

Report
NACADA Consultation Visit to Indiana University Kokomo
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Introduction

At the invitation of Gerry Stroman, Director of University Division, Elizabeth Higgins was invited to campus to conduct an on-site program review of the academic advising program at the Indiana University Kokomo. This review was to be, to the extent possible within time constraints, a holistic one that looked particularly at the academic advising function across campus which includes the different schools, colleges and divisions. This visit reflects Indiana University Kokomo's continuing interest in making improvements to its academic advising program.

The consultant utilized myriad information sources in conducting this program review:

- a) Documents (web and print), including the 1998-99 Institutional Self-Study Report for the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, the 2007 NSSE results, university bulletin information related to policies and procedures, and other information gleaned from various university/school/college web pages and print brochures/documents, and
- b) Interviews with Chancellor Ruth Person; Stuart Green, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Gerry Stroman, Director of University Division and Affirmative Action Officer; Jack Tharp, Vice Chancellor for Student Services; Sharon Calhoon, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Deans and Directors; faculty and professional advisors from the various schools, colleges and divisions; and with students representing each school/college/division.

Questions that guided this particular review were informed by the *Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS)* for Academic Advising Programs and the *NACADA Core Values for Academic Advising*. Not unlike regional and specialized accrediting standards, the CAS Standards for Academic Advising Programs provide a framework for self-assessment and benchmarking. Components of the CAS Standards include: Mission, Leadership, Organization & Development, Human Resources, Financial Resources, Diversity, and Assessment & Evaluation, as well as others that are considered critical to successful academic advising programs. A copy of the *CAS Standards* is included in this report in *Appendix A* as are copies of the *NACADA Core Values* and the *NACADA Concept Statement on Academic Advising*.

The *NACADA Core Values* provide the philosophical and ethical underpinnings for academic advising programs. These *Core Values* should guide the design and development of programs and initiatives with regard to academic advising. While the *Core Values* are explicated in the full document (*see Appendix A*), in general they reflect a commitment to students, the institution, higher education, the advising profession, and to ourselves as academic advising professionals.

This report begins with a set of general observations about academic advising at Indiana University Kokomo and includes information regarding its organization and approach to delivery.

General Observations

Indiana University Kokomo leadership, faculty members, professional staff and students are dedicated to exploring changes that will assist students in their overall success and persistence. The institution offers many degree programs ranging from Associate degree programs through Master level programs. It is a commuter campus of approximately 3,300 which serves an eleven county area in north central Indiana. Most students (80 %) work full or part time and a little over half (56%) are full-time undergraduate students.

Academic advising at Indiana University Kokomo is organized in a decentralized manner. Each school/college/division has professional staff or faculty members responsible for academic advising in their respective areas. Letters of acceptance also include the name of each student's academic advisor. Students begin their university experience by attending an orientation program where they become acclimated to the campus, programs, services, policies and register for their first semester of classes. Additional meetings with their academic advisors are welcomed. Students can make appointments by calling them directly or contacting their respective department.

Ultimately, the challenge for Indiana University Kokomo is to manage this decentralized approach in such a way to ensure that academic advising is consistent, accessible, and focused on student success. While respecting the autonomy of individual units, it is possible to pursue an organizational model that provides for the overall coordination of academic advising at the campus level. Indeed, this may be the most appropriate and beneficial for the program particularly in light of the ever-present resource limitations that seem to be plaguing most public higher education institutions. The notion of campus level coordination of academic advising at Indiana University Kokomo emerged from the following observations:

- Individuals involved in academic advising are seen as hard-working and knowledgeable, but have competing responsibilities.
- Academic advising delivery is seen as uneven and inconsistent within, between, and among units and often considered synonymous with scheduling.

