



# President's Task Force on Advising Recommendations Report

October 16, 2023

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## Foreward

Dear Kean Community,

When I first called for a President's Task Force on Advising, I knew we needed stakeholders from across the university to come together and engage in this important work. Like our new mission and core values, this work could not be done in a vacuum. Moreover, it required us to balance a sense of urgency to optimize the advising experience for our students with an understanding that this kind of deep systems work requires time, patience, and a very deliberate process.

Today I am proud to share this report that represent the culmination of countless hours of hard work undertaken by the Task Force. A team of colleagues from all corners of our university community came together and worked tirelessly for over a year to examine our advising structure, roles, responsibilities, and impact for students. This was a massive undertaking, and I thank Dr. Joseph Youngblood, Senior Vice President for Transformational Learning and External Affairs, and Dr. Mensah Peterson, Associate Vice President for Student Success, for serving as co-chairs and ensuring that the process was transparent and inclusive.

Although this report is the culmination of the Task Force's work to date, it is better viewed as a beginning than an ending. This report, and the recommendations it contains, represent the first step toward making changes to our advising structures here at Kean. Changes this major cannot be implemented overnight. I ask for your support and patience as we begin to operationalize these recommendations. Together we will deliver the most impactful advising possible for our students. Please join me in continuing this journey. I am excited to see the positive changes to come.

Sincerely,



Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D.

# Executive Summary

## RECOMMENDATION #1

### Ensure Equitable and Accessible Advising Delivery

- **Recommendation 1.A.**

All new, incoming undergraduate students (freshmen and transfers) should receive academic advising upon their entry into the institution by the Center for Advising, Persistence and Success (CAPS) staff of professional advisors. Students will be assigned a faculty advisor once they earn 60 credits.

- **Recommendation 1.B.**

Students admitted through Special Admission programs, including SUPERA, EOF, Bridge to Success, and Center for Veteran Student Success will be assigned a program advisor/counselor at the University, in their program, who will remain with the student throughout their undergraduate career at Kean. These student populations are not assigned a CAPS advisor at all, but will be assigned a faculty advisor once they earn 60 credits.

- **Recommendation 1.C.**

Academic major programs with highly structured, cohort-guided operations may opt to advise their students upon entry until graduation.

- **Recommendation 1.D.**

All undergraduate students with an intended or declared major have a faculty advisor assigned upon earning 60 or more credits.

- **Recommendation 1.E.**

Further enhance, recognize, and support the Center for Advising, Persistence, and Success (CAPS) as the University's advising hub.

- **Recommendation 1.F.**

Centralize training for all advisors (faculty, professional, and program) provided annually and regularly to promote consistency, clarity, and collegiality.

- **Recommendation 1.G.**

The New Student Orientation (NSO) will continue to be coordinated by the Division of Student Affairs. However, should incorporate tenets of academic advising and its importance on their pathway to completion.

- **Recommendation 1.H.**

Undecided students will be advised by a CAPS professional advisor. In accordance with a revised Declaration of Major practice, students will select an intended major by the time they have attempted/earned 45 credits at Kean University. All students are assigned a faculty member once they have earned 60 credits.

## **RECOMMENDATION #2**

### **Provide clear lines of communication of academic advising practices to University constituents (i.e. students, faculty and staff).**

- ***Recommendation 2.A.***

The institution should utilize one advising platform to ensure that there is less confusion for institutional constituents regarding advising and registration.

- ***Recommendation 2.B.***

Determine what students' preferred method of communication is and needs to be when disseminating and sharing essential academic advising information.

- ***Recommendation 2.C.***

Ensure that advising practices and processes are clearly communicated to students at the University.

- ***Recommendation 2.D.***

Establish transparent ways to communicate how students can resolve issues, concerns or problems.

## **RECOMMENDATION #3**

### **Ensure that the policies, procedures and practices are equitable, student-centered and look to increase student outcomes.**

- ***Recommendation 3.A.***

Ensure, a University-wide, use of academic plans are established for all students, through the institutional advising platform.

- ***Recommendation 3.B.***

Streamline and enhance the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) processes at Kean University.

- ***Recommendation 3.C.***

Improve the Declaration of Major policy and procedures to improve student outcomes and degree completion at Kean University.

- ***Recommendation 3.D.***

Enhance the Kean University Leave of Absence (LOA) process is by providing students with a more comprehensive and accommodating system that meets their diverse needs.

## RECOMMENDATION #4

### **Overhaul all advising technologies and platforms to provide easy access to necessary curriculum and student support information.**

- **Recommendation 4.A.**

Ensure that the EAB Navigate platform breaks down many of the administrative hurdles to provide clear, consistent and easily accessible information about students seeking and needing advisement, registration, and other support services.

- **Recommendation 4.B.**

Curriculum software and degree audits (either through Student Planning and or Navigate) MUST be able to track student majors AND minors as a matter of equity for Kean students and to accommodate pending curriculum revisions.

- **Recommendation 4.C.**

Kean must assign oversight and or periodic program review/assessment of End User technologies to a single entity/stakeholder to ensure they meet the above stated goals.

- **Recommendation 4.D.**

Overhauled technologies and functionalities must be accessible through a single portal or landing page with the following functionalities, essential to the End Users, as outlined in Table 4, below:

## RECOMMENDATION #5

### **Provide advisors with a standardized advisor training program and opportunities to gain certifications to develop the knowledge and skills needed to help students persist to graduation at Kean University.**

- **Recommendation 5.A.**

The advisor trainings should have different modalities in which advisors learn from.

- **Recommendation 5.B.**

An assessment component should be developed for the advisor training program. This would allow the professional development opportunities to be assessed for effectiveness. The assessment can be part of the current yearly evaluations for professional advisors “to assess the understanding of various job duties, set goals, and evaluate any changes that need to be made”. Faculty advisor assessment would need further discussion.

- **Recommendation 5.C.**

Prizes and rewards should be incorporated into the training to incentivize advisors learn and professionally develop.

- **Recommendation 5.D.**

We also recommend that a training manual or advisement handbook be developed as well as an online repository to house subject specific trainings. A process for updating the handbook needs to be implemented to ensure that it is kept current and relevant. We recommend that the previously recommended committee oversees this process.

- **Recommendation 5.E.**

An extension of a university committee on advisement should be created, with representatives from different colleges and units who will be responsible for providing updates and recommendations. In addition, the new Center for Teaching and Learning can assist with developing or recommending training materials and modules guided to faculty.

## Introduction and Charge

The President's Task Force on Advising began in January of 2022. The charge of the Task Force was to address the overarching concerns of the advising experiences students were having as well as address Kean University's student success and student outcomes of persistence, retention and graduation rates.

Grounded in the institutional Mission, Strategic Goals and the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), the President's Task Force on Advising looked to integrate evidenced-based research, best practices and comparative institutions into the fabric of advising at Kean University, all while maintaining a student-centered framework.

### **The purpose of the President's Task Force on Advising was threefold:**

1. Facilitate communication and collaboration among Professional Academic Advisors and Faculty Advisors across the University
2. Improve advising processes and practices across the University to enhance student support.
3. Aid in the betterment of policies and procedures across the University as it relates to persistence, retention, and student success at Kean University.

### **Methodology**

#### **The initial task force members were comprised of the following:**

- Two co-chairs, Dr. Joseph Youngblood, Senior Vice President Transformational Learning & External Affairs; and Dr. Mensah Peterson, Associate Vice President for Student Success and Retention.
- Three professional support staff members (steering committee), Dr. Stephanie Baker, Executive Director for the Center of Advising, Persistence and Success; Peggy Thompson, Executive Assistant for the Senior Vice President Transformational Learning & External Affairs; Chantonette Lyles, Acting Director for the Office of Accessibility Services; and 25 initial task force members.

These initial members consisted of faculty, executive directors, assistant and associate academic deans, support program administrators, staff and students. Initial members were briefly surveyed and asked three specific questions about academic advising at Kean University—What are some practices and processes Kean does well? What are some practices and processes Kean can improve or enhance? What are areas the task force should thoroughly review?

Based on the feedback received by the initial members, five Content Areas were established:

- Advising Communications
- Advising Structure and Model
- Advisor Training
- Advising Policies and Procedures
- Technology and Assessment

On May 2, 2022 the University community was solicited to expand the membership of the Task Force participation in this collaborative effort. The Task Force was comprised of well over 100 members with a wealth of knowledge within higher education; historical knowledge at Kean University; and an immense amount of experience in academic advising. Again, these members consisted faculty, executive directors, assistant and associate academic deans, support program administrators, staff and students.

With respective co-chairs and members, each Content Area was responsible for 1) identifying areas to enhance regarding advising; 2) answer guiding questions based specifically on research, industry best practices, and institutional comparisons; and 3) make formalized recommendations on how to enhance the areas reviewed.

The President's Task Force on Advising met for a little over one year. The steering committee, comprised of the co-chairs and support staff, met weekly. Each steering committee member were liaisons to one specific Content Area throughout the duration of the Task Force. The co-chairs for the Content Areas, and respective members, met consistently throughout the year to work on the above. All Task Force members inclusive of the steering committee, co-chairs of the Content Areas and members collectively met approximately 3-4 times virtually to go over Task Force updates, answer questions and provide feedback regarding the direction of the Task Force.

A President's Task Force on Advising Google Sites website was developed along with two Google Drive repositories. The website housed general information regarding Task Force members, the Content Areas, a calendar, contact information, general resources and charts to the initial surveys. The Google Drive repositories housed documents from each Content Area as well. These documents comprised of list of committee members, agendas, external academic advising resources (i.e. empirical articles, e-books, assessments etc.). The Google Drive was accessible to all Task Force Members. The Google Sites website was accessible to anyone in the campus community that had the link.

In November of 2022, the President's Task Force on Advising held its first Advising Lecture Series Retreat. The executive team along with members from each of the five content areas listened to the keynote speaker, Dr. David Hood, who held roles as Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at Minnesota State University, Mankato and a senior leadership positions in Academic Affairs and Student Success at Montclair State University and North Carolina Central University.

Dr. Hood challenged members of the advising task force to find Kean University's catalyst for changes in advising. In addition, Dr. Hood highlighted the importance of advising reform models and removing barriers to student success, focusing on the journey towards redesign, person-centered student interactions, academic support initiatives, and holistic and proactive advising critical to persistence, retention and graduation rates. Each of the five content areas engaged in dialogue with Dr. Hood in their breakout sessions, discussing challenges, recommendations and next steps. All received words of advice stemming from Dr. Hood's successes in creating and rebuilding academic advising structures and student success outcomes at multiple institutions.

During the retreat, the Education Advisory Board, also known as EAB, presented on Navigate, an academic advising platform. This led to a consensus amongst the Task Force to move forward with Navigate as a tool to support academic advising and student success at Kean University.

Although the work of the President's Task Force on Advising was comprehensive, the work was limited to reviewing and analyzing primarily undergraduate academic advising on the Union Campus. This provides a limited scope of academic advising at Kean University. What will need to be explored in potential renditions of an Advising Task Force in the future, is looking at academic advising enhancements on all campuses and all the various populations and student types at the institution, including career advising. As students move through their educational journey at the institution it is imperative that career advisement be infused as well as be a paired component to academic advising (Rey, 2022).

## Advising at Kean University

Kean University has made significant enhancements to increasing student success and outcomes, within the last three years. Central to student success is academic advising (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2022; Gordon, Habley, et.al., 2000). Academic advising has long been a fixture in higher education and a notable support service that is proven to increase student outcomes (Fountain, 2021; Gordon, Habley, et.al., 2000).

At the time of this review, Kean University's, first-time full-time, four-year graduation rates were the second lowest in the state at 26% (below the national average). The six-year graduation rate was also the second lowest in the state at 50% (aligned with the national average). In 2019, the second year retention rate for first-time full-time students was 74.1%. In 2020, the retention rate was 71.4%. This is a 2.7% decline between 2019 and 2020.

