**Academic Advising Program Review**
**San Jose State University**
**April 10-12, 2019**

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# Executive Summary

On April 9-12, 2019, Drs. Susan Poch, Kimberly Smith, and Vanessa Harris represented the NACADA Consultant and Speaker Services for a program review at San Jose State University (SJSU). The charge to the consulting team was to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the SJSU academic advising program and to provide recommendations to SJSU leadership. Prior to the campus visit, the consultants were provided background information regarding SJSU, college demographics, and the academic advising program that currently exists.

SJSU strengths, challenges, and recommendations identified by the consultants are highlighted below.

*Strengths*

- Dedicated stakeholders

- Passion for student success across campus

- Student government association has a genuine interest in enhancing advising programs and services for all students

- Established college Student Success Centers

- Faculty satisfied with advising work in college Student Success Centers

- An established, albeit not effectively functional, Advising Council

- Program directors for special population offices who are committed to student success

- SJSU is poised and ready for change in their academic advising program

*Challenges*

- Student dissatisfaction with advising structure and delivery

- Advising structures and processes are fragmented and confusing for students

- Lack of a standard definition of academic advising at SJSU; lack of clearly articulated definition, mission, goal statements

- Lack of a comprehensive training program

- Key administrative advising leadership position recently eliminated

- Lack of trust from the advising community toward SJSU leadership

- General lack of trust between central advising office and college success centers; role of centralized vs. departmental advising is not clear

- Lack of university-wide academics-focused communication plan

- Orientation is not academically-focused

- Inconsistent use of, and access to, technology

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*Recommendations*

- Establish campus-wide leadership and strategic planning efforts to enhance academic advising.

- Consider an exclusively professional advisor model to more effectively meet the needs of students.

- Create SJSU advising definition, vision, mission, goals and learning outcomes that apply across the university. Clearly define roles and responsibilities of academic advisors.

- Provide a framework to evaluate and assess academic advising success.

- Create a comprehensive, ongoing, advisor training and professional development program for all faculty and professional academic advisors.

- Expand the role and responsibilities of the  Academic Advising and Retention Services Office to support the leadership and campus framework of academic advising.

- Reaffirm the Advising Council to support the advancement of established university-wide strategic goals and learning outcomes related to academic advising and student success.

- Develop an advising communication plan for the institution appropriate  for all constituencies.

- Revise and implement a comprehensive orientation program that gives equal prominence to students' academic journey.

- Develop and implement a technology plan for academic advising.


*Conclusion*

SJSU is well positioned to make innovative changes in its advising program due to recent changes in academic advising leadership and structure.  Although there are some significant challenges with trust and role confusion, it is clear that students are a top focus in the academic advising program. Continued investment and attention on advising by appropriate administrators, particularly with consideration of the recommendations above, can move SJSU to a high caliber advising experience for SJSU students that can improve student satisfaction, retention, and graduation rates.

# Overview

On April 10-12, 2019, Drs. Susan Poch, Kimberly Smith, and Vanessa Harris represented the NACADA Consultant and Speaker Services for a program review at San Jose State University. The charge to the consulting team was to conduct a comprehensive and in-depth assessment of the SJSU academic advising program.

Prior to the campus visit, the consultants were provided background information regarding SJSU, student demographics, and the academic advising program that currently exists. The itinerary for the SJSU visit primarily involved meetings with key stakeholders in SJSU's academic advising and student success programs. The three-day schedule of meetings is included as *Appendix A* in this report.

Whether faculty or staff/professional, advisors play an integral role in the success of students by inviting them to become part of the community of scholars that is the university, and mentoring them in their interactions with faculty members, administrators, staff members, and peers. Advisors help students navigate complex systems, facilitate the exploration of life and career goals, and challenge students to think critically about their experiences with the curriculum and co-curriculum. Advisors demystify the curriculum for students, explaining connections that are often implied, but seldom clearly explained. Advisors teach students how to ask and reflect on the tough questions of "What am I doing?" or "Why am I studying this subject?" Or even, "Do I have the right disposition or abilities for this field?"

Academic advising, done well, is a combination of challenge and support. The challenge to students is to think beyond the here and now; the support for them from academic advising is the encouragement to move forward in the face of disappointment and/or normal developmental progression. It is a laborious and time intensive activity that requires an institutional commitment to reinforce academic advising as a priority. Successful academic advising programs are intentionally designed, outcomes-based, and considered integral to the student academic experience.

This consultation report highlights: (1) the conceptual framework utilized for the academic advising review, (2) campus strengths associated with academic advising, (3) challenges associated with academic advising, and (4) prioritized recommendations for SJSU leadership.

# Framework of Consultants' Visit

It is important to clarify the consultants' perspective on academic advising as a preface to our general observations and recommendations. The Global Community for Academic Advising (NACADA) has endorsed four documents that address the philosophy and practice of academic advising: *NACADA Concept of Academic Advising, NACADA Statement of Core Values, NACADA Core Competencies, and the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education: Standards and Guidelines for Academic Advising.* Links to each of these documents may be found in *Appendix B* of this document.

Advising programs that are considered "best practices" in the field will reflect the advising philosophy contained in these foundational documents. For the purpose of framing the context of the review of SJSU's advising program, the following points address major assumptions about successful academic advising:

- Academic advising is best viewed as a form of teaching and is integral to the success of the teaching and learning mission of higher education institutions. As Marc Lowenstein (2005) observes, "an excellent

advisor does the same thing for the student's entire curriculum that the excellent teacher does for one course" (p.65). Advisors teach students to value the learning process, to apply decision-making strategies, to put the college experience into perspective, to set priorities and evaluate events, to develop thinking and learning skills, and to make informed choices.

- The NACADA *Concept of Academic Advising* identifies three essential components of advising: curriculum (what advising deals with), pedagogy (how advising delivers the curriculum), and student learning outcomes (the result of academic advising). These student learning outcomes are based upon what we want students to know, to be able to do, and to value and appreciate as a result of the academic advising process.

