

# FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMIC ADVISING REPORT ON THE SECOND PHASE

2020  
Action and Implementation

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Frostburg State University completed the first phase of the Excellence in Academic Advising project in November 2019. A comprehensive self-study conducted by a task force of 90+ students, faculty, and staff analyzed institutional data, advisor and student surveys, and current and national practices to make fourteen overarching recommendations to improve academic advising. These recommendations formed the basis of an action plan drafted in January and February of 2020 with the input of the EAA Task Force and other stakeholders, especially students. The recommended actions to improve academic advising fit into two broad themes.

## *Theme 1: Implement a new academic advising model based on national best practices and supported by appropriate technology*

The EAA Task Force recommends that FSU adopt a dual advising model for academic advising where students will have a full-time primary role advisor who supports them throughout their academic career and one or more faculty advisors in their academic programs. The full-time advisors will be housed in a centralized office under the auspices of Academic Affairs. The new model for academic advising is based on the needs of our current students throughout their lifecycle and best practices endorsed by NACADA. This new model will be supported by a common institutional framework for academic advising and investment in leadership, technology, and staffing.

Actions	Status
Establish a common foundation for academic advising, including an operational definition, a mission statement, goals for improvement, and learning outcomes that contribute to the University’s learning outcomes.	Mission and Goals were approved in December 2019. Remaining elements are on-target for review by shared governance in the fall of 2020.
Implement a dual advising model for academic advising where students will have a full-time primary role advisor who supports them throughout their academic career and one or more faculty advisors in their academic programs.	Model development with campus feedback will occur in fall of 2020 with phased implementation beginning in fall 2021.
Implement a comprehensive student success software platform to enhance academic advising communication, student referrals to services, degree planning and auditing, and data integration and access (potentially replacing other software).	RFP in development for summer/fall 2020. Implementation and pilot would occur in 2021.
Map the student lifecycle to enhance academic advising practice and delivery, identifying key milestones, transitions, challenges, and barriers over the entire student academic career and paying special attention to the difference between various student populations.	Typical four-year student lifecycle has been mapped as of May 2020.
Identify leadership for academic advising within the Division of Academic Affairs including a centralized advising office to coordinate the dual advising model and an Academic Advising Council. This leadership would coordinate training, assessment, and communication.	A renewed Academic Advising Council will begin meeting in the fall of 2020. The centralized office should be in place before the new model phases in.
Develop advising delivery experiences beyond the typical once-a-semester one-on-one meetings.	Work on this action would begin after the new model implementation starts and would involve feedback from faculty, staff, and students.

## *Theme 2: Improve academic advising at FSU through training and professional development*

The EAA Task Force recommends professionalizing the advising role and providing training for all academic advisors. Training for faculty advisors would increase quality and consistency of advising interactions with students. As we move toward a model with more professional advisors, FSU needs to treat academic advising as a professional pursuit.

Actions	Status
Implement standardized training for academic advisors based on NACADA components: Conceptual, Informational, Relational, Technological, and Personal.	Advisor training outcomes were proposed in May 2020. Development of a training program aligned with these outcomes will begin in fall of 2020.
Establish standard job descriptions and hiring criteria for professional advisors and clear expectations for faculty advisors in support of the new model.	Implementation of the new model and training program will shape this work in the fall of 2020.
Recognize Excellent Academic Advisors at FSU through Nomination for Advising Awards	The next round of NACADA regional awards open in the fall. Other opportunities will present themselves during the following year.
Develop a communication plan for academic advising.	This work will be done by the Academic Advising Council and other advising leadership beginning in 2021.
Provide resources to professionalize the advising role by supporting advising scholarship and professional development.	This action should wait until after we implement the first stages of the new model, likely in 2022.

## Appreciations

The EAA steering committee greatly appreciates the support and engagement of FSU's senior leadership in this project. This project would not have been possible without the endorsement of the faculty and staff senates; the support of the Student Government Association; the active participation of a task force of 90 students, faculty, and staff; and financial support from the FSU strategic plan funds.

The liaisons are especially appreciative of the hard work done by our EAA Fellow, Dr. Susan Poch, guiding us through the process and helping us understand our data and evidence. We also thank the EAA Core Team from NACADA The Global Community for Academic Advising and the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education for support and encouragement and the opportunity to be a part of this exciting project.

# ACTION PLAN TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC ADVISING

Based on the feedback from the EAA Task Force, the EAA Steering Committee recommends eight priority actions for calendar year 2020 and three priority actions to begin after work on many of the initial actions completes. We have grouped these actions into two strategic themes based on the findings of the self-study. Progress on both themes will help FSU achieve the high-quality consistent academic advising desired by students, faculty, and staff in support of FSU's mission and goals for academic advising.

## *Theme 1: Implement a new academic advising model based on national best practices and supported by appropriate technology*

The EAA Task Force recommends that FSU adopt a dual advising model for academic advising where students will have a full-time primary role advisor who supports them throughout their academic career and one or more faculty advisors in their academic programs. The full-time advisors will be housed in a centralized office under the auspices of Academic Affairs. The new model for academic advising is based on the needs of our current students throughout their lifecycle and best practices endorsed by NACADA. This new model will be supported by a common institutional framework for academic advising and investment in leadership, technology, and staffing.

## Action 1: Establish a Common Foundation for Academic Advising

Recommendation IV: FSU must adopt a foundational framework for academic advising to provide common elements across all advising activities in all divisions, colleges, and units.

Recommendation X: FSU must assess the effectiveness of academic advising.

A foundational framework for academic advising contains the following common elements.