- Academic advising does not have visibility on campus and needs a clear mission statement in order to bring consistency to its delivery. Academic advising is not currently, but should be prevalent in electronic and print materials.
- The academic advising program at Indiana University Kokomo lacks directionality and intentionality. An assessment plan which includes the vision, mission, goals and outcomes would help create an academic advising identity for the entire university community and serve as a campus roadmap for academic advising delivery.
- A comprehensive staffing analysis is in order. Professional advisors have multiple hats that may or may not fit within the concept of academic advising. Advisor loads range from 75 to 526 students.
- Academic advisors would benefit from on-going professional development.
- While the campus overall does not seem to have a shared set of beliefs about academic advising, Indiana University Kokomo students do have clear expectations for their academic advising experience. Their priorities were accuracy, accessibility, consistency and a caring partnership with the advisor. The following are the student's expectations of the knowledge, characteristics and skills of academic advisors.
 - Have a standard of advising
 - Believe in my success
 - Know that the act of advising motivates students
 - Expect us to graduate
 - Help us build a graduation plan
 - Show us how to plan out to graduation – teach us how
 - Check in on how we are doing
 - Care about us
 - Know who I am
 - Talk about the importance of having a mentor
 - Act as a consultant
 - Have time for me, be available
 - Don't be rushed
 - Know me and my abilities
 - Be friendly
 - Be welcoming and approachable
 - Help me problem solve
 - Assist with scheduling
 - Be knowledgeable about policy and procedures as well as classes
 - Be honest about course difficulty
 - Follow up while I'm gone (stopped out)
 - Have correct information
 - Have a positive demeanor
 - Be a good listener
 - Be a role model of professionalism
 - Be detailed oriented
 - Be accessible, have walk-in time as well as appointments
 - We want to be able to trust what they are saying is correct

Recommendations for Academic Advising at Indiana University Kokomo

Based upon these general observations, the following recommendations are made as ways to bring consistency to, to enhance, and to enrich the academic advising program at Indiana University Kokomo. In some cases, recommendations may require an infusion of resources; in others, they merely require a rethinking of how and what the purpose of academic advising is at Indiana University Kokomo, how it should be delivered, and how collaborations can be intentionally developed to support the overall program.

Recommendation #1: Create a position within the Vice-Chancellor's office responsible for campus-wide leadership for academic advising.

While a decentralized structure respects the autonomy of individual units, it also poses problems with regard to coordination and consistency of effort. This recommendation provides for campus leadership of academic advising. This position would report directly to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and would be responsible for the intentional coordination, approach and delivery of academic advising. This position would supervise all professional advisors who deliver advising across campus. One of the primary responsibilities would be to create an academic advising team that works collaboratively with all university departments and schools/colleges/divisions. In coordination with this team and other stakeholders as appropriate, the person in this position would facilitate the creation of a clear identity for academic advising on the campus, lead the development of an outcomes-based assessment plan, conduct a comprehensive review of staffing for academic advising, and immediately create an academic advising portal to support the needs of students, faculty and staff. This person in this position would also create a professional development plan for academic advisors, develop an advisory group that includes students, and have a small advising load as well as be the key individual who disseminates critical advising related information. Possible titles for this position include Assistant Vice-Chancellor, Executive Director, Director, etc. The title needs to be commensurate with the expectations and of sufficient stature to be effective within the campus community.

- ***Facilitate the creation of a clear an identity for academic advising.***

Currently academic advising is widely defined as course scheduling at Indiana University Kokomo even though university leadership, faculty and professional advisors and students know it can and should be much more. Information defining academic advising should be easily found within the university bulletin, website, and relevant printed materials. Students should see academic advising prominently promoted throughout their time at Indiana University Kokomo. This is an opportunity to share what students can expect from their academic advising experience as well as their active role in the process. Constant, deliberate communication will assist in creating ownership for academic advising throughout the campus. It will begin to create a culture of “what we do.”

Orientation is often the first opportunity for introducing this culture and sharing this information. This program allows students to ask questions about “how academic advising works.” All printed material given to students such as the New Student Handbook should have the mission of academic advising and the expectations of the advising partnership clearly identified for students and their family members.

- ***Develop an outcomes-based (student learning and advising delivery) assessment plan for academic advising.***

Each interview mentioned the importance of consistency with regard to the delivery of academic advising at Indiana University Kokomo. Developing an assessment plan for academic advising will allow for a shared philosophy and articulated mission, vision, goals and measurable outcomes. This in itself will create the foundation upon which the academic advising program can be built.