In 2021, the formulation of the Center for Advising, Persistence and Success (CAPS) was created to address many of the experiences students had surrounding academic advising at Kean University. Although the work of CAPS has proven to be significant, thus far, there are still opportunities within academic advising that the institution can review to enhance and increase student experiences and institutional outcomes.

Prior to the creation of CAPS, academic advising was decentralized. A decentralized academic advising organizational structure is one where advising services are supported by faculty or staff in specific academic departments (Gordon, Habley, et.al., 2000). At Kean University, each academic department advised students primarily utilizing faculty, with the exception of specialized programs (i.e. Bridge to Success, EOF, SUPERA and Veterans Student Support Services), where each student has their own personal advisor. The benefits of faculty advisement provided students with answers to discipline-specific questions, faculty have a greater understanding of course content and curriculum, as well as provide insight into their field of expertise and or graduate school (Gordon, Habley, et.al., 2000; Fountain, 2021). The opportunities that have been presented to enhance academic advising under the decentralized model have been the increasing demands of faculty time, the abilities of faculty to stay abreast with changing policies and procedures across the University, faculty advisors being equipped to handle student personal situations and knowing the proper resources to connect students to at the University.

Since CAPS inception, the advising model has shifted to a shared split model. A shared split model is a model where some advisors meet with students in an advising center or centralized unit, while other advisors meet with students in a particular academic department or discipline (Pardee, 2004). The split model is a component of the shared model, where students are divided between a centralized advising unit (i.e. CAPS) and academic departments (Gordon et. al., 2008). Once certain conditions are met, students are shifted or assigned over to an academic area (i.e. faculty advisor).

Although this model has had a positive impact, there has been some confusion, amongst the campus community, in working with pockets of students, such as the incoming freshmen whom are handled by the School of General Studies and incoming transfer students, whom are handled by Transfer Admissions and faculty advisors in respective academic departments.

In the Fall of 2022 the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) was disseminated across the campus community. The tool is used to improve the quality of student life and learning. It measures student satisfaction and priorities, showing how satisfied students are as well as what issues are important to them.

When analyzing the experiences of students on academic advising the SSI highlighted various scaled items that gathered both the Importance and Satisfaction of students' experiences. The results are below:

SCALE ITEM	▲	IMPORTANCE	SATISFACTION	GAP	IMPORTANCE %	SATISFACTION %	GAP %
<b>ACADEMIC ADVISING</b>							
My Academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major	🔴	6.53	5.91	0.62	90%	72%	18%
Major requirements are clear and reasonable		6.52	5.79	0.73	90%	67%	23%
My academic advisor helps me set goals to work toward.		6.20	5.33	0.87	80%	58%	22%
My academic advisor is approachable.		6.45	5.74	0.71	86%	68%	18%
My Academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.		6.33	5.46	0.87	84%	59%	24%
Academic advisors provide referrals for my personal, academic and career goals.	🔴	6.37	5.41	0.96	84%	60%	24%
After visiting my advisor, I am better prepared to proceed with my college/career goals.		6.44	5.62	0.82	87%	64%	22%

Students noted within the inventory that, overall, academic advising is a very important experience they have at Kean University. These experiences have some of the highest scores demonstrating the significance as well as have some of the highest student feedback or commentary given within the inventory.

However, based on the difference in the variation or Gap%, as indicated in the chart above, between Importance and Satisfaction, this means there is more improvement that is needed in academic advising.

The final recommendations within this report represent the most critical concerns needing to be enhanced in order to further support the academic advising experiences of students as well as impact student outcomes at Kean University. The President's Task Force on Advising envisions these recommendations to serve as areas to guide policies, practices, structure and resource allocations. The work provided by these recommendations is an ongoing process and will require shared responsibilities between all stakeholders at the institution.

The recommendations, within this report, are broken down by the following: Content Area, Overarching Recommendation, and Sub-recommendations with explanations and or resource implications, if applicable.

# Recommendations

## ADVISING STRUCTURE AND MODEL

### RECOMMENDATION #1

#### Ensure Equitable and Accessible Advising Delivery

The aforementioned recommendations derive from the current “shared/split” model currently employed at the University as described by student admit type below:

#### SHARED SPLIT MODEL- REGULARLY ADMITTED FRESHMEN

##### RECOMMENDATION 1.A.

**All new, incoming undergraduate students (freshmen and transfers) should receive academic advising upon their entry into the institution by the Center for Advising, Persistence and Success (CAPS) staff of professional advisors. Students will be assigned a faculty advisor once they earn 60 credits.**

The first point of contact a student makes with Kean University is usually through the Admissions Office (Enrollment Services). New, incoming freshmen are currently advised by 19 faculty from the School of General Studies (SGS). Advisement by SGS faculty occurs after admitted students have submitted the deposit and until the “add/drop” period has concluded, during the first week of class. Students are then assigned a CAPS advisor (primary advisor) as well as a major faculty advisor (secondary advisor) in the first year. Students are then assigned to a new CAPS advisor in the fall of their sophomore year while maintaining the same faculty advisor from their freshman year. The faculty advisor becomes the primary advisor for their junior and senior years.

##### **Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the initial advisement for regularly admitted freshman students be supported by the Center for Advising, Persistence and Success (CAPS).

##### **Resource Implication:**

- Based on NACADA recommended caseloads, CAPS would require 13 additional full-time professional advisors to serve and support new and continuing freshmen students.
- This option would require additional resources and personnel to assist with the advisement of incoming and continuing freshmen. Assuming an annual incoming freshman class of 2000 students to advise and a continuing freshmen student population, comprised of 1200, CAPS would require approximately thirteen more full-time, professional advisors and an additional Associate Director responsible solely for Incoming First Year Students. Currently CAPS has one Associate Director and two Academic Advisors to assist the current freshmen cohort. The additional staff request is based on national data for effective student caseloads (250:1; 300:1) endorsed by the National Academic Advising Association, (NACADA), the premier professional organization in this area.
- Since registration advisement demand varies across the year, CAPS will require advising assistance during peak advising periods. Existing human resources could be deployed through college faculty liaisons to CAPS through reduced load or perhaps non-teaching contracts for advising services delivered by full-time faculty. Currently student workers, known as GEMS (General Education Mentors) are also an important part of the process and assist with working with students as they come into campus. Peer advising can be an important resource for advising lower division students. GEMS do not presently advise their peers.

