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September 27-28, 2018

#AdvisingUTS

2018 ADVISING INSTITUTE



Welcome Letter from the University of Texas System Planning Committee

Welcome to The University of Texas System's 2018 Advising Institute!

In the past two years, the UT System Administration, in collaboration with the academic universities, has worked to put in place a framework focused on three pillars for advancing student success systemwide: Finances, Advising and Belonging. A systemwide advising affinity group was convened in 2017 that was comprised of institutional representatives from across the UT System's eight academic institutions. A "5E Framework" for academic advising and student success was developed, and recommendations were provided to UT System Administration and to provosts at each institution.

One of the primary recommendations of the affinity group was to host a systemwide advising institute. UT System-supported professional development has provided a meaningful way to engage campus stakeholders in sharing best practices and a vision for enhancing student success systemwide. The purpose of the Advising Institute is to provide opportunities for networking with other UT System colleagues, to create a platform for sharing institutional practices and models, and to provide professional development. Each of the eight UT System academic institutions will have a platform to highlight the excellent work underway by advising staff and leadership.

Finally, when developing a framework and content for this institute, the planning committee relied heavily on both the "UT System 5E Framework" and the "Nine Conditions of Excellence in Academic Advising," published by The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) and The Gardner Institute. A summary of the UT System framework and "nine conditions" are provided on the next page.

We welcome each of you and recognize the critical role that advisors play in student success at each institution and across the UT System, and we hope to use this time to build on the incredible work that is already taking place.



UT System 5E Framework for Advising and the NACADA/Garner Institute 9 Conditions of Excellence Model

UT SYSTEM ADVISING AFFINITY GROUP: FRAMEWORK FOR ADVISING AND STUDENT SUCCESS

EDUCATE

Equip students with the understanding necessary for self-efficacy and optimal choices in academic planning.

EMPOWER

Provide information in a readily accessible and consumable format to make the most common decisions around academic advising

ENHANCE

Students often want a meaningful relationship with their advisors. If interactions between students and advisors are enhanced, students can progressively pursue more informed decision making around careers, activities, finances, and majors.

ELEVATE

Elevate the career pathways of advising staff to recognize the indispensable functions they perform on academic campuses and the role that they play in forming relationships with students and guiding them on their chosen path.

EVALUATE

Effective academic advising can only occur when there is continuous assessment, evaluation and data-driven improvement. We must first measure that the advising programs implemented perform in a manner intended. Then we must begin to measure improvements in outputs and outcome.

NACADA AND GARDNER INSTITUTE: NINE CONDITIONS OF EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMIC ADVISING

Institutional Commitment: Institutions recognize that academic advising is a shared responsibility integral to the students' educational experience and the institution's teaching and learning mission.

Learning: Institutions assure that academic advisors are knowledgeable about the institution's expected learning outcomes, curriculum, pedagogy, and the student learning process.

Advisor Selection and Development: Institutions employ effective selection practices, professional development, and appropriate recognition and rewards for all advisors and advising administrators.

Improvement and the Scholarship of Advising: Institutions committed to systematic assessment and evaluation recognize the complexity of the educational process and its theoretical underpinnings.

Collaboration and Communication: Effective academic advising requires coordination and collaborative partnerships among all units across campus.

Organization: Excellent advising programs are intentionally organized across the institution to meet the institutional academic mission, goals, and intended outcomes.

Student Purpose and Pathways: Effective academic advising directs students to explore and define their own purpose, goals, and curricular pathways to achieve learning and developmental outcomes.

Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity: It encourages individual and institutional conversations that promote understanding, respect, and honor diverse perspectives, ideas, and identities.

Technology Enabled Advising: Excellent academic advising incorporates appropriate technology to complement, support, and enhance advising practice.



Agenda at a Glance

The University of Texas System

2018 Advising Institute

Thursday, September 27, 2018

11:00a – 12:00p	Registration	Enterprise 8
12:00p – 1:00p	Seated Lunch UT System Welcoming and Opening Remarks by Dr. Rebecca Karoff, UT System, and President Vistasp Karbhari, UT Arlington Keynote Address: <i>Academic Advising: Creating Meaningful Campus-Wide Change</i> By Dr. Brett McFarlane, Executive Director of Academic Advising, University of California, Davis	Enterprise 8
1:00p – 2:00p	Institutional Team Time 1 <i>Implementing Best Practices in Advising and Student Success</i>	Enterprise 8
2:15p – 3:00p	Concurrent Sessions 1 Session 1 A: <i>UTEP's Holistic and Integrated Advising Redesign</i> Session 1 B: <i>Collaboration and Communications Across the Institution</i>	Cattle Barons Wildcatters
3:15p – 4:00p	Concurrent Sessions 2 Session 2 A: <i>Advisor Professional Identity</i> Session 2 B: <i>Creating the Advising Curriculum: Interactive Discussion</i>	Cattle Barons Wildcatters
4:15p – 5:15p	Cross-Institutional Team Time 1 <i>Is Email Jeopardizing The Art of Advising?</i> Facilitated by Dr. Sue Ohrablo, Higher Education Consultant	Enterprise 8
6:00p – 7:30p	Networking Happy Hour and Dinner	Enterprise 7 & 8

Friday, September 28, 2018

8:00a – 8:30a	Breakfast	Enterprise 7 & 8
8:45a – 9:45a	Cross-Institutional Team Time 2 <i>Why Don't They Tell Us Anything?: Promoting Effective Institutional Communication</i> Facilitated by Dr. Sue Ohrablo, Higher Education Consultant	Enterprise 8
10:00a – 10:45a	Concurrent Session 3 Session 3 A: <i>Toward a System-Wide Assessment of Advising: Reacting to Recommendations</i> Session 3 B: <i>Unique Populations, Unique Needs: Serving Outside of the Box</i>	Cattle Barons Wildcatters
11:00a – 11:45a	Concurrent Session 4 Session 4 A: <i>The Impact of Texting on Academic Advising and Student Engagement</i> Session 4 B: <i>Having Difficult Conversations with Students</i> Session 4 C: <i>Adviser Career Ladders (Administrator Discussion)</i>	Cattle Barons Wildcatters Enterprise 8

12:00p – 1:00p

Seated Lunch

Enterprise 8

Keynote Address: *Achieving Excellence in Our Advising Practice*

By Dr. Stephanie Foote, Assistant Vice President for Teaching, Learning and Evidence-Based Practices, John N. Gardner Institute

1:00p – 2:15p

Institutional Team Time 2

Developing Personal and Institutional Advising Philosophies

Discussion of Key Takeaways and Report Out



UTEP's Holistic and Integrated Advising Redesign Presentation

Cattle Barons

Heather Smith, Associate Vice President for Academic Advising and Student Support (UT El Paso)

This presentation will provide an overview of UT El Paso's advising redesign from a structure that historically assisted students as a collective body to one that works with every individual student based on their unique interests, aspirations and commitments. In addition, we will review the significant changes implemented through the holistic and integrated advising model and discuss the progress and impact of the redesign in year one.

Communication and Collaboration Across the Institution Panel Discussion

Wildcatters

Erin Nance, Academic Advisor II and Athletic Advisor (UT Permian Basin)

Amanda Perez, Academic Online Advisor (UT Permian Basin)

Douglas Vardeman, Advisor for Health and Kinesiology (UT Tyler)

Veronica Viesca, Director of University Advising Center (UT Tyler)

Moderated by Meredith Goode, Director of Academic Policy and Analytics (UT System)

This panel will offer an opportunity to discuss challenges related to cross-institutional communication among advisors, faculty, financial aid, and other stakeholders. Advising staff from UT Permian Basin and UT Tyler will discuss strategies for effective cross-campus communication with the goal of improving access to institutional information that aids in student planning and decision making.



Concurrent Session 2

Thursday, 3:15p

Advisor Professional Identity Presentation

Cattle Barons

Dr. Gabriel Bermea, Director of the Academic Advising Center (UT Rio Grande Valley)

The role of the academic advisor has long been debated across institutions of higher education. However, at UT Rio Grande Valley, a clear connection to the impact of the academic advisors' influence on student success has been at the core of UT System's newest institution. During this session, we will explore the role of the academic advisor, the definition of advising vs. advisor, and offer examples of how the professional identity of the academic advisor has been cultivated at UT Rio Grande Valley.

Creating the Advising Curriculum: An Interactive Session Interactive Discussion

Wildcatters

Dr. Wanda Mercer, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (UT System)

Dr. Ashley Purgason, Associate Vice Provost for Student Success (UT Arlington)

This interactive session will allow advising professionals to explore what it means to conduct advising based on a philosophy of developing the student as a learner. Attendees will explore the advantages and challenges of developing the advisee as a learner. Information will be provided on curricular development and learning outcomes in the advising profession so that attendees may begin to apply these concepts to their own work.



Toward a System-Wide Assessment of Advising: Reacting to Barons Recommendations Presentation and Interactive Discussion

Cattle

Dr. Cassandre Giguere Alvarado, Executive Director of Student Success (UT Austin)

The goal of this session is to provide an opportunity for participants to react to the recommendations of a UT System-wide academic advising scorecard. The scorecard and its metrics were designed by members of the Academic Advising Affinity Group to provide a consistent way of documenting advising strengths while acknowledging the differences in advising structures across UT System. This session will be highly interactive: Participants are expected to work in cross-disciplinary teams to react to the document and share thoughts and recommendations

Unique Populations, Unique Needs: Serving Outside of the Box Panel Discussion

Wildcatters

Angelica Barrera, Interim Associate Vice President of Student Advising and Support (UT San Antonio)

John Jackson, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education (UT Dallas)

James Kumm, Executive Director for Veterans Programs (UT Arlington)

Every student an advisor interacts with is unique. Veterans and first-generation students, among others, benefit from innovative approaches in order to provide excellent service. Three institutions will provide expertise in how they are serving some of these talented groups of students throughout their life cycle, including lessons learned, solutions implemented and suggestions for how advisors can best be of service. Presenters will share the unique needs identified for some of these special populations and present a call to action for the advising community to serve these groups in new and different ways.



The Impact of Texting on Academic Advising and Barons Student Engagement Presentation

Cattle

Liz Hannabas, Senior Director of the University Advising Center (UT Arlington)

Daniel Zarazua, Senior Academic Advisor (UT Austin)

This presentation will explore an innovative approach to fostering the advisor/advisee relationship beyond traditional emails. Data gathered by an advising unit at UT Austin using a texting platform will be presented. Participants will learn how this advising unit used texting to drive increases in student engagement with advisors. Presenters will share real example text messages from students, as well as testimonies from students about their experiences with texting and advising. Participants will collaboratively learn specific strategies, recommendations, and pitfalls of texting in advising.

Having Difficult Conversations with Students Facilitated Discussion Among Advisors

Wildcatters

Facilitated by Elizabeth Mayer, Senior Research and Policy Analyst (UT System)

This session is highly interactive and includes a peer-led conversation. The goal of this session is to identify some of the more difficult topics of conversations that students often feel uncomfortable discussing with academic advisors. Examples may include student health and safety, financial health, a sense of belonging on campus, and major or career path changes. Communication strategies for having difficult conversations with students will be discussed and shared with participants.

Advisor Career Ladders Facilitated Discussions Among Administrators

Enterprise 8

Angelica Barrera, Interim Associate Vice President for Student Success and Director of Academic Advising (UT San Antonio)

This session is for administrators and executives attending the Advising Institute. A facilitated discussion will take place among the group on career ladders for the advising profession at our various institutions. The goals of the session include learning about promotion structures and positions at other institutions, examining current ladders at one's own institution and brainstorming ways to elevate the advising profession and provide opportunities for growth.



Institution Team Time 1

Thursday, 1:00p

Implementing Best Practices in Advising and Student Success

Facilitated by Dr. Ashley Purgason, Associate Vice Provost for Student Success (UT Arlington)

Institutional degree maps and “15 to Finish” are two best practices in advising and student success as a means to help students remain on track and graduate on time. An overview of both practices will be provided by institutional stakeholders who have recently implemented them. Attendees will then spend time with their institutional team discussing these best practices and the benefits, opportunities, and potential challenges of implementing, expanding, or improving the initiative within their department or institution.



Institutional Team Time 2

Friday, 1:00p

Developing Personal and Institutional Advising Philosophies

Discussion of Key Takeaways and Report Out

Facilitated by Elizabeth Mayer, Senior Research and Policy Analyst (UT System)

Facilitated by Meredith Goode, Director of Academic Policy and Analytics (UT System)

The development of a personal advising philosophy can provide structure and focus for advisors in both day-to-day advising work and long-term career goals. Additionally, a personal advising philosophy can provide a mechanism for incorporating theory into advising practice. Similarly, institutional advising philosophies can help to provide clarity and purpose for advisors, students, and other institutional stakeholders. This session will provide resources and time for attendees to develop or revise a personal advising philosophy. Institutional teams will also begin to discuss the development and content of an institutional or departmental advising philosophy.

Each institutional team will discuss and report out to all attendees two key takeaways from the Advising Institute. Next steps will be discussed.



Cross-Institutional Team Time 1

Thursday, 4:15p

Is Email Jeopardizing The Art of Advising?

Facilitated by Dr. Sue Ohrablo, Higher Education Consultant

***Please sit at the table that corresponds with your lanyard color.**

Email advising has become a standard method of communication for students. Whether they are campus-based, distance, or online, students often prefer the convenience of interacting with their advisors via email. The asynchronous nature of email communication enables students to write down their questions and concerns as they occur to them and allows for communication outside of standard business hours. Students can keep and refer back to advisor emails, and advisors can use emails to document student interactions.

This session will focus on common pitfalls that occur in email advising, and examine limiting factors such as tone, intent, and prescriptive advising. Participants will examine real-life examples and engage in discussion as to how to strategically infuse developmental advising techniques into email communication, as well as determine when email advising is not appropriate to address students' concerns.



Cross-Institutional Team Time 2

Friday, 8:45a

Why Don't They Tell Us Anything?: Promoting Effective Institutional Communication

Facilitated by Dr. Sue Ohrablo, Higher Education Consultant

***Please sit at the table that corresponds with your lanyard color.**

Effective communication and information exchange are key factors in the successful operation of colