

Institutional Data

The Ohio State University is a large, public, research 1, land-grant, primarily residential university that offers over 200 undergraduate majors. The university serves over 60,000 students, roughly 46,000 undergraduate students across all five of its campuses. The university advising community operates on a decentralized model whereby every college/major department has their own set of academic advisors. There are over 200 professional advisors across all areas of the institution.

Program Development

The Academic Advising Association of Ohio State (ACADAOS) was founded in 1991 to encourage greater interaction and discussion among campus professionals, faculty, and graduate students interested in advising issues at The Ohio State University. ACADAOS was recognized as an official Ohio State University organization by the Provost in 1995. This organization has been allied with the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) since 1994.

The ACADAOS Professional Development Program was first launched in the autumn of 2014 in an effort to reward and encourage academic advisors to participate in professional development. We have a number of free and local opportunities available to advisors – many of which they were already attending – and we wanted a more formalized process for tracking and recognizing those professional development activities. This program is designed to allow any advisor, regardless of the constraints of resources, to be able to participate in the program and be recognized for their efforts.

Additionally, given the various position descriptions of advisors across our campuses, we wanted to create a method by which advisors could provide evidence of the many things they do to improve the quality of service provided to students, and help administrators – few of whom have served as academic advisors themselves – understand what it means to be an academic advisor, and the important role that professional development plays in student success.

The development of the Professional Development Program also went hand-in-hand with the OSU Quality Initiative, which was an effort to improve quality of academic advising across the University as part of Ohio State's 2017 reaccreditation under the Higher Learning Commission.

We were very fortunate to have the support of Dr. Wayne Carlson, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies and Dean of Undergraduate Education. He gave us the charge to create this program, and consistently provided funding from his office to support the awards

given to the advisors. We have also been sponsored by our Registrar's office each of the past two years. Through these generous contributions, we have been able to present approximately \$2500 over the past three years to advisors participating in the program. These prizes have ranged from as small as \$25, to as large as \$250.

The Professional Development Program is maintained in OSU's learning management system, Canvas, locally branded as "Carmen" (see Appendix A for the web address to the demonstration site). The learning management system is accessible by all OSU faculty, staff, and students, so it made sense to use this platform over others. All dues-paid members of ACADAOS are added into the Professional Development Program course on Canvas so that they may begin to track their professional development activities. A new "course" is created each year so that advisors are able to restart the completion of activities and collection of points in the Professional Development Program.

Goals and Objectives

In creating the Professional Development Program, we had the following goals and objectives:

- Create opportunities for any advisor at Ohio State to grow as a professional, regardless of their access to funds and resources
- Recognize and reward advisors for sustained commitment to their own professional development
- Help administrators, faculty, staff, and students better understand the purpose and value of academic advising
- Facilitate the legitimization of advising as a profession across the University community

For individual advisors, participation in this program allows advisors to:

- Complete a self-assessment to identify areas in which you have strengths, and areas which you would like to further develop
- Create a plan that meets your time and resource availability
- Collaborate with other colleagues and share knowledge
- Gain recognition by your colleagues and your supervisor for your efforts
- Develop your own opportunities for growth and development

Program Description

Professional growth and development are crucial means of continuing to improve the services and support provided to our students. Many academic advisors have limited time and resources to devote to such activities, yet the expectation of continued education has not

wavered. The question has become: how can we provide motivation and support for professional development opportunities with steadily decreasing resources?

As members complete various activities related to professional development, they receive points for each activity. Members self-report their activities, which are logged into our online system. Members are recognized as they progress through each tier so they continue to stay motivated throughout the program (see appendix B).

Advisors are limited in how many of each type of activity they can submit; for example, an advisor can accumulate no more than 90 points through attending an event/workshop. This limiting of points is designed to encourage advisors to consider multiple types of professional development activities.

The Professional Development Program also includes a Professional Development Opportunities Library connecting advisors with resources at OSU and NACADA to help them pursue their professional development goals. This library includes information on different professional development opportunities, including grant writing, attending conferences, using data, assessment, teaching, stress management, and more.

Prior to initiating this program, ACADAOS did extensive research into other benchmark institutions and other similar professional organizations at Ohio State. We found very few examples of similar programs, and while we feel that this is a unique effort, it has great potential for application to other comparable organizations.

Procedures used for program evaluation

By the Numbers:

	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Completed Tier 1	41	**	28
Completed Tier 2	22	**	19
Reached 275+ points	8 (<i>19.5% of those who completed Tier 1</i>)	13	14 (<i>50% of those who completed Tier 1</i>)

** Due to a change in OSU's learning management system during this year, data is missing about how many advisors completed Tier 1 and 2

The top activities tracked in both the first and third year of the Professional Development Program were: Attended a conference on campus (first year: 14; third year: 15); Attended an event/workshop (11;12); Joined an on campus committee (10;12); and Joined a national organization (8;9). The fact that three of the top four activities were on campus items supports the program outcome of creating opportunities for any advisor at Ohio State to grow

as a professional, regardless of their access to funds and resources. This data also supports the individual advisor goal of creating a plan that meets advisor time and resource availability.

