Academic Advising – Strategic Plan

Focus Area 5 of the University Strategic Plan:

Student advising has emerged as a critical component of retaining and graduating students in a timely manner. Salisbury University's advising model was designed for a university of 2,500 students and it is time to assess whether it continues to be the most effective model for a university with over 8,600 undergraduate and graduate students. As academic programs become increasingly complex, so do the challenges involved in balancing students' aspirations with degree requirements. Advising procedures need to be in place so that students can meet their educational goals efficiently within the expected four-year degree time frame. The University recently purchased the Education Advisory Board product to provide detailed metrics on student academic performance and predictive modeling for students in any given degree program. This product can be a significant resource for students, staff, and faculty, but it will not replace the importance of establishing a quality advising relationship.

Standard 9 (Student Support Services) Middle States recommendation:

The team suggests that the University systematically review the advising model to create more efficient and effective support for students in pursuit of their educational goals while supporting and rewarding faculty and staff advisors

Response:

In response to the current University Strategic Plan and the Middle States recommendation (above), the following Academic Advising Strategic Plan has been developed.

Model:

- Centralized Advising Center for first-year, pre-professional, and undeclared students
- Faculty advising/mentoring for professional program students and declared majors
- Director of Academic Advising (Reports directly to the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs)
- 4 Advising Services Coordinators (current title)
- 5 Academic Advisors

Goals:

- Open a centralized Academic Advising Center (potential space: Blackwell Library)
- Develop a structured first-year academic advising program for incoming freshmen and transfer students
- Establish an advising web presence which provides resources and fosters student independence/autonomy
- Create four-year plans for all entering students

- Provide intentional outreach to at-risk populations: probation, minority/new majority, satellite, Health Professions Advisory Program (HPAP), transfers, and students transitioning from professional programs
- Engage motivated faculty in working with first-year students
- Collaborate with Support Services (i.e.: Career Center , Center for Student Achievement, Counseling Center, Disability Services, , Math Emporium, Writing Center) to provide appropriate support to students in need
- Develop a University-wide assessment plan for academic advising

Projected Outcomes:

- Increase in usage of data analytics to inform curricular choices, academic planning, seat availability, and advising outreach
- Increase in personalized advisement (both prescriptive and developmental) from professionals as well as faculty advisors
- Improved advising for transfers, pre-majors, and undeclared students
- Increase in retention
- Decrease in number of credits for graduates
- Faster time to degree

Goal Implementation Timeline:

2016-2017

- Summer 2016
    - Hire 4 Academic Advisors
    - Transition current ASCs to a centralized reporting structure (reporting to the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs)
- Fall 2016
    - Hire a Director of Academic Advising
    - Begin assigning all incoming undecided, first-year, and pre-professional freshmen to professional advising staff
    - Introduce 4-year curriculum guides to the campus community
    - Roll out scheduling software (College Scheduler) to campus community
- Spring 2017
    - All professional advising staff reports to Director of Academic Advising
    - 4-year plans required for all incoming students
    - Create an online advising presence (dedicated advising site increases visibility of services and self-service options)
    - Hire and train faculty advisors for work in the Academic Advising Center

2017-2018

- Summer 2017

- o   Open a centralized Academic Advising Center (portion of the current Blackwell Library)
- Fall 2017
  - o   Host an Academic Advising Center Open House
  - o   Hire peer advisors to perform various forms of basic advising assistance
  - o   All sophomore undecided and pre-professional students stay assigned to Academic Advising Center professionals
- Spring 2017 – Focus on training faculty advisors on advising techniques and technologies

2018-2019

- Fall 2018
  - o   Increase use of data analytics to focus on outreach to special populations: probation, minority/new majority , HPAP, transfers, and students transitioning from professional programs
- Spring 2019
  - o   Institute a university wide assessment plan

Notes:

- Reallocates prescriptive advising tasks to professionals
- Allows faculty to focus on coaching and mentoring professional program students and declared majors
- Provides consistency for first-year students
- Encourages self-advising of second-year students
- Increases the number of contacts students have with an academic advisor
- Promotes a holistic approach to advising that facilitates discussions regarding the broad range of academic areas of study