



**KEAN**

**Academic Advising Task Force**

**Structure Model**

**Final Report**

**April 28, 2023**

The Presidential Task Force was charged by Senior Vice President of Transformational Learning & External Affairs Dr. Joseph Youngblood, II., J.D. and Associate Vice President of Advising, Persistence and Success Dr. Mensah Peterson in the Division of Student Success and Retention on April 22, 2022 with:

1. Facilitating communication and collaboration among Professional Academic Advisers and Faculty Advisers across the University
2. Improving advising processes and practices across the University to improve 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.

The Task force was led by two co-chairs Dave Farrokh (Assistant Dean, College of Business and Public Management) and Vito Zajda (Director of Veteran Affairs). Also, on the committee were contributing members Andrew Brannen, Barbara Johnson, Barbara Ridener, Bridie Chapman, Ethel Eaddy, Giancarlo Labruna, Gianna Medeiros, Laureen Delance, Maureen Byrne, Nekeisha Blandin, Ralph Spencer, Raza Rafique, Ronald Dowdell, Rose Gonnella, Simone Mack-Bright, Stephanie Baker and Tamika Quick. This Content Area was responsible for identifying areas to enhance advising regarding the structure model of academic advising at Kean University. Initially the group was guided by answering guided questions based on research, best practices, and institutional comparisons. The Task Force met almost biweekly from July 14, 2022, to April 28, 2023. Taskforce members also met with or sought advice from numerous sources and stakeholders, including; department/program/division advisors, faculty, academic deans and department heads, students, Offices of the Provost and Registrar. We also relied on data provided through Institutional Research and SADI, NACADA Best Practices, Institutional Effectiveness, EAB Navigate and other institutions having similar demographics to Kean University.

Assumptions:

- The University views Academic Advisement as an integral component of the student learning experience.
- The University will implement a Shared/Split Standardized Advising Model
- Leadership oversight for the model will be the responsibility of the Division of Student Success and Retention in partnership with academic colleges.
- We have a committed group of professionals working in advising and all staff and faculty positions are important and needed.
- While responsibilities and titles/roles may change, all current advising leaders will be integral to our advising structure in the future.

- We will pursue outcomes aggressively but will not sacrifice effectiveness in the process.
- Achieving identified outcomes is an institutional priority to support a student-centered advising system that promotes student retention and success.

Based on these assumptions, we make the formalized recommendations on how to enhance the areas reviewed:

Prime Recommendation: Ensure Equitable and Accessible Advising Delivery

Recommendation 1A: All new, incoming undergraduate students (freshmen and transfers) will receive 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. (See 1F for exceptions).

Recommendation 1B: Undergraduate students with 60 or more credits earned will be advised by an assigned faculty advisor. The advising focus will transmute into mentoring responsibilities emphasizing career readiness, professional development, internship and research opportunities, graduate study, as well as the informational aspects of course sequencing and traditional registration advising.

Recommendation 1C: Further enhance, recognize, and support the Center for Advising, Persistence, and Success (CAPS) as the University's advising hub.

Recommendation 1D: Centralize training for all advisors (faculty, professional, and program) provided annually and regularly to promote consistency, clarity, and collegiality.

Recommendation 1E: Students admitted through Special Admission programs, including Supera, Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF), Bridge to Success, and Center for Veteran Student Success, are assigned a program counselor upon entry to the University and the program counselor will remain with the student throughout his or her undergraduate career at Kean. These student populations will not be assigned a CAPS advisor during the freshman and sophomore years, but will be assigned a faculty advisor once they earn 60 credits.

Recommendation 1F: Major programs with highly structured, cohort-guided operations may opt to advise their students upon entry until graduation.

Recommendation 1G: The New Student Orientation (NSO) will continue to be coordinated by the Division of Student Affairs.

Recommendation 1H: Undecided students will be advised by a CAPS professional advisor. Students will select an intended major by the time they have earned 45 credits at Kean University. All students are assigned a faculty member once they have earned 60 credits.

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

1. Shared Split Model- Regularly Admitted Freshmen

Current Status:

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 after the “add/drop” period 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: We recommend that the initial advisement for regularly admitted freshman students be provided by the Center for Advising, Persistence and Success \(CAPS\). \[Recommendation 1A from main list\]](#)

Resource Implication:

Based on NACADA recommended caseloads, CAPS would require thirteen additional full-time professional advisors to serve 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 (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.

School of General Studies Advisement

In this institutional review of advising services, the committee recognizes and applauds the exemplary advising provided by the faculty and staff of the School of General Studies presently and in the timeframe prior to the creation of the Center for Advising, Persistence and Success in 2021. Their work underscores the need for professional advisors serving a student population as large and diverse as Kean’s. In addition to advising, lecturers assigned to SGS also teach 39 credit hours during the academic year, and have been instrumental in ENR outreach, assessment activities, as well as other faculty responsibilities. 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.

Academic Year	Approximate Number of New, Incoming Students advised by SGS (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, in addition to the new, incoming students.)
2016-2017	1773
2017-2018	1802
2018-2019	1760
2019-2020	1683
2021-2022	1850
2022-2023	?

