyond traditional efforts to ensure the entire institution responds and adopts the vision with strategy and collaboration. When fully integrated, advising operations will be characterized by data-informed decisions gathered from advising activities, the use of technology platforms, and meaningful interactions that add substantial value in guiding students through their educational journey.

Section 2 of this framework outlines key academic advising components to include in the strategic planning process to support student success.

**Enhancing academic advising and its effectiveness on college campuses starts with understanding its impact on student success outcomes.**

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<sup>3</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=40>.



## SECTION 2

# Strategic Alignment Planning Dimensions

**Institutional leaders are engaging in more frequent discussions focused on integration strategies to redefine equitable advising services. Colleges and universities nationwide recognize student retention as a critical function of academic advising. The variability in organizational structures and standards for advising services, policies, and procedures has resulted in systemic barriers that impact student retention and progression.**

Senior leadership is responsible for planning and implementing holistic advising redesign. This requires a commitment to identify systemic barriers that hinder student success and rebuild advising models that yield a more significant impact on key performance measures leading to improved student outcomes. Positioning the holistic advising redesign as a strategic priority begins with institutional leaders' incorporation of advising into a shared philosophy for student success. This requires consistent and progressive leadership and accountability for implementing advising models that align with the institutional mission, vision, and strategic planning goals.

Student success administrators acknowledge that institutional characteristics, capacity, and reporting lines can determine advising's organization and structure. For instance, some institutions utilize reporting lines that designate responsibility for student success to advising administrators. Others have shared advising responsibilities between faculty and primary-role advisors with different reporting lines. The framework outlined below describes and formulates a robust plan to organize advising delivery and support of centralized or decentralized structures to engage the entire campus community in elevating academic advising improvements.

Stakeholder engagement supports a culture of collaboration, cross-functional training, and teamwork with input from faculty, staff, and students. Convening a team of administrators, academic advisors, and other key constituents on campuses will help establish a shared vision that builds consistent advising standards. As such, stakeholders appointed to these work groups should demonstrate competency in understanding student needs, making data-informed decisions, building cross-functional collaborations, and implementing continuous quality improvement.

Framework dimensions to plan and organize a strategic alignment of academic advising are illustrated in Figure 3. Descriptions for action strategies follow.



Credit: Northern State University (OK)

**Figure 3. Strategic Alignment Dimensions**



This framework outlines the six dimensions of strategic alignment with action strategies to improve academic advising services with a semester of annual timeframe to develop.

### STRATEGIC DIMENSION 1

## 01. Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

Leaders or student success administrators can develop a strategic alignment of advising on college campuses by forming a comprehensive stakeholder engagement that supports a culture of collaboration, communication, and cross-functional training. This method fosters both macro- and micro-level communication with input from faculty, staff, and students. This initial step is critical in motivating all stakeholders around the process and unifying advising as a strategic priority.

The next part of this step is identifying roles and responsibilities to execute the charge and a timeline to complete the holistic advising redesign. This process must include the purpose, goals, and tactical direction to align advising operations to the strategic plan.

### ACTION STRATEGY 1



#### **Convene cross-functional work groups and appoint a student success administrator to lead recurring meetings. Recommended work group teams include:**

- Academic administrators—deans and/or department chairs
- Academic advisors/advising council members
- Institutional research
- Faculty
- Student affairs (residential life, counseling services, student health services)
- Library services (a hub for learning, gathering, and studying)
- Accessibility services
- Enrollment/admissions
- Financial aid
- Institutional development (scholarship leveraging)
- Registrar
- Information technology
- Psychological and social work services
- Athletic coordinator

### STRATEGIC DIMENSION 2

## 02. Assess and Refine Mission and Vision for Advising

The advising mission should align with the institutional mission and core values. Likewise, leaders should establish core values for holistic advising, which include statements of civility, equity, and inclusion, and include metrics for evaluation.

This assessment provides an opportunity to ensure that advising is adapting to emerging trends of all student groups. This process should align with the institution's strategic planning cycle, often a three- to five-year period.



### ACTION STRATEGY 2

#### **Conduct a strategic planning retreat with the members of the advising team.**

- Align team to create a shared mission and vision to foster buy-in.
- Develop a strategic plan that aligns with the institutional and advisors' purposes.
- Collect data on what students would like to gain from advising departments.
- Achieve collective agreement and feedback from the advising team.
- Brainstorm and identify processes to intentionally advance the mission.

### STRATEGIC DIMENSION 3

## 03. Aligning Advising Strategy and Goals to Support the Institutional Mission and Vision

This process requires institution-wide thinking and integration of goals and objectives to support the institutional mission and vision.



### ACTION STRATEGY 3

#### Student success segments in the strategic plan will include:

- Advising goals that identify three to four supporting objectives for student success.
- Key performance indicators (KPIs) and corresponding thresholds for success that lead to goal achievement.
- Detailed process mapping of how and where the alignment to the institutional mission and vision occurs.
- Documentation to request budget resources to advance goal attainment.
- A proposed implementation timeframe.

### STRATEGIC DIMENSION 4

## 04. Assessment Planning for Academic Advising

Solicit input from a diverse group of internal and external stakeholders to develop the assessment plan for academic advising. The assessment should be aligned with the institution's assessment planning cycle and identify the goals, success metrics, and student learning outcomes related to advising.

### ACTION STRATEGY 4



#### Facilitate CQI in advising by using the assessment process and advising goals. Gauge student success metrics for outcomes that are quantifiable activities to impact outcomes:

#### 1. PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Examples: Student retention, credit accumulation rate, course completion rate.

#### 2. PROCESS DELIVERY OUTCOMES

Examples: Tutoring contact hours, number of advisee appointments, service referrals from alerts.

These are identified as the learning goals and objectives that students are expected to achieve, categorized as cognitive learning, behavioral learning, and affective learning.<sup>4</sup>

#### ADVISING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- **Cognitive Learning:** Students will understand degree program requirements for their major.
- **Behavioral Learning:** Utilize the degree-audit system to know the effects of changing majors.
- **Affective Learning:** Identify behaviors that minimize debt from college loans.

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4. Robbins, R. & Zarges, K.M. (2011). Assessment of Academic Advising: A Summary of the Process. Retrieved from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources Web Site: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Assessment-of-academic-advising.aspx>.

## 05. **STRATEGIC DIMENSION 5** Conduct a Situational/Gap Analysis of Advising Services

The value and benefit of performing a gap analysis as part of strategic alignment provide insight into operations capacity and limitations.



### **ACTION STRATEGY 5** Convene annual discovery sessions

The following questions can focus the discussion on operations and process gaps.

#### **INTERNAL TEAM PERSPECTIVE: ACADEMIC ADVISORS**

1. How do we improve efficiency in advising processes?
2. How do we close the loop on referrals and follow up on action items?
3. How do we improve our approach to problem-solving and identifying solutions?
4. What new or emerging barriers have students experienced over the past six months?

#### **RESOURCE PERSPECTIVE: ACADEMIC ADVISING LEADERSHIP TEAM**

1. What assets or resources do we have to reach student success targets?
2. What data-informed best practices or trends can we leverage?
3. What resources do we need to improve the student experience?
4. How do we implement plans and strategies to support the mission with limited resources?
5. How are institutional policies and procedures for academic advising documented?
6. What is the communication process when changes occur in academic advising policies and procedures? Who leads this effort?

#### **LEARNING AND GROWTH PERSPECTIVE: ACADEMIC ADVISING AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES TEAMS**

1. What processes, policies, and procedures are done well?
2. What processes, policies, and procedures receive the most complaints?
3. What existing roadblocks hinder our progress?

## STRATEGIC DIMENSION 6

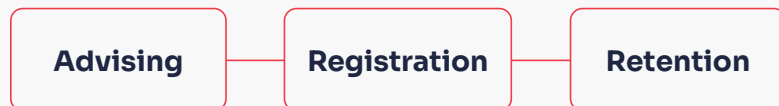
# 06. Accelerate the Transformation of Advising Practices That Target Outcomes and KPIs

Change and transformation evolve from acknowledging what works well and where improvements can be made. Improvement occurs when stakeholders formulate a strategy for understanding which improved to optimize efficiency.

The first step toward materializing student success outcomes starts with establishing appropriate operational targets for advising practices.

These operational targets must be the underlying drivers of measures known to correlate or impact the outcome, as shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Drive Practices that Correlate with Outcomes



## ACTION STRATEGY 6



### Establish clear objectives for advising delivery by considering the following targets for efficiency and effectiveness:

- The number of advising student interactions or touchpoints that must occur each semester.
- Student satisfaction levels with advising.
- The percentage of credit accumulation rates each academic year. Implement or refine a program that facilitates consistent credit accumulation each semester (e.g., 15 to Finish program).

Leaders must frequently monitor operational targets and proactively track progress. Advisors need data and reporting on student course loads from the institutional research office or information technology. Likewise, course planning efforts must create enough sections for students to enroll in desired credit loads. Advising leadership teams can employ a proactive stance that informs academic leadership about course level needs to improve or maintain student momentum.

This section of the guidebook provided the components for establishing planning dimensions and action steps for the strategic alignment of advising. Section 3 will focus on implementation strategies and demonstrate a framework for developing the components essential for formulating processes, policies, and procedures to reenvision academic advising.



### SECTION 3

# Implementing a Comprehensive Academic Advising Framework

**Student services leaders will build off the planning and action steps for strategic alignment to reenvision and implement an academic advising framework to support student success.**

Advising leaders are responsible for the process of strategic planning. Institutional leaders must develop the foundational components of mission, vision, goals, and student learning outcomes combined with supporting dimensions, as illustrated in Figure 5. Leading with clear strategic direction will provide teams with focus and purpose.



Figure 5. Academic Advising Framework: Components of Mission, Vision, Goals & Student Learning Outcomes

Mission	Vision	Goals	Student Learning Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity</li> <li>• Active purpose</li> <li>• Expectations and operations of advising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aspirational</li> <li>• Forward-thinking</li> <li>• Reflective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operationalizes mission and vision</li> <li>• SMART Methodology</li> <li>• Transformative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results-oriented</li> <li>• Assessment measure</li> </ul>



**ACTION STEP 3.1**

**Guidance for Developing an Advising Mission Statement**

The academic advising mission should bring context to operations and standards of practice for advising. Further, it will articulate the student advising experience and advisor role. Investing time for a dedicated collaborative team to develop the mission statement will give purpose to daily work operations and fosters a sense of community, social responsibility, and inclusion.



**ACTION STEP 3.2**

**Guidance for Developing an Advising Vision Statement**

The academic advising vision statement should reflect an intentional future state for advising and articulate the ideal student experience. Framing a vision should convey an aspirational declaration that builds on elements of the advising mission and values.



**ACTION STEP 3.3**

**Guidance for Developing Advising Goals**

Goals for academic advising are often process-oriented because of the nature of advising services. Process-oriented goals can promote transformative growth and improvement in student success. Use the SMART framework to establish well-designed goals. As outlined in Figure 6, the SMART framework attributes reflect specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound goals.

Figure 6. Academic Advising SMART Goals Framework





**ACTION STEP 3.4**

### Guidance for Developing Student Learning Outcomes

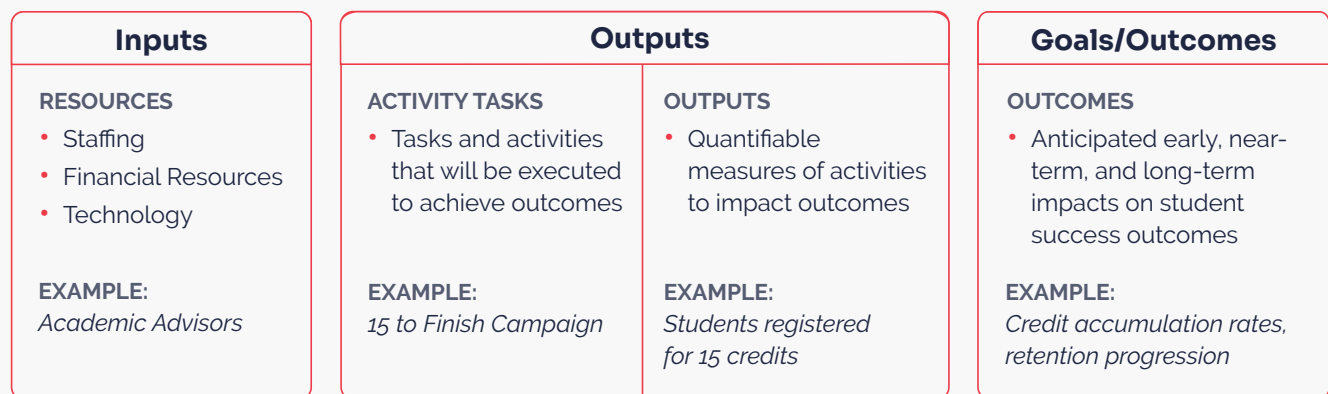
The logic model below is a valuable framework for developing student learning outcomes (SLOs) in academic advising.<sup>5</sup> A transformative strategy is created by applying the logic model components as a foundation to connect to the other academic advising mission, vision, and goals. The logic model framework will help link the SLOs to the advising program goals and institutional key performance indicators (KPIs).

