Channel Islands
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Excellence in Academic Advising Self-Study Report

In Coordination with

NACADA EAA
Excellence in Academic Advising

March 2024

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CSUCI EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMIC ADVISING REPORT

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With support from the Chancellor's Office, California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI) participated in an eight-month comprehensive self-study, in partnership with NACADA: The Global Community for Advising, Excellence in Academic Advising (EAA). The study aimed to conduct an evidence-based assessment of the advising program at CSUCI across nine conditions of excellence to enhance student success and institutional effectiveness. A campus-wide collaboration involving cross-divisional university stakeholders and subcommittees comprised of 27 staff, faculty, and administrators examined institutional artifacts, advising practices, and existing assessment data using key performance indicators (KPIs) to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of academic advising. The assessment included the review of institutional dashboards with six years of data (Appendix 1), student and advisor surveys (Appendices 2 and 3), and faculty focus groups (Appendix 4). An all-day retreat was held to review data, discuss recommendations, and select priorities (Appendix 5). While faculty provided feedback through committees, surveys, and focus groups, none attended the retreat.

Academic advising is crucial in helping students adjust to and navigate university culture and supporting their persistence, success, and graduation (Lawton, 2018; Stevens et al., 2018; The Equity-Excellence Imperative, 2022). Advising is rooted in teaching and learning[1], where advisors serve as navigational, informational agents, fulfilling multiple roles of knowledge sharing, teaching, coaching, and coordinating support with other student support services (Chamberlain & Burnside, 2021; Strayhorn, 2015; Thomas & McFarlane, 2018). The Conditions for EAA provide aspirational standards for advising that promote student learning, success, and completion.[2] Advising excellence is reflected in a cohesive, institution-wide strategy that aligns the advising mission, vision, and student learning outcomes. It is demonstrated through a comprehensive, collaborative, and communicative advising program that adapts to students' evolving and diverse needs, along with a systematic approach for continuous assessment and improvement to inform advising practices and enhance the use of technology.

CSUCI's academic advising structure demonstrates strengths in collaboration, established advising technology, engagement with stakeholders, personalized advising approaches, and strong faculty and primary-role advisor collaboration. However, key challenges include the lack of a coordinated institutional approach, inconsistent faculty involvement, outdated assessment practices, high advisor caseloads, and limited integration of student data into advising. Additionally, hiring, development, and recognition for advisors are insufficient, and faculty adoption of advising technologies remains inconsistent. Challenges are evident as follows:

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[1] NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2006). NACADA concept of academic advising. Retrieved from https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/Concept.aspx

[2] NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising (n.d.). Excellence in Academic Advising. Retrieved from https://nacada.ksu.edu/Programs/Excellence-in-Academic-Advising.aspx

- **Lack of Institutional Coordination:** There is no formal, institution-wide space to advance academic advising, address barriers, and engage in continuous improvement across all units.
- **Faculty Involvement & Expectations:** Faculty focus groups revealed a lack of clear expectations for their roles in advising, leading to inconsistency in the student experience across majors, especially between faculty and primary-role advisors.
- **Outdated Assessment & SLOs:** There are gaps in assessment, data utilization, and integration of career planning into advising practices. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and an Advising Syllabus exist for the primary-role advising unit but are outdated, with limited assessment alignment across advising units. More importantly, a campus-wide mission, vision, and SLOs for advising do not exist.
- **Insufficient Hiring & Development Practices:** There is low or nonexistent institutional prioritization for the implementation of hiring practices that establish consistent and equitable salary scales for primary role advisors and have specific criteria for assigning faculty advisors. Advisor development, recognition and reward structures for academic advisors also hinder institutional growth.
- **Inconsistent Administration Support:** Prolonged staff vacancies with the Human Resources re-hiring processes, combined with a lack of campus-wide understanding of advising complexities such as the minimum year-long training required for advisors and the need to support students' diverse needs, weaken the effectiveness of advising efforts. Additionally, high student-to-advisor ratios limit one-on-one advising opportunities.
- **Faculty Adoption of Advising Technology:** While primary-role advisors widely use Dolphin Navigate, few faculty do, creating inequities in advising, access, and support. The platform is essential for scheduling appointments and recording interactions, ensuring consistency and accountability for students and advisors.
- **Transactional vs. Intentional Communication:** The absence of a comprehensive institutional strategic communication plan results in fragmented and transactional advising communication rather than proactive, student-centered engagement.

