

Academic Advising Financial Plan of Action

The Academic Advising Center (AAC) provides advising for all Conditionally Admitted, Undecided, and Associate degree seeking students, as well as any student on campus who wishes to meet with an advisor for any reason. The Center is staffed by 2 full time staff and 5 student work study who strive to provide all students with the highest quality of services possible. The Advisors also provide training for faculty on advising techniques and best practices on a semesterly basis.

Mission Criticality & Essentiality

- **Evidence/ Data (Qualitative and/or Quantitative)**
 - ASU 2020 plan, Initiative 2.3 and subsequent sub-initiative focus on changing advising at ASU
 - Quality checks of Admission Counselors in 2016 found a 40% error rate (378 students checked), while in 2017 it was down to 15% (302 students checked).
 - Faculty Professional Development (PD) trainings on Advising
 - First Year Advising Center
 - 974 Visits to the AAC in 2015-16 Year
 - 554 different Students seen by staff
 - 1179 Visits to the AAC in 2016-17 Year
 - 510 different Students were seen by staff
 - 872 Visits to the AAC thus far 2017-18 calendar year
 - 434 different students seen by staff
- **Narrative**

Quality advising is critical to any institution and ASU is no different. Historically, advising has been viewed at ASU as an added task to faculty. When Dr. McClure sent out the survey that would eventually turn into the ASU 2020 plan, advising was listed as a major area that needed to be corrected. So much so, when the ASU 2020 plan was finalized, advising issues and changes had its own Initiative in the plan. Specifically, 2.3 and its sub sections, all address a need to change how advising is done at ASU. The topics covered range from faculty training, to obtaining DegreeWorks, and funding for a first year advising center. As part of the 2020 plan, Advising would do quality checks for incoming freshman registration done by the Admissions office. The Fall 2016 freshman class was the first to have all registrations checked, we will continue to until a First Year Advising Center (FYAC) is formed and all registration are done by trained, full time advisors.

Due to the nature of the Admissions office, with high turnover of people, it is very difficult to ensure counselors are well trained to advise complex issues students might possess. The first year had an error rate of 40 percent, due largely to an entirely new admission staff. Training was provided to the staff prior to the opening of registration, but a 2 hour training cannot prepare

them for every issue that might arise. The following year was a much lower error rate (15%), but the staff, as a whole, was the same as the year prior. Although the number of errors have gotten better, and error can lead to students starting their academic careers off track, and keeping them from graduation on time.

Through Title V, we are able to offer trainings in Appreciative Advising, and starting in the Spring 2018, Nuts and Bolts. The staff in the AAC took the Appreciative Advising course in the Summer of 2016 and became certified trainers to allow them us to train the entire campus. While each are important, they are important for different areas. Faculty make up the bulk of our advisors on campus and thus, should be training in the best practices to do so. Appreciative Advising focuses on the mindset behind being a good advisor. It emphasizes making a connection with the student and making them feel like they are important to the advisor and in control of their academic path. Also, we are able to offer stipends to faculty who attend the 4 hour training. Without this, we would not have the ability to reach faculty and ensure they are being the best advisors they can be to our students. "Nuts and Bolts" will focus on how to look up student records, test scores, and use Web Services and DegreeWorks, to ensure accurate advising for students. Without these trainings, new faculty would have to be trained by their department on how to advise, and which has resulted in more errors; some students taking courses they do not need, or PINS being given out without any real advising, resulting in students left to figure it out on their own. With the addition of DegreeWorks, current faculty advisors would have to learn how to optimally use the program by playing with it, instead of in-depth, knowledgeable trainings offered by qualified staff.

The ASU 2020 core purpose is "to educate, serve, and inspire our diverse populations in the pursuit of their lifelong dreams and ambitions." With roughly 20% of ASU FTFT students being conditionally admitted (CA) (students with index below 80), these students need a quality advisor who can make sure they are not falling through the cracks, which is critically important to our mission. ASU might be the only options for education for some of these students and it is our mission to help serve these underserved students. These students are already coming to ASU with a higher risk of dropping out, due to a high need for remediation on Math and English. Without a dedicated advisor to give them the guidance they need, they could be doomed to drop out. Current data provided by ASU Office of Institutional Effectiveness shows ASU 3 yr. retention rate at 57%, while our most at risk population, conditionally admitted students, are at a retention rate of 43%. While 43% might sound low, without a full time advisor who does required check-ins with each student during the semester, this might be even lower. The same data provided also showed the current 6 yr. graduation rate at 30%, while the conditionally admitted population are graduating at 23% for students with an index from 71-79, and only 3% with an index below 71. We need to further research national retention rates of students with the same characteristics as our conditionally admitted students to be more informed about our programming for these students. These rates, again, are lower than the university average, but would be drastically lower without the full time staff devoted to them.