- Best practices in advising programs consistently address three issues. First, it is critical that both professional advisors and faculty advisors receive adequate training and professional development opportunities. Advisor training and development needs to be ongoing, not simply a one-time session, and it should include three major areas of concern to advisors: conceptual, relational, and informational. Secondly, there should be appropriate rewards and recognition for advisors including career advancement opportunities. Thirdly, it is critical that the advising program includes a continuous assessment plan that goes beyond student satisfaction surveys in order to determine if student learning outcomes for advising are being achieved.

- Finally, we are convinced that, when done well, academic advising has a significant impact on student success as reflected in an institution's retention and graduation rates.

## General Observations

In the sections below, we will highlight what we see as SJSU's strengths and challenges. We will follow with a section highlighting our recommendations along with some general conclusions. Overall, we were impressed with the level of dedication we saw from both faculty and staff towards enhancing the advising experience for SJSU students.

## Strengths

- **Dedicated stakeholders:** The advising stakeholders with whom we met during our visit expressed what we believe to be a sincere desire to improve academic advising and the advising process at SJSU. Having all stakeholder groups support the common desire to improve academic advising is a real strength of the university and reflects positively on the shared focus of the student experience.

- **Passion for student success across campus**: Across campus, student success was mentioned over and again. From faculty and staff who advocate for their students to programs that assist students' achievement, helping SJSU students succeed is paramount.

- **Student government association has a genuine interest in enhancing advising programs and services for all students:** The very active and engaged Student Government Association felt strongly enough about improving academic advising that they developed and administered a student survey to measure satisfaction. While the response rate was small, participants were eager to share their

viewpoints about their experiences with academic advising. SGA representatives met with us multiple times and expressed their desire to improve academic advising at SJSU.

- **Established college Student Success Centers:** Each college has a student success center that delivers academic advising in the college. With varying models and size, the Student Success Centers provide students with an identified place to get information. Additionally, the success center Directors meet regularly and collaborate on change and innovation within the advising community.

- **Faculty satisfaction with advising work in student success centers:** In our meetings with colleges, faculty expressed great respect and appreciation for professional advisors in their respective student success centers, and felt that students were appropriately connected with faculty major advisors. We heard minimal complaints about advising staff from departments.

- **An established, albeit not effectively functional, Advising Council:** The Advising Council has been in existence for several years and initially served the needs of the advising community. It grew to a large membership as more stakeholders wanted to participate. While the purpose of the Advising Council is not clear, it does provide an opportunity to re-envision its function, goals, and leadership.

- **Program directors for special populations who are committed to student success:** These non-college success center directors understand academic advising, and advocate strongly for their special populations of students. Although they are not academic advisors per se, they assist their students through the advising process as necessary. They desire to be more collaborative with college Student Success Centers' work on behalf of their students. Strong caution should be noted about these well intentioned program leaders providing direct delivery of advising services for their constituencies. While they are attempting to address the immediate needs of their students, these individuals are not adequately trained nor connected to the academic curriculum in each department.

- **SJSU is poised and ready for change in their academic advising program:** Recent changes in leadership and advising structure provide an opportunity for SJSU to create an academic advising program that is learner-centered with student success at the core. Finding the correct path for academic advising improvements will involve a large number of stakeholders, and as a result will provide an excellent academic advising experience for students.

## Challenges

- **Student dissatisfaction with academic advising delivery.** The majority of students with whom we spoke had stories of mistakes, misinformation, and confusing processes. Many self-advised through the majority of their SJSU time. They believed they could do fine on their own. Most students described advising as only course selection and not as assistance with developing a complete degree experience. And yet, when they did check in with an advisor toward the end of their academic career, the information they got was often wrong or wasn't provided (several students reported that they were not told by their assigned advisors that they lacked a requirement to graduate). A select few felt trusted and valued by their advisor, but that was the exception, not the norm.

- **Advising structures and processes are fragmented and confusing for students.** Generally, students are advised for General Education by professional advisors, then receive Major advising by faculty advisors (and a different advisor for a minor or second major). Having multiple advisors who may provide inconsistent information is often confusing for students. Additionally, faculty advising is limited in scope, not consistent, and often perceived as inaccurate by students. Further, college success centers

have different names, departments have different ways to make appointments to see an advisor, and may have different policies for disqualified or provisional students. Additionally, other non-college centers (i.e., URM, athletes, EOP, and AARS) serve their students differently, have separate purposes, and may add to the confusion of advising for students. When asked about "frosh" orientation, most students described an overwhelming and confusing process (some had a one-day orientation, others two-day); the little time they had with an academic advisor consisted of being handed a schedule of classes into which they should register. They did not understand how to register, the purpose of the curriculum, or the reason these classes were important. Finally, their college/department advisors often were not present, which serves to reinforce advising as only course scheduling with people who have little time to engage with the student.

- **Lack of common definition of academic advising at SJSU**; **lack of clearly articulated, mission, goal statements.** Throughout our three-day visit, it was evident that there was no consistent understanding or definition of academic advising. Students and many faculty and professional advisors believed that GE advising (staff) and Major advising (faculty) were separate, and experienced each as simply course scheduling in most colleges and departments, not understanding the cohesiveness of a university curriculum. We cannot emphasize more strongly that a clear definition of what advising is and the responsibilities of all who advise students is critical to the success of SJSU advising program. Without a common definition and understanding of academic advising there can be no mission statement or learning goals developed. Moreover, the current academic advising program is not outcomes based nor learner-centered. The advising program is not and cannot be assessed without these key foundational components.

- **Lack of a comprehensive training program.** Faculty and professional advisors do not have adequate training prior to the assignment of students for advising. What little training is provided is narrow and brief, or in some cases, inaccessible (technology as an example). There appears to be no available or identified body of advising resources (advising manual, sample syllabi, documented and consistent steps for onboarding new advisors) that advisors can tap into. Faculty advisors have little to no reward or recognition for their role in advising (a .2 release time per faculty was discussed, although many faculty either didnot know about that or misunderstood what that exactly meant) and advising is not considered for tenure and promotion. There are also no rewards and recognition for outstanding professional advisors. Together, this lack of acknowledgment for advisors by their peers, key stakeholders, and senior level leadership reinforces the notion that academic advising is not important or valued at SJSU.

