

Guided Pathways: Advising and Career Planning Workgroup

Introduction: A Brief Narrative

The task put before this workgroup was to review current advising and career planning structures and practices and put forward recommendations to align with guided pathways principles and practices. Diane Pritchard and Tom Barry co-lead the workgroup. Workgroup members represented various areas of and positions within the college. The members included: Sharon Bellusci, Amanda Hoffer, Cindy Lenhart, Sam La Duca, Kara Rutherford, Roxie Supplee, and Wendi Worthington.

Prior to the start of workgroup meetings, Diane and Tom met to discuss the workgroup's goal and to create a plan for our meetings, discussions, and movement towards a proposal. Diane and Tom determined that the overarching goal of the workgroup was (1) to identify current practices to evaluate and alter and (2) to identify recommended structural changes to advising and career planning.

During the winter academic term, the workgroup met four times. At the first meeting, the overarching goal was presented and agreed upon. We agree that our task was not to provide details for each recommendation; our task was to provide a list of recommendations for changes. Our group envisions the ideas laid out in this proposal as a starting point for future discussions, with administration, instructional leadership, and other stakeholders determining where COCC wants to invest resources in implementing the recommendations.

We identified four separate implementation plans or areas to address. These four areas contain distinct elements yet overlap. We intentionally did not prioritize or rank in order the importance of these areas. The workgroup determined that our work and this report reflect an initial evaluation and proposal. Administration, instructional leadership, and other stakeholders will review this proposal and determine, in consultation with the general guided pathways workgroup, the viability and prioritization of the identified areas.

Implementation Plan: Advising Structure, Advising Workload and Advisor Responsibilities

Primary Stakeholders

Faculty advisors, Academic Affairs, CAP Services, Admissions and Records, and students.

Comprehensive Goals: A redesigned advising and career planning model built upon Guided Pathways principles and centered around a student's educational and career journey.

Comprehensive Outcome: To better serve and support a student's journey through academic and career advising from start to completion with Education Pathways Umbrellas.

NOTE: The following activities are not listed in a prioritized order.

Activity 1: Develop a sustainable advisor model

1. Goal: To develop a robust model of academic and career advising that supports student success.

Outcome: An equitable distribution of students to advisors (professional and faculty) that supports the students and programs.

- Address the following areas:
 - Ratio of students per faculty
 - Ratio of students per professional advisor
 - NACADA recommends a ratio of 300:1 of advisees to professional advisor.
 - Flexibility to address the unique needs of specific programs.

2. Goal: To provide a comprehensive and clearly defined advising model for students.

Outcome: Students will receive advising support that addresses both technical and institutional components and discipline-specific program, transfer, and career requirements and opportunities.

- Professional advisors will work in partnership with faculty advisors/mentors:
 - Students would benefit from having access to (1) the professional advisor addressing technical aspects of navigating college systems (GradTracks, Degree Plans, etc.), providing information about available resources, and general onboarding of students to the college and Educational Umbrella Pathways; and (2) the faculty advisor/mentor providing information and guidance on discipline and program specific topics, such as occupational opportunities, course preparation, program expectations and standards (i.e. professional dress standards, safety) and transfer.
 - Students will need to be educated on the distinction between the two advisors and the purpose in and preparation for meeting with each type of advisor.
 - Clear communication and documentation processes that happens per student so information is shared between the two assigned advisors.
 - Determine practices that will facilitate effective communications and sharing of information between professional advisors and assigned programs.
 - Training model implemented for professional advisors and faculty advisors/mentors.
 - Assign at least one professional advisor to each educational pathway.
 - Provide trainings on Grad Tracks notes and reinforce with advisors the critical importance of putting notes in Grad Tracks following meetings with advisees.
 - The workgroup recognizes the importance of creating a document that differentiates between the roles of professional and faculty advisors. Determining and documenting their distinct and shared roles needs to be completed during the next step in this advising model change process.

Activity 2: Increasing efficiency and transparency of onboarding students to advising and career planning.

1. Goal: To streamline and expand options for training students on systems central to degree planning.

Outcome: Students will become more knowledgeable at a faster rate about educational pathways, GradTracks, and other key areas related to program and degree selection and progression towards completion.

- Develop more efficient means of training and/or informing students of GradTracks, degree plans, and institutional resources. One more efficient approach is regularly scheduled trainings on each of the campuses. Consider directing and tailoring these trainings to each of the educational pathway umbrellas.

2. Goal: To facilitate education umbrella pathway selection by the end of the first term.

Outcome: Students have a clearly defined pathway.

- Recommend or require an exploratory class within each educational pathway. Within that class, students will learn about GradTracks and other existing systems to facilitate their degree completion.
- Determine additional strategies to take (for example, targeted social media communications) to facilitate students' selection of a pathway.

Activity 3: Locating Admissions and Records and CAP Services in the same building.

1. Goal: To physically locate Admissions and Records and CAP Services in the same building.

Outcome: Increased accessibility and increased collaboration between these two departments, both central to supporting and guiding students from application through registration and degree completion or transfer.

Activity 4: Utilize a focus group to solicit student feedback on these and other parts of this proposal.

1. Goal: To obtain feedback from students on their experiences with onboarding and advising.

Outcome: A student centered advising model.

- With the information obtained from focus groups the Guided Pathways steering committee will be in a more informed position on deciding where to invest resources.
- A focus group or multiple focus groups will provide: (1) an understanding on how students experience advising and career planning and (2) student feedback on the recommendations made in this proposal.
- The composition of the focus groups should be a cross-section of various student populations, including career/technical, transfer, traditional, non-traditional, and underrepresented groups with representation from all campuses.

Activity 5: Re-envision career advisor staff position.

1. Goal: To revise the duties of the career advisor staff position.

Outcome: The job description will be reviewed and revised.

- The career coordinator position that works with existing programs to facilitate and promote career connected events and initiate partnerships with business industry and community organizations.