Report of the

Academic Advising Council on Undergraduate Academic Advising at UTSA

The University of Texas at San Antonio

June 2016

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Adrianna Solis[6]	Mathematical & Physical Sciences	Academic Advisor I
Jessica Williams[7]	Mathematical & Physical Sciences	Academic Advisor IV

1. Joined AAC 4/4/16. Filled vacant voting member position.
2. Left AAC 2/1/16. Replaced by Melinda Estrada as voting member.
3. Joined AAC 3/7/16. Filled vacant voting member position.
4. Became voting member effective 1/4/16. Left AAC 3/22/16. Replaced by Michelle Baland.
5. Joined AAC 5/2/16. Filled vacant position.
6. Joined AAC 1/4/16. Filled vacant backup member position.
7. Left AAC 1/4/16. Manuel Flores became voting member.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to assess the current environment in academic advising at UTSA and to recommend improvements regarding advising. Specifically, this report focuses on topics from the perspective of those in the advising community.

Over the past two years, the Academic Advising Council (AAC) has taken steps to work more closely with executive university leadership (e.g. Provost and VP for Academic Affairs, Vice Provost and Dean of University College, Senior Vice Provost, Associate Vice Provost, Associate Dean of University College, and Executive Director of Advising). As a result, some positive changes have been made, so it is the AAC's hope that direct communication will continue in order to address further issues and implement the recommendations made in this report. An invitation is therefore extended to all to discuss the report with the AAC.

The Academic Advising Council is a venue for advisors to discuss ideas and concerns, as well as share best practices between the advising centers. In order to assess the needs and concerns of the UTSA advising community, the Academic Advising Council creates and administers a survey that is distributed to the advising community every two years.

The results of the 2016 AAC Advisor Survey are vital in creating a snapshot of the current environment in advising because they represent the only comprehensive source of feedback from the perspective of those working in advising. Various groups have surveyed students on academic advising at UTSA, however, advisors have not often been consulted. The advisor survey seeks to provide advisors the same opportunity to formally express their ideas on how to improve advising practices, strengthen relationships with students, and foster employee relations. Academic advisors are on the front lines daily assisting students with their academic needs, so obtaining their feedback is considered especially important to continue evaluating the changes made in advising over the past two years, as well as to review the impact of university-wide initiatives.

The AAC began developing the 2016 advisor survey in January 2016. The 2014 AAC Advisor Survey was used as the basis for the new survey, and many questions were used again with the intent to compare the results of the two surveys. The 2016 survey continued the practice of inviting the entire advising community, including center directors, athletics advising, teacher certification, and health professions advising to complete the survey. The new Qualtrics survey system was used for the first time to conduct the survey. The link to the survey was distributed by email to the advising listserve on March 9th. Participants had approximately two weeks to complete the survey. AAC representatives and center directors were asked to ensure that all members of their offices received the link to the survey.

The advising community was eager to provide feedback about advising and offer suggestions on how to improve practice. Eighty-one responses were collected. Over 80% of advisors present on March 9th completed the survey. Several directors, assistant directors, program coordinators, administrative associates, and academic advisors/coordinators from other offices also completed the survey. All survey questions and the top responses are included in the “Survey Results” section of this report.

Overall, the survey results seemed to be more positive than those from the 2014 survey. That does not mean that all of the answers were necessarily positive, but they were often still improvements on the 2014 results. For instance, only 30% of respondents in the 2016 survey believe advisors are compensated fairly based on level of education and experience, but this is still an improvement compared to the 0% that agreed with the same statement in 2014.

Some issues, however, have not improved since the 2014 survey. These issues include, but are not limited to: (1) little opportunities for advancement due to a frozen career ladder, (2) high workload impacted partially by administrative demands, (3) misalignment of advisor and administration expectations, and (4) issues with communication across all levels.

Because some of the same topics were mentioned in response to several questions on the survey, the “Discussion & Recommendations” section seeks to consolidate this information and organize it by topic. This section also offers recommendations in order to address any issues. Several of the recommendations made are related because they fall under a broad topic. For instance, one broad topic is that advisors be consulted before decisions impacting them are made. Specific recommendations that are all related to this topic are: involving advisors in orientation design, involving advisors in setting deadlines for special tasks (e.g. DegreeWorks planner entry), and reviewing changes to academic policies with advisors (e.g. moving the “W” drop deadline). While involving advisors in each of these tasks is a specific recommendation, *consulting advisors before decisions are made* is the broad issue that unites them.

The survey results were not the only source used to assess the current state of various advising topics in the “Discussion & Recommendations” section. Several reports and resources related to advising were also used to determine which topics have remained persistent and which are related to recent UTSA initiatives. The following resources will be referenced in this report:

Year	Title	Referred to as
2016	UTSA 2020 Blueprint (preliminary information)	2020 Blueprint
2014	Report of the Academic Advising Council (AAC) on Undergraduate Academic Advising at UTSA	2014 AAC Report
2013	Academic Advising Restructuring Proposal	Restructuring Proposal (2013)
2012	Academic Advising Plan	Advising Plan (2012)
2011	Four Year Graduation Rate Improvement Plan	GRIP (2011)
2010	Report of the Provost Task Force on Undergraduate Academic Advising	Task Force Report (2010)
2006	Report of the Subgroup on Student Academic Support, Taskforce on Improving Student Success and Graduation Rates	Academic Support Report (2006)
2005	Report on Academic Advising and the Academic Advising Centers at the University of Texas at San Antonio for the NACADA Consultant Bureau Site Visit	NACADA Report (2005)

Recent developments in advising through May 2016 and additional information gathered from UTSA offices and external organizations are also incorporated into the "Discussion & Recommendations" section. For instance, data provided by the Office of Institutional Research was used to show that turnover in advising was much lower in 2015 compared to previous years.

Certain topics will be given more attention in the "Discussion & Recommendations" section based on the frequency with which they were reported in the survey, the amount of attention given to them in previous reports, and their importance due to recent developments discussed by the AAC through May 2016.

Between the survey results and the additional resources, the AAC believes it has obtained an accurate picture of many of the current issues in advising and the factors that have contributed to them over time. The AAC believes it is important for the administrators and the Ad Hoc Advising Group to review the "Discussion & Recommendations" section in particular.

The "Conclusion & Action Steps" section proposes some general actions that need to be taken going forward. The list is not comprehensive but highlights some of the most important steps needed. Recommended next steps were made for several different groups: the AAC, the advising community, advising leadership, and executive university leadership.

I. Survey Development & Implementation

The Academic Advising Council was formed in the fall of 2011. Few opportunities existed before this time for advisors to discuss concerns and best practices in advising. The first advisor survey was administered by the AAC in the spring of 2012 to determine the needs and concerns of the UTSA advising community. Prior to this, advisors were seldom asked for comprehensive feedback on advising at UTSA.

In the spring of 2014, the AAC followed the recommendation of the 2012 AAC Survey Report to administer an advisor survey every two years. In January of 2016, the AAC continued to follow this recommendation by creating and offering the third AAC Advisor Survey. The previous surveys were administered in spring and summer semesters, but the AAC determined that it would be beneficial to conduct the survey in early-to-mid spring in order to avoid overlap with fall registration and summer orientation. A desire to obtain feedback from the large number of new advisors hired in recent years also justified the need for a third survey.

Questions were not organized into the same three categories used in the 2014 survey: (1) Advisor Training & Development, (2) Employee Relations, and (3) Best Practices. Some of the questions either did not fit well within these categories or could have belonged to more than one, so more specific categories were created in order to group similar questions. The 2016 survey consisted of 23 questions which were divided into seven areas:

- Demographics
- Training & Professional Development
- Technology
- Policies, Procedures, & Structure
- Advisor Experience
- Best Practices & Collaboration
- Next Steps & General Comments

Fifteen of the twenty questions from the 2014 survey were either directly copied or modified for the 2016 survey. Some questions were changed because they were no longer relevant or to make room for new questions that the AAC wanted to ask. Other questions were interpreted in different ways in the 2014 survey, so they needed to be altered in order to better obtain the desired information. The Executive Director of Advising, members of USSTS, the Technology Interest Group, and the AAC were also given the chance to provide feedback about the survey questions.

Some questions also underwent changes in formatting to make evaluating the results easier. For instance, Question 2 ("How long have you been in advising at UTSA?") was previously open-ended, but it was changed to multiple choice for the 2016 survey. In addition to making the results easier to tabulate, this also allowed for only those who selected that they had been in advising for less than 3 years to be shown Question 3 (“The New Advisor Training was useful”).

Some questions (e.g. “How would you rate the current advising structure?”) were purposefully left vague in order to see which topics would be brought up most. These vague questions may be made more specific in future surveys if the AAC decides to ask about the particular themes identified in the 2016 responses. For example, since many respondents mentioned caseloads and workload equity in relation to the question on the advising structure, the AAC may need to specifically ask about these topics on the next survey.

The new Qualtrics survey system was used for the first time to conduct the survey. A university-wide SurveyMonkey account had been used for the first two AAC surveys, but using Qualtrics will ensure that only the AAC will have access to the surveys going forward. Each year, the AAC will need to ask OIT to add the officers to the “UTSA Academic Advising Council AAC” group in Qualtrics. This will ensure that future councils will be able to see past surveys and their results.

The advising community was given approximately two weeks to complete the survey (March 9 to March 25). Some survey responses were started but never finished. When the survey was closed, Qualtrics automatically ended any “Responses in Progress” and moved them to the “Recorded Responses” section if at least one question had been answered. Each survey response was checked manually to ensure that at least one question other than the two demographic questions was answered. If it was, the survey response was kept. If it was not, the response was deleted so that the overall number of survey responses was not inflated by responses that did not contain any information and so that the demographic data would accurately reflect those who had completed at least one of the non-demographic survey questions. The total number of responses that were deleted was 9.

Eighty-one responses were collected. There were 76 advisors listed on the internal advising directory revised on 2/29/16 (not including those from the University Health Professions Office, Athletics, and Teacher Certification). Sixty-three respondents identified their official title as “academic advisor” for an advisor response rate of 82.8%. Several directors, assistant directors, program coordinators, administrative associates, and academic advisors/coordinators from other offices also completed the survey.

Since not all questions were answered by all respondents, each question below in the “Survey Results” section has the number of responses for that question listed. Qualtrics automatically provided basic statistics and graphs for close-ended questions. Comments and responses to open-ended questions were coded to identify common topics. Due to the wide range of comments, only the most mentioned topics are usually listed in the “Survey Results” section.

Questions that compare several things on the same scale (e.g. the usefulness of different advising tools) will also display a “mean score” between 1 and 5. The mean score represents the average of the ratings. A score closer to 1 represents a more positive rating.

II. Survey Results

This section contains a summary of the 2016 survey results. Due to the wide range of information given by respondents, questions will focus on the most common responses. When possible, the results are compared to those of the 2014 survey. The questions are organized according to the seven subject areas: (1) Demographics, (2) Training & Professional Development, (3) Technology, (4) Policies, Procedures, & Structure, (5) Advisor Experience, (6) Best Practices & Collaboration, and (7) Next Steps & General Comments.

Demographics

Question 1: What is your current title?

Responses – 81

Answer	Response	%
Academic Advisor I	38	46.91%
Academic Advisor II	7	8.64%
Academic Advisor III	9	11.11%
Academic Advisor IV	8	9.88%
Director	7	8.64%
Other (please specify below)	12	14.81%
Total	81	100%

Other Responses	
Assistant Director	2
Program Coordinator (including Sr.)	2
Administrative Associate (including Sr.)	2
Academic Advisor	1
TRiO SSS Success Advisor	1
Athletics Academic Coordinator	1
Assistant AD for Academics	1
Employed	1
Anonymous	1
Total	12

Question 2: How long have you been in advising at UTSA?

Responses – 81

All Responses		
Answer	Response	%
0-1 year	12	14.81%
1-3 years	20	24.69%
3-5 years	15	18.52%
5-10 years	14	17.28%
10-15 years	13	16.05%
15+ years	7	8.64%
Total	81	100%

The median response was between 3-5 years, so over half of respondents have been in advising at UTSA for fewer than 5 years. This is similar to the 2014 survey results.

Advisors Only		
Answer	Response	%
0-1 year	9	14.29%
1-3 years	18	28.57%
3-5 years	15	23.81%
5-10 years	10	15.87%
10-15 years	8	12.70%
15+ years	3	4.76%
Total	63	100%

When looking only at advisors, the percentage that has been in advising for fewer than 5 years increases somewhat to approximately two-thirds.

Training & Professional Development

Question 3: The New Advisor Training was useful.
Responses – 26 (plus 1 comment with no rating)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Count	5	16	3	2	0	26
Percentage	19.23%	61.54%	11.54%	7.69%	0%	100%

This year's survey limited this question to those who selected either "0-1 year" or "1-3 years" on question 2. This decision was based on several factors. Many of the 2014 survey responses mentioned that it had been years since they had completed New Advisor Training and that it was difficult to recall much about it. The New Advisor Training has also undergone changes in recent years, so limiting this question to those who have attended the most recent sessions provides the most relevant information.

Most (~80%) agreed that the New Advisor Training was useful. Three comments mentioned that they did not attend New Advisor Training until months or even years after staring as an advisor. This was also a concern for many in the 2014 survey. Two comments mentioned it was a good time to network with others, and two comments mentioned that they did not care for the customer service portion of the training.

Question 4: In addition to the monthly all-advisor meetings, what other training or professional development needs do you have? This could include topics to cover, online training resources, etc.
Responses – 57

Top Responses	
Response	# of Responses
Technology	13
Cross-office collaboration	10
Policies & procedures	9
Diversity	6

Technology was mentioned most often with different programs receiving specific comments (SSC-5, DegreeWorks-3, General tech resources-3, Banner-2). For SSC, respondents would like future training to include things like standard practices for inputting contacts and notes. For DegreeWorks, most would like further training on the planner piece.

Cross-office training and collaboration was also mentioned by many. Several comments specifically mentioned advisor swap, mentoring, or shadowing. Others mentioned wanting increased discussion with their colleagues rather than always being "trained" or "talked at" by others during the monthly meetings. This could include discussing common issues and best practices, sharing conference presentations, and collaborating to create things like "cheat sheets."

Policy and procedure updates were also mentioned several times. Some mentioned specific topics such as the completion of financial aid forms or changes to the catalog. Some comments mentioned that they would simply like better communication of changes including regular updates at meetings, summaries sent to the listserve, and central resources, like a manual of official policies and procedures, that would be posted where all have access.

Diversity training was mentioned by some. Specific topics included LGBTQ issues, multicultural competence, and working with people from different generations. The comments mentioned these issues in reference to both working with students and with colleagues.

Some of the other topics mentioned were advising theories and approaches (including things like motivational interviewing), personal and professional development (including things like personality/strengths assessments, time management, and stress reduction), conference attendance, and working with special populations (including probation/reinstated students and transfers). There were also some who felt that there is already enough or even too much training. Some also mentioned that the monthly meetings should focus on more important topics instead of on teambuilding or scavenger hunts.

Technology

Question 5: Please rate each of the following in terms of how well it assists you in your everyday duties. (You may provide comments to explain your rating for each in the box provided)
Responses – 75 to 79

		Very Well	Well	Not Very Well	Not Well at All	I do not use this	Total	Mean Score
Banner								1.38
	Count	53	23	2	1	0	79	
	Percentage	67.09%	29.11%	2.53%	1.27%	0%	100%	
DegreeWorks								1.95
	Count	28	38	7	1	5	79	
	Percentage	35.44%	48.10%	8.86%	1.27%	6.33%	100%	
Electronic Degree Plans (Word, Excel, etc.)								2.69
	Count	25	22	5	2	23	77	
	Percentage	32.47%	28.57%	6.49%	2.60%	29.87%	100%	
Global CRM								2.25
	Count	27	26	12	7	7	79	
	Percentage	34.18%	32.91%	15.19%	8.86%	8.86%	100%	
EARN								3.51
	Count	3	16	19	18	22	78	
	Percentage	3.85%	20.51%	24.36%	23.08%	28.21%	100%	
SSC (Student Success Collaborative)								2.34
	Count	22	33	9	0	13	77	
	Percentage	28.57%	42.86%	11.69%	0%	16.88%	100%	
I:drive								1.77
	Count	34	33	9	2	1	79	
	Percentage	43.04%	41.77%	11.39%	2.53%	1.27%	100%	
Advising Blackboard								3.68
	Count	4	18	11	10	34	77	
	Percentage	5.19%	23.38%	14.29%	12.99%	44.16%	100%	
Internal Advising Website								3.07
	Count	8	25	15	8	19	75	
	Percentage	10.67%	33.33%	20.00%	10.67%	25.33%	100%	

Banner was rated as the most useful of the tools (mean score closest to 1 and 96% useful rating). It is also the only one that everyone reported using. Comments for Banner included it being a great source for student information and the only means by which to perform certain tasks like changing majors and removing holds. Some find it fast while others find it slow or have issues with being kicked out at times. Several mentioned that it is not very user friendly due to having to navigate to multiple screens with odd names. At least one person would like additional resources on how to perform certain tasks in Banner.

DegreeWorks was rated as the third most useful tool. Many mentioned that it does not always function properly. When it is temporarily unavailable, it makes some advising activities very difficult since a degree plan is not available. There are also issues with errors and inaccuracy. Some also feel there are fundamental problems with the program including no possible customization, not being able to see all requirements on the same screen, and not being time efficient. Many, however, do find it useful. They say it helps them show students how to stay on track and makes it easier to share information with students and colleagues. Some mentioned using it as a secondary tool to explain degree requirements and double-check their work. They explained that performing an audit by hand can make it easier to understand the student's "story" as told by their academic history.

Approximately 60% find electronic degree plans (those created in Word, Excel, etc.) useful, but approximately 30% do not use them at all. Many are likely using DegreeWorks only instead. Comments about the electronic plans mentioned that they can be easier to use since they are often customizable, display all requirements on one page, and can double as a semester plan. Some use them as their primary degree plans, others as a backup for when DegreeWorks is down or to double-check DegreeWorks, and others solely to discuss sequencing of courses. Drawbacks mentioned were that they may be more prone to error, are time intensive, aren't as easily accessible for students, and aren't automatically updated.

Even though Global CRM will be eliminated with the adoption of SSC, the AAC decided to ask about it in order to see how widely it was being used and what issues might be addressed by the change to SSC. About 67% of respondents find it useful, and only a few reported that they don't use it. Comments mentioned the notes section and email/appointment tracking feature as being the most helpful pieces, because they allow for sharing of information across centers. One issue is that the email tracking can become bloated with every interaction between an advisor and student. Some have had issues with it not working at times and not integrating with Outlook very well. While having most of the student's information on one screen is helpful, it displays information that isn't always needed and does not allow for customization.

EARN had one of the lowest overall ratings and almost 30% of respondents indicated that they do not use it. Comments mentioned it being a decent tool to use for checking student grades, but that grades aren't always updated. It is also unclear if grades are correct since there seems to be inconsistent information at times. Additional comments stated that advisors receive too many notifications not related to advising and that caseloads are incorrect in the system.

SSC had slightly more positive feedback than Global although its overall score was slightly lower due to more people indicating that they do not use it. This is partially because of how new SSC is. The comments were mostly positive with some finding it more user-friendly than Global. Many are eager for the Campus version to be released since it will provide additional functionality (like attaching documents) that will make Global irrelevant. Currently many are copying notes into both Global and SSC. One issue seems to be how users are signed out after a very short time period. There are also some concerns with the risk indicators that don't seem accurate for all students.

The I:drive had the second highest rating overall and only had one person report not using it at all. Many access it for specialized information (e.g. degree plans, international letter templates, training materials, etc.) and see it as a great tool to share information across offices. Others use it for storing student files and other sensitive information. While it is reported as easy to use (no log-in required), some mention that it is poorly managed/organized. Things may be moved or deleted without warning, and it is often unclear what is available since there is no directory or table of contents.

The Advising Blackboard had the lowest overall score and almost 45% of respondents indicated that they do not use it at all. Comments mentioned the lack of ease in using it (required to log-in) and poor management/organization (unsure what is there, outdated information, etc.) as its primary drawbacks. Some do use it to communicate with students or to access specific information.

Overall, the internal advising website did not have a very good rating. This could partially be because many commented about not knowing about it until recently. Some mentioned that it has some good general information, but it does not seem to be used heavily by anyone at this time.

Question 6: What sort of technology training would you like to see in the future?
Responses – 45

Top Responses	
Response	# of Responses
SSC	18
DegreeWorks	10
General technology usage	6
Banner	4
Advising specific resources	4

Not reflected in the above table is the request by many to have ongoing training opportunities for different programs. They would also prefer that trainings for larger programs, like SSC, be broken into smaller sessions that each cover a specific piece or function of the program instead of one large session on the entire program. Many also desire hands-on training when programs are fully functional. Some would like for trainings to focus on improving consistency of usage across advising since not all are using these programs in the same ways.

The comments show the greatest training need for technology is regarding SSC. Many are aware that there are already plans in place for training once the Campus version is released. They would also like training on the protocols that should be used to enter student data to ensure that accurate reports can be run.

There were also several requests for further DegreeWorks training, especially for the planner piece. Others mentioned wanting to know how to use Banner to make sure that DegreeWorks is operating correctly (e.g. reading the correct major or splitting hours correctly). Some would like for each advising center to work further with USSTS to correct their plans so that the what-if feature is accurate for all majors.

Several people mentioned that they would like training on general technology usage. Some mentioned specific programs like Excel and Blackboard. Many mentioned simply wanting ways to improve efficiency (e.g. keyboard shortcuts or general technology management). Some would like to have videos on how to use programs or correct problems while others would like training on how to create their own tutorial videos.

Banner and other commonly used advising resources, like the I:drive and internal advising website, were also areas that some would like to be trained on, especially for new advisors.

Question 7: How else would you like to utilize technology in advising?
Responses – 44

Top Responses	
Response	# of Responses
Communication & collaboration	5
Scheduling & notifications	5
Electronic forms	5
Student resources	5
Online advising	5

Overall, many seem to prefer fewer programs or tools that can perform several tasks at once (e.g. SSC). There are also calls for greater consistency in the usage of technology which could be aided by a reduction in the number of programs used.

One way respondents would like to utilize technology is to improve communication and collaboration within the advising community. This includes figuring out the best ways to share information with everyone and potentially reducing the number of emails received. The same principles were mentioned in reference to communication with students and other staff as well.

Many would also like for students to be able to schedule appointments online. Some mentioned using the UTSA App, but this function is an option in the Campus version of SSC. Others mentioned having a check-in system similar to those used in restaurants to alert students of advisor availability during walk-ins. This would preferably utilize text alerts.

A general push to go completely paperless was mentioned, but having electronic petitions and forms was mentioned most often. Respondents mentioned things like forms being sent automatically from fillable documents, creating electronic signatures, or using SSC for routing forms.

Several mentioned wanting additional student resources like online modules for the pre-orientation information. It was mentioned that online resources and programs, like DegreeWorks, promote interaction and discussion between advisors and students while also allowing students to access information on their own.

Some would like to see further online advising capabilities developed. One example mentioned was using Skype or FaceTime, especially for students completing online orientation or for those that may be commuting. Having an online chat feature like the library or text messaging capabilities were also mentioned. Some, however, specifically mentioned not wanting online advising and that the human element needs to be preserved.

Policies, Procedures, & Structure

Question 8: The processes are clear in regards to academic policies and procedures.
Responses – 75

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Count	4	23	23	20	5	75
Percentage	5.33%	30.67%	30.67%	26.67%	6.67%	100%

The results are not strongly weighted toward either agreement or disagreement. However, they still seem to be an improvement on the results of the 2014 survey which were strongly oriented toward disagreement (about two-thirds disagreed).

The comments suggest that things are getting better although they may not actually be "good" yet. Some things seem to be clear while others still aren't. Procedures may often be less clear than policies. The varying processes and timelines for the academic colleges and departments were mentioned as contributing to the confusion.

There are issues with the wording of some policies which can lead to different interpretations. Some would like for the language of policies to be clarified and for this to be done in a transparent and thoughtful way. Several comments mentioned how there are constantly changes, and this may partially be the result of making changes too quickly that in turn require further changes to correct new issues.

Many mentioned that once changes are made, they need to be communicated clearly. This should include more than an email or announcement at a meeting. Several would like for a central source to be established for advisors to reference. Some suggested that the monthly all-advising meetings could be used for discussion and answering questions but not as a forum for final decisions to be made.

Comments mentioned that centers are often doing things in different ways even if an agreed upon procedure is established. At times this may be from some knowing the established procedure while others don't. There were also some who do not believe that the same thing works for every center due to the different student populations we work with. They would like for careful thought to be given to which policies and procedures should be standardized and which should be left open for customization by the centers.

Question 9: Are there any specific policies, procedures, or practices that you would like to change? If so, what suggestions do you have to improve them?
Responses – 36

Top Responses	
Response	# of Responses
Consistency & clarity	6
Electronic forms	5
Change of major	4
Eliminate the 75-hour policy	4

The most mentioned request is a call for increased consistency and clarity for all policies and procedures. Correcting contradictory wording in the catalog and information bulletin was specifically mentioned, as was having a directory of where to send all forms and petitions.

The second most mentioned suggestion was to make all forms electronic in order to save time and become truly paperless. Options for this include creating fillable documents that auto-send to the correct office or using SSC.

Many also mentioned issues with the change of major process and transition between centers. This was also an issue identified in the 2014 survey. The primary problem mentioned was students being turned away if Banner still shows the old advisor even if the major has already been changed. It was also mentioned that students are turned away if they first go to the center of the desired major even though they are supposed to have the student complete a major change request to be evaluated within a few days.

Eliminating the 75-hour policy was mentioned by several. One person cited the fact that most petitions are approved anyway as grounds for eliminating it.

Some of the other topics mentioned were improving communication with academic departments, removing advisors from forms, addressing issues with the three attempt rule (specifically for MAT 1023/1073), and not having to advise on all minors.

Question 10: How would you rate the current advising structure?

Responses – 74

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total
Count	4	33	30	7	74
Percentage	5.41%	44.59%	40.54%	9.46%	100%

Overall, opinions on the advising structure were split with half giving the current structure a rating of “good” or “excellent” and half giving it a rating of “fair” or “poor.” Generally, comments seemed more positive than in the 2014 survey. One positive change mentioned was eliminating secondary majors. Despite this change, some still have primary majors that span more than one college, meaning they have to juggle different policies and admissions criteria for each.

Equity in workload is also a concern for many. This is related to differences in caseload size but also in differences in things like the number of students seen at orientation. These differences affect the time that is available for things like special projects and professional development.

The caseload model was mentioned as a positive by most since it allows for a greater level of rapport with students, but the “advisor for life” concept does seem to have its downside. Some mentioned that advising all classifications often leads to competing demands on advisors’ time. This was also a concern in the 2014 survey. For instance, the time devoted to freshman orientation during the summer negatively impacts availability for continuing students. Some would prefer having a dedicated freshman advising center again that could provide specialized attention to the needs of freshmen and allow others to be freed up for other duties.

Some also expressed concern with the amount of standardization across advising. The desire to evaluate advisors based on the percentage of contact with their caseload is concerning to many based on the differences in caseloads. It was also mentioned that using single interpretations for policies or standard procedures for all of advising does not work well for some centers due to the differences in student populations and academic offices that they work with. Specific policies and procedures were not mentioned. Some also believe that advising is often painted with a broad brush so that all receive reprimands or trainings in response to isolated events.

The change of major process was also cited as a problem. Currently, students can be bounced from one center to the next due to strict policies regarding assigned advisors/centers.

On the advisor side of things, the lack of advancement opportunities was mentioned as a major issue by several respondents. Having to leave centers for promotions means losing expertise which was also an issue for those reassigned during the initial restructure and for those who could potentially be reassigned during the yearly caseload review.

Advisor Experience

Question 11: My job duties (such as appointments, walk-ins, special projects, technology testing, etc.) are manageable.
Responses – 69

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Count	11	32	12	10	4	69
Percentage	15.94%	46.38%	17.39%	14.49%	5.80%	100%

A little over 60% of respondents agreed that their job duties are manageable, which is a significant improvement over the 2014 survey results (only ~17% agreed). A common topic mentioned by both those who agreed and disagreed was how caseload sizes impact their ability to engage in outreach, professional development, and special projects. Many acknowledged that steps are being taken to address this, including reassigning positions and filling vacant positions.

There are also concerns that the level of "extra" duties required, such as increased outreach campaigns and yearly technology testing, will place increasing demands on advisors going forward. Some also mentioned that the time spent on meetings or team-building events could be better devoted to other duties.

It was also noted that the time of year plays a role in how manageable the workload is. Busier times often mean prioritizing what is absolutely essential. A few mentioned requiring additional time in the evenings or on weekends to complete all of their duties, and one person mentioned that the stress of the job might play a role in whether or not they stay in advising despite loving the work that they do.

Question 12: Advisors are paid fairly based on level of education and experience.
Responses – 71

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Count	2	19	14	19	17	71
Percentage	2.82%	26.76%	19.72%	26.76%	23.94%	100%

Just over half of respondents disagree that advisors are paid fairly based on level of education and experience. Almost 20% neither agree nor disagree, and only around 30% agree. This is still an improvement over the 2014 survey results (0% agreed). Many mentioned that pay does not accurately reflect the level of education that most possess. They also mentioned how no consideration is given to experience as salaries are non-negotiable.

Many mentioned the lack of a functional career ladder as an even larger problem than the base pay scale. Many are being given additional duties without being promoted to a higher level and, by default, a higher pay grade.

Some mentioned that the salary is at least more competitive than it was before the raises, but others believe it is not competitive with other positions in higher education requiring the same or less education. Non-salary benefits of other positions, like more paid time off and opportunities for career advancement, were also cited as reasons for our positions being less competitive.

In general, some believe that for the work demands, the pay is not compensatory. Other comments included pay not reflecting rising cost of living and a feeling that the university underestimates the value and contribution of advising.

Question 13: I feel like the concerns of the advising community are well advocated for by: (You may provide comments to explain your rating for each in the box provided)

Responses – 71 to 72

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure	Total	Mean Score
Academic Advising Council								2.18
	Count	22	34	6	1	9	72	
	Percentage	30.56%	47.22%	8.33%	1.39%	12.50%	100%	
Directors								2.35
	Count	19	29	12	4	8	72	
	Percentage	26.39%	40.28%	16.67%	5.56%	11.11%	100%	
Executive University Leadership								3.41
	Count	3	13	22	18	15	71	
	Percentage	4.23%	18.31%	30.99%	25.35%	21.13%	100%	

The feedback for the level of advocacy by the Academic Advising Council was generally positive with ~78% agreeing, ~10% disagreeing, and 12.5% stating that they were unsure. Most comments mentioned that the AAC does a great job giving advisors a voice and advocating for them across the university. Specific comments mentioned the proactive efforts to reach out to faculty and administrators as well as the transparency from keeping agendas and meeting notes on the I:drive. The creation of the Interest Groups was also mentioned as a positive.

There were concerns from some regarding how much advisors can ultimately do and how receptive administrators are to advisors' concerns. Another concern mentioned was that the AAC has become too aggressive in their advocacy. The time demands required and issues with representation in some of the Interest Groups, which may be due to workload differences, were also mentioned as issues.

The feedback for the level of advocacy by the directors was also generally positive with ~67% agreeing, ~22% disagreeing, and ~11% stating that they were unsure. Comments mentioned the work that they do in the directors meetings as well as conversations with department chairs, deans, and others across campus as positive examples. Similar to the AAC, there were concerns about how much they can ultimately do if the administration is not open to hearing their concerns.

Some limited their response to their own director. One reason mentioned for this was that it isn't always communicated what efforts are being made by the group. Some also mentioned that the group isn't always on the same page about advising as a whole. There was also one comment concerning whether all directors have an equal voice in the meetings.

The feedback for the level of advocacy by executive university leadership was generally negative with ~23% agreeing, ~56% disagreeing, and ~21% stating that they were unsure. The biggest issue mentioned in most of the comments was how leadership seeks little input from those in the advising community before making changes. Even though they may have good intentions, the lack of input from advisors often results in less effective measures that do not successfully address problems. A recent example mentioned by many is the development of the new orientation structure.

Some believe that administrators have more of a macro-level perspective that prevents them from really knowing what advisors do, understanding the challenges they face, and having realistic expectations. This lack of understanding has also contributed to the “advisors can do it” approach where advisors are continually given more tasks. Some also do not believe that university leadership values advisors as an integral piece of student success or views them as professionals.

Some respondents did mention that relationships with administrators are better than in the past, but that much of it has been the result of proactive efforts to engage with them. It was suggested that we propose solutions when speaking with leadership. One comment also mentioned that it is unclear what is done above the director level.

Question 14: How would you rate the level of communication and transparency for each of the following? (You may provide comments to explain your rating for each in the box provided)

Responses – 69 to 70

		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unsure	Total	Mean Score
Academic Advising Council								1.89
	Count	28	30	7	2	3	70	
	Percentage	40.00%	42.86%	10.00%	2.86%	4.29%	100%	
Directors								2.40
	Count	11	36	13	4	6	70	
	Percentage	15.71%	51.43%	18.57%	5.71%	8.57%	100%	
Other Advising Centers								3.14
	Count	1	24	20	14	11	70	
	Percentage	1.43%	34.29%	28.57%	20.00%	15.71%	100%	
Executive University Leadership								3.45
	Count	2	8	24	27	8	69	
	Percentage	2.90%	11.59%	34.78%	39.13%	11.59%	100%	

The feedback regarding communication and transparency for the Academic Advising Council was generally positive with ~83% rating it as “good” or “excellent.” Comments mentioned the notes being available on the I:drive, the updates during the monthly all-advising meetings, and the email reminders on the listserve as positive factors. One respondent mentioned that their office’s AAC representative does a good job relaying information to the office at staff meetings.

The feedback regarding communication and transparency for the directors was also generally positive with ~67% rating it as “good” or “excellent.” Many comments mentioned that it often varies by director though. Some mentioned that their director is very open with them, but it was noted that not all are as transparent. It was also mentioned that updates are not often sent from the group as a whole.

The feedback regarding communication and transparency for the advising centers was not as positive with less than 2% rating it as “excellent” and only ~34% rating it as “good.” Some mentioned that things have gotten better and that the monthly all-advising meetings provide time to network and give updates. Others, however, mentioned that little else is shared outside of these meetings, especially regarding the special programs and initiatives that others may be doing. They would like to hear more about these things, receive more updates about changes in policies from different areas, and potentially have the chance to engage in Advisor Swap again to better form connections with those in other offices. Some also mentioned that everyone would likely prefer more transparency with things like workloads and caseloads which SSC and the recent reassignments are seeking to address.

The feedback regarding communication and transparency for executive university leadership was mostly negative with ~3% rating it as “excellent” and ~12% rating it as “good.” Comments mentioned how most information is only sent on a need-to-know basis. They also mentioned how decisions are often already made by the time they reach advisors, so there is no opportunity for discussion or to be part of any potential solutions. Decisions or mandates also usually never include any background information. For instance, it was mentioned that not all advisors are aware of the actual caseload numbers that determined the need to reassign some positions.

Question 15: What about your employment at the university do you value the most?
Responses – 54

Top Responses	
Response	# of Responses
Students	21
Colleagues	19
University environment	9
Benefits & pay	8

Not surprisingly, working with students topped the list of things that people value about their employment at the university. This was also the top response in the 2014 survey. Many mentioned being able to make a difference by impacting students' lives and helping them achieve their goals as particularly meaningful to them.

Also like the 2014 survey, many mentioned their colleagues as something they value. They included directors, admins, their center colleagues, and those all across advising in their answers. Comments included the support they receive from each other during trying times and the relationships that they have developed over years. The sense of community within advising was also mentioned including one example of how it is nice being able to relate to each other and laugh over shared experiences. Some also mentioned the opportunities and support they receive from directors to grow professionally.

Working in the university environment was also something that several valued. Some mentioned working in the field of education as important while others mentioned being part of the push for Tier One. Some also mentioned the perk of being able to access academic journals and the latest research.

Benefits and pay were also mentioned as something many value. Insurance was the specific benefit mentioned most often although accumulated vacation time was as well.

Other responses included the importance of the work in making a difference, security, the opportunities provided to grow and develop the skills needed for advancement, and helping develop staff into cohesive teams.

Question 16: What do you like about your work as an academic advisor?
Responses – 59

Top Responses	
Response	# of Responses
Working with students (general)	25
Guiding/Mentoring/Teaching students	19
Seeing student growth	9
Rewarding work	9

The top response was a general comment about working with students, but there were other specific topics mentioned as well. Direct interaction with students was key for many because of their focus on being student-centered.

The activities related to guiding, mentoring, and teaching students were mentioned by many. This includes helping students make plans to get the most out of their education, graduate in a timely manner, and achieve their dreams. Helping students navigate difficult challenges and avoid potential mistakes was also mentioned.

Many also mentioned the enjoyment they get seeing students grow over time. This includes seeing them become responsible adults, seeing them actually achieve their goals, and seeing them graduate.

Many mentioned the work itself being rewarding. Advisors feel that what they are doing is making a difference in someone's life. It was often mentioned that while the work is usually challenging and can be stressful, advisors are able to directly see the impact that they are making when students have "aha" moments. Some even mentioned enjoying the challenges because of how it encourages them to think of innovative and creative solutions.

Working with knowledgeable colleagues who also care about students was mentioned by many. Other responses mentioned learning about theories, best practices, and even the academic programs and courses offered by the university as things that they enjoy about being an advisor.

Question 17: How would you rate the level of morale for each of the following? (You may provide comments to explain your rating for each in the box provided)
Responses – 70

		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unsure	Total	Mean Score
UTSA Advising								2.60
	Count	5	29	27	7	2	70	
	Percentage	7.14%	41.43%	38.57%	10.00%	2.86%	100%	
Your Center								2.17
	Count	18	29	17	5	1	70	
	Percentage	25.71%	41.43%	24.29%	7.14%	1.43%	100%	
Yourself								2.13
	Count	20	29	13	8	0	70	
	Percentage	28.57%	41.43%	18.57%	11.43%	0%	100%	

The feedback regarding morale for UTSA Advising as a whole was split with ~49% rating it as “excellent” or “good” and ~49% rating it as “fair” or “poor.” Comments mentioned that it often varies for each person or center. Some mentioned that it is better than in recent years, especially with the raises. A continued problem for morale is the lack of input advisors feel they have in decision-making. Decisions are often handed down with no transparency. It was also mentioned that some are not engaged in promoting positive change even if they think there are problems.

Respondents tended to rate the morale for their center more positively with ~67% rating it as “excellent” or “good.” Comments mentioned having supportive teams that work well and support each other as positive factors. A major factor impacting morale in some centers has been staffing issues related to vacant positions. This has increased the workload for those still present.

Respondents tended to rate morale for themselves most positively with ~70% rating it as “excellent” or “good.” Individual ratings did have the highest percentage of “poor” ratings though at ~11%. Feeling burnt out was the primary factor mentioned for lower ratings. Constant demands to do more with less, little support for efforts to make positive changes, receiving too many emails, and receiving more criticism than support were all cited as contributing to burnout. Others mentioned that their morale has been affected by being understaffed but that it should improve as new staff are trained.

Best Practices & Collaboration

Question 18: What are some best practices from your office that you feel have enhanced your ability to be a better advisor?
Responses – 39

Top Responses	
Response	# of Responses
Communicating with colleagues	9
Teamwork	7
Training	6
Autonomy & involvement	4
Planning	4

Communicating well with their colleagues was the most mentioned practice that has enhanced respondents' abilities to be better advisors. This includes things like open-door policies that promote an environment where advisors feel comfortable asking others questions. It also includes staff meetings that give advisors an opportunity to discuss issues and get on the same page so that they are sending the same messages to students.

Teamwork was the second most mentioned practice. Helping each other out during busy periods and being cross-trained in the center's majors so that advisors can see students outside of their caseloads when needed were specifically mentioned.

Trainings within the center, at the monthly all-advising meetings, and from Human Resources were all mentioned by many as being beneficial.

Having a degree of autonomy and being involved were also mentioned. This includes directors that do not micromanage and instead provide some level of autonomy for their staff through delegation. Being involved in decision-making so that they can help shape their work was also mentioned.

Engaging in planning is important for many. Some mentioned that setting calendars well in advance helps provide structure that makes it easier to manage the workload. It also helps prevent being reactionary to every little "emergency" that inevitably arises.

Many other topics were also mentioned including diversifying responsibilities among staff, setting aside time to reflect on and improve practice, having more admin time, adopting new technologies and policies even when there is an adjustment period, conducting outreach to better manage caseloads, and not bouncing students between offices.

Question 19: What do you perceive as barriers to being successful in your job?
Responses – 46

Top Responses	
Response	# of Responses
High workload/Not enough time	11
Policy & procedure issues	9
Ineffective university initiatives	8
Lack of involvement and value	8

High workload or not having enough time to do everything was the most common barrier mentioned. This was also the most mentioned barrier in the 2014 survey. It includes things like not having enough time to devote to actual advising in favor of special assignments or administrative duties like paperwork and technology testing. Respondents also mentioned not having time to reflect on and improve service.

Several issues with policies and procedures were also mentioned. Many stated that they are still often unclear or are constantly changing. They also said that things are not streamlined across centers and that established procedures are not always followed by all.

Many also mentioned various university initiatives as being ineffective or at odds with a student-centered approach. For instance, some are not comfortable with trying to push more students into taking summer courses, especially the “Early Bird” students that haven’t even graduated high school yet. The new orientation model is another example mentioned by many as something that doesn’t seem to be well planned.

Many respondents also mentioned that they feel like advising is not valued by the university. A large part of this is due to advising not being involved in planning and decision-making. It seems that the impact on advising is not always factored into certain decisions. Some mentioned that advisors are often the last to know certain things and aren’t treated like professionals.

There were several additional barriers mentioned. One was a high level of bureaucracy that results in too many meetings, micro-management, and needing an “act of congress” to get things done. Another was high caseloads resulting from vacancies that leave no time for professional development or other activities. Poor communication between academic departments and advising was another barrier, as were things like departments changing policies and not offering enough courses. Technology seeming more like an obligation than a helpful resource and difficulty retaining advisors due to pay and lack of advancement opportunities were also mentioned. Mentioned less often were things like favoritism within offices, unnecessary trainings, and not having the catalog or class schedule early enough.

Question 20: How would you rate your relationship with your center's academic departments?

Responses – 63

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total
Count	12	33	16	2	63
Percentage	19.05%	52.38%	25.40%	3.17%	100%

Approximately 71% of respondents rated their relationship with their center's academic departments as either "excellent" or "good." Approximately 25% rated the relationship as "fair" and only 3% rated it as "poor."

Comments specified that it often depends on the department. Many mentioned that they have a good relationship with most departments. These departments often communicate updates to advisors and are responsive with petition requests. There are a few departments, however, that do not have a very good relationship with advising. They make frequent changes and do not communicate them to advisors. They also take a long time to return petitions. A few mentioned that they have never even met many of the department chairs and other faculty for the departments they work with.

Question 21: Which offices or individuals would you like to see advising collaborate with? In what ways would you want to collaborate with them?

Responses – 36

Top Responses	
Response	# of Responses
Admissions	10
Financial Aid	9
Orientation	7
Other advising centers	6

Admissions was the most mentioned office that respondents would like to collaborate with. Many specifically expressed interest in working to ensure that transcripts are evaluated correctly. Some also mentioned wanting to know more about the criteria and process used for evaluating transfers and readmitted students.

Financial Aid was the second most mentioned office that respondents would like to collaborate with. Comments mostly mentioned wanting a better understanding of the basics, like the different types of aid, how payment plans work, and how aid can be taken away from students.

Orientation was also mentioned by some. Participating more in the development of the advising pieces of orientation was the primary topic mentioned.

Collaboration with other advising centers was the fourth most common response. Many specifically mentioned bringing back Advisor Swap to allow for opportunities to shadow others and see how other centers operate.

Several other topics were also mentioned: working with the Registrar's Office on receiving registration schedules earlier, working with academic departments on receiving catalogs earlier and to have more frequent updates on changes in programs, and working with the Career Center so that advisors can provide statistics and examples to students about job prospects. Student Affairs, PIVOT programs, Student Support Services, International Programs, and many other offices were also mentioned.

Responses often specified similar goals that they hoped to achieve regardless of the office mentioned. For instance, many want to better clarify the roles and responsibilities of each office so that students are not told that a problem will be addressed by the wrong office. It was also suggested that advising be consulted when expected to participate in events or initiatives housed in other offices. Other common topics included understanding how offices affect each other and making the most appropriate referrals.

Next Steps & General Comments

Question 22: What are the top five topics that you would like the Academic Advising Council or the Interest Groups to focus on going forward?
Responses – 38

Top Responses	
Response	# of Responses
Policies & procedures	19
Career ladder & advancement	16
Professional development	10
Technology	9
Pay/compensation	8

Overall, many of the same topics mentioned in the 2014 survey were again mentioned in this year's survey. Policies and procedures had a significant increase in mentions, as did technology.

Policies and procedures was the most mentioned issue that respondents would like the AAC or Interest Groups to focus on going forward. Specifically, many would like to see further streamlining to ensure that advising centers are on the same page about things like the change of major process. They would also like for a central location of policies and procedures to be established to aid these efforts. Further comments were related to removing advisors from certain forms, converting all forms to electronic, and giving advisors the ability to make decisions for certain forms.

Reinstating the career ladder or general comments about improving opportunities for advancement was the second most mentioned topic. It was also the second most mentioned topic in the 2014 survey. Many comments mentioned establishing permanent funding for the career ladder. Other comments included implementing the automatic reclassifications from Academic Advisor I to II and increasing the number of Academic Advisor II, III, and IV positions.

Professional development was the third most mentioned topic this year and was the fourth most mentioned topic in the 2014 survey. Many requested funding to attend state, regional, and national conferences. Others suggested that advising should have an established curriculum or certification for advisors to follow throughout their careers, especially as they move through the career ladder. Others would like training that is more than just updates on policies or new programs from the university. Leadership and work-life balance were mentioned as potential topics.

Technology was also a commonly mentioned topic although there weren't as many specific topics provided. Making sure that the DegreeWorks worksheets and planners are correct for all majors was mentioned by some.

Pay was the fifth most mentioned topic this year and was the most mentioned topic in the 2014 survey. Specific comments referenced increases for Academic Advisors at the II, III, and IV levels. There were also suggestions to "compensate" advisors with additional time off during spring break or by not requiring advisors to be present for Skeleton Crew.

Several other topics also had multiple mentions. Many would like better communication between advising centers including more discussion of best practices at the monthly all-advising meetings and the chance to engage in Advisor Swap. Having more input regarding orientation for both freshman and transfers was also mentioned. Several special populations were mentioned including probation/reinstated, low income, first generation, and students with 45/90 holds. Some also would like to increase transparency between advising centers and from leadership. Specifically, they identified having clear responsibilities for advisors at each level as well as for directors. They also specified having a clear understanding of how the caseload numbers are calculated and how they will influence the annual review for potential reassignments. Morale was brought up by some although the only specific suggestion was to provide more opportunities for social interaction outside of work. Communication with students, including social media and marketing, was also mentioned by some. Best practices and outreach related to caseload management also received several mentions.

Question 23: Do you have any other comments or questions?
Responses – 19

Top Responses	
Response	# of Responses
Thank you	8
Overall poor environment	4
Enjoys job	2
Too many trainings/conferences	2

Most responses simply thanked the AAC for putting the survey together to give advisors an opportunity to provide feedback. Some also mentioned that they hope the advocacy by the AAC and directors continues as it has over the past few years as they see it as a move in the right direction.

Several took the time to re-emphasize comments from previous questions that highlight what they see as a poor overall environment in advising. Some recognized that this is a negative view, but they said that it is not without justification. A primary reason mentioned for this environment is the disconnect between advisors and leadership due to a lack of interaction and involvement. The expectations of leadership, exemplified by things like the Tiger Team initiatives and the Advising Restructuring Proposal, seem to be at odds with the goals of the advisors that are actually on the front line serving students. Many also mentioned unfair treatment or criticism from the university and from those within advising. When paired with the poor compensation and issues with the career ladder, the issues are further exacerbated. Many feel that the previous issues with turnover could return if leadership does not improve.

Other comments mentioned that even when people enjoy working as an advisor, they still have some of the same concerns already mentioned by others.

Some mentioned that they believe there are too many trainings or conferences that aren't often worth the time dedicated to them. One comment referenced the future of the Interest Groups and whether they will be continued even if their focus will be on ever smaller tasks.

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III. Discussion & Recommendations

The following section will discuss the major themes found in the 2016 Advisor Survey responses, as well as relevant information concerning advising at UTSA through May 2016. Discussion topics may not directly correspond to a single survey question. Instead, they may stem from responses to many questions and information from other sources that all address the common topic. Therefore, they are not organized according to the seven areas of the survey. A list of recommendations can be found at the end of this section on pages 66-68.

Many of the issues identified and recommendations made in this report have been repeatedly identified or proposed over the last decade by various groups, both internal and external to UTSA. While progress has been made on many topics of concern, there are still several areas that remain overlooked or unaddressed. Many of the positive forces working in advising have come from center-level efforts and initiatives. As a whole, the advising community continues to be left out of policymaking bodies that create many issues that advisors in turn must address. Until these issues are addressed and recommendations acted upon, significant improvement in advising as a whole will likely remain unattainable from a systemic viewpoint.

A. Advisor Retention & Turnover

While there has always been and always will be some level of turnover in advising, this issue has been of primary importance to those in advising in recent years and needs to be examined again. The 2014 AAC Report described the high level of turnover in the first year following the restructuring announcement. High turnover has made the adjustment to the new structure more difficult, and although the internal switching of centers by advisors was not tracked, it has further contributed to the instability.

In 2014, the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) provided the AAC with a report on advisor turnover from January 1, 2012 to January 1, 2014. The AAC requested a similar report to cover the most recent two years, and OIR provided a report spanning December 31, 2013 to December 31, 2015 which essentially covers 2014-2016 (see Appendix A).

The reports from OIR only track the status of advisors present on the first date of the data set, so they likely do not capture all turnover during these time frames. For instance, if an advisor was hired after January 1, 2012 and left before January 1, 2014, they would not be captured in the 2012-2014 data. Vacant positions are also not counted in the initial count of advisors.

The two-year turnover rates for 2012-2014 and 2014-2016 are presented in Figure 1 below.

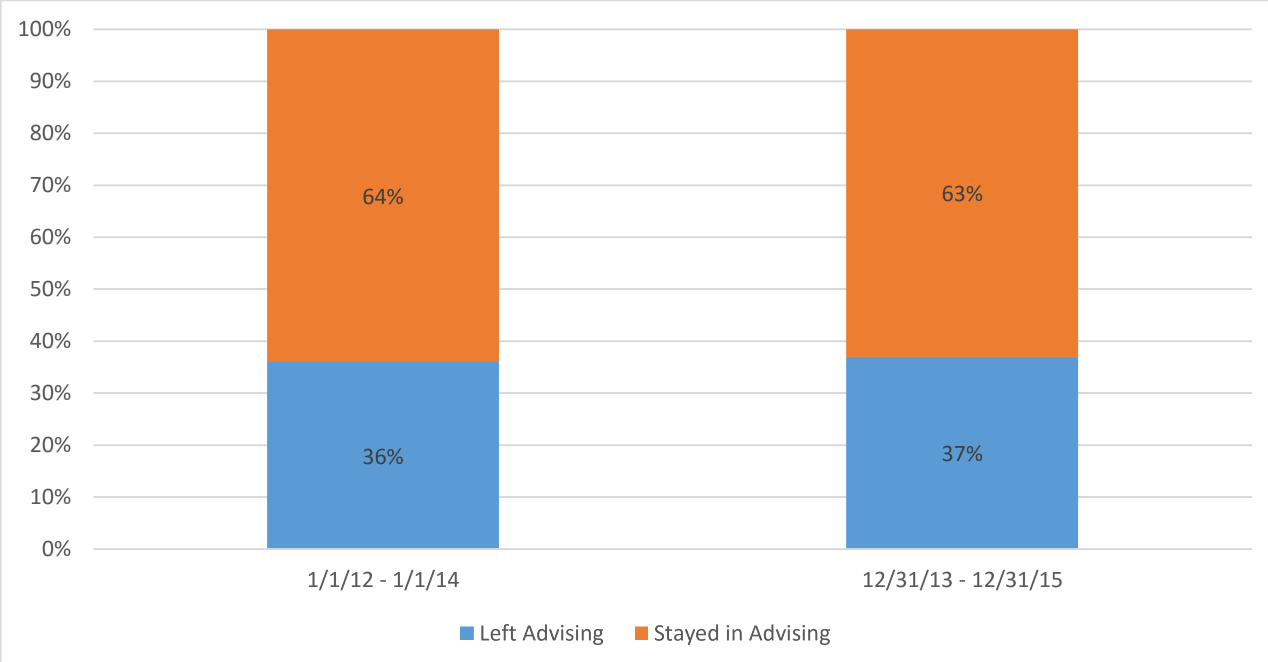

Figure 1. Comparison of 2-Year Advisor Turnover Rates (2012-2014 & 2014-2016).

Although the two-year turnover rates from 2012-2014 and 2014-2016 are almost identical, a look at recent one-year turnover rates shows a more optimistic outlook. While the first two columns below in Figure 2 show rates closer to those of the two-year time periods, the most recent year (column 3) shows a significantly lower level of turnover in advising.

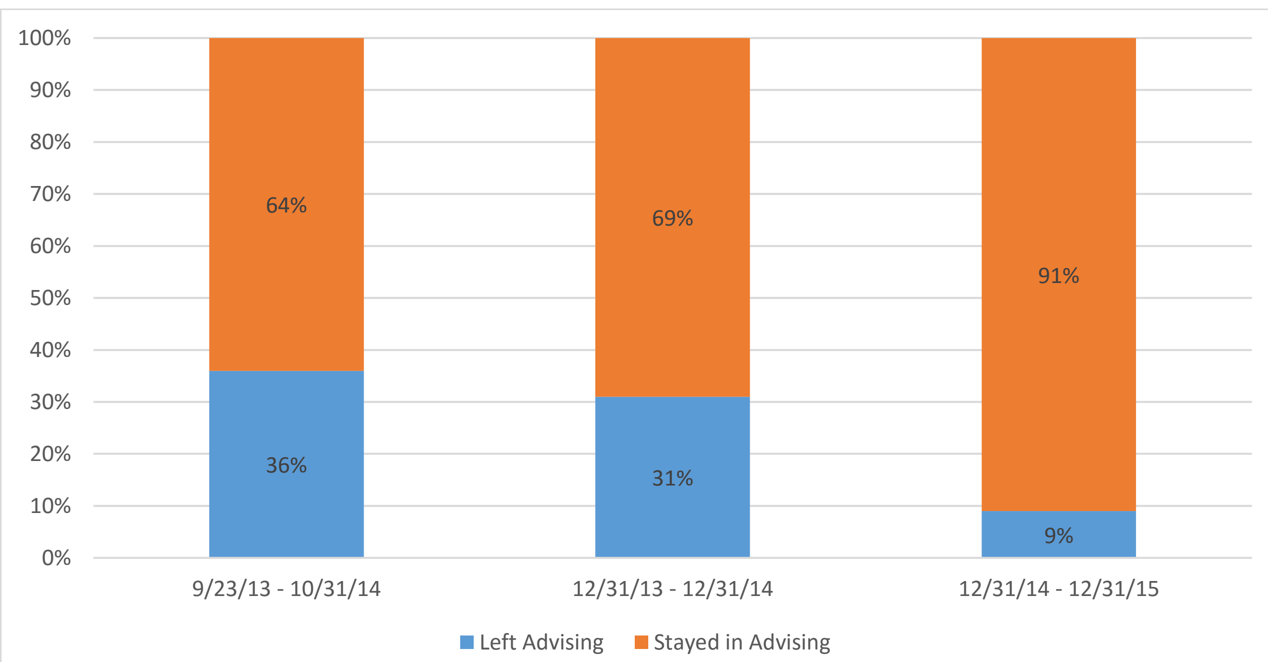

Figure 2. Comparison of 1-Year Advisor Turnover Rates.

One potential contributing factor to the lower turnover could be the increases in advisor salary levels. These increases began in January 2015 which coincides with the beginning of the period represented by column 3.

It should be noted that the data for the first year listed in Figure 2 comes from the 2014 AAC Report and begins with the day the new advising center assignments were made public. The authors of the 2014 AAC Report chose that date, rather than December 31st or January 1st, to monitor the impact that the restructuring had on turnover. Consequently, the data from columns 1 and 2 overlaps and counts some of the same advisors twice. In the future, turnover data should continue to use consistent time periods (one-year and two-year periods beginning either December 31st or January 1st) to compare turnover rates over time. Despite the issues with columns 1 and 2, the data in column 3 is not subject to the same overlap and therefore still shows a significantly reduced amount of turnover in advising in the past year.

Like the data gathered in 2014, the most recent turnover data does not include advisors who have switched centers in the past year but have remained in UTSA Advising. The monthly internal advisor directories could be used to track advisors switching centers over a given time period. Advisors that switch centers may lose some of their content knowledge and expertise if they move into an area that is unfamiliar to them. While advising has retained these advisors, switching centers still causes disruption for students. Students have to be reassigned which works against GRIP (2011) and Restructuring Proposal (2013) concepts such as an “advisor for life” that are dependent upon retaining advisors. The original center is also short-handed until the vacancy is filled and a new advisor is trained. New advisors require significant amounts of training to be brought up to speed on the many facets of advising at UTSA, and current advisors are the primary trainers for new advisors. Current advisors are therefore tasked with seeing more students during the months it takes to fill a position and train a new advisor while also setting aside time for training.

Academic Advisor I and Academic Advisor II positions had the most turnover from 12/31/13 to 12/31/15 (see Tables 2, 3, & 4 in Appendix A). While the turnover for these, and all, positions has been much lower over the past year, Academic Advisor I positions still had the highest level of turnover in 2015. It is likely that those in higher levels feel more invested in advising as their career path. The Advising Plan (2012) acknowledged that the university has a core of academic advisors who are committed to serving students even when promotions are unavailable. This may be true, but these professionals will not be with UTSA forever. Despite their lower turnover percentages, an unusually high number of senior advisors have left UTSA in recent years. While they receive higher compensation and have been able to successfully rise through the ranks, they face their own unique challenges, some of which will be explained in topic B. Advisor Compensation and topic C. Career Ladder & Advancement. Unless more advisors are retained, UTSA may eventually lack a core group of veteran advisors to provide stability in difficult times.

The 2014 AAC Report's recommendation to create a formal process for determining why advisors leave UTSA Advising has not been completed to date, however, the Advisor Experience Interest Group is in the process of creating such a system. It will likely include an anonymous survey and optional interviews with those that identify as willing to answer further questions. The 2016 survey responses provide some insight into why current advisors might potentially leave. Primarily, little opportunity for advancement, better pay elsewhere, high stress, high workload, and issues with leadership seem to contribute to decisions to leave. Informally, former colleagues have echoed similar reasons for leaving advising.

Jump to Recommendations

B. Advisor Compensation

Advisor compensation was the top issue that respondents in the 2014 survey wanted the AAC to address and was the fifth most mentioned topic in the 2016 survey. Just over half of respondents in 2016 disagree that advisors are paid fairly based on level of education and experience. Almost 20% neither agree nor disagree, and only around 30% agree. This is still an improvement over the 2014 survey results (0% agreed). In general, some believe that for the work demands, the pay is not compensatory. Other comments included pay not reflecting rising cost of living and a feeling that the university underestimates the value and contribution of advising.

Previously, low advisor pay was identified as a primary factor influencing advisors' decisions to leave UTSA advising. Beginning in January 2015, salary levels were adjusted for all advising positions to make them more competitive with similar positions both at UTSA and in the surrounding region. As mentioned in topic A. Advisor Retention & Turnover, the turnover in advising after these adjustments were made was significantly lower than in previous years. The AAC was told that the information on turnover and salary levels in the 2014 AAC Report was surprising to some UTSA administrators. They were aware of some turnover and inequity in salaries, but the report provided a clear picture of exactly how many advisors were leaving UTSA Advising and how much of a difference in pay there was between UTSA Advising positions and similar positions. The AAC cannot claim sole credit for the adjustments as the directors and Executive Director of Advising had been working for some time to increase salary levels.

Table 1 shows the minimum salaries of similar positions at UTSA in both 2014 and 2016. The 2014 data was taken from the 2014 AAC Report. The 2016 data was taken from various sources. When official salary information could not be obtained or was not specified on a recent job posting, the lowest listed salary for that position on the Texas Tribune Government Salaries Explorer was used. When the Texas Tribune website was used, individuals with the most recent start dates were used to estimate the base pay for a position since a more recent start date means they are likely starting at the minimum salary for that position.

Table 1. Minimum salaries for entry-level positions at UTSA in 2014 & 2016.

Position	2014 (minimum)	2016 (minimum)
Academic Advisor I	$30,000 (job posting)	$38,500 (Career Ladder)
Career Counselor I	$38,500 (from CC Director)	$37,000 (Texas Tribune)
Athletics Academic Coordinator I	$32,000 (job posting)	$35,000 (Texas Tribune)
International Undergrad. Admissions Advisor	$36,000 (job posting)	$35,000 (Texas Tribune)

In 2014, advisors had the lowest minimum starting salary of the four positions identified, but they now have the highest minimum starting salary as of 2016. While this is a positive change, it is important that salary levels be constantly re-examined. This is at least the second time that advisor salaries have had to be adjusted to address a large difference in pay among UTSA positions. The Academic Support Report (2006) recommended that advisor salaries be increased to match those of a Career Counselor. This recommendation was followed, but the same adjustment had to be made in January 2015.

The same trend appears when comparing the salaries of advising positions at different institutions in the area (see Table 2 below).

Table 2. Salaries for advising positions in the local area in 2014 & 2016.

Position	2014 (minimum)	2016 (minimum)
UTSA	$30,000 (Career Ladder)	$38,500 (Career Ladder)
Alamo Colleges	$38,000 (job posting)	$40,372 (HR website)
TAMU-SA	$32,000 (job posting)	$34,000 (Texas Tribune)
Texas State	n/a	$32,000 (Texas Tribune)

In 2014, UTSA had the lowest minimum starting salary of the institutions identified, but as of 2016 they have the second-highest minimum starting salary of the four institutions listed. The Alamo Colleges continue to be our primary competitors and have often been the destination for those who leave UTSA Advising. Their minimum starting salaries were raised shortly after UTSA's adjustment in January 2015.

Some respondents acknowledged that salaries are at least more competitive than they were before the raises, but others believe they are still not competitive with other positions in higher education requiring the same or less education. Non-salary benefits of other positions, like more paid time off and opportunities for career advancement, were also cited as reasons for our positions being less competitive. Several survey respondents suggested that advisors could be "compensated" by not being required to be present for Skeleton Crew.

There are still concerns over salary with respect to its influence on retaining advisors. The increase in pay from one advising level to the next is simply not much of an incentive to stay in advising when compared to the years of experience needed and additional duties that must be taken on. To view the base pay for each advising level, see the career ladder in Appendix B.

Several respondents mentioned that many, especially in the Academic Advisor I position, often pursue positions elsewhere instead, so we are losing talent in the lower levels. This system also does not reward those who have stayed in advising, so it has been suggested that increases for Academic Advisors at the II, III, and IV levels be considered.

Table 3 below shows salary comparisons between UTSA academic advisors and career counselors at each level of their respective career ladders. The Texas Tribune Government Salaries Explorer was used to determine the range and averages for each position.

Table 3. Salaries for UTSA Academic Advisors and Career Counselors.

Position	**Advisor**		**Career Counselor**	
	Average	**Range**	**Average**	**Range**
Level I	$40,397 (n = 43)	$38,500 – 40,291	$39,077 (n = 4)	$37,000 – 40,170
Level II	$42,871 (n = 13)	$41,512 – 46,007	$43,668 (n = 5)	$40,870 – 46,522
Level III	$44,275 (n = 13)	$43,694 – 44,979	$48,490 (n = 2)	$47,536 – 49,445
Level IV	$48,214 (n = 11)	$45,000 – 52,055	n/a	n/a

The only position in advising that currently carries a higher average salary compared to its equivalent in the Career Center is the Academic Advisor I position. This is somewhat misleading as well since many at the Academic Advisor I level have several years of experience over their counterparts in the Career Center. There are significant differences in pay for those at the Academic Advisor III level compared to that of the Career Counselor III. The pay of the Academic Advisor IV position is closer to that of the Career Counselor III, although even then only 3 of the 11 Academic Advisor IVs have a salary over the average for a Career Counselor III.

Academic Advisor and Career Counselor positions both require similar levels of education and experience according to the official requirements listed by UTSA Human Resources. Furthermore, many of the offices at UTSA use a salary range and have hired new staff above the minimum salary listed on job postings. Advising on the other hand hires staff at a set rate with no room for negotiation based on education or experience, which many survey respondents mentioned as a significant issue.

Jump to Recommendations

C. Career Ladder & Advancement

The career ladder was the second most mentioned issue in the 2014 survey that respondents wanted the AAC to address. Despite the fact that the career ladder wasn't given its own question in the 2016 survey, it was again the second most mentioned topic that respondents want to be addressed. Many mentioned the lack of a functional career ladder as an even larger problem than the base pay scale.

The decision not to ask about the career ladder in 2016 was made because its frozen status for the past few years has essentially rendered it irrelevant. Also, recent edits have been made to the language in the career ladder, and many likely don't know how it is ideally supposed to work when unfrozen. A current copy of the career ladder is in Appendix B. The following acronyms will be used in this section to refer to the different advisor titles: Academic Advisor I (AAI), Academic Advisor II (AAII), Academic Advisor III (AAIII), and Academic Advisor IV (AAIV).

Currently, advisors face many of the same barriers to advancement that were present in 2014: having vacant positions reclassified to a lower level, often having to switch offices for a promotion, and limitations in each office on the number of positions at each advising level.

As a result of the turnover, we have seen a shift in the makeup of the advising community, especially when looking at the proportion of AAI and AAII positions. Figure 3 shows the change over the last three years according to the 2014-2016 OIR report.

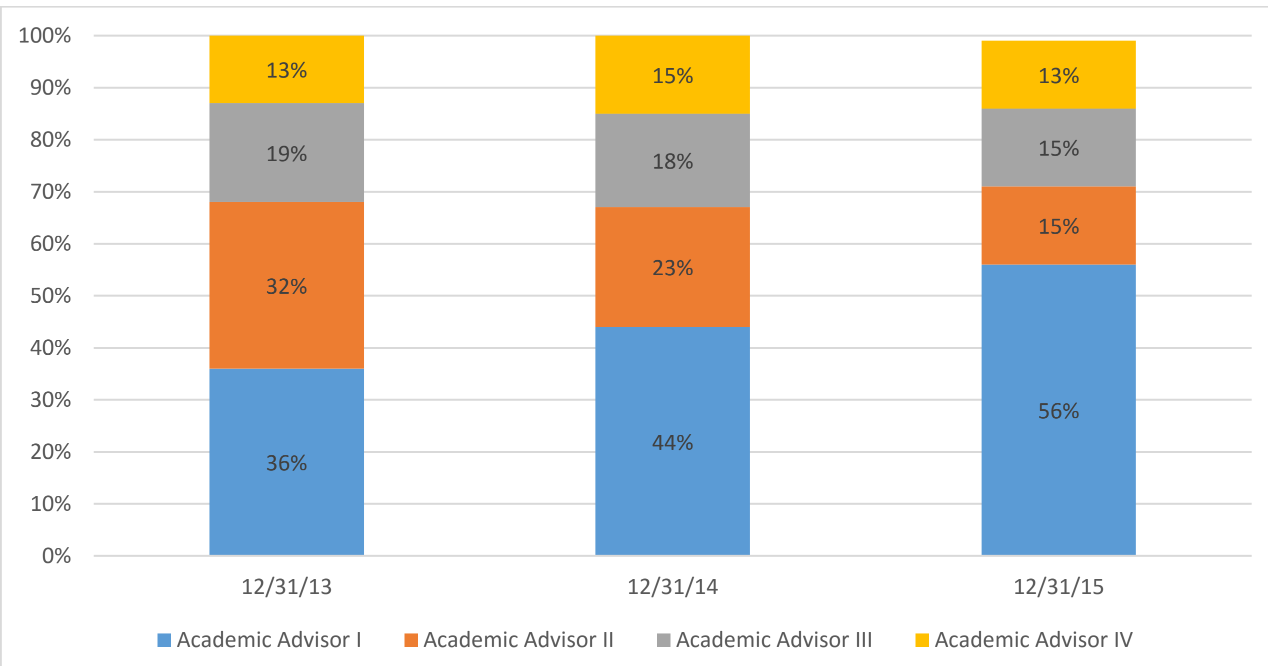

Figure 3. Advisors by Level (12/31/13 – 12/31/15).

There was an increase in the overall number of advisors from 75 on 12/31/13 to 84 on 12/31/15. Some of this increase could be the result of some positions being vacant in previous years when the data was analyzed. Part of the increase in the percentage of AAI positions could be attributed to the overall increase in advisor positions in 2015, but even if we assume the 9 new positions were all AAI positions and take them out of consideration (to equal 75 positions as in 2013), the same trends from Figure 3 are seen: namely that the percentage of AAI positions has increased while the percentage of AAII positions has decreased.

One thing to note is that while the percentage of AAIs was higher in 2015, this group contains a number of advisors who qualify to be AAIIs or even AAIIIs based on years of experience. Table 4 below shows the self-reported years of experience for those that listed Academic Advisor I as their official title in the 2016 survey.

Table 4. Years of experience (Academic Advisor I only).

Answer	Response	%
0-1 year	9	24%
1-3 years	16	42%
3-5 years	10	26%
5-10 years	2	5%
10-15 years	0	0%
15+ years	1	3%
Total	38	100%

Thirteen of the AAIs reported experience which surpasses the minimum 2 years of UTSA Advising experience needed to become an AAII. Some of the 16 AAIs that reported having between 1-3 years of experience also likely meet this minimum. The Advising Plan (2012) stated that the Career Ladder allows advisors to receive promotions without having to take on additional responsibilities (at least for some levels). This essentially allows them to be rewarded while also providing more veteran advisors for student contacts. In reality, the opposite is usually happening: advisors are often taking on additional responsibilities without receiving promotions.

Advisors often have to switch advising centers for a promotion. This leads to delays in filling vacant positions within advising since an advisor moving to a new office simply creates another vacant position in their previous office. This creates what can seem like a never-ending series of vacancies that is usually only resolved when someone from outside of UTSA Advising is hired at the Academic Advisor I level. It also continues to work against the “advisor for life” concept as advisors who change centers have to change caseloads.

If a higher position does not become available or if an advisor is unwilling to change offices for a promotion, their only other option tends to be to look outside of UTSA advising for career advancement. The Advising Plan (2012) recognized the important role that the career ladder has played in retention of advisors in the past, so it isn’t surprising that its suspension is hurting UTSA Advising’s ability to retain quality advisors. When advisors leave, we lose their knowledge and the relationships that they have developed with departments and other offices.

With the issues that have resulted from the new advising structure, it is essential that the freeze be lifted as soon as possible to reward those who have helped advising make it through this transition process. The main factor affecting the frozen career ladder is the availability of funding which will be discussed further in topic D. Advising Funding.

Currently, the career ladder simply addresses the qualifications one must have to be eligible for each level, but many would also like for the career ladder to outline the roles and responsibilities that differentiate advisors at each level. This could include specifying the knowledge and skills that advisors are expected to accumulate as they move from one level to the next. It has also been suggested that a training program be developed to facilitate advisors' development.

Jump to Recommendations

D. Advising Funding

Advisors have consistently requested more transparency regarding advising funding. Efforts have been made to increase advisor salaries, reinstate the career ladder, and raise overall funding for advising, but they have not been communicated to the advising community. Sharing information about the issues does not solve them, but it can lead to greater understanding of the challenges surrounding things like why the career ladder remains frozen.

A central issue with advising funding is the lack of knowledge of how funds are used. While it is understandable that every detail of the advising budget would not be shared with advisors, there are a number of concerns and speculation that could be addressed if advisors had a basic understanding of how funds are allocated. For instance, the Advising Plan (2012) suggested that the advising fee could be used to support things like the peer-mentoring piece of the first-year experience. It is unclear at this time if advising fees have indeed been used to support the first-year experience initiatives. Also, it was previously unclear which funds were used to purchase DegreeWorks. The Advising Plan (2012) suggested that advising funds could be used for this, but a grant covered the cost instead. If grants from outside sources are used to pay for initiatives and programs, sharing that knowledge can affect perceptions on the usage of advising funds. This relates directly to the larger issue of communication and transparency that will be addressed in topic F. Communication & Collaboration.

While some of the new technology assigned to advising has been helpful, there are still many advisors who feel that it has not been as helpful as advertised. When advisors believe funds are being used for ineffective initiatives and programs, for example to purchase Global which will be discontinued in the next few months, it obviously has a detrimental effect on morale. Advising services are best delivered by advisors, not through automation. Advising funds should therefore be invested in advisors, which means using funds to increase advisor salaries, reinstate the career ladder, and support the professional development of staff.

Since advising funds are based on student enrollment, the constant fluctuations in enrollment make it impossible to maintain a steady stream of funding. This instability leads to a lack of promotions because it is unclear if future funding can maintain a higher number of advisors at the II, III, and IV levels.

Increasing the advising fee or using additional/alternative sources other than fees to fund advising should be considered. As a fee increase is unlikely to happen any time soon and still leaves the system at the mercy of enrollment, it is essential that alternative means of funding be identified to supplement or replace the current structure. As an example, non-degree seeking students are now being charged an advising fee which will marginally increase funding. An examination of the usage of advising funds generated by student fees should also be conducted. The investigation should focus on cost-saving measures that could free up additional funding for other uses.

Jump to Recommendations

E. High Workload

High workload was the most common barrier mentioned to being successful in both the 2014 and 2016 surveys despite the fact that workload was rated as more manageable in the 2016 survey. Many advisors struggle to manage their caseload, and some still report needing to work over 40 hours per week just to keep up with their regular job duties. Advisors find little time to engage in additional activities that, while important, are not as urgent as student inquiries. For instance, little time is available to assess and reflect on practice which makes it difficult to develop plans for improvement.