- **Key administrative advising leadership position recently eliminated.** An Associate Vice President role that was recently abolished was a concern for most of the academic advisors with whom we spoke (both faculty and professional). The vacancy was unexpected and appears to have put the advising community into a state of confusion. Programs, events, procedures, and meetings are on hold or proceeding without key leadership. The position also had many responsibilities that were shifted to another senior administrator who has little experience in academic advising.

- **Lack of trust from the advising community toward SJSU leadership.** As a result of a series of changing upperlevel leadership positions, and the lack of communication and information about recent restructuring of some advising programs, the advising community is understandably wary and mistrustful. Key advising unit leaders expressed concern regarding a lack of ability to participate in and provide feedback on institution-wide issues that directly affect academic advising. Other stakeholders communicated they also would prefer to have a more proactive approach to issues by being a part of

decisions related to academic advising on campus. The advising community recognizes that many of these decisions must be made at the top levels, yet they feel that their voice was not heard (or asked for).

- **General lack of trust between central advising office and college success centers; role of centralized vs. departmental advising is not clear.** There was a sense of mistrust between centrally-located advisors in AARS and department-assigned advisors (faculty and success center advisors). It was often unclear who was responsible for which policy/procedure. The AARS has expanded its services, often performed by a single individual which doesn't allow for sufficient back-up or continuity and further blurs the lines of responsibility. Success center advisors and AARS advisors both work with disqualified students often with differing programs. AARS advisors felt that they cared more about student success because they worked more directly with undeclared and undecided students, while success center advisors felt uneasy about relying on the AARS. While the relationships appear to be cordial and collaborative, an "us vs them" attitude was apparent. We are concerned that absent a collaborative conversation about how all policies and procedures affect students, and the clear roles and expectations of both AARS and the success centers, they will continue to be in a struggle.

- **Lack of university-wide academics-focused communication plan.** In a number of conversations a desire for a university-wide communication plan to students was expressed. At issue were contradictory messages or duplicate messages sent to students at inconsistent times. A specific concern that departments/colleges/student success offices did not know what was being sent to students regarding orientation. They also felt that it made the institution look disorganized.

- **Orientation is not academically-focused.** As discussed above, orientation was a topic that came up several times, both from students and advisors. Specific issues include lack of available classes for students in later orientation sessions, little time for advising, orientation messaging that is confusing for students; and little college participation. One key example was the constant varying of the length of the orientation program. Academic advisors felt that the AARS did all first-year advising without their input. We also heard from students that should they want to change their minds about a first choice of majors, it was difficult and nearly impossible. Students should not be made to feel unwelcome or at fault for changing their minds. Finally, the current academic portion needs to be adjusted to reflect more of a student focused approach (i.e., identifying a student's goals and interests and putting supports in place to help the student achieve those goals and experience success--starting at the point of orientation). Although we understand orientation must introduce the whole institution to students, not giving sufficient time to the academic message sends the wrong message to students.

- **Inconsistent use of, and access to, technology.** SJSU has a significant investment in technology that aids and supports academic advising. Yet, the technology is inaccessible to many for lack of training, it is used inconsistently across campus, and is considered a burden by many. The lack of formal governance structure associated with advising technology, and lack of a strategic plan for the utilization (current and future) of advising technology contributes to inconsistent use. Across SJSU a strategic plan for the utilization of advising technology that could improve advising praxis, as well as student success outcomes, is absent. Finally, there is no formal plan for utilizing technology or assessing its effectiveness, to help improve student outcomes.

# Recommendations

**Establish campus-wide leadership and strategic planning efforts to enhance academic advising.**

Dedicated leadership for the academic advising program does not exist. We found that the question "Who is in charge of advising at SJSU?" is one not easily answered. There is no one person identified as being in charge of academic advising at SJSU. Although not official, and with no direct reporting lines to academic advising, the advising community perceived that the responsibility belonged to the AVP position recently eliminated. That leaves advising in a vulnerable state given there is no position dedicated to serving full-time as the overseer of all things academic advising at SJSU. Therefore, it is recommended that SJSU establish a dedicated senior level position to develop, implement, monitor and assess academic advising activities throughout the university community through administrative collaborations with the academic colleges and various other university stakeholders in support of undergraduate education. The title of this position may vary depending on resources and organizational structure. Specific duties should include:

*Provide an advising voice in high-level decision-making.* This position must serve as an advocate for advising and be accountable for the creation and ongoing strategic planning of a university-wide advising model that aligns with institutional priorities.

*Provide leadership to adopt a campus-wide delivery model for academic advising.*(see below)

*Establish professional development and training activities for faculty and professional advisors to promote high quality academic advising across the university* (see below).

*Establish a system of accountability within the academic advising community.* We heard numerous student complaints about situations where advising mistakes were made by faculty and staff advisors, conflicting advising information was provided, and no existence of a means of expressing their grievances relative to the academic advising process. It is imperative, under the leadership of the senior level advising administrator that a process be developed to address advising mistakes and adjudicate advising complaints in collaboration with the college associate deans. This will facilitate accountability, establishment and/or revision of necessary policies and procedures, and consistency among all academic advisors at the institution.

*Develop appropriate resources to sustain the delivery of quality academic advising services.* Management and allocation of resources, including staff, funds, and space is crucial to the overall success of academic advising at SJSU. Advising resources must exist at the university level, as well as college level including having a specific budget line for academic advising. This communicates that advising is a priority and not an afterthought that is supported out of other funds, non-recurring funds or leftover funding. Lacking unit academic advising budgets and an institutional knowledge of the total spent on advising often leads to never fully addressing the issues of funding an effective advising program.

