

# **ACADEMIC ADVISING STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

## **WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

The Standards and Guidelines set forth embody the ideal of advising at Western. This document will direct us in our efforts to provide students an outstanding undergraduate advising program. The Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) and the NACADA Statement of Core Values were two resources used to develop this document.

### **PART 1: MISSION**

The mission of the Academic Advising Program (AAP) at Western Illinois University is to support the overall mission of the University, i.e. to “have a profound and positive impact on our changing world through the unique interaction of instruction, research, and public service as we educate and prepare a diverse student population to thrive in and contribute to our global society.” The primary purpose of the AAP is to assist students in the development of meaningful educational plans that are compatible with their life goals.

Academic advising should be viewed as a continuous process of clarification and evaluation.

Students deserve honest, friendly, respectful, dependable, accurate, and professional service. In order to serve students well, academic advisors understand that they are responsible to many constituents who comprise our academic communities.

While the ultimate responsibility for making decisions about life goals and educational plans rests with the individual student, the academic advisor assists by helping to identify and assess alternatives and the consequences of decisions. Institutional goals for academic advising should include:

- Development of suitable educational plans
- Clarification of career and life goals
- Selection of appropriate courses and other educational experiences
- Interpretation of institutional requirements
- Enhancement of student awareness about educational resources available (e.g., internships, study abroad, honors, and learning assistance programs).
- Evaluation of student progress toward established goals
- Development of student decision-making skills
- Reinforcement of student self-direction
- Referral to and use of institutional and community support services
- Collection and distribution of data regarding student needs, preferences, and performance for use in making institutional decisions and policy

### **PART 2: PROGRAM**

The academic advising program should identify resources to assist students in overcoming specific personal, physical, or educational problems or skill deficiencies.

The academic advising program should identify environmental conditions that may negatively influence welfare and propose interventions that may neutralize such conditions.

Individual academic advising conferences must be available to students each academic term. The academic advisor should review and utilize any available data about student academic and educational needs, performance, aspirations, and problems and must collaborate in collection of such data.

Confidentiality of individual student records must be maintained.

### **PART 3: HUMAN RESOURCES**

The academic advising program must have adequate and qualified staff to fulfill the mission of that service and to implement all aspects of the program. A variety of staffing arrangements may be used. Advisors may be full-time or part-time professionals who have advising as their primary function within the institution or may be full-time professionals who have other responsibilities, such as teaching faculty. Paraprofessionals (i.e., graduate students in practica, internships, or assistantships) or peer advisors (i.e., trained undergraduate students) may also assist advisors.

Paraprofessionals must be carefully selected, trained with respect to helping skills and institutional services and procedures, closely supervised, and evaluated regularly. Paraprofessionals must recognize the limitations of their knowledge and skills and must refer students to appropriate professionals when the problems encountered warrant.

To ensure that professional staff members devote adequate time to professional duties, the academic advising program must have sufficient clerical and technical support staff.

Adequate staff should be available to meet students' needs without unreasonable delay. Caseloads should be such that advisors are able to allow an appropriate amount of time for students to discuss plans, programs, courses, academic progress, and other subjects related to their educational programs.

Academic advisors should have an appropriate earned degree; an understanding of student development; a comprehensive knowledge of the institution, its programs, academic requirements, majors, minors, and student services; a demonstrated interest in working with and assisting students; a willingness to participate in pre-service and in-service training and other professional activities; and demonstrated interpersonal skills.

### **PART 4: FUNDING**

The academic advising program must have funding sufficient to carry out its mission and to support the day-to-day operations and functions of advising. In addition, consideration should be given to supporting institutional memberships in appropriate professional organizations; relevant subscriptions and necessary library resources; attendance at professional association meetings, conferences, and workshops and other professional

development activities. Printing and media monies should be sufficient to provide quality printed and non-print information to support the advising activities. Funding support for in-service training of advisors, particularly those for whom the advisory function is a part-time or secondary assignment, should be available.

## **PART 5: FACILITIES**

Academic advising must be provided adequate facilities to fulfill its mission. As applicable, the facilities should include or have access to, the following: private offices or private spaces for advising or meetings of a confidential nature; office, reception, and storage space sufficient to accommodate assigned staff, supplies, equipment, library resources, and machinery; and conference room or meeting space. Facilities should provide privacy, freedom from visual and auditory distractions, adequate space, and an atmosphere of warmth and friendliness.

## **PART 6: LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

Academic advisors must be knowledgeable about and responsive to relevant civil and criminal laws and must be responsible for ensuring that the institution fulfills its legal obligations. They must utilize appropriate policies and practices to limit the liability exposure of the institution, its officers, employees and agents. The institution must provide access to legal advice to professional staff as needed to carry out assigned responsibilities.

## **PART 7: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, ACCESS AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

The academic advising program must adhere to the spirit and intent of equal opportunity laws in all activities. The program must ensure that its services and facilities are accessible to and provide hours of operation that respond to the needs of special student populations.

## **PART 8: CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Academic advising is an extension of the educational process, which is highly dependent on a one-to-one relationship. Advising effectiveness is also dependent upon close working relationships with other institutional agencies, the faculty and the administration.

The academic advising system should be fully integrated into other processes of the institution. There should be functional and effective relationships with other campus services, the teaching faculty, administrators and with related areas such as admissions, records, registration, counseling, and career planning and placement.

## **PART 9: ETHICS**

All persons involved in the provision of advising services to students must maintain the

highest standards of ethical behavior.

Certain ethical obligations apply to all individuals employed in the academic advising program, for example: All advisors must ensure that confidentiality is maintained with respect to all communications and records considered confidential. Unless the student gives written permission, information disclosed in individual advising sessions must remain confidential. In addition, all requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (Buckley Amendment) must be complied with and information contained in students' educational records must not be disclosed to third parties without appropriate consent, unless one of the relevant statutory exceptions applied. A similar dedication to privacy and confidentiality must be applied to research data concerning individuals.

All advisors must recognize the limits of their training, expertise, and competence and must refer students in need of further expertise to persons possessing appropriate qualifications.

Advisors must insure the accurate presentation of information to the public, students, parents, colleagues, and subordinates. Brochures, student handbooks, and other materials prepared for open distribution must accurately represent the institution's goals, services, programs, and policies.

Advisors must not counsel or aid students in circumventing institutional policies or regulations. When confronted with situations in which students have violated or circumvented established policy or norms, the advisor is obliged to address the issue and refer students to the appropriate agency accordingly.

Advisors are responsible to the college or university in which they work. Advisors respect the opinions of their colleagues, remain neutral when students present them with comments, questions, or opinions about other faculty or staff, and are non-judgmental about academic programs.

## **PART 10: EVALUATION**

Advisors are encouraged to develop and utilize appropriate methods to evaluate the functions performed in an advising setting. Results of these regular evaluations should be used in revising and improving the program goals and implementation.

Prepared by a subcommittee of the Council of Advisors

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