The EAA study aims to enhance the student experience at CSUCI by ensuring consistent and equitable advising outcomes. Advising at CSUCI follows a shared model: primary-role advisors within the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) provide centralized support through the Academic Advising Center and EOP, while faculty advisors in the Division of Academic Affairs (DAA) serve students within their academic departments across three schools (Appendix 6). The DSA follows a student success framework that offers proactive, holistic support through targeted outreach and reactive assistance when students seek help. In contrast, while some faculty actively support student success initiatives, overall, faculty advising lacks a clear framework with undefined roles, expectations, training, and accountability. To improve advising effectiveness, institutional changes are needed to establish a university-wide advising strategy, clarify faculty advising roles, enhance assessment practices, and expand professional development. Additional efforts should focus on strengthening administration support, mandating training for advising technology, developing a strategic communication plan, ensuring accessibility for diverse students, and expanding partnerships with external stakeholders.

Below is a summary of recommendations defined by the EAA Task Force for achieving academic advising excellence at CSUCI.

Committee Recommendations for Prioritized Action

- **Create a Council of Academic Advisors (CAA)** with representation from primary-role advisors, faculty advisors, and student representatives. This council will support advisors, enhance the student experience, and foster collaboration across advising units, student support centers, and campus partners.
- **Establish a unified advising mission, vision, and expectations** through the Council of Academic Advisors. This includes clearly defining the role of faculty in advising, requiring advisor training, which includes advising technology and ensuring consistency across academic programs to support student success.
- **Implement a comprehensive advisor development plan** that sets baseline training requirements for all advisor levels beyond onboarding. This plan should include training goals, a structured calendar, and opportunities for ongoing professional development in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) best practices and other key areas.
- **Ensure all advisors (primary-role and faculty advisors) use EAB Navigate for appointment scheduling and advising notes** to improve consistency, facilitate cross-advisor communication, and enable students to book appointments based on their specific needs.
- **Develop a university-wide advising website** that outlines the advising structure and connects students to the appropriate resources.
- **Alleviate advisor workload challenges** by addressing structural obstacles and improving the advisor-to-student ratio. Last academic year, the primary-role advisor caseload was 508:1; with the recent enrollment decline, it has improved to 430:1 (Appendix 7). However, to ensure effective advising and student support, it is recommended that the ratio be further reduced to the ideal 250:1 caseload.[3]

By addressing these challenges and leveraging opportunities, CSUCI can foster a more cohesive, data-driven, and student-centered advising culture that enhances both student satisfaction and academic success, as well as advisor effectiveness. This self-study serves as a foundation for continuous improvement, reinforcing the institution's commitment to providing high-quality academic support services that meet the evolving needs of students.

II. SCHOLARLY CONTEXT

Academic advising is uniquely positioned to help close equity gaps, as they intersect directly with the student experience, institutional policies and processes, and curriculum (Lawton, 2018; The Equity-Excellence Imperative, 2022; Troxel et al., 2021). Research indicates that students who engage with advisors more frequently report higher self-efficacy, improved learning outcomes, and greater satisfaction with institutional support. However, a clear institutional vision and mission for culturally responsive, data-informed, and holistic advising are essential, alongside