- A. Definition of advising
- B. Mission statement for advising
- C. Institutional advising goals
- D. Advising learning outcomes that contribute to the University's learning outcomes, including those that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion

### Progress

- Draft mission and goal statements for academic advising at FSU - Completed April/May 2019
- Approval of mission and goals by shared governance - Completed December 2019
- Draft learning goals for academic advising - Completed May 2020
- Draft common conceptual definition for academic advising - Completed May 2020
- Shared governance approval for advising definition and learning goals - Planned for Fall 2020
- Draft assessment plan for academic advising - Planned for 2021

In December of 2019, FSU shared governance endorsed an institutional mission statement and goals for academic advising. The mission and goals statement will be published in the undergraduate catalog and on the FSU website.

### Advising Mission

**Frostburg State University engages every student in collaborative, learner-centered advising, focusing on academic, professional, and personal development.**

### Advising Goals

Frostburg State University:

- fosters a campus culture where advising is a shared responsibility essential to the education experience and student success;
- empowers students, faculty, and staff to utilize university and professional resources to promote students' ability to navigate the university and achieve their goals; and
- offers a university experience where holistic engagement prepares students to meet the challenges of a diverse, complex, and changing global society.

### Proposed Advising Definition

We are proposing the following conceptual definition that will help students and advisors understand what academic advising is:

*Academic advising at Frostburg is a collaborative process between students and advisors, based on expert knowledge of the field, focused on students' academic, professional, and personal development, and success in their higher education goals.*

### Proposed Learning Goals

Finally, we are proposing nine student learning goals for academic advising to inform the roles and responsibilities of students and advisors.

1. Establish and maintain a trusting relationship with an academic advisor and other university personnel as relevant
2. Articulate personal, professional, and academic goals that can be fulfilled by the pursuit of higher education
3. Select an academic major which aligns with their goals, strengths, skills, and interests
4. Articulate the academic requirements, policies, and procedures needed to track their degree progress as outlined in the university catalog
5. Create and pursue an academic plan for timely degree completion
6. Demonstrate awareness of campus resources and use these resources to achieve goals and promote timely degree completion
7. Identify and participate in both co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that align with their personal, professional, and academic goals
8. Complete career readiness documents, such as a résumé or cover letter, for the job search process
9. Develop an awareness of the professional organizations and opportunities available within their discipline for continued growth and development

### Next Steps

The draft conceptual definition and learning goals will be submitted for feedback from FSU students, faculty, and staff in the fall of 2020. We hope to have endorsement by the Student Government Association, the Faculty Senate, and the Staff Senate by December of 2020. In 2021, we will begin work on an assessment plan for academic advising.








## Action 2: Implement New Model for Academic Advising

Recommendation I: FSU must visibly demonstrate institutional commitment for advising by providing appropriate and ongoing allocation of resources (fiscal, human, and physical) to support institution-wide advising practices and continuous improvement of advising based on assessment.

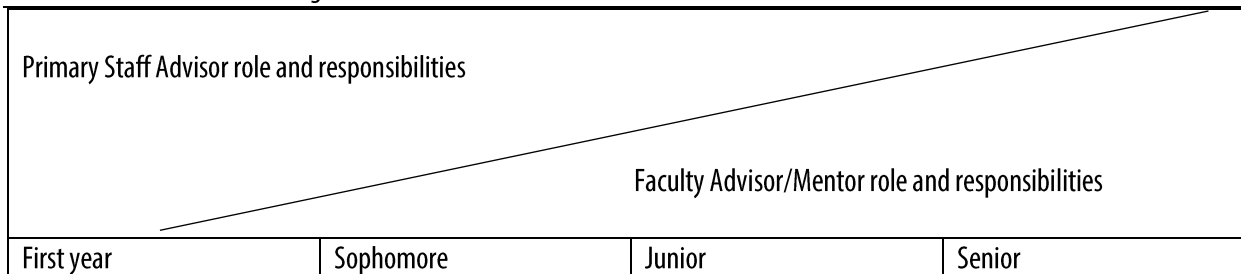
Recommendation VI: FSU must implement a shared, learner-centered advising model supportive of the advising mission, goals, and learning outcomes.

The EAA Task Force recommends transitioning to a dual advising model with purposefully shared responsibility between students, faculty, and staff.

### Progress

-  Identify major model parameters - Completed May 2020
-  Align advisor roles to student lifecycle, draft learning outcomes, and advisor process outcomes - Work in progress
-  Host town halls to share new model and gather feedback - Planned for Fall 2020
-  Shared governance endorsement of new advising model - Planned for Academic Year 2020-2021
-  Develop staffing plan for new advising model - Planned for Academic Year 2020-2021
-  Phased-in implementation of new advising model - Planned to begin in Fall of 2021
-  Update academic advising policies to reflect changes to the advising model as they occur - Planned to begin in Fall of 2021

Each undergraduate student would have a full-time primary role advisor who supports them throughout their academic career along one or more faculty advisors who provide increasing support in specific aspects of the advising relationship in the students' academic program(s). The split in duties will be informed by advising learning outcomes and will change throughout the student lifecycle.



While this model would represent the general rule for undergraduate students, most graduate programs and some undergrad programs, due to the uniqueness of their student populations or programs (nursing for example), would merit an exception to these structures.

**Next Steps**

We will hold town halls in the fall of 2020 to share this new model and get feedback from FSU students, faculty, and staff . We hope to have endorsement by the Student Government Association, the Faculty Senate, and the Staff Senate by May of 2021. A staffing plan for this model will be developed in Academic Year 2020-2021, and phased-in implementation could begin as soon as the fall of 2021.

**Action 3: Comprehensive Student Success Software Platform**







Recommendation VIII: FSU must improve access to advising services and information by creating an academic advising service portal.

Recommendation IX: FSU must evaluate new technologies that could enhance the effectiveness of advising at a University level.

This software platform will ideally provide some or all of the following functions, some of which may replace or enhance the functionality of other platforms (e.g. Beacon).

- Enhance communication between students, advisors, instructors, and support staff beyond what can be provided in Beacon now.
- Provide enhanced referral and appointment tracking for various student services and provide that information back to advisors.
- Provide enhanced degree planning and auditing tools for students and advisors.
- Integrate existing student data from various sources (e.g. PAWS, Canvas) and provide a comprehensive success dashboard for students and advisors.
- Provide an advising knowledge base for students and advisors.

**Progress**

-  Release a Request for Proposal (RFP) to which vendors can respond - Work in progress for Summer and Fall 2020
-  Review vendor proposals and select solution - Planned for Fall 2020
-  Implement product - Planned for 2021
-  Pilot use of the product faculty and staff early adopters - Planned for 2021
-  Full implementation for all faculty, staff, and students - Planned for Academic Year 2021-2022
-  Create advising portal in Canvas - Canceled: The student success software platform will have this functionality





**Next Steps**

We hope to release Request for Proposal (RFP) this summer to which vendors in this space can respond. Following adoption and integration, we hope to conduct a pilot of this platform in 2021. Full implementation would be during the 2021-2022 Academic Year.

## Action 4: Map the Student Lifecycle

- Recommendation III: FSU must incorporate a lifecycle model into the design of academic advising that promotes connecting, engaging, developing, supporting, and guiding students through their careers at FSU.
- Recommendation XII: FSU must promote delivery of academic advising beyond the traditional once-a-semester appointments for scheduling and registration.

### Progress

-  Map the typical undergraduate student lifecycle - Completed May 2020
-  Identify common student milestones and barriers - Completed May 2020
-  Identify lifecycle stages, milestones, and barriers by student subpopulation - Work in Progress
-  Align draft learning goals and advisor process outcomes to student lifecycle - Work in Progress

A group of faculty and staff have identified the major student lifecycle stages, events, transitions, and challenges over the entire student academic career from admission to graduation. Additionally, this group has identified milestones and barriers that are experienced by certain populations of the student body but all. For example, transfer students do not get the same intensive advising experience in ORIE 101 as first-year students do. The draft student lifecycle milestones and barriers can be found at the end of this document as Appendix 1.

### Next Steps

This information will be used to inform the development of advising delivery and training to address specific student lifecycle milestones and challenges.




## Action 5: Identify Leadership for Academic Advising

- Recommendation I: FSU must visibly demonstrate institutional commitment for advising by providing appropriate and ongoing allocation of resources (fiscal, human, and physical) to support institution-wide advising practices and continuous improvement of advising based on assessment.
- Recommendation V: FSU must identify a position or office to provide leadership for advising at the senior administrator level.

A dual advising model will need dedicated institutional leadership for academic advising. This leadership takes two forms. First, given the intricate relationship between academic advising and the curriculum in the academic programs, academic advising should be housed in the Division of Academic Affairs and coordinated by a centralized office of academic advising. The office will provide organizational structure for the primary role advisors. This office and its director will provide leadership and coordinate training, communication, and assessment related to academic advising campus wide.

Second, an Academic Advising Council provides an opportunity for advising practitioners, both faculty and professional staff, to meet regularly. This council would provide a venue for sharing best practices, advising the centralized advising office, and monitoring efforts to improve academic advising. This council is already listed as an existing standing administrative advisory group in the faculty handbook but is currently inactive. In the fall of 2020, we will be reviving this council and requesting shared governance approval of a new charter.

### Progress

-  Restart Academic Advising Council - Planned for Fall 2020
-  Identify advising leadership position or office within the Division of Academic Affairs - Planned for Academic Year 2020-2021
-  Reorganize academic advising units and services to report to the position or office in Academic Affairs - Planned for Academic Year 2020-2021

**Next steps**

The Academic Advising Council will reconvene in the fall of 2020 and work to update its charter to meet the needs of EAA Recommendations. Pending support of FSU leadership, reorganization of academic advising to fully report to the Provost's Office will begin in Academic Year 2020-2021.

### Action 6: Develop Advising Delivery Experiences

- Recommendation III: FSU must incorporate a lifecycle model into the design of academic advising that promotes connecting, engaging, developing, supporting, and guiding students through their careers at FSU.
- Recommendation XII: FSU must promote delivery of academic advising beyond the traditional once-a-semester appointments for scheduling and registration.

**Progress**

Work on this action will begin after completion of the other actions in this theme. Work on this action is planned for Academic Year 2021-2022. Key steps in this action include:



Implement a "pathways to success" advising delivery that expands the advising experience from ORIE 101 into the second, third, and fourth years with content appropriate for the student lifecycle milestones and challenges in each year - Planned to start in Academic Year 2021-2022



Develop advising delivery experiences focused on the needs of various student subpopulations - Planned to start in Academic Year 2021-2022

## *Theme 2: Improve academic advising at FSU through training and professional development*

The EAA Task Force recommends professionalizing the advising role and providing training for all academic advisors. Training for faculty advisors would increase quality and consistency of advising interactions with students. As we move toward a model with more professional advisors, FSU needs to treat academic advising as a professional pursuit.

### Action 7. Develop Training for Academic Advisors

- Recommendation II: FSU must ensure consistency of the student advising experience by providing common expectations and guidelines for all advising interactions.
- Recommendation VII: FSU must provide a mandatory academic advising training program and plan for regular opportunities for development that integrates diversity, equity, and inclusion into its foundation.

Standardized advising training provides a means to promote consistency and quality in academic advising delivery.

**Progress**

Draft advisor training outcomes - Completed May 2020



Align training outcomes to NACADA competencies - Completed May 2020



Develop advising training curriculum and delivery - Planned for Fall 2020



Implement advisor training for all academic advisors - Planned for 2021

A group of faculty and staff have identified key advising training outcomes that will serve as learning outcomes for an advising training program. The advising training outcomes are organized into components based on the NACADA Core Competencies.

## Advising Training Components

- Conceptual – Theoretical foundations for advising
- Informational – Knowledge that advisors need to work with students at FSU
- Relational – Building and maintain productive advising relationships
- Technological – Using technology to support advising
- Personal – Promoting advisor self-care and self-efficacy

Read more:

- [NACADA Core Competencies](#)
- [Article on training components](#) by Jeffrey McClellan (FSU Dept. of Management)

## Proposed Advisor Training Outcomes

1. Use PAWS to respond to student needs
2. Assist students to understand and navigate policies and procedures
3. Effectively communicate information to facilitate student understanding and action
4. Demonstrate effective advising and counseling skills
5. Effectively develop and maintain productive working relationships with students
6. Demonstrate a knowledge of the resources available the FSU website, Beacon and other technological tools
7. Encourage and assist students to define and integrate their educational and career goals
8. Facilitate effective referrals to resources in relation to student needs
9. Have a knowledge of advising that informs your practice
10. Manage student records and data
11. Perform transfer credit evaluations
12. Assist students to develop effective degree plans
13. Coach students in developing behaviors that contribute to success in college and life
14. Understand the context of higher education, FSU, and the Maryland System and be able to effectively guide students and perform your job within it
15. Demonstrate ability to adapt advising approaches to meet the needs of diverse student populations

## Next Steps

These training and process outcomes are being mapped to the proposed learning goals. Work will continue to align them to the student lifecycle and the advisor roles in the dual advising model. Based on these outcomes, we will be developing and implementing a training program for academic advisors at FSU, to begin in Academic Year 2020-2021.







### Action 8: Provide a Standard Job Description for Academic Advisors

- Recommendation II: FSU must ensure consistency of the student advising experience by providing common expectations and guidelines for all advising interactions.
- Recommendation VI: FSU must implement a shared, learner-centered advising model supportive of the advising mission, goals, and learning outcomes.
- Recommendation XIV: FSU must promote advising as a professional field through the selection of advisors, demonstration of core competencies, dissemination of evidence-based practices in advising, and scholarship and service.

As FSU considers hiring additional academic advisors to support a new advising model, the institution needs to establish standard job descriptions and clear hiring criteria for these professional advisors. Additionally, the role of faculty advisors at FSU has been poorly defined beyond assisting

students with course scheduling and registration. The learning goals and advising training outcomes provide a foundational to build standardized expectations for academic advisors in the professional and faculty advising roles.

### Progress

-  Draft advisor process outcomes - Completed May 2020
-  Align advisor process outcomes to student lifecycle stages and advisor roles for dual advising model - Work in progress
-  Develop job descriptions and hiring criteria for professional advisors - Planned for Academic Year 2020-2021
-  Develop a career ladder for professional advisors at FSU - Planned for Academic Year 2021-2022.
-  Standardize advising caseloads for professional advisors - Planned for Academic Year 2021-2022.
-  Update faculty workload to provide appropriate credit for high faculty advising loads - Planned for Academic Year 2021-2022.

A group of faculty and staff have drafted advisor process outcomes based on the draft advising learning goals. These process outcomes represent the tasks that advisors will perform.

### Proposed Advisor Process Outcomes

1. Develop and maintain knowledge of legal guidelines, university policies, degree requirements, organizational structures, and campus and community resources
2. Participate in training as necessary to understand the ways technology, student development theory, and equitable and inclusive environments affect advising
3. Establish a positive working relationship with advisees built on trust, mutual respect, and mentorship
4. Guide advisees to identifying academic, professional, and personal goals aligned to their interests and higher education's purpose
5. Help advisees create a plan focused on timely degree completion
6. Establish relationships with and refer students to campus programs, offices, and personnel that support advisees' attainment of their personal, professional, and academic goals
7. Continually challenge and support students in their pursuit of meaningful co-curricular and extra-curricular college experiences that promote intellectual and personal growth
8. Recognize crucial gaps in advisees' knowledge and skills, and assist them with identifying opportunities to build their strengths
9. Maintain knowledge of professions in their discipline and assist students with navigating the job search process

### Next Steps

Following institutional feedback on the model and learning goals, a committee of faculty and staff will draft job descriptions and hiring criteria, perhaps for multiple levels of professional advisors with different levels of responsibility. This work will occur in Academic Year 2020-2021 in preparation for hiring the first professional advisors to support the new advising model.

## Action 9: Nominate FSU Advisors for Advising Awards

Recommendation XII: FSU must provide recognition and rewards to incentivize high-quality advising based on proven best practices.

FSU already has many excellent academic advisors who are deserving of recognition. While we work on developing an internal award for advising, we must also nominate our colleagues for external awards.

**Progress**

Nominate academic advisors from FSU for NACADA Region II - Planned for Fall 2020



Nominate academic advisors from FSU for NACADA global awards and other national awards - Planned for 2021



Develop institutional awards for excellence in academic advising - Planned for Academic Year 2021-2022

**Next Steps**

Nominations for the NACADA Region II awards occurs in the fall. We plan to announce a call for internal nominations early in the fall semester so we may nominate several deserving advisors across the various award categories. There may be additional venues for recognition, including the NACADA Global awards with a nomination period in the late winter.

### Action 10: Advising Communication Plan

Recommendation XI: FSU must develop and implement an institution-wide advising communication plan that provides for the regular and timely dissemination of advising information customized by stakeholder group.

**Progress**

The communication plan for academic advising will be developed and implemented by the advising leadership position or office in Academic Affairs, assisted by the Academic Advising Council. The specific details of the communication plan will be based on the completion of other EAA actions. Work on this action is planned for Academic Year 2021-2022. Key steps include:



Draft communication plan - Planned for Academic Year 2021-2022



Develop communication content specific to stakeholder groups - Planned for Academic Year 2021-2022



Develop communication delivery methods appropriate for various stakeholder groups - Planned for Academic Year 2021-2022

### Action 11: Resources for Professionalization

Recommendation I: FSU must visibly demonstrate institutional commitment for advising by providing appropriate and ongoing allocation of resources (fiscal, human, and physical) to support institution-wide advising practices and continuous improvement of advising based on assessment.

Recommendation XIV: FSU must promote advising as a professional field through the selection of advisors, demonstration of core competencies, dissemination of evidence-based practices in advising, and scholarship and service.

**Progress**

The number of professional academic advisors employed at FSU will increase in support of the dual advising model. These professional staff need to have continuing professional development opportunities beyond the initial training. Additionally, they must have the resources to contribute to the growth of their professional field. Faculty advisors wishing additional professional development or seeking to contribute to the scholarship of advising will benefit from these opportunities and resources as well. Work on this action is planned for Academic Year 2021-2022. Key steps include:



Increase holdings in the library related to academic theory and practice - Planned for Academic Year 2021-2022



Identify resources to support academic advisors' attendance and participation in workshops and conferences - Planned for Academic Year 2021-2022



Provide opportunities for academic advising scholarship - Planned for Academic Year 2021-2022

# SUMMARY OF SELF-STUDY FINDINGS

## *Points of Excellence*

The initial institutional commitment to improving advising at FSU is encouraging. The institutional strategic plan has goals, action priorities, and action items supporting improved academic advising and professional development for students. The strategic plan also supports inclusivity, cultural competence, and respect for diversity of ideas and backgrounds, which are critical to advising FSU's diverse student population. The EAA project is a strategic priority for FSU, and strategic planning funds were committed to the project. The support and engagement of faculty, students, staff, and senior leadership at FSU demonstrates commitment to implementing recommendations.

Faculty, staff, and students express confidence in and appreciation for campus units that provide advising services. These units include the Center for Academic Advising and Retention, the Center for Career and Professional Development Center, TRIO Student Support Services, and the advising centers in the Colleges of Business and Education. These units work with faculty advisors to provide collaborative advising experiences for student populations at FSU.

The first year advising program, including Preview FSU, ORIE 101, and the FSU Connections provides an exemplar for a shared model of integrated advising services with support from the divisions of Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Student Affairs. These programs have established budgets and the advising components are centrally coordinated by CAAR. Faculty and staff advisors are partnered with peer mentors to deliver an advising experience with articulated learning outcomes and common expectations. ORIE 101 instructors also serve as advisors for first year students and are active members of students' success networks. FSU Connections provide collaboration with instructional faculty in the students' programs by coupling a high impact first-year seminar with content courses in students' majors. CAAR provides training, professional development, best practices, and regular communication relevant to these experiences. Preview and ORIE advisors, as well as student mentors, are rewarded for their efforts through stipends. Both Preview FSU and ORIE 101 are evaluated and assessed through student surveys. This integrated partnership model is a national best practice that continues to be newly adopted by other institutions.

## *Areas of Deficiency*

Beyond the student's first year, advising is decentralized, with each department and college having its own procedures and practices. This advising structure leads to a lack of consistency in advising across the institution, a key conclusion from the 2018 advising town halls reinforced by the self-study findings. FSU lacks five critical components that would promote consistency and quality improvement:

1. FSU lacks an institutional advising framework, including a shared definition for advising, an institutional mission statement for advising, advising goals to inform practice and improvement efforts, and advising learning outcomes.
2. FSU lacks an assessment plan for advising to drive quality improvement.
3. FSU lacks regular training and professional development for all advisors.
4. FSU lacks a communication plan to share advising information with students, advisors, and other stakeholders.
5. FSU lacks recognized institutional leadership for advising to management and coordinate assessment, training, communication, and quality improvement.

## *Opportunities*

The greatest opportunities for improvement expand existing practices to benefit all students and advisors. FSU needs to implement a shared model for academic advising that extends the advising approach used in ORIE 101. This model will feature shared responsibility between students and advisors for academic, personal, and professional development and be built on a partnership between faculty and staff for integrated advising services. This model needs to support student throughout their full lifecycle at FSU, not just during the first year.

FSU needs to integrate the data and processes contained in existing technology for advising to provide comprehensive support for advising and retention efforts. FSU should also promote widespread use of alternative advising delivery practices that occur in some units, but not others. Advising is a teaching and learning activity that supports the rest of a student's education. It is more than those few transactions that occur in order to register for classes.

