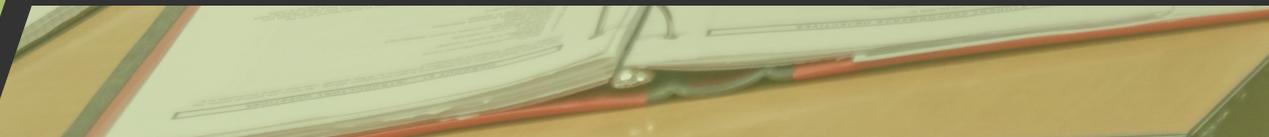


 **Ohio** **STRONG START**  
TO FINISH



**Advising Implementation Forum Report**





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# Introduction

Ohio Strong Start to Finish (SSTF) is a collaboration between the Ohio Department of Higher Education, the Inter-University Council, the Ohio Association of Community Colleges, and 18 community colleges and 12 universities in Ohio that have committed to adopting evidence-based practices to increase the number of students who pass gateway mathematics and English courses by the completion of their first year in college.

At the beginning of the initiative, 33% of the students in the participating colleges and universities completed the gateway mathematics and English courses by the end of their first year. The goal of the Ohio SSTF is to increase this to 50% of students completing the gateway courses aligned with the student's program of study by the end of the first academic year. Additionally, the Ohio SSTF project focuses on reducing the achievement gap for students of color, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, students from rural areas, and students over the age of 25.

The Ohio SSTF project created five implementation forums to review best practices and to provide recommendations to the participating institutions and to Ohio SSTF leadership. The membership in these forums is composed of faculty and staff from Ohio SSTF colleges and universities who are recognized experts in the associated field.

In joining the Ohio SSTF collaboration, each institution agreed to integrate the following priorities on its campus: ensuring that clearly structured programs of study exist for all majors; aligning redesigned gateway mathematics and English courses to all programs of study; implementing co-requisite remediation at scale in mathematics and English; and building advising structures to ensure all students register for coursework in sequences to meet their goal. These are evidence-based curricular reforms and holistic student services that support student completion of gateway classes and are aligned with the *Core Principles for Transforming Remediation within a Comprehensive Student Success Strategy*.<sup>1</sup>

Academic advising has been described as “a collaborative educational process whereby students and their advisors are partners in meeting the essential learning outcomes, ensuring student

academic success, and outlining the steps for achievement of the students' personal, academic, and professional goals."<sup>2</sup> The role of an advisor is not only to answer questions and provide information, but also to provide opportunities for students to make connections with offices on campus, with faculty, and with other students. Advising engages students beyond their own worldviews, while recognizing their individual characteristics, values, and motivating factors as they enter, move through, and exit the institution.<sup>3</sup> An effective academic advising relationship is one that capitalizes on intentional interactions with students. Developing this relationship plays a critical role in a college student's experience.

Support for the completion of gateway courses, and more generally student persistence and success, begins prior to the student's arrival on campus or attendance in classes. This frequently includes assistance with the preparation of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), selection of a program of study, and selection of a course schedule. These topics, along with additional information about college life, opportunities, and expectations, are frequently presented through campus academic advising. Holistic advising systems are designed to provide support and guidance to students throughout their time at the college or university. The Core Principles note, "significantly better and more equitable outcomes can be achieved through a combination of tailored academic and noncognitive supports, high-quality intensive advising, and responsive basic needs support."<sup>1</sup> Major studies (<sup>4</sup>, <sup>5</sup>, <sup>6</sup>) have shown academic advising to be a significant factor in student success, retention, and graduation. A recent study<sup>7</sup> that examined data from 55 institutions

and more than 1.5 million students showed that advising was the most-effective student service in increasing persistence; meeting with advisors provided more than a 5% lift in persistence rates. Advising was the also leading student service assisting students from underrepresented populations.

The participants in the Ohio SSTF program range from large, multi-campus institutions to small, rural community colleges and universities. It is recognized that advising structures designed to best meet the needs of the students may differ significantly from campus to campus and that there is no single optimal advising organizational structure. Advising may be done by professional advisors, by faculty, or by combinations of the two. Advising may be centralized within a single student success organization or associated with particular academic units. Regardless of the structure, there are fundamental principles that ensure students receive information and guidance in a timely manner that support their progress in their chosen academic program. These fundamental principles include having a well-defined communication plan, building advisor-student rapport, utilizing technology to reach students and assess student progress, and recognizing the critical role of advising in student success.

As part of its charge, the Advising Implementation Forum surveyed public community colleges and universities in Ohio to understand the breadth of advising structures and policies in the state. Information from this survey will be used to provide examples of institutions that have implemented the best practices presented in this report.

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## Acknowledgements

This work was supported in part by Strong Start to Finish, Education Commission of the States. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of Strong Start to Finish, Education Commission of the States, its officers, or employees. Strong Start to Finish is an emerging network of committed postsecondary leaders and philanthropists, working together to change institutional practice and policy across the nation and bring equity to education. Our goal is to significantly increase the number and proportion of low-income students, students of color, and returning adults who succeed in college math and English and enter a program of study in their first year of college. For more information, visit [www.strongstart.org](http://www.strongstart.org).

# Advising Implementation Forum Charge

The goal of Ohio Strong Start to Finish is to increase students' completion of their credit-bearing gateway mathematics and English courses within their first 12 months after matriculation with a specific emphasis on closing the attainment gaps for students of color, adults over 25, rural students, and Pell-eligible students. The State of Ohio is driving toward the goal that 65% of Ohioans aged 25-64 will have a postsecondary credential of value. Proactive student counselling and support provide essential services necessary for Ohio to meet its attainment goal and to reduce gaps in achievement for underserved populations. Because many Ohio SSTF institutions are exploring redesign, the Advising Implementation Forum is striving to build collaborative knowledge from our partners. The Advising Implementation Forum is charged with developing collaborative solutions on the following items:

- Identifying successful models and practices that ensure all entering students are advised about degree pathways and the associated gateway mathematics and English courses;
- Recommending methods of integrating advising and student support services to facilitate successful transfer between institutions;
- Identifying advising strategies that have shown promise in increasing the completion of gateway courses by students from underserved populations;
- Reviewing the capability of Learning Management Systems, Student Success Management Systems, and/or Advising Systems currently in use throughout the state for supporting advising and timely interventions for students at risk; and
- Providing guidance on adopting and managing a proactive advising and student support infrastructure.

The Advising Implementation Forum will serve as an advisory group to the Ohio SSTF leadership teams and Ohio public institutions of higher education on advising and student support practices.

# Communication

**R**egardless of the advising system or philosophy, timely and informative communication is critical to effective advising. The importance of building relationships through academic advising is well documented in national literature and supported by organizations such as NACADA. Students who meet with an advisor report being more engaged across all Community College Survey of Student Engagement benchmarks than their peers who have not met with an advisor.<sup>8</sup> Early and frequent communication should be a goal to establish a relationship and build a partnership with the student.

Creating a strategic communication plan provides the framework for both planned student-advisor interactions and critical interventions. A comprehensive communication plan begins prior to the student's arrival on campus and continues throughout his/her academic program. A strategic communication plan may include the following interactions with students:

**Prior to acceptance:**

- Information sessions
- Collaborative efforts with school districts

**Prior to the start of term:**

- Electronic welcome
- Survey to collect data related to major, career goals, and extracurricular and auxiliary interest

**Initial advisor meeting:**

- Establish advisor/advisee expectations
- Provide a brief summary of general education requirements
- Discuss class schedule
- Provide information on how to access/use college information systems
- Provide information on academic and social support available
- Provide tips for student success
- Highlight important dates and deadlines
- Plan subsequent advising meetings

Once the term begins, it is imperative to continue regular meetings with students. Even with effective early communication, students frequently may not include advising on their “to-do” list. While the majority of students report meeting with an advisor, returning students are more likely to do so (78%) than are entering students (62%). As less than 50% of first-time college students return to the same institution the following fall, this discrepancy suggests that early advising might contribute to increased retention.<sup>9</sup>

With the focus of higher education on student progress and completion, advising is a key component to student retention strategies. While transactional advising is still integral, advisors are increasingly utilizing a holistic approach, which lends itself to frequent opportunities for communication both individually and in group settings. One way to continue fostering the advisor-student partnership is by incorporating advising sessions into the

institution’s culture. This can be accomplished through First Year Seminars, Student Success Seminars, or a sequence of organized seminars and activities. The impact is even greater when these courses or events are led by advisors. Topics may include:

- Academic planning
- Career advisement
- Success planning
- Goal setting
- Financial literacy
- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Institutional policies and procedures

Developing a student-advisor partnership guided by a continuing communication plan creates the environment supporting interactions when the student encounters challenges in their academic program, social adjustment to college life, or financial or family difficulties.

**Recommendation 1**

||| **The advising unit should have a strategic communication plan that ensures frequent and timely interactions between the advisor and students.**

# Impactful Advising Practices

**W**ithin the framework of holistic student support, the advisor provides the critical link between the student, the academic programs, the academic support and social services, and the institutional policies and practices. The strategic communication plan establishes the framework for initial and continuing contact, but development of the relationship between the student and advisor depends upon the quality and content of the conversations.<sup>10 11</sup>

Successful advising builds trust, recognizes student accomplishments, elicits the student's goals and potential challenges, and collaboratively develops a plan achieve the goals. The tenets of appreciative advising<sup>12</sup> provide a foundation and strategy for accomplishing these objectives through its Disarm, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver, and Don't Settle phases.<sup>13</sup>

**Disarm:** Make a positive first impression with the student, build rapport, and create a safe, welcoming space.

**Discover:** Ask positive open-ended questions that help advisers learn about students' strengths, skills, and abilities.

**Dream:** Inquire about students' hopes and dreams for their futures.

**Design:** Co-create a plan for making their dreams a reality.

**Deliver:** The student delivers on the plan created during the Design phase and the adviser is available to encourage and support students.

**Don't Settle:** Advisers and students alike need to set their own internal bars of expectations high.

The first four phases of appreciative advising address the composition of an advising session. The Deliver phase ensures continuing support that maintains the student-advisor relationship, gives positive reinforcement, and reminds students of where to find resources in case they encounter roadblocks. The final phase, Don't Settle, highlights past successes while connecting these to future goals.<sup>12</sup>

Along with employing strategies that develop relationships and empower students, effective advising must accomplish the academic and information sharing goals of an advising session. For recurring types of meetings, it is helpful to have predesigned checklists to ensure the student receives all pertinent information. For example, Stark State College's Gateway Advising Appointment Checklist provides both activities to be covered and outcomes to be achieved during the initial advisor appointment.