- In addition to the new, incoming student advising reflected in the table below, School of General Studies faculty have been responsible for advising freshmen students and all Undecided students to varying degrees from 2011 to 2021. Please note that “new, incoming” students are a distinct group from enrolled freshman.

Table 1. Number of Incoming First-Year Students advised by The School of General Studies.

ACADEMIC YEAR	APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF NEW, INCOMING STUDENTS ADVISED BY SGS
	<i>(This table does NOT include currently enrolled first-year students or enrolled Undecided students who were also on the caseload for SGS for multiple years.)</i>
2016-2017	1773
2017-2018	1802
2018-2019	1760
2019-2020	1683
2021-2022	1850
2022-2023	1904

## SHARED SPLIT MODEL – TRANSFER STUDENTS

### Recommendation 1.A.i.

**All new, incoming transfer students be advised and assigned a professional advisor from the Center for Advising, Persistence and Success (CAPS) upon entry and until they have earned 60 credits.**

The taskforce acknowledges that for staff, faculty and students, the transfer process and initial advisement of transfer students has been confusing and inefficient. This conclusion is born out by end-of-recruiting cycle admissions data reporting large numbers of transfer students who have been neither advised nor registered for classes. Enrollment Services estimates an additional 400 students would have enrolled through better operational efficiency for Fall 2022 alone.

This option would only be possible if the Center is equipped with resources and personnel to advise the large number of incoming transfers. Additionally, significant numbers of transfers begin entry in the spring semesters of every academic year. This additional entry point differs from the advising needs of incoming freshmen.

### Resource Implication:

- Based on NACADA recommended caseloads, CAPS would require minimally seven additional full-time professional advisors to serve new and continuing transfer students.

Table 2. Number of Fall Transfer Students Enrolled Per Year as well as Five-year Average.

Enrollment Fall Transfer Enrollment Per Year						
	FA/18	FA/19	FA/20	FA/21	FA/22	5-Year Average
Union	1154	1170	885	774	790	954.6
Ocean	306	355	282	230	228	280.2
Total	1460	1525	1167	1004	1018	1234.8

## SHARED SPLIT MODEL- SPECIAL ADMIT FRESHMEN

### **Recommendation 1.B.**

**Students admitted through Special Admission programs, including SUPERA, EOF, Bridge to Success, and Center for Veteran Student Success will be assigned a program advisor/counselor at the University, in their program, who will remain with the student throughout their undergraduate career at Kean. These student populations are not assigned a CAPS advisor at all, but will be assigned a faculty advisor once they earn 60 credits.**

## SHARED SPLIT MODEL- COHORT MAJORS

### **Recommendation 1.C.**

**Academic major programs with highly structured, cohort-guided operations may opt to advise their students upon entry until graduation.**

These unique majors often require a demonstration of aptitude prior to admission (portfolio, audition, etc.) to be admitted into the major, may require sequential major coursework from the onset, or are structured for high faculty engagement in the lower division coursework (studio, laboratory, instrument lessons). The programs should continue to advise and communicate with their students directly. In order to ensure consistency, we recommend each cohort major coordinator meet and communicate regularly with the Director of CAPS.

#### **School of Integrative Science and Technology majors:**

- Biology – Stem Teacher Education 5 year BS/MA
- Biotechnology/Molecular Biology – STEM 5 year B.S./M.S.
- Biomedicine 4 year B.S.
- Chemistry – STEM Teacher Education 5 year B.S./M.A.
- Computational Science & Engineering – STEM 5 year B.S./M.S.
- Mathematics-STEM Teacher Education 5 year B.S/M.A
- Theatre Conservatory majors
- Music Conservatory majors
- Michael Graves College majors:
- Robert Busch School of Design
- School Public Architecture

## SHARED SPLIT MODEL – UPPERCLASSMEN (60 OR MORE CREDITS EARNED)

### **Recommendation 1.D.**

**All undergraduate students with an intended or declared major should have a faculty advisor assigned upon earning 60 or more credits.**

The Faculty of Kean University are and continue to be an integral part of student success at Kean University. As the institution progresses toward Carnegie R2 designation, the research demands on faculty will increase. The Advising Task Force is also mindful that Academic Affairs is restructuring the Colleges to a more traditional academic department structure. This document is an initial step in outlining and clarifying the faculty responsibilities in the advising and mentoring process.

In this model, Kean University full-time faculty would still advise students with 60+ credits earned (Juniors and Seniors). While the NACADA recommended reasonable load for full-time instructional staff is 20 to 1, they also note institutional factors should be considered in determining a realistic faculty advisor load.

**As faculty members at Kean University, advising mentoring/coaching goals for Juniors and Seniors should:**

- Foster growth, retention, and timely completion toward degree completion.
- Provide honest and realistic guidance for professional planning and assist with preparation for success in their future profession; and,
- Create a supportive relationship based on the best interests of students.

Foundational to all mentoring is ongoing communication between the student and the faculty member regarding how each views the mentoring process, and the expectation that may emerge on each side. Students should be encouraged to have an active role in the mentoring relationship, taking responsibility for initiating meetings and asking for information as appropriate.

In addition, sensitivity to individual differences is inherent in the mentoring process. Awareness of each student's unique needs based on his or her background is vital. Mentoring and advising may be most successful when faculty remain not only sensitive to, but responsive to, issues of individual differences. Culturally conscious and deliberate engagement in working with students from diverse backgrounds helps to increase competent mentoring and advising for all students.

For the purposes of this document, mentoring activities are thought to include, but are not limited to, three general areas: 1) coursework and other academic progress, 2) research and scholarship, and 3) professional development and additional resources. There often will be overlap among many of these activities and faculty members are encouraged to tailor these activities to the specific discipline, role, and needs of the student.