Advisors most often reported not having enough time to devote to actual advising duties due to a high number of special assignments or administrative duties. Many administrative tasks, such as documenting appointment notes, processing petitions, and advising students by email, are directly related to advising interactions. Even though they do not include in-person contact, they are necessary tasks that require advisors' attention. Email advising can even increase the amount of time advisors have available for in-person advising because it can prevent valuable appointment or walk-in time from being used for minor issues or for topics that do not involve advising. Additional administrative work, while still related to advising goals, is more secondary to advising and may not be handled by advisors at other institutions. For instance, intrusive programs that support probationary students are initiated by advising centers at UTSA. These types of programs are needed, but they increase demand for advising and create further administrative work for advisors. Furthermore, advisors are routinely expected to perform tasks such as testing DegreeWorks and outreaching to active students not enrolled for the next semester, which further exacerbates the issue of advisor time.

Many other issues have also been identified as contributing to high workload in previous reports (GRIP, 2011; Task Force Report, 2010; Academic Support Report, 2006; NACADA Report, 2005). Vacancies were also mentioned as contributing to high workload for some advisors. One of the ways the Advising Plan (2012) hoped to address student access to advising was by increasing the efficient use of advisors' time. Automating certain tasks with new programs was one way they hoped to do this. Unfortunately, this has not been the case as some programs have never functioned properly and even create more work for advisors at times (see topic G. Technology below for more information). Additional issues that significantly contribute to high workloads for advisors are discussed below. It is important that any discussions regarding this issue focus on eliminating the causes of high workload rather than on simply reducing the amount of time dedicated to administrative tasks.

1. **University administration mandates.** A high number of assignments from university leadership continues to be a primary issue contributing to high advisor workload. These assignments are predominantly assigned to advisors by administrators or other offices in support of university initiatives or events and do not always focus on student contacts. While these tasks might be worth pursuing, time demands limit what advisors can physically do in one day. Time normally reserved for student contacts has to be sacrificed to accommodate each new demand. This is especially concerning since at the UTSA 2020 Blueprint event in April, Dr. Romo mentioned that one of the main issues students have identified with advising is that it is difficult to get in to see their advisor. Students have confirmed that this is a primary concern in meetings with both the Executive Director of Advising and the AAC.

   In the Spring 2016 semester alone there have been numerous new programs and initiatives, such as the Early Bird program, Alamo Runners initiative, Summer Registration event in March, and March Into Your Major, that have been added to advisors' calendars. Often advisors are required to develop programming for these events at the last minute due to poor planning and little to no involvement in initial planning stages. Advisors may see the value in some of these activities, but often, the investment of time and effort is not worth the limited outcomes. For instance, the time dedicated to preparing for the Early Bird appointments on UTSA Day proved to be an inefficient use of time when many of those who registered for the event did not attend. Advising was then asked to accommodate students that had not registered for the event by the original deadline because the online signup form had not been deactivated. When students and their families were directed to advising or told that "advising will take care of you" it made it appear that advising was disorganized. It also set a poor precedent by allowing students to be seen after not meeting a deadline and not planning ahead.

   The most recent, and likely the most time consuming, of the extra tasks given to advising has been the mandate to create and lock a semester plan in DegreeWorks for ~14,000 continuing students. This number was closer to 23,000 before those in advising worked to cut different groups from the list. No explanation was provided regarding why it was being mandated or why the particular deadline of August 15th was chosen. This deadline means that the mandate overlaps with some of advising's busiest times, fall registration and summer orientation.

Also, the task itself is flawed since students will not be consulted when their plans are created. This places an emphasis on quantity over quality since it guarantees that many plans will not be aligned with students' individual circumstances. For instance, if an advisor is not aware that a student intends to enroll part-time, they will likely create a plan for them based on full-time enrollment. The plan will have to be modified after consulting with the student meaning that much of the time set aside for this project would have been unnecessary. If students do not confirm certain aspects of their plans with advisors, it could also lead to claims of misadvisement. Even though there is a disclaimer at the bottom of the plans and leadership has stated that they will be supportive of advisors in these situations, students' opinions of advising can still be affected by perceived misadvisement.

Involving students in the creation of their plans could give them greater familiarity of their degree requirements as well as promote the kind of intentional planning that we want from students. Had the mandate been to create semester plans during all scheduled appointments going forward, the goal of increasing the overall number of plans could have still been accomplished but in a more intentional and worthwhile way. Monitoring the number of locked plans could have ensured that progress was indeed being made across all of advising.

The bottom line is that advisors simply have not received enough justification to believe that the time and effort that will be put into the DegreeWorks mandate is worth the limited outcomes. The work being put forth is not likely the best way to achieve the desired results of informing students and helping the university predict course demand. Further discussion of this mandate will appear in topic F. Communication & Collaboration and topic G. Technology.

Comments from the survey and conversations between staff members have made it clear that these kinds of tasks are linked to turnover of staff. The DegreeWorks mandate has already caused one person to leave UTSA, and even those who were not already considering leaving advising have stated that each new task or mandate has made them more disillusioned with their job. Advisors do not believe that their goal to help students is being fulfilled in the current environment since more time is being taken away from student interactions.

Advisors want to help the university achieve its goals, but there are fundamental disagreements about how that will be best accomplished. Advisors can connect students with existing resources in the Tomás Rivera Center or refer them to new initiatives like the PIVOT programs, but this still requires direct interaction between advisors and students. Students have to value the advice they receive from advisors which requires a relationship that cannot be strengthened when advisors are not available to meet with their students.

The priority placed on tasks like locking DegreeWorks plans oversimplifies the factors that influence student progress toward graduation. These tasks also do not take into account that advisors are often operating at the intersection of the academic and the personal. For instance, countless students have described how personal issues, including loss of a family member, sexual assault, homelessness, and thoughts of suicide, have impacted their academic progress. While these conversations may end with the creation of an adjusted plan to get the student back on track, advisors rightly do not focus on the plan as the solution in itself. After all, having a locked plan means little when students are facing physical, mental, or financial challenges. The fact that advising can have an intensely personal nature is what causes many to react so strongly when something like the DegreeWorks planner mandate is given such tremendous importance.

Student interactions with faculty and staff have been established as playing a significant role in student success according to research, the results of a pilot study done by UTSA advisors, and other campus initiatives (e.g. PIVOT programs). With all of this in mind, it is frustrating that the university's approach to advising continues to place importance on impersonal, menial tasks, like the DegreeWorks mandate, that do not emphasize student interaction. While the university cannot simply double the number of advisors, they do have a strong measure of control over certain factors. Namely, they can create an environment that does not prevent advisors from doing their jobs. They can harness the desire, experience, and knowledge present in advising instead of driving talent away and placing barriers in the way of advisors. This in turn would have a positive impact on advisor morale and, ultimately, the service provided to students.

2. **Caseloads.** Some of the same issues with caseloads present in 2014 have continued to contribute to high workload. For instance, advisors face competing demands for their time by having to advise all classifications of students. All advisors see new freshman, and under the new orientation model advisors will now have even less time during the summer to serve continuing students or perform other duties. These competing demands continue in other semesters when advisors are juggling helping new students adjust to college, helping continuing students plan for future semesters, intervening for early alerts or probation students, and conducting campaigns to ensure students stay on track. Some have mentioned conducting outreach and diversifying responsibilities among staff as ways to help in managing caseloads.

   Caseload inequality has also been a primary concern for many, although steps have been taken with the recent reassignments to address this issue. If discrepancies in workload, student contacts, and/or advisor availability remain despite having more equal caseloads, other factors will need to be examined. For instance, some majors tend to require more contacts of a technical nature due to prerequisite issues or other program-related factors. They take up advisors' time regardless though, and the demand from these students might only be remedied by changes in prerequisites or other program requirements.

3. **Scheduling.** Another factor that may impact workload regardless of caseload size is scheduling. Many mentioned taking time to plan and set schedules for the semester as a best practice. This allows them to better structure their work and prevents them from having to react to the inevitable "emergencies" that arise. Differences in how centers schedule their time should be examined. For instance, the amount of appointments and walk-ins offered varies by center. This variation allows centers to adapt to the needs of their particular students, but it may impact availability. There are also differences in how centers structure advising interactions. For instance, some restrict walk-ins to a specific duration, almost like a mini-appointment, while others do not set a time limit. Some also restrict which types of activities or questions can be answered in a walk-in while others do not.

   The decision to offer a greater number of one type of contact over the other could influence student behavior and, ultimately, demand for advising. For instance, it has been suggested that offering a higher number of walk-ins, and not placing time or content restrictions on them, allows students to seek any service on-demand. While access to an advisor is a goal to strive for, almost unrestricted access could discourage planning and forethought. Students have been quick to learn that showing up to an appointment is not important if they can simply attend walk-ins to have any question addressed or any task completed.

   This leads into another problem affecting advisors' time: how to manage students who "no show" to appointments. Centers send email or phone reminders to students, usually 24 hours in advance, but the issue of "no shows" is still pervasive. Table 5 shows the percentage of "no shows" by month for one advising center.

Table 5. Percentage of appointments that "no show" for one center (January – May 2016).

January	February	March	April	May	Average
17.59%	14.42%	20.22%	15.57%	17.17%	16.99%

   In the future, SSC could be utilized to send students text message reminders, which many students say they would prefer. Reminders can only do so much though, and it has proven difficult to establish consequences for a "no show" since students cannot be denied service altogether. The use of a "no show" fee has been suggested by different groups, but several issues with this idea have been identified. Primarily, advising does not want to place any additional financial burden onto students, even though any fee would be minimal. The cost of administering such a fee, in both dollars and time, might negate any benefits of it anyway. Some centers currently restrict students who "no show" more than once during a semester to 8:00 AM appointments or to walk-ins only. This may not be much of a consequence for some though. The AAC has begun conversations with representatives of the Student Government Association to brainstorm potential solutions to this issue.

   When discussing workload, many mentioned that how manageable it is depends upon the time of year. Figure 4 shows one center's student contacts separated by month during the most recent academic year. Appointments, no shows, walk-ins, emails, and phone calls are all included. “No shows” represent scheduled appointments that are important to include when accurately depicting demand for advising.

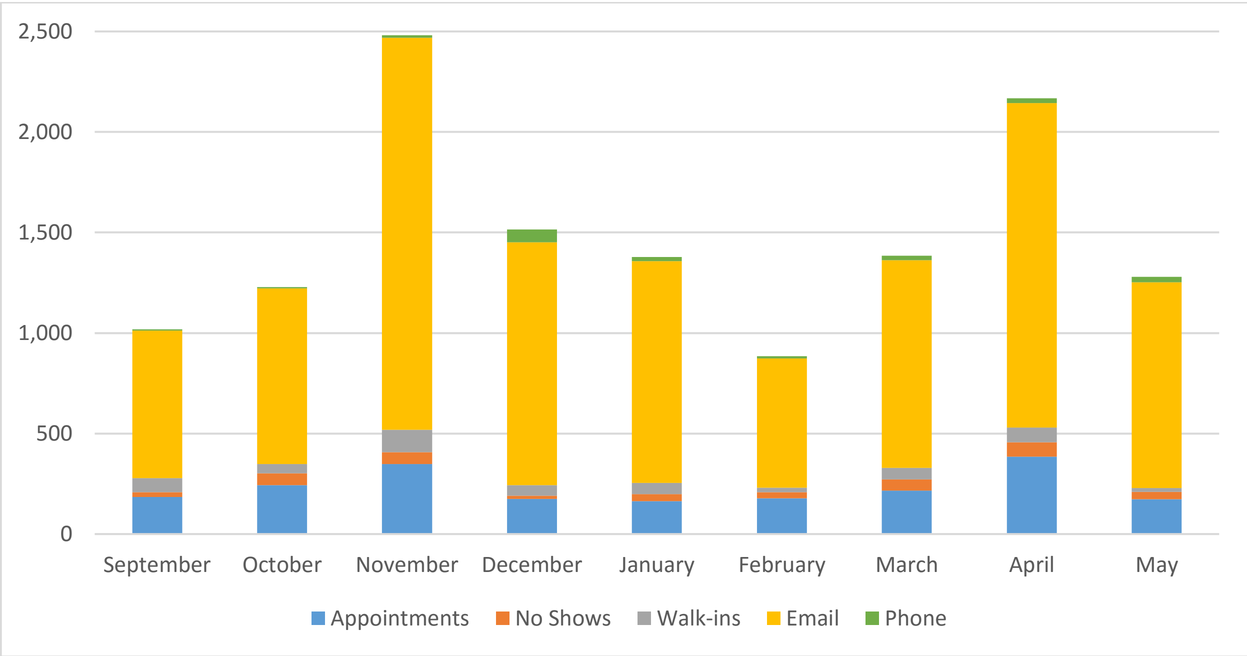

Figure 4. Students contacts by type (September 2015 – April 2016).

Demand for this advising center peaked at certain times of year, especially during the first few weeks of registration each semester. Contacts for other centers separated by month were not available, but similar increases in demand have been informally reported by other centers as well. The AAC plans to take further steps to determine whether the pattern seen above is similar for all centers.

While it is difficult to see changes in contact types in Figure 4, this graph most accurately depicts total demand for advising during the given months. Figure 5 below separates the contacts by type (appointments, no shows, walk-ins, and emails) and adjusts the counts proportionally so that comparisons can be made more easily. Phone calls were excluded because the data did not vary much month-to-month and because an extreme outlier affected the scale of the graph. Phone calls likely do not have as much variation because less time is available for phone advising.

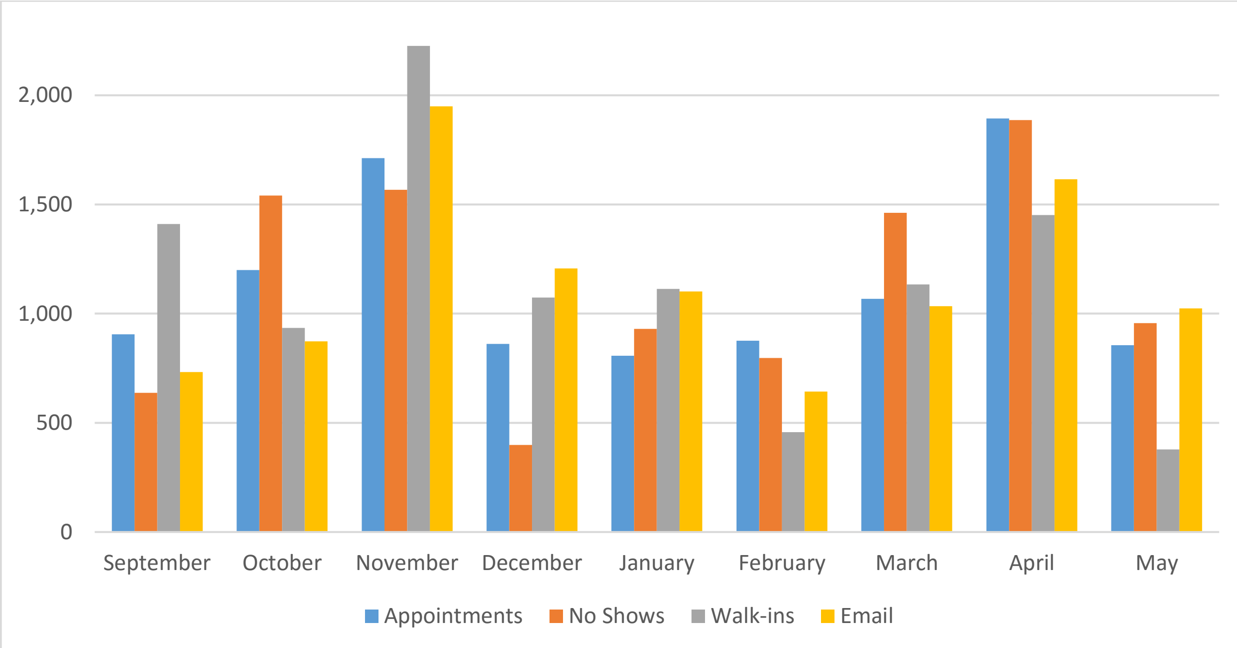

Figure 5. Contacts by type (September 2015 – April 2016).

The amount of each contact type tends to rise and fall in similar patterns by month. The most pronounced peaks can be seen for appointments, emails, and walk-ins. In just one month (October 2015 to November 2015), appointments increased by 42.6%, emails increased by 123%, and walk-ins increased by 138%. Appointments likely did not increase at as high of a rate partly because there are a finite number of appointments available. A troubling trend is that there was a higher number of "no shows" during the highest demand months which further exacerbates availability issues.

Advisors conduct outreach in non-peak periods to encourage students to take advantage of better availability, but students are not always responsive. Even when students come in during non-peak times, the conversations are often more "theoretical" because future class schedules are not available. These students may return once the schedule is released if there are problems with the plans discussed during the non-peak advising sessions.

In 2016, the summer class schedule was released in January, approximately two months before summer registration began. This change was very helpful, but the fall and spring class schedules continue to be released approximately one month before registration actually begins. This time frame is not as long as it appears, and students often have competing demands during the middle of the semester that make them deprioritize advising. For instance, during the four-week period between the release of the fall class schedule (March 7th) and the beginning of fall registration (March 31st), students had both midterms and spring break. This could have essentially cut out two of the four weeks as options for many students. If the class schedule were to be released earlier (e.g. two months before registration begins), it could help draw more students in during the non-peak months and prevent the need for repeat appointments.

Jump to Recommendations

F. Communication & Collaboration

Issues with communication have existed for years and are documented in multiple reports (Restructuring Proposal, 2013; Advising Plan, 2012; Academic Support Report, 2006; NACADA Report, 2005). In general, communication needs to be more frequent and more transparent. Lack of advisor involvement in planning groups is a key element that contributes to the issues with communication.

Communication, or lack thereof, was a common thread throughout the survey although it was just shy of being one of the top five issues identified. The importance of communication cannot be overstated as it is a foundational factor that influences many other issues as well. It was also the most mentioned practice that has enhanced respondents' abilities to be better advisors. Collaboration is also extremely important and is being included in this section with communication as the two often go hand-in-hand.

Policies and procedures will also be addressed in this section because of the role that they play in communication and because many would like for further collaboration to focus on addressing issues with policies and procedures. Respondents have called for policies and procedures to be clarified, simplified, and streamlined when possible. Once done, advisors would like for any changes to be communicated clearly and for steps to be taken to ensure that procedures are followed consistently going forward.

This section will address communication and collaboration between advisors and several different groups: executive university leadership, academic colleges/departments, UTSA Advising as a whole, and other campus offices.

1. **Executive university leadership.** One way in which communication needs to be improved is in regard to communication between advisors and executive university leadership. In the survey, communication and transparency for executive university leadership was rated poorly with only ~3% rating it as "excellent" and ~12% rating it as "good." Currently there are multiple levels between those on the front lines of advising and those making decisions. Most communication still flows in a top-down manner and doesn't always reach advisors. While this hierarchy has its purpose, it also alienates staff from the administration and decreases morale.

   Due to the separation that exists between staff and university leadership, advisors feel that many of their suggestions and concerns go unheard. It also means that there is little buy-in or connection with overall university initiatives from those on the front lines. Advising is cited as important in the GRIP (2011), the 2016 UTSA strategic plan, and the current 2020 Blueprint goals, but it is unclear how often advising is consulted by administrators. When advising is involved in discussions, it is often at the Executive Director level. Advisors and center directors have not been regularly asked to be involved in improving service, and any changes are usually developed by those outside of advising. When advising does develop plans of their own, they aren't always followed. For instance, the recommendation from the advising strategic plan to gradually phase in the DegreeWorks planner over several years was not heeded. Having their recommendations ignored does not make those in advising feel like their input is valued by the university.

The communication divide also means that administrators do not always have relevant information needed to make sound decisions. Administrators often only have a macro-level view of advising and, therefore, do not have a real grasp of what advisors do, understand the challenges they face, or have realistic expectations for their work. Historically, advising's role has consisted of implementing and troubleshooting the policies and procedures created by the administration. The 2014 AAC Report and NACADA Report (2005) both suggested that it would be more effective to involve advisors from the beginning in future decision-making groups. In previous years, the Annual All-Advisor Workshops aimed to improve communication. The Advising Plan (2012) noted that "the purpose of the workshops was not training, but rather a forum for an exchange of ideas between advisors and administrators, identifying those policies and procedures that seem to be working and addressing the issues for those that are not working well at all. Administrators would be able to hear directly from advisors who are on the front line administering policies and procedures" (p. 17). Unfortunately, direct dialogue in these workshops was limited.

The announcement of President Romo's Ad Hoc Advising Group has awakened many of the same feelings of concern as the 2013 advising restructuring. While some in the ad hoc group rejected the suggestion to include more than one representative from advising, the group as a whole is at least taking the time to speak with advisors to gain a better picture of what is and isn't working in advising before making any recommendations. This is a positive change compared to the efforts of similar groups in the past, and advisors hope that their feedback will be seriously considered.

Even when asked to provide input in the past, advisors often have not received any follow-up communication. For instance, the advising community did not receive any updates on the recommendations made by the many task force groups convened by the Provost during the restructuring two years ago. Advisors were demoralized when the work they put into the groups was essentially ignored. The advising community would prefer that the Ad Hoc Advising Group continue to involve the advising community throughout their process.

In the survey, the fourth most mentioned barrier to being successful was an impression that the university does not value advisors as integral players in student success or view advisors as professionals. One way this was demonstrated was by emailing staff the day before the 2020 Blueprint forum to let them know of the event. Most people would not be able to rearrange other obligations in that short of a time frame in order to attend. These actions make it seem as if leadership does not really want feedback and involvement of staff. Many advisors are willing to work with the administration and are already doing what they can to improve advising. The administration simply needs to harness the energy presently being expended by advisors so that each group can benefit from a partnership. Staff would benefit by having an improved sense of ownership over their jobs and by receiving recognition from the administration that advisors are valued members of the institution. Any organization is likely to create more buy-in when those affected by decisions have had a hand in shaping them. The suggestion to involve advisors more has been mentioned as far back as the Academic Support Report (2006), and the NACADA Report (2005) stated that helping advisors feel heard can go a long way toward improving job satisfaction and, ultimately, the level of service they provide to students. The university has shown interest in involving students and faculty in planning, but it is time that they extend the same collegial attitude to the professional staff.

In the event that advising is not involved in discussions, staff members need to be provided with the justification for initiatives. Currently, any background information is only given on a need-to-know basis. It takes time to communicate additional information, but the benefits are worth it. There may still be disagreement, however, transparency will improve understanding. For instance, August 15th seems like an arbitrary deadline for the DegreeWorks planner mandate, so it is unclear why it was chosen. As mentioned in topic E. High Workload, this task must be completed during two of the busiest times of year. A later deadline, like December 31st, would have allowed advisors to complete this task during the fall semester. General feedback from those that have worked with Ellucian indicates that many institutions do not utilize the DegreeWorks planner to the same extent as is being required by UTSA. It is unclear if the administration knows that there are still issues with DegreeWorks (many of which are outlined in topic G. Technology). These issues impact advisors' confidence in DegreeWorks, and, as a result, their willingness to utilize pieces of it. If administrators are aware of the issues with the deadline, the concerns with the ineffectiveness of the mandate itself, and the functionality issues of DegreeWorks, advisors would like to know why this task and particular deadline have been given such importance. If they are not aware of these things, it would illustrate the need for better communication and advocacy between administrators and those in advising.

Direct conversations on issues like these could occur between administrators and advisors in a number of settings. One way would be for administrators to present updates at the monthly all-advising meetings. Another way would be to utilize the AAC as a small, but representative, sample of advisors. The advising community is largely confident in the AAC's ability to advocate for advising as indicated by the survey responses. Over the past two years, there has already been an increase in direct contact between the AAC and several administrators, including the Provost and Associate Vice Provost. The AAC gained representation for advisors in the GRIP Cross Campus Team meetings and started conversations about issues like the 30/45 Excess Credit Limitation policy which lead to the creation of the Contract to Graduate. By visiting the Associate Deans' Council, the Policies & Procedures Interest Group was able to streamline the process for core/university requirement petitions and resolve issues with the 75-hour major change policy. These proactive efforts have yielded positive results and should continue since the impetus will likely continue to be on advisors to reach out to administrators to improve communication. The AAC hopes that administrators will continue to show the same willingness to meet with advisors. Meetings could occur as needed, but yearly or semesterly contact would be recommended at a minimum.

Some respondents mentioned that when advisors are given the opportunity to interact with administrators, faculty, or other staff, they need to be mindful of their professionalism. This is especially true when discussing challenging topics. Respondents also mentioned the need for advisors to be solution-focused. The AAC has sought to model this approach in their interactions with administrators and through the creation of the Interest Groups initiative which provides advisors the opportunity to discuss issues and propose potential solutions. By providing solutions to problems and communicating how changes would benefit students and the university, advising will be able to better demonstrate the value of including them in discussions.

Increased contact with faculty and administrators would also allow advisors to better demonstrate their role in student success and strengthen their professional image. As a whole, advising will need to be more proactive in making their work more visible to university leadership. Highlighting programs developed by advisors, including those aimed at improving success for first-year students and students on academic probation, would demonstrate advisors' creativity and initiative. Several in the advising community have presented on these topics at advising conferences, so this same information could be presented to university leadership in a forum like the GRIP Cross-Campus Team meeting. More concerted efforts could also be made to publicize staff awards so that administrators would be more aware of the impact of UTSA advisors on the profession and the university.

2. **Academic departments.** Overall, relationships with academic departments were rated positively with over 70% rating them as either "excellent" or "good." Comments specified that it often depends on the department in question. Supportive departments communicate updates to advisors and are responsive with petition requests. They meet with advisors at least once per semester, and some even attend advising center staff meetings. They are often open to feedback on curriculum requirements, such as additional course options for

majors or minors. They have also worked with advisors to review future catalog entries, resolve issues with prerequisites, compile statistics on their majors, and address more specific issues like adjusting study abroad listings so that students do not violate the limit of 6 hours of Special Studies credit.

Some departments, however, have been historically challenging to work with. Respondents mentioned that these departments create barriers that prevent them from being successful. For instance, making frequent changes to prerequisites or policies and not communicating them to advisors can lead to student claims of misadvisement. They also have a slower turnaround time for petitions. Some respondents mentioned that they have never met some of the department chairs and other faculty in the departments they work with.

A persistent issue with communication between advisors and the colleges has stemmed from the lack of uniform policies and procedures in the academic offices (Restructuring Proposal, 2013). Survey respondents confirmed that varied processes and timelines for the academic colleges and departments contribute to confusion. Efforts have been made to simplify procedures at the college-level, but procedures at the department-level continue to remain inconsistent. Further efforts will need to be made to simplify policies and procedures where appropriate.

3. **Within UTSA Advising.** Within advising, groups like the AAC and directors were rated positively on communication and transparency. Many seem to appreciate the steps that the AAC has taken to be more transparent and share information, including placing their notes on the I:drive and sharing updates by email and at the all-advising meetings. Since directors do not send updates as a group, it was mentioned that communication and transparency tends to vary. Some mentioned that their director is very open with them, but it was noted that not all are as transparent. Advisors are often aware of the general state of things, but they would prefer more transparency about advising issues and information. For instance, they would like to know the exact caseload averages to better understand how the reassignments in March made things more equitable.

   While communication from the AAC and directors could always be improved, the greatest concern regarding communication in advising is between advising centers. Communication and transparency for the advising centers was rated less positively with only 2% rating it as “excellent” and ~34% rating it as “good.” Additionally, the fourth most mentioned need for collaboration was among advising centers. Some survey respondents mentioned that many are simply concerned about their own center and do not consider how decisions impact UTSA Advising as a whole. Two specific topics that need improvement are the way information is distributed and ensuring that uniform practices are followed. These issues have resulted in inconsistencies that have been noticed by both students and staff.

When information is left to trickle down to advisors, it does not always reach all that need it or it becomes distorted resulting in differing interpretations or practices. Currently, email is often used to distribute information, however, it requires staff to create individual systems of organization and can make retrieval of information difficult. Some common resources are available for advisors to reference, but they are placed in various locations. Many centers place copies of these documents in their center I:drive folders, but if they have not been verified or updated recently, advisors may be using outdated information or forms when advising students. Many would rather see further development of centralized stores of information on the I:drive and internal advising website which is similar to the recommendation made by the Task Force Report (2010). Advisors have specifically requested that common forms and their instructions as well as supplementary materials for all majors be included in a central source. Emails could still be sent to notify the advising community when additional resources become available, but placing items in the main I:drive folder or on the internal advising website would ensure that the same sources of information are consistently being used by all. Usage of the I:drive and internal advising website is further discussed in topic G. Technology.

Issues with policies and procedures was the most mentioned topic that respondents would like the AAC or Interest Groups to focus on going forward. Specifically, many would like to ensure that advising centers are on the same page, because when agreed upon procedures are not followed, it impedes communication. For instance, if notes are not placed in Global or SSC, it makes it more difficult for advisors in different offices to provide consistent information to students. The change of major process was mentioned in the responses to several different survey questions and is another example of an established procedure that is not always followed. The main issue is that students are often bounced from one center to the next, especially if their major or assigned advisor has not already been changed. Some may not be fully aware of the procedure in these cases, so further clarification may be needed.

It has been suggested that a policies and procedures manual be developed to address confusion. The benefit of having policies and procedures in a single searchable document is that advisors will not have to remember where each one is located in the catalog or information bulletin (if they are listed there). Links to their location in the catalog or information bulletin could still be provided so that advisors can refer students to the official sources. The Policies & Procedures Interest Group intended for the creation of a manual to be a long-term goal, but work could begin immediately. The manual can be developed over time since it will likely never be truly “finished.” As the accuracy of each policy or procedure is confirmed it can be added to the manual, and notifications can be sent out summarizing additions on a regularly basis (e.g. monthly). The manual would be placed on the I:drive and internal advising website to provide a backup and to give advisors a choice in how they access it.

When appropriate, standard processes can be established by the Executive Director, center directors, and AAC. For instance, it makes sense for many university-wide policies to have a single form and process. Many, however, do not want to see complete standardization that will limit each center's ability to tailor their services to their specific student populations. This is related to another current issue with communication in advising: some are reluctant to share positive results with others out of concern that the entire advising community will be forced to implement the same approach. What works for one center may not work for others, and the work that others have done on the same subject should not be dismissed in favor of one center's approach. It is important that centers be able to share best practices in a commitment-free environment without having to worry about the backlash that such discussions will have on the entire advising community. Centers should be given the flexibility to adopt pieces of a program or approach without having to fully adopt the program. While we do aim to provide a certain level of care across all of our centers, room for some customization allows advisors to develop new and innovative approaches. This is a desirable goal to further develop the professional field of advising.

The entire advising community should have the opportunity to discuss practice and be more involved in shaping their own work. Communication was the most mentioned best practice that has helped advisors be successful. Specifically, open-door policies promote an environment where advisors feel comfortable asking others questions and staff meetings give advisors an opportunity to discuss issues and make sure they are sending the same messages to students. While these practices exist at the center-level, they aren't supported on a larger scale. The monthly all-advising meetings are primarily reserved for others to speak to advising, but they could be used to increase advisor interaction. While some mentioned these meetings serve as a forum to network, others mentioned that little is shared outside of these meetings, especially regarding the special programs and initiatives that others have created. The all-advising meetings will be discussed further in topic H. Training & Professional Development.

4. **Campus offices.** There have been calls for better communication and more collaboration between advising and other campus offices for quite some time. The Interest Groups and the restructuring task force groups have both shown that interaction between campus offices leads to improved understanding and positive outcomes. Each office on campus plays a unique role in helping students, and it is important that they understand the impact that they have on others. Addressing minor issues that are easier to solve would be a good way to start forming stronger relationships between the advising community and other offices.

   Admissions was the most mentioned office that respondents would like to work with. Specifically, they would like to ensure that transcripts are evaluated and entered into the system properly to best work with DegreeWorks. This includes making sure that duplicate courses are marked and core courses are coded. Working with International Programs to improve study abroad processes was also mentioned. There were also requests to work more closely with the Orientation office (see topic I. Orientation & First-year Experience for more information).

Most respondents requested that discussions with other offices focus on clarifying the roles and responsibilities related to policies and procedures. For instance, a recent discussion with the Registrar's Office clarified that they, not advising, are responsible for tracking and exiting students that violate the gateway policy. Further clarification is needed for other policies and procedures. For example, students are often referred to advising to complete a SAP appeal despite the fact that the form specifies that the advisor section only needs to be completed if the student's aid was terminated due to exceeding the maximum attempted hours. It is unclear who refers students to advising in these cases, so offices other than advising and Financial Aid may need to be consulted. There is also disagreement on whether advisors have a role in the Time Conflict Override process. It has been mentioned that the advisor signature line was supposed to have been removed from this form altogether. Several respondents would like for advisors to be removed from several other forms as well because they do not believe that our signature is necessary or that advisors are able to significantly affect the final decision. For forms that advisors do sign, they would like further authority to make decisions.

There were also some requests to simply learn more about other offices. For instance, some respondents would like to know more about the types of financial aid students can receive and the circumstances in which that aid can be taken away from them. Others would like to receive data or examples from the Career Center that illustrate the job prospects for students of different majors.

Jump to Recommendations

G. Technology

The continual acquisition of new programs for advising has remained an issue for the past several years. The morale amongst advisors regarding technology is low due to the time it takes to learn a new program, only to find that the program will be discontinued within a short time, as was the case for AdvisorTrac, Global, and EARN. This constant turnover in platforms results in wasted time, money, and other resources. The more advisors are directly involved in the selection and implementation of programs, the better the chance these programs have of lasting.

Many of the programs were advertised as tools that would assist advisors in freeing up their time for more complex activities since they would help address routine advising duties (Advising Plan, 2012). In reality, the management of these systems creates further routine activities. For instance, constantly checking the functionality of new programs has a detrimental effect on advisor time. Some advisors regularly block their calendars to test DegreeWorks which takes time away from seeing students, completing other administrative tasks, and can be frustrating for the advisors who feel their time could be better spent on other duties.

It was suggested that some variation of the following question be asked when considering adopting new programs: “does the program either (1) do something that we can’t currently do or (2) do something that we are already doing but better?” It is also important to consider how the program should be used, which can often transform into “how will advisors be required to use this program?” Some things are reasonable to require, such as everyone’s usage of SSC for documenting notes. However, requirements are most often imposed upon advisors by administrators several levels removed from front-line advising. It is understandable that the university would want to get the most out of their investment in programs such as SSC and DegreeWorks, but these directives are not always the most effective or efficient way for advisors to do their jobs. They often turn tools into obligations. The recent DegreeWorks planner mandate is a specific example of a requirement that is an ineffective use of the program and inefficient use of advisors’ time. Requiring advisors to lock a three-semester plan for students without clear academic goals is not the kind of “complex” activity that helps students find their direction. There is value in using the planner, but it is most effective when used as a tool during advising, not as something advisors create for students without their input. The plans can be more beneficial if advisors have a say in how they are utilized.

Although many of the current advising programs will no longer be used in the coming months, it is important to ensure as few programs be used as possible. Advisors are optimistic that SSC alone will be able to perform many of the required tasks currently performed by several different platforms. Consistency of technology usage is a key concern for many, so the reduction in the number of programs could promote full utilization of those that remain. More technology training, which was the most requested training in the survey, needs to be included to support consistency. Not only does this pertain to every advisor, but the high priority the university has placed on advising technology requires continuous training.

1. **DegreeWorks.** DegreeWorks was supposed to help automate the degree tracking and auditing process, which would free up advisors for other activities and empower students to take a more prominent role in planning out their degree requirements (GRIP, 2011). Advisors would still serve to check requirements, verify student-made plans, and make exceptions when necessary, but the automation was supposed to decrease the time advisors spent creating degree plans. DegreeWorks received a mostly positive rating in the survey. It includes several new and beneficial features that were not available previously, namely that it updates automatically and students have constant access to their plans, but it does not fulfill all of the functions as advertised.

   The issues with DegreeWorks are strikingly similar to those identified with CAPP before it (Advising Plan, 2012; Task Force Report, 2010; Academic Support Report, 2006; NACADA

Report, 2005). Having to correct the issues with DegreeWorks has added duties to many advisors' workloads, which is the opposite goal of automation. Additionally, DegreeWorks crashes at times which means advisors and students do not have access to degree plans. Since DegreeWorks is supposed to assist in reducing advisor workload, the fact that it is sometimes offline is a hindrance to advisor productivity.

Also like CAPP, DegreeWorks is more useful for some majors than others. While all advisors have begun to use it more, many were, and still are, reluctant to do so due to functionality issues. For instance, DegreeWorks still does not function well for majors with a higher degree of choice. Advisors have especially seen errors with free electives, including a recent case in which a student's worksheet incorrectly showed that one additional hour of credit was needed when the required number of hours was already listed in the section.