**Student Outcomes:**

- Confirmation of major choice
- Basic understanding of major| curriculum | health application (if applicable)
- Completed class schedule
- Knowledge cost and payment/financial aid options
- Written login information and basic systems information
- Knowledge of next steps
- Success Team information

**Administrative Outcomes:**

- Basic understanding about student:
  - » Funding
  - » Transportation
  - » Time management challenges
  - » Academic strengths and challenges
  - » Communication options
  - » Goals (or lack of goals): Career/Major
  - » Motivation
- Schedule next appointment

**Checklist:**

- Confirmation of major choice
  - » How did you decide on your major?
  - » What are your career plans?
- Basic understanding of major| curriculum | health application (if applicable)
  - » Review the curriculum guide for the selected major
  - » Explain where the testing placed the student and required prerequisites
- Time to degree completion for full-time/part-time
  - » Completed class schedule

- Determine schedule availability and limitations
  - » Are you employed full time or part time?
  - » What other responsibilities do you have?
  - » Do you want to attend school full time or part time?
  - » What hours and days do you want to be on campus?
- Build schedule
- Print schedule
  - » Knowledge cost and payment/financial aid options
- Review bill
- Verify plans for payment
  - » Introduce FAFSA
  - » Payment plan
  - » Written login information and basic systems information
- Review mystarkstate and email information
- Record username | password | email on “Start your journey” Student Guide
  - » Knowledge of next steps
- Review “Start your journey” Student Guide
  - » Mystarkstate login
  - » Review class schedule
  - » Payment
  - » Books
  - » Parking pass
  - » eSTARKSTATE

- Review orientation plans
    - » Sign up for on-campus
    - » Provide on-line access information
    - » Success Team information
  - Provide students with Success Team names and information
  - Schedule next appointment
- 

### **Recommendation 2**

||| **Advising units should adopt practices that develop relationships and empower students.**

### **Recommendation 3**

||| **Advisors should develop action plans with advisees, identifying needs and time tables for accomplishing goals.**

### **Recommendation 4**

||| **Advisors should be encouraged to develop close relationships with academic departments and student services across the campus to provide timely and appropriate referrals.**

### **Recommendation 5**

||| **The advising unit should develop a referral process that includes monitoring and follow-up.**

# Caseload Management

**S**tudent-advisor relationships are developed over time by frequent interactions and are facilitated by the assignment of students to a particular advisor. The importance of case management strategies for advising was recognized in noting that, “Academically underprepared students are attending college in increasing numbers and represent a proportion of the student population that cannot be ignored or marginalized. Fortunately, there is evidence to suggest that underprepared students can be just as successful as their more prepared counterparts, as long as they receive proper support.”<sup>14</sup> The assignment of students to advisors allows the development of supportive personal relationships. “Implementing case management strategies in advising is a promising way to increase the retention and completion of underprepared students through a personable, proactive, and strengths-based approach that emphasizes communication, collaboration, and accountability. It can create a more meaningful experience for students and a more fulfilling vocation for advisors.”<sup>15</sup>

The importance of building relationships was a common theme in the responses to the Advising Implementation Forum survey of institutional advising practices. In many cases, increased communication occurred as the result of a structural change from a drop-in, transactional approach to an appointment-based, relational approach to advising. Data were provided to show that, in addition to building relationships, the wait time and service satisfaction of students also increased with these structural changes. With an assigned caseload of students, the advisor is responsible for following the progress of each student in her/his caseload and has the ability to intervene and assist the student when required. Because of the relationships that are developed, advisors and staff members often report higher levels of satisfaction when serving a caseload of students as opposed to being in a transactional office serving students on a first-come, first-served basis.

While recognizing that there is no “one-size-fits-all” model of caseload advising, the following practices have proven successful at Ohio colleges and universities:

**Cross-Training:** Many colleges benefit from having advisors cross-trained in basic functionalities of career advising and financial aid. Providing advisors with this information results in reduced student referrals and supports the holistic approach to student advising.

Shawnee State University moved to a model in which students are supported academically, personally, and in financial management by their advisor. Advisors also provide general information about careers and majors. Since that transition in 2015, the first year retention rate has risen from 64% to 72%.

At Lorain County Community College and Sinclair Community College, financial aid and career advising are embedded within academic advising. All advisors have a basic understanding of federal financial aid and have received training in career development theory. The objective is not to replace the specialized knowledge within the financial aid and career services offices, but rather to be able to respond to standard enquiries without requiring students to make multiple appointments to obtain needed information. The University of Cincinnati Clermont and Blue Ash campuses also embed a career plan within academic advising as part of their Bearcat Promise.

**Coaching:** Stark State College moved from a transactional model to a holistic model, utilizing appreciative advising techniques to provide coaching to a caseload of students. This transition was rooted in a grant-funded, success coaching initiative for first-time, full-time students. In this model, every student has an assigned Gateway or Faculty Advisor and the relationship with the advisor gives the student a sense of connection and belonging to the institution as well as a go to person for assistance in navigating simple to complex issues. The program had a positive impact on the retention and persistence of first year students; students who were coached had a term-to-term retention rate of 83%, while those who were not coached had a 74% rate. In fall-to-fall persistence, coached students had a 54% persistence rate, while those who were not had a 44% rate. The lessons learned from this work provided the foundation for the college’s current advising model.