The other population served directly in the AAC is undeclared students. These students are special in their own way, and as a result, work closely with their advisor and the Career Services office. The Advisors collaborate with the Career Services office to help the advisor with students who are unsure of a major or are having difficulty selecting between several. As a result, the

MyMajors assessment or Strong Interest Inventory are given to help assess which major best suits the student. After the results are tabulated, the student and the advisor get a print out and they meet to go over what options the assessment has produced. This includes going through the major course by course and informing the student what each major would look like, if he or she decided to declare it. Once they have chosen a major to declare, they are assigned a faculty advisor. This is especially critical, since students who don't declare by their sophomore year are at increased risk for lengthening their time for degree completion, or dropping out altogether. Due to the changing of the major, a graduation rate is impossible to obtain.

We are currently looking at ways to create a First Year Advising Center (FYAC) and ways to implement it with the current staff ASU possesses, to ensure all freshman are receiving the necessary help they need to successfully transition from High school to ASU. "Oakland University in Rochester, MI, is one example of an institution whose changes in first year advising netted retention and graduation gains. Retention rates from 2011 to 2012 increased overall by eight percent with some schools/colleges seeing increases up from 9.3% to 14.4% (Ternes and Webb, 2013). "For the University's 2012 freshman class—the first to go through the First Year Advising Center and Second Year Experience—49 percent are now juniors, a 10 percent increase over the previous year, and the overall retention rate is 10 percent higher as well" (Student Retention Rates, 2014). In addition, OU's current [2015] four-year graduation rate is more than double the rate in 2003. Although Oakland University is not in a rural setting and has a significantly larger student population, their initiatives are worthy of consideration and implementation at ASU." By creating the FYAC, it would also alleviate the duty of registering FTFT students by admissions, and that would be done by the advisors in the Center. Those same advisors would also be that student's advisor for their entire first year at ASU, helping them make the transition to college, as easy as possible. Students declare majors without really knowing whether a major is a good fit for them and their career goals. FYAC advisors can alleviate time lost changing majors for faculty and staff, as they would be knowledgeable about all majors on campus.

Every year, more and more students are coming to see one of the two advisors in the AAC who are not assigned to the two staff and which highlights the quality of the advising going on. Students appreciate their experience are talking to one another. Each year has shown an increase in visits, while quality of the visits has remained high. In 2015-16, we had 974 visits with 545 different students being seen, only to increase that the very next year to 1179. And for the current year, we have already had 892 visits and 434 individual students seen, with 5 months left in the year. This emphasizes the number of assigned students who are not assigned to the AAC staff, but are meeting with them and getting whatever help they might need at that time.

The number of undecided students has not been as high as conditionally admitted students, which is a good thing. This means that more students are coming to ASU knowing what they want to major in and are getting into those courses for their area of study sooner. While conditionally admitted students remain fairly constant from year to year, those students are students who might not have gotten a shot at school elsewhere, and are in need of more intrusive techniques than higher achieving students. These students are just as capable of success as those students who are unconditionally admitted, as long as they receive the support they need. Without staff to serve this population, we would be setting these students up for failure.

- **Summary**

In summary, Advising is a key necessary resource of any institution and without it, the students we currently serve and will continue to serve, would be negatively affected. A prime example was during Spring 2018 registration. The wait time to see the only advisor in the AAC, was over an hour long and students were frustrated by that wait time. Helping those FTFT freshman make the transition a successful one is key to helping ASU increase its retention rates as a whole. This department is necessary for the success of the student population we are dedicated to serving through our mission. We work very closely with so many other departments on campus to ensure students' needs are met, that we feel we are essential to ASU and the students that the institution serves. Whether it be faculty PD trainings, students served directly by one of the two advisors, quality checks done for incoming freshman, or an impromptu walk in by a student in need, these all represent key areas that if not done correctly, will only hurt out students and add to ASU's decline in enrollment.

Cost & Benefit

- **Evidence/ Data (Qualitative and/or Quantitative)**
 - Current Budget for Advising- \$89,480, to include salaries for 2 full time advisors and operating budget (not including benefits for staff)
- **Narrative**

The majority of the budget is for staff salaries, with \$10,480 for operation expenses, which include the following expenses:

TutorTrac/ AdvisorTrac/ SurveyTrac for the entire ASU campus (\$1024/ year)
NACADA membership dues (\$150)
Office supplies to include paper and printer ink for the entire Student Success Center (\$1000)
Office supplies (\$800)
Professional development for staff (\$4000) to include conference attendance
Participation in Finals week food for students in the Bear Cave (\$1000/ year)
Student activities (\$500).

This budget currently is under review, as we are working on moving to a first year advising center and the cost associated with that are unknown at this time. ASU will be continuing to work within this budget to provide the staff and students with the support that they might need. By adding 2-3 more advisors, the budget for PD will have to be stretched to the max to ensure staff are up to date on the best practices and any new and innovative techniques that they can bring back to ASU to better serve our students. What we can bring back to ASU after attending a conference is always taken into consideration, when considering conference attendance.

The advising staff is seeing approximately 500 of the 1700 students each year, in some form or fashion. While the majority of the students seen actually have a faculty advisor in their area of study, the staff never turns a student away. The staff carry an average load of about 225 students, which makes up about 45% of the total students seen in the AAC on an average year. That is a

large portion of the overall student population that is coming to see the staff each year with questions ranging from changing a major/minor, double majoring, double checking their faculty advisor course recommendations, questions about previous credit, and so on. For the small cost of this department, we are touching a large portion of the student body and discussing their academic plans and issues. We also employ 5 students as work study to staff for our Kiosk. These students learn valuable career readiness skills that they are able to apply in the real world, upon graduation. The staff answer the phone and greet students when they come to see an advisor, trouble shoot student issues; addressing needs and directing them to the appropriate resources, which are key skills for any job they will have after college.

