Advising Task Force Report

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Minnesota State University, Mankato

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

There is compelling evidence that advising is considered very important by students, that academic advising is an important factor in retention, and that many students at Minnesota State University, Mankato, feel that their advising experience is less than ideal. Many faculty feel frustrated with their lack of time, their lack of training, and the lack of a centralized advising resource that quickly and reliably provides information about policies and procedures necessary for good advising. The following report describes the issues uncovered by Noel-Levitz and NSSE, a pilot study matching survey done in 2006, an in-depth conversation with graduation evaluators here, a mirror-image advisee/advisor survey that has been completed this year, as well as a description of the institutional structures of other comparable universities. Discussion, recommendations, issues discussed but not addressed, and areas of interest and concern follow.

I. Introduction

The Task Force (hereinafter referred to as Task Force or Members) on student advising was charged with delivering a report to the MSU Mankato Faculty Association and Division of Academic and Student Affairs with specific recommendations on ways to improve academic advising for students at Minnesota State University, Mankato. This charge came as a direct result of concerns expressed by the Minnesota State Student Association (MSSA). The Task Force has met since the spring of 2010 and throughout the 2010-2011 academic year. In this current year, Members studied advising at the University from the perspectives of the advisees and advisors, and explored other institutions' structures. This work would not have been possible without the ready assistance of Lynn Akey and Jennie Cashin from Institutional Research. They have met with the Task Force many times and helped us along this journey.

 Members include Angie Bomier and Kellian Clink, who have both served as academic advisors for more than 20 years and Sara Granberg-Rademacker, who has coordinated undecided advising for 5 years. These three participate in weekly Student Relations Coordinators meetings, which are devoted primarily to advising issues. Jane McConnell participated on the Task Force before she went on sabbatical (spring 2011), and has advised mass communications students for about 15 years. Matt Carlson has worked with advising in a number of capacities for about 5 years and participated in the spring of 2010. The two MSSA Student Senators on the committee were Sarah Koenen (a second-year student in ISYS) and Dan Kromer (a senior in Social Studies Education). They brought their perspectives as advisees, and sought regular feedback from the 16 MSSA Academic Committee members. Sarah Glaser, a first-year graduate student in Counseling and Student Personnel, participated this year, offering feedback and actively contributing to the review of institutional advising structures. In sum, Members had about 100 years of advisor and 100 years of advisee experience to draw on between all parties involved.

The Task Force was proposed in the fall of 2009 but only organized late in the spring of 2010 due to other pressures at the University that fall. The group requested another year to study advising-related issues in

more depth. Members started with the premise that effective advising involves shared responsibility between advisees and advisors, and advising plays a critical role in a student's academic experience, leading to retention and graduation. Effective advising also contributes to a student's overall sense of well-being and satisfaction with their college experience.

In preparation for their work, Members studied existing documents, including: in-depth interviews with graduation evaluators (2010); student and advisor surveys and recommendations created by Bobbi Urban in 2006 ; a proposed "Advising Values" document developed by a group of University advisors and assessment administrators who participated in a National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) advising assessment seminar (2006); an enrollment management report (2007); a CSET Undergrad Advisory Board report (2010); Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) for academic advising (2005); a MSSA Survey (2008); and a report authored by Jennie Cashin collating data from NSSE & Noel Levitz (2010; Appendix A). Members studied extant material and then performed original research, which will be described later.

The Task Force discussed and revised the Advising Values document, with the hope of helping the University prioritize advising processes and structures.

Minnesota State University, Mankato Advising Goals

Academic advising at MSU-Mankato is an intentional educational partnership to support and enhance learning. This multi-dimensional and developmental process supports students' diverse backgrounds, interests, and abilities and facilitates students' achievement of educational, career, and life goals.

Minnesota State University-Mankato Advising Values

Academic advising at MSU-Mankato reflects the University's commitment to promote learning by:

- Valuing and supporting students' intellectual and educational needs and development

- Valuing a collaborative environment across various constituencies (e.g., students, faculty, & staff, resources on campus and in the community)

- Supporting intentional partnerships and trust among the university's students, faculty & staff

- Valuing the diversity of students, faculty & staff

- Empowering students to be responsible and gain self-reliance for their decisions/choices

Advisor Goals/Responsibilities

KNOW
1. Academic advisors are knowledgeable of institutional policies, procedures and requirements.

2. Academic advisors are aware of campus resources available to assist students.

3. Academic advisors are knowledgeable of curricular requirements for general education, majors, minors, & graduation.

DO
4. Advising sessions facilitate student self-responsibility.

5. Academic advising meetings involve the student's development of both long-term and short-term goals and plans.

6. Advising sessions are accessible, frequent, and of sufficient length.

VALUE
7. Academic advisors respect the individuality and time of students.

8. Academic advisors support, promote & value intentional partnerships and trust among the university's students, faculty & staff.

Student Goals/Responsibilities

KNOW
1. Students are knowledgeable of institutional policies, procedures and requirements and the consequences for failing to meet them.

2. Students are aware of the various resources and services on-campus.

3. Students are knowledgeable of curricular requirements for general education, major, minor & graduation.

DO
4. Students are able to recognize and accept personal responsibility for their educational, career, and life goals.

5. Students implement strategies to be successful in educational, career, and life goals.

6. Students utilize the resources & relationships available to them in the University community to advance their educational and career goals.

VALUE
7. Students develop positive, professional relationship(s) with MSU faculty/staff.

8. Students connect with the MSU campus community.

9. Students value the time and individuality of faculty, staff & peers.

II. Summary of Research

Literature on Academic Advising

Students value advising *and* it is important for their successful retention and graduation. Academic advising provides students with an opportunity to engage with faculty/staff, and academic support expenditures correlate with higher retention and graduation rates according to Astin and Tinto, two of the most seminal scholars in college student research (Gansemer-Topf, 2006). Smith & Allen (2006) summarize the vision of advising well when they write that advising includes: "integration, referral, information, individuation, and shared responsibility. It involves helping students integrate the various curricular and co curricular aspects of their education into a meaningful whole (i.e., holistic advising), referring them to campus resources, providing information about degree requirements and how things work at the university, considering students as unique individuals, and providing them with opportunities to develop planning, problem solving, and decision making capabilities in a context of shared responsibility." Effective retention programs have come to understand that academic advising is the very core of successful institutional efforts to educate and retain students (Tinto, 1987, 2004).

"Faculty behaviors such as discussing personal values, majors/ academic concentrations, and financial aid account for significant variance in the prediction of student advising satisfaction" (Draves, 2009). Kuh's book *Student Success in College,* based on a study involving more than 1000 hours on each campus and interviews with more than 2700 people of high performing schools (7 private, 11 public), stated that "academic advising was a high priority" at these successful colleges.

Creamer and Scott (2000) write that "the linking of rewards to effective academic advising is a clear indication of an institution's commitment to advising weighed against other competing demands on faculty time. …Top-level leadership is important to operationalize the institutional mission and make a commitment to advising…positive outcomes in these areas ultimately result in satisfied alumni and increased enrollment."

According to ACT's fifth national survey, less than one-third responding institutions indicated any evaluation of advisor performance (Creamer & Scott, 2000). Faculty perceptions of rewards for advising will be addressed below.

Research performed at Minnesota State University, Mankato

Noel- Levitz and NSSE

Jennie Cashin, Institutional Research Analyst, created a document (Appendix A) describing results of the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (Noel-Levitz) (data from 2006-2010 from about 300 students), and National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data (2005-2009 from about 500 students) relevant to advising. The Noel-Levitz survey asks students to respond with a level of importance *and* a level of satisfaction. A performance gap is calculated by subtracting the satisfaction score from the importance score. The NSSE collects data from first-year and senior students about their participation in programs and activities that are proven for their impact on learning and personal development. Both are national surveys and thus can provide the university with comparative information. Cashin's document, entitled *"What do students report about Academic Advising at Minnesota State Mankato?"* states:

> Based on student ratings, academic advising is shown to be one of the most important
>
> aspects of our university as compared to other aspects such as campus life, service
>
> excellence, recruitment and financial aid, campus climate, registration effectiveness, etc.
>
> Other four-year public institutions also report that students at their universities find
>
> academic advising to be among the most important. These Noel-Levitz results suggest
>
> that students' expectations are not being met *entirely*. The performance gap shows that
>
> there is room to improve. The gaps, however, are in line with what they are for other
>
> National Four-Year Public Institutions. In addition, the scores indicate students are
>
> somewhat satisfied, moving in the direction towards being satisfied with academic
>
> advising. These NSSE results provide further confirmation that student rating of

academic advising for both first-year and senior students' falls between fair to good, with small differences between Minnesota State Mankato, other MnSCU Minnesota Universities or other Four-Year Competitors (2010).

	Spring 2006 Minnesota State Mankato			Spring 2008 Minnesota State Mankato			Spring 2010 Minnesota State Mankato			Spring 2010 National Four-Year Publics		
	Importance Rating[2]	Satisfaction Rating[2]	Gap	Importance Rating[2]	Satisfaction Rating[2]	Gap	Importance Rating[2]	Satisfaction Rating[2]	Gap	Importance Rating[2]	Satisfaction Rating[2]	Gap
My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major.	6.63	5.59	1.04	6.61	5.56	1.05	6.61	5.62	0.99	6.51	5.47	1.04
Major requirements are clear and reasonable.	6.53	5.25	1.28	6.54	5.35	1.19	6.48	5.20	1.28	6.41	5.34	1.07
My academic advisor is approachable.	6.53	5.28	1.25	6.48	5.37	1.11	6.47	5.44	1.03	6.43	5.43	1.00
My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.	6.43	5.02	1.41	6.41	5.12	1.29	6.27	5.24	1.03	6.28	5.21	1.07
My academic advisor helps me set goals to work toward.	6.16	4.73	1.43	6.23	4.85	1.38	6.01	4.79	1.22	6.10	4.93	1.17
Average Score	*6.46*	*5.17*	*1.29*	*6.45*	*5.25*	*1.20*	*6.37*	*5.26*	*1.11*	*6.35*	*5.28*	*1.07*

[1] Data extracted from Noel-Levitz® Student Satisfaction Inventory ™ Campus Report

[2] Student Importance rating and Student Satisfaction rating on 1-7 scale, 7 being very important or very satisfied

Advising experiences for First-Year students compared to Senior students[1]

		Spring 2005 Minnesota State Mankato	Spring 2007 Minnesota State Mankato	Spring 2009 Minnesota State Mankato	Spring 2009 Minnesota	Spring 2009 4yr Competitors
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor. [2]	First-Year	2.02	2.13	2.11	2.17	2.21
	Seniors	2.48	2.47	2.43	2.36	2.33
Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically.[3]	First-Year	2.80	2.88	2.91	2.99	3.05**
	Seniors	2.67	2.68	2.83	2.91	2.86
Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution? [4]	First-Year	2.61	2.83	2.95	2.97	3.08*
	Seniors	2.67	2.67	2.64	2.86**	2.83*
Average Score	First-Year	2.48	2.61	2.66	2.71	2.78
	Seniors	2.61	2.60	2.63	2.71	2.67

[1] Data extracted from National Survey of Student Engagement Institutional Report

[2] In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Very Often

[3] To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following? 1 = Very Little, 2 = Some, 3 = Quite a bit, 4 = Very much

[4] 1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Good, 4 = Excellent

Student and Faculty Study

In 2006, Bobbi Urban piloted a study of advising and succeeding in reaching 136 faculty advisors, 25 MSUAASF advisors, and 188 students. Results from students & faculty anticipate the Task Force's results in that the students infrequently feel that "big picture" planning is present in their faculty/student advising experience.

