

Frequently Asked Questions – Academic Advising Proposal

How does this proposal fit into other campus initiative?

Retention of students has been a major focus for several years. Academic advising has been shown to predict student satisfaction and add benefits to the student experience. Additionally, this proposal is in line with the quality initiative being considered as a part of the continuing accreditation process for the Higher Learning Commission and the Changemaker Initiative which is a part of the Big Idea campaign. The synergy of this proposal with these campus-wide efforts will only enhance the student experience and help improve student satisfaction and retention. Finally, increasing student retention by as little as 1% would have a significant financial benefit for the University.

Drake promotes the student-faculty relationship and our approach to advising and mentorship as a strength. Will blended advising change/detract from that strength?

While the current advising model does have its strengths, there has been some areas of dissatisfaction with this model that have been noted by students. Through the Changemaker Initiative and a report from the 2020 Arts and Sciences Work Group, areas where academic advising could be improved to provide higher quality and consistent advising across campus have been noted. A blended model of advising will help address these concerns.

What roles will the professional staff advisors and faculty have in the blended advising model?

Faculty advisors will focus more on serving as professional mentors and advisors during a student's time at Drake and less on the nuts and bolts of academic advising. This will allow faculty members to use their experiences within a discipline to guide a student toward their intended personal and professional goals. The professional staff advisors will focus on what they do best, ensuring students are meeting the requirements necessary for graduation through their registration as well as providing development opportunities for faculty to enhance their advising and mentoring skills.

What are the target ratios of advisees to professional staff and faculty advisors in the blended advising model?

According to the recommendations of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), there should be 1 professional staff advisor for each 250-300 students. Within the proposal a calculation of the necessary number of advisors per college/school for undergraduate and graduate students has been laid out.

How will the quality of advising be assessed for faculty and professional staff advisors in the blended advising model?

For faculty, according to AAU guidelines, advising is recommended to be assessed and evaluated under teaching. Current models exist on campus on how to assess advising on an annual basis and include it in the promotion and tenure process. Each college/school could adopt their own assessment model for

faculty advisors. This would also be true for professional staff advisors. The assessment of staff advisors would largely fall under current campus practices of annual reviews and goal setting.

What is the reporting structure for the professional staff advisors?

Professional staff advisors would be housed within each college/school. It would be up to the individual unit to determine the reporting structure, but it would likely fall under the purview of an Assistant/Associate Dean. The professional staff advisors will meet together regularly to share ideas, discuss challenges, and ensure best practices are being followed. This group of professional advisors will be aligned under the Office of Academic Advising within the Registrar's Office.

Will there be consistency of advising between colleges/schools?

Collaboration between units is encouraged and should occur with the intended structure. This should ensure some consistency across campus. Additionally, campus-wide development opportunities for faculty members to enhance their advising skills should be developed and implemented. These could occur during January terms or the Drake Learning Symposium.

How are graduate programs and Drake Online incorporated into the new blended advising model?

Drake Online already uses a form of blended advising and that will continue as it currently operates. Advising for graduate programs would be incorporated into this model. The number of needed professional staff advisors was calculated using numbers of graduate and undergraduate students within each college/school. How students are assigned to advisors will be up to each school/college to determine.

How will we fund the new academic advising model?

There are two possible ways to help provide additional funds for any new staff lines that would need to be created when implementing a blended advising model. First, it is important to note that this proposal isn't solely based on the creation of new positions. Some new staff positions will need to be created and some staff positions simply need to be restructured. For those new lines, funding could come from increased retention of students. An example of increased revenue using Arts and Sciences is included in the proposal and would generate funds to cover the additional costs of advisor salaries. Additionally, some funding may be available from the university through the Quality Initiative project the university is about to undertake as a part of the continuing accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission.