

**INSTITUTIONAL VISION
AND ACADEMIC ADVISING**

**2005 NACADA Region V Scholarship
Research Project Application**

Submitted by

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Description

NACADA's recently posted Statement of Core Values of Academic Advising affirms the importance of advising within the academy and serves as a general framework to guide its professional practice. One of the truisms presented in this document is that "effective advising requires a holistic approach... [that involves] a broad understanding of an institution and a detailed understanding of student needs." This statement clearly and succinctly reinforces the importance of synchrony between the practice of advising and the specific organizational patterns, cultural values, curricula and other critical dimensions of the home institution. It also brings to the forefront an often ignored philosophical component of the symbiotic relationship between advising offices and their college or university—institutional vision.

Institutional vision is a conception of what, at its best, a college or university is like and the kinds of educated human beings that institution is attempting to cultivate. It reflects the nature of the learning community within the college or university and defines the institution's perceived purpose, priorities and promises. Most institutions of higher education have explicitly and eloquently generated an institutional vision in the form of a Mission Statement or Vision Statement. These statements reflect a *shared* vision, uniting students, faculty and staff with the upper administration, blue ribbon committee and/or Board of Trustees that conceived it. Mission and Vision Statements tend to have a long shelf-life, serving as perpetual reminders of an institution's unique identity and aspirations. They are also living documents, occasionally being revisited or revised to reflect an ever-changing world and the new challenges and opportunities facing higher education in general or that institution in particular.

As a philosophical template for an institution, Mission and Vision Statements are generated to offer guidance to the operation of a college or university. The institutional vision reflected in these statements yields clarity amidst skepticism, blind ambition or other circumstances that may have narrowed the focus of students, faculty and staff. If they are ignored or revered as inaccessible historical documents, they serve no practical purpose. A vision-driven college or university is not an institution that is systematically organized down to its very details around a particular conception of what is important. Few academic institutions can be so totalitarian and survive. Rather, visions are intended to inspire action, clarify values and guide activity.

This project seeks to identify whether and how institutional vision guides academic advising practices and protocols in higher education. It entails an examination of institutional goals in comparison to specific college, department or program goals that tend to guide advising operations. Without purposeful reflection of the aspirations and priorities that drive an institution, students may not be cultivating the broader set of skills, sensibilities, attitudes and understandings that go beyond declared majors. Although institutional vision transcends core requirements, it is important to assess whether and how it gives form to curricular decision making and guides educational planning on all levels. Furthermore, Vision Statements can help resolve many of the controversies associated with the proper organization and operation of advising offices that have long faced advising practitioners. An institution's general approach to students and educational outcomes, as reflected in its Vision Statement, can serve to advocate the adoption of one type of advising structure (e.g., centralized or departmentalized), approach (e.g., prescriptive or developmental), delivery system (e.g., faculty-, professional- and/or peer-delivered), or procedure (e.g., intrusive or non-intrusive) over another.