**Meta-Major Advising:** Several of the colleges use meta-majors or known transfer patterns to determine caseloads for advisors. The use of meta-majors allows the advisors to become experts on the curricula of all programs within the scope the meta-major. In moving to meta-major advising, Sinclair Community College’s internal surveys and Community College Survey of Student Engagement results indicated positive responses from students in both satisfaction and knowledge of college processes.

**Student Outreach:** A key feature of caseload advising is the ability to provide structured outreach to students. At

the Miami University regional campuses, professional advisors are expected to reach out to their students at least three times in their first year. First, to welcome the students to campus and introduce themselves as their advisor along with providing information, important resources, and dates. At mid-semester, advisors follow up reviewing mid-term grades and providing positive nudges or redirection as needed. Finally, they invite students to a registration campaign through Navigate, ensuring all students in their caseload are registered in appropriate courses. Other institutions have initiated similar outreach plans, frequently with the aid of their learning management or student success management system, as part of their strategic communication plans.

### **Recommendation 6**

||| **Advisors should be provided with resources and training outside of academic advising, such as financial aid and career services.**

### **Recommendation 7**

||| **Institutions should adopt a caseload assignment strategy to facilitate the development of advisor-student relationships.**

# Late Registration

One of the challenges facing higher education institutions is balancing the goals of access and increased enrollment with evidence-based best practices for student success. This tradeoff is particularly evident in policies regarding late admission and registration. Late admission refers to the institution admitting a student on or after the first day of class, whereas late registration refers to registering for a class on or after the first day that the class meets.

There are many reasons that a student may wish to register after the beginning of class. Often requirements of the armed services necessitate that service members participate in training that overlaps the beginning of a term. Sometimes students are injured or ill, have delays in their financial aid, or simply make last-minute decisions to enroll. The reasons for late registration may be justifiable, but research on late registration reflects a potential long-term loss for the sake of a short-term benefit.<sup>16 17</sup> This research has prompted the implementation of institutional policies to ensure students' best interest is considered.<sup>18</sup>

Most higher education institutions in Ohio have a late registration policy; however, they vary widely. Recognizing the unique challenges for new students, institutions frequently have adopted different policies for new students than for continuing students. The majority of institutional policies allow students to register for courses through the first week of classes. Some require instructor permission to enter a course either during the first week or later.

Several schools in Ohio developed their policies based on their analysis of student performance. Washington State Community College previously permitted students to add classes during the first week of the term. However, an analysis of their data indicated that students who entered a course after the first three days were unlikely to succeed. Consequently, the school changed its policy to reflect that analysis.

Analysis of student withdrawal data at Sinclair Community College showed that students enrolling late were the most likely to drop the class. To stress the importance of on-time enrollment, Sinclair adopted the policy that any student who wishes to add a course after it has met must obtain permission from the department chair.

Marion Technical College and Southern State Community College limit late registration in order to improve the success rate of students. Their data and national trends<sup>19</sup> show that students registering late were often not prepared. To evaluate the student's preparation, these colleges require approval from the course instructor for students to add a course after it begins. Through the required conversation, the instructor and student determine whether the student is prepared to take the class at that time or if it would be better to wait a semester.

Understanding that there will be legitimate circumstances that keep students from enrolling in a timely manner and that some students may need to change their schedule early in the semester, some institutions offer a set of "late start" courses. These may begin several weeks after the start of the standard term. Other institutions have courses that begin the second half of the term, which are particularly helpful for students who drop a course after struggling in one of their original courses.

Examples of late start strategies in Ohio include Owens Community College, which offers 13-week courses beginning three weeks after the start of the standard semester, including 13-week Saturday courses to provide opportunities for students with schedule conflicts due to work or other commitments. In addition, they offer eight-week courses beginning mid-semester. These courses provide opportunities for late registrants and for students needing to make changes from their original schedule.

Ohio University offers a Learning and Study Strategies course that begins four weeks after the term has started, and an additional section that begins seven weeks after the first day of the term. These staggered start times are designed to provide an opportunity for students who dropped a challenging course to learn the study strategies they need to be successful, and to provide the student with a credit recovery opportunity so they don't fall behind in their credit accumulation for graduation.

### Recommendation 8

**For incoming students, the institutions should adopt policies that allow registration up to the day prior to the beginning of classes. New students who have not yet navigated the university environment and who have a host of other concerns in addition to coursework as they transition to college will be much less likely to succeed if they begin on or after the first day of classes.**

### **Recommendation 9**

For continuing students, institutions should adopt policies that limit the ability to add or change their schedule after the first day of classes. Students wishing to make changes should be encouraged have a conversation with an advisor or faculty member to ensure that they understand the risk of beginning a course after it has begun.

### **Recommendation 10**

Institutions should consider offering some “late start” courses for students wishing to register after the beginning of the term or needing schedule changes.

### **Recommendation 11**

The Institutional Research office of each institution should regularly analyze the performance of students who register late to provide information for policy decisions.

### **Recommendation 12**

Institutions should consistently review data to identify obstacles to student persistence and completion.

### **Recommendation 13**

Institutions should ensure that there are sufficient sections of key courses to meet the student demand and that they are offered at a variety of times to meet student schedules.

# Leveraging Technology

**T**echnology in advising is a continuously evolving landscape, but effective use of technology is critical to effective advising. When implemented well, “technology in advising contributes positively to the student experience, supporting goals toward increased retention and improving learners’ academic success.”<sup>20</sup> Technology can also support increased workloads, shifting student needs and demands in an increasingly global environment, and helping advisors and students clearly understand pathways through curriculum and to graduation.

Advisors use a multitude of technology tools every day: scheduling student meetings, reviewing student performance, receiving and responding to early alerts, accessing catalogs, assisting student registrations, creating campaigns, and communicating with faculty and other support staff. Regardless of the intended use, there are best practices for the evaluation and acquisition of technology. The process begins by identifying the stakeholders, users, and the information technology team of the institution that will install and support the system. The evaluation team should:

- Determine what the product can and cannot do. This includes the functionality available from the technology, how it integrates with existing systems, and the support available for the product. A new system that cannot interface with existing technologies, or which lacks vendor or on-campus support, is set up to fail.
- Understand that in some cases your practices and policies may need to adjust or change to align with the functionality of the new technology, and not the other way around. Most commercial products offer some customization, but less than you may desire.

- Plan for implementation to be ongoing and longer than expected. Implementing a new technology is not a discrete task. Implementation is often delayed when overlooked pieces or problems come to light – once users are in and testing the system. This makes stakeholder and vendor support even more critical, as any implementation will also require good communication and culture changes.<sup>21</sup>

Technology should support administrative efficiency. Access to necessary student information should be available to advisors without relying on additional administrative staff for support. It is also important to establish institutional values and requirements for technology used in advising. While there are different vendors and products available, many of the features can be implemented internally within the institution's LMS or Student Success Management System. Ideally, technology to support advising should have the following capabilities:

- Provide accurate information to the appropriate people: Advising notes, for example, should be accessible to the student, the advisor, and other academic support team members who could assist the student.
- Provide basic academic record information. Students should be able to easily access their transcript information, the courses they have completed in pursuit of their degree, and the remaining requirements. This allows personal conversations to transcend the data points and include higher level concepts and decisions.

- Provide degree audits for students that show current grade point average, courses completed with associated grades, and courses needed to complete their academic program.
- Connect advisors, faculty, and staff who are working together on behalf of the student to facilitate information sharing and consistency. This reduces duplication of efforts and promotes consistent messages to students. The resulting experience for the student provides a team of supportive individuals at the institution working to help them make progress.
- Provide Early Alert information from faculty to notify students, their advisors, and others who support them when a student is off track in a class.
- Assist case management by the identification of students in need of assistance and track student follow-up on recommendations.
- Provide “just in time” information such as text reminders of appointments, automated email reminders of important dates and activities, and supporting campaigns. Early alerts are good examples of how technology can nudge students to stay on track to graduation.
- Provide self-service appointment scheduling. Students can schedule appointments when the office is closed and can leave notes for the advisor about the concerns the student wants to address in the meeting.
- Provide the ability for online or remote advising.

The growth of online programs, the prevalence of personal computers, tablets, smartphones and video streaming have made online advising a standard practice

among universities and colleges. In addition to supporting students in online classes, online advising provides flexibility to all students for scheduling appointments and communicating with advisors. Bailey and Brown<sup>22</sup> noted that, “It is important to consider offering comparable services to online learners in a way that minimizes confusion for the student yet also limits duplication of services for the institution. The institution should make the available services, methods, and timeliness explicit to students.”

The virtual environment introduces potential challenges to advising sessions. Hubbard<sup>23</sup> and Alijets & Long<sup>24</sup> provide the following recommendations for online advising:

- Manage expectations. Students and advisors alike will have distractions and disruptions. Expect student cancellations and that technology problems will likely derail conversations.
- Tighten the agenda. Advisors should have shorter meetings that happen closer together and are also more productive. Sending a communication and an agenda prior to the meeting can help the meetings be more productive.
- Send a video invitation as well as phone number so that students can meet without video if they are on break at work or in an uncomfortable environment.
- Empower students by encouraging them to self-serve with the safety net of a future appointment to overcome obstacles and set new goals.

Virtual meetings provide an opportunity to let the students show the advisor what they know. Advisors should consider allowing students to share their screen and help them to become more comfortable with the institution’s online processes.<sup>25</sup> The use of the chat function allows students to take charge of forms and registration allowing the advisor to give directions from the student view. Guiding students to online resources allows them to find campus information, access to grades, financial aid, and other resources on a 24/7 basis. While advising through email may seem less personal, when done intentionally it can be effective and have the same qualities as virtual or in-person advising.<sup>26</sup>

#### Recommendation 14

||| **Institutions should furnish advisors with a variety of technology that provides timely access to student information, connects individuals and units that support students, and facilitates communication with students.**

#### Recommendation 15

||| **Institutions should offer advising, including online, that serves students on evenings and weekends, as well as during the standard work hours.**

# Advising as a Profession

College and university advising is done by professional advisors, by faculty, and by combinations of the two. Recognizing individual contributions to the goals of an institution provides value and significance to the employee, which is an essential requirement for personal and professional development.<sup>27</sup> For professional academic advisors, a career ladder is a robust and meaningful professional development path that rewards quality.<sup>28</sup>