6. For the following questions regarding advising services in your area, answer for yourself if you are an individual faculty advisor, OR for the program you work with if you are part of an advising program (Click EACH area you agree with).

Students are provided with processes for determining life goals.		31	30%
Degree requirement information is provided in a timely manner.		91	89%
Students are advised on course selection.		101	99%
Policies and procedures are clarified to students.		93	91%
Progress against student goals is monitored and evaluated.		55	53%
Student responsibility in the advising process is reinforced.		80	78%
Referral for remedial coursework or personal development is provided.		72	70%
Information provided to students is always current and accurate.		73	71%
Advising meetings are made available for ALL students (within my realm of responsibility) EACH term.		81	79%

7. The advisor I met with incorporated the following discussions into our advising sessions (click all that apply):			
Assessment of my interests, abilities, and values		43	33%
Educational, career, and life goals		79	61%
Development of a short- and long-term plan		71	55%
MSU policies or procedures		38	29%
General education requirements		94	72%
Major requirements		105	81%
Exploration of majors or career possibilities for me		34	26%
Course selection		89	68%
My academic progress and how this impacts the achievement of my goals		47	36%
Leadership opportunities I might be interested in		19	14%
MSU services or resources I might be interested in		41	31%
Community services or resources that apply to me		11	8%
My personal and academic strengths and weaknesses		32	24%
Referral to another office on campus		35	27%

In response to survey results, the "Academic Advising Plan" (Appendix C), Urban recommended a central advising office, and reported that advisors would like to participate in on-campus, group advisor training sessions open to all advisors. Furthermore, she reported that at least 50 percent of respondents wanted a general manual for advising, as well as training in the following:

- General overview of the campus advising system

- Effective advising practices

- Legal issues/FERPA

- Advising-related technology (DARS, web registration, ISRS, etc.)

- Academic policies and procedures (curricular changes, transfer policies, probation/suspension, etc.)

Conversation with Graduation Evaluators

Another important source of information was garnered from interviews Angie Bomier (2010), conducted with graduation evaluators (Marilyn Lerud, Arlene Glaser, and Christine Cords). They reported significant issues which can delay students' graduation, including: advisors being unaware of changes in policies; requirements for departmental "major plans of studies" which may create delays when students are preparing to graduate; students not applying to graduate when they are encouraged to do so (at least one year prior to anticipated graduation); and confusion between "participation in graduation ceremonies" and actually completing requirements for graduation. The evaluators suggested possible solutions:

- Provision of an "Advising Referral Service." Even if such a service was available only one day a week and at a temporary location in the Student Union, it might help with some problems. The decentralized nature of University advising services can confuse students, and this service could help connect students with appropriate advising assistance.

- Consider eliminating "plans of study" for specific majors. These often become major obstacles in the graduation review process.

- Emphasize junior year activities to promote "pre-graduation audits." This process would help students identify problems earlier, and allow time to address issues such as substitutions, waivers, etc.

2008 MSSA Survey

Another source Members reviewed was an MSSA survey conducted in 2008 about several issues, including academic advising.

12   How often do you see your advisor per semester?

	Number	%
0	191	16.26%
1	485	41.28%
2	237	20.17%
3	81	6.89%
4+	181	15.40%

13   Do you know who your advisor is?

	Number	%
Yes	1113	95.54%
No	52	4.46%

14   Do you know how to change your advisor?

	Number	%
Yes	703	60.03%
No	468	39.97%

15   Are the advisors helpful to you?

	Number	%
Yes	928	79.66%
No	237	20.34%

16   What do you think is the biggest academic issue our university is facing?

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1) Grading	77	6.70 %	181	15.74 %	532	46.26 %	275	23.91 %	85	7.39 %
2) Class Availability	382	32.87 %	435	37.44 %	225	19.36 %	96	8.26 %	24	2.07 %
3) Advising	137	11.95 %	266	23.21 %	453	39.53 %	237	20.68 %	53	4.62 %
4) Faculty teaching styles	235	20.45 %	365	31.77 %	364	31.68 %	154	13.40 %	31	2.70 %
5) Textbook prices	729	62.52 %	290	24.87 %	105	9.01 %	30	2.57 %	12	1.03 %

Again, this survey indicates student concerns about advising services. The indication that 40 percent of students don't know how to change their advisor may indicate that students lack other important advising-related information as well. Further, considering that 20 percent of respondents find advisors unhelpful, and that 35 percent believe that advising is the biggest academic issue facing the University suggests that advising continues to be a key area of concern.

III. Task Force Research

After reviewing the studies and research outlined above, the Task Force decided to do another survey. Members visited with Dr. Steve Bohnenblust, Lynn Akey (Institutional Research), and the Student Relations Coordinators, and reviewed a dozen pertinent dissertations about advising assessment to help identify factors to study. The advisee's survey was tested with MSSA volunteers and the advisors survey was tested with a faculty advisor. This section describes the process, the section following describes the results.

Advisee Survey

Using the Advisor/Student Goals/Responsibilities (pages 5-7); Members developed an advisee survey (launched December 3) which was subsequently used to create a "mirror" advisor survey (per the suggestion of Member Sarah Koenen). The advisee survey was sent to all 13,243 undergraduate students, and resulted in 541 responses as of 3/9/2011. The survey asked for demographic information, asked for an open-ended response, and the questions asked about students' perceptions of their advisors' knowledge and accessibility. In addition, the survey asked students to describe themselves as advisees.

Advisor Survey

Task Force representatives took a first draft of the survey to the Student Relations Coordinators and asked for their ideas. Feedback was also obtained from other advisors and from Lynn Akey, given her knowledge of assessment. It was tested on an advisor who is not an SRC for more feedback before it was launched.

The first part of the survey mirrors the advisee survey. Then, advisors are asked to respond to demographic questions before ranking potential barriers to good advising and answering five open ended questions:

- What is MSU doing well? Name three strengths.
- What are MSU's greatest challenges?
- Articulate one idea for improving advising.
- Name one thing you're uncomfortable doing as an advisor.
- Is there a structural element you would recommend?

Commencement Survey

Following interviews with graduation evaluators, Angie Bomier suggested adding an ongoing advising survey as part of students' graduation application. Mary Dowd convened a meeting and the Career Development Center (CDC), represented by Kristin Underwood, offered to add 3 advising questions to the existing commencement survey. The advising questions were included in the commencement survey in January, 2011. As of March 9, there were already 402 responses. To date, these responses echo some impressions formed from the other data. Students were asked to articulate a good advising experience, name an advising frustration, and suggest an improvement.

Comparative Structure Study

To gain a more holistic perspective on advising, Members wanted insight from other institutions. Thus, the Task Force chose to look at peer institutions, as defined by the Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Sarah Glaser and Sara Granberg-Rademacker led efforts to understand structural elements of advising.

Advising administrators at each institution were identified. Members developed a list of potential questions, which were forwarded to the Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Studies and International Education for feedback/consideration. The finalized list was sent with the necessary documents to the Institutional Review Board for approval. A total of fourteen advising administrators were contacted. Seven responded. Results from the Task Force's research are discussed in Section IV.

IV. Results

Results from Advisee Survey

The advisee survey was launched the first week of December and these results are from March 10, 2011. Jeff Henline sent surveys to 13,243 undergraduate students. The survey was formatted using Survey Monkey. Because results below don't show the scale, it was included as a textbox above survey results. It was clearly indicated in the actual survey instrument.

PAGE:

1. Do you know who your assigned academic advisor is?
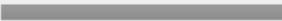
	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	95.2%	515
No	4.8%	26
answered question		541
skipped question		3

2. Have you ever met with your assigned academic advisor?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	84.7%	458
No	15.3%	83
answered question		541
skipped question		3

PAGE: MY ADVISOR

1. My advisor demonstrates knowledge about:

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know	Response Count
Curricular Requirements for my general education courses	12.2% (47)	9.6% (37)	10.9% (42)	24.4% (94)	35.1% (135)	3.1% (12)	4.7% (18)	385
Curricular Requirements for my major	7.8% (30)	5.4% (21)	7.8% (30)	26.2% (101)	50.5% (195)	1.3% (5)	1.0% (4)	386
Curricular requirements for my minor	12.9% (50)	11.1% (43)	10.1% (39)	11.9% (46)	21.4% (83)	26.4% (102)	6.2% (24)	387
Prerequisites that I must follow	10.4% (40)	8.3% (32)	12.7% (49)	23.1% (89)	40.3% (155)	2.3% (9)	2.9% (11)	385
Graduation Requirements	11.2% (43)	8.8% (34)	10.6% (41)	22.1% (85)	36.6% (141)	4.2% (16)	6.5% (25)	385
Campus Resources	11.7% (45)	10.4% (40)	14.5% (56)	16.3% (63)	29.3% (113)	5.2% (20)	12.7% (49)	386
Internships	12.7% (49)	8.3% (32)	12.9% (50)	13.2% (51)	20.7% (80)	11.6% (45)	20.7% (80)	387
Current job market	13.4% (52)	6.7% (26)	12.7% (49)	12.9% (50)	23.3% (90)	8.3% (32)	22.7% (88)	387
Research opportunities	12.7% (49)	5.7% (22)	11.6% (45)	9.6% (37)	22.0% (85)	12.9% (50)	25.6% (99)	387
Graduate schools	10.1% (39)	8.0% (31)	9.8% (38)	10.1% (39)	19.9% (77)	15.2% (59)	26.9% (104)	387

answered question	387
skipped question	157

2. My advisor:

	Strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree			
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know	Response Count
Lets me know what materials are needed before our appointments	20.2% (78)	11.9% (46)	14.2% (55)	19.1% (74)	**25.1% (97)**	6.5% (25)	3.1% (12)	387
Encourages me to set up advising appointments	24.4% (94)	15.3% (59)	13.7% (53)	15.5% (60)	**27.5% (106)**	2.1% (8)	1.6% (6)	386
Is accessible for sufficient amount of time	16.6% (64)	11.4% (44)	13.0% (50)	23.8% (92)	**33.2% (128)**	1.0% (4)	1.0% (4)	386
Is respectful of my time	13.3% (51)	9.6% (37)	9.6% (37)	26.8% (103)	**38.8% (149)**	1.0% (4)	0.8% (3)	384
Serves as a resource that benefits me	21.8% (84)	8.8% (34)	9.3% (36)	21.8% (84)	**37.0% (143)**	0.5% (2)	0.8% (3)	386
Refers me to another department or office	17.9% (69)	11.1% (43)	14.5% (56)	13.5% (52)	**19.7% (76)**	16.1% (62)	7.3% (28)	386
						answered question		387
						skipped question		157