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[3] The Boyer 2030 Commission. (2022) The equity-excellence imperative: A 2030 blueprint for undergraduate education at U.S. research universities. Retrieved from https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/books/boyer2030/report.pdf

strong institutional commitment, support, and intentional collaborations across student support services (Chamberlain & Burnside, 2021; Jones et al., 2021; Lawton, 2018). Leveraging technology can help advisors dedicate more time to building meaningful relationships with students and conducting targeted outreach to those with greater academic advising needs. Additionally, since the COVID-19 pandemic, students' needs have become more complex, placing increased demands on advisors (Rivas, 2024; The Equity-Excellence Imperative, 2022; Troxel et al., 2021). Research reveals a statistically significant negative relationship between advisor caseload size and student retention rates, suggesting that reducing an advisor's caseload by 100 students, while effectively leveraging technology, could increase retention by one percentage point (Shaw et al., 2021). Previously, the recommended advisor-to-student caseload ratio was 300:1 for primary role advisors and 30:1 for faculty advisors. However, in response to the increasingly diverse and complex needs of post-pandemic student populations, institutions are now encouraged to lower their ratios to 250:1 and 25:1, respectively (The Equity-Excellence Imperative, 2022). Significant work remains for institutions to strategically and intentionally use data and equity-minded assessment practices to provide structure and accountability in advising redesign efforts.

While the impact of academic advising on student success is well established in the literature and institutional data, formal assessment and accountability measures for advising remain underdeveloped (Lawton, 2018; Thomas & McFarlane, 2018; Troxel et al., 2021; Yonker et al., 2019). To effectively support students, advising models and organizational structures must incorporate student-centered, equity-driven practices that leverage data for sense-making, identify barriers, and capture students' lived experiences to inform meaningful change and achieve equity goals. A well-defined academic advising curriculum is needed that includes student learning outcomes and sets clear expectations for both primary-role and faculty advisors that embody student development, learning, and culturally responsive approaches (He & Hutson, 2017; Lawton, 2018; Thomas & McFarlane, 2018; Troxel et al., 2021).

Institutional accountability is also essential to ensure consistency and quality in advising practices. Clearly defined roles and expectations for advisors should be explicitly incorporated into the evaluation, promotion, and faculty retention and tenure process for those serving as faculty advisors within their departments. A dedicated space, time, and resources are needed for robust, ongoing professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy that better equips advisors with the knowledge and tools to respond to more nuanced student experiences and support their academic and career goals. Furthermore, the work of advisors, coaches, mentors, and career counselors should be better coordinated, integrated, and aligned with institutional student success strategic plans under one umbrella (Chamberlain & Burnside, 2021; The Equity-Excellence Imperative, 2022). At a time when our institution is having to reduce resources and consider personnel reductions, maintaining and investing in academic advising and equity-driven practices should remain a priority to support student success and institutional effectiveness.

Current Advising Model and Organizational Structure

At CSUCI, the advising model and organizational structure are shared between the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) and the Division of Academic Affairs (DAA), with primary-role advisors housed in the DSA and faculty advisors within the DAA. Before transitioning to the DSA in 2019, the centralized Academic Advising unit was housed under the DAA, with its reporting structure

shifting from the Provost's Office to the School of Arts and Sciences and later to Enrollment Management. The advisor types at CSUCI include the following:

- **Primary-role advisors** meet with students from the first year until graduation, providing short-term and long-term academic planning of all degree requirements, including major advising. They take a holistic approach to supporting students, helping them maximize educational opportunities and make informed decisions about their education and post-graduation goals.
- **Peer advisors** also provide onboarding, advising, and peer support to first-year students.
- **Graduate school advisor**, housed within the central advising unit, assists students in navigating the graduate school application process as it relates to their career aspirations.
- **Faculty advisors** provide guidance on major curricula and experiential learning opportunities such as internships, research, and service learning.

- While there are some intentional collaborations between primary-role advisors, faculty advisors, and career counselors regarding students' career aspirations, these efforts lack full coordination. Communication and collaboration are further hindered by the structural separation of the Career Development and Alumni Engagement Office, which falls under University Advancement. This creates challenges in aligning advising efforts across three different divisions.

The centralized Academic Advising Office has implemented several initiatives to enhance advising services and better support student success (Appendix 8). By leveraging institutional data, the office has developed targeted outreach efforts to assist students who need additional support and ensure they remain on track for graduation (Appendix 9). Data indicates that students who engage with academic advisors have higher retention rates than those who do not (Appendix 10). Among Fall 2023 first-time, full-time (FTFT) students, those who met with advisors had a 77.1% retention rate, an average GPA of 3.16, and an average unit completion of 29.33 by the end of Summer 2024. In contrast, students who did not meet with advisors had a 62.2% retention rate, an average GPA of 2.95, and an average unit completion of 26.74. Additionally, Fall 2023 FTFT students in the CA Promise program had a retention rate of 81.7%, and Fall 2022 CA Promise transfer students had a 73.1% graduation rate. Below is a summary of additional successes found in the Advising program.

III. ACADEMIC ADVISING SUCCESSES IDENTIFIED AT CSUCI

- **Centralized Advising Unit:** The professional, primary-role advising unit has a defined mission, vision, and expectations for advisors, providing a foundation for alignment. All primary-role advisors either have advanced degrees in higher education/counseling or are currently completing them. There is a strong commitment to student success with a dedicated team of advisors. There are mostly high levels of student satisfaction regarding advisor availability and responsiveness.
- **Advising Technology:** A strong advising technology infrastructure is in place, with universal adoption among primary-role advisors to ensure a consistent and equitable advising experience. This system supports online appointment scheduling and degree planning tools, streamlining student access to advising services. The EAB Dolphin

Navigate platform plays a key role in identifying students who may need additional support, such as new students with low incoming GPAs or those with lower unit completion rates. It also enables the tracking of key student success metrics, including retention, GPA, and units earned, for students who engage with services.

- **High-Impact Practices:** There is a clear awareness of higher education and retention literature for all advisor types, including its recommendations to implement high-impact practices (HIPs). Evidence of engagement in co-curricular activities is found in advising-related outreach initiatives and the promotion of recommended HIP activities during first-year onboarding, registration, and within some academic roadmaps.
- **Collaboration & Communication:** Collaboration occurs at an individual level between faculty and primary-role advisors, and intentional communication structures exist, including templates, calendars, and tools like Dolphin Navigate. Engagement with key stakeholders is evident through meetings, focus groups, campaign calendars, partnerships with community colleges, and advisor participation in Senate committees such as GE, local curriculum committees, and Student Academic Policies and Procedures.
- **Shared Resources & Partnerships:** There is institutional support through funding opportunities like Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) grants and Associated Students, Inc. (ASI) to support peer advisors, as well as partnerships with transfer institutions, including the Transfer Success Pathway Program and Regional Transfer Summits that contribute to student access and success.
- **Engagement with Students:** Internal events, such as the Major Fair and various workshops, help foster connections among students, student organizations, and academic programs. Notably, a Sociology student success workshop, developed through a collaboration between Academic Advising and the Sociology department, resulted in improved retention and completion rates for Sociology students. This initiative gained national recognition from *Excelencia* in Education and served as a blueprint for CSUCI's Initiative for Mapping Academic Success (CIMAS) program.

IV. ACADEMIC ADVISING EMERGING PRACTICES IDENTIFIED

The following emerging practices are in their initial stages, showing promising outcomes for students and the institution.

- **Guided registration**: In partnership with academic programs, Advising, the Learning Communities program, the Registrar's Office, and Student Systems, first-year students receive guided registration at Advising and Registration to support their major pathway.
- **Early Alert:** This 2024-2025 academic year, Advising partnered with the Math and English departments, tutoring centers (LRC and WMC), and peer mentor programs to pilot early alert progress reports for first-year courses using the EAB Navigate platform. This initiative takes a proactive approach by identifying and reaching out to students of concern within the first three to five weeks of the semester. By streamlining communication and connecting students with academic support resources, including tutoring and peer mentoring, the initiative aims to provide timely interventions that enhance student success.
- **Faculty Advising:** Faculty Advisors engage in advising work, demonstrating a desire to support student success outside of the classroom. They provide valuable subject-matter expertise within their disciplines, helping students identify courses best suited for their

goals, interests, and learning styles. Some faculty advisors offer guidance on co-curricular and professional opportunities while also sharing academic success strategies for specific courses. Student responses and faculty focus groups indicate good outcomes, but outcomes remain largely unknown without formal tracking and assessment. Faculty advisors express a need for more structured training, greater support, and a stronger sense of community to enhance their effectiveness in this role.