### **Coursework and Other Academic Progress**

- Provide guidance regarding course selection.
- Offer direction regarding relevant degree requirements.
- Support completion of Graduation Forms
- Reinforce quality of academic practices and integrity
- Discuss a realistic timeline for important milestones toward degree completion.
- Conduct an annual review of students' progress.
- Recommend academic support services when appropriate.

### **Research and Scholarship**

- Provide project ideas and support the student through research discussions.
- Schedule regular meetings with the student; adjust as needed as the student moves through the system.
- Facilitate the exploration of avenues for funding.
- Ensure students are aware of ethical standards and best practice in pursuing discipline research/ scholarship activities.
- Discuss realistic work expectations about own research commitments, but also in future graduate assistantship roles.
- Create opportunities for collaborative research and creative projects with Kean faculty, including conference presentations and publications.
- Develop forums and workshops for sharing student research, scholarship, and creative artistry.
- Oversee independent studies, portfolios, research projects, and portfolios.
- Consult and collaborate with others regarding students' needs in research, advising, and mentoring relationships.

- Provide timely feedback on student work.
- Respond in a timely manner to questions.

### **Professional Development and Additional Resources**

- Connect students to career and or internship possibilities
- Respond to student inquiries regarding jobs or careers in the field of study
- Discuss the potential external associations or organizations students can be a part of in their chosen fields and the benefits

### **Suggested Workload and Quality of Advising for Professional Advisors**

A common concern nationally centers on what is considered a reasonable caseload for a professional academic advisor. Experts on academic advising suggest a full-time professional advisor should work with with a maximum of 300 students, with variation based on electronic resources, group advising, and other institutional factors. Assuming that 300:1 ratio, the Director of Educational Practices at ACT, Wes Habley, writes,

- “Advisors who work primarily with students who have more extensive advising needs should have fewer advisees...On many campuses those students are undecided, underprepared, adult, disabled, minority, and/or first generation.
- “Advisors who work with students in complex academic programs that include rigorous institutional requirements and/or state and accrediting agency requirements should have fewer advisees.”
- “Advisors who work with students in transition (first-year, transferring in or out) should have fewer advisees.”
- “Advisors who work with students in academic difficulty should have fewer advisees.”
- “Advisors who work with international students should have fewer advisees”.
- “Advisors (full-time) who are assigned other tasks necessary for the operation of the advising program should have fewer advisees.”

*(Wes Habley, Director, Office of Educational Practices, ACT, Inc., “Advisor Load.” 2004. Retrieved January 10, 2010,*

## **OTHER STRUCTURE AND MODEL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **Recommendation 1.E.**

**Further enhance, recognize, and support the Center for Advising, Persistence, and Success (CAPS) as the University’s advising hub.**

### **Recommendation 1.F.**

**Centralize training for all advisors (faculty, professional, and program) provided annually and regularly to promote consistency, clarity, and collegiality.**

### **Recommendation 1.G.**

**The New Student Orientation (NSO) will continue to be coordinated by the Division of Student Affairs. However, should incorporate tenets of academic advising and its importance on their pathway to completion.**

### **Recommendation 1.H.**

**Undecided students will be advised by a CAPS professional advisor. In accordance with a revised Declaration of Major practice, students will select an intended major by the time they have attempted/earned 45 credits at Kean University. All students are assigned a faculty member once they have earned 60 credits.**

[www.kean.edu/media/advising-structure-model-final-report](http://www.kean.edu/media/advising-structure-model-final-report)

## **ADVISING COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Recommendation #2**

**Provide clear lines of communication of academic advising practices to University constituents (i.e. students, faculty and staff).**

### **Recommendation 2.A.**

**The institution should utilize one advising platform to ensure that there is less confusion for institutional constituents regarding advising and registration.**

The institution currently uses several platforms to support and academic advise students, such as Keanwise, Ellucian, ADVISE and Student Planning. This has led to and created much confusion amongst students, the professional advisors and faculty that support and service students. During the duration of the President's Task Force on Advising, Kean University has engaged with EAB to utilize Navigate, EAB's comprehensive advising platform. The goal is to sunset ADVISE and implement Navigate to satisfy the majority of the institutions advising technological needs. This enhancement in the platform will move more advising functions over to a primary platform.

### **Recommendation 2.B.**

**Determine what students' preferred method of communication is and needs to be when disseminating and sharing essential academic advising information.**

By conducting surveys, questionnaires, inventories and focus groups, the institution will be able to determine students' preferred methods of communication when disseminating essential academic advisement information to students at the University.

### **Recommendation 2.C.**

**Ensure that advising practices and processes are clearly communicated to students at the University.**

Under this recommendation, the University will have to clearly delineate and communicate the roles of the professional advisors and roles of the faculty advisors to the campus community. The University will have to clearly articulate the process for student transitions from a CAPS advisor to a faculty advisor. Streamlining the advisor assignments and effectively communicating these changes will help reduce the number of handoffs a student undergoes. Much of this communication can take place in GE 1000 and GE 3000. This would introduce students to essential academic advisement and processes, such as the ones highlighted above. Additionally, one other practice to consider is the proximity or location of the advisors to improve services throughout the year.

To aid in this effort of clearly communicating to constituents about advising practices and processes, it was recommended to embed an advising communication calendar in an advising handbook. Within the handbook one would include the best practices for text/email communications, articulate expectations for specific modalities and roles, and provide sample communications.

### **Recommendation 2.D.**

**Establish transparent ways to communicate how students can resolve issues, concerns or problems.**

[www.kean.edu/media/communications-content-area-recommendations](http://www.kean.edu/media/communications-content-area-recommendations)

## ADVISING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### **Recommendation #3**

**Ensure that the policies, procedures and practices are equitable, student-centered and look to increase student outcomes.**

### **Recommendation 3.A.**

**Ensure, a University-wide, use of academic plans are established for all students, through the institutional advising platform.**

Ensure all students have an academic plan. A significant portion of academic advisement surrounds course selection and registration. However, the benefit of having an established academic plan helps map out course requirements for each student's subsequent semesters. This not only provides a clear pathway to graduation for students, it alleviates the need and reduces the number of advisement sessions to discuss course and section selection.

