ACADEMIC ADVISING RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL

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I. Background and Current Model

Academic advising is currently decentralized and split between Academic and Faculty Advisors. Students with 30sch or under meet exclusively and compulsory with a professional Academic Advisor. Students with more than 30sch meet electively with their Faculty Advisor.

Academic advising is presently affected by several challenges:

- Students, in recent forums, have voiced a need for consistent, centralized, and accessible advising options.
- Faculty Advisors are inherently unavailable between semesters.
- A system of preparatory "graduation checks" is not available to students and engenders graduation apprehension and defers the process to timely completion of degree requirements.

Ameliorating the current situation will require additional elements of Academic Advising to be housed in the Student Success Center.

II. Proposal

The Department of Academic Advising and Student Success is seeking a structural transformation of our current advising process, which will take effect fall 2014. The Academic Advising Department will become a shared, centralized model between professional Academic Advisors and Faculty Advisors which provides the best features of both structures: centralized and decentralized. This model provides students with expert advice from faculty in their respective degree programs, and it allows professional advisors to serve students with special needs such as first-time-in-college (FTIC) and first-generation students, academically at-risk students, student athletes, etc. This aims to establish an accessible, centralized, and comprehensive advising process for all Texas A&M University-Texarkana students.

Objectives

1. Provide consistent and high quality advising for all students.
2. Increase availability of advising resources.
3. Provide advising access to nontraditional students via online services and alternative work schedules.
4. Promote consistent policies and procedures for advising across A&M-Texarkana.
5. Establish a system of preparatory "graduation checks" to ensure properly communicated degree expectations.
6. Extend early alert retention services to upper division courses.
7. Improve advising communication between faculty and staff across campus.

III. Proposed Structure for Advising

Organizational Format

Academic advising will be a centralized structure with shared responsibilities between Academic Advisors and Faculty Advisors within four stages: (1) Prospective, (2) 0-29sch, (3) 30sch-42sch, and (4)

43sch-Graduation. The Student Success Center, with professional academic advising staff, will deliver administrative support and professional development and work collaboratively with Faculty Advisors by providing resources and training. Academic Advisors will advise prospective students and all admitted and enrolled students from their first semester until graduation. Academic Advisors will provide advising at the upper classman level in areas of preparatory "graduation checks," early alert retention, and course selection as needed for every degree program. Once a student reaches 30sch he/she will be assigned to a Faculty Advisor who will provide complementary advising and mentoring within their respective programs, thus creating a co-advising model during the last 90sch. Academic Advisors will initiate regular information meetings with faculty to insure consistent advising practices and streamlined communication across campus.

Compulsory Academic Advising Component

All new students are required to meet with an advisor during SOAR. Freshmen students will be required to meet every semester with an Academic Advisor until core completion. All students with more than 42sch will be required to meet with an Academic Advisor annually, prior to fall registration.

Academic Recovery Program

Students on academic probation will be monitored by a professional Academic Advisor. At the end of each semester, the Registrar's office will provide the advisors with a list of students entering academic probation. During the probationary semester, Academic Advisors will:

1. Ensure that probationary students are not enrolled in more than 12sch.
2. Meet with probationary students at least once a month.
3. Check mid-term grades to assess recovery progress:
    a. If a probationary student receives a B or better at midterm, the Academic Advisor will provide positive and reinforcing communication.
    b. If the probationary student receives a C or lower and is jeopardy of not completing coursework successfully, the Academic Advisor will assess the need for further

interventions such as, but not limited to: Increasing frequency of student-advisor visits; connecting this student with campus resources such as tutoring or counseling; initiating and attending student-faculty visits; and adjusting course load.

Impacted Policies, Procedures, and Services

Existing Academic Advisors within the Student Success Center will be cross-trained to advise upper level classmen, and one and one-half (1.5 FTE) additional Academic Advisor positions will be needed to ensure adequate professional advising services for all students. This would bring our case load ratio of advisees per full-time professional academic advisors to approximately 270 to 1, considering the undergraduate enrollment to be roughly 1350. Based on the 2011 NACADA Survey, the median case load ratio of advisees per full-time professional academic advisor for a small institutional size is 233 to 1 (Robbins, 2013). While our proposed structure's ratio is above the national median case load, it will be effective with the use of a complementary faculty advising partnership with shared responsibilities. No changes will be made to the existing Faculty Advisor assignments. Each college will encourage use of the new advising element as needed and be responsible for outlining how to best advise their respective majors.