There are also issues with how DegreeWorks gives currently enrolled courses priority over previously completed credits. This can make it appear as if a previously satisfied requirement is still needed. For example, if a student only needs 9 hours to graduate but enrolls in 12 hours to maintain full-time status, DegreeWorks will often place all 12 hours in the degree requirements if they are applicable. It will essentially "bump" a previous credit by moving it to the "additional courses" (i.e. unused credits) section. This issue is unfortunately widespread and means that a student could be misled by the information presented by DegreeWorks if they do not check their requirements before registering for future classes.

This particular issue can also impact the appearance of graduation status. For instance, a recent Spring 2016 graduation candidate completed the requirements for her degree but was enrolled in a student teaching course for the Fall 2016 semester in order to complete the teacher certification program requirements. Instead of showing that she had met the minimum requirements for her intended degree, DegreeWorks made it appear as if the student would satisfy a missing free electives requirement with the C&I 4646 course. An advisor had to manually enter an exception to exclude her "in progress" course so that her worksheet would show 100% completion. Having to manually confirm that DegreeWorks is accurate takes time and does not support the goal of automation. It is unlikely at this time that final graduation status can become an automated process based on whether or not a student's worksheet shows 100% completion.

Additional issues with DegreeWorks have included it not sorting courses into the appropriate fields, incorrectly counting courses in both the core and electives areas, and incorrectly using duplicate credits. Some of these issues are due to the incorrect coding of transfer credits in Banner. While minor actions can usually address these problems, it means that advisors have to complete tasks that fall outside of their area of responsibility.

Several survey respondents requested that further efforts be made to ensure that the worksheets are accurate for all majors. This is especially crucial to be able to use the "what-if" feature when discussing options with students or when determining whether students may make changes to their program of study according to the 75-hour policy.

Some have mentioned the lack of customization as an issue. Advisors are unable to show students how major and minor requirements might overlap in a clear way. With previous electronic degree plans (e.g. Word documents), advisors could embed minor requirements into overlapping major requirements to reduce the likelihood that students would take unneeded credits. Some respondents also mentioned that they would like to have all information on one page, be able to have the planner and worksheet pages open simultaneously, and be able to include notes on the worksheet page.

For many advisors, the DegreeWorks planner is not as efficient, customizable, or accurate as the semester plans that were used previously. It operate so slowly at times that the plans take longer to adjust than it would take to create a plan using previous methods. This is not the fault of those who have and continue to put in a significant amount of time and work into programming DegreeWorks. Instead, the issue lies with limitations of the program itself. DegreeWorks is supposed to reduce the amount of time advisors spend on these informational functions, but this particular feature only adds to the time an advisor would need. Many advisors requested further training on the planner.

The university intends to use the DegreeWorks planner for things other than advising, such as predicting course demand for future semesters. This would ideally mean using locked plans at least one year in advance to determine which courses are offered, but this is not realistic for most students. This level of planning would require constant updates due to changing student circumstances, and plans made one year out may not match the student's life circumstances one year later. For instance, many base their class choices on shifting work schedules. Changes in their personal life may also cause their academic plans to change. Academic circumstances, like failure to pass a prerequisite, can further affect the accuracy of plans. The planner also does not consider some of the most important factors that influence which courses students choose to take, namely instructor and time of day.

An alternative to better help students plan long-term would be to release proposed class schedules semesters in advance. This would allow students to base their plans on more concrete information instead of theoretical discussions that often do not match the actual class schedule that is released. It is understandable that asking faculty to commit to schedules over a year in advance is problematic, but it is similar to the expectation currently being placed on students.

2. **Student Success Collaborative (SSC).** While the SSC is fairly new to most, opinions about it seem to be mostly positive so far. The main concern voiced for this program is the quick

logout time, which will be addressed in the campus version. Additional training will be needed for the Campus version, but these efforts are already underway. Some mentioned wanting to know more about standard practices for putting in notes and tracking contacts. This is being worked on now by the SSC Workflow team. Standard documentation practices do not serve solely to help advisors communicate with each other. The NACADA Report (2005) mentions that consistent record keeping can help provide reliable data from across centers that can be used when requesting more resources and when proposing changes.

Most are eager for the Campus version to be released since it will replace both Global CRM and EARN. The advising community is hopeful that the early alert feature of SSC will be implemented more thoughtfully than EARN. Issues advisors wish to avoid include receiving alerts throughout the semester instead of at predetermined times, making advisors the default contact for all issues, and not having clear expectations of how advisors should respond to alerts.

3. **Global CRM.** Global, like DegreeWorks, has not functioned properly from its initial release. There have been issues with getting it to integrate with Outlook, and it did not update student information in a timely manner. One of the primary purposes of Global was to display student information in a single screen. While it did this to a certain extent, much of the information displayed was not useful. The notes and email/appointment tracking features were cited as the most helpful pieces of Global, because they allowed for information to be shared across centers. The area that displayed these functions was very small though and could become bloated if every email interaction was included. The advising community is optimistic that SSC can better fulfill the original purpose of Global.

4. **EARN.** EARN started out as a promising program, however, many in the advising community were disappointed with the results. It was never clear how many faculty members were taking advantage of EARN's capabilities, which directly relates to how effective of a tool it would have been. Caseloads were also not accurate. Once again, the advising community is optimistic that SSC will perform these capabilities better after the discontinuation of EARN.

5. **Other technology usage.** In recent years, there are several other ways in which technology has been used in advising. Several platforms have been used to share information across advising. Currently, Blackboard, the internal advising website, the Academic Advising I:drive folder, and specific center I:drive folders duplicate information. Advisors are unsure of which to reference at times as they all house different pieces of information and some are more up-to-date than others. A decision of which of these platforms to use should be made. The I:drive and the internal advising website likely offer the best combination of features.

   The I:drive has remained a constant reliable tool for several years. Respondents reported high usage, and it received the second highest rating of any technology resource currently in use. Key features include it not requiring any additional log-in to access it and the ease with which content can be shared with others without having to complete a tedious process for adding, deleting, or modifying content. Specifically, utilizing the main Academic Advising I:drive folder would be useful because it would ensure that the same forms are being used by all advisors as opposed to those in the specific center I:drive folders. The internal advising website is also useful since it can provide links to what would theoretically be the most up-to-date forms posted by other offices. The website could also serve as a backup for forms and resources in case the I:drive is ever unavailable. It too does not require additional log-in information in order to access it, but only the website administrator would be able to edit the content. All of this said, the management and organization of the I:drive needs to be improved which could potentially include creating a guide as to what information is available there. Steps would also need to be taken to ensure that the internal advising website does not develop some of the same organizational issues as the I:drive and Blackboard.

The advising community has voiced interest in having resources that would allow them to be completely paperless and allow for automatic routing of forms. Using programs like DegreeWorks and SSC in conjunction with the I:drive and internal advising website could ensure that information will still be accessible to advisors regardless of internet outages or intermittent DegreeWorks functionality. It has also been requested that further technology resources for students and advisors be developed. This could include a chat feature, online advising tools, and a notification system for walk-ins.

Jump to Recommendations

H. Training & Professional Development

One goal of the 2020 Blueprint is to offer exceptional advising. The Advising Plan (2012) mentions training as a key way to improve the quality of advising. Survey respondents agree that training is important since it was the third most mentioned practice that helps advisors be successful. Given this fact, it is concerning that training is also the third most mentioned topic that respondents want addressed. Many advisors feel they do not have enough time for training or professional development. It is crucial that UTSA be an organization that values the development of its employees. Students, advisors, and the university can all benefit from a greater level of professionalism in its advising staff. This would positively contribute to advisor retention because advisors would feel that their individual development matters to the university. There are a number of trainings advisors can attend at UTSA or via NACADA, but all directors must prioritize these opportunities for their staff. Many advisors are committed to professional development, and understand the numerous benefits to it. However, they feel that the disparate caseloads still contribute to some centers having more time than others for training and professional development opportunities.

There is a great deal of contention concerning the monthly all-advising meetings. The meetings can be characterized by topic: general information on how colleges/departments/offices work, discussions on policies or procedures, and teambuilding activities. Many feel that their time would be better spent in the office working with students or catching up on administrative tasks. Often times the presentations from colleges/departments/offices are not relevant for many advising centers. For example, the College of Engineering updates, while informative for all, were more relevant for only a few centers. Respondents would prefer these types of presentations to be optional since not everyone works with the specific student populations discussed.

Suggested topics that would apply more broadly to all advising centers include, but are not limited to, advising theories, stress management, time management, and information about Financial Aid. While some mentioned the updates on policies and procedures being helpful, these meetings still do not fit the definition of "professional development" when compared to the knowledge and skills learned at a conference. Many advisors tend to find the teambuilding activities unproductive, but they could potentially be done in a more constructive way. One suggestion was to make these activities more appropriate and useful. For instance, having advisors complete a strengths or personality assessment (e.g. True Colors, Keirsey, or StrengthsQuest) would allow them to learn more about themselves and others. This would improve understanding of one another's strengths and preferences as they relate to the work environment, which in turn would improve teamwork.

The most requested training mentioned in the survey is technology training. The requests and comments dealing with technology will be addressed further in topic G. Technology. The second most mentioned training request was for opportunities to shadow other advisors, be assigned a mentor, or simply to engage more with advisors from other centers. Many suggested that Advisor Swap be re-implemented and expanded to include offices outside of advising.

New Advisor Training (NAT) was another topic mentioned. It is now being offered every semester, but depending on when a new advisor is hired, they might have to wait many months before they participate in NAT. Many requested online modules so that they can access training materials immediately after they are hired. These online resources could also serve as a permanent reference for all advisors to utilize. This suggestion was also made in the Advising Plan (2012) and the 2014 AAC Report.

Funding to attend or participate in professional development, webinars, and other training opportunities presents another issue. Barbara Smith has encouraged all advisors to submit proposals to present at state, regional, and national advising conferences, however funding may not allow all that are accepted to attend. Also, given the heavy workloads, advisors find little time to write proposals and create presentations. It has been suggested that the monthly all-advising meetings be used as a forum to discuss potential presentation topics and to share best practices with newer staff members. This might also allow fellow advisors to identify similar interests and potentially collaborate on presentations. Again, utilizing the all-advising meetings for discussion on topics which apply to all advisors is something that has been mentioned by many members of the advising community.

Some no-cost professional development opportunities exist and should be publicized to advisors. These opportunities are not adequate substitutes for conference attendance, but they can still allow advisors to obtain new knowledge or skills. For instance, advisors from across the nation have hosted free online presentation sessions through NACADA. These sessions typically last one hour and are similar in nature to presentations at conferences. Starting in August, university employees will also have access to on-demand training materials through Skillsoft. The materials in Skillsoft will not be advising specific but could still be useful. A wide range of topics are covered including technology, leadership, project management, and communication. These resources can usually be accessed in several different ways including through online videos, books, articles, and even online courses.

Jump to Recommendations

I. Orientation & First-year Experience

In recent years, the university has placed a significant focus on the experience of students from orientation through the end of the first year. The current advising structure eliminated the advising center that was dedicated solely to serving all first-year students, and, as a result, the changes in recent years to both new student orientation and the first-year experience have had a significant impact on all of advising. These topics have garnered considerable attention in meetings and appeared frequently in the survey responses. Overall, little of the university's efforts and discussions have focused on how advising can best serve these students.

1. **New Student Orientation.** Orientation and Family Programs was the third most mentioned office that survey respondents would like to collaborate with. They would especially like to focus on the advising portion of orientation as the new structure for Summer 2016 has substantially impacted advising. They feel that feedback from advising has not been considered when shaping the activities or structure of orientation.

   While summer 2015 orientation had its issues, especially for centers charged with seeing high numbers of students, there are more significant issues with the new structure. Of primary concern is the expanded time commitment to two full days per week. Centers have traded one presentation and a full day of consecutive appointments for two presentations and two days of orientation appointments. This means there will be less time to devote to continuing students and other activities, and it does not address the issue of burnout for centers that see higher numbers of students at orientation.

The new structure also means that there will be less time available to address registration issues, such as TSI and health services holds, before students meet with their advisor. Furthermore, when the pre-advising presentation was done the day before appointments, students had the opportunity to utilize online resources in order to prepare a schedule the evening before their appointments. While not all came to their appointments prepared with a potential schedule, the new structure ensures that even fewer will likely do so.

Survey respondents believe that the new structure has shifted the orientation experience away from academic and student support services. The newly implemented idea is to have students complete online modules or view videos embedded in emails before coming to orientation, but there is nothing requiring them to do so. Students who have completed the online orientation program in the past often do not enter their advising appointment with the same amount of familiarity of registration processes as those who complete the in-person version. These students often require one-hour appointments in order to adequately cover the material not learned from the online program. If this year's online modules and emails are similarly ineffective, they will not offset the time lost in this year's program. Efforts will need to be made to determine how effective the modules and emails are and whether or not students are actually viewing them prior to orientation.

Although unrelated to the structure of the new orientation model, another challenge of orientation is making sure that students are seeing the correct advising center. The primary reason for this issue is students switching majors prior to or during orientation. Students that switch their major prior to orientation are supposed to be able to change their orientation group to the appropriate advising center, but there have been some problems with this process. Many students still appear on the original advising center's list of students even after their major has been changed. It is unclear if this is due to failure on students' part to change their orientation reservations or due to issues with the online reservation system. Either way, it leads to advisors having to advise outside of their primary areas of expertise until a student can see their new advisor. While freshmen may take some of the same courses regardless of their major, each major influences which courses are more critical to start sooner.

For students coming in with previous credits, the issue of advising outside of one's area of expertise becomes even more problematic. While advisors can easily determine which courses a student qualifies for by checking prerequisite in the catalog, they may not be familiar with the content and rigor of the major courses which may influence how appropriate they are for a first-time freshman. For instance, HIS 2003 (Historical Methods) likely shouldn't be attempted during a student's first semester even if they have already earned credit for both freshman composition courses before graduating high school. They would qualify for this course, but the intensity of the requirements may be overwhelming for a student not yet accustomed to the demands of college-level coursework.

2. **First-year experience.** With the creation of a common first-year experience for all students, the university has sought to support first-time students beyond orientation. Although a core requirement (AIS 1203) and peer mentoring (UPM 1000) were established as distinct initiatives of the first-year experience, there have not been clear plans regarding the advising of first-year students. One advising-specific component, the use of ENGAGE results, has had little impact given that many students did not agree with the results. They reported not putting much though into their responses when completing the assessment. It is unclear if the university has done any independent analysis to determine whether the ENGAGE results are a good predictor of academic success for UTSA students.

   The Restructuring Proposal (2013) mentioned focusing on quality advising during orientation and the first year in order to improve freshman-to-sophomore retention rates and help students find their ideal major, but little is mentioned regarding how that would occur. Advisors are focused on helping students achieve their goals and earn their degrees, but due to the competing demands on their time discussed earlier, little time is available for the several, in-depth interactions often needed to help students determine what they want to do. While these conversations do occur, advisors also lack the kinds of advanced resources that would enhance their ability to help students determine their direction.

   The university should consider ways in which other offices or areas can support first-year students in order to take some of the burden and expectations off of advising. Some areas already perform many beneficial services. For instance, the Career Center administers interest assessments, and the Orientation office offers ROWDYS Camp which focuses on helping students identify strengths and create long-term plans. It has also been suggested by both advisors and students that these kinds of activities be incorporated into the AIS & UPM curriculum. Advisors have not received positive feedback on AIS from students, and most students do not seem to understand the purpose or goals of the course. The curriculum could be shifted to be closer to that of the old Freshman Seminar (COR 1203) and could include topics on college success, major exploration, and campus resources and programs. It has been mentioned that this material is not "academic" enough in nature, however, the material related to college success was previously covered in COR 1203 and is currently covered in the College Success Seminar (CSS 1201). These courses not only teach students valuable skills, they also teach them the underlying theories behind them. This material could very well be considered "academic" and would support the efforts of advising and other campus services as well. AIS includes some activities that support major and career exploration, but it has been suggested that these topics and study skills be given additional focus.

   If the university believes that advising should provide additional support for first-year students, several options will need to be considered. Some have suggested that a return to the CFAC (Colleges' Freshman Advising Center) model would give first-year students advising tailored to their specific needs. Reducing some advisors' caseloads to just first-year students would release them from the burden of activities like graduation audits. This would provide time to collaborate with the First-Year Experience to offer special advising workshops or incorporate advising activities into the AIS curriculum. These advisors could be trained in the use of additional resources and programs used to aid students in making decisions on major. This system would also mean that other centers would be released from demands like orientation. The CFAC model would also prevent students from having to change advisors or centers after changing their major during their first year.

The CFAC model has its downsides though. Solely advising first-year students means that demand for advising in this center would have more extreme "peaks" throughout the year. Also, not all advisors prefer the CFAC model. They prefer the current "advisor for life" concept because it allows them to begin forming relationships with students from day one. The Restructuring Proposal (2013) noted that only 24% of students that start their studies in a declared major finish in the same major. It would be beneficial to determine how many students change their major during their first year and, more specifically, how many have to change to a different advising center. If it is a high percentage, it would make the "advisor for life" concept somewhat irrelevant.

Because it is unlikely that advising will revert back to a system that includes a dedicated first-year advising center any time soon, options for providing additional support to new students in the current structure will need to be considered. In the Fall 2015 semester, one center piloted a program aimed at increasing success for first-year students. The program involved monthly "check-ins" that each focused on different topics. Data analyzed by the Office of Institutional Research showed that students that participated in the program tended to have higher GPAs and complete a higher number of hours than those that did not, even after controlling for factors like ethnicity, gender, first-generation status, and high school rank. Some centers likely have more time to devote to these kinds of interventions, so steps will need to be taken to address the workload issues described in topic E. High Workload.

Jump to Recommendations

J. Morale

Morale is an ongoing area of concern that can vary at the individual, center, and community level. Opinions on the overall morale for UTSA advising were equally split between positive and negative. Lack of input or involvement is still a significant negative influence on morale. Other factors already discussed that negatively impact morale are lack of transparency, high workload, issues with communication, and little opportunities for advancement (many of which were also identified as detrimental to morale at the time of the NACADA Report in 2005).

Morale is considerably better now for individuals compared to the 2014 survey, primarily due to an increase in compensation. Although morale was rated higher on average for individuals and centers, individual ratings still had the highest percentage of “poor” ratings at approximately 11%. Constant demands to do more with less, little support for efforts to make positive changes, and receiving too many emails were all cited as contributing to individual burnout. Others mentioned that their morale has been affected by being understaffed but that it should improve as new staff are trained. Ratings were more positive for centers due to the support received from colleagues. An issue for some centers has been turnover which leads to a higher workload for those who remain. While it is encouraging to see the improved ratings compared to previous years, morale constantly shifts based on each decision or mandate. Considerable attention should be given to assessing and maintaining a high level of morale.

Jump to Recommendations

Complete List of Recommendations

The following is a complete list of recommendations organized according to the discussion topics. Many are general in nature, but specific strategies and suggestions to accomplish the recommendations can often be found in the corresponding discussion topic.

