

Opportunities for Enhancing Advising at OSU

Executive Summary
Division of Undergraduate Studies • July 2017

Proactive Advising Practices College Tour

Creating and maintaining an effective, proactive undergraduate academic advising system coordinated across OSU's colleges is a foundational element supporting improvement in retention and graduation rates. As follow-up to the September 2016 Academic Advising Capacity Report and at the request of the colleges, representatives of the Division of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) summarized nine recommended practices, drawn from academic advising literature as well as proven practices in OSU colleges and from universities across the country, in order to provide colleges ideas to consider as they examine their current advising methods, policies, and models.

In Winter & Spring 2017, the DUS representatives met with the advising leadership of each college (usually the associate dean and head advisor) to share the nine practices, discuss the college's current efforts and future plans in any of these areas, learn about the college's 2-3 top advising goals for the next year, and receive feedback on how DUS can help support their work toward these advising goals. The nine practices were offered as potential recommendations to consider – not as a mandate. Given the varying needs of OSU's colleges, different practices were expected to be higher priority and interest to different colleges.

The nine recommended practices were in general well received by the associate deans and head advisors. The colleges indicated they were already engaged in or considering implementing many of these practices or variations thereof. Information gathered from the meetings was compiled in college-specific summaries and vetted with the college representatives who attended.

Five overall themes arose from the proactive advising practices college tour that illuminate key opportunities where the colleges and DUS might partner to improve the coordination and effectiveness of academic advising at OSU.

Five Opportunities for Enhancing Advising at OSU

To enhance the coordination and effectiveness of undergraduate advising, the OSU Colleges and DUS could:

- 1 Increase engagement in and availability of **technology tools training** for advisors
- 2 Prioritize **advising workforce** matters related to advising capacity and professional advancement
- 3 Develop mechanisms and strategies for coordination and customization of **communication to students**
- 4 Engage in regular, consistent **assessment of advising** and student experience outcomes
- 5 Promote and sustain the **sharing of advising practices** and lessons learned between colleges

Recommended Practices for Effective, Proactive Academic Advising at OSU

1. Maintain reasonable advising loads for all academic advisors.
2. Utilize technology to drive targeted advising approaches based on different student needs.
3. Provide consistent proactive advising outreach.
4. Facilitate an advising touchpoint with every student at least once per term during the first two years.
5. Promote advising as a year-round enterprise.
6. Advise students via a college-centralized office during their first two years.
7. Make sample degree maps available online for current and prospective students.
8. Support ongoing professional development for advisors.
9. Assess and evaluate advising outcomes.



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1. Increase engagement in and availability of technology tools training for advisors

Advisors increasingly utilize technology and student data in daily practice. According to a Spring 2017 survey (N = 100), over half of OSU advisors report using MyDegrees and Web for Advisors daily or hourly. Newer tools such as CORE and the Student Success Collaborative (SSC) are used less frequently but present opportunities for optimizing administrative tasks and conducting proactive outreach to students. During the tour, several colleges described the need for further training to support advisors in more effectively utilizing technology and integrating it into their advising practice. From the technology tools introductions during the New Advisor Retreat to Excel data skill-building workshops to on-demand resources via Canvas, the Division of Undergraduate Studies currently provides relevant trainings and is poised to expand and develop additional offerings based on needs identified by advisors and colleges.

2. Prioritize advising workforce matters related to advising capacity and professional advancement

The advising leadership across colleges recognized the need for increased advising capacity and the challenges created by high advising loads. Some colleges are addressing or planning to address this internally through new hires and the redistribution of assigned duties. Other colleges expressed interest in the previously discussed shared advising positions between the college and DUS (funded 60/40). Further, three colleges voiced their support for the development of campus-wide career ladder that would provide a structure for professional advancement for advisors, similar to OSU's promotion structure for instructors. Such structures have been implemented by other large public universities and found to be an effective strategy for retaining excellent advisors and reducing staff turnover¹.

3. Develop mechanisms and strategies for coordination and customization of communication to students

Several colleges described lack of coordination of communication to students as a barrier to providing consistent, proactive advising outreach. Students currently receive repetitive and even conflicting communications from OSU offices, which are usually standard messages to all students in a specific category (e.g. senior class standing). As a result, students frequently ignore institutional emails, including those from their advisor(s). To address this, OSU could better leverage available and acquire new technologies to coordinate and track outreach and communication to students with the goal of providing tailored, just-in-time information based on their individual needs.

4. Engage in regular, consistent assessment of advising and student experience outcomes

Multiple colleges noted a need for better assessment of advising and student experience outcomes, particularly with the ability to disaggregate data to the college level. To this end, DUS conducted a survey in Spring 2017 of OSU undergraduates to measure first-year academic advising and student experience outcomes. With the addition of two data analysts in Summer 2017, the Division is poised to continue and expand central efforts to assess outcomes in these areas, provide college-level results, and liaise with colleges about interpretation and application of results.

5. Promote and sustain the sharing of advising practices and lessons learned between colleges

Nearly every college advising leadership team expressed a high level of interest in learning what other colleges were doing or planning related to the nine practices in order to borrow and adapt ideas and strategies. They were particularly interested in learning from each other about how advisors are using technology tools in practice and the use of data to inform advising. DUS and its personnel might serve as central connectors to this purpose in order to promote communication between colleges around advising practices and facilitate the sharing of promising practices related to the nine areas.

¹ Iten, C., & Matheny, A. (2008, September). Promoting academic advisors: Using a career ladder to foster professional development at your institution. *Academic Advising Today*, 31(3). Retrieved from <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Promoting-Academic-Advisors-Using-a-Career-Ladder-to-Foster-Professional-Development-at-Your-Institution.aspx>