Steps in Developing an Assessment Plan for Academic Advising

Webinar Handout

Overview

Academic Advising is integral to the success, retention, and persistence of our students in colleges and universities across the globe. However, in order for institutions to identify the success of the academic advising experiences of students, it is essential to have in place an assessment of academic advising plan. In addition, assessment of academic advising is key to all accreditation efforts by regional accreditation agencies and content based accreditation efforts.

NACADA Executive Director Charlie Nutt, Assessment Institute Advisory Board Chair and Faculty Rich Robbins, and Assessment Institute Faculty Members Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski and Karen Boston come to the AdvisorConnect Webinar platform to outline for participants the steps in developing an assessment plan for academic advising as well as provide hands-on examples of programs that have been implemented on college campuses.

Regardless of institutional size or advising model, this webinar is a must for all institutions who need to develop an academic advising assessment plan that focuses on student learning and program effectiveness.

## Sample Vision Statements

Oregon State University aspires to be recognized nationally for excellence in academic advising among land grant institutions.

Indiana State University will be known as an institution where every student is matched with an academic advisor dedicated to aligning student talents and ambitions with sound curricular and co-curricular choices.

The McCoy College Academic Advising Center will be a national model for excellence and innovation in academic advising. (Texas State-San Marcos)

Academic Advising at the University of Louisville aspires to be a dynamic, nationally-recognized system that sets standards of excellence focused on student learning, technological innovation, and a collaborative commitment to student success in a diverse and changing society.
From Mission to Advising Program Goals/Objectives

Mission:
The mission of Engineering Advising is to provide services to assist Engineering students in achieving their academic goals and personal successes at Cornell University.

Programmatic Goals/Objectives:
1. to provide accurate and current information
2. to work in partnership to promote student success
3. to work with students in an environment emphasizing the developmental process
4. to constantly improve our services to students
5. to promote the shared responsibility of academic advising between student & advisor
6. to evaluate and assess our programs and services

Based upon Cornell University College of Engineering Goals and Objectives

Mapping Assessment

Mapping Assessment – Complete Example Used in Webinar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT Student Learning Outcome</th>
<th>WHERE Experiences provided for learning</th>
<th>WHEN When Should Learning Occur?</th>
<th>WHEN When to Gather Evidence of Learning?</th>
<th>HOW How will you gather evidence?</th>
<th>HOW OFTEN How often will you gather this data?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student generates a Degree Audit Report</td>
<td>Orientation First Year Advising Appointment Video on Website</td>
<td>By end of first year</td>
<td>By end of first year</td>
<td>Observe appts. Number of audits run between fall and spring</td>
<td>Every semester Annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student communicates the value of an internship</td>
<td>Second Year Advising Appt. Appt. w/career services Intro to major course</td>
<td>By end of Junior Year</td>
<td>Third and Fourth Year</td>
<td>At point of graduation application Senior exit survey Alumni survey</td>
<td>Once a year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See University of Utah Mapping Assessment Chart at the end of this document.
Abbreviated Annotated Bibliography


Revised and updated version of Campbell et al's original 2005 NACADA guide to assessment in academic advising (see below). Provides a theoretical introduction to and a step-by-step process for developing an assessment program specifically for academic advising.


Suggests that student learning can be assessed indirectly through correlated measures of teaching, including the assessment of multiple dimensions of learning, use of multiple assessors, and conducting assessment over time. The processes discussed and the importance of student learning as a desired outcome makes this relevant to assessment of academic advising.


Presents academic advising as a form of teaching, emphasizing the shared skills and common competencies involved in both effective teaching and effective academic advising. Discusses the use of an academic syllabus for advising, and emphasizes the importance of identifying and assessing student learning outcomes for academic advising as is done with academic programs.


Discusses the importance of evaluation and assessment in higher education, focusing primarily on evaluation and assessment of academic programs. One of the most important aspects of this work is that the author distinguishes between evaluation and assessment, and provides a discussion of the philosophical underpinnings for conducting evaluation and assessment in higher education.

CAS Standards and Guidelines for Academic Advising website

www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/Research_Related/CAS.htm

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) is recognized as a leading authority in the identification of values, principles, and standards of practices for various facets of higher education, including academic advising. CAS offers 16 “relevant and desirable” student learning outcomes for academic advising applicable to every type of higher educational setting, as well as standards and expectations for the academic advising director and the academic advising program. These student learning outcomes (or derivations thereof) may be used as desired outcomes for advising programs, depending on the institutional and programmatic mission, goals and objectives.


An updated chapter following White (2000). Introduces the reader to the concepts of vision, mission, goals, and objectives, as well as the relational nature of such statements and their importance in strategically guiding an effective academic advising program. As it is from these identified aspects of the advising program which student learning outcomes are derived, this chapter provides an important basis for the understanding of the entire process involved in identifying and assessing student learning outcomes for academic advising.


Provides a theoretical introduction to and a step-by-step process for developing an assessment program specifically for academic advising. Included are examples and templates to walk the reader through the steps of assessment of advising.


Describes the popular methodologies used to evaluate individual advisor performance and effectiveness. Although not a discussion of assessment of academic advising, individual advisor effectiveness can serve as one of multiple forms of measurement in the assessment of student learning outcomes.

Developing an Assessment Plan

An updated chapter following Creamer and Scott (2000). The emphasis here again is on evaluation of advisor effectiveness rather than assessment of student learning outcomes for academic advising, focusing primarily on student perceptions of advisor effectiveness. Although not a discussion of assessment of academic advising, individual advisor effectiveness can serve as one of multiple forms of measurement in the assessment of student learning outcomes.


Provides an overview of the processes involved in assessment of student learning in higher education, with a focus on academic programs. The processes discussed and the importance of student learning as a desired outcome makes this relevant to assessment of academic advising.


Discusses the components of an effective advising program and the differences between process evaluation (assessment) and outcome evaluation (assessment) of advising programs. Includes a discussion of the importance of multiple forms of data measurement in these processes as well as considerations in planning and conducting assessment of advising.


Offers a systematic and collaborative process of assessing for student learning including but going beyond the classroom. Student learning is viewed as a core process of institutional learning, with assessment a necessary activity to improve educational practice and student learning. Included are clearly written definitions and examples of various assessment terms, practices, and resources including worksheets and exercises.


Describes the role of assessment in the Total Quality Management approach to higher education that was popular in the 1980s and early 1990s. Emphasizes the importance of the systematic process of assessment in improving student development and learning, using examples from specific campuses.


This article describes the similarities and differences between assessment and research, emphasizing the progression through which assessment of academic advising can evolve into a research inquiry.


Lists resources primarily for advisor evaluation with some information on assessment of advising services, including examples of evaluative instruments, surveys, and inventories developed and used by institutions of higher education, as well as standardized inventories used for evaluation of advising.

NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources [www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/Newclearinghouse.htm/#resources](http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/Newclearinghouse.htm/#resources)

Provides searchable database of thousands of articles and resources about and related to academic advising in higher education. Users can specifically search for resources on evaluation and assessment of advising.


[www.nacada.ksu.edu/AAT/NW27_4.htm#6](http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/AAT/NW27_4.htm#6)

Discusses the importance of a mission statement for academic advising regarding programmatic, institutional, and assessment purposes, and provides an introduction to student learning outcomes for academic advising (including examples), relating student learning outcomes to the advising mission statement.


Examines assessment practices in higher education including developing learning goals and objectives, involving faculty, staff, and students, selecting and designing methods, reporting and using results, and assessing the assessment program. Examples of assessment activities are provided from all types of institutions.


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*Developing an Assessment Plan*
Discusses how expanding knowledge in the fields of human learning and educational measurement can be used to improve assessment of what students know and how well they know it, as well as the methods used to make inferences about student learning. Included are principles for designing and using new kinds of assessments with examples provided.

This straightforward work discusses how the initial purpose for assessment is often based on external requirements for data demonstrating effectiveness, and how assessment processes are often designed with specific accreditation requirements in mind. The emphasis is on assessment of academic programs, but the message is clear and relevant to all areas of assessment in higher education.