Regardless of the institutional structure, academic advising has three fundamental roles: “curriculum (what advising deals with), pedagogy (how advising does what it does), and student learning outcomes (the result of academic advising).”<sup>29</sup> A career ladder for professional advisors addresses these roles by providing advisor voices as experts to be included when policies are developed or implemented, and by providing experienced advisors with leadership skills. In addition, career ladder positions provide institutional leveling of advisors with job responsibilities and expectations, with the benefit of promotion, based on respect for personal aspiration and professional achievement.<sup>28</sup>

NACADA<sup>30</sup> proposed a framework for academic advising core competencies. This model identifies a wide range of understandings, skills, and knowledge that support academic advising, to guide professional development and to promote the impact advising has on student development, progress, and success. “The Core Competencies Model organizes essential characteristics into three different areas: conceptual, informational, and relational. It is only fitting that this framework is utilized to build a career ladder for PRAs to assist both individuals and institutional administrations in identifying a path of career progression.”<sup>31</sup>

Career ladders provide a formal path to advancement through an infrastructure of tiered levels of employment, including distinctions in title and pay. The promotion qualifications typically include education, experience, and performance. For most colleges and universities, the lack of a career ladder is the norm, regardless of the size of the institution, the advising circumstance, and the type of institution.<sup>32</sup>

A number of Ohio institutions have established advising career ladders for professional academic advisors on their campuses. One path allows an academic advisor to progress by transitioning from a full-time academic advisor position to an administrative position. The initial transition is to an assistant director role with a 50% advising caseload and a 50% administrator caseload. The final stage of this career ladder is assuming a full-time administrative position with little or no advising caseload. Examples of this career path include

- The University of Toledo with positions Academic Advisor, Assistant Director of Student Services, Associate Director of Student Services, and Director of Student Services.
- Sinclair Community College with positions Part-time Academic Advisor, Academic Advisor, and Senior Advisors and Managers, with a 50% caseload and 50% supervision responsibility.
- Owens Community College has Academic Advisors and Advisor Leads for each school. The Advisor Leads have a caseload and manage the advising team within the school.
- University of Cincinnati Blue Ash and Clermont Colleges have the positions Advisor, Senior Advisor, and Assistant Director. The Senior Advisor typically has a master's degree and performs additional duties along with an advising caseload. The Assistant Director has half of an advising caseload and manages staff and projects for the advising unit.
- The Ohio State University has four levels for front line advising, with low or no supervisory responsibility, and

then four levels of management consistent with other areas across our system.

- Wright State University has Academic Advisors with 100% advising caseload, Assistant Directors with a 50% advising caseload and a 50% administrator role, and Director, which is a 100% administrator role.

The other popular path allows an academic advisor to maintain a full-time advising caseload, while still progressing in his or her career field of being an academic advisor, without transitioning into an administrator. This path often includes position titles such as Advisor I, Advisor II, Senior Advisor I, and Senior Advisor II. Occasionally, an academic advisor wants to grow and progress in his or her academic advising career, but does not want to enter administration; in those instances, this career path would be a good option. Examples of the advisor-to-advisor progression paths include:

- Youngstown State University has Academic Advisor 1, Academic Advisor 2, Senior Academic Advisor 1, and Senior Academic Advisor 2 positions.
- Kent State University has four tiers for academic advising on its campus: Advisor I, Advisor II, Senior Advisor I, and Senior Advisor II.

### Recommendation 16

||| **Institutions should implement a career ladder for professional academic advisors.**

# Statewide Initiatives

According to the National Student Clearinghouse<sup>33</sup>, more than 33% of students in Ohio transfer between institutions while pursuing higher education, so advisors need to understand the curriculum of not only their own programs but also those of partner institutions. To facilitate the transfer process and ensure that students do not lose credit, the Ohio Department of Higher Education – in conjunction with faculty from the state colleges and universities – has created a series of programs to align courses among the Ohio public colleges and universities that ensure transferability, and to award college credit for military or career-technical training. These programs include the Ohio Transfer Module, Transfer Assurance Guide, Career-Technical Assurance Guide, Military Transfer Assurance Guide, and Ohio Guaranteed Transfer Pathways.<sup>34</sup>

## Recommendation 17

||| The Ohio Department of Higher Education should create a path for students to appeal transfer decisions that result in transfer guarantees not honored.

## Recommendation 18

||| The Ohio Department of Higher Education should continue to work with college and university faculty to create additional guaranteed transfer pathways.

## Recommendation 19

||| The Ohio Department of Higher Education should support the implementation of a uniform statewide electronic high school transcript to provide timely information for advising at admission, orientation, and registration.

# Recommendations

**W**hile recognizing that the organization of advising on campuses may vary based on the enrollment, programs, and available resources, the following recommendations are meant to be independent of the advising structure and represent general conditions that support effective advising.

## Recommendation 1

The advising unit should have a strategic communication plan that ensures frequent and timely interactions between the advisor and students.

## Recommendation 2

Advising units should adopt practices that develop relationships and empower students.

## Recommendation 3

Advisors should develop action plans with advisees, identifying needs and time tables for accomplishing goals.