- **Student Success Concept:** Last academic year, under the leadership of the DAA, a campus-wide student success conceptual framework (Appendix 11) was developed and approved by the Academic Senate. The centralized advising unit has begun integrating the framework into advising services, but it has yet to be fully implemented and operationalized widely.
- **New Student Onboarding –** The campus has taken deliberate steps to enhance collaboration and streamline services for first-year and transfer students, making processes clearer, events and services more accessible, and separating advising and registration from Orientation to provide students with dedicated time with advisors. Additionally, event planning and promotion are strategically coordinated through an Institutional Programming Collaborative and Student Marketing Center to ensure alignment and visibility.

Student Outcomes

Over the past six years, the four-year graduation rate has increased by 9.4 percentage points, reaching 32.8% for the Fall 2019 FTFT cohort (Appendix 1). Similarly, the two-year graduation rate peaked at 48.6%. However, both rates have since declined, with the four-year graduation rate currently at 29% and the two-year graduation rate at 45.4%. The Fall 2019 FTFT cohort also achieved a peak first-year retention rate of 83.1%, but this has dropped to 71.2% for the Fall 2023 cohort. Among Fall 2019 transfer students, the one-year retention rate was 89.5% but saw a nearly 7% decline during the COVID-19 pandemic for the Fall 2021 cohort. Encouragingly, retention has since rebounded to 86.1% for the Fall 2023 transfer cohort. While these trends highlight areas of progress, post-pandemic recovery remains ongoing.

V. ACADEMIC ADVISING PRACTICES NEEDING DEVELOPMENT OR IMPROVEMENT

It is essential to assess existing initiatives and interventions to improve campus-wide coordination, particularly in advancing a university-wide advising strategy to achieve excellence in academic advising at CSUCI. Areas for improvement also include clarifying faculty advisor roles and responsibilities, enhancing assessment and data utilization, expanding administration support for advising, and creating a strategic communication plan. Addressing these priorities and opportunities for improvement will strengthen advising efforts and support student success across the institution, increasing our student outcomes in retention and graduation rates.

A. University-Wide Advising Strategy

CSUCI faces significant challenges in collaboration, administration support, and communication within academic advising. Many existing collaborations rely on individual relationships rather than institutionalized policies, making them vulnerable to staff and leadership turnover (Appendix

12). While the centralized advising unit has well-documented communication practices, there is a lack of university-wide awareness and cohesion, limiting the effectiveness of advising efforts. Additionally, administration support remains inconsistent, with prolonged staff vacancies with the Human Resources re-hiring processes, combined with a lack of campus-wide understanding of advising complexities such as the minimum year-long training required for advisors and the need to support students' diverse needs, weakening the effectiveness of advising efforts (Appendix 13). Faculty engagement in advising also varies widely, with some programs excelling, according to student surveys and faculty focus groups, while many lack clear expectations, equitable workloads, and structured training (Appendix 14). The absence of strong top-level advocacy further hinders the prioritization and accountability of advising-related initiatives (Appendix 15).

Inconsistent oversight and training of faculty advising also contribute to the absence of a cohesive university-wide advising strategy (Appendix 16). Faculty advisor focus groups reported essentially no oversight of their work as advisors, noting that no authority figure ensures the work is completed or enforces quality standards. In contrast, primary-role advisors receive oversight and training from staff administrators with subject-matter expertise in advising, student development, and retention, who have the authority to direct advisors' work and implement accountability measures. However, any oversight of faculty advising would necessarily have to be done by chairs and/or deans, who do not necessarily have that same expertise. This creates a fundamental disconnect in the oversight of faculty advisors. Those with the expertise in advising and retention who train and oversee primary-role advisors have no authority to do the same for faculty advisors, while those who oversee faculty advisors do not have advising and retention expertise. Faculty also reported minimal or no training, requiring at least a year to feel confident in their advising knowledge, expressing that faculty advising would be more effective if an authority figure or designated area provided oversight.