**Consider an exclusively professional advisor model to more effectively meet the needs of students.**

We recommend that SJSU adopt a professional advisor model for undergraduate students that includes having all professional advisors in each student success center to develop consistent and comprehensive advising services to students, particularly those in upper division. This model is will most efficiently support the development of a clearly defined advisor curriculum, role definition, and facilitate the achievement of equitable advising experiences across the colleges. In addition, all advisors would have equal opportunities

for learning, growth, and advancement.

Throughout our visit we had an opportunity to meet with many faculty advisors. Their commitment to students was unmatched. However, as a group, their primary passion rested in assisting students in gaining necessary knowledge and skills relative to their discipline and connecting students to industry. The faculty expressed a desire to be involved and many appear to welcome a more defined faculty mentoring program with associated professional development.

In addition, several of the students who were a part of our interviews spoke highly of their interactions with faculty advisors in their disciplines with regards to the skills development, gaining internships, and transitioning to their post-graduate plans. However, from students' perspectives, faculty were less accessible, provided less advising relative to general education requirements, and were noticeably less knowledgeable and uncomfortable discussing university policies and procedures. The role faculty play as teachers and mentors in the disciplines should be highly valued and a part of every student's experience at SJSU. A transformation of the advising culture and experience within the institution should include many opportunities for students to interact with faculty in their disciplines and through experiential learning.

A professional advising model may require the hiring of additional full- or part-time advisors to serve the needs of students without long and frustrating wait times. Although resources are always limited, an institution must consider the trade-offs created by human resource constraints. According to the report, "Driving Toward a Degree: Establishing a Baseline on Integrated Approaches to Planning and Advising" (Drivetodegree.org, 2016), the decision to hire advisors is often driven by enrollment numbers, ratios, and advisee loads, but institutions must find ways to invest in sufficient human resources necessary to achieve desired impacts and improved processes for student success (p. 19).

Another benefit of the professional advising model is that it supports the ability and efficiency of integrating academic and career advising to better support students. "Academic advising synthesizes and contextualizes students' educational experiences within the framework of their aspirations, abilities and lives to extend learning beyond campus boundaries and timeframes" (NACADA, 2006). Therefore, academic advising facilitates the clarification of academic, personal, and career goals which combines each of these three dimensions into comprehensive educational plans for the realization of those goals.

Given the structured and intentional nature of academic advising, academic advisors stand in a prime position to serve as effective career influencers in an effort to better prepare students for life after college. For example, many colleges and universities have structured, intentional advising approaches established to ensure students engage in academic advising throughout their college tenure. However, it is less common for schools to have comparable strategies in place to get students engaged with the career development process prior to graduation. In fact, one out of three college seniors never visit the career center at any point in the college experience (Alvarez, 2018).

Throughout the academic experiences of students, academic advisors provide valuable assistance to students regarding the exploration of majors, careers, and transferable skills. Career and academic advising are very closely related, often provided concurrently to students, and a developmental advising approach supports career advising by academic advisors. The notion of an integrated approach to academic advising has considerable merit and is a long-standing concept. O'Banion (1972, 1994) offered five elements of academic advising to emphasize academic planning and decision making, the exploration of life and vocational/career goals, educational program choice, course selection, and class scheduling.

Adopting an exclusively professional advisor model allows for the incorporation of a proactive advising philosophy as a means of improving student outcomes. Proactive, or intrusive, advising involves advisers connecting with all students before they begin to struggle and mandating advising for students who would not normally seek help on their own. Specifically, professional advisors are able to use various conceptual frameworks and their ability to form rapport with students to head off potential barrier to student success.

**Create an SJSU advising definition, vision, mission, goals and learning outcomes that apply across the university and provides a common purpose and understanding of academic advising among all stakeholders. Clearly define roles and responsibilities of academic advisors.**

As part of the review process, we were provided with various documents from all of the colleges at SJSU. It was clear that a mission, definition, vision, and learning goals for advising did not exist. One or two colleges did have a college level advising mission statement. However, in order to be uniform a partnership with the university-wide advising program, all colleges success centers, and the Academic Advising Council, should develop advising mission, definition, vision, and learning goals that can then be used across campus.

The SJSU academic advising program as a whole will benefit greatly from a shared mission and set of goals for academic advising and a clear set of expected outcomes for student learning. To be most effective, the development of these critical elements is best achieved by having all constituents involved in the discussion. Certainly, there will need to be central coordination and leadership in this endeavor; however, there must be input from all levels of the university advising program in order to support campus-wide "buy-in." One cannot begin to explain advising or tell the SJSU story about academic advising if there is no shared mission, definition, vision, or learning outcomes.

This shared approach to academic advising will also help SJSU clarify the roles that various individuals who provide of academic advising should play. There is much confusion and inconsistency currently, about what advisors at various levels do to support students. There should be role clarification on what primary role central office advisors fulfill, the roles that unit advisors and faculty mentors should play, and most importantly identification of students' responsibilities. Having this common understanding will help all SJSU faculty and staff promote a more consistent, positive experience for student success.

After the definition, mission, vision, and outcomes have been vetted with the academic advising community, it should be shared with the all campus stakeholders. The university department(s) charged with branding should be used to develop the messaging to share this framework with the faculty, staff, students and all stakeholders. This new definition and understanding of advising is necessary to assist with the transformation of academic advising at SJSU. This rebranding of advising is important and the prime time to introduce the definition, mission, vision, and outcomes to entering freshman and transfer students is at orientation.

We particularly recommend that once SJSU advising mission, goals and outcomes are created, it would be beneficial to send a team of advisors to the NACADA Assessment Institute with the charge to develop an advising assessment plan for the university. The team will have the opportunity to work with NACADA faculty who are assessment experts and return to SJSU with an action plan ready to implement.

Guidelines and resources for developing an academic advising vision and mission statement, goals and outcome representative of SJSU are noted in *Appendix B.*

**Provide a framework to evaluate and assess academic advising success.**

Evaluation involves students' and/or others' perceptions of the performance of the individual advisor, while assessment involves an examination of the academic advising program and services, typically focused on student learning outcomes resulting from the advising experience (Robbins, 2011, 2016). Both evaluation and assessment are necessary to provide evidence of effectiveness and success in all areas of higher education, including academic advising.

The components necessary for an effective assessment program will be in place once the vision, mission, goal statements and outcomes for academic advising are developed for the university. An assessment plan must include the following: agreed-upon institutional and/or college-wide student learning outcomes (SLO) for academic advising, measurement methodologies, processes, and instruments, identification of who will be responsible for gathering the data, a timeline for assessing various components, the methods for reporting results, and the processes by which the assessment will be shared and reviewed for future improvements to SJSU advising program.

Assessment best practice approaches recognize that student "satisfaction" surveys do not constitute an "assessment." Student satisfaction surveys and advisor evaluation are only pieces of an overall assessment program that focuses on student learning.

We also recommend a standard annual evaluation tool for academic advisors. Developed from articulated roles and responsibilities, learning outcomes, and trainings, the annual evaluation recognizes excellence in advisors with opportunities for professional growth and promotion. Similarly, it provides an avenue for conversation about areas of improvement. When the evaluation is standardized across the university, it further promotes the common understanding of academic advising across the university community.

We recommend that SJSU gather data to support the established learning outcomes for each college success center and the institution-wide advising outcomes when they are established. A system to allow students to provide feedback could be established through the use of a data gathering tool such as Qualtrics. It is critical that these data are shared with the advising community as a way to strengthen advisors' understanding of areas for improvement.

NACADA has many resources for institutions that want to implement an assessment program. These can be found in *Appendix B* of this report.

**Create a common comprehensive, ongoing, advisor training and professional development program at SJSU for all faculty and professional academic advisors**.

Through our visit, one of the glaring themes was the lack of training and professional development. The concern was that professional advisors were not onboarded adequately with the necessary training relating to technology, student population, type of students on campus, best practices for academic advising, and how to effectively work with specific populations of students.

The initial training, and ongoing training and professional development, is paramount to the success of any advising structure regardless of faculty or professional advisors. A robust and well-structured academic advising program must have a comprehensive, relevant, and consistent training and professional development program that accommodates the needs of both professional advisors and faculty advisors. Training and professional development provides an excellent opportunity for growth and to learn how the profession of academic advising has evolved over the years. As the training and professional development

program is developed, it should be a norm and an expectation that faculty advisors should receive training as well. The faculty advisor training does not have to be as detailed as the professional advisor, but it must include training that is relative to the faculty member's role as determined by SJSU.

Your training and professional development program should be mandatory for all advisors. It is essential that training areas include the newly created vision, mission, goals, and student learning outcomes. There should also be a detailed resource section that provides a list of acronym and common terms. Additionally, various topics should be included that help advisors understand their roles and duties in student success.

The advising directors of the student success centers have already discussed a potential training program in detail and have outlined a list of training topics that are needed for successful onboarding and continued training for new advisors. The thought that was put into listing the training, highlights the importance of what is needed for advisors to be efficient and successful in their duties and responsibilities.

Any training and professional development program should be aligned with NACADA's Core Competencies (conceptual, informational, and relational).

> 1. *Conceptual elements*: concept of advising, mission, and role of advising, relationship between advising and retention, student success, student learning outcomes, advising as teaching, ethical issues in advising;
> 2. *Informational element*s: programs, advising model, policies, curriculum, referral resources, advising tools including technologies, FERPA;
> 3. *Relational element*s: interview skills, communication skills, rapport building, inter-and intra-cultural communication skills needed when working with a diverse student population;

Further, there should also be an area that focuses on the personal elements, which address the understanding of self-awareness (as an advisor) that requires knowledge about one's values and levels of concentration, stress, emotions, and commitment, and also an ongoing awareness of self and the application of skills in self-assessment, self-regulation and growth (McClellan, 2007).

To ensure there is a detailed training program that is reflective all the needs and services for students at SJSU, training should be inclusive of all departments on campus, not just academic advising offices. We found that SJSU has a wealth of individuals and departments that could provide a variety of training that showcases their departments (i.e., working with specific populations and understanding advising theories and how theories can relate to certain student populations). Working collaboratively across all disciplines and departments will ensure that the onboarding and continual training and professional development is consistent for every advisor. Advisors will have the general knowledge and foundation to advise more effectively and holistically. There are many NACADA resources available for developing training and professional development programs. Please refer to *Appendix B.*

**Expand the role and responsibilities of the Academic Advising and Retention Services Office to support the leadership and campus framework of academic advising.**

In addition to its current role in providing support to exploratory students (i.e., undecided and transitionary), Academic Advising and Retention Services (AARS) should be structured in a manner that recognizes the staff as "super" advisors who coordinate with the college success centers and overall advising community in an effort to support the university-wide advising goals. These "super" advisors, under the leadership and

direct supervision of the senior level advising administrator, could serve as liaisons to the colleges and success centers to provide training and professional development, to share best practices, and support each unit's unique programmatic and advising delivery services. While the current AARS staff are to be commended for their efforts with exploratory students, additional professional development is necessary to assume their new leadership roles. The upcoming retirement of the current leader in AARS provides an exciting opportunity to give considerable thought and planning into defining this new role of AARS.

While a recent decision has been made to assign this unit within Student Affairs, we recommend that careful consideration be given to re-aligning academic advising within Academic Affairs. In terms of best practices, academic advising is often placed within Academic Affairs in order to reinforce its connection with the curriculum and curriculum development. However, if this model does not adequately meet the needs of SJSU and the decision to have academic advising remain in Student Affairs, an alternative alignment might be to the Student Services division. This alignment would support the effective delivery of student services, given this new grouping of units reflects daily collaboration by those who must partner for student success.

**Reaffirm the Advising Council to support the advancement of established university-wide strategic goals and learning outcomes related to academic advising and student success.**

The Advising Council must be charged or empowered to act on change at an implementation level as the members serve as "representatives" for their advising colleagues. They can also collaboratively implement university advising initiatives that are consistent across colleges, avoid duplication, and build on strengths. The Advising Council should be a problem-solving group that focuses on implementation challenges and policy/process analysis, working collaboratively with campus partners when input and consultation is needed (e.g., Enrollment Management, IT, Student Affairs, Academic Support).