Topic A. Advisor Retention & Turnover	
A.1	Finish developing the survey to determine the reason(s) why advisors leave UTSA Advising.
A.2	Send the survey to those that leave UTSA Advising and address issues reported as contributing to advisors' decisions to leave UTSA Advising.
A.3	Continue to use OIR data to monitor advisor turnover on 1-year & 2-year cycles (beginning either Dec. 31st or Jan. 1st to avoid overlap of data). Use the internal advisor directories to capture 100% of turnover or movement within advising.
Topic B. Advisor Compensation	
B.1	Continue to monitor advisor salary levels to ensure that a large gap in pay does not once again develop between UTSA Advising and other similar positions, both at UTSA and in the local area.
B.2	Consider raising the minimum salaries for Academic Advisor II, III, and IV positions to create incentives for advisors to remain in advising.
B.3	Consider non-salary compensation options, like not requiring advisors to be present for skeleton crew days.
B.4	Determine how advising could negotiate salaries based on education and experience.
Topic C. Career Ladder & Advancement	
C.1	Unfreeze the career ladder in order to grant overdue promotions and support advisor retention.
C.2	Specify the roles and responsibilities of advisors at each level of the career ladder.
C.3	Develop a suggested training program to support advisor development as they move through the career ladder.
C.4	Remove barriers, such as reclassifying positions and limiting the number of advisors at each level, which block career ladder promotions for qualified advisors.
C.5	Examine the career ladders and promotion systems of other institutions for ideas and best practices.
Topic D. Advising Funding	
D.1	Increase transparency of how advising funds are used to address concerns and reduce speculation.
D.2	Identify alternative sources of funding that are not dependent on enrollment.
D.3	Review the current usage of advising fees for cost-saving measures that can be reassigned to support the human capital in advising.
Topic E. High Workload	
E.1	Make necessary administrative duties as efficient as possible.
E.2	Determine which administrative tasks could be performed by other offices.
E.3	Limit mandates from university leaders and offices to those that are absolutely necessary and that emphasize beneficial practices such as in-person contact.

E.4	In addition to caseloads, use contacts and availability to examine inequality in workload between centers.
E.5	Identify, and address if possible, degree requirements, prerequisites, or processes that cause some majors to see advising in higher numbers for "technical" problems.
E.6	Consider how changes in appointments or walk-ins could change student demand.
E.7	Develop a consequence system to discourage "no shows."
E.8	Make time for important, but not urgent, tasks like setting schedules, reflecting on service, and discussing best practices with colleagues.
E.9	Release class schedules earlier to reduce demand during peak times.
Topic F. Communication & Collaboration	
F.1	Eliminate barriers to communication by increasing contact between advisors and administrators. For instance, by holding regular (semesterly) meetings with the AAC.
F.2	Include AAC representatives and center directors in future ad hoc groups on advising.
F.3	Improve understanding and buy-in by being more transparent about the justification behind any mandates or decisions from university leadership.
F.4	Ensure that communication flows in a continuous loop by providing regular feedback to the advising community.
F.5	Remain solution-focused and professional when discussing issues with administrators.
F.6	Highlight how advising's efforts and accomplishments support student success and university goals.
F.7	Ensure that all departments consult advisors on program changes, catalog revisions, and other academic issues.
F.8	Provide advisors with prompt notification of any changes in policies or requirements related to degree requirements.
F.9	Establish and enforce consistent procedures for the routing of forms and petitions for all academic departments and colleges.
F.10	Establish the I:drive and internal advising website as the primary means by which to share information within advising and as the official location in which to store reference materials in order to promote consistency across advising.
F.11	Enforce agreed upon procedures and practices.
F.12	Create a policies and procedures manual.
F.13	Balance standardization and customization to encourage efficiency, effectiveness, and innovation.
F.14	Increase opportunities for staff to discuss best practices, address concerns, and socialize.
F.15	Provide opportunities for advising and other offices to discuss issues and share information.
F.16	Work with Admissions to ensure that transcripts are evaluated correctly and in a timely manner.
F.17	Clarify responsibilities for university forms and adjust signature lines as needed.
Topic G. Technology	
G.1	Involve advisors in the selection and implementation of platforms.

G.2	Do not mandate 100% utilization of platforms if it works against efficiency and effectiveness of practice.
G.3	Address functionality issues with the DegreeWorks worksheet.
G.4	Have advisors work with USSTS to make sure that all worksheets display accurate degree requirements.
G.5	Determine why the DegreeWorks planner operates slowly at times.
G.6	Develop a specific strategy for the use of early alerts in SSC.
G.7	Improve the organization and management of the I:drive.
G.8	Use technology to become entirely paperless and support online advising resources.
Topic H. Training & Professional Development	
H.1	Use the monthly all-advising meetings for topics that are more relevant to all of advising and to encourage advisors to develop or present conference presentations.
H.2	Re-implement Advisor Swap.
H.3	Address accessibility of New Advisor Training through the use of online tools.
H.4	Expand opportunities to attend national and regional conferences.
Topic I. Orientation & First-year Experience	
I.1	Involve advising in orientation planning efforts to improve the effectiveness of activities and address issues with workload.
I.2	Address the issues with student major changes prior to orientation, including those resulting from students being denied admission to programs (e.g. Architecture).
I.3	Determine whether the ENGAGE results predict academic success.
I.4	Consider how advising and other offices can work together to provide additional support services for first-year students.
I.5	Consider whether changes to the first-year experience, especially in AIS, could benefit student success.
I.6	Determine how many students switch majors within the first year and how many of those students must switch advising centers.
I.7	Determine the structure and activities that will best help advising serve first-year students.
Topic J. Morale	
J.1	Expand morale boosters used by centers, such as socials, lunch events, and teambuilding, to all-advising events.
J.2	Create opportunities for advisors to provide feedback on ways to improve the corporate culture.

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IV. Conclusion & Action Steps

We recognize that this report is often focused on what isn't working rather than what is working. This is partially due to the significant impact that these issues can have on advising. Positive trends have been observed in several areas, but the advising community remains guarded about how the overall university culture affects advising. While the Ad Hoc group is a cause for concern, many are hoping that the positive changes that have occurred in the past two years are also a sign that this group will be different than the last. Action steps for various groups are listed below.

AAC or Interest Groups:

- Discuss the survey results and report with the administration, the Ad Hoc Advising Group, and the advising community.
- Revisit the recommendations regularly and determine the most appropriate person or group to act on each.
- Provide opportunities for advisor feedback, including the biannual survey & open forums.
- Relevant recommendations: A.1, A.2, A.3, B.1, C.3, D.3, E.1, E.2, E.6, E.7, F.1, F.5, F.6, F.9, F.10, F.12, F.14, F.15, F.16, F.17, G.8, G.9, H.2, I.4, I.6, I.7, J.1.

Advising Community:

- Take advantage of opportunities to offer feedback to the AAC, center directors, the Executive Director, and executive university leadership.
- Take ownership over work by proactively addressing issues.
- Share ideas and best practices with the entire advising community.
- Relevant recommendations: E.1, E.2, E.5, E.6, E.7, E.8, F.5, F.6, F.10, F.14, G.4, G.8, G.10, I.7, J.1.

Advising Leadership (e.g. Executive Director & center directors):

- Communicate information quickly and clearly to the advising community.
- Collaborate with the AAC on projects, initiatives, and trainings.
- Promote cross-center communication, collaboration, and teamwork.
- Relevant recommendations: A.2, A.3, B.1, B.2, B.3, B.4, C.1, C.2, C.3, C.4, C.5, D.1, D.3, E.1, E.2, E.4, E.6, E.7, E.8, F.1, F.3, F.4, F.6, F.9, F.10, F.11, F.12, F.13, F.14, F.15, F.16, F.17, G.1, G.2, G.3, G.4, G.5, G.6, G.7, G.8, H.1, H.2, H.3, H.4, I.4, I.7, J.1.

Executive University Leadership or Ad Hoc Advising Group:

- Discuss the survey results and report with the AAC.
- Engage in regular discussions with the AAC, center directors, and advising community.
- Ensure that policies and procedures are consistent and support students/advisors.
- Relevant recommendations: A.3, B.2, B.3, B.4, C.1, C.4, C.5, D.2, E.1, E.2, E.3, E.5, E.9, F.1, F.2, F.3, F.4, F.7, F.8, F.9, F.13, F.15, G.1, G.2, G.6, I.1, I.2, I.3, I.4, I.5, I.6, I.7, J.2.

Appendixes

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Office of Institutional Research
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TO: Matt Keneson
Advising - Arts and Humanities

FROM: Brian Cordeau
Office of Institutional Research

DATE: March 11, 2016

SUBJECT: Advisor Study Update (201602015)

Methodology

The information requested came from the UTSA Define Human Resources database (12/31/2013) and PeopleSoft data files (12/31/2014 and 12/31/2015) which contain all employee job records such as title, percent time, department and other key fields for the date listed. The advisors were counted during each time frame, this includes positions which were filled, not the total number of positions available. Those advisors who were here in 2013 were then merged with the 2014 and 2015 data sets to determine what their current status was (definitions below). Note that this year Associate/Assistant Directors are excluded and Health Professions Advisor I is combined with Academic Advisor I.

Advising Status as of December 31st 2015:

Stayed in Advising – Staff member continued to be an advisor at the same or similar level.

Promoted within Advising – Staff member earned a promotion within advising. This could be a promotion to a higher level advisor or a management position within advising.

At UTSA, not in Advising – Staff member was still employed at UTSA but was in a different position.

No Longer at UTSA – Staff member was not employed at UTSA.

Results

The tables below provide below showing the counts of advisors from 2013 - 2015 and the status of the advisors over time. The first table contains the total number of advisors in 2013-2015 as of December 31st for each of those years. The second and third tables track advisors from 2013 and 2014 to determine what their status is as of December 31st, 2015.

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Table 1 Number of Advisors by Title in 2013-2015 as of 12/31

	2013		2014		2015		2013-2015	
Job Title	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**# Change**	**% Change**
Academic Advisor I	27	36%	31	44%	47	56%	20	74%
Academic Advisor II	24	32%	16	23%	13	15%	-11	-46%
Academic Advisor III	14	19%	13	18%	13	15%	-1	-7%
Academic Advisor IV	10	13%	11	15%	11	13%	1	10%
Total Advisors	75	100%	71	100%	84	100%	9	12%

The most noticeable increase during this timeframe was the increase in the number of Academic Advisors at the 'I' level which went from 27 to 47 from 2013 to 2015. At the same time there was a decrease in the 'II' position of eleven. During the timeframe above there was also a slight increase in the number of undergraduates from 24,342 to 24,462.

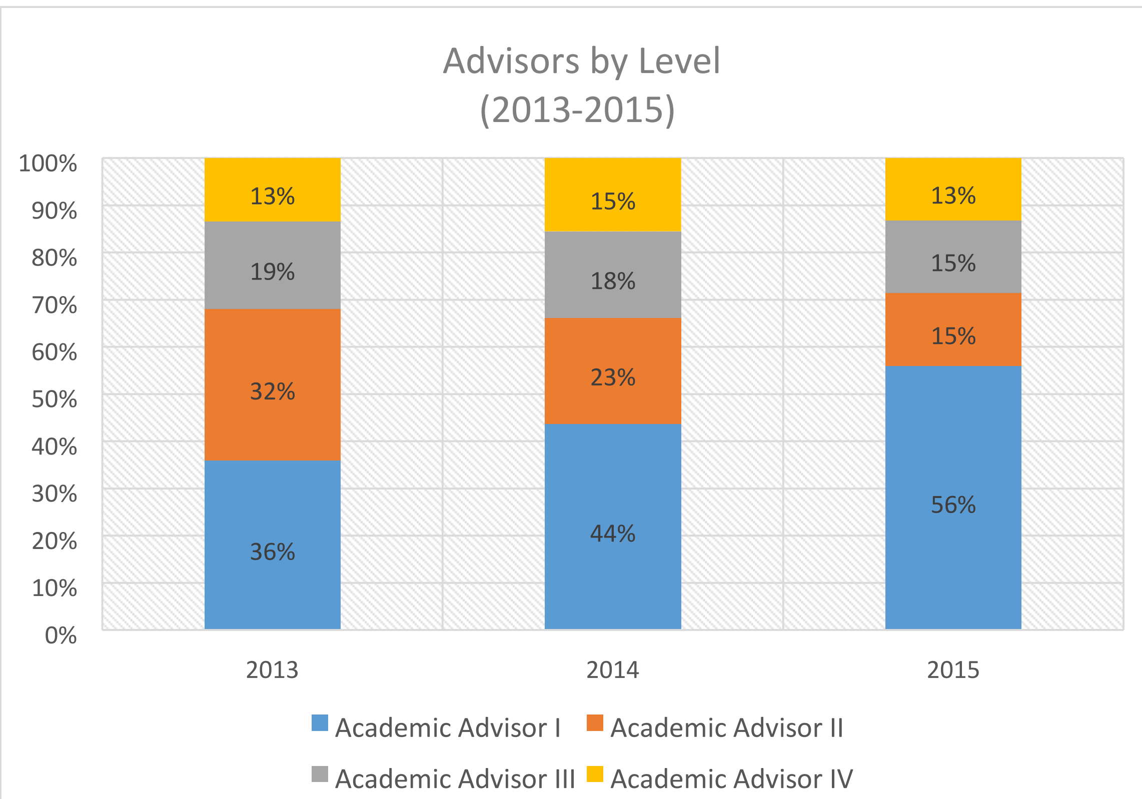

Figure 1 Advisors by Level (2013-2014)

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The figure above shows the proportion of advisors for each year by level. Of interest here is that over 50% of advisors are Advisor I, up from 36% in 2013.

Table 2 Current Status of Advisors from 2013

		Status as of 2015							
	Total	Stayed in Advising		Promoted within Advising		At UTSA, not in Advising		No longer at UTSA	
Job Title in 2013	#	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Academic Advisor I	27	9	33%	6	22%	2	7%	10	37%
Academic Advisor II	24	8	33%	5	21%	2	8%	9	38%
Academic Advisor III	14	8	57%	2	14%	1	7%	3	21%
Academic Advisor IV	10	8	80%	1	10%	0	0%	1	10%
Total	75	33	44%	14	19%	5	7%	23	31%

Of the 75 advisors in 2013, 47 (63%) were still in an advising role in 2015. The other 28 advisors were not employed at UTSA (23) or were in a different area (5). Nearly 40% of Advisors at the 'I' and 'II' level left UTSA.

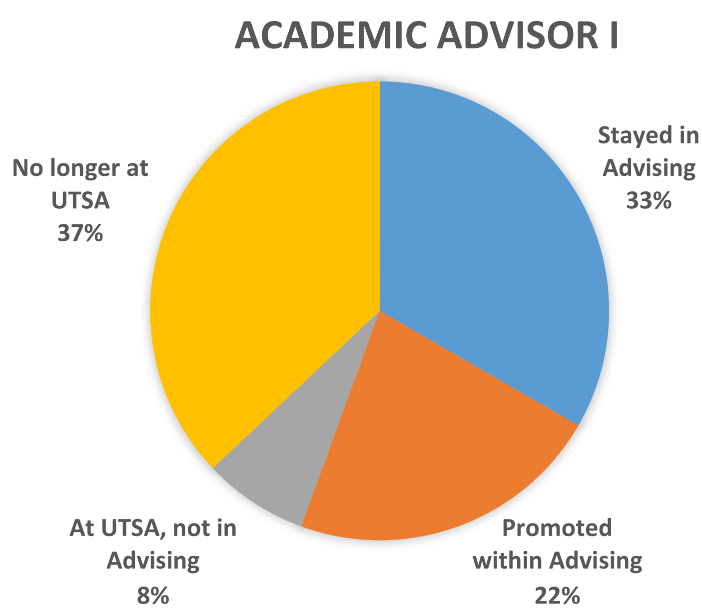

Figure 2 Current Status of Staff who were Academic Advisor I in 2013

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Table 3 2014 Status of Advisors from 2013

		Status as of 2014							
	Total	Stayed in Advising		Promoted within Advising		At UTSA, not in Advising		No longer at UTSA	
Job Title in 2013	#	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Academic Advisor I	27	12	44%	6	22%	1	4%	8	30%
Academic Advisor II	24	11	46%	3	13%	2	8%	8	33%
Academic Advisor III	14	9	64%	1	7%	0	0%	4	29%
Academic Advisor IV	10	10	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	75	42	56%	10	13%	3	4%	20	27%

The table above shows the status of advisors from 2013 as of 2014. What is interesting here is that the turnover rate from 2013 - 2014 is much higher for all positions than the rate from 2014 - 2015 in table 4.

Table 4 Current Status of Advisors from 2014

		Status as of 2015							
	Total	Stayed in Advising		Promoted within Advising		At UTSA, not in Advising		No longer at UTSA	
Job Title in 2014	#	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Academic Advisor I	31	26	84%	1	3%	1	3%	3	10%
Academic Advisor II	16	13	81%	2	13%	0	0%	1	6%
Academic Advisor III	13	12	92%	0	0%	0	0%	1	8%
Academic Advisor IV	11	9	82%	1	9%	0	0%	1	9%
Total	71	60	85%	4	6%	1	1%	6	8%

Of the 71 advisors in 2014, 64 (91%) were still in an advising role in 2015. The other seven advisors were not employed at UTSA (6) or were in a different area (1).

Please let me know if you need additional information or have any questions regarding this request.

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BACK TO A. ADVISOR RETENTION & TURNOVER

Appendix B. Career Ladder

Grade	Starting Salary	Position Title	Minimum Requirements	Progression	Job Duties
58	$38,500	Academic Advisor I	Master's *or* Bachelor's + 2 years academic advising or related experience		Direct academic advising duties
59	$40,500	Academic Advisor II	Master's + 2 years academic advising or related experience *or* Bachelor's + 4 years academic advising or related experience	At least 2 years UTSA Academic Advising Experience plus overrall rating of "SP" or "O" for the last two years of annual evaluations, and recommendation from supervisor	Direct academic advising duties
60	$42,500	Academic Advisor III	Master's + 4 years academic advising or related experience *or* Bachelor's + 6 years academic advising or related experience	Posting of position (internal or external)	Direct academic advising duties
61	$45,000	Academic Advisor IV	Master's + 6 years academic advising or related experience–or Bachelor's + 8 years academic advising or related experience + 1 annual year of academic advising at UTSA + 1 year supervisor experience	Posting of position (internal or external)	Direct academic advising duties; graduation/retention project(s) that benefit the college advising center; supervisory when Director and/or Associate Director are out of the office

Revised 12/7/15

BACK TO B. ADVISOR COMPENSATION

BACK TO C. CAREER LADDER & ADVANCEMENT