## *Summary of Recommendations*

- I. *Institutional Commitment and Resources*  
FSU must visibly demonstrate institutional commitment for advising by providing appropriate and ongoing allocation of resources (fiscal, human, and physical) to support institution-wide advising practices and continuous improvement of advising based on assessment.
- II. *Consistency*  
FSU must ensure consistency of the student advising experience by providing common expectations and guidelines for all advising interactions.
- III. *Student Lifecycle*  
FSU must incorporate a lifecycle model into the design of academic advising that promotes connecting, engaging, developing, supporting, and guiding students through their careers at FSU.
- IV. *Foundations for Advising*  
FSU must adopt a foundational framework for academic advising to provide the following common elements across all advising activities in all divisions, colleges, and units.
- V. *Leadership*  
FSU must identify a position or office to provide leadership for advising at the senior administrator level.
- VI. *Advising Model*  
FSU must implement a shared, learner-centered advising model supportive of the advising mission, goals, and learning outcomes.
- VII. *Advisor Training*  
FSU must provide a mandatory academic advising training program and plan for regular opportunities for development that integrates diversity, equity, and inclusion into its foundation.
- VIII. *Knowledge Base*  
FSU must improve access to advising services and information by creating an academic advising service portal available through the University's website and a Canvas advisor course.
- IX. *Technology*  
FSU must evaluate new technologies that could enhance the effectiveness of advising at a University level.
- X. *Assessment*  
FSU must assess the effectiveness of academic advising.
- XI. *Communication Plan*  
FSU must develop and implement an institution-wide advising communication plan that provides for the regular and timely dissemination of advising information customized by stakeholder group.
- XII. *Recognition and Incentives*  
FSU must provide recognition and rewards to incentivize high-quality advising based on proven best practices.
- XIII. *Delivery*  
FSU must promote delivery of academic advising beyond the traditional once-a-semester appointments for scheduling and registration.
- XIV. *Professionalization*  
FSU must promote advising as a professional field through the selection of advisors, demonstration of core competencies, dissemination of evidence-based practices in advising, and scholarship and service.

# BACKGROUND

## *Why do we want to transform academic advising?*

To paraphrase FSU President, Dr. Nowaczyk, this is our once-in-a-generation chance to transform academic advising at FSU. If done right, we will enrich the advising experience for all students and increase the quality of student-advisor interactions. If successful, we will see an increase in student graduation rates and an enhancement of our reputation because of increased student success.

Quality and consistent academic advising are critical components of student success. However, students, faculty, and staff routinely share that FSU cannot consistently deliver quality academic advising to its students.

- As many as 44% of students are dissatisfied with the way advisors help them set goals (Noel-Levitz Student Success Inventory, 2013)
- About 44% of FSU faculty and 50% of FSU staff feel that advising is not valued at FSU (Middle States self-study, 2015)
- Only about 38% of FSU faculty and 42% of FSU staff feel that they receive adequate advising training (Middle States self-study, 2015)
- As many as 41% of students would prefer a different advisor than the one assigned (SGA Advising Survey, 2015)
- Less than 50% of seniors discuss career plans with their advisors (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2016)
- Only 45% of FSU faculty feel they have adequate resources to advise students (FSU Faculty Morale Survey, 2017, 2018)

FSU's Strategic Plan for 2018-2023 includes improvement of academic advising as a priority. Improvement of academic advising supports the following FSU strategic goal, particularly parts A and B:

### *II. Provide engaging experiences that challenge our students to excel.*

- Implement an advising/support structure that meets student needs from applicant through alumna/us.
- Integrate effective career and professional development into the student experience.
- Create a campus climate that enhances the well-being of our students and is welcoming, inclusive, and contributes to the cultural competence of each of our graduates.

Specifically, improvement of academic advising is represented in FSU's third action item:

***Frostburg State University supports student success through comprehensive academic and career services that are focused on the needs of students from admission through their years as alumni.***

## *Task Force Leadership*

### **A. Liaisons**

Name	Title
Jay Hegeman	Assistant VP and Registrar
Benjamin Norris	Associate Professor & Chair of the Faculty

### **B. EAA Fellow**

Name	Title
Susan Poch	Assistant Vice Provost Emerita, Washington State University

### **C. Steering Committee**

Name	Title
Sara Beth Bittinger	Interim Assistant Vice President for Analytics
Delanie Blubaugh	Student Representative

Matthew Crawford	Associate Professor, Chemistry
Keith Davidson	Academic Counselor, Center for Academic Advising and Retention
Jennifer Earles	Assistant Professor, Sociology
Michael Flinn	Associate Professor, Computer Science and Information Technologies
Heather Gable	Associate Professor and Chair, Nursing
Emma Gerhold	Assistant Athletic Director for Student Development and Success
Kenneth Levitt	Assistant Professor, Management
Joseph Littley	Data Warehouse Architect
Tamara Lowry	Director, TRIO Student Support Services
Janet Mattern	Assistant Professor, Education Professions
Jeffrey McClellan	Associate Professor, Management
Michael Monahan	Associate Professor and Chair, Management
Jill Morris	Associate Professor, English and Foreign Languages
Timothy Pelesky	Director, Enterprise Applications
Jenna Puffinburger	President, SGA
Amy Shimko	Director, Student Development
Selina Smith	Assistant Director, Institutional Research
Beth Stallings	Director, Center for Academic Advising and Retention
Linda Steele	Program Coordinator, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Rita Thomas	Instructional Design & Technology Manager
Robin Wynder	Director, Center for Student Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

### *What is the timeline for the EAA Project?*

- Provost established advising task force – December 2017
- Advising town halls – January and February 2018
- FSU applied to participate in EAA project – March 2018
- Findings from town hall shared with campus – April 2018
- FSU accepted into EAA charter cohort – July 2018
- EAA Steering committee and conditions committees established – October 2018
- Self-study launch – First full meeting of the task force – November 2018
- EAA surveys administered to students – March 2019
- Complete dataset of anonymized student outcomes submitted for review – April 2019
- EAA Fellow visited campus for Mission and Goals Advance Workshop with full task force – April 2019
- EAA surveys administered to faculty and staff – May 2019
- EAA task force retreat to integrate findings and develop recommendations – August 2019
- Final condition committee reports submitted – September 2019
- Steering Committee consolidated and prioritized recommendations – October 2019
- Final self-study report released – November 2019
- Advising Mission and Goals approved by university shared governance – December 2020
- EAA Kickoff to Action workshop with full task force to draft action plan – January 2020
- Draft action plan submitted to FSU President – February 2020
- Steering Committee and Task Force reconfigured into action groups – February 2020

