**University of Central Arkansas**

**Academic Affairs - Best Practices in Academic Advising**

**Mid-Year Report**

Below is an abbreviated outline of the AAC’s work on best practices in academic advising and graduation application. A full report will be submitted to Faculty Senate at the end of the academic year.

**Suggestions for Academic Affairs Advising Best Practices:**

* Senator Dahlenburg presented information on peer and aspirant institutions and we found two that are super performers on retention and matriculation rates
	+ Grand Valley State University (Michigan)
		- First-year retention rate 82%
		- Four-year graduation rate 31.3%
		- Five-year graduation rate 58.3%
		- Six-year graduation rate 64.9%
		- % of students who transfer out 12.5%
	+ Appalachian State University (North Carolina)
		- First-year retention rate 87%
		- Four-year graduation rate 44.1%
		- Five-year graduation rate 66.3%
		- Six-year graduation rate 69.7%
		- % of students who transfer out 11.7%
* Montag, et al. article in NACADA Journal (2012) suggests:
	+ 40-85% of millennials change major at least once before graduation
	+ 10% change majors >4 times
	+ ***Need consistent career guidance***
	+ Advising can improve student satisfaction
		- Advisors help students decide on and commit to a major
	+ Praxis blend of advising works better
		- Advisor directed combined with interaction and decisions by student in later years
	+ Millennials have 7 traits to generation
		- Special needing individual attention
		- External pressure to perform (not self-directed)
		- Achievement oriented
		- Optimistic
		- Team-oriented
		- Preference for structure
		- Protected relying on others for support
	+ Today’s students need:
		- Individualized classes
		- Personal relationship with advisor
		- Clear structure
		- Need to impact the world
		- Want to be part of a team
	+ **FINDINGS:**
		- Advisor needs to give quick straightforward advice about majors, offerings, and requirements
		- Need to have mentor engaged in developmental advising practices and giving career options with resources to achieve.
* Complaints lodged in UCA system are 3-fold
	+ **Disconnect between Degree Works and Banner and Faculty can’t do both**
	+ **Too many advisees per faculty/unequal work load/disconnect between advising center and faculty advisors**
	+ **Graduation applications are cumbersome and not efficient or effective**
* Grand Valley State University has the following formulas:
	+ General advising through an advising center until major declared
	+ Advising in college or department (depending on size and complexity) after major declared
	+ Career exploration centers in general advising area
	+ Grand Finish! Incentives (bonuses for completing coursework earlier)

**Suggested Recommendation to Consider for Academic Affairs Committee:**

1. ***Purchase and initiate a new software bundle that will incorporate the DegreeWorks and the Banner capabilities into one design so communication can be more effective.***

These suggestions were made by the IST Peer Review Team and have been appreciated and affirmed by all involved.

1. ***Change advising system to a tiered-approach done primarily by dedicated advisors and assisted by faculty/community mentor-consultants.***

Done presently by GVSU and others and would meet the suggestions of the article by Montag et al. Non-declared students would go to a central advising center and would stay there until a major or career choice is made. The student would then go to an embedded advisor in the college or department housing that choice. Faculty would be assigned to each student as a mentors/consultant to allow the student to connect with someone successful in their area of interest and be able to talk to someone knowledgeable about that field. The faculty would consult with the student and direct them to the advisor if there are any problems. The advisor would detail the courses and options available for progress to degree and areas of interest. The advisor would send the student to the registrar for finalization of courses for each term. Diagram is attached.

1. ***The student would be audited at the completion of 30, 60, and 90 hours by the advisors and reported to the University.***

Presently this is done prior to the last year of school to try to prepare the student for graduation. Under this proposal, the student would be automatically audited after completing 30 hours, again at 60 hours, and finally after 90 hours to review the student’s course work for appropriateness in leading to degree completion and eventual graduation. Graduation application would be done closer to completion of all required coursework and not one year in advance as done presently. This is presently done by Appalachian State and is done by GVSU, but is less formal in application.

1. ***Faculty survey to evaluate faculty perceptions of current academic advising practices and readiness to change related to modifications in academic advising practices.***