Communication challenges also persist, as CSUCI lacks a comprehensive, strategic communication plan, resulting in transactional rather than intentional engagement. Faculty participation in communication planning is inconsistent, and there is no standardized method for effectively sharing curricular changes (Appendix 12). Additionally, communication materials often fail to meet accessibility standards, limiting equitable access for students. Relationship-building efforts need improvement, with many interactions being transactional rather than fostering deeper connections between advisors and students. There are communication efforts through platforms in Canvas courses, and other messaging systems, but staff capacity constraints further hinder the use of innovative communication channels, such as social media, and limit personalized student outreach.

University-wide Communication Strategy – To address these issues, CSUCI must develop a university-wide communication strategy to enhance awareness, engagement, and alignment of advising efforts. Strengthening faculty engagement through clear expectations, structured training, and equitable workloads will be essential in creating consistency across advising practices. Expanding institutional partnerships with internal stakeholders, K-12 institutions, transfer institutions, and employers will help improve advising pathways and student transitions. Additionally, accessibility and inclusivity must be prioritized by ensuring all communication materials meet ADA standards and leverage diverse outreach platforms. Building proactive advisor-student relationships through personalized outreach, increased staff capacity, and

intentional communication strategies will further enhance the advising experience. Lastly, strong support from top upper administration and top-level advocacy is crucial to solidifying advising as an institutional priority and holding units accountable for collaboration and student success initiatives. By implementing these strategies, CSUCI can transition from fragmented, transactional advising practices to a cohesive, inclusive, and student-centered advising culture.

Create Council of Academic Advisors (CAA) – Currently, no administration position or council is responsible for overseeing and aligning academic advising across the institution. While the centralized advising unit and EOP maintain regular communication and leadership oversight, faculty advising lacks clear expectations and structured oversight. Academic advisors connect with faculty advisors at least once per semester, but without defined expectations, oversight, or a dedicated community of practice, faculty advising remains inconsistent in practices, advising ratios, and resources. There is a need for an institutional space dedicated to advising collaboration, coordination, and continuous improvement. Such a space would align advising goals across all units, strengthen communication between primary-role advisors and faculty advisors, and allow for a community of practice space to discuss advising challenges to better support student success. To address this, it is recommended that a Council of Academic Advisors be established, comprising representatives from primary-role advisors, faculty advisors from each school, and student representatives. This council would provide support for all advisors, enhance the student experience, and foster collaboration across advising units, student support centers, and campus partners.

B. Advising Curriculum Development

University-Wide Advising Mission and Vision – For CSUCI to engage in meaningful and intentional improvements in academic advising, it is essential to establish an institutional advising mission and vision that is shared across the campus community. These statements will serve as a foundation for advising practices, enhance campus-wide understanding of the complexities of advising, and inform resource allocation to support student success. Currently, only the centralized Academic Advising Office has a defined mission, vision, and student learning outcomes. To ensure consistency and alignment across all advising units, the university-wide advising mission and vision should be aligned with CSUCI's broader mission and strategic planning efforts.

The current assessment framework for academic advising lacks a comprehensive, evidence-based approach. There is no robust, multidimensional assessment plan, and the absence of a multi-method research approach limits the ability to gather meaningful stakeholder feedback, particularly from students (Appendix 17). Additionally, unit-level assessments are not effectively tied to an advising strategy, reducing opportunities for continuous improvement. To address these gaps, clear and measurable student learning outcomes for advising must be established and consistently applied across all advising units. This will provide a strong foundation for implementing advising as a pedagogy, which is essential for student retention and success.