## Recommendation 4

Advisors should be encouraged to develop close relationships with academic departments and student services across the campus to provide timely and appropriate referrals.

### **Recommendation 5**

The advising unit should develop a referral process that includes monitoring and follow-up.

### **Recommendation 6**

Advisors should be provided with resources and training outside of academic advising, such as financial aid and career services.

### **Recommendation 7**

Institutions should adopt a caseload assignment strategy to facilitate the development of advisor-student relationships.

### **Recommendation 8**

For incoming students, the institutions should adopt policies that allow registration up to the day prior to the beginning of classes. New students who have not yet navigated the university environment and who have a host of other concerns in addition to coursework as they transition to college will be much less likely to succeed if they begin on or after the first day of classes.

### **Recommendation 9**

For continuing students, institutions should adopt policies that limit the ability to add or change their schedule after the first day of classes. Students wishing to make changes should be encouraged have a conversation with an advisor or faculty member to ensure that they understand the risk of beginning a course after it has begun.

### **Recommendation 10**

Institutions should consider offering some “late start” courses for students wishing to register after the beginning of the term or needing schedule changes.

### **Recommendation 11**

The Institutional Research office of each institution should regularly analyze the performance of students who register late to provide information for policy decisions.

### **Recommendation 12**

Institutions should consistently review data to identify obstacles to student persistence and completion.

**Recommendation 13**

Institutions should ensure that there are sufficient sections of key courses to meet the student demand and that they are offered at a variety of times to meet student schedules.

**Recommendation 14**

Institutions should provide advisors with a variety of technology that provides timely access to student information, connects individuals and units that support students, and facilitates communication with students.

**Recommendation 15**

Institutions should offer online advising that serves students on evenings and weekends, as well as during the standard work hours.

**Recommendation 16**

Institutions should implement a career ladder for professional academic advisors.

**Recommendation 17**

The Ohio Department of Higher Education should create a path for students to appeal transfer decisions that result in transfer guarantees not honored.

**Recommendation 18**

The Ohio Department of Higher Education should continue to work with college and university faculty to create guaranteed transfer pathways.

**Recommendation 19**

The Ohio Department of Higher Education should support the implementation of a uniform statewide electronic high school transcript to provide timely information for advising at admission, orientation, and registration.

# Glossary

TERM	DEFINITION	RELEVANT SOURCES
<b>Academic Advisor</b>	“Academic advising is a collaborative relationship between a student and an academic advisor. The intent of this collaboration is to assist the student in the development of meaningful educational goals that are consistent with personal interests, values and abilities. Although many individuals on campus, including academic advisors, may assist the student in making decisions and accomplishing goals, the academic advisor is granted formal authority by an academic unit (college, school, department) to approve the student's academic program of study and assist the student in progressing toward the appropriate degree.”	<p>NACADA. (2003). Paper presented to the Task force on defining academic advising. Retrieved from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising</p> <p>David S. Crockett, Ed. (1987). Advising Skills, Techniques and Resources: A Compilation of Materials Related to the Organization and Delivery of Advising Services. Iowa City, Iowa. ACT Corporation.</p> <p>University of Michigan - Dearborn (2002). DS</p>
<b>Appreciative Advising</b>	Appreciative Advising is the intentional collaborative practice of asking positive, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals, and potentials. The six phase approach includes disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, don't settle.	<a href="http://www.appreciativeadvising.net">www.appreciativeadvising.net</a>
<b>Career Advising</b>	Career advising is one of the pillars of holistic advising. While colleges differ on the integration of career advising within academic advising, most institutions of higher education recognize the importance of career advising to some extent. Career advising helps students to match their interests, abilities, and values to academic programs as they align to career paths.	NACADA

TERM	DEFINITION	RELEVANT SOURCES
<b>Career Ladder</b>	Career ladders provide a formal pathway for advancement through an infrastructure of tiered job levels composed of distinctions in titles and pay.	NACADA
<b>Caseload Model</b>	An organized case assignment system that ensures effective and equitable assignment of students to advisors.	Poole, Rachel, J. (1992). Continuing Students' Responses to Academic Advising Following Implementation of an Advisor Caseload Assignment System at the Community College of Allegheny County, Homewood-Brushton Branch. ERIC Number: ED355982. DS
<b>Data-Driven Decision Making</b>	Data-driven decision making (DDDM) is the process of making organizational decisions based on actual data rather than intuition or observation alone. DDDM is also referred to as evidence-based decision making.	Northwestern University. <a href="https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/data-driven-decision-making/">https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/data-driven-decision-making/</a>
<b>Equity</b>	Equity in higher education refers to student outcomes and means that every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, despite race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background, or family income. Equity meets and supports the student based on the individual student's needs.	The Aspen Education & Society Program and the Council of Chief State School Officers. 2017. Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs. Washington, D.C. <a href="https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2017/05/LeadingForEquity.pdf">https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2017/05/LeadingForEquity.pdf</a>
<b>Financial Aid Advising</b>	Financial Aid Advising is one of the pillars of holistic advising. Colleges differ on how much to integrate financial aid.	