With University-wide academic plans, the expectation is that students register earlier because they would not have to wait for an advisement appointment; students are taught how to be interdependent. Instead, upon the opening of course registration, the student can refer to their academic plan and register early. This will also reduce and enhance the dynamic relationship between advisee and advisor. Advisors will be able to focus on the students that need true advisement, not just assistance with registration. Students that withdraw or fail courses in their plan are at risk of stopping out or transferring out of Kean. The use of academic plans will help our advisors engage these students to revisit their academic plan, provide support, and reinforce their pathway to graduation.

### **Recommendation 3.B.**

**Streamline and enhance the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) processes at Kean University.**

These streamlined processes and enhancements should include the following:

- A University committee comprised of financial aid staff (SAP coordinator), faculty, and staff (academic advisors, student accounting representatives) to review SAP appeals.
- Include a broad range of extenuating circumstances in the SAP Appeals Process including but not limited to:
  - ◊ Illness (self or family member)
  - ◊ Work conflicts
  - ◊ Transportation Challenges
  - ◊ Lack of Childcare
  - ◊ Housing insecurity
  - ◊ Training for Faculty/Staff Advisors about the SAP policy/timeline
- Communicate with Faculty/Staff Advisors regarding the SAP process in real-time.
- Workshops teaching students how to write a successful appeal
- Understanding SAP Workshops
  - ◊ Hartnell College SAP Workshop (Quiz)
  - ◊ Howard University SAP Virtual Workshop
- If an appeal is granted, the committee can recommend:
  - ◊ Restriction of credit hours
  - ◊ Mandatory Advising
  - ◊ Course Restrictions

- ◇ Adherence to an academic plan (currently in place with no oversight from advising areas); Provide advisors with (i.e. EOF, Bridge to Success, Supera, & Athletics) access to academic plans (for approved appeals) to ensure that the student is following the plan.
  - ◇ Change of Major \* (restricted majors)
- Allow students to appeal more than once if the extenuating circumstances are different from the initial appeal
- Code students in Colleague who are on SAP or SAP Warning
- SAP Warning (67% to 75%)
  - ◇ Create action plans and outreach to students informing them of their status.
  - ◇ Early warning system for students at risk of losing their aid
    1. SAP Probation

### **Recommendation 3.C.**

#### **Improve the Declaration of Major policy and procedures to improve student outcomes and degree completion at Kean University.**

##### **These improvements should look to incorporate the following guidelines:**

- Make sure that all advisors are trained and educated on the institutional declaration of major policy. Noting the differences between being Intended vs. Declared. Educating the University community would ensure those students that are undecided actually declare their major by the spring semester of their Sophomore year. This would help with creating a pathway of increasing degree completion.
- Adjust the declaration of major policy in a way that decreases the number of steps for a student to declare a major.
  - ◇ One way of decreasing the number of steps is to potentially automate some of the processes. Students that come into the University as Undecided majors must select and be admitted into a major prior to earning between 45-60 credit hours. If a student has not been admitted into a major by the time they have earned 45-60 credit hours, the student could be placed into another default major or Liberal Arts major automatically via the Office of the Registrar. The Liberal Arts major looks to use an interdisciplinary approach to developing thinking, reasoning and communication skills for a variety of careers. Thereafter, the student could follow the Liberal Arts curriculum until they have consulted with their primary academic advisor and officially changed their major with the Office of the Registrar.
  - ◇ Another way of decreasing the number of steps is by creating restricted and unrestricted categories for majors. Most of the majors and minors at Kean University could be considered unrestricted, meaning there are no specific requirements for entry. One may declare these unrestricted majors and minors at any time throughout their academic career. Therefore, the majority of students (freshmen, transfer, readmit and second degree) would be, initially, admitted into their requested intended majors and minors. However, some majors at Kean University would be considered restricted, which means they have specific requirements for entry into the academic program (i.e. GPA, prerequisite coursework, auditions, portfolio, etc.). Undecided students and students looking to declare a restricted major have to formally apply and be admitted into their requested major by the academic department (college) or school. This would ultimately adjust entry GPA's to be standardized or be eliminated in unrestricted majors. This would also create a more efficient way to declare for a major.
  - ◇ The third way of decreasing the number of steps is to create electronic workflows for the Major/Minor Status Change Form. This would lessen the amount of moving around students would have to do in order to obtain necessary signatures.
- To standardize GPA requirements for students attempting to complete or graduate from undergraduate majors. The standard University GPA is 2.0. All majors, with the exception of the programs that have accreditation and state mandates governing their curricular or restricted majors (see above), would have a 2.0 GPA. This would help with creating a pathway of increasing degree completion.
  - ◇ The various GPA requirements also poses a barrier for students attempting to graduate or complete

these academic programs. Institutional data highlighted there were a significant number of students that had in excess of 90 credits or more, but may not have had the GPA requirements to graduate from their major. This, in turn, illustrates the need for enhancements within this policy.

### **Recommendation 3.D.**

#### **Enhance the Kean University Leave of Absence (LOA) process by providing students with a more comprehensive and accommodating system that meets their diverse needs.**

The current LOA policy focuses mainly on medical, mental health-related issues, and military leave. While these reasons are essential, students may need to take a voluntary leave of absence for other reasons, such as employment opportunities, financial difficulties, or family responsibilities. Expanding the reasons for taking an LOA and creating a form that allows students to select options outside of medical, military service, or counseling services-related issues would enable students to choose the reason that best fits their circumstance.