2. Shared Split Model- Special Admit Freshmen

Students admitted through Special Admission programs, including SUPERA, EOF, Bridge to Success, and Center for Veteran Student Success will be assigned a program 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 during the freshman and sophomore years, but will be assigned a faculty advisor once they earn 60 credits. [Recommendation 1E from main list]

The chart below lists the number of students advised by the School of General Studies and served by the individual Special Admit programs for AY 2021-2022

<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Staffing</b>	<b>Number of Incoming Freshmen</b>	<b>Total Number of Students served</b>
EOF	13	201	701
Bridge to Success	5	310	810
Supera	4	192	465
Veterans	3	54	301

### 3. Shared Split Model- Cohort Majors

This task force acknowledges that due to the specificity of certain majors, we recommend the preferred advising delivery is to assign a faculty advisor to each student upon entry and to continue this relationship through to graduation. [Recommendation 1F from main list]

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

#### 4. Shared Split Model – Transfer Students

This taskforce acknowledges that for our staff, faculty and students, the transfer process and initial advisement of transfer students has been (too often) confusing and inefficient. This conclusion is borne 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 2023 alone.

The Transfer Process:

1. The applicant submits a transfer application and all academic transcripts to the Office of Admissions.
2. The transfer evaluator makes an admissions decision and the corresponding notation in the student's electronic record, completes the transfer credit evaluation, and informs the student accordingly.

3. In cases where the student is not accepted, no credit evaluation is completed.
4. Accepted transfer students are notified to schedule an appointment with a faculty advisor from their major (the College Dean should welcome the new student by letter which contains the name and contact information for their faculty advisor).
5. Students email the faculty advisor to set up a virtual or in-person appointment.
6. For Fall 2023 registration advisement, accepted students are able to schedule appointments with faculty through an easy to use appointment scheduling portal.
7. The faculty advisor meets with the student to provide course recommendations and review/remove any advisement related restrictions preventing course registration.
8. The student self-registers through Keanwise.
9. Transfer Student Services offers formal “transfer advising days” at Kean Union and the Academic Affairs at Kean Ocean coordinate the transfer advising days at that location. Faculty advisors provide advising at the events at each location presently.
10. Accepted transfer students are invited to Transfer Student Orientation in the months preceding a fall or spring semester of matriculation.

The Taskforce recommends that 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. [Recommendation 1A from main list]

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.

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 – Upperclassmen (60 or more credits earned)

[We recommend that all undergraduate students with an intended or declared major have a faculty advisor assigned upon earning 60 or more credits. \[Recommendation 1B from main list\]](#)

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 Taskforce 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 will 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.

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.

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.

#### 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.

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### 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.

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### **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 about 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, <http://www.nacada.ksu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/advisorload.htm>).

## **New Student Orientation**

The University continues to review and improve the student experience as fundamental to retention, persistence, graduation, and student satisfaction. While not an advising event, New Student Orientation impacts advising delivery through placement testing and associated activities. Since NSO emphasizes transition to college life, residential living, meal plan offerings, parking, student IDs, financial aid, as well as many other non-academic services, [New Student Orientation \(NSO\) should continue to be coordinated by the Division of Student Affairs.](#) [Recommendation 1G from main list]

## Further Considerations:

1. Further investigation of structure and staffing at the Kean Ocean campus is needed. While this report was addressing the advising structure and needs for the main campus, the consideration of equitable needs of Kean Ocean should be addressed and reviewed. The above recommendations will serve as a guide and will be shared during implementation with leadership as a springboard for forming such guidelines.
2. As modifications are made to the existing structure, the University should regularly assess the efficacy of advising delivery across the institution.
3. As the population of students admitted to the School of Online Education grows, the advising structure may be impacted.
4. Improve the efficiency and timeliness of completion of transfer credit evaluations-

Kean University utilizes the Transfer Equivalency System, (TES) from College Source. TES allows for a staff member to quickly locate course descriptions; route and track the evaluation process; store, manage, group, and publicize the resulting equivalencies; and generate lists of equivalencies between institutions. One office presently using the system is the Center for Veterans Student Success (CVSS). CVSS utilizes the system to review the ACE Guide on military credit and create the equivalency. You then build on this for each branch creating the exact equivalencies to KU. The next option is to then post a link on the CVSS website allowing potential veterans to see their Military Occupational Speciality (MOS) along with transfer credit Kean grants. This will increase recruitment efforts for all potential veterans nationwide, and worldwide. Please note: feeder school equivalencies can be loaded into TES, such as the NJ Transfer Database and other non feeder colleges.

There is also another component called Transferology from College Source. Kean University does not have this system. The system brings TES up a notch. A potential student enters their courses to find equivalent courses at other schools. Matches are ranked by awarded credit, so you can eliminate the guesswork and maximize your transfer potential. This offers quick access to program information, school size, and tuition & fees cost. The system even allows a campus visit with a click of a button. The system even supports those students who may want to take summer courses at Kean by eliminating the archaic paperwork involved.

The idea behind these systems is for the University to become more efficient with the transfer student population. Allowing potential and incoming applicants to see exactly the courses that will transfer over, allowing the staff to scan the official transcript to create the matches ending the time it takes to manually enter in transfer credit. The turnaround time would go from weeks to one or two days. For example if Montclair offers a new computer science course. You can review their college catalog and use the system to make an equivalency with the Executive Director's Approval.