1. As a student I:	Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree					Don't Know	Response Count
Understand current policies, procedures, and requirements and the consequences for failing to meet them	5.8% (26)	8.0% (36)	14.2% (64)	29.6% (133)	39.6% (178)	0.4% (2)	2.4% (11)	450
Am aware of the support services on campus such as the Counseling Center	10.0% (45)	10.7% (48)	17.0% (76)	26.6% (119)	31.7% (142)	1.8% (8)	2.2% (10)	448
Am aware of various academic services such as tutoring in the Center of Academic Success	6.7% (30)	9.2% (41)	16.6% (74)	28.2% (126)	36.2% (162)	2.0% (9)	1.1% (5)	447
Understand how to use the academic bulletin	11.8% (53)	8.5% (38)	14.1% (63)	21.7% (97)	38.6% (173)	0.9% (4)	4.5% (20)	448
Feel prepared for appointments with my advisor	8.3% (37)	8.7% (39)	14.3% (64)	23.2% (104)	39.7% (178)	4.5% (20)	1.3% (6)	448
Utilize a plan of study for program completion	9.4% (42)	6.7% (30)	13.0% (58)	26.4% (118)	41.4% (185)	1.1% (5)	2.0% (9)	447
Understand the advising structure of Minnesota State Mankato (i.e. knowing where to go for different services on campus for academic needs such as declaring or changing a major, registering for classes, applying for graduation, program information, etc.)	10.7% (48)	18.6% (83)	14.1% (63)	23.9% (107)	29.1% (130)	1.1% (5)	2.5% (11)	447

answered question   450

skipped question   94

PAGE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. My program is in the College of:

		Response Percent	Response Count
Allied Health & Nursing		20.0%	88
Arts & Humanities		11.4%	50
Business		14.4%	63
Education		15.7%	69
Extended Learning		0.0%	0
Science Engineering & Technology		18.9%	83
Social & Behavioral Sciences		22.3%	98
Undecided		3.0%	13
Do not know		1.1%	5
	answered question		439
	skipped question		105

2. The resource I go to for most of my advising needs is:

		Response Percent	Response Count
My faculty advisor in my major		65.5%	251
Other faculty member (Not my assigned advisor)		23.5%	90
First Year Experience Office		1.8%	7
College SRC (Student Relation Coordinator)		1.3%	5
Center for Academic Success		1.3%	5
College Advising Center		5.7%	22
College Access Program		0.8%	3
	Other (please specify) Show replies		75
		answered question	383
		skipped question	161

4. Did you begin college at Minnesota State Mankato or elsewhere?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Started here		63.0%	276
Started elsewhere		37.0%	162
		answered question	438
		skipped question	106

6. What is your current classification at Minnesota State Mankato?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Freshman		10.2%	44
Sophomore		19.4%	84
Junior		22.7%	98
Senior		46.3%	200
Graduate Student		1.4%	6
	Other (please specify) Show replies		13
	answered question		432
	skipped question		112

10. How many times do you meet with your advisor per year?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Never		13.5%	59
Once		23.6%	103
Twice		32.6%	142
Three times		14.4%	63
Four times		7.3%	32
Five or more times		8.5%	37
	answered question		436
	skipped question		108

11. How could your advising experience be improved?

		Response Count
	Show replies	241
	answered question	241
	skipped question	303

Open-ended comments were coded by MSSA Student Representative, Sarah Koenen.

Idea	Count	Description
Personal Advising	106	Would like advisors to know students on a personal level, check on their progress, more prepared for meetings, friendly, show care, show willing and interest in helping
More knowledgeable	51	Better understand transfers, transcripts, general education requirements, graduation requirements, courses required and suggested for major, double majors/minors
Time	38	Unable to set up appointments with advisors due to scheduling, appointments too short, students are left waiting outside offices during office hours
General Information	32	Students do not know where to go to get general information, advisors are unwilling to provide general information about advising, program, etc.
E-mails	21	Not answering e-mails.
Advisor Initiative	19	More advisor initiative to contact students and set up appointments
Rude	16	Meeting with the advisor is an uncomfortable experience
Where to go.	16	My advisor does not know where to send me for different resources. Where do I go in the summer?
Non-faculty/ professional advisors	15	
Mandatory	6	Make advising appointments mandatory
Advisor changes	8	The advisor left the university (permanently or temporary), students were not notified
Better communication with 7700 France	2	
My advisor is good	19	
It's individual/ what you make of it	2	
It's alright	4	

Commencement Survey

Another way of understanding advisees' experiences is to review results from the commencement survey, launched two months ago. The survey asks for a positive experience, a frustration and a suggestion for improvement. As of early March, there were 421 responses. To summarize:

The Positive:

There were many glowing comments along the lines of "…such a positive influence on me. He was a great role model, I hope to be as inspiring as him one day;" "incredibly patient;" "understanding;" "approachable, open and understanding;" "finding my path;" "always there for me no matter what;" "easy to talk to." There were lots of kudos for getting students involved with organizations, student research, and help with internships and writing recommendations for jobs. There were a lot of comments such as "…without this advisor, I never would have been able to graduate." Approximately 100 respondents indicated they experienced no advising frustrations at all, including one statement from a student noting "…all the advisors were perfect."

The Frustrations:

On the other hand there were 35 responses along the lines of "I never had a good advising experience so I can't share one." 43 responses supported the general theme that advisors "…seem too busy with their own obligations and felt like they didn't have time for you…" Many discussed perceptions of getting the run-around and several mentioned not graduating on time because of misinformation. Students shared frustration about having to visit multiple offices and receiving different responses from different people.

Suggestions:

      About one-quarter of the respondents didn't have any suggestions or said advising was fine. The remaining responses brought up similar themes, including "have more advisors, train them better so they don't misinform the student, care more, and don't be so rushed…"

Summary from the commencement survey:

      On the positive end of the spectrum, the majority of students seemed satisfied with advising. Studying the commencement survey made it quite clear that a large number of individual advisors are regarded with great fondness and feelings of connectedness. However, many students clearly communicated issues with advisor availability, feeling that their advisors are rushing them and feeling too often, that their advisors are unable or unwilling to help them. Too often students feel that their advisors are uninformed. Often there are comments that indicate the students feel like their advisor doesn't know or doesn't care about their academic progress.

Advisor Survey Results

The Advisor Survey was launched by Jeff Henline in Instructional Technology in January and was sent to 840 advisors. Specifically, it was delivered to Student Relations Coordinators, CAP (College Access Program) advisors, CAS (Center for Academic Success) advisors, and FYE (First Year Experience) advisors, as well as faculty. They were asked to talk about themselves, their training for advising, and their impressions of their advisees.

PAGE:

1. Am knowledgeable about:

Please use this scale: 1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neutral 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know	Response Count
Curricular Requirements for general education courses	5.3% (7)	11.5% (15)	16.8% (22)	35.9% (47)	29.0% (38)	1.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	131
Curricular Requirements for the major	3.1% (4)	2.3% (3)	2.3% (3)	8.4% (11)	78.6% (103)	5.3% (7)	0.0% (0)	131
Curricular requirements for the minor	3.8% (5)	6.1% (8)	6.9% (9)	18.3% (24)	50.4% (66)	13.0% (17)	1.5% (2)	131
Prerequisites students must follow	3.1% (4)	5.4% (7)	7.7% (10)	23.8% (31)	58.5% (76)	1.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	130
Graduation Requirements	3.1% (4)	6.1% (8)	13.0% (17)	35.9% (47)	40.5% (53)	1.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	131
Campus Resources	1.5% (2)	8.4% (11)	22.9% (30)	48.1% (63)	17.6% (23)	1.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	131
Internships	7.6% (10)	13.0% (17)	19.8% (26)	23.7% (31)	28.2% (37)	7.6% (10)	0.0% (0)	131
Current job market	6.1% (8)	7.6% (10)	13.7% (18)	29.0% (38)	39.7% (52)	3.8% (5)	0.0% (0)	131
Research opportunities	6.2% (8)	7.0% (9)	24.0% (31)	32.6% (42)	27.9% (36)	2.3% (3)	0.0% (0)	129
Graduate schools	5.4% (7)	5.4% (7)	16.3% (21)	31.8% (41)	37.2% (48)	3.9% (5)	0.0% (0)	129
						answered question		131
						skipped question		1

2. I was trained to do advising

		Response Percent	Response Count
by the Student Relation Coordinator in my college		30.0%	36
Other faculty member		22.5%	27
My university mentor		2.5%	3
Self Study		**31.7%**	38
Not at all		13.3%	16
	Other (please specify) Show replies		16
	answered question		120
	skipped question		12

3. Changing gears, my sense of my advisees is that they:

Please use this scale: 1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neutral 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know	Response Count
Understand current policies, procedures, and requirements and the consequences for failing to meet them	8.4% (11)	28.2% (37)	**33.6% (44)**	24.4% (32)	3.8% (5)	0.0% (0)	1.5% (2)	131
Are aware of the support services on campus such as the Counseling Center	7.8% (10)	**32.6% (42)**	31.0% (40)	20.2% (26)	3.9% (5)	0.0% (0)	4.7% (6)	129
Are aware of various academic services such as tutoring in the Center of Academic Success	7.7% (10)	**31.5% (41)**	30.0% (39)	22.3% (29)	6.2% (8)	0.0% (0)	2.3% (3)	130
Understand how to use the academic bulletin	9.2% (12)	23.8% (31)	**31.5% (41)**	28.5% (37)	6.2% (8)	0.0% (0)	0.8% (1)	130
Are prepared for appointments with me	9.3% (12)	21.7% (28)	24.8% (32)	**33.3% (43)**	10.1% (13)	0.8% (1)	0.0% (0)	129
Utilize a plan of study for program completion	7.0% (9)	20.9% (27)	22.5% (29)	**27.9% (36)**	18.6% (24)	3.1% (4)	0.0% (0)	129
Understand the advising structure of Minnesota State Mankato (i.e. knowing where to go for different services on campus for academic needs such as declaring or changing a major, registering for classes, applying for graduation, program information, etc.)	10.8% (14)	**36.2% (47)**	33.1% (43)	15.4% (20)	4.6% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	130
							answered question	131
							skipped question	1

PAGE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. I do advising through (indicate one):

		Response Percent	Response Count
Allied Health & Nursing		20.3%	26
Arts & Humanities		18.0%	23
Business		5.5%	7
Education		6.3%	8
Extended Learning		0.0%	0
Science Engineering & Technology		18.0%	23
Social & Behavioral Sciences		23.4%	30
Center for Academic Success		0.8%	1
Student Support Services		0.0%	0
I am a librarian who advises students whose majors are undeclared		3.1%	4
FYEX Office		3.1%	4
I am a Student Relations Coordinator		1.6%	2
	Other (please specify) Show replies		5
	answered question		128
	skipped question		4

Number of Advisees Responses from Advisors:

3	80	100+	70
38	~30	22	30
25	100-150	20	4-8
12	9	200	25
20	15	15	25
53	4	33	20
85	40	Unlimited	18
30-40	30	??	20
35 minors	30	A lot	25
Varies	20+	25	75-80
46	74	18	45
40	60	7-9	8
140	158	50+	80
30-40	70	40+	8
22	10	51	8
~50	59	125+	35
50-60	70	30	30
4	40	28-20	7
160	80	60+	43
25	20	30	10
70	24	80+	20+
75	10-15	20-25	20
25	10	80+	30
12	100	20	48
Many	10	52	

6. How many times do you meet with most of your advisees per year?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Zero	2.4%	3
Once	26.8%	34
Twice	39.4%	50
Three times	22.0%	28
Four times	5.5%	7
Five or more times	3.9%	5
	answered question	127
	skipped question	5

7. Also, how many times do you communicate (through group emails or individual emails, for example) with most of your advisees per year?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Zero		10.3%	13
Once		11.9%	15
Twice		19.8%	25
Three times		17.5%	22
Four times		14.3%	18
Five or more times		26.2%	33
		answered question	126
		skipped question	6

8. Do your advisees need a code in order to register if they have less than 24 or more than 60 credits or because your students have mandatory advising in your department?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		37.3%	47
No		62.7%	79
		answered question	126
		skipped question	6

10. Do you feel the following are potential barriers to effective advising?

Please use this scale: 1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neutral 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Don't Know	Response Count
Registration technology	19.4% (25)	30.2% (39)	19.4% (25)	19.4% (25)	9.3% (12)	0.0% (0)	2.3% (3)	129
Lack of centralized advising place, administrator or website	11.5% (15)	23.8% (31)	19.2% (25)	25.4% (33)	17.7% (23)	0.0% (0)	2.3% (3)	130
Knowledge of referral resources	4.7% (6)	25.2% (32)	33.1% (42)	25.2% (32)	7.9% (10)	0.8% (1)	3.1% (4)	127
Advising Load too heavy	8.5% (11)	13.8% (18)	28.5% (37)	21.5% (28)	25.4% (33)	0.8% (1)	1.5% (2)	130
Meetings with advisees too infrequent	7.7% (10)	21.5% (28)	30.8% (40)	24.6% (32)	13.1% (17)	0.0% (0)	2.3% (3)	130
MSU advising info difficult to find	8.5% (11)	34.1% (44)	19.4% (25)	24.0% (31)	8.5% (11)	0.8% (1)	4.7% (6)	129
Don't feel current about changing policies	8.6% (11)	33.6% (43)	18.8% (24)	30.5% (39)	7.0% (9)	0.8% (1)	0.8% (1)	128
Students are unprepared for meetings	6.2% (8)	24.8% (32)	25.6% (33)	32.6% (42)	10.9% (14)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	129
Lack of rewards for quality advising make it a lower priority	11.6% (15)	18.6% (24)	18.6% (24)	20.2% (26)	24.8% (32)	2.3% (3)	3.9% (5)	129
Lack of time	3.1% (4)	16.5% (21)	19.7% (25)	34.6% (44)	22.0% (28)	2.4% (3)	1.6% (2)	127
					Others (please specify) Show replies			23
					answered question			130
					skipped question			2

Comments (number of similar responses in parentheses):

- Students who are uninformed/unable to work on figuring stuff out on their own (2)
- Lack of time (2)
- Students who are unprepared for meetings (2)
- Impatient students who don't understand the full range of faculty responsibilities
- Bad bulletin/hard to find information I need
- Lack of rewards for advising
- Need better mechanism for communicating with my advisees
- Some students are disrespectful
- Lack of rewards item really hits home. There is no recognition of individuals who really spend time with their advisees.
- Lack of centralized office, lack of mechanism to require student advising.
- Better registration system to take care of pre-reqs.
- Lack of advising training

The following are cross tabulations to study patterns by colleges:

Changing gears, my sense of my advisees is that they:

Please use this scale: 1) Strongly Disagree, 2) Diagree, 3) Neutral, 4) Agree, 5) Strongly Agree

I do advising through (indicate one):	Understand current policies, procedures, and requirements and the consequences for failing to meet them	Are aware of the support services on campus such as the Counseling Center	Are aware of various academic services such as tutoring in the Center of Academic Success	Understan d how to use the academic bulletin	Are prepared for appointment s with me	Utilize a plan of study for program completion	Understand the advising structure of Minnesota State Mankato (i.e. knowing where to go for different services on campus for academic needs such as declaring or changing a major, registering for classes, applying for graduation, program information, etc.)
Allied Health & Nursing	2.80	2.63	2.96	3.04	3.08	3.50	3.08
Arts & Humanities	2.83	2.90	2.78	3.00	2.96	2.86	2.52
Business	2.33	2.43	2.00	2.17	2.71	3.86	2.57
Center for Academic Success/ Student Relations Coordinator	4.00	4.00	4.50	4.25	3.50	3.50	3.50
Education	3.00	3.14	3.25	3.00	4.13	4.13	3.50
FYEX/Librarian who	2.64	2.91	3.00	2.73	2.82	3.00	2.27
Science Engineering &	3.10	2.65	2.80	3.05	3.23	3.64	2.64
Social & Behavioral	2.86	2.74	2.74	2.89	3.12	3.04	2.33
Total	2.88	2.79	2.88	2.97	3.13	3.34	2.69

As an advisor I feel I do a good job of:

Please use this scale: 1) Strongly Disagree, 2) Diagree, 3) Neutral, 4) Agree, 5) Strongly Agree

I do advising through (indicate one):	Explaining to my advisee what materials are needed before advising appointments	Communicating to my advisees when to set up appointments	Being available for a sufficient amount of time	Being respectful of students' time	Being a valuable asset to my advisees	Knowing when to refer to another department or office
Allied Health & Nursing	3.92	4.20	4.56	4.56	4.43	4.52
Arts & Humanities	3.77	4.17	4.35	4.39	4.04	4.48
Business	3.00	3.71	4.14	4.57	4.43	4.43
Center for Academic Success/ Student Relations Coordinator	4.33	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Education	4.75	4.25	4.75	4.43	4.86	4.86
FYEX/Librarian who Advises/Other	3.78	3.80	4.45	4.55	4.00	4.50
Science Engineering & Technology	4.10	4.32	4.18	4.41	4.48	4.68
Social & Behavioral	3.78	4.00	4.25	4.61	4.68	4.63
Total	3.89	4.14	4.38	4.52	4.43	4.59

After the quantitative part of the survey, faculty/staff advisors were asked to provide feedback via open-ended questions. Responses, at the end, indicate how often a similar response occurred.

1. **Name three strengths as you see them (number of similar responses in parentheses):**

- SRCs and Advising Centers wonderful   (59)

- Orientation is wonderful (l4)
- Caring people (12)
- Office of First Year Experience wonderful   (12)
- DARS is wonderful   (8)
- Registrar/Registration is wonderful (3)
- Bulletins online (3)
- Registration code (3)
- Learning community (2)
- SBS student handbook
- Bulletin descriptions are clear and easy to follow
- This…researching needs

Despite the fact that this question was looking for strengths, some respondents saw this as an opportunity to

point out some challenges. The following responses specifically outline those challenges.

- In our college (CAHN) we need a centralized advising office for undergraduates. 100 advisees is too much to handle with other responsibilities
- We are so overwhelmed with advising in our program that I cannot think of any strength other than the fact that faculty care about students and their progress
- I honestly don't see any strength. I have learned on my own how to advise
- MSU doesn't do well in terms of advising, individual faculty members do (some don't) but it is not MSU.

2. **What are MSU's greatest challenges in providing advising? (number of similar responses in parentheses)**

- Students unmotivated to figure things out/ don't understand advising (26)
- Lack of a Central location/website/person (19)
- Too many advisees (16)
- Lack of updating kinds of training for advisors (14)
- Too busy advisors (13)
- Transfer issues (9)
- Lack of training for advisors (9)
- No rewards for advising (9)
- Poor advising leads to fewer loads, so faculty can do things that get more recognition and reward. (6)
- Registration system (5)
- Lack of Consistency (4)
- Students can't figure out major
- System too complicated in general (3)
- Not enough mandatory advising mechanisms (3)
- Uninformed students (3)
- Temp faculty don't know enough (3)
- Class availability
- Non-trad needs for evening appts
- Student no-shows for appointments

What are MSU's greatest challenges in providing advising? CONTINUED (number of similar responses in parentheses)

- In my own field, advising incorporates my college and the College of Education – this means some complicated negotiations and I do not know how to better meet student/ faculty needs without a specific advisor for these needs.
- Bogus 120 credit curriculum changes. Foolish administration eliminated programs instead of administrators.

3. Articulate One Idea for Improving Advising on Campus:

- Centralized advising (10)
- More staff devoted to advising (10)
- Advising training (8)
- Rewards/recognition/load for advising (7)
- Normative behavior for students outlined for pre-appointment advising study DARS, thought about classes, etc. (5)
- Better registration system to deal with prereqs more effectively (3)
- Facilitate mechanism for more easily being able to get in touch with advisees (2)
- Consider advising short course for all students (2)
- Leave the advising the academic departments; the idea of centralized advising is absurd. We're the ones who know how best to advise students in their majors.
- Advising as part of tenure process
- More faculty
- Full-time departmental advisor
- Buy Banner
- Two-year curriculum cycle would make things less confusing. It is tough when things change every year.
- Interactive website that allowed students to develop their plan of study and track their coursework over time.
- Standing Committee formed to be responsible for updating advisors.
- Special advisor for students dealing with COE, and the thing they're going to teach.
- More fair distribution of advisees
- Make it mandatory

4. **Name one thing you're uncomfortable with, if anything:**

- Personal counseling (6)
- Transfer decisions/transfer credits/ all matter transfer (5)
- Advising regarding general education classes (3)
- Dealing with FYE students who are assigned to come see me but are unprepared. (2)
- Writing letters in support of their continuation after they've been put on probation (2)
- Telling a student that perhaps they're not really college material (2)
- Financial aid (2)
- Telling them they've had their financial aid pulled because of their grades
- Suspension process
- If uncomfortable with an area or topic, I refer.
- Gen Eds need to be simplified. Writing intensive courses do nothing to teach the process and product related to academic writing.
- Advising in areas other than my own.
- Telling a student they should choose another major, they're in over their heads.

- Permitting a student into my class. Unclear policies and procedures.
- Suggesting to a student they need the services of the Center for Academic Success.
- Making a recommendation for the Counseling Center, knowing there's such a long wait.
- I'm uncomfortable attempting to prepare students for the dismal economy created by an idiotic Bush administration.
- The College of Education/Area of teaching advising
- They're responsible for their academic plan, not me.
- Minors

5. Does your supervisor/Dean ask you to assess your services as an advisor? Does it impact how you advise?

- No (37)
- As part of article 22 (9)
- I have done this but more from my own desire to know about how my advising is working, and less that someone else have asked me to. Yes, it does. But I tend to get low response rates so it's hard to generalize.
- No I think the assumption is that we are/would do a good job. I don't think my colleagues place equal emphasis on doing the same quality job.
- No, doesn't matter, I do the best I can anyway.
- I've never been asked to assess my services. There are no clear standards of what good advising is, and frankly, there are no incentives to be good at it…all that happens is that I get more students requesting me instead of their old, not-as-good advisor, which puts a heavy burden on my time.
- Yes, sure it does.
- The Dean does not ask, and assessing advising would be useful but it would be very time consuming and it would be biased. Students who don't get what they want when they want it will never be happy and they'll take that out during the assessment.
- No, I haven't been asked to assess myself.
- Some deans have, some haven't.
- This has not been requested of me, but I have few advisees and they are very specific to a certain discipline.
- Yes. No.
- No. I do feel that unhappy students will report to the Dean though so there is pressure to advise well.
- No. this is never considered in workload or student outcomes.
- Nope and I don't think this really impacts how I advise—for me I assess how well I serve students, not administration.
- Yes, but the Dean really does not appear interested in our advising concerns.
- No but they should and then they should follow up with someone from my advisees as a reference.
- Never been asked to assess/evaluate my advising skills/competencies.
- No, this does not impact how I advise. My philosophy is if students come to me I work hard to help them. I do not, however, "babysit" them by sending emails and reminders. I think they are adults and need to learn to be proactive about using the resources they have been given.
- Sort of, but since no help is given by the Dean it is not a productive discussion.
- No…which is one reason why we should have course advising go to an advisor, not a faculty member.
- I already do it and would whether they cared or not; it certainly isn't a big part of the 5 "equal" criteria.
- No one assesses my advising. I'm not sure anyone cares.
- No, but they should. It would not impact how I advise, because I advise to serve the students (not as a friend, but as a faculty mentor).
- I am encouraged to take advantage of Continuing Ed provided by my college's SRC. It is positive and proactive.
- No, but I do assess my advising each year.

- No, this is not really an issue for us.

6.   Structural recommendations

- Centralized (4)
- Equitable dividing of advisees (3)
- Mandatory advisor training (2)
- Mandatory advising (2)
- Better registration system for pre-reqs (2)
- Designated advising week each semester
- Put writing intensive courses in the major
- Provide better tracking, monitoring and resources for students who are admitted with admission deficiencies.
- Better mechanism for communicating with advisees
- Thank you for asking!
- Training focusing on common problems
- Reduce Gen Ed to 40
- Eliminate cultural diversity
- Reinstate printing of Gen Ed handbooks
- Differentiate academic from career advising
- Clarify if advisors should be IFO or MSUAASF
- Survey mainly focused on undergraduate advising, yet graduate level advising and thesis advising is extremely time intensive.
- ALL FACULTY SHOULD ADVISE (all caps in the original). Why some of my colleagues get away without advising is beyond me. I need my advising load reduced so I can continue to do it well.
- Develop a tutoring/support system that matches the rigor of our more difficult programs
- Every major should have a list of suggested classes
- An Advising Center for CAHN
- Administrator for Advising
- Online tutorials for advisors
- Perhaps a once a year clearance, especially for freshmen and sophomores would help get people in the habit of checking in.
- Updating advisors
- Educate advisees on how to use DARS, etc.
- Evaluate faculty workloads to provide more equity
- The whole issue of if you do it well, you're rewarded with more work and the people who do it badly or are curmudgeonly get off the hook because their assigned advisors go to someone nicer.
- Communicate the policies to students and faculty and hold them responsible for knowing them and enforcing them. Too many students want to appeal something or keep talking to another person until they get what they want or exhaust all other options. No enforcing policies, prerequisites, etc. consumes various professionals' time and is unfair to those students who do take responsibility for their actions.
- You get what you reward.
- A collective social gathering of advisors and advisees at the start of each semester and an encouraged informal gathering of the same at the end of each semester by department.
- It may make sense to better locate FYE in central campus and use that office as a referral to other advising services on campus.

Comparison Advisor/Advisee Survey Results

Academic Advising: Advisor/Student Rating Comparison

	Advisor As an advisor I feel I do a good job of:	Student My advisor:	Gap Difference between student and advisor rating
Lets me know what materials are needed before our appointments	3.89	3.19	-0.70
Encourages me to set up advising appointments	4.14	3.07	-1.08
Is accessible for sufficient amount of time	4.38	3.47	-0.92
Is respectful of my time	4.52	3.69	-0.82
Serves as are source that benefits me	4.43	3.44	-0.99
Refers me to another department or office	4.59	3.08	-1.51

Scale: 1) Strongly Disagree, 2) Diagree, 3) Neutral, 4) Agree, 5) Strongly Agree

These are mean scores. A T-test analysis was performed and all the above were statistically significant.

Academic Advising Knowledge: Advisor/Student Rating Comparison

	Advisor I am knowledgeable about:	Student My advisor demonstrates knowledge about:	Gap Difference between student and advisor rating
Curricular Requirements for my general education courses	3.72	3.66	-0.07
Curricular Requirements for my major	4.65	4.09	-0.57
Curricular requirements for my minor	4.21	3.26	-0.95
Prerequisites that I must follow	4.30	3.79	-0.52
Graduation Requirements	4.06	3.72	-0.34
Campus Resources	3.72	3.50	-0.22
Internships	3.55	3.31	-0.24
Current job market	3.92	3.37	-0.54
Research opportunities	3.69	3.37	-0.33
Graduate schools	3.91	3.38	-0.53

Scale: 1) Strongly Disagree, 2) Diagree, 3) Neutral, 4) Agree, 5) Strongly Agree

All but the graduation requirements, campus resources and internships findings were statistically significant at a .50 level.

Academic Advising: Advisor/Student Rating Comparison

	Advisor My sense of my advisees is that they:	Student As a student I:	Gap Difference between advisor and student rating
Understand current policies, procedures, and requirements and the consequences for failing to meet them	2.88	3.92	-1.04
Am aware of the support services on campus such as the Counseling Center	2.79	3.62	-0.82
Am aware of various academic services such as tutoring in the Center of Academic Success	2.88	3.81	-0.93
Understand how to use the academic bulletin	2.97	3.71	-0.74
Feel prepared for appointments with my advisor	3.13	3.82	-0.69
Utilize a plan of study for program completion	3.34	3.86	-0.53
Understand the advising structure of Minnesota State Mankato (i.e. knowing where to go for different services on campus for academic needs such as declaring or changing a major, registering for classes, applying for graduation, program information, etc.)	2.69	3.44	-0.75

Scale: 1) Strongly Disagree, 2) Diagree, 3) Neutral, 4) Agree, 5) Strongly Agree

Again, all of the above were statistically significant according to the T-test analysis performed.

Clearly, faculty *and* students see themselves as more knowledgeable than they perceive the other half of the equation in advising. About one-third of the student respondents strongly agreed that they understood the system: the bulletin, the resources, the mechanisms. The advisors are not as confident about their level of understanding. On an emotional level, advisees feel rushed, subject to uncaring and sometimes misguided advice. They want to feel cared about and they want to get their answers when they need them. Students want the advisor to take responsibility for scheduling the meeting, perhaps because they understand the faculty's time constraints but also perhaps because they don't understand yet the balance of responsibilities between advisor and advisee. Many advisors feel that they *are* caring, but they feel overwhelmed with responsibilities and feel the lack of time, training, and updating for effective advising. Sometimes advisors feel that students are unprepared. Students don't always come in having studied the bulletin, considered the possibilities and weighed

the alternatives. Many faculty would like some kind of centralized place to look for answers, an ongoing training program, and an easier way to contact their advisees.

Comparative Structure Study Results

Advising administrators at each IPEDS peer-institution were identified, and a list of questions was distributed to all. A total of fourteen advising administrators were contacted. Seven responded, and the following provides an overview of their responses to questions.

1. *Does your institution use a decentralized model (i.e., advising centers across campus; some professional advising, some faculty advising), or a centralized model (i.e., advising done in one primary location)?*

Most institutions indicated that advising is largely a decentralized process. Some institutions further explained that they use essentially a "mixed-model" approach – where students in some departments are advised by faculty; some use professional advisors; some use peer advisors. Western Illinois University seems the closest match to the University in that advising is more centralized in some academic colleges than others, and even within one college, advising is divided further – with some departments relying exclusively on professional advisors, and others relying exclusively on faculty advisors.

2. *With regard to specific academic advising, does your institution only use professional advisors, or only faculty advisors? Or does the institution use a combination of the two? (If combination, please describe how each is used.)*

Again, responses varied, with many institutions reporting that they use a combination of faculty and professional advisors. Some institutions determine which type of advising students receive based on students' major status. Others designate who will do advising based on students' major and the number of credits they have completed. For example, at Eastern Illinois State University, the Academic Advising Center (AAC) advises students:

…who are undeclared, new incoming freshmen and students who have not completed the requirements for their major. Most students remain in the Academic Advising Center until they have completed 15 credits. The AAC holds Early Childhood and Elementary School majors until they complete 45 credits

and Basic Skills and attend a teacher's meeting. The AAC holds Psychology majors until the Intro to

Psychology course is passed with a C and they receive a C in college algebra…

St. Cloud State reports that professional advisors are used for particular academic programs and

undecided. Peer advisors are used in two departments (one uses peer advisors WITH teaching faculty), while

most others use a teaching-faculty advising model.

3.   *If faculty advise, is advising considered in the tenure/promotion process?*

Three of the institutions reported that technically advising is part of faculty-contracts. However, while it

is required, advising does not appear to be rewarded or recognized in any particular way – it is simply expected.

Two additional respondents indicate that advising is not part of the tenure process or appears to be a very minor

consideration. One reports that he's unsure whether it's considered, but points out that each department does

have a "lead" for the department's advising process. Western Illinois explains that faculty teaching loads are

adjusted based on the volume of students assigned to an advisor. This model merits further consideration,

particularly given previously shared survey responses that support some additional assistance to allow faculty

more time to allocate to advising.

4.   *Is there a training program/certificate for faculty doing academic advising? Who offers this training?*

Many institutions reported that their advising area offers training. However, some followed this

statement with an acknowledgement that training is not required, and/or few people attend. Others indicated a

willingness to provide training, but only if asked. Another stated that the training program is not very organized.

Missouri State University, on the other hand, offers a Master Advisor Program (MAP) that has been

recognized at a national-level for being an "Outstanding Institutional Advising Program," and as a result, has

been featured in two best practices monographs since then. It was created initially in 1995 to increase the

quality of academic advising by "systematically providing faculty and professional staff advisors with

appropriate training, evaluation and recognition". Since then, creation of multiple advising education programs

have been developed – some provide on-going training, and others target the specific advising needs (i.e.,

advising for new advisors, advising information for departmental secretaries). More information about the MAP

can be found at http://www.missouristate.edu/advising/10704.htm.

> 5. *How is information regarding academic policies/procedures/curriculum updates/etc. shared with advisors across campus?*

Many institutions use electronic means of updating advisors – including email and listservs in particular.

Some mention intentionally developed updates that come at key times during the academic year – for example,

after new curricular changes are approved, or at an annual academic advising forum event.

> 6. *Do advising center(s) exist on campus? Do centers have responsibility for majors/colleges, general advising, and/or undecided advising?*

Similar to question #1, responses here indicate that different models are used at different institutions.

Interestingly, centralized advising services often exist for undecided students, as well as students who select

majors in the College of Business and perhaps those in the College of Education.

> 7. *Is there a centralized process for students to declare majors (one location or one form that all students submit to declare majors), or a decentralized process (majors declared in the individual colleges, individual offices, etc.)?*

Four of the six institutions responding to this question indicate that the procedure is centralized,

occurring in either a registrar's office or advising center. Two institutions explain that the major-declaration

form/process requires approval from both the new and old departments, presumably to keep records updated.

> 8. *Is advising mandatory – for all students/majors? If it is mandatory, how is this enforced? Or is advising only required for certain student populations (first-year students? Undecided students? Other student populations?) Or is advising not required at all?*

All institutions report some form of required advising. Many require advising based on specific student

characteristics, including: major (i.e., math, engineering), lack-of-major (undecided students), class status

(based on number of earned credits), and academic standing (academic probation status).

> 9. *Are advisors required to keep notes of advisee meetings? Is there a sense of liability associated with advising?*

Three institutions use electronic means of keeping notes on particular advisee appointments, and two of

these appear to interface with the larger campus Student Information System. Others indicate some note-taking,

but do not specify if notes are electronic or physical – however, because these notes are later "passed on" to

another area (when students change major, for example), these notes may be actual physical files. Most indicate that liability does not appear to be a concern, and two explain how notes may actually reduce liability to an extent – since the notes serve as documentation that an error was <u>not</u> made.

10. Does academic advising fall under Academic Affairs or Student Affairs/Development?

Five of the seven respondents explain that advising is part of the Academic Affairs structure at their institutions. One notes that Academic and Student Affairs were recently collapsed into one unit, and that no one is specifically assigned to oversee advising. Another is part of Student Services and Enrollment Management.

Together, information from institutions was used to inform recommendations that the task force developed, which is shared later in this document.

V.   Discussion

There seemed to be convergence of certain themes in the different documents. The NSSE, Noel-Levitz, 2006 advisor/advisee survey results, the 2008 MSSA survey, and Task Force surveys, (both the one distributed by the Task Force, and the commencement survey) all indicate a high value placed on advising. In addition, they point to similar issues from the students' perspectives. Many students feel advisors lack:

- knowledge
- approachability
- caring
- time for the advisees

Further, the advisors seem concerned about their lack of these same things. In a situation where both parties share responsibility, it is heartening to understand they share the same concerns. Faculty want initial training as well as means for getting updates about advising, they want time to do the job adequately and an equitable number of advisees. They would like to feel that students are prepared to take responsibility for their academic career and come ready to discuss alternatives at meetings the students set up.

Survey responses point to potential challenges. For example, the fact that 15 percent of student respondents never met with their advisors seems like an issue, even if a few students felt they could self-advise

without problems. Advisors can offer curricular and career guidance to the next generation of people in their field and foster a sense of academic community in the here and now. Only 37 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that their advisors understood their graduation requirements. While students' low confidence in advisors knowledge about internships, job markets, research opportunities and graduate schools is problematic, their lack confidence in advisors' knowledge of graduation requirements seems a more urgent issue to address.

24 percent of student respondents indicate they seek advising from faculty members who are not their advisors. Faculty members report a certain amount of resentment when good advising leads to…more advising.   This is perhaps an issue without a successful answer, because students will always go to people who are seen as more empathic and faculty who are caring are not likely to turn a student away.

There was certain bitterness in some of the students' responses, such as "My advisor can be very short and make the appointment a little uncomfortable because it feels like it is a little inconvenient or unneeded." Or "I e-mailed and called my advisor and she never got back to me. I didn't want to keep bothering her so I set up a time with a different advisor. I have also talked to another person with the same advisor who had the same thing happen to her. That was very frustrating to have to wait around to see if she would e-mail or call me back and to never have a response from her." Examples of this theme also surfaced in commencement survey responses. "Seem too busy with their own obligations and felt like they didn't have time for you." "Professors being too busy and ignoring you."

Advisors, on the other hand, generally feel that some students are unprepared and unprofessional in their dealings with their advisors. Only 43 percent of advisors feel that students are prepared for their appointments. Comments like this were common: "Students do not come prepared for advising, they think they can just come in and their advisor will simply tell them everything they need to do...or even register for them; students need to take an online quiz or something similar on issues of university resources, access to registration, etc. Students also need to be more respectful."

Another point of interest emerged as Members reviewed the University's websites related to advising. When Members reviewed college advising websites, they found that some were less than helpful. One was a broken link for months. In addition, the University's website is not readily or effectively queried, making policies and procedures difficult to find. The "ask a question" link is a partial solution, but many campus constituents don't seem to know about it. There are many factors that make using the University's website unwieldy for both advisees and advisors. The University of Washington offers a model that may be worth emulating. Its primary page is above. Its headings include the following topics: Home, Freshman Basics, and For Transfer Students, Choosing a Major, Registering for Classes, Degree Planning, Opportunities, Help and Glossary. Websites linked from these headings are useful in that they address a specific audience, are easy to navigate, and their very presence says loudly that WE CARE ABOUT ADVISING.

The Task Force did not have enough time to delve into the issues raised by transfer and distance students and the Task Force would strongly urge the Administration to entrust these research projects to relevant parties.

The Task Force studied and revised a proposed Advising Mission. Members agreed that advising is a shared responsibility. The MSSA could perhaps take a role in encouraging students in understanding their responsibility and in helping them think through creating activities to complete before meeting with advisors,

goals to complete during their four years at the University, sponsor student panels open to all students, to RSO

heads, and to student leaders of all kinds that honestly talk about the pitfalls and pleasures of planning a

successful academic experience.   It would be very helpful to see what the MSSA is willing to commit to doing

in terms of helping students with advising tasks.

Another area worth exploring is the idea of developing a social marketing campaign that targets both

advisors and advisees. Social marketing is the systematic application of marketing, along with other concepts

and techniques, to achieve specific behavioral goals for a social good. The current surveys and previous surveys

suggest that MANY advisors feel that most people in their department and at the University sincerely care about

students and their academic experiences. It's worth exploring a marketing program to help everyone understand

that advising is something that many people on this campus value and want to do well and promote a normative

positive communication about doing advising well, seeking out information and behaving in ways that

strengthen the culture of good advising. On the flip side, it seems worth exploring the idea of being a good

advisee as well, preparing in advance by studying the catalog, looking at resources such as MN I-seek to

understand careers, and developing a 4-year plan to be used in consultation with the advisor in the meeting.

V.   Recommendations

Everything the Task Force has studied allows the following statements to be made with some confidence:

- Advising is being done very well by many caring faculty and staff;
- Advisees too often, however, feel rushed, misinformed, and badly treated;
- Advisors feel pressed for time, undertrained for advising, unable to find timely information for advising, and unrewarded for the challenging work of quality advising.

First and foremost, the Task Force cannot emphasize enough that advising is important to students,

valued by students, important for enrollment management, and a priority. The University, understandably, has

multiple priorities. However, Members stand by the belief that quality advising is of the highest priority, as it

helps students graduate, helps them feel good about their educational experience, and helps them feel a deeper

sense of community and well-being at our university. All of the research points to advising as a critical

component of a successful college experience. The following recommendations are based on that premise, in conjunction with the specific results documented earlier.

A. Minnesota State Student Association (MSSA) Assistance

The Task Force studied and revised a proposed Advising Mission. Members agreed that advising is a shared responsibility. The MSSA could perhaps take a role in encouraging students in understanding their responsibility and in helping them think through creating activities to complete before meeting with advisors, goals to complete during their four years at the University, sponsor student panels open to all students, to RSO heads, to student leaders of all kinds that honestly talk about the pitfalls and pleasures of planning a successful academic experience.   It would be very helpful to see what the MSSA is willing to commit to doing in terms of helping students with advising tasks.

B. Social Marketing Campaign

Another area worth exploring is the idea of developing a social marketing campaign that targets both advisors and advisees. Social marketing is the systematic application of marketing, along with other concepts and techniques, to achieve specific behavioral goals for a social good. The current surveys and previous surveys suggest that MANY advisors feel that the most people in their department and at the University sincerely care about students and their academic experiences. It's worth exploring a marketing program to help everyone understand that advising is something that many people on this campus value and want to do well and promote a normative positive communication about doing advising well, seeking out information and behaving in ways that strengthen the culture of good advising. On the flip side, it seems worth exploring the idea of being a good advisee as well, preparing in advance by studying the catalog, looking at resources such as MN I-Seek to understand careers, and developing a 4-year plan to be used in consultation with the advisor in the meeting.

C. Advising Website

As mentioned earlier, the University's web resources related to advising could be better tailored to meet different student populations' needs more effectively. Further, as a result of reviewing different institutional

advising models/structures, Members realized that the University's mixed-model is not altogether uncommon – with some areas offering centralized advising centers, while others rely more heavily on a decentralized (mostly faculty) advising model. Mixed-models allow institutions to make intentional, intelligent decisions about the use of their resources. However, mixed-models also present opportunities for greater confusion and dissatisfaction – as a changing student and faculty/staff populations do not always understand the complexities behind the different systems. Thus, the Task Force recommends that the University develop two distinct and separate audiences: students and advisors. University of Washington's website is a great place to start to find helpful organizational schemata, though they have a full-time webmaster. We will not have that luxury, in all probability, but something created with hard work and updated with great diligence would go a long way to helping both students and advisors.

To maximize its effectiveness, this site should be maintained on a regular basis to ensure that accurate information is being conveyed. This could be potentially under the purview of Dr. Claudia Tomany in her role as Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Studies or under the purview of Dr. David Jones in his role as Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. Kellian Clink would happily volunteer to assist with this and three student volunteers, (Sarah Koenen, Allison Wanzek & Christopher Prokop) have similarly indicated interest in developing such a site.

D.   Advising Loads

Another area of concern focuses on the different advising loads of faculty across campus. Faculty/staff responses to the survey indicate that faculty members are distinctly aware of the different loads that vary for a variety of reasons – including size of program, complexity of program, etc. However, one of the most troubling challenges associated with advising load is the simple recognition that the better advising an advisor provides, the more likely that (s)he will be "rewarded" with more students requesting his/her advising services (whether or not the individual is listed as a student's advisor-of-record). The Task Force recommends that the University

develop a system to reward quality advising – perhaps modeling it after a system at our sister-institution, Western Illinois State University, where teaching load is actually reduced based on the number of assigned advisees. Members recognize that this may be impossible, particularly given the current economic climate. In that case, recognition could occur through serious review/acknowledgment in the faculty professional development process, instead of being treated as a "taken-for-granted" task that it seems to be currently.

E. Advisor Training and Availability

Advisors could likely benefit from enhanced initial training as well as updating, as evidenced by faculty and student surveys. The Task Force's review of other institutions suggests that training is a concern at other campuses; however, it also revealed the presence of an established, nationally known advising training program – the Master Advisor Program (MAP) at Missouri State University. The Task Force recommends more extensive conversations with the current director of that program, to better understand the resources available from MAP – so that informed conversations about possible replication of a program that would meet the University needs could begin here. On a more prosaic level, advisors could benefit from some training on different technology fixes to existing problems, such as how to post their hours of availability on Outlook or some other mechanism, such as the software utilized by Brian Wasserman, that allows students to see availability and make an appointment. There are many intersecting technologies needed to advise well, and as they evolve, it becomes necessary to update advisors about these changes.

F. System for Advising Updates

Advising updates are another area of concern. The survey spoke to this quite emphatically. Currently, there is no structured system that allows for new information to be shared among academic advisors – with exception of regular Student Relations Coordinator meetings, and semi-regular Academic Advising Forum meetings. Sister institutions report using electronic means to share relevant updates with advisors – particularly at certain times of the academic year when information is updated. The Task Force recommends development of a means that

can provide bi-annual advising updates – related to advising policy/procedure/curriculum. This could be the aforementioned website, a listserv, or other communication mechanism.