Articulating student learning outcomes for the academic advising program will allow advisors to identify specific experiences that support student learning. They then can communicate these outcomes to students creating contexts for advising conversations grounded in teaching and learning. In addition, outcomes for the delivery of academic advising need to be identified. These outcomes are anchored in the academic advisor and are often referred to as advisor learning outcomes. Advisor outcomes help to inform and shape the professional development needs in order to support the success of the advising program.

It is clear that the professional advisors at Indiana University Kokomo are very much interested in being part of the development of an assessment plan for academic advising. They are looking forward to being included in the Academic Advising Assessment program currently being scheduled for August 2008.

- ***Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the staffing for academic advising at Indiana University Kokomo.***

Faculty and professional advisors wear multiple hats at the Indiana University Kokomo. Faculty involved in academic advising gear up for the registration times while balancing their course, research and service responsibilities. Professional advisors aim to achieve all of their responsibilities for their respected departments. These responsibilities can include webmaster, schedule builder, student group advising, scholarships, academic actions, graduation certifications, recruitment visits/fairs and phone calls, student services, resource center coordination, licensing, orientation coordination, clerical duties and retention initiatives. It is the belief of professional advisors that to remain at their current salary level these non-advising responsibilities must be a part of their job description. The advising load of each professional advisor varies depending on where they are located. This supports the uneven delivery of academic advising across campus. At the time of this visit one advisor has a 30 day appointment wait for academic advising while another receives phone calls at home to assist students. Although the staff and faculty are very committed to their responsibilities at hand, this is an opportune time to

conduct a comprehensive analysis of staffing activity and resources. This analysis should include a comparative salary analysis of regional and national institutions as well as recommendations for future directions as the ebb and flow of advising loads occur. If the current situation is left untouched there would be no room to change without a larger commitment of resources. This recommendation does recognize that difficult decisions for change might need to take place. A decision-making process of this type should look at responsibilities and student success versus people and performance.

- ***Create an academic advising portal page that is student oriented.***

Students want easy access to information that will help them understand their Indiana University Kokomo community. They want to be able to create their graduation plan with the assistance of an academic advisor and available on-line resources. This graduation plan not only allows them to plan out each semester but provides them with a projected date of graduation. Clearly publicized course cycles would allow them to glean some insight into the next few semesters which ultimately assists in the creation of their graduation plan. These course cycles and other course related information should not only have course numbers but also course titles. Students stated that the course numbers, although important, are not as meaningful as course titles. The portal page should be focused on learning not outlining what a student has to do or know. It should provide them with experiences for learning in an approachable format. A student friendly portal of advising information would allow them to have access to already existing information that they now have to search and find. Links could include course cycle by major, academic advisor assignment, OneStart workshops for students, degree audit, forms, financial aid, and career services. Having students involved in the design of this page would be imperative.

Recommendation #2: Provide resources and programs to support advisor training/development initiatives as well as recognition and reward structures.

Advisor development as well as recognition and reward structures are essential parts of any academic advising program. In order for advisors to be motivated to participate in advisor training and development, the role and function of advisors needs to be valued within the institution. It was evident that while the concept of academic advising was verbally noted as important and valued, it did not seem that the actual practice of academic advising was valued through the recognition and reward structure of the institution. Consideration should be given to officially recognizing the role of academic advising in student success and persistence on the campus and to support professional development opportunities for academic advisors such as attendance at state, regional, and national conferences and institutes; NACADA is a good resource for these opportunities.

Currently, Indiana University Kokomo is coordinating a professional development opportunity focusing on building an academic advising assessment program. This program is scheduled for this August. This is a great start and could serve as the first in a

series of programs for advisor development. Additional professional development topics that could be considered in the near future may include the following: implementing the developmental approach of advising, proactive versus reactive advising, building the advising relationship, sharing ideas for change, success oriented advising, identifying passion, and accepting and challenging the 21st century student.

Recommendation #3: Change the campus language regarding student progress to focus on student success.