- Campus update on action plan – August 2020

### What did we learn from the advising town halls?

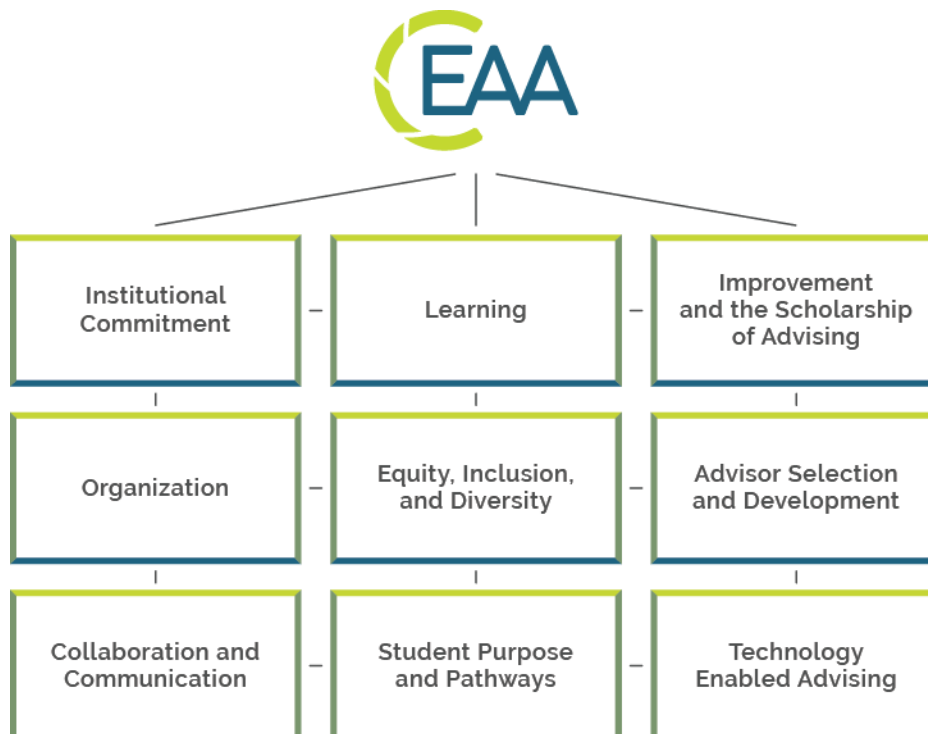
In the fall of 2017, Dr. Throop, FSU Provost, assembled an Advising Task Force to address the FSU action priority related to advising. In January and February of 2018, the task force held advising town halls attended by nearly 200 students, faculty, and staff. The primary concern identified was the lack of consistency in all aspects of FSU’s advising program, including the student experience, advisor training and expectations, and use of technology. Other themes emerged from the feedback gathered at those town halls:

1. There should be an articulated unifying mission for academic advising. The mission statement would include the purpose and intended outcomes of academic advising.
2. There should be a plan to assess academic advising systematically which should lead to improvements and innovation. Direct and indirect measures should be used including multiple feedback pathways.
3. Academic advising requires an agreed upon “owner” and a standard university-wide set of policies and procedures.
4. Good academic advising requires thorough and periodic training. The training should include the philosophy (framework, underlying values), goals, policy, processes, and technology.
5. Academic advisors need to know available resources for students and be skilled at making referrals.
6. Academic advisors and students need technology-based tools to help plan degree paths, connect students on resources based on monitored progress, and predict course and pathway outcomes to support interventions.
7. Expectations of students and academic advisors must be clearly understood and conveyed.
8. Student success is predicated on excellent academic advising, which in turn, relies on university-wide collaboration and communication.

The Task Force noted the similarity of these conclusions to the EAA Nine Conditions of Excellence, which led to FSU’s successful application to participate in the EAA charter cohort.

### What are the Nine Conditions of Excellence?

NACADA and the Gardner institute identified Nine Conditions of Excellence in Academic Advising through research into effective advising practices. These Conditions are standards-based and are intended to aid in improving student learning, success, and completion.



## *What were the guiding principles of the self-study?*

The self-study followed a model developed by the EAA core team at NACADA and the Gardner Institute and facilitated by FSU's EAA Fellow, Dr. Susan Poch, and the Task Force Co-Chairs, Dr. Jay Hegeman and Dr. Benjamin Norris. The self-study adhered to these key principles:

- The self-study will be an honest, realistic, and evidence-based assessment of the current state of academic advising at FSU. Achievable steps for improvement must be based on an accurate understanding of our true strengths and challenges and not a wishful overestimate of our progress.
- Frostburg State University is the primary audience for this self-study. While lessons learned from the self-study will be shared with other institutions through the EAA project, the driving force remains an internal desire to improve advising.
- The self-study will seek open and inclusive participation of students, faculty, and staff in a comprehensive conversation about academic advising. The progress of the self-study will be transparently communicated through regular reports to the campus community.
- The self-study will prioritize student success, the student advising experience, and the joint responsibility of all members of the FSU community for improving the quality of academic advising.
- Recommendations for improvement will be grounded in self-study results, based on evidence of effective practice, and be designed to be phased in over several years.

## Appendix 1: Draft Student Lifecycle

### Traditional Student Lifecycle: 1<sup>st</sup> year student

#### Key Advising Milestone/Points (First Semester)

- Admit/Deposit Paid
- Preview – Registration/Complete information Survey (Advising Information)
  - Registration for preview
  - Survey (completion)
  - Registration for classes
    - General Advising
    - ORIE (Sunday ORIE Meeting; before semester starts)
  - Drop/Add Advising
  - Week 3-4 – 1<sup>st</sup> year progress survey (Instructor Alerts)
    - 1<sup>st</sup> year early alert
  - Midterm warnings
  - Honors registration and DSS
  - Withdraw with 'W'
  - General registration

*Note: Beacon survey 1<sup>st</sup> semester ORIE instructor; Risk Assessment Survey; Retention.*

#### Traditional Student Lifecycle 1<sup>st</sup> year student – Key Advising Milestone/Points (Second Semester)

- Check with advisor 1<sup>st</sup> week of drop/add
  - Probation Mandatory workshop 1<sup>st</sup> week
- Declare Major
  - Meet with department advisor or end of the first semester.
- 4<sup>th</sup> week survey – progress
- Mid-term
- Registration
- Withdraw

*Academic Department to take over (current advising model).*

#### Parallel/Optional

- Involvement in activities
- Engagement/connecting/relationships
  - Activities
  - Student organizations
  - Scavenger Hunt
  - Fairs
    - Majors
    - Career
  - Orientation (Seminar; 7 additional meetings)
    - Learning connection
    - Field Shadow
    - Guest Lecture
  - Living Learning Communities (EDU, NURS, Echo Stars)
  - Leadership Retreat
- At least one activity (each student)
  - Athletics
  - Organization
  - Some engagement
- Bridge Program
  - Behave, dress, etc.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> professional/college experience
- BRING STENGTHS QUEST BACK
- Majors Signing Day

**• Traditional Student Lifecycle: 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> year students**

**Key Advising Milestones/Points (Sophomore)**

- Check with advisor 1<sup>st</sup> week of drop/add
  - Probation Mandatory workshop 1<sup>st</sup> week
- Mid-term
- Registration
- Withdraw
  - Repeat for 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of sophomore year

**Challenges/Barriers – Sophomore Year (as well as 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year)**

- Not much info in 2<sup>nd</sup> year
  - Getting info from upper classman and org advisor
  - Faculty advisor does not get any info on the student (survey or something to help communicate with faculty)
  - Orie advisor is less connected to the student
  - Transferring is pivotal and the decision to stay or leave is made
  - Out on own, lack of relationship with academic advisor, want to build relationship, how to get involved, drifting
  - Nothing consistent across the academic departments for sophomores (example – EDU 201)
  - Resources presented in orie need reiterated
  - Conversation about graduation
  - Holistic Advising
    - FA; personal finances
    - Stress management (Senior Stress)
  - Athletics
    - Scheduling courses
    - Access to courses
      - Frequency on course offerings
        - Communication about the courses

**Key Advising Milestones/Points (Junior and Seniors)**

- Check with advisor 1<sup>st</sup> week of drop/add
  - Probation Mandatory workshop 1<sup>st</sup> week
- Mid-term
- Registration
- Withdraw
  - Repeat for both semesters of Junior and Senior years
- **Additional Milestones**
  - Junior
    - Starting process to professional schools,
    - testing,
    - Interpersonal skills for career development
    - Application for graduation
      - *At 90 credits apply for graduation; degree audit.*
  - Senior

*Notes: Ongoing – Academic advising each semester, Workshop (if applicable), mid-terms, registration, withdraw, and repeat every semester.*

**Ideas – 2<sup>nd</sup> Year/Sophomore Students**

- Engagement
- Strengths Quest
- Study Abroad
- Internship (Planning)
- Career Office
- 4<sup>th</sup> week progress survey
- Sophomore year experience/seminar
- A survey to inquire about what might help a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student
- Fair – informational, push from professors to attend
- Pop-up boxes in PAWS for informational purposes
- Checklists to help remind students of milestones - example
  - <https://advising.columbian.gwu.edu/academic-milestone-checklist>
  - Disclosure of milestones may vary for each 'special' student types

**Other Special Student Populations (Milestones/Challenges/Barriers)**

- **Transfer Students**
  - Lack connections
  - Ideas for Transfer Students
    - Transfer orientation; adding to preview for transfer students to attend
- **Re-entry**
  - CAAR
    - Probation ORIE (as needed)
  - Academic department advises
- **Second degree**
  - Connected directly with advisors for registration
- **Non-traditional students**
  - LOA
- **Veterans**
  - FA issues
  - Timely access to resources – textbooks
  - Priority registration
  - Excessive documentation required for this population
- **Online students**
  - University level online resources
    - FA, Registrar, Probation, Orientation, online office/leadership
- **Honors students**
  - If courses not completed early, you cannot graduate with honors
    - Early credit completion; load up on honors courses
- **Part-time students**
- **Satellite Students**
  - Hagerstown - USMH
  - Arundel Mills
    - Engineering - Electrical
  - UMCP
    - Engineering
  - ATB students (ten different schools)
    - Nursing (ACM, AACC, CCC, Cecil, CCBC, CSM, Frederick, HCC, Harford, & PGCC)
  - Cecil – Engineering - Materials
    - ACM Collaborative - Nursing
- **Latin honors for all students**
  - Change the 50-credit minimum rule.
  - Second degree, online, non-traditional, and some satellite students impacted by this rule.