G. Major Declaration Centralized

Many institutions that the Members reviewed use a centralized system for major declaration. Our current processes involve different steps in different programs. For example, in some colleges (Allied Health, Arts & Humanities, Social & Behavioral Sciences), students declare majors in the departments. In others (Business, Education, Science, Engineering & Technology), students go to the respective Advising Center. Because of the number of steps involved in adding a new major to the Integrated Student Record System (ISRS), this process can lead to human error – and no official major being logged in ISRS, which subsequently affects the accuracy of University data. The Task Force recommends a review of current major declaration processes, and current data about students' majors in attempt to better understand the scope of the possible benefits/costs that current decentralized major declaration model offers. In the meantime, the advising website proposed earlier could certainly detail accurate information about where students need to go to change majors.

H. Research on Registration Access Codes

Across campus, advising requirements vary greatly. Some students are required to meet with an academic advisor every semester, while other students make it through their entire degree program without ever consulting an advisor. Because "access codes" are a system that allows some departments (and FYE) to require academic advising, the University has a system that would be ripe for potential research (access codes requirement vs. non-access code requirements). Also, in light of the President's focus on increasing the University's graduation rate, the Task Force recommends that access codes and required advising merit further attention – to better understand the costs/benefits for students and advisors, and in particular how these do/do not impact student success.

I. Update Advising Technology

Develop, utilize and maintain advising technologies and useful applications. Both students and advisors need to be able to avail themselves of access to electronic advising tools, including DARS, USelect, Hobson's Retain and other ISRS features and advising services. Some technology services still need work; for example, the ISRS system needs to be able to interface effectively with DARS for transfer equivalencies. The current situation leads to many frustrations for transfer students who need to validate pre-requisite requirements. Faculty advisors would benefit from increased use and familiarity with tools to research issues, and better serve their advisees. The position proposed would be responsible for figuring out current technology and understanding developing technology and communicating the need for advisors to be in the loop about unfolding technological help pertinent resources.

J. Advising Referral Coordinator

All of the recommendations above may benefit from a centralized individual, who serves as an "advising expert" on campus – in the form of an advising referral coordinator. This position could provide many essential services, but would most often serve as a key communicator fulfilling multiple roles. For example, this individual could be charged with maintaining the advising website for students and advisors. Further, currently, the Registration Help Desk, under supervision of Deb Schulz, disseminates important registration/advising-related information once per semester, which provides some direction to students who may otherwise be confused. This position could fill a somewhat parallel role, focusing on communication about the University's different advising structures, important deadlines/events/related reminders, who also understands appropriate venues for advising referrals. (S)he could provide "advising referrals" in a central location to help answer simple advising questions that may ease some faculty/staff advisor load. This position could coordinate communication efforts to do the social marketing mentioned above. Perhaps (s)he could serve as an ex-officio member of UCAP, and the General Education/Diversity committee – and be responsible for drafting executive summaries at the end of each semester/academic year to keep advisors apprised of broad curricular changes.

Finally, this position may be able to focus assessment efforts related to advising – for example, the coordination of data collection about major declaration, access codes, etc. that were outlined above, or the collation of other advising data – in the Noel-Levitz, NSSE and commencement surveys.

Students and faculty both understand the time constraints problem at MSU, Mankato. The staff person needs to be fully versed in all of the colleges' advising structures, policies, and procedures and would, in collaboration with the SRC's and the supervisor, work with IT to have a dual-audience website. This website will have pertinent timely information to assist students, help them plan a 4-year program and help them understand where to go for academic or other help. It will also aid all advisors by making readily accessible pertinent and timely information. We feel that a supplemental full-time advising station advisor could provide quick answers to some questions, make referrals when appropriate and appointments when necessary in addition to having responsibility for the centralized advising website and doing general research about the needs of advisement on campus. The person in the position would perhaps be a non-voting member of UCAP and Gen Ed/Diversity, so as to understand unfolding policy changes. One of the underlying issues in all of the responses both from advisors and advisees is that the curriculum is quite complex and it is ever-changing.

Suggestions not studied but worth sharing. These were brainstorming we conjured along the way.

- A registration hold on students in their junior years until they are advised would be beneficial.
- Research project to compare students with mandatory advising experiences with those who have none.
- Use visual images in Venn diagram fashion to help students plan their graduations.
- Guidelines to help students know what to ask when they visit their advisors.
- Texting students during semesters with advising advice.
- Posters designed to invite study to help students be aware of advising information.
- A non-credit online course in advising (Desire2Learn) that students are automatically enrolled in.
- Use walls of campus bathroom stalls to post advising information for these captive audiences.
- Promote Residential Life participation in the advising promotion.
- Use the 'free" October day for advising and advisor training

- Consider an automatic *registration hold* on all entering freshmen (perhaps for the second semester to avoid hectic orientations), when students change advisors, and at the junior year. This hold would be removed after students receive access codes at meetings with their advisors. The committee found that these are crucial times for students to build relationships with their advisors.

- First-year major classes could incorporate creation of *four-year graduation plans* as a part of the curriculum. Even if students switch their courses of study, it is beneficial to gain familiarity with the planning process. The committee agreed that requiring a finished plan may be the incentive students need to create plans.

- Some students don't understand that they don't need to *switch bulletins* each year new ones are published.

- Students receive some information that explains the differences between participating in *graduation ceremonies versus actual graduation,* but efforts should be made to emphasize the difference.

- *Prerequisite graphs* for individual majors would be useful if placed in the *Bulletin.* Currently some departments have such graphs, which can be hard to find, and others do not have them at all. Students find great value in visual representations of their programs and believe the undergraduate bulletin would be a great place to implement this.

- Students would like a list of *recommended electives* for each program and which general education credits, if any, they fulfill. This could be included in an example transcript or 4-year plan for each department.

- The *registration system* needs to be coordinated with the DARS reports. It is often frustrating to students if the courses they have taken are not accounted for when the student registers for classes.

- The information about the bulletin presented at *orientation* is often lost. An online video about the information that students could access at any time would be beneficial.

- *Student-to-student advising* would be beneficial, however there would most likely be a lack of responsibility for when the students actually graduate.

- Some departments have specialized tutor rooms. In addition, some professors schedule time for the *tutor rooms*. Students have found that such times are beneficial not only for academic considerations, but also for them to interact with faculty members of their department at a more informal level. This interaction allows time for tutoring as well as conversations on how to approach their major and advising in general. Advising is also accomplished at the student-to-student level through tutor rooms.

- Junior year/3rd year workshops would be hard to instigate by departments. Perhaps the *Career Development Center* could have a session on what juniors need to do to apply and prepare for graduation. The 80-credit hold would also help third-year students learn more about graduation by meeting with their advisors.

- Students would benefit from helpful guidelines for consideration of and applying for professional or *graduate school*.

- Departments/colleges must be responsible for advisors receiving new information about *changes in programs*.

- There are currently few ways to give credit to excellent advisors and teachers. The problem of "all of the 'good advisors' receiving more advisees but little compensation" and "there are no benefits to being a 'good advisor'" have been presented. The CSET "Excellence in Teaching and Excellence in Academic Advising" *Awards* is one way to recognize a job well done.

- Colleges should have *undergraduate advisory boards* so other advisors will have opportunities to hear about college-wide problems and hear from leaders from various departments.

- Faculty members and department chairs need to make sure that official substitutions and equivalencies are submitted to the registrar's office.

- Student problems include working around required channels, not getting necessary contact information, and not applying for graduation in a timely fashion. Students need to take advantage of the pre-audit process available through the registrar's office.

- Provide a central advising center or table.

In conclusion, many very capable individuals contributed to the findings in this report, many of whom have been acknowledged in this report. We are grateful to all of these individuals for making the Task Force's job much easier. We especially wish to thank Lynn Akey and Jennie Cashin in Institutional Research for providing instrumental help throughout the Task Force's processes – offering much time and energy as surveys were developed and revised, results were analyzed, and information was collated. Steve Bohnenblast offered time and expertise when surveys were being developed, and revised. MSSA Academic Subcommittee members provided feedback on multiple occasions, which allowed Task Force members to refine our thoughts along the way. Task Force members appreciated meetings with those MSU Mankato administrators who were also reviewing advising-related issues, and welcomed the opportunity to share ideas and outline strategies to pursue this topic. Finally, the Task Force would like to graciously acknowledge MSSA for continuing to pursue advising as an issue of student concern, and the Faculty Association for help in establishing an informal Task Force to study this important issue.

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Appendix A – NSSE & Noel Levitz Summary

Academic Advising at Minnesota State University, Mankato
A Snapshot of Recent Institutional Survey Results with Comparison Group Data

"What do students report about Academic Advising at Minnesota State Mankato?"

Based on student ratings, academic advising is shown to be one of the most important aspects of our university as compared to other aspects such as campus life, service excellence, recruitment and financial aid, campus climate, registration effectiveness, etc. Other four-year public institutions also report that students at their universities find academic advising to be among the most important.

Within the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, academic advisors are evaluated on the basis of their *knowledge, competence,* and *personal concern for student success,* as well as on their *approachability.* The five items in Table 1 below summarize student-ratings of importance of and satisfaction with academic advising. The larger the performance gap, the greater the discrepancy between what students expect and their level of satisfaction with the current situation. The smaller the performance gap, the better the institution is doing at meeting student expectations.

Table 1
Academic Advising in Numbers1

	Spring 2006 Minnesota State Mankato			Spring 2008 Minnesota State Mankato			Spring 2010 Minnesota State Mankato			Spring 2010 National Four-Year Publics		
	Importance Rating[2]	Satisfaction Rating[2]	Gap	Importance Rating[2]	Satisfaction Rating[2]	Gap	Importance Rating[2]	Satisfaction Rating[2]	Gap	Importance Rating[2]	Satisfaction Rating[2]	Gap
My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major.	6.63	5.59	1.04	6.61	5.56	1.05	6.61	5.62	0.99	6.51	5.47	1.04
Major requirements are clear and reasonable.	6.53	5.25	1.28	6.54	5.35	1.19	6.48	5.20	1.28	6.41	5.34	1.07
My academic advisor is approachable.	6.53	5.28	1.25	6.48	5.37	1.11	6.47	5.44	1.03	6.43	5.43	1.00
My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.	6.43	5.02	1.41	6.41	5.12	1.29	6.27	5.24	1.03	6.28	5.21	1.07
My academic advisor helps me set goals to work toward.	6.16	4.73	1.43	6.23	4.85	1.38	6.01	4.79	1.22	6.10	4.93	1.17
Average Score	*6.46*	*5.17*	*1.29*	*6.45*	*5.25*	*1.20*	*6.37*	*5.26*	*1.11*	*6.35*	*5.28*	*1.07*

[1] Data extracted from Noel-Levitz® Student Satisfaction Inventory ™ Campus Report

[2] Student Importance rating and Student Satisfaction rating on 1-7 scale, 7 being very important or very satisfied

In addition, the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE) contains three items that provide insight into first-year and senior student experiences with academic advising. Table 2 provides a summary of first-year and senior student mean ratings for each item across three administrations of the survey.