TERM	DEFINITION	RELEVANT SOURCES
<b>Holistic Student Support</b>	An approach designed to provide all students with the type and intensity of support they need to identify and select the best pathway to achieve their education and career goals. A holistic approach meets students where they are, addresses their individual needs, leverages their strengths, and focuses on student development and learning.	Holistic Student Supports Redesign: A Toolkit for Redesigning Advising and Student Services to Effectively Support Every Student. October, 2018. Achieving the Dream. <a href="https://www.achievingthedream.org/sites/default/files/resources/atd_hss_redesign_toolkit_2018.pdf">https://www.achievingthedream.org/sites/default/files/resources/atd_hss_redesign_toolkit_2018.pdf</a>
<b>Intake Form</b>	A questionnaire completed by students to collect institutional data used for the planning of appropriate services and programs.	
<b>Late Registration</b>	Institutions have differing interpretations of what constitutes late registration. For the purposes of this paper, late registration shall take place on and after the first day of classes.	
<b>Midterm grades</b>	Midterm grades are used in higher education as a student success strategy to identify the student's academic progress to date in their individual courses at the midway point of the semester. Advisors or other college staff may use midterm grades to proactively reach out to students who are in jeopardy of unsuccessful completion of courses and also as positive nudges to students that are doing well.	
<b>NACADA</b>	National Academic Advising Association	
<b>Online/Distance Advising</b>	Advising that occurs in some way other than face-to-face. This includes phone advising or technology mediated advising with platforms such as WebEx, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or other commercial products.	

TERM	DEFINITION	RELEVANT SOURCES
<b>Syllabus (Advising)</b>	An advising syllabus is a tool, which allows advisors to outline the advising relationship and experience for their advisees. Advisors help students navigate between curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular issues and activities. The advising syllabus communicates to students a set of learning outcomes that they will be expected to achieve during their academic experience at the university.	Trabant, T.D. (2006). Advising Syllabus 101. Retrieved from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources website: <a href="http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Creating-an-Advising-Syllabus.aspx">http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Creating-an-Advising-Syllabus.aspx</a>
<b>Syllabus (Course)</b>	A syllabus is a document on the material of a course, the objectives and the components, and a guide for students to the kind of education and learning they can expect in a course. This resource can help create a well-structured curriculum that also invites students to take accountability for their own education.	Stanford University(n.d.). Creating A Syllabus  Teaching Commons. Retrieved from <a href="https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/resources/course-preparation-resources/creating-syllabus">https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/resources/course-preparation-resources/creating-syllabus</a>
<b>Student Success</b>	Student Success refers to the outcomes for students that include a personal, rigorous, and enriching learning experience that culminates in the achievement of their academic goals in a timely manner and fully prepares them to realize the career aspirations.	Holistic Student Supports Redesign: A Toolkit for Redesigning Advising and Student Services to Effectively Support Every Student. October, 2018. Achieving the Dream. <a href="https://www.achievingthedream.org/sites/default/files/resources/atd_hss_redesign_toolkit_2018.pdf">https://www.achievingthedream.org/sites/default/files/resources/atd_hss_redesign_toolkit_2018.pdf</a>
<b>Student Persistence</b>	For the purposes of this report, we use persistence to refer to term-to-term persistence at the same institution.	
<b>Student Retention</b>	For the purposes of this report, we use retention to refer to year-to-year retention of students at the same institution.	
<b>Student Type (Continuing)</b>	A student who has been admitted to an institution and has already been enrolled in a program whose enrollment for that program has not lapsed.	

TERM	DEFINITION	RELEVANT SOURCES
<b>Student Type (New)</b>	Any student who is new to the institution without any prior higher education credit.	
<b>Student Type (Returning)</b>	A student who had previously been enrolled in an institution but had stopped for at least one semester, then returned to complete program.	
<b>Student Type (Transfer)</b>	A student who is new to the institution bringing in credit from another institution of higher education.	
<b>Transactional Advising</b>	A view of advising that focuses on tasks and requirements in a simple manner. "A transactional approach to advising [...] associates a specific problem to be resolved with each interaction between student and advisor, is unlikely to assist in creating long-term academic plans and a stable advising relationship."	<a href="https://advisingmatters.berkeley.edu/grow/advancing-practice-library/personal/what-does-advisor-not-do">https://advisingmatters.berkeley.edu/grow/advancing-practice-library/personal/what-does-advisor-not-do</a>
<b>Transformative Advising</b>	A view of advising that focuses on building relationships resulting in increased student knowledge as they understand the consequences of their decisions on their academic and career plans.	<a href="https://advisingmatters.berkeley.edu/grow/advancing-practice-library/personal/what-does-advisor-not-do">https://advisingmatters.berkeley.edu/grow/advancing-practice-library/personal/what-does-advisor-not-do</a>

TERM	DEFINITION	RELEVANT SOURCES
<b>Withdrawal</b>	<p>A withdrawal from the course occurs after the institution's drop/add period has ended and before the course withdrawal deadline published by the institution. Course withdrawals are designated by a grade of "W" on the transcript, have no impact on grade point average, and are not counted as completed credits on the transcript. Typically, students are not eligible for a tuition refund, must pay outstanding balances owed to the college, and withdrawals may negatively impact financial aid satisfactory academic progress.</p> <p>Students that withdraw from all courses are considered not currently enrolled at the institution and, if receiving financial aid, may be subject to having their aid recalculated based on the timing of the withdrawal from all courses.</p>	

## **Advising Implementation Forum Members**

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