There is evidence reflecting the collaboration between primary role advisors and faculty advisors in supporting student success, creating academic roadmaps and milestones for students to engage in co-curricular activities, and referring students to one another or other campus resources to best support students' needs (Appendix 18). Faculty advisors articulate the value-added in faculty

advising, for providing subject-matter expertise in the major, helping students identify courses best suited for their goals, interests, and learning styles, and providing academic success strategies for particular courses. While evidence indicates that some primary-role advisors and faculty advisors incorporate career exploration into students' academic plans, this practice is neither intentional nor universally implemented. Career planning and navigation must be incorporated into individual student pathways early on, creating benchmarks, recommendations, and resources for each academic year. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to streamline the integration of co-curricular and high-impact practices within advising to enhance student learning and enrich the overall educational experience.

Enhancing assessment and the use of data is also critical to improving advising effectiveness. Student learning outcomes should be updated and aligned across all advising units, and multidimensional assessment plans should be developed using evidence-based methodologies. Additionally, student performance data must be leveraged effectively to strengthen advising interventions, including the development of early intervention strategies for students facing academic difficulties. By adopting data-driven approaches, CSUCI can ensure that advising remains responsive to student needs, fosters equitable student support, and contributes meaningfully to student success.

C. Advisor Training and Development

Defined Expectations - To enhance the effectiveness of academic advising, CSUCI must implement a comprehensive advisor development plan that establishes baseline training requirements for all advisors beyond initial onboarding. This plan should outline clear training goals, a structured calendar, and continuous professional development opportunities, with a strong emphasis on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) best practices, in addition to ongoing training on emergent post-pandemic challenges and post-2024 election effects. Additionally, faculty advisors require structured training and clearly defined expectations to ensure equitable workloads and consistency in advising practices, along with appropriate recognition for excellence in their role.

Strengthening scholarly inquiry and professional development is essential to enhancing the quality and effectiveness of academic advising at CSUCI. The institution should expand support for advising-related research, actively promote participation in professional development programs, and offer incentives for staff to contribute to advising scholarship. There is an institutional culture of incentivizing faculty for research, but the same cannot be said for staff. By fostering a data-informed, evidence-based, and scholarly-driven advising culture, CSUCI can align its practices with national best standards, ultimately improving outcomes for both students and advisors. Advisor development and practices are fragmented and insufficient, lacking the necessary structures, processes, and commitments to support hiring, development, and recognition practices that align with institutional advising goals (Appendix 13). These deficiencies hinder the ability to provide equitable, effective, and mission-driven advising services.

Additionally, enhancing hiring and professional development practices is essential for improving advisor effectiveness and retention. Streamlining hiring processes, expediting the replacement of critical advisor positions, implementing comprehensive training programs that address evolving

student needs and diverse populations, and establishing formal recognition systems will help cultivate a well-supported and highly skilled advising community.

D. Advising Resources

Enhancing advising resources at CSUCI requires a multifaceted approach that prioritizes institutional support, workload management, technological improvements, and data-driven decision-making. Currently, there is minimal emphasis on scholarly inquiry related to advising, with little institutional support for professional development, research collaboration, or contributions to advising scholarship (Appendix 13). Addressing advisor workload challenges is crucial, as the current primary-role advisor caseload of 430:1 exceeds the recommended 250:1 ratio. Additionally, faculty advisor caseloads vary significantly, ranging from as low as 9.6:1 to as high as 62.1:1 (Appendix 19), leading to inconsistencies in advising quality and accessibility. These disparities make it difficult to provide personalized and effective student support, highlighting the need for a more balanced and equitable distribution of advising responsibilities.

University-Wide Advising Website – Expanding administration support for advising, including stronger advocacy at higher administration levels and improved understanding of advising complexities, will help integrate advising more fully into institutional priorities. Additionally, developing a university-wide advising website that clearly outlines advising structures, connects students to appropriate resources, and streamlines information for all students from onboarding to graduation will enhance accessibility and efficiency. Greater collaboration with Institutional Research (IR) is also essential to providing data that measures student learning outcomes in advising, enabling all advising units to better track student persistence and retention, assess the impact of advising services, and gain insights into the student experience from start to finish. By prioritizing these enhancements, CSUCI can strengthen its advising infrastructure, improve student outcomes, and ensure a more cohesive and well-supported advising experience.

E. Advising Technology

Ensure All Advisors use EAB Navigate – CSUCI has established a strong infrastructure for advising technology, with professional advisors consistently utilizing tools such as EAB Dolphin Navigate (EAB) and the CI Academic Requirements Report (CARR) as foundational elements of advising interactions (Appendix 20). These platforms facilitate appointment scheduling, advising notes, and coordinated outreach, ensuring consistency and streamlined communication across advising units. However, faculty advisor adoption of these technologies remains inconsistent, limiting the ability to track student engagement and success metrics such as retention, GPA, and earned units. Without comprehensive data on faculty advising interactions, the university lacks a full picture of advising's impact on student outcomes.

Mandate and Support Faculty Advisor Training for Advising Technology – A key challenge is the lack of institutional authority to mandate faculty training or the adoption of advising technologies. The existing campus culture does not allow staff or non-faculty administrators to require faculty members to integrate these tools into their advising practices. As a result, students may experience inequitable advising support, as primary-role advisors rely on EAB for documentation and continuity, while faculty advisors often do not. Encouragingly, faculty advisor

focus groups expressed support for training and increased utilization of EAB Navigate, recognizing its potential to enhance advising effectiveness and student support. To address these gaps, CSUCI must implement strategies to ensure all advisors use EAB for scheduling, documentation, and student outreach. Additionally, mandating faculty training on advising technologies will help create a more uniform and data-informed advising experience, enhancing student support and allowing for more comprehensive tracking of student success. Expanding the use of student data within advising practices will also enable more proactive and personalized guidance, improving overall student outcomes.

VI. STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations outlined below were identified as prioritized areas for action to maximize efficiency and impact:

1. **Create a Council of Academic Advisors (CAA)** - Many of the recommendations will require campus-wide coordination of advising units by this council, therefore, it is recommended that this be the first priority for implementation.
2. **Establish a unified advising mission, vision, and expectations** - Through the Council of Academic Advisors, the university should establish campus-wide advising mission and vision statements, along with clear expectations for all advisor roles and defined student learning outcomes. This will ensure consistency in advising practices and enhance support for student success.
3. **Implement a comprehensive advisor development plan** – The CAA should establish an Advisor Training Committee responsible for setting baseline training requirements for all advisor levels and types beyond onboarding. This committee will develop a sustainable implementation plan for long-term professional development, including DEI best practices aligned with the CSUCI's Advising mission, vision, and student learning outcomes. Additionally, it will oversee the creation of comprehensive training materials and the development of various training components to ensure continuous advisor growth and effectiveness.
4. **Ensure all advisors use EAB Navigate and other advising technology to support advising practices** – The CAA should establish a Technology Committee to evaluate existing advising technology and identify the necessary IR dashboards or data to measure student learning outcomes. In collaboration with the CAA and the Advisor Training Committee, the Technology Committee should develop a comprehensive technology plan and training program to enhance consistency, improve cross-advisor communication, and effectively track student engagement and success metrics.
5. **Develop a university-wide advising website -** To help students and campus stakeholders understand CSUCI's advising model and support structures, the university should develop a university-wide advising website. This website should clearly outline advising structures, connect students to appropriate resources, and streamline information for all students from onboarding to graduation, enhancing accessibility and efficiency.
6. **Alleviate advisor workload challenges** and **Leverage Advising Technology**– Advising leadership must collaborate with the Provost and Deans to ensure equitable staffing and workload distribution across all units by developing funding plans and achieving a sustainable advisor-to-student ratio. While recent enrollment declines have improved the

primary-role advisor caseload from 508:1 to 430:1, faculty advisor caseloads vary significantly, resulting in inconsistencies in quality and accessibility. To support future enrollment growth and enhance advising quality, the goal is to reduce the ratio to an ideal 250:1 for primary-role advisors and 25:1 for faculty advisors. Additionally, leveraging data and technology is crucial for identifying systemic barriers and advancing equity goals through informed advising strategies.

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