Qualitative Assessment:

At the May 2016 ACADAOS General Body meeting, (during the second year of the PDP), the President asked the meeting attendees to provide feedback about the program. Specifically, the leadership team wanted to know what type(s) of recognition or incentives would motivate more advisors to participate in the program. As a result of this qualitative assessment, we changed the structure of Tier 3 slightly. In the first year of the program, advisors who earned a certain number of points would receive professional development funding. Advisors were required to submit a description of their professional development activity and any receipts to the Treasurer, and then they would be reimbursed for the amount they earned through participating in the PDP. Advisors at the May 2016 ACADAOS General Body meeting agreed they would be more incentivized to participate in the program if they earned a monetary reward that could be spent on anything – not just professional development. With this in mind, we began to offer gift cards as a reward for reaching 275 points in Tier 3. Even though the dollar amount of the gift card was less than the previously offered PD funds (\$20 compared to \$50), participation in 2016 and 2017 increased over participation in 2015, so we decided to stick with this structure.

In the spring of 2016, after the second full year of conducting the program, a feedback survey was sent to all ACADAOS members. We used the feedback (listed in Appendix C) to create more opportunities for individuals who would be participating for multiple years, and started using the grading function more frequently, so that individuals could more easily keep track of their scores. Many members indicated that one of the primary reasons they joined ACADAOS was because of the professional development support and opportunities (see appendix D).

Results/Outcomes

The result of participating in the Professional Development Program has not only benefited the advisors that have chosen to partake, but the students we serve and the institution as a whole. The commitment advisors have shown to their own development has provided the students with advisors who are open to learning new and innovative approaches to assist with their educational goals. The knowledge obtained through participation in professional development has benefited the university and the staff because advisors are able to share resources and apply the information gained to the work conducted at Ohio State. Participation in the Professional Development Program gives advisors the opportunity to document and track the activities they are doing and provides an incentive to get involved in

trainings, workshops, webinars, and conferences that helps them enhance their knowledge and skill base.

The creation of the Professional Development Program has empowered advisors to take advantage of the resources and opportunities that are available to them locally and nationally, as supported by the statements included in Appendix E.

Potential for adaptation by other institutions

This program has significant potential to be adapted at any other institution in the country. In order to do so, here are the elements that would be keys for success.

Meaningful prizes and recognition

We were fortunate to have significant financial backing from the Office of Undergraduate Education and the Registrar's office. This financial support provided us with the opportunity to offer monetary prizes both large and small. However, some of the most meaningful results of participation in the program cost only the time and energy of University staff and administrators.

The letters that were sent to the supervisors of those who participated had a significant impact on the advisor's ability to educate leadership about the profession of advising, and benefit of continued professional development. These letters were hand-signed by Dr. Carlson and sent directly to the advisor's supervisor. It takes significant commitment to this program from administration in order to sustain this process.

It is also very important to consistently assess the opportunities that are provided, so that participants who are in their second year, or beyond, in the program are still finding events that help them continue to grow, not merely to collect points. Failure to do so will result in a significant decrease in their interest in continued participation.

Support from Administration

As mentioned above, in addition to the financial commitment, Dr. Carlson was quick to offer any sort of assistance that we needed to administer the program. He was a constant advocate for the advising community, and elevated ACADAOS to being the organization primarily responsible for providing professional development opportunities for advisors across our campuses.

This program's success will also be dependent on a large commitment of time and energy of those both participating in and administering the program. Administrators must be committed

to the success of all involved, so that advisors can take time away from their normal work schedules to participate. It is not realistic, nor sustainable, to expect advisors to only participate in these programs “on their own time.” We initially encountered several supervisors on our campus who felt this should be the case - despite the fact that this not an expectation of faculty or administrators. Advocating for advisor participation was yet another area where the support of Dr. Carlson was so vital. He offered to write letters or emails to those supervisors in order to articulate the importance of professional development to the success of our students.

Tracking System

It is important to have some sort of system by which advisors can submit activities performed as part of the program. We used a learning management system (LMS), powered initially by Desire 2 Learn and now powered by Canvas, so that all advisors were familiar with the system, and able to easily access and navigate the program. This system also allowed multiple members of ACADAOS to have access to grade submissions, which allowed us to distribute the work across several people.

There are many methods by which this sort of system can be implemented, including Google Docs or Forms, survey software such as Qualtrics, or simply via email and Excel spreadsheets. Whatever method is chosen, there are some important elements to consider:

- The ease and speed with which advisors can submit activities for points
- Ability for advisors/administrators to review submissions and award points
- The system must be able to track the points accumulated by participants in a way that both the participants are able to see a running tally of their points, or regular communication must be had with the participants, so that they are aware of their point totals to date.

There is not one system that works better than another. It is important to think about what systems are available at the institution, and which one of those is the best system for that campus.

Funding

Many organizations may feel as though this program’s success occurred primarily because of the amount of financial resources that have been provided. Certainly, being able to provide financial prizes have been beneficial, but the letters from Dr. Carlson have been very effective motivation for involvement in the program, as well.

For those organizations looking for ways to create additional revenue to support such a program, there are potential resources available:

- Dues - we charge our members \$10 per year to join our organization. Other institutions could consider requiring a similar small dues fee - or raising an existing one - in order to support the program
- Internal sponsorship - this can come from other units on campus, especially those who often show support for advising. Granted, on many campuses, excess dollars are scarce, but relatively small amounts, such as \$100, may not be critical for a large unit, but can go a long way to support such a program. We have also started a Fundraising Committee within our organization, whose goal is to provide additional support to the programs that we offer.
- External sponsorship - many local business and large chains are happy to provide support for such programs, especially if their support can be well publicized. We have received donations such as coupons for free meals, gift cards, and even significant discounts on food for large scale events. The level of support that we have received has been more than we expected, and we have been able to use these donations for prizes for events, or use the savings to support other aspects of the program.