#### Describe each component of the logic model framework.

<b>Inputs</b>	Identify the required resources to achieve the expected outcomes.
<b>Activity Tasks</b>	Categorize tasks and activities that will be executed to achieve outcomes.
<b>Outputs</b>	List quantifiable measures of advising activities that the program will generate to impact outcomes.
<b>Outcomes</b>	Indicate the early, near-term, and long-term desired results and impacts on student success outcomes.
<b>Assumptions</b>	Explain key beliefs about the advising program, its processes or resources, or students that, if not actual, might affect program success.
<b>External Factors</b>	Describe factors external to the department or institution that may impact advising program success.

List the components for academic advising activities in the logic model's respective area, as illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Advising Program Logic Model <sup>6</sup>



5. Robbins, R. & Zarges, K.M. (2011). Assessment of Academic Advising: A Summary of the Process. Retrieved from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources Web Site: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Assessment-of-academic-advising.aspx>.

6. Adapted from Center for Violence Prevention and Intervention Research.

<https://icjia.illinois.gov/researchhub/articles/logic-models-practical-planning-to-reach-program-goals#logic-model-template>.

Lastly, there are additional aspects to consider while implementing strategic planning for advising. It is necessary to operationalize planning dimensions at a macro level to include:

1. Collaboration with cross-functional units play a significant role in student success efforts to retain students.
2. Discussion and planning centered on the feasibility of delivering services at proposed levels. Specifically, consider the roles, contributions, and effects from other departments (e.g., admissions, financial aid, registrar/bursar, residential life, health services) on the strategic plan goals.
3. Consideration for capacity planning and strategy to maintain the ability to meet student success measures for advising and retention of students.

#### ACTION STEP 3.5



### **Guidance for Developing Advising Structures (designing first-year, centralized, decentralized, hybrid, remote)**

Academic advising structures and settings are determined by characteristics of the institution, student needs, and demographics based on the institution's population, infrastructure, and capacity.

In any condition or scenario, these two aspects should always be included when considering a framework:

1. The first-year advising experience should be customized.
2. Faculty involvement and coordinating faculty and student interactions are critical.

Variables shown in Figure 8 outline conditions required to organize the delivery of academic advising practices.

As a part of shaping the plan and strategy, leaders can lead their advising teams in discovery sessions or internal analysis to review these considerations as part of selecting an inclusive advising model. These sessions' frequency will be determined based on the institution's need to change the academic advising structure.

**Figure 8**

#### **Consideration for Organizing Advising Services**

- Institutional Culture
- Student Needs
- Fiscal and Human Resources
- Technology Infrastructure
- Data Support
- Academic Policies and Procedures
- Student Learning Outcomes

# Organizational Structure for Academic Advising



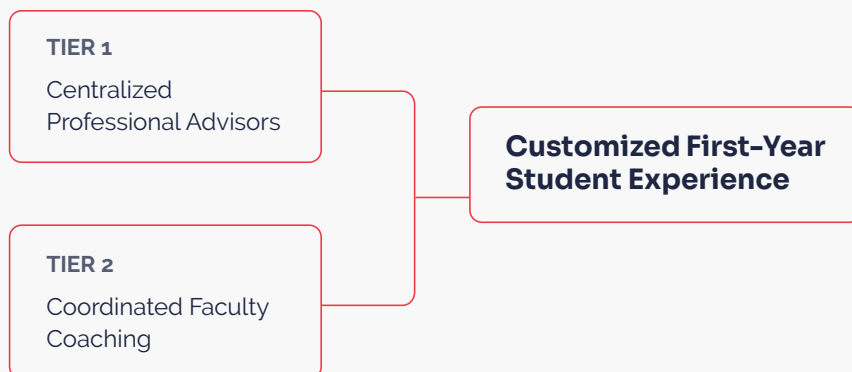
## ACTION TIP 1

### Identifying a Best-Fit Advising Framework

As institutional leaders determine the best advising model per the type of institution (e.g., public, private, community, research, liberal arts, HBCUs), it is highly recommended that institutions tailor the first-year advising experience to acknowledge the critical adjustment and transition issues that first-year students face.

Customized academic advising can be deployed as part of a cohesive, blended framework that uses two-tier advising for first-year students, as illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Two-Tiered Advising



### **Tier 1: Centralize academic advising as part of a first-year experience by utilizing primary-role advisors and standardizing processes at the institutional level.**

#### ADVISOR'S ROLE (YEAR ONE)

Examples of Tier 1 advising activities in the first year include:

- A comprehensive review of expectations for student learning outcomes of advising
- Orientation to and utilization of tools and resources
- Proactive and holistic student guidance
- Intrusive academic advising sessions
- Early alert and intervention initiatives
- A universal review of academic program requirements, policies, and procedures
- An integrated plan for academic and social support services
- The exploration of degree programs, major clarification, and selection
- The exploration of career pathways and goals
- Campus referrals and activity support for health and financial wellness
- Navigating cultural, diversity, and inclusivity aspects of college life
- Financial literacy and the impact of time-to-degree on student loan debt

## **Tier 2: Primary-role advisors collaborate with major/departmental faculty to deliver specific and tailored coaching interactions during the first year.**

### **PRIMARY-ROLE ADVISOR'S ROLE (YEAR ONE)**

Examples of Tier 2 advising activities in the first year include:

- Provide connections and experiential learning opportunities (study abroad, undergraduate research, practicum)
- Review of student learning outcomes of faculty coaching and mentoring
- Research guidance and understanding of scholarly resources
- Exploration of academic and career pathways
- Introduction to internship requirements and industry expectations
- Wide-ranging information on student professional development and growth

As previously stated, it is critical to organize a comprehensive academic framework linked to the institution's mission, strategic goals for advising, and student success, while also delivering practices that include operational efficiency. Holistic redesign emerges from a process of active planning, establishing clear and well-defined goals and student learning outcomes, and providing wide-ranging consideration through the lens of students.



#### **ACTION TIP 2**

### **The Student Voice**

It is vital to include the student voice when selecting the advising delivery framework. This can be accomplished by inviting a few students to sit on the planning committee or by conducting focus groups that include representation from different subpopulations within each of the classifications (e.g., years in college, ethnic group).

In developing any advising delivery framework, plans should include protocols for academic advising components across each year for two-year institutions and four-year institutions. The framework and protocols must comprise standardized processes, efficiency in advising delivery, standard advising policies and procedures, and an environment where CQI is valued.



## Advising Activities and Processes for Year Two and Beyond

Academic advising beyond the first year will mirror and build upon first-year student learning outcomes. While students become more independent after year one, the same interactions should occur between advisors (primary-role and faculty) and students. Depending on advising capacity and institutional infrastructure, the framework can remain intact. Students can receive the same level of advising activities with phased-in activities relevant to their progress.

Examples of advising activities for students matriculating to upper-class levels include:

- Assisting with managing progress toward a degree
- Providing in-depth knowledge of academic curriculum and course guidance
- Recommending relevant academic support services
- Identifying problem-solving strategies to improve grades
- Developing and refining individual career goals in selected degree program(s)
- Providing coaching/mentoring and networking support
- Recommending peer mentoring opportunities
- Providing life skills and ongoing guidance and support for career pathways and industry preparation
- Discussing transfer options to four-year institutions, career placement, or graduate school enrollment

## Guidelines for Creating Equitable Advising Caseloads

Several factors determine how institutional leaders can address academic advising caseloads. The variation in advising caseloads is influenced by institutional infrastructure and advisor capacity.

Understanding the advising service population is critical in helping leaders identify the best approach to determine equitable advising caseloads. Caseloads should consider student enrollment, the number of advising staff, and the capacity to provide holistic advising sessions. Research on developing caseloads for advising identifies specific variables that extend beyond demand and capacity estimates. NACADA, the global community for academic advising considered the premier source for advising practices, highlights views shared by Robins, who described the complexity of factors that surround determining equitable caseloads:<sup>7</sup>

**“Direct comparisons of advisor caseloads in institutions of the same type (e.g., 2-year colleges; 4-year, public, bachelor-degree granting universities; 4-year, private, bachelor-degree granting colleges) with similar student populations, programs, or geographical area are complicated by differences in campus climate, politics, institutional mission and goals, and other factors.**

- Robins, 2013

Thus, determining advising caseloads involves many considerations. Standards and guidelines developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) state that “Academic advising caseloads must be consistent with the time required for the effective performance of the activity.”<sup>8</sup> Further, Eric White, past president and former NACADA representative to CAS, recommends institutional leaders consider the questions identified in Figure 10 when developing advising caseloads.<sup>9</sup>

No “one size fits all” approach to establishing academic advising caseloads exists. The considerations of professional organizations such as CAS and NACADA present a starting point for institutions when determining advising caseloads.

Figure 10. Factors to Consider for Establishing Equitable Advising Caseloads

### What

What type of student populations are being advised and what are their needs? Undecided, honors, seniors, athletes, minoritized, or low income?

### Who

Who is advising students? Primary-role advisors or faculty with teaching and research responsibilities?

### How

How many other responsibilities are advisors performing? Do they have the requisite time to accommodate a demanding advising caseload?

7. Robins, R. (2013). Advisor Load. Retrieved from <https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor-Load.aspx>.

8. NACADA (2019). Advisor to Student Ratio/Caseload Resources. Retrieved from <https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor-to-Student-Ratio-Caseload-Resources.aspx>.

9. Ibid.

## Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Social Justice, and Accessibility in Academic Advising

The planning process is an opportunity to integrate policies and practices centered on equity, diversity, inclusion, social justice, and accessibility. Institutions that champion the success of all students, particularly minoritized and low-income students, embed diversity and inclusion in their mission and core values. Cultural competency training for advisors will bring new perspectives in advising service delivery. Further, training for advisors to use data to identify achievement gaps can aid in mitigating inequities. Professional development can equip advisors to meet students "where they are" and offer them pathways to attaining their goals.



Topics to foster equity, diversity, inclusion, social justice, and accessibility in advising include:

1. Building cultural competency skills for advisors to engage with students to help confront issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, social justice, and accessibility.
2. Demonstrating cultural competency as an integral part of academic advising and student success program initiatives.
3. Identifying methods of assigning academic advisors to students from varying backgrounds.

## Utilizing Process Mapping in a Framework for Academic Advising

Process mapping employs methods that standardize and document activities and can be applied as part of a CQI strategy in academic advising and implementing high-impact student success initiatives. For example, institutions can design and implement a standard of practice for academic advising that can transform advising delivery, enhance the student experience, and improve student outcomes. Institutional stakeholders must understand how and when advising activities occur over an academic year. Mapping the process facilitates this ability.

Process mapping in the context of CQI allows institutions to:

1. Map out advising processes, policies, and procedures centered on student success goals.
2. Identify weaknesses in institutional processes, policies, and/or practices.
3. Identify capacities that impede or accelerate the transformation of academic advising.
4. Understand issues of access and equity for underrepresented students.
5. Create a culture of CQI to support student success in the short and long term.



Process mapping can be deployed as a technique to identify, design, and document policies and procedures. The first step in process mapping is to hypothesize the three key elements or Three Cs (capacity, consistency, and connection), as described in Figure 11.

**Figure 11. 3C Elements of Process Mapping**



### Mapping the advising process enables institutions to:

1. Create alignment of academic advising operations to the strategic plan and systemic integration of strategies to support institutional mission and vision.
2. Illustrate a shared academic advising mission that is student-centered and aligns with the delivery of holistic academic support and student professional development.
3. Perform assessment and evaluation of academic advising initiatives between the current state and future state of processes.
4. Apply insights and learnings to drive transformation based on mission and vision.

### Benefits

Process mapping encourages a culture of governance and accountability that yields tangible advantages. Its benefits can illustrate a standard of practice to:

- Produce a cross-functional collaboration to bolster team-oriented mindsets and behaviors, build a partnership culture, and improve communication at both macro and micro levels.
- Provide ways to use data to improve advising delivery and outcomes, such as closing equity gaps and deploying timely interventions.
- Document advising policies, procedures, and artifacts for accreditation.
- Measure processes for efficiency and establish benchmarks to manage operations and workflow.

When properly executed, this strategy offers institutions a transparent and supportive framework to transform academic advising and student success initiatives.

## Strategic Budgeting Process and Conditions to Support Academic Advising

- Senior leadership can offer structure and guidelines to the strategic budgeting process that generates a transparent approach for developing operational budgets to support academic advising units.
- Allocation methods for creating operational budgets should align with the institutional strategic plan, data-informed decision-making (e.g., enrollment, retention trends), and be justified by performance goal projections and advising student learning outcomes.

## Onboarding, Training, and Development for Academic Advising

### Academic Advisor Hiring, Training, and Development

- Expanding efforts to develop a robust onboarding process faculty advisor is crucial. A formal equity-based structure as part of new employee orientation will establish a valuable foundation to standardize expectations and training.
- Coordinated efforts with the Office of Human Resources to develop a guidebook for new hires to learn equity-minded policies, procedures, service-level practices, and cross-functional impact areas.
- Leaders must create transparent and progressive career paths and career advancement opportunities to retain advisors.

### New Hire Training on Advising Policies and Procedures

- Best practices in onboarding new advisors incorporate training about policies and procedures related to advising.
- Cover common student services such as financial aid, student affairs, and information technology. Data literacy is an essential skill for understanding equity and the unique needs of students.
- Data and information are recommended for staff to effectively use data in decision-making and planning student success initiatives.<sup>10</sup> Data demands advisors are well trained in federal, state, and institutional compliance laws, mandates, and other regulations that govern student rights and institutional responsibilities.
- Compliance training should be embedded in onboarding for new advisors to address the following topics:
  - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
  - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
  - Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
  - NCAA initial-eligibility standards for incoming freshmen and transfer students, and progress-toward-degree standards

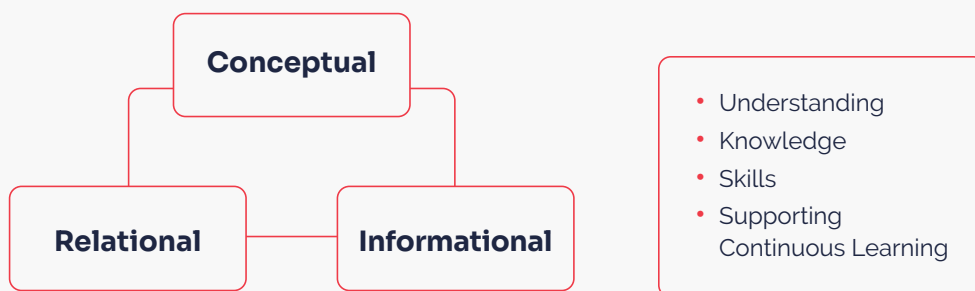
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10. Swing, R. L., and Ross, L. E. (2016). Statement of Aspirational Practice for Institutional Research. Association for Institutional Research, Tallahassee, Florida. Retrieved June 2024 from <http://www.airweb.org/aspirationalstatement>.

## Competencies

The advising environment must cultivate high standards for advising principles and values. Institutional leaders can adopt and employ the NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model as part of academic advisor onboarding, as illustrated in Figure 12.

Figure 12. NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model



This model will help institutions cultivate a sense of community and provide understanding, knowledge, and support to strengthen the academic advising campus community. The NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model conceptual underpinnings identify three key modules to drive excellence among employees in the academic advising profession.<sup>11, 12, 13</sup>

Use of this framework can provide campuswide understanding and knowledge based on three primary competency areas:

### 1. Conceptual

Offers context and clarity of academic advising service delivery. It encompasses concepts and theories of understanding for advisors to guide students effectively.

### 2. Informational

Upholds the significance of academic advising. It underscores the program and curriculum knowledge advisors must utilize to guide and support students at their institution.

### 3. Relational

Strengthens the skills that enable academic advisors to convey advising concepts and information to their advisees as a primary component of advisor-student interactions and student development.<sup>14</sup>

The academic advising framework in this section focused on implementation strategies to implement a well-designed model. It established the essential components for re-envisioning academic advising.

The next section will describe several strategic data elements that are valuable for decision-making and supporting student success.

11. NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2017). NACADA academic advising core competencies model. Retrieved from <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreCompetencies.aspx>.

12. See supplemental resources for additional training and professional development in Appendices.

13. See supplemental resource for academic advisor training needs assessment.

14. NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2017). NACADA academic advising core competencies model. Retrieved from <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreCompetencies.aspx>.

Credit: Eastern Washington University



## SECTION 4

# Institutional Effectiveness and Data Utilization

## Data Utilization and Analytics Segment

Senior leadership is responsible to gauge data through relevant indicators, like measurable outcomes in the strategic goals and advising effectiveness. These data should reflect the advising delivery population, service quantity, service quality, and measures on overarching student success goals. Enrolling, retaining, and graduating students capped with post-college outcomes of employment or graduate school serve as key performance indicators (KPIs) that evaluate institutional performance.

**Leaders must have historical trend data for these outcomes and preliminary measures that reflect actual performance. Data must have the granularity to measure performance within student subpopulations so that leaders can achieve equity in outcomes for all students**

Reporting on leading indicators, those that correlate with outcomes and KPIs supply actionable data to influence these outcomes while they are taking shape.

The monitoring of early momentum indicators (e.g., credit accumulation, gateway course completion, and term-to-term retention) and progression sourced from best practices helps students get off to a good start in their educational journeys and supports timely completion.

**Paired with tracking advising activity and early momentum, the use of data helps keep advising front of mind for academic leaders, faculty, and staff. When performance expectations are clear, measurable, and monitored, effective teams will strive to achieve them.**

Frequent review of the early momentum indicators communicates the importance of achieving advising goals and underscores their impact on student success. Thus, regular examination of student success metrics for near-term measures, long-term measures, and advising operations can support student success goals at transformational levels.

## Strategic Data Elements for Senior Leadership

Several strategic data elements at the institutional level are valuable for decision-making and supporting student success. Operational measures of advising activities speak to the frequency and extent of advising services, advisor caseloads, and academic performance and engagement of advisees.

**The advisor of record is a critical data element that provides the data needed to measure advising caseloads and examine them for equitable distribution and balance.**

With the advisor of record established, advising sessions can be entered to document the date and purpose of visits using coding systems or comments. These data become the basis for examining whether advising has occurred, measuring how frequently it has happened, and understanding student performance by and

across advisors. Data about student satisfaction and the advising experience can be very insightful when examined across advisors.

Long-term measures assess student and institutional success and reflect goals commonly tied to institutional and strategic plans. While first-year retention, graduation rates, time to degree, and career and graduate school placement are lagging indicators, each has preliminary measures that speak to progress with student success.

**Moreover, these data are instrumental in informing leaders about attainment gaps across the spectrum of student sub-groups and demographics, such as minoritized race/ethnic groups, gender, age, low-income, and first-generation.**

**Other disaggregation variables include major, entry origins, readiness levels, new student type (e.g., first-year student or transfer), and enrollment intensity. Likewise, intervention tracking is necessary to understand which services are having an impact and who uses them.**

**Disaggregating the long-term measures by sub-groups provides essential information about student success and equity: who is finishing and who is not.**

**Monitoring credit loads to ensure full-time students enroll in 15 credits per semester supports the amount of enrollment intensity needed for bachelor's degree completion in four years or less.**

**Completion of gateway courses in mathematics and English is a critical measure of student momentum. Gateway course completion shows a progression toward timely degree completion.**

Student success measurements can signal if students are meeting criteria that support timely completion. This group of leading indicators is an intuitive set, and research identifies these metrics as representing early momentum that supports on-time degree completion.

Likewise, overall course completion rates can indicate bottlenecks and progression issues resulting from a gateway or other high failure courses. Identification of high-failure rate courses allows institutions to focus efforts on planning and deploying interventions to promote course-level success. Lastly, credit accumulation rates and credit completion ratios are essential measures that show the proportion of students who accumulate credits at desired thresholds and the extent to which they pass the courses they attempt. See appendix for 5 Strategic and Operational Student Success Metrics.

**Near-term measures are actionable and provide indications of early momentum that ensure students are progressing on their educational journey.**

Several of these measures can serve as KPIs, particularly those which measure primary outcomes. Others are candidates for leading indicators for regular monitoring to ensure that activities occur at the level needed and time point in the student journey. For example, fall to spring retention is a leading indicator of first-year retention. Both are measured, in part, by early-term registration activity until the institution reaches its census enrollment and officially measures retention. Likewise, success rates in developmental or first-year gateway courses will correlate with the number of students achieving early momentum. As stated previously, there is no shortage of data to track measures that speak to student success.

**It is vital to measure what matters frequently and in time to impact students who need assistance, added support, redirection, or other resources when they need it.**



## Recommendations for Reporting Capabilities for Student Success

The use of data provides front-line staff and leaders access to understand student success outcomes and metrics. Equally important is collecting evidence to understand the impacts of interventions and alerts. Institutions can accomplish this with many tools and approaches.

Whether an institution develops its own system with employee skill sets and talent or obtains a vendor solution and consulting services, the system should have the following capabilities:

### Reporting Capabilities and Use Cases

Capability	Use Cases
Dashboards and data visualizations with anytime, anywhere access	Summarize operations for leading indicators with prior year comparisons, point-in-time comparisons, and progress to targets. Filter and disaggregate data to populations of interest.
Operational reports in a self-service format	Regular access to measures that cross-functional units track for high-volume activities such as advising, pre-registration, mid-term grades, internship placements, referrals for interventions, application for graduation, or other workflow metrics.
Access to underlying data	Allow access to the detail for validation, student outreach, and datasets for research.
Export of data visualizations	Communicate progress easily for department or institutional update and meeting.
Data integration	Integrate data from new or disparate systems such as learning management systems or survey data.
Predictive analytics and early alerts	Identify at-risk students in real time via alert systems.

Data may source from disparate systems, but effective data integration will tie data together for more holistic analysis and understanding. Advising activities offer incredible opportunities to influence student success outcomes and understanding, and communicating these impacts helps achieve student success.

Effective reporting capabilities can equip student success leaders with data to measure the impact of campaigns and services and serve as the basis for continuous improvement.

The last topic in this section will describe ways institutions can share data with campus stakeholders.

## Approaches for Communicating the Utilization of Data Throughout the Campus

The vast amount of student success data on campuses has little value if it is not shared. All areas on campus need access to insightful data to help understand student outcomes and design strategies for improvement. Data utilization is key to progress, and campuses can take a number of approaches to communicate the ways stakeholders use data and showcase how it is making a difference.

**A growing strategy is to increase data democratization at the institution by expanding the definition of decision-makers. In the *Statement of Aspirational Practice for Institutional Research*, Swing states that “other decision-makers include students shaping their own experiences, faculty shaping their teaching and interactions with students, and staff shaping program design and direct interactions with students.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, the widespread use of data by institutional stakeholders can foster student success.**

- Data champions can serve as powerful voices in advocating for data use by showing the connection between data and student outcomes.
- Chief institutional research officers can be a voice at the table during discussions surrounding strategy and resources. The chief information officer and the chief institutional research officer serve key roles in creating a data governance structure to set controls around data privacy and security, data quality, and data integration. This supports effective data use on campus and builds assurance that data are handled properly.
- Institutional research staff can train others in data use and definitions to build data literacy and increase the number of staff who have access to information and tools for analysis.
- Data partnerships such as the PDP can expand institutional research capacity by giving others such as advisors and student affairs professionals access to dashboards and reports that help tell the student success story.
- These strategies can build a networked institutional research function beyond the staff in the institutional research office.

**Another way that institutions can promote the use of data on campus is to create cross-functional data teams that can examine data through a diverse lens to solve problems.**

**For example, advisors, faculty, student affairs, enrollment management, financial aid, and institutional research functions combine to form a broad institutional perspective to address issues. Cross-functional teams such as these can begin their meetings with a review of data that spurs informed discussion and decision making.**

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15. Swing, R. and Ross, L. (2016). Statement of Aspirational Practice for Institutional Research. Association for Institutional Research. Retrieved from <http://www.airweb.org/aspirationalstatement>.



Further, Gagliardi and Turk state, “they can help better communicate insights to senior leaders from diverse perspectives that can help extract the most value from data and insights in ways that facilitate action.”<sup>16</sup> Beginning with clear research questions that seek to measure and support student success can support a student-focused paradigm shift.<sup>17</sup>

**This shift can focus data use on telling the student story, what shapes it, and how it can be guided toward heightened levels of success. Leveraging existing staff, messaging, and structures are valuable approaches to grow and expand data use to support student success.**

The final section of this guidebook focuses on planning for long-term sustainability in academic advising. We will also discuss transformation readiness and sustainability.



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16. Gagliardi, J. and Turk, J. (2017). The Data Enabled Executive: Using Analytics for Student Success and Sustainability. American Council on Education. Retrieved from <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/The-Data-Enabled-Executive.pdf>.

17. Ibid.



## SECTION 5

# Planning for Long-Term Sustainability in Academic Advising

**Advising sustainability requires vision and capacity building in policies, processes, resources, and structures to achieve future goals. Components include demonstrating the capacity to maintain student success operations, academic advising staff, and program and revenue support beyond any acquired external funding.**

Senior leadership should engage in robust planning and transformation readiness to respond to evolving change. This guidebook presents key opportunities to create an advising model infused in best practices. These include mapping advising processes centered on student success, ensuring equitable outcomes for all students, implementing evidence-based practices to accelerate transformation, and creating a CQI culture.

Long-term growth and sustainability are integrated into the strategic planning process. Senior leaders are responsible and accountable for focusing on policies, budgets, and comprehensive improvements to sustain the advising program. Methods to allocate budgets for advising operations should align the request to the institutional strategic plan and performance metrics. However, leaders must justify

requests with projections that promise to meet or exceed performance targets. It is important to address the resources needed to fund a best-in-class operation equipped with such attributes as the optimal number of advisors, equitable advising caseloads, and training to avert knowledge gaps. The associated costs will prove to be a prudent investment. The increase in revenue from the increase in retention will provide an ROI that justifies the expenditures.

Effective hiring and a well-developed onboarding process that instills core competencies will manage transitions and minimize disruption caused by personnel changes. Lastly, leaders should avoid the use of non-recurring revenues for personnel or other recurring expenses. Instead, they should use grant dollars to pay for major one-time expenses such as equipment, supplies, or conference travel.

## Dimensions of Sustainability for Academic Advising Operations

Section 5 describes the dimensions of sustainability needed for academic advising operations. The action-oriented strategies and solutions highlighted can drive continuous quality improvement and long-term growth and sustainability.

As summarized in Figure 13, these dimensions fall into four categories:

**01.**

STRATEGIC VISION  
& PROCESSES

**02.**

PEOPLE &  
STAFFING

**03.**

DATA, ANALYTICS,  
& TECHNOLOGICAL  
RESOURCES

**04.**

FISCAL  
RESOURCES

An additional component to sustain advising operations is planning for disruption, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the societal unrest sparked by social injustice. In higher education and student success operations, transformation readiness has emerged as a critical capacity where institutions must pivot all operations to other modes to maintain academic advising service delivery and technology access for all students.

The risks that come from reactive leadership, insufficient capacity, and low agility in advising operations infrastructure could prove detrimental to student success and institutional performance.

Nevertheless, as illustrated in Figure 14, when dimensions of sustainability are applied through the lens of disruption, leaders have the requisite planning considerations to rapidly shift service modes.

Figure 13. Dimensions of Sustainability



Leaders must expand conventional planning and consider how to use existing resources in new and resourceful ways to respond to challenges brought on by disruption to normal operations.

If the recent events have taught institutional leaders anything, it is that disruption is likely to occur again and will impact each of the dimensions discussed in this guidebook.



# Conclusion

**The composition of institutional characteristics across the higher education landscape offers many variations of what success looks like in the context and delivery of holistic advising services. There is a broad range of factors that contribute to student success outcomes.**

Key findings from the institutional scans point to colleges and universities identifying and implementing a diverse set of best practices to provide a cohesive student experience. While there are existing challenges for some institutions to define and illustrate a coherent plan to address equitable outcomes, efforts are underway to build plans that address this long-standing and systemic issue. Contrasting these findings with key components of strategic planning efforts helped conceptualize and frame the ASN Senior Leadership Guidebook.

This guidebook presented a high-level framework of factors and dimensions of advising redesign for college campuses to integrate with strategic planning efforts. Further, these recommendations offered tactics to drive the transformation of academic advising operations. This work included efforts to establish mission, vision, data utilization, and equity and sustainability goals for advising.

Institutions that invest the time, energy, and commitment to incorporating academic advising into strategic planning will influence near- and long-term student success outcomes. The benefits will be widespread and serve student needs, institutional growth, and sustainability. The authors envision that the practical guidance and support offered to redesign or refine academic advising help elevate student success and accelerate transformation on college campuses.

## Key Takeaways

- 01.** Leaders must expand conventional planning and consider how to use existing resources in new and resourceful ways to create robust advising models.

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- 02.** If the post-COVID-19 events have taught institutional leaders anything, it is that **disruption is likely to occur again** and will impact each of the dimensions discussed in this guidebook.

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- 03.** This guidebook presented a **high-level framework of factors and dimensions of advising redesign** for college campuses to integrate with strategic planning efforts.

---

- 04.** These recommendations offered **tactics to drive the transformation of academic advising operations**.

---

- 05.** Institutions that invest the time, energy, and commitment to incorporating academic advising into **strategic planning will influence near- and long-term student success outcomes**.

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- 06.** The **benefits will be widespread** and serve student needs, institutional growth, and sustainability.

# Appendix 1: Guidebook Key Terms and Language

## Holistic Advising Redesign

Holistic advising redesign is the process of identifying, implementing, and refining high-quality, effective institutional practices that support students as they work toward achieving their personal, academic, and career goals. With the recognition that changes in advising will impact other areas of an institution, this type of redesign typically requires cross-functional collaboration and a focus on people, processes, and technology. Successful holistic advising redesign promotes an institutional culture of being student ready.

## Advising

Advising is a critical component of student success and a "bright star" in the integrated constellation of student supports at an institution. The advisor-advisee relationship supports students as they identify and attain their academic, career, and personal goals.

The network defines "advising" as encompassing more than the student interaction. It also includes the structure and operations of academic advising, the roles and responsibilities of primary-role and faculty advisors, and advising pedagogies, approaches, and models.

## Early Momentum Indicators

Early momentum indicators are measures of student progress in the first year of college that correlate with student success. Among these indicators are major selection, credit accumulation, gateway course completion, and term-to-term retention.

## Process Mapping

Process mapping employs methods that standardize and document activities in a process and facilitates CQI.

## Strategic Alignment

Strategic alignment is when goals, planning dimensions, and advising student learning outcomes are connected to operational functions and aligned to the strategic plan.

## Student Success

For this guidebook, student success is defined as enrolling, retaining, and graduating students capped with securing post-college outcomes of employment or graduate school (at minimal cost and debt to the students and with maximum potential for earning).

## Sustainability

Sustainability is the ability to develop and integrate capacities, policies, processes, and resources to achieve future goals and continue student success operations, academic programs, and revenue generation and support beyond external funding reliability.

## Appendix 2: Advising Structure Discovery Session Topics

### Institutional Culture

How does the institutional culture demonstrate the capacity to lean into the change process of implementing a new structure for academic advising?

### Student Needs

Does our institution clearly understand its student populations, their needs, and how to implement programming to support their needs?

### Resource Advising

Does the institution have financial resources and the ability to hire adequate advising staff based on enrollments? How does onboarding, training, and development occur for professional advisors and faculty? Include accountability measures as part of the discovery.

### Technology Infrastructure

Does the institution have a technology infrastructure and platform to deliver consistent advising? Include student success platforms and technology as part of the discovery.

### Data Support

Does the institution have the capacity to provide real-time data to support customized advising recommendations for students? Are advisors and faculty trained on how to use data for decision making such as examining disaggregated data?

### Academic Policies and Procedures

Does the institution have clearly defined policies and procedures to guide and support the delivery of consistent academic advising practices? What policies and procedures impact advising practices and student behaviors?

### Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for Advising

How does the institution measure achievement of SLOs related to advising?



Credit: Rhode Island College



## Appendix 3: Supplemental Resource for Training and Professional Development

Frequent training sessions will provide consistency in processes and procedures and reinforce advising service improvements. Training and development are also useful for succession planning to reduce knowledge gaps during transitions.

### EXAMPLES OF CAMPUSWIDE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

*Training frequency is noted as semester training (S) or annual training (A).*

- Cross-functional training to include faculty and primary-role advisors and other student success practitioners at least once per semester (S)
- Workshops to foster knowledge exchange, information sharing, and strategies to implement new policies and procedures (S) (A)
- Degree program audit training (A)
- Process and policy for transfers and nontraditional students (A)
- Data utilization for decision-making and understanding student attainment gaps (A)
- Compliance training on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (A)
- Compliance training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (A)
- Compliance training on NCAA regulations for initial-eligibility standards and progress-toward-degree standards (A)
- Student success information systems and technology platform training (A)
- Assessment of strategic planning and CQI strategies (A)
- Professional and advanced certification training and career paths (A)
- Effective and best practices (S) (A)
- How to engage in conferences and research presentations (A)

## Appendix 4: Supplemental Resource for Academic Advisor Training Needs Assessment

It is important to conduct training needs assessment for academic advisors. This series of questions can facilitate the discovery of topics for professional development.

1. How is a shared definition or philosophy of advising used to train advisors effectively?
2. How does the institution provide consistent training and development to academic advisors?
3. Is there one student success administrator to provide training oversight or a team responsible for cross-functional training?
4. How is CQI embedded in advisor training sessions? What are the measures of success?
5. How are advisors consistently trained in the development of core competency skills? How is this process evaluated?
6. How are advisors trained on the referral process for student affairs conduct policies?
7. How is academic advisor training coordinated with the office of institutional effectiveness or assessment office? Is there cross-functional collaboration?
8. What is the process for academic advisors to request training and professional development?
9. Is there an existing process for academic advisor certification training? If so, what is the process for academic advisors to receive advanced certification training? If not, what steps can the institution take to develop standardized certification training?



Credit: Northwest Missouri State

## Appendix 5: Strategic and Operational Student Success Metrics

Measure	Advising Operations	Near-Term Indicators (Leading)	Long-Term Indicators (Lagging)
Advising Caseloads	X		
Advisor Sessions	X		
Student Satisfaction	X		
Student Services Utilization	X	X	
Co-Curricular Activities	X	X	X
Major Selection		X	
Credit Load		X	
Course Completion		X	
Credit Accumulation		X	
Gateway Course Completion		X	
Retention (Enrollment)	X	X	X
Persistence		X	X
Graduation Rates			X
Time to Degree			X
Career Placement			X
Cohort Default Rate			X

## Appendix 6: Institute for Higher Education Policy Field-Driven Metrics Framework

	Access	Progression	Completion	Cost	Post-College Outcomes
<b>Performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enrollment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Credit Accumulation</li> <li>Credit Completion Ratio</li> <li>Gateway Course Completion</li> <li>Program of Study Selection</li> <li>Retention Rate</li> <li>Persistence Rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transfer Rate</li> <li>Graduation Rate</li> <li>Success Rate</li> <li>Completers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Net Price</li> <li>Unmet Need</li> <li>Cumulative Debt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment Rate</li> <li>Median Earnings</li> <li>Loan Repayment and Default Rates</li> <li>Graduate Education Rate</li> <li>Learning Outcomes</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expenditures per Student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost for Credits Not Completed</li> <li>Cost for Completing Gateway Courses</li> <li>Change in Revenue from Change in Retention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time/Credits to Credential</li> <li>Cost of Excess Credits to Credential</li> <li>Completions per Student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Share of Cost</li> <li>Expenditures per Completion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Earnings Threshold</li> </ul>
<b>Equity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enrollment by (at least) Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progression Performance by (at least) Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion Performance by (at least) Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Net Price and Unmet Need by (at least)</li> <li>Economic Status, Preparation Age, Race/Ethnicity</li> <li>Debt by (at least) Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity, Completion Status</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcomes Performance and Efficiency by (at least) Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity, Completion Status</li> </ul>

### Key Student Characteristics

- Enrollment Status
- Attendance Intensity
- Credential-Seeking Status
- Program of Study
- Academic Preparation
- Economic Status
- Race/Ethnicity
- Age
- Gender
- First-Generation Status

### Key Institutional Characteristics

- Sector
- Level
- Credential/Program Mix
- Size
- Resources
- Selectivity
- Diversity
- Minority-Serving Institution (MSI) Status
- Post-traditional Populations
- Modality

Source: Janice, A. and Voight, M. (2016). Towards Convergence: A Technical Guide for the Postsecondary Metrics Framework. Institute for Higher Education Policy. Retrieved from [www.ihep.org/research/publications/toward-convergence-technical-guide-postsecondary-metrics-framework](http://www.ihep.org/research/publications/toward-convergence-technical-guide-postsecondary-metrics-framework).



Credit: Utah Tech University

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