

CSUSB Excellence in Academic Advising Self-Study Report
In coordination with NACADA
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Introduction

It is well documented that the influence of academic advising is underestimated in studies investigating the impact of institutional initiatives, and understudied in the broader advising literature (Aiken-Wisniewski, Smith, & Troxel, 2010; Habley, 2009). The impact of academic advising must be measured and communicated in terms that align with current higher education accountability demands (Keeling, 2010). However, significant work remains for most institutions, to develop campus wide best practices to impact and align, communicate, and effect meaningful advising outcomes (Light, 2004). Contrary to the paradigm shift toward advising as a holistic relationship model that produces measurable outcomes, institutions tend to evaluate alignment of advising programs with the often, flat student success-centered paradigm (Gordon, 2004; Hurt, 2007; Lowenstein, 2005). To capture the full impact of academic advising it is imperative to take a holistic evaluative approach through the use of student success metrics and qualitative measures.

The study aimed to evaluate CSUSB's advising program theory (i.e., identified strategies for achieving measurable outcomes) and existing data. This evaluation was based on a review of institutional artifacts guiding CSUSB academic advising, literature related to academic advising assessment, and CSUSB's existing academic advising assessment data. The findings were intended to inform recommendations for advancing the campus culture and climate, starting from the institution level down to academic advisors. These recommendations focus on key performance indicators for CSUSB's academic advising and student success efforts. The carefully planned and timely dissemination of results from this study will foster the empowerment, involvement, pride, and ownership among the CSUSB employees who advise students—motivating them to embrace assessment as an avenue to celebrate achievements and improve advising.

Scholarly Context

While the link between advising and student success has been long demonstrated in the literature, assessment of academic advising is recently emerging and in its infancy phase compared with that of classroom learning outcomes (Kelley, 2008). In line with the higher education landscape at large, academic advising systems are evolving. An example of this is the paradigm shift from prescriptive and transactional views of advising toward a holistic practice for student success with a developmental approach—thereby facilitating assessment of how advisors teach students to develop skills and understanding necessary for academic success. As this evolution transpires, the measurement of performance outcomes and demonstrated accountability become a pertinent part of the academic advising and student success practice.

Identifying desired academic advising outcomes (e.g., accountability, empowerment) and related student learning outcomes (e.g., self-efficacy, responsibility, study skills, perceived support) is complicated. This process should be guided by a multifaceted exploration that combines and cross-pollinates traditional quantitative approaches, qualitative data that communicates student expectations

and experiences, analysis of program structure and mission, and review of related scholarly literature (Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon, Hawthorne, 2013).

Evaluation Findings

CSUSB academic advising has undergone major changes since 2011. Since that time, advising has grown campus wide in terms of the number of academic advisors (grew from 8 advisors campus wide to 42) and number of students receiving advisement. The framework for academic advising is based on a student success model that offers support when students seek help and includes intentional, targeted, and timely interventions.

CSUSB participated in a six-month comprehensive self-study, Excellence in Academic Advising (EAA), through the National Academic Advising organization (NACADA). This review involved nine cross-functional committees consisting of 75 faculty, staff, students, and administrators from academic and student affairs. The findings are broken down into the following three categories:

- 1) Academic advising successes
- 2) Academic advising emerging practices
- 3) Academic advising practices in need of development, focus or attention
 - a. For each item, goals and objectives were identified

Academic Advising Successes Identified at CSUSB:

CSUSB has many reasons to take pride in its academic advising services. The successes identified by the EAA committees included:

- Changes to the academic advising model during the centralization of operations and services resulted in positive changes and major development in student servicing and accessibility. As a system at CSUSB, academic advising is not starting from scratch because the structural pieces, in line with key performance indicators of excellence in academic advising are already in place.
- The advising infrastructure is robust, innovative and representative of emerging student success trends that serve the needs of the whole student.
- CSUSB has the necessary structures in place to support professional development and learning communities that center academic advising for professional academic advisors, student affairs advisors, and faculty advisors (TRC, SDC, FCE).
- Institutional Research produces exceptionally helpful data that are regularly used to guide advising campaigns and student success work.
- CSUSB students are a joy to work with. Academic advisors value student input and interactions.
- There is a plethora of academic support services available including tutoring, mentoring, writing support, public speaking support, veterans success efforts, and disability services for students at CSUSB.
- Faculty advisors are engaged in advising work and demonstrate the desire to contribute to student success outside of the classroom.
- CSUSB has invested heavily in academic advising. Collaborative stakeholders for student success are plentiful.
- CSUSB has an abundance of technology to assist with academic advising, monitoring student progress, and data collection (Navigate, uAchieve, PeopleSoft, IR dashboards and etc.)

- CSUSB has a layered academic advising approach for special populations in areas with expertise such as EOP, SAIL, Support to Students with Disabilities, Undocumented Student Success Center, Athletics, and the Veterans Success Center.
- Reorganization of academic advising from a decentralized to centralized holistic model with a developmental approach led to structural and organizational efficiencies. Such efficiencies include increased access to academic advisors and consistent experiences for students across colleges and majors.
- As a campus, CSUSB faculty and staff have a vested interest in the success of students and are passionate about working with them in an advising capacity to contribute to their academic journeys.

Academic Advising Emerging Practices Identified:

Due to the evolving nature of academic advising, many practices have changed over time to meet current institutional needs. The following emerging practices are in their initial stages, showing promising outcomes for students and the institution.

- Data based academic interventions such as ENGAGE, AIR, Disengage, and AENE.
- Block/Pack enrollment used to assist with university enrollment and degree completion for students.
- Integration of career development within academic advising to better motivate and retain students.
- ASUA advising offsite partnerships in affinity and college spaces to enhance the connection between primary role advisors with students and campuswide stakeholders.
- Collaborative activities such as orientation, the university advising council, advising academy, and student success teams between the academic colleges, student affairs and ASUA have helped to coordinate advising efforts.

Academic Advising Practices in Need of Development, Focus or Attention:

While advising at CSUSB has undergone significant changes and improvement that have led to the scaling up of access to services and operational efficiencies, ongoing work and development is needed to refine, standardize, and streamline the advising process for students. The areas include:

- The university needs to develop an advising mission, along with clear objectives, goals, and an execution plan. While the centralized advising unit within ASUA has established the, aforementioned, a university-wide companion is needed. CSUSB as an institution needs to clearly define academic advising, articulate roles for professional academic advisors and faculty advisors, and describe how these components relate to student success outside of ASUA.
- Committee reports acknowledge the campus advising infrastructure that has been created by ASUA and recommend buy in on the college level by Deans and Associate Deans.
- Faculty is doing advising work and they care about student success, however, faculty advising is not standardized. There is little to no uniformity amongst academic departments.
- Continue to build collaboration between colleges, student affairs, and ASUA to strengthen academic advising.

- Institutional Research produces data that are used to craft advising campaigns throughout the student lifespan. Data literacy training and data utilization should inform advising practices campus wide (beyond just ASUA).
- High student-to-advisor caseloads create challenges for effectively implementing and sustaining holistic advising, and hamper progress toward a fully developmental approach.
- To support advising that recognizes the value of and more fully includes faculty advisors, incentive and professional development opportunities are needed.

EAA Strategic Plan for Implementation

The goals and objectives listed below were identified as areas for growth, and the chart demonstrates the implementation plan for each goal. (see attached spreadsheet for details)

Goal 1-Advising Identity: Solidifying a student-ready, strengths-based, culturally relevant philosophy as a core foundation for advising at CSUSB.

- Student Development Outcomes
- Institutional Mission of Academic Advising
- Professional Development

Goal 2-Partnership: Engage campus stakeholders in meaningful communication and collaboration related to academic advising strategies and practices.

- Communication
- Collaboration

Goal 3-Structural: Creating systematic and streamlined organizational culture utilizing appropriate technology to facilitate optimal advising for student success.

- Organizational
- Technology
- Comprehensive Assessment