Although written primarily in regard to career advising, the concepts and processes included are also used in the assessment of academic advising. This chapter discusses the reasons for conducting assessment of career advising, the differences between evaluation and assessment, and detailed concepts, steps, and processes of each. Emphasis is placed on the assessment of student learning outcomes for career advising, the mapping of the developmental and learning opportunities for these outcomes, and the use of multiple outcome measures for any single desired outcome as well as acting upon the results of assessment.

The emphasis here is on the role of institutional research in the assessment of academic advising. Whatever your institutional type, there is likely existing relevant institutional data that can serve as one of the multiple measures for any given desired outcome for academic advising. For example, if assessment of advising includes data on retention rates, grade point averages, graduation rates, or similar information, these are typically under the purview of institutional assessment. Benchmarking data with peer institutions or programs may also be available, as may be relevant data from any of the national student surveys. Your institutional research folks need to be included as important stakeholders in your assessment efforts!

This section of the monograph chapter "Planning, Implementation, and Assessment" focuses on the latter topic, offering an introduction to and summary of the steps involved in the assessment of academic advising. The focus is on how to design an effective assessment plan for advising using programmatic goals to develop desired process and delivery outcomes as well as desired student learning outcomes, outcome measures for both types of outcomes, and the utilization of professional standards such as the CAS Standards and the NACADA Core Values to guide assessment processes.

This article discusses the reasons for conducting assessment of academic advising, the differences between evaluation and assessment, and detailed concepts, steps, and processes of each. Emphasis is placed on the assessment of student learning outcomes for academic advising, the mapping of the developmental and learning opportunities for these outcomes, and the use of multiple outcome measures for any single desired outcome as well as acting upon the results of assessment.

Introduces the importance of assessing student learning in areas of higher education beyond the academic program, including student affairs and academic advising. Discusses the importance of identifying student learning outcomes and provides a general discussion of qualitative and quantitative data in outcome assessment of student learning.

Developing an Assessment Plan

Provides a historical review of outcomes assessment in higher education and a general guide to designing, implementing, and evaluating assessment programs. Included are the topics of the role of the political context on assessment practices, factors contributing to the push for assessment, assessment as it has evolved through accrediting agencies, and suggestions for evaluating the effectiveness of the assessment effort at institutions of higher education.


Upcraft, M. L., and Schuh, J. H. (1996). Assessment in Student Affairs: A Guide for Practitioners. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Provides an overview of program evaluation, the tools to design and perform assessment in student affairs, and how to communicate the results and implement changes based on results. Included are discussions of outcome measures for programs and services, the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods, benchmarking, and professional standards.


Wholey, J. S., Hatry, H. P., and Newcomer, K. E. (1994). Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. This extensive and well-written handbook provides eight suggested methods for outcome-based program evaluations, including step-by-step descriptions of these methods, data collection and analysis procedures, and real-life examples of these programs. The authors emphasize the role of theory, examination of previous research, selection of an appropriate evaluation methodology, and the importance of realistic goals in conducting this form of research. Presented are not only the positive aspects of such programs, but also a detailed discussion of the constraints and issues involved, including examples of unexpected or negative results and how to deal with these.
Assessing academic advising is critical for any institution that wishes to improve advising services for students and create a culture that values academic advising (Cuseo, 2008). Institutions of higher education and advisors have a professional and ethical responsibility to determine if the services provided are effective in meeting the needs and goals of students and the institution (Troxel, 2008). To these ends, in May 2009 the professional advising community at Texas State University worked as a team to create an academic advising assessment plan. Advisors gathered for a two-day Academic Advising Summit to create and map student learning outcomes. Rich Robbins, chair of the NACADA Assessment Institute Advisory Board and our Summit facilitator, stated:

The most significant outcome of the two-day event was the building of a sense of teamwork, unity, and ownership of the process among the participants from the respective advising units. Assessment of academic advising efforts have put the institution “ahead of the curve” not only within the state but nationwide as well. The [Texas State] university can become a true model for assessment of academic advising for other higher education institutions (Robbins, 2009).

During this same time period, Texas State University underwent reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Part of the reaffirmation process included development of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). Our QEP theme for this accreditation cycle is “Enhancing Student Success through Personalized Advising and Mentoring.” Our academic advisors wanted to develop an assessment plan to support this QEP and to take ownership of the assessment of academic advising.

