

Student Success Task Force

High Advising Ratios & Uneven Student to Advisor Ratios in College

Co-Chairs

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Executive Summary

Task Force Charge

The Student Success Task Force on High Advising Ratios was assembled in September 2015 and charged with identifying issues associated with the transition to a decentralized advising model and to develop recommendations for sustainability of a decentralized advising model.

The current advising model at Fresno State is designed to enhance the quality of academic advising to improve student persistence, retention, and graduation. Traditionally, advising at Fresno State varied with different approaches used across campus. In fall 2015, a decentralized/shared advising model was launched. Currently there are 18 full-time professional advisors working in each of the eight College Advising Centers. University Advising Center (UAC) was established as the linking pin for advising across campus and provides liaisons to each College. The UAC is responsible for all advisor training; working with undeclared majors and students in transition, special majors, 4-year Degree Guarantee Program and the probation/disqualification process. As such, a strong communication network between the UAC and the campus advising community is critical.

The task force assembled three sub-committees with the following outcomes:

1. A literature review of identified evidence-based best advising practices and models including an assessment of advising-student ratios and corresponding staffing needs at Fresno State.
2. Explored current College Advising Center's use of social media and web communication
3. Collected quantitative and qualitative data from three sources, a) faculty survey - a total of 459 tenure and tenured track faculty were sent an online survey with 139 responses (Appendix A), b) Professional Advisors Forum (Appendix B) and c) Council of Department Chairs forum with 15 present (Appendix C).

The faculty survey yielded rich data in terms of advising issues and concerns including: faculty workload with disparities in quality and quantity of advising within and across colleges; major and career advising are better suited for faculty rather than professional advisors; increased bureaucracy and budget for sustainable decentralized advising; need for training and communication for use of advising technology, as well as roles and responsibilities of faculty and professional advisors.

The task force developed themes from the collection of all data and formulated the following recommendations below:

Recommendations Compiled by Faculty and Professional Advisors

- **Increase Visibility and Importance of Advising**
 - Align advising mission to the institutional mission
 - Cross Campus Training:
 - University Advising Model
 - Clearly establish roles, responsibilities, partnerships
 - Develop goals and establish a plan for sustainability
 - New faculty orientation to include faculty advisor training and information

- Consideration should be given to policy revisions pertaining to faculty probationary plans in regards to advising expectations
 - Integrate high impact practices into faculty and professional advisor training
- Establish protocol for professional development
- Establish clear description of faculty role in advising (state in the probationary plan)
- Establish advising communities (focus on system-wide approach to advising for retention)
- Develop a concise communication plan including social media, websites, and flowcharts.
- **Structure**
 - Establish an Academic Advising Coordinator in each College
 - Identify space needs
 - Hire or align any additional staffing needs to reduce advising caseloads (see Appendix D for current caseloads).
 - Establish common practices across the colleges to improve efficiency, communication and success
 - Information sharing
 - Flowcharts and syllabi
 - Communication plan
 - Develop consistent assessment plans across colleges
 - Collaboration with Career Development Center
- 3. Technology/Tools**
 - Utilize consistent tools to advise students (develop common language)
 - Training and use of U-Direct Roadmaps
 - Shared advisor notes in GradesFirst
 - Efficient and accurate advising of transfer students
- 4. Research**
 - Establish a Provost Award in Academic Advising that would fund:
 - Research project development (utilize students)
 - Presentations at National Conferences
 - Professional development opportunities
 - Development of assessment tools
- 5. Resources**
 - Financial: adequate funding to accomplish decentralization
 - Facilities: adequate space for future growth of centers
 - Technology/Equipment: adequate advising tools
 - Staffing
- 6. Budget** (see Appendix E)

In closing, an investment of additional work and time are needed to guide, finalize and implement the recommendations put forward in this report. Key faculty and professional advisors will need to be assembled to move forward with the issues identified in the faculty survey that may present future barriers to implementation.

Appendix A

Faculty Survey

1. As a faculty member what role do you currently play in advising?
 - a. None
 - b. GE
 - c. GE and Major Advising
 - d. Career Development
 - e. Major Advising and Career Development
 - f. Major Advising OnlyCOMMENTS:
2. Are you open to sharing advising responsibilities with professional advisors in a college center?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe, I need more informationCOMMENTS:
3. What advising role do you want to play in the future? Please describe. (In a write in box)
4. Where does advising fit in the faculty workload? Do you consider it to be a part of:
 - a. Service
 - b. Teaching
 - c. Research
 - d. Neither
 - e. All of the aboveCOMMENTS:
5. How do you view advising in terms of faculty responsibilities and how is advising practiced in your department? (write in box)
6. Is advising currently shared between faculty and professional advisors in your department?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I do not knowCOMMENTS AND DESCRIPTION OF ROLES:
7. Does the current structure promote communication among professional advisors and faculty?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. SomewhatCOMMENTS:
8. What would you change to make advising more effective (write in box)

9. What specific on-line technologies, if any, would you like to see implemented or improved to facilitate the advising process (write in box)
10. Do you in your role as a faculty advisor utilize GradesFirst to maintain records of your contact with advisees?
- Yes
 - No
 - I do not know what that is
 - I have not been trained to use this system

COMMENTS:

11. How are faculty assigned students to advise in your department?
- Department Administrative Assistants
 - Department Chair
 - Students are not assigned an advisor
 - I do not know
12. Do you believe it is clear to students who they should go to for specific advising needs?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

COMMENTS:

13. How does your department orient new faculty to the advising process? (Write in box)
14. What are your suggestions for improving advising at Fresno State? (In a write in box)
- What do you believe we need to do to improve advising with first generation students and students of color?