Student-Athlete Advising Component

The Athletic department will provide a coordinator of Student-Athlete Services to provide academic advising, establish eligibility, and coordinate/represent the Champions of Character program for our student-athlete population. Essential job functions are outlined below.

Advising Assignments

Academic Advisors will execute advisor assignments in Banner to students during SOAR and when connecting students to their respective Faculty Advisors. The Registrar's office will reassign Faculty Advisors in Banner upon receipt of any change of major requests.

Job Descriptions

Under the proposed structure, the Director of Academic Advising and Student Success would have the following responsibilities:

- Set policies to be used by all advisors
- Align advising processes to be consistent across the university
- Monitor advisor workload
- Alert the Associate Vice President for Success and Deans to major issues concerning advising

The Lead Academic Advisor would:

- Supervise and manage the advising activities
- Ensure advising access to nontraditional students to include, but not limited to:
    - Staggered advising schedules
    - Extended advising hours
    - E-Advising
- Initiate regular communication/training between Academic Advisors and faculty
- Monitor early alert reporting and provide faculty training
- Alert the Director of Academic Advising and Student Success of any advising issues that arise

The Academic Advisors would:

- Coordinate academic advising to new students using the whole student approach to include, but not limited to: assisting students with course selection, registration, connection to the University community and campus leadership opportunities, and retention issues.
- Create, implement, lead, and analyze academic advising and retention programs for students.
- Provide students, faculty and staff with information regarding degree options, hours required and course and degree requirements.
- Counsels in both group and individual settings with students, prospective students, and alumni regarding educational opportunities, career and employment issues, and personal development.
- Promotes and facilitates the link between academic curriculum and departments with a system of career counseling activates/services to enhance students' future employment opportunities.
- Review new student transfer course work, disburses, interprets and discusses various degree requirements with students, faculty, and staff.
- Performs preparatory "graduation checks."
- Teach IS 0300 when necessary.
- Coordinate, plan, and implement special projects such as, but not limited to, an early alert/intervention program, peer advisor program, success workshops, career development workshops, Career Day events, etc.
- Work independently and collaboratively with members of the campus community in planning and implementing retention programs for students to include but not limited to: SOAR, Eagle Access, and student leadership programs.

The Coordinator of Student-Athlete Services would:

- Provides guidance for the overall student-athlete experience.
- Monitor and track graduation rates, retention rates, and provide the necessary tools for overall success in the enhancement process of all student-athletes.
- Advises student-athlete, exercising discretion and independent judgment, on their course selection and managing schedule demands.
- Reviews new student-athlete transfer course work and discusses various degree requirements with student-athlete, faculty, and staff; Reviews degree audit with student-athlete.
- Prepares advising packets and presents degree planning information to new student-athletes during student orientation.
- Perform preparatory graduation checks for student-athletes.
- Gathers and compiles information for reports and presentations relative to academic data.
- Anticipates needs, initiates action, and provides information to the Director of Athletics regularly.
- Assists student-athletes to effectively access the academic service resources available.
- Monitor academic progress, contact faculty members, and provide academic support for at-risk student-athletes.
- Inform student-athletes of academic probation/suspension terms and provide intensive advising during student-athlete probation.
- Assist student-athlete with defining and developing realistic academic, career, and life goals.
- Adhere to confidentiality guideline (FERPA).
- Assists program coaches in monitoring class attendance while providing communication to all faculty members with regards to class time missed directly related to competition or travel.
- Meet with student-athletes on a regular basis.

- Maintains and develops records managements systems including confidential student records, compliance materials, and other general correspondence.
- Champions of Character representative
- Maintains and coordinates all eligibility efforts via the play NAIA Eligibility Center.
- Coordinate community outreach projects for Champions of Character program

The Faculty Advisors would:

- Conduct advising for respective program requirements and assist with course selection.
- Provide a meaningful connection between discipline and university opportunities.
- Build professional relationships with the students.
- Counsels in both group and individual settings with students regarding educational opportunities and professional development.

References

Robbins, R. (2013). Implications of advising load. In Carlstrom, A., *2011 national survey of academic advising.* (Monograph No. 25). Manhattan, KS: National Academic Advising Association. Retrieved from the NACADA *Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources* website http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/tabid/3318/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/94/article.aspx. - See more at: http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor-Load.aspx#sthash.lJhrcjEI.dpuf