Assessment team leadership developed a structure for the Summit that allowed full participation of all professional advisors on campus. A pre-Summit meeting was held to educate advisors on the importance of assessment, student learning outcomes, and communication. The following ground rules were implemented to enhance teambuilding and ensure the full participation of everyone involved: respect others’ opinions, share and listen openly, share airtime, avoid side conversations, adhere to time frames, and take responsibility for your own learning. On the first day of the Summit, advisors formed small teams to develop learning outcomes for the following three advising goals derived from our QEP:

1. Ease the transition to the university experience
2. Encourage student engagement for intellectual and personal growth
3. Teach students to use resources and relationships to maximize their educational and personal potential.

Each goal was shared by two teams. Following an initial brainstorming activity, teams with identical goals worked together to identify the top five student learning outcomes developed from each group’s initial work. Next, all teams came together and each advisor identified three preferred student learning outcomes for each goal. This resulted in a group consensus of three student learning outcomes for each advising goal. During the second day of the Summit, each group mapped out the student learning outcomes and identified multiple measures for each outcome. This team approach helped advisors understand how assessment data is used and allowed advisors to be involved in the process from planning through implementation to data review. Importantly, the Summit and the resulting university-wide assessment plan connects to the institution’s strategic planning process with the goal of improving academic advising services.

The teamwork principles used in our summit can be applied to the development of an assessment plan on other campuses. Effective teamwork principles that increase productivity are well documented in business and higher education settings. Grant and Moore (2008) noted that characteristics of successful teams include: a clear elevating goal, a results driven structure, competent team members, a unified commitment, a collaborative climate, standards of excellence; external support and recognition, and principled leadership. Our shared goals guided us in the process, including our desire to claim ownership of the assessment of academic advising. Additionally, academic advising leaders at Texas State wanted to involve all advisors to create a sustainable assessment process that would support the QEP and SACS accreditation.

The Advising Summit provided a results-driven format that allowed each academic advisor to learn, participate, and provide input on how to assess and improve advising services. All advisors were able to participate in developing and mapping student learning outcomes for assessment. Texas State University has a diverse and committed group of
professional advisors who are dedicated to providing excellent academic advising services to our students. The assessment plan created a framework for data-driven decisions for improving advising services. As advisors learned about the importance of assessment and began creating and mapping student learning outcomes, the level of commitment and collaboration increased significantly. The standards of excellence that guided this team process included a commitment to professional excellence and a desire to support both the QEP and the university’s reaffirmation of SACS accreditation. Upper level administrators provided leadership and support through this process.

The Advising Summit at Texas State resulted in a unique team approach involving an unusually large number of stakeholders. This arrangement allowed for the professional advising community to take ownership of the assessment process and create an effective, sustainable assessment plan. This accomplishment and the resulting sense of teamwork increased advisor enthusiasm for assessment. Engaging this large group of advisors increased the knowledge, experience, and idea sharing for improving the assessment process and advising services. Following the Summit, there was a significant increase in the number of advisors who wished to assist in planning, data collection and analysis, report writing, and the development of action plans for the improvement of advising services. The Texas State professional advising community hopes that the process we developed will be valuable for our colleagues. Additional resources for developing and sustaining academic advising assessment are available in the NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources website at www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/Links/assessment.htm.

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References


### Student Learning Outcomes

| Key: Learning Outcomes Introduced (I), Reviewed (R), Understood or Demonstrated Competency (C) |

#### University College Advising

#### Mapping Assessment

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freshmen</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Freshman Advising Appr.</th>
<th>Program Evaluation</th>
<th>LEAP Module</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
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<table>
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<th>Survey of Student</th>
<th>Survey of Practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>Understanding of Mathematics</td>
<td>Survey of Practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Student Learning Outcomes

- Introduced (I)
- Reviewed (R)
- Understood or Demonstrated Competency (C)

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**Note:** The image contains a complex table and grid that outlines various aspects of student learning outcomes and assessment processes. The table is structured with different categories such as Transfer, To U, Returnning, Program, Freshmen, and Center, each with associated outcomes and processes. The key for understanding the outcomes includes indicators for introduced, reviewed, and understood or demonstrated competencies.