Throughout the interviews with students it was made clear that they want to have high expectations placed upon them. They want their advisors to believe that they can and will graduate. However, students stated that they were told to “expect to take 5-6 years to graduate” and that they should not expect an advisor to be available to them on any type of regular basis. Creating contexts for student success begins with setting high expectations for learning AND expecting that students will be able to meet those expectations. Supporting positive student self-efficacy is critical and begins with the messages the campus sends regarding student ability. Although it is possible that students will take more than four years to graduate it should be made clear there are different paths depending on each individual student’s situation. Advisors should assist students in understanding the pros and cons of graduating in four or more years. It is highly recommended that positive language should be used as much as possible. This should be visible on the advising website, at Orientation, during advising appointments and continue as students become alumni.

Recommendation #4: Review the current faculty and professional advising structure to maximize the expertise of both professional and faculty advisors.

Currently the decentralized approach of advising supports the autonomy of each academic area. Students benefit from the connectedness of their advisors to their major home or for undeclared students, University Division. Faculty, professional advisors and students see a benefit from this physical relationship where they can develop relationships with fellow individuals in their area of interest as well as the ease of communication when people are in close proximity.

From interviews, the consultant heard a significant amount of support for an advising approach that was delivered by professional academic advisors. Faculty are seen as playing a key role in the mentoring of the student body. The faculty members with whom the consultant spoke noted that the mentoring role of their advising and teaching responsibilities was meaningful to them and to their students. These members of the faculty mentioned that mentoring upper level students was a rewarding part of their advising function. They would prefer to assist students through a mentoring relationship rather than continuing in the currently defined advising role. Students have stated

they want to be knowledgeable about the importance of having a mentor. These two themes; professional academic advising and faculty mentoring, begin to identify the expertise of both groups as well as a core belief about academic advising at Indiana University Kokomo.

Identifying the core beliefs of the campus academic advising program reveal the expertise of both professional and faculty academic advisors and is an essential foundational component in identifying an appropriate advising model for any campus. Identification of core beliefs can be accomplished by developing the outcomes based assessment plan.

Organizing the delivery of academic advising by focusing on the maximization of expertise also allows for the creation of individual advising responsibilities. These responsibilities create boundaries that shape the consistent practice requested by all parties interviewed. Building a consistent developmental model of academic advising with campus-wide leadership will also embrace the necessity for close relationships with academic departments.

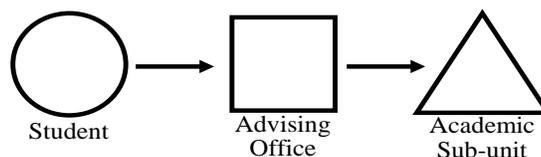
A two step process for changes in academic advising is recommended at Indiana University Kokomo. Step one addresses the leadership for academic advising and step two addresses the organizational structure.

Step 1: Identify the campus-wide leader for advising. Consideration should be given to having all professional advisors report to this person. This approach would retain the physical proximity embraced by the current model while providing initial direction on a path for change. This structure would create an avenue for communication and facilitate discussion about other necessary changes in areas such as advising loads, physical constraints, team creation, daily supervision opportunities, etc.

Step 2: Rethink the organizational structure for the delivery of academic advising and consider creating a central location for all academic advising. A Total Intake model can be very successful with the development of intentional on-going communication among academic departments. Academic advisors could/should have specific liaison responsibilities for particular majors. This approach also increases the visibility of academic advising on a campus. **Figure 1** depicts a Total Intake model for academic advising. In this model, all students receive their initial advising through a centralized advising center. Once a student has met certain conditions he/she is then transitioned to a faculty advisor. The conditions for transition may be related to academic coursework (e.g., developmental coursework), a specified time period (e.g., first year or first two years), or advising role (e.g., technical advising or career/curriculum advising), to name a few.

Figure 1

Total Intake Model

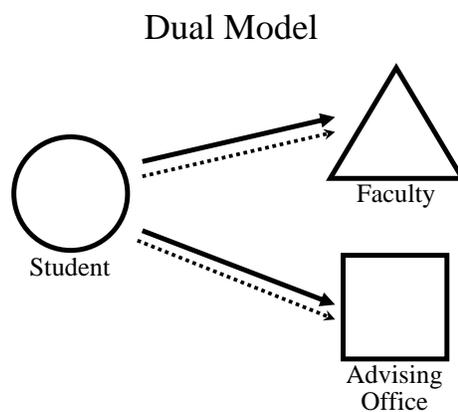


The Total Intake model also has the potential to alleviate the concerns expressed regarding advising loads because advisors would be seen as knowledgeable individuals who could advise more than one cohort of students. This model, depending on the staffing analysis, could potentially provide academic advisors for areas who currently have none or have limited availability of academic advising.

Depending on the results of the comprehensive staff analysis it may be appropriate for students to transition to faculty advisors in their junior or senior year or be assigned a faculty mentor beginning their first or second year to compliment their professional advising experience. If a faculty mentor program were to be created there would be a need to outline the outcomes of the program to ensure that the student experience it is consistent throughout the institution.

Figures 2 and 3 present other organizational models for academic advising that might be considered by Indiana University Kokomo. Figure 2 presents a Dual Model for the organization of academic advising.

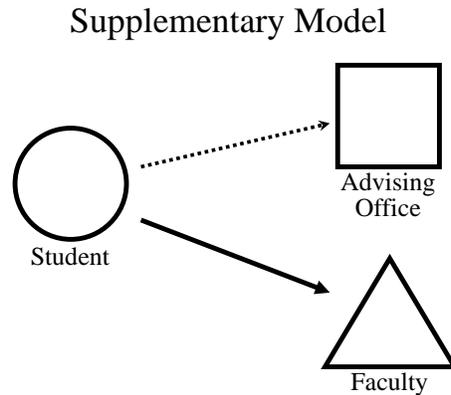
Figure 2



In a Dual Model, students are assigned two advisors, one within the advising center and one within their academic unit, most often a faculty advisor. Also highlighting the visibility of academic advising on a campus, this model does have some drawbacks in that, unless carefully coordinated, students can often become confused as to whom they should see for what purpose.

Figure 3 depicts the Supplementary model which again, highlights the importance of academic advising on a campus.

Figure 3



In this model, students are assigned a primary advisor in their respective academic units. The advising center is responsible for providing technical support regarding requirements and is usually also responsible for coordinating campus resources about academic advising.

What is clear from each of these three models is that there are a number of ways in which an advising center can be used to support and enhance the academic advising program on a campus. It should be noted that there is no “pure” model in existence on any campus and the selected organizational model should be chosen in order to maximize the available expertise of those who academic advise (e.g., faculty members, professional staff advisors, peers, etc) and in careful consideration of the cultural context of the institution.

Timeline

It is recommended to make as many changes as possible throughout this summer so that the change in culture can happen as the new academic year begins. This is also the start of the Fall 2008 cohort of students who will begin their new college experience when they attend orientation this summer.

Immediately identifying an individual to lead this cultural change will be an important first step. This individual will be a key change agent as decisions need to be made.

The Academic Advising Assessment program being scheduled for August 2008 will set the foundation for the new outcomes based academic advising approach. Pre-program work on a draft mission and a brainstorm of student learning outcomes may be beneficial. Other professional development opportunities could be designed for summer and fall involvement.

It will be imperative to conduct the comprehensive analysis of staffing and resources as soon as possible. This will allow university leadership to identify areas in need of change as well as potential resources to support this change.

The development of an advising portal page should begin this summer with the intention of on-going construction throughout the academic year with student input and possible intern assistance.

It is the understanding of the consultant that advisor assignment capability in OneStart is currently being worked on. This capability would also inform the faculty mentor assignment if applicable.

A review of web and print material will identify changes for advising language.

Summary

Leadership, faculty, professional advisors and students see a need for change in academic advising at Indiana University Kokomo. Campus-wide leadership for academic advising along with an outcomes based assessment plan that has clear vision, mission and goals will begin to create an identity to be shared throughout the campus community. Involvement of faculty, professional advisors and students in the development of the assessment plan will be imperative. This will allow all stakeholders to inform the process, plan development, identify professional development and student access needs. As initial program changes are being made along with the student success language the institution should experience positive cultural change.

Appendix A

Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) for Academic Advising Programs

NACADA Core Values for Academic Advising.

Concept Statement on Academic Advising