COMMENTS:

15. How effective do you believe the university is in meeting the advising needs of our students?
- Very effective
 - Somewhat effective
 - Not effective

COMMENTS:

WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT US TO KNOW?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Appendix B

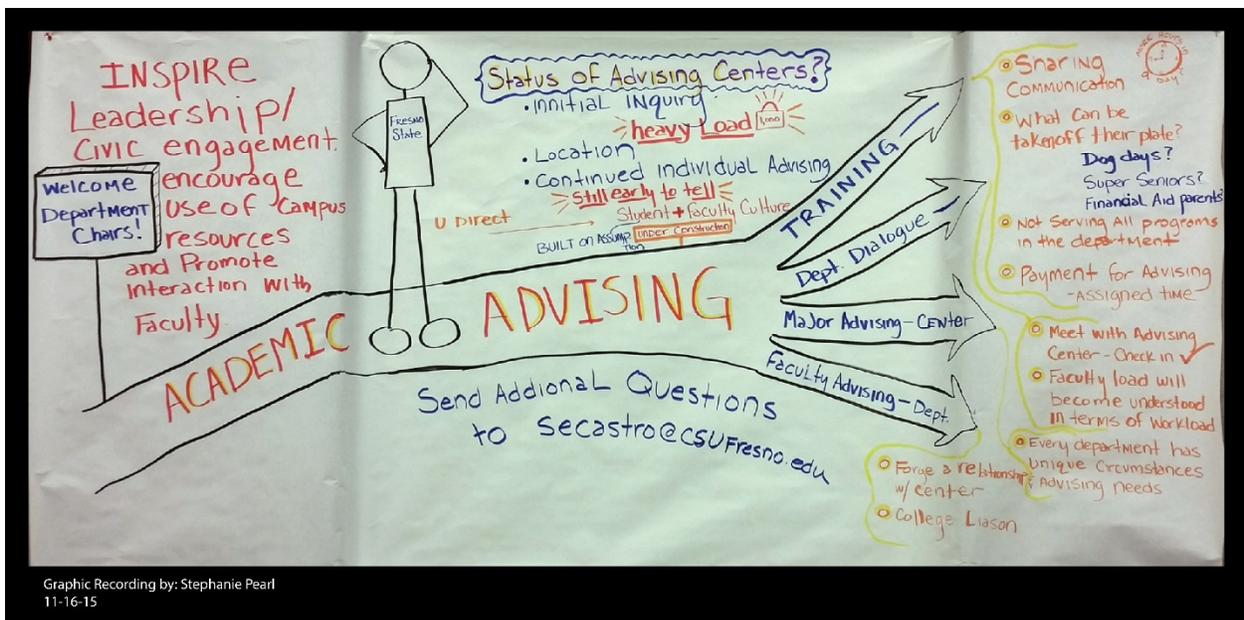
Academic Advisors Forum following webinar on Appreciative Advising

1. What is the current status of advising in your unit?
2. What do you believe is going well?
3. What steps are being taken to enhance quality advising in your unit?
4. What challenges are you facing as we make the transition to decentralized advising?
5. Small Group Discussion: What suggestions do you have to improve advising at Fresno State?
 - a. Select one suggestion and turn it into an action statement.
 - b. What resources are needed to implement your suggestion and recommended action?
6. What else do you want us to know?

Appendix C

Council of Charis Forum Questions with Graphic Recording

1. What is the current status of advising centers in your college? What is working well and what are the challenges?
2. What types of information/training does faculty need in order to participate in a decentralized/shared model of advising?
3. Have faculty engaged in a dialogue about the future of advising in your department? If so, what suggestions did faculty have for improving advising at Fresno State? What suggestions do you as chair have for improving advising at Fresno State?



Appendix D

Current Advisor Caseloads

College Advising Centers	#Majors	#Advisors	Avg Caseload
COAH	1774	2	887
CSB	2941	3	980
CSM	3006	3	1002
COSS	2518	2	1259
COHHS	3976	4	994
JCAST	2276	3	758
Kremen	1118	2	559
LCOE	1450	1	1450

Appendix E

Projected Budget

Staffing Recommendations	Cost (including benefits)
Hire Additional SSP II (5 total)	\$5,431.70
Craig School of Business (1)	\$5,431.70
College of Science and Mathematics (2)	\$10,683.40
College of Social Sciences (1)	\$5,431.70
College of Health and Human Services (1)	\$5,431.70
Advising Coordinator - SSP IV for each college (6 total)	\$6,751.20
College of Arts and Humanities	\$6,751.20
Craig School of Business	\$6,751.20
College of Social Sciences	\$6,751.20
College of Health and Human Services	\$6,751.20
Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology	\$6,751.20
Lyles College of Engineering	\$6,751.20
Total Investment for SSP III and SSP IV	\$67,485.70

*Special budget for Academic Advising Training and Professional Development

\$20,000/yr requested to permanently fund materials, speakers, webinars, advisor awards, events