- **Summary**

While this budget is small, we support success and retention for our students with the money. The students who attend the breakfast and lunch during finals week in the Bear cave rave about how nice it is to have a break from studying and have a meal with their fellow students. Many of these students don't have the time to cook for themselves during final week, and some struggle daily with budgeting enough to eat healthy meal. The AAC will continue to ensure this budget is used to the fullest to support all students in every way possible. A cut to this budget would make it very difficult to continue the things we do and the students would suffer, as the food and student focused events would be the first to be eliminated.

Quality of Outcomes

- **Evidence/ Data (Qualitative and/or Quantitative)**
 - Quality checks of Admission in 2016 found a 40% error rate (378 students checked), while in 2017 it was down to 15% (302 students checked)
 - Training provided through AAC was extremely effective
 - Conditional Admits retention rate of 43%, compared to 57% for all FTFT
 - Students satisfaction has held constant based on exit surveys of students
 - 2015-16 satisfaction rate was 98.6%
 - 2016-17 satisfaction rate was 99.4%
 - 2017-18 satisfaction rate is currently 98.3%
 - Number of student visits has increased
 - 2015-16 year saw 897 visits to the AAC
 - 2016-17 year we saw 1179 visits to the AAC
 - 2017-18 year thus far, we have seen 872 visits to the AAC

- **Narrative**

While most of these have been previously mentioned, it is important to reiterate the outcomes of what we are doing. Without the quality checks being performed, students would have taken courses that do not apply to their specific degree, or repeat courses they took while in high school, resulting in a waste of their money and Financial Aid. It also adds frustration for students when they learn they took a course they did not need and could have taken something else. This has resulted in countless students leaving ASU, never to return, only to hurt ASU retention rates,

graduation rates, and financial standings. If quality checks can save 1 student, then they are worth doing. The problem arises that once students are on campus, faculty can misadvise, these mistakes cannot be caught, as it would be impossible and improbable to check every student registration. While as a whole, the faculty at ASU do an adequate job of advising, errors have been made and students lost, as a result. Creating a FYAC would ensure that all incoming freshman will be on track, increasing satisfaction and retention.

When each student signs out after their visit, they are asked to complete a satisfaction survey on their visit. The survey is there to help us gauge our student's satisfaction with their visit and has a place for comments, if they so choose to leave one. The vast majority have great comments and are happy with their visit. So much so, the exit surveys would show a 3 yr. average satisfaction of 98.8%, no matter who they see. Students consistently praise the advisors for helping the students in any way they need. So much of what we do is more than picking out classes for the next semester. Conditionally admitted students are required to do check-ins with advisors, to help keep the student on task and see how their semester is going. I wish I could say all students attend, but those who do attend move from conditional to unconditional at a much higher rate than those who never attend. In those meetings, we cover their academics, but also how the student is as a whole. We ask about their activities and interest, family (if they have divulged any info previously), career goals, etc., and assist in any way we can, to ensure the student is succeeding at ASU. This individualized interest and transition assistance goes a long way to increasing student success and retention.

The AAC is seeing a larger number of students than what is initially assigned to the advisors. On average, the two advisors have an advising load of around 225 students' total, but we are seeing more and more students that are not assigned to us for a variety of reasons. This goes to show how students are talking about the great help and guidance they are getting in the AAC and other students want that level of attention and dedication to their academic career (some faculty do this very well).

- **Summary**

In summary, the data from our exit survey shows the students who are coming to see an advisor are extremely happy with their experience. While it is impossible to have a 100% satisfaction rating, we are very proud of our 98.8% we currently have. The registration checks we provided has saved countless students money and time on taking courses that were not required for their degree. Without the advising staff doing these, students would waste their valuable time and money. No student is ever turned away due to their advisor being a faculty member. We are here to serve any and all students who seek out our help and will continue to do so.

Conclusion

- Any unmet needs
 - Only 1 advisor currently in AAC
 - FYAC requires a minimum of 4 staff to advise all freshman for their first year
 - Student Work Study money to maintain the Kiosk staffing

- Summary of program performance

The AAC Advising staff provides a vital academic and personal service to all students who come and visit us. AAC staff will continue to serve any and all students who are in need of help. We have a 98.8% satisfaction rate amongst students who have seen an advisor and are seeing more students that are not our advisees, than are assigned to us. The staff carries an advising load of approximately 225 advisees, but averages seeing over 500 each of the last 3 years. If we're able to do that with 2 staffers, imagine what we could do with 4 staff and the good that could come from that. Advising is a key aspect to any institution of higher learning and is here to assist students in their academic career. Without advising, student will feel lost and frustrated about issues and faculty will have no one to go to with advising based questions. We provide staff and faculty with training opportunities every semester to better understand the advising process, and in turn, help our students.