#### **Other ways to enhance this process include:**

- Having a centralized office responsible for the LOA process ensures that students have a designated point of contact who can provide them with the necessary information and guidance throughout the process. At most institutions this would be the Dean of Students.
- Providing a clear definition of LOA and outlining the steps needed for students taking an LOA and returning from an LOA is crucial. This information ensures that students know what to expect, how to prepare, and what steps they need to take before and after their leave of absence. Having a list of action items, such as contacting housing and residence life, financial aid, and student accounting, provides students with clear steps to follow to ensure a smooth transition.
- List steps for students returning from a LOA, as noted in these links:  
[www.montclair.edu/red-hawk-central/how-to-guides/undergraduate-student-request-for-withdrawal-or-leave-of-absence/](http://www.montclair.edu/red-hawk-central/how-to-guides/undergraduate-student-request-for-withdrawal-or-leave-of-absence/) ;  
[www.bu.edu/files/2021/04/LG\\_BU\\_AbsenceGUIDE\\_StudentManualV2.pdf](http://www.bu.edu/files/2021/04/LG_BU_AbsenceGUIDE_StudentManualV2.pdf)
- Develop a user friendly LOA form as indicated here: [sps.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/2019-11/LeaveofAbsenceRequestForm.pdf](http://sps.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/2019-11/LeaveofAbsenceRequestForm.pdf)

[www.kean.edu/media/policies-and-procedures-content-area-recommendations](http://www.kean.edu/media/policies-and-procedures-content-area-recommendations)

## **ADVISING TECHNOLOGY AND ASSESSMENT**

### **Recommendation #4**

#### **Overhaul all advising technologies and platforms to provide easy access to necessary curriculum and student support information.**

### **Recommendation 4.A.**

#### **Ensure that the EAB Navigate platform breaks down many of the administrative hurdles to provide clear, consistent and easily accessible information about students seeking and needing advisement, registration, and other support services.**

Since the convening of this Task Force Sub-Committee, the executive leadership of Kean University adopted EAB Navigate as a replacement for the Ellucian Colleague product, ADVISE. Although we are not aware of all the features of Navigate, at this moment in time, the recommendations presented are broad and not platform or software specific. The following caveats should be noted:

- If Navigate does not integrate with Student Planning, it, like ADVISE, will be used minimally.
- If Navigate/Student Planning do not allow for uniform and seamless integration with advisor google

calendars to make advising appointments, it will be little used by students and advisors to manage advising appointments.

- New software that fails to eliminate the technological hurdles that currently exist will NOT be a net gain.
- Similarly, in many ways the KeanWise/WebAdvisor interface is preferable during the advising meeting to Student Planning due to its visual clarity for End Users. As we phase out systems, this must be done with the recommendations in mind so that we do not compromise informational clarity.
- Given the large number of platforms and software systems in use across campus, it is suggested that the University develop and adopt a Technology Master Plan to ensure the compatibility and suitability of systems.

#### **Recommendation 4.B.**

**Curriculum software and degree audits (either through Student Planning and or Navigate) MUST be able to track student majors AND minors as a matter of equity for Kean students and to accommodate pending curriculum revisions.**

The institution will have to ensure that our platforms are in alignment with evolving curricular changes degree audits built into KeanWise and Student Planning can only track academic majors. They cannot track double majors or minors. This is particularly problematic moving forward as Provost Birdsell is calling for the reapportionment of credit requirements to degree to facilitate each student completing a major and two minors. It is imperative that minors be shown in the degree audit/progress to degree so that Kean students graduate with as many credentials as possible.

#### **Recommendation 4.C.**

**Kean must assign oversight and or periodic program review/assessment of End User technologies to a single entity/stakeholders to ensure they meet the above and below stated goals.**

#### **Recommendation 4.D.**

**Overhauled technologies and functionalities must be accessible through a single portal or landing page with the following functionalities, essential to the End Users (our students and their advisors), as outlined in the Table on the following page.**

Table 3: Functionalities needed by End Users on single portal:

Portal/Dashboard Functionality Needed	
STUDENTS	ADVISORS
Access major curriculum	Access major curriculum
Access minor curriculum	Access minor curriculum
Track progress to degree	Track progress to degree
Request course substitutions	Request/approve course substitutions
Search for and plan courses	Search for courses and review student plan; review enrollments
Register for courses	Review student registration/schedule
Add/drop courses	Approve Add/drop courses
Identify advisor(s)	Identify advisor(s)
Contact advisor(s)	Communicate with student(s)
Schedule appointment with advisor(s)	Manage appointments with students
Review advising notes/recommendations from advisor(s)	Post advising notes/recommendations to students; review advising notes/history
View holds	View and remove holds
View academic alerts	Post and review academic alerts
Request change of major; declaration of major; addition of minor; declaration of content area	Approve change of major; declaration of major; addition of minor; declaration of content area
Request course petition and overloads	Approve (or reject) course petition and overloads
Access information about and calculator for grade recalculation; request grade recalculation	Access information about and calculator for grade recalculation; approve grade recalculation
Access support services (academic, wellness, financial)	Refer student to support services (academic, wellness, financial)
View syllabi and textbooks	Post syllabi and textbooks
Locate Financial Aid information	Refer students to Financial Aid support
Locate Career Services Support	Refer students to Career Services
Locate Internships	Locate Internships
View grades	Submission of grades
View information related to academic probation and dismissal; instructions for appeal	Be notified of students on academic probation or dismissed; instructions for appeal; review of progress

**Recommendation 4.E.**

**Consider the models for the assessment of advising by following NACADA’s assertion that advisement is part of the educational experience. To that end, assessment should be modeled on academic assessment in assessing what students know, what they do, and how they value advising<sup>1</sup>. More specifically, we need to assess:**

OBJECT OF ASSESSMENT	METHOD OF ASSESSMENT
<b>1) What students know and understand about advising and registration</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review what students are taught about advising and registration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indirect Measure: Course assessment of GE 1000/3000 content/learning outcomes pertaining to advising and registration</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure student knowledge of advising and registration processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct measure</li> </ul>
<b>2) What students do in advising and registration</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure student scheduling of advising appointments through platforms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct measure: quantitative analysis of scheduling metrics</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure student keeping appointments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct measure: quantitative analysis of scheduling metrics</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure student retention, persistence, and time to degree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indirect measure: Longitudinal analysis of student retention and graduation rates</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure efficiency of degree completion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indirect measure: Statistical analysis of credits earned to identify extraneous courses taken</li> </ul>
<b>3) Assess student valuation of advising relationships</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure student satisfaction with advisor and advising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exit survey</li> </ul>
<b>4) Assess clarity, simplicity, and accessibility of technologies used</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure student use of technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor platform metrics</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure simplicity of technologies used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct periodic “click” count testing</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure advisor use of technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor platform metrics</li> </ul>

*Rich Robbins, “Assessment of Academic Advising: An Overview,” 2017 NACADA Summer Institute, <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Portals/0/Events/SummerInst/2017/PowerPoints/Green%20Bay/F2-Assess-RR.pdf>*

**[www.kean.edu/media/technology-and-assessment-recommendations](http://www.kean.edu/media/technology-and-assessment-recommendations)**

## ADVISOR TRAINING

### Recommendation #5

#### **Provide advisors with a standardized advisor training program and opportunities to gain certifications to develop the knowledge and skills needed to help students persist to graduation at Kean University.**

The advisor-training program should be housed within the new Center for Advising, Persistence and Success (CAPS) and a designated staff be in charge of overseeing the training and updating the program as needed. Findings showed that most of the advisor-training programs reviewed were housed in the Advisement Centers at those institutions.