Under the leadership of the senior level administrator, the Advising Council can provide input on advisor professional development, advising curriculum development, and program collaborations with university partners and stakeholders. Finally, the group can also serve as an important "communication" hub for all academic advisors, sharing new ideas, providing cross-college communications, act as a resource for SJSU concerns/ideas, and be an advocate for best practices.

The current advising council at SJSU is a large membership of various advisors and advising stakeholders across campus. We have heard from every group that we met with that the committee in its current state is not effective. There is currently no leadership and the body is not empowered with decision-making ability. Therefore, we propose that the council be reconstituted to be a body that is representative of critical departments or areas on campus that can make informed decisions about student success through the lens of academic advising.

In the process of establishing this new committee, the most important thing to take into consideration is the reporting structure. We propose the following:

*The AVP for Enrollment Management or whoever is the appointed person responsible for campus-wide advising should be the leader of this newly formed council.*

*There should be shared governance.* Therefore the committee could also have co-chairs. There should be a leadership committee within the council that consists of the Directors from each of the college student success centers, the Registrar, Admissions, and Undergraduate Studies.

*The committee should include the Associate Deans (who are usually responsible for academic advising at the college level).*

*It is recommended that the council be comprised of subcommittees* that are responsible for addressing specific advising needs and create ad hoc subcommittees as needed in order to manage a large committee and give the necessary campus advising stakeholders a voice. For example, there was a great deal of discussion around the role of the general education (GE) advisors' responsibilities.  A subcommittee could be created that specifically reviews the process for GE advising across all colleges and departments and then submit a report to the large body with recommendations on how to improve GE advising.  The Council as a whole would vote on the recommendations and the AVP for Enrollment that takes those approved recommendation to the Provost for campus-wide approval.  Then it becomes the responsibility of each student success center directors to implement said recommendations.

The overarching responsibility of this council is to provide leadership to and for the campus-wide advising. The Advising Council should be empowered to be the change agent for advising, serve as an advocating body for student success,  and promotion of professional development of academic advising at SJSU. The Council may take a significant role in the following areas with links provided in *Appendix B*:

- *Create a recognition and reward structure that highlights exceptional advising at SJSU.*
- *Create campus-wide advisor training and professional development for both professional and faculty advisors.*
- *Review and suggest revisions to advising policies and procedures that impact students such as probation and suspension, when students transition to another college, or the transcript evaluation process.*
- *Create a campus-wide advisor handbook that is electronically accessible to all advisors.*
- *Create an annual advisor summit that allows the advising community to come together during the fall or spring semester to provide campus-wide advisor training and departmental updates.*
- *Creating a campus-wide assessment plan for academic advising.*

**Develop a communication plan for the institution appropriate for all constituencies.**

It is always important that communication flows between and among students, faculty, and staff, in very intentional ways so that constituents get information they need in a timely manner. At SJSU, there is not a protocol for sharing information among the academic advisors. This results in students being told inaccurate information. Sometimes courses are added or programs are changed and the information does not reach the advisors quickly. There should be an immediate and direct way for the information to get from the departments to the advisors.

Consider forming a Communications Task Force to address gaps in communication between academic staff and advisors. This task force should focus on utilizing technology and information sharing to bridge the communication gap and create a platform for uniform information sharing. Liaisons should be established. The liaisons need to be kept up-to-date with both internal and community-based information. This will assist with students receiving accurate and consistent information across the institution.

Review web-based communication regarding academic advising**.** It is always a good practice to establish and continually review the advising webpage to be sure it provides direction to students and advisors. It is good practice to add the vision and mission statements, as well as the advising syllabus to the web site.  The advising webpage can also help students determine to whom to go for information.

Communicate more clearly the what, why, and when of advising. Both students and advisors indicated a need for better communication about what advising is, why it is important, and when to see an advisor. The

creation of a consistent advising process will stress the importance of advising, and the use of an advising syllabus will help with promoting the "what" and "why" of advising. The "why" can also be promoted on the advising web page and through other social media. The "when" can be advertised in a number of ways: a statement on the log-in page for the student portal; a statement on the class search page; catchy posters placed around campus, particularly in classrooms and common gathering areas; and reminders from faculty. In addition, students need to be educated on how to learn who their advisor is. Consider determining an "Advising Month" preceding registration. Make use of this month to encourage better planning on the part of students, not waiting to the last minute to seek advising, and earlier interventions on the part of advisors. Market "Advising Month" early through various avenues including email and text blasts, other social media, signage, table tents in common gathering areas, etc., and encourage students to be advised and register on time to ease the advising burden the few weeks prior to when the semester starts.

**Revise and implement a comprehensive orientation program that gives equal prominence to the students' academic journey**.

We strongly reaffirm that the New Student and Family Program (NSFP) office continue to be responsible for oversight, planning, and implementation of all aspects of the orientation process, communication, and program. However, we want to advocate for a better partnership with the central academic administration to develop academic-focused presentations for all participants, students, and families, during the orientation experience. An example might include the development of a large session, led by the senior level advising administrator, for all colleges. Orientation is a university program regardless of where it reports and the content should reflect the entire student experience. Specific strategies include:

*Support course availability for all students during summer orientation*. We cannot stress more strongly that the institution prioritize an intentional review of the availability of courses for all new students prior to their summer orientation experience. Students and advisors alike repeatedly mentioned that very often students are unable to register for a full-time load during orientation due to the limited availability of courses, particularly for those students who attended the later orientation sessions. It should be noted that international students are disproportionately impacted by this situation given their later arrival into the United States. The resolution presented to many of them is to seek concurrent enrollment at another institution. This does not present a welcoming environment for many students. Additionally, the "block scheduling" process should be clarified. Some believe it to be a learning community, while others (including faculty and students) are unaware that classes are linked.

*Empower colleges to fully collaborate on the development of the comprehensive orientation program*. Representatives from most of the colleges expressed frustration that AARS assumed responsibility for delivering the advising and registration function of orientation; colleges did not deliver information about their own unique programs and experiences students should expect to participate in. Common talking points and themes should be discussed with NSFP and each college should commit to covering that content during their time on day 1 and day 2. It is important to provide academic components on both days of the program.

*Foster collaboration in the planning process*. Academic partners expressed an imbalance with academic content and student life content - this feedback emphasizes the importance of content mapping. Some college leadership feel as though their contribution to orientation is an afterthought instead of being intentionally implemented. Stronger relationships between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs could increase engagement and buy-in.

*Determine the academic messaging.* It is essential that a consistent academic message be developed and delivered to students.  The emphasis must be placed on students: faculty, and professional advisors indicated that students received conflicting information about the number of credits required each term in order to graduate within four years.  Specifically, faculty seemed to encourage students to enroll in fewer credits, based on their personal demands, without regard to discussing the financial implications on students.  In this case, it would be appropriate to aggressively adopt a "15 to Finish" campaign that has been institutionally sanctioned regarding timely progress toward degree.

*The Student Success Centers should have primary responsibility for their students' academic orientation.* Success Centers should greet, welcome, advise and assist with registration for  their new students (both transfer and freshmen) across both days of the orientation program.

*Consider a comprehensive "transition" program for all new students.* Transition programs ensure that all new Spartans and their families begin their journeys at SJSU with a comprehensive introduction to the university community.  It is not episodic, like the existing summer orientation program, but instead spans an institutionally defined time period (i.e., from admission through the first year of enrollment).  It involves many events and opportunities, supported by various stakeholders who deliver extensive services and provide a window into the rich history and traditions of SJS.  It may be delivered as a stand-alone program or in conjunction with a formal first year experience program.  Established student outcomes should be the focus for this timeframe versus feeling the need to provide everything during summer orientation when students are not retaining said information at full capacity.

**Develop and implement a technology plan for academic advising.**

A comprehensive technology plan reaffirms students' responsibilities within the advising process and gives academic advisors the necessary tools to be effective and efficient in their advising delivery. SJSU has already invested in advising technologies that streamline and support advising practices. These tools include NAVIGATE and the Spartan Connect suite.  However, access to and training on these platforms is insufficient.  Repeatedly, academic advisors expressed frustration at the fact that there is no consistent manner in which to gain access to the systems and receive ongoing support.  It is recommended SJSU develop and implement a technology plan to ensure these platforms are consistently used across the university. In addition, dedicated IT support must be provided to respond to necessary updates relative to programmatic changes, curricular changes.

Additionally, a comprehensive system should include a student academic planner that can be completed by the advisor and advisee electronically during the advising process. The academic planner needs to remain visible subsequently to students and advisors. An effective academic planner maps out the student's journey to completion and can include the student's challenges and strengths for success. The absence of such a system stands in the way of effective advising practices and interferes with continuity from one advising session to another. Students can become frustrated when they are required to explain the same scenarios and life situations over-and-over again. Doing so can cause students to feel that no one is really listening or available to help them. The lack of systems to reduce such feelings/perspectives stand in the way of "advising as teaching" and "advising as a helpful relationship."

It is also recommended that professional development/training in how to use the adopted technology to its fullest potential be provided for all advisors as part of their required training program. Its use needs to be employed consistently by both professional and faculty advisors. Further, any system needs to be explored to see how notes can be entered and viewed by all advisors and faculty mentors. A way to access anecdotal notes from each advising session must be made available to prepare for each subsequent advising session.

Training on writing anecdotal notes may be beneficial. Additional technology strategies to support effective and efficient delivery of advising services include:

- Engage academic advisors in the selection and implementation of software – in an authentic effort to collaborate with the end-users.
- Provide adequate and timely training for all academic advisers on the new advising-related platforms using an experiential approach (conduct in a computer lab so advisors can be hands-on during training).
- Fully utilize technology tools in ways that support students and provides students with easy access to their own records, i.e. grades, transcript, schedule, degree audit, financial account, etc.
- Require all academic advising units across the University to use the adopted advising platforms and enter advising notes after every student contact so that advisors are supporting not only students but each other in their efforts to give guidance and provide accurate, timely information.
- Dedicate IT analysts and programmers to these advising platforms and other related systems that support a strategic approach to improvements in the current technology and the development or implementation of new technology.

## Conclusion

Although there are some significant challenges, it is clear that students are a top focus in the academic advising program at SJSU. Continued investment of attention on advising by key administrators, particularly with consideration of the recommendations above, can move SJSU to the next level of advising excellence. A consequence of that improved excellence will be greater student satisfaction and improved retention and graduation rates.

SJSU has a unique opportunity to explore partnerships that can strengthen academic advising across campus. Aided with general observations and recommendations in this review, SJSU can intentionally plan for the development of campus-wide alignment of academic advising, advising and academic planning technology, campus-wide assessment of academic advising, and review of campus-wide advisor training and development.

We very much enjoyed visiting the SJSU campus and appreciate the warm hospitality we received. Clearly the university has many talented faculty, staff, and administrators who are committed to student success. We congratulate you on the desire to improve your academic advising program in order to better serve your students. We very much enjoyed meeting with your students. They have a genuine, deep love for SJSU. Your students want to engage with the campus community and have meaningful conversations about their careers and the pathways to reach their goals.

Our goal is to have our observations and recommendations be helpful as you make improvements in academic advising at SJSU. We applaud the university's interest in undertaking change on behalf of your students and we wish for you great success in this endeavor. We are happy to expand on any of the topics or recommendations in writing and/or a follow-up telephone or online meeting.