Table 2
Advising experiences for First-Year students compared to Senior students[1]

		Spring 2005 Minnesota State Mankato	Spring 2007 Minnesota State Mankato	Spring 2009 Minnesota State Mankato	Spring 2009 Minnesota	Spring 2009 4yr Competitors
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor. [2]	First-Year	2.02	2.13	2.11	2.17	2.21
	Seniors	2.48	2.47	2.43	2.36	2.33
Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically. [3]	First-Year	2.80	2.88	2.91	2.99	3.05**
	Seniors	2.67	2.68	2.83	2.91	2.86
Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution? [4]	First-Year	2.61	2.83	2.95	2.97	3.08*
	Seniors	2.67	2.67	2.64	2.86**	2.83*
Average Score	First-Year	2.48	2.61	2.66	2.71	2.78
	Seniors	2.61	2.60	2.63	2.71	2.67

[1] Data extracted from National Survey of Student Engagement Institutional Report

[2] In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Very Often

[3] To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following? 1 = Very Little, 2 = Some, 3 = Quite a bit, 4 = Very much

[4] 1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Good, 4 = Excellent

Difference statistically significant *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001 (2-tailed)

"What do the numbers tell us?"

Strengths

Noel-Levitz data:

- The average performance gap scores related to academic advising are slowly shrinking, meaning that Minnesota State University, Mankato academic advising is improving in meeting student expectations.

- The average student satisfaction scores slightly increased from spring 2006 to spring 2010. This is not a significant change, but it is worth noting. The average student is somewhat satisfied, moving in the direction towards being satisfied with academic advising.

- Minnesota State University, Mankato student satisfaction with academic advising is not significantly different on any of the five items or for the academic advising scale overall than student populations surveyed at other National Four-Year Public Universities.

NSSE data:
- First-year students rate the support provided by the university to help them succeed more favorably than senior students. However, a decrease in rating for this item is also witnessed at other Minnesota Universities and other Four-Year Competitor Universities. In addition, senior student ratings at Minnesota State Mankato are not significantly different than senior student ratings for this item at other Minnesota Universities or other Four-Year Competitors.

- The average score of all three items for first-year and senior students slightly increased from spring 2005 to spring 2009. Again, this is not a major change, but it is worth noting.

Areas for Improvement
Noel-Levitz data:
- For each of the five items surveyed, there are performance gaps for every single one. Essentially, this means that there is room for improving the academic advising program based on these five items surveyed.

NSSE data:
- For each of the three areas surveyed, there is room for improvement as student ratings fall between the *sometimes*, *some* and *fair* to *often*, *quite a bit* and *good*. In particular, senior students evaluate the overall quality of academic advising received lower in comparison to other Minnesota Universities and other Four-Year Competitors.

In Summary

The Noel-Levitz results suggest that students' expectations are not being met *entirely*. The performance gap shows that there is room to improve. The gaps, however, are in line with what they are for other National Four-Year Public Institutions. In addition, the scores indicate students are somewhat satisfied, moving in the direction towards being satisfied with academic advising. The NSSE results provide further confirmation that student ratings of academic advising for both first-year and senior students falls between fair to good, with small differences between Minnesota State Mankato, other Minnesota Universities or other Four-Year Competitors.

Appendix B- Student and Faculty Study

6. For the following questions regarding advising services in your area, answer for yourself if you are an individual faculty advisor, OR for the program you work with if you are part of an advising program (Click EACH area you agree with).

Students are provided with processes for determining life goals.		31	30%
Degree requirement information is provided in a timely manner.		91	89%
Students are advised on course selection.		101	99%
Policies and procedures are clarified to students.		93	91%
Progress against student goals is monitored and evaluated.		55	53%
Student responsibility in the advising process is reinforced.		80	78%
Referral for remedial coursework or personal development is provided.		72	70%
Information provided to students is always current and accurate.		73	71%
Advising meetings are made available for ALL students (within my realm of responsibility) EACH term.		81	79%

7. The advisor I met with incorporated the following discussions into our advising sessions (click all that apply):

Assessment of my interests, abilities, and values		43	33%
Educational, career, and life goals		79	61%
Development of a short- and long-term plan		71	55%
MSU policies or procedures		38	29%
General education requirements		94	72%
Major requirements		105	81%
Exploration of majors or career possibilities for me		34	26%
Course selection		89	68%
My academic progress and how this impacts the achievement of my goals		47	36%
Leadership opportunities I might be interested in		19	14%
MSU services or resources I might be interested in		41	31%
Community services or resources that apply to me		11	8%
My personal and academic strengths and weaknesses		32	24%
Referral to another office on campus		35	27%

Appendix C- Academic Advising Action Plan

Academic Advising Action Plan
Assessment of Academic Advising at MSU - 2006

PART I: CAS STANDARDS FOR ACADEMIC ADVISING
The following academic advising components have been identified through faculty and student surveys as needing attention. The following recommendations are based on the CAS Standards for Academic Advising and would align our advising services more closely with these standards.

PROGRAM PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES
Departments need to identify specific student learning and development outcomes for measuring effective academic advising.

Relevant student learning and development outcome areas should be intentionally incorporated into advising sessions.

Advising services should be intentionally based on theories of learning and human development. All advisors need to have a thorough knowledge of pertinent theories.

Advisors should be capable and willing to provide comprehensive services to students. Areas identified as needing further review:
- Processes for determining life goals
- Assessment of interests, abilities and values
- MSU policies or procedures
- Exploration of majors or career possibilities
- Individual academic progress and achievement of goals
- Leadership opportunities
- MSU services and resource referral
- Community services and resource referral
- Individual academic strengths and weakness assessment
- Cultural diversity requirement

LEADERSHIP
The institution needs to have a clearly identifiable leader of academic advising with responsibility over advising services and advising personnel.

ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION
Each department/program should have written performance expectations for each advisor.

Advisors need to receive advising-related information from a common, identifiable source, campus-wide.

Individual advisors need to be sufficiently recognized and rewarded for effective advising performance.

Sufficient professional development opportunities related to advising need to be offered.

ADVISING STAFFING AND TRAINING
Staffing needs to be adequate in each department/program with personnel qualified to accomplish the advising mission.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES
Each department/program must have adequate funding to accomplish its advising mission and goals.

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES
Advisors need information and training on laws and regulations relevant to advising responsibilities.

Advisors need to be informed of institutional policies regarding personal liability and related insurance coverage options.

Students need to be informed of legal obligations or rights regarding communication with their advisor.

ETHICS
Each department/program should have a statement of ethical practice that is reviewed periodically.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION
Each advisor's performance should be evaluated regularly.

Data should be collected from students receiving advising services to measure advising effectiveness.

CURRENT PRACTICES
[This section pertains to specific areas of interest to advisors and is indirectly related to the CAS Standards.]

Advisors would like to participate in on-campus, group advisor training sessions that are open to all advisors.

Areas of interest for training include (at least 50% of survey respondents indicated an interest):
- General overview of the campus advising system
- Effective advising practices
- Legal issues/FERPA
- Advising-related technology (DARS, web registration, ISRS, etc.)
- Academic policies and procedures (curricular changes, transfer policies, probation/suspension, etc.)

Advisors would utilize a general academic advising manual.

PART II: ACT NATIONAL SURVEY OF ACADEMIC ADVISING

The following recommendations are based on areas in which MSU differs from other *4-year public institutions* across the nation. Only areas in which majorities (at least 50% of respondents) of 4-year public institutions currently provide advising services as noted are outlined. Positive alternatives to our current advising system are proposed to more closely align our advising services with other institutions like MSU nationwide. Many alternatives are not included in this action plan because they do not meet the 50% positive majority response value; however, they would highly benefit any institution's advising services.

CAMPUS COORDINATION AND ORGANIZATION

A coordinator of advising could be clearly identified to all advising personnel

The Coordinator could report directly to the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs.

The Coordinator's title could be "Director of Advising" or "Coordinator of Advising".

The campus could develop a written policy statement on academic advising.

The campus could regularly evaluate the overall effectiveness of the advising system.

Advisors could be trained to regularly utilize the DARS system.

ADVISING IN THE ACADEMIC UNIT OR DEPARTMENT

Advisees could be required to meet with their advisors *at least once* each term and especially on the following occasions:

- Class scheduling/registration
- Declaring a major
- Changing a major
- Approving graduation plans
- Substitutions/waivers

Advisor training could be offered to all advisors in all departments.

Advisors in all departments could be minimally offered individualized training based on their needs or a single workshop of one day or less per year.

Training topics could include:

- Academic regulations, policies, and registration procedures
- Campus referral sources
- Use of information sources (test results, transcripts, degree audits)
- Importance of academic advising

All advisors could be provided with an advising handbook.

ADVISING CENTER
This institution could have an advising center.

Advising center staff could be responsible for:
- Advising on general education requirements
- Establishing and maintaining advisee records
- Training advisors campus-wide
- Serving as a liaison to academic departments/colleges

The advising center could have a full-time advisor as the primary provider of advising

Students could be required to contact the advising center at a minimum for class scheduling/registration.

Individualized training for advisors, as well as a series of short workshops throughout the year, could be provided by the advising center with topics including:
- Academic regulations, policies and registration procedures
- Campus referral sources
- Use of information sources (test results, transcripts, degree audits)
- Importance of academic advising
- Definition of advising

The advising center staff could routinely be provided the following information:
- Aggregate data on student retention
- Descriptive data on student population
- Advising handbook

Advising center staff could be formally evaluated every academic term, mainly through supervisor review, and if chosen, also by student evaluation.

GOAL ACHIEVEMENT AND ADVISING EFFECTIVENESS
Advising programs and departments could utilize the National Association of Academic Advising (NACADA) goals for the advising program to measure advising effectiveness.

PART III: ADVISING FORUM DISCUSSION POINTS

Discussion points from the September and October Advising Forum meetings.

It would be helpful to have a central/universal advising area or place to obtain answers to advising-related questions.

The Mav OneStop site would be more effective if linked with a referral to a person. It is minimally utilized, if at all, by advisors.

New advisors need training on who/where to get advising-related answers.

We need to avoid transferring students around to other offices and get their questions answered in one place.

It might be helpful to do an assessment of first-year students compared with senior-level students on their knowledge of how to use "the university system".

Front-line personnel customer service skills are important to the advising process.

Faculty/staff need to have hours that are posted and consistent.

Advisors need to know how to ask questions, probe further, and determine what the student really needs. Advise the *whole* student and address their life-skills and professional skills needed to succeed.

First-year students need more intrusive counseling after orientation.

Advisors need a timely, *quick summary* of policies that are updated or changed and a note when they are in effect. They need a *user-friendly* website with this information.

The best way for advisors to receive advising-related information is through a regular campus advising newsletter that has a comprehensive, updated distribution list.

Advisors need one, official, updated source for academic policies, curriculum, academic requirements, etc. Sources have inconsistencies and errors (online Bulletin, paper Bulletin, laminated course sheets).

Most advisors agreed that students should be required to meet with their advisor *every* year (possibly every term). Some suggest identifying certain populations.

The DARS system needs to be accurate and reliable. Advisors can benefit from utilizing it in conjunction with advising.

Most advisors would like campus-wide advisor training. At a minimum it would be helpful to have basic training on advising tools to use on campus.

Advisors need a reasonable load of advisees.