The advisor training will be composed of three programs with continuous training sessions and workshops throughout the year to supplement the initial trainings and to qualify advisors for an advanced certificate. The continuous trainings will also inform the advising community of new technologies, curriculum changes, advising trends and professional development opportunities. The training will also align with current changes and other subcommittees recommendations. The three trainings are as follows: Note: A certificate/diploma is to be printed and given upon completion of each training.

#### **The three programs consist of the following:**

- Academic Advising Training – A general training that will cover all the basics of advisement including: University mission and philosophy, FERPA, policies and procedures, programs and curriculum, campus resources, technology, special populations, career and graduate studies, advising theories and pedagogy, and communication skills.
- Cultural Competency/Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Training – This training provides opportunities to expand advising perspectives, knowledge, and skills around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging to facilitate student success. The certificate will enhance advisors’ contributions to creating diverse and inclusive workspaces where differences are embraced and appreciated and student can flourish. Each advisor must complete a practicum demonstrating the application of certificate content in an immersive or reflective way.
- Advanced Academic Advising Certificate – The advanced certificate is for experienced academic advisors who have been performing this role for two or more years and are looking for additional professional development opportunities and possibly to contribute to the field. This certificate would require that advisors complete the Academic Advising Training, the Cultural Competency/DEIB Training, additional professional development workshops and possible course work. A capstone project will also be required. At this phase, advisors will receive a deeper understanding of advising theories and pedagogy, advising competencies, and create their own advising philosophy. They will also be encouraged to develop advising connections, publish in the field, and attend professional development conferences and events.

#### **Advisor Training Learning Outcomes**

- The expectation is that by the end of the advisor training advisors will be able to:
  - Know the mission, vision, policies, procedures and advising process of Kean University
  - Guide students toward degree completion and their academic goals by understanding university policies, procedures, curriculums and programs.
  - Utilize all the advising technologies available at the institution
  - Refer students to appropriate campus resources and offices
  - Feel supported and encouraged to seek additional professional development for personal enrichment, to add to the field and to improve institutional practices.

### **Recommendation 5.A.**

#### **The advisor trainings should have different modalities in which advisors learn from.**

##### **In-person workshops and online modules:**

- We recommend the trainings be offered online through CANVAS and will have case studies and quizzes to give advisors plenty of opportunities to assess their learning. There will be a combination of videos and readings to make the information diverse and engaging.
- In addition, in-person workshops should be designed to discuss the material covered in the online modules and assess its application. They should be hands-on workshops that would allow advisors the opportunity to practice and apply the advising skills learned.

##### **Observations/Shadowing:**

New advisors should have the opportunity to observe or shadow experienced advisors prior to starting the advising cycle and be observed while advising students to receive feedback.

We recommend that new advisors observe or shadow a certified experienced advisor for at least two weeks prior to the beginning of their advising role at Kean. A professional in the Center for Advising, Persistence and Success, or a certified advisor or supervisor from the college, school or program should also observe them for a two weeks period.

After the observations are completed, the new advisor should write a self-assessment or action plan and identify areas of strength and development.

Each new advisor should also be assigned a mentor during their first year who they can resort to with any questions or concern.

### **Recommendation 5.B.**

#### **An assessment component should be developed for the advisor training program. This would allow the professional development opportunities to be assessed for effectiveness. The assessment can be part of the current yearly evaluations for professional advisors “to assess the understanding of various job duties, set goals, and evaluate any changes that need to be made”. Faculty advisor assessment would need further discussion.**

### **Recommendation 5.C.**

#### **Prizes and rewards should be incorporated into the training to incentivize advisors learn and professionally develop.**

Dr. Hood discussed the importance of building an effective recognition and reward system to increase staff morale and reward good work. Based on Dr. Hood’s recommendation during the November 21st , 2022 retreat, we like to make the following recommendations:

- Creating growing opportunities for advisors. Work with HR and different unions to create positions where advisor can be rewarded for taking additional responsibilities or developing new programs. For example entry level advisors vs. senior level advisors (e.g. a title change from Professional Service Specialist 4 to Professional Service Specialist 3) or growing from an advisor position into an associate director position or other leadership positions.
- Yearly evaluations should be tied to job duties
- Implementing recognition ceremonies and awards, e.g. presidential award for best academic advisor or an advising award luncheon to celebrate accomplishments
- Motivate advisors to get nominated for NACADA awards and send a university wide acknowledgment of such recognition
- Providing advisors opportunities for professional development and self-grow

**Recommendation 5.D.**

We also recommend that a training manual or advisement handbook be developed as well as an online repository to house subject specific trainings. A process for updating the handbook needs to be implemented to ensure that it is kept current and relevant. We recommend a committee oversees this process.

**Recommendation 5.E.**

An extension of a university committee on advisement should be created, with representatives from different colleges and units who will be responsible for providing updates and recommendations. In addition, the new Center for Teaching and Learning can assist with developing or recommending training materials and modules guided to faculty.

[www.kean.edu/media/advisor-training-recommendations](http://www.kean.edu/media/advisor-training-recommendations)

**Training Manual:**

[www.kean.edu/media/academic-advisement-handbook](http://www.kean.edu/media/academic-advisement-handbook)

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