## Contact Information

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# Appendix A - Consulting Visit Schedule

**SJSU Visit Itinerary for NACADA Consultants**
**Vanessa Harris, Susan Poch & Kimberly Smith**
**April 10-12, 2019**

**Wednesday, April 10th**

| *Time* | *Group* | *Location* |
|---|---|---|
| 9 to 10 a.m. | Advising Council<br>Facilitated by Francisco Castillo,<br>  Director of Jack Holland Student Success Center | SU Room 2A |
| 10 to 11 a.m. | College of Science<br>Facilitated by Elaine Collins, Associate Dean | SU Room 2A |
| 11 to 11:15 a.m. | Break | |
| 11:15 a.m. to 12 p.m. | Special Populations (EOP, African American/Black<br>  Student Success Center, Chicanx/Latinx Student<br>  Success Center, UndocuSpartan Resource Center,<br>  ASPIRE)<br>Facilitated by Lilly Pinedo Ganghai, Program<br>  Director for Chicanx/Latinx Student Success Center | SU Room 2A |
| 12 to 1:15 p.m. | College of Engineering<br>Facilitated by Sarah Johnson, Director of College<br>  Of Engineering Student Success Center | ENG 285/287 |
| 1:15  to 2 p.m. | Campus tour with Ariadna Manzo,<br>  Associated Students President | ENG 285/287 |
| 2 to 2:45 p.m. | Cindy Kato, Director of Academic Advising &<br>  Retention Services | SU Room 2A |
| 2:45  to 3:00 p.m. | Break | |
| 3:00  to 4 p.m. | Special Populations (Veteran and military students,<br>  Students registered with Accessible Education<br>  Center, Student-athletes)<br>Facilitated by Cindy Marota, Director of the Accessible<br>  Education Center | SU Room 2A |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 to 5 p.m. | College of Business<br>Facilitated by Francisco Castillo,<br>    Director of Jack Holland Student Success Center | Clark 412 |
| 5:15 to 6:30 p.m. | Dinner with SJSU Students<br>Facilitated by Connie Tsai, SJSU Student | SU Room 2A |

**Thursday, April 11th**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9 to 10 a.m. | Academic Advising & Retention Services<br>    Staff<br>Facilitated by Michael Randle, Associate Director | SU Room 2B |
| 10 to 11 a.m. | College of Health and Human Sciences<br>Facilitated by Matthew Masucci, Associate Dean | SU Room 2B |
| 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. | Student Success Center Directors<br>Facilitated by Cindy Kato, Director AARS | Clark 412 |
| 12 to 12:30 p.m. | Break | |
| 12:30 1:45 p.m. | Lunch with SJSU Students<br>Facilitated by Jessica Visque, SJSU Student | SU Room 2B |
| 2 to 3 p.m. | College of Education<br>Facilitated by Marcos Pizarro, Associate Dean | SWC 122A |
| 3:00 to 3:15 p.m. | Break | |
| 3:15 to 4 p.m. | Undergraduate Studies Team<br>    (e-Advising tools, degree audit, transfer credit<br>    rule writers)<br>Facilitated by Nancy Day, Degree Audit and<br>    Curriculum Technical Analyst | SWC 122A |
| 4 to 5 p.m. | Student Affairs Leadership Team<br>Facilitated by Sharon Willey, AVP Enrollment | SWC 122A |

**Friday, April 12th**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9 to 10 a.m. | College of Humanities & Arts<br>Facilitated by Roula Svorou, Associate Dean | SU 2B |
| 10 to 11 a.m. | College of Social Sciences<br>Facilitated by Ron Rogers, Associate Dean | WSQ 105 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 11 to 11:15 a.m. | Break | |
| 11:15 to 11:45 a.m. | Debrief with Sharon | SU 2B |
| 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. | Lunch with Student Success Advisors | BBC 032 |
| 1 to 2 p.m. | Meeting with President Papazian | Tower Hall |
| 2 to 5 p.m. | Working Time | SSC 427 |

# Appendix B – NACADA Resources

NACADA Pillars of Academic Advising
    https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars.aspx

Academic Advising Administrators' Institute
    http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Events-Programs/Events/Administrators-Institute.aspx

Academic Advising Vision and Mission Statements
    http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Academic-advising-mission-statements.aspx.

    http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Academic-advising-mission-statements.aspx
    https://www.nacadajournal.org/doi/pdf/10.12930/0271-9517-26.2.5

Advising Handbook
    https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor-Handbooks.aspx.

Advising Research Seminar
    http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Events/Advising-Seminar.aspx

Advising Summit
    https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Enhance-the-Advising-Culture-on-Campus-Implement-an-Annual-Advising-Fair.aspx

Advising Syllabus
    http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Creating-an-Advising-Syllabus.aspx

    http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advising-Syllabi-Resource-Links.aspx

Advisor Development
    http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor-Training--Development.aspx

    https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/Administration-of-Advising/Advisortraining.aspx

    https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor-training-and-development-Why-it-matters-and-how-to-get-started.aspx

Assessment of Academic Advising Institute
http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Events-Programs/Events/Assessment-Institute.aspx

Assessment of Advising
http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Assessment-of-academic-advising.aspx

http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Evaluation-of-Academic-Advisors.aspx

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https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/CAS-Advising-Standards.aspx

National, Regional and International Conferences
http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Events-Programs/Events/Annual-Conference.aspx
https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Community/Regions/Region-9.aspx
http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Events-Programs/Events/NACADA-Middle-East-Conference.aspx

NACADA Concept Statement
http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Concept-of-Academic-Advising.aspx

NACADA Core Competencies
https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreCompetencies.aspx

NACADA Core Values
https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreValues.aspx

NACADA Institutes:
http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Events-Programs/Events.aspx

NACADA Pillars of Academic Advising
https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars.aspx

NACADA Pocket Guides
https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Publications/Pocket-Guides.aspx

Organizational Models for Advising.
http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Organizational-Models-for-Advising.aspx

Peer Advising
http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Peer-Advising-A-Win-Win-Initiative.aspx
http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Portals/0/ePub/documents/32-1.pdf

Reward and Recognition

    http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Events-Programs/Awards.aspx

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Underrepresented Students

    https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Student-Populations-Index.aspx

Webinars and Professional Development Packages

    http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Events-Programs/Events/Web-Events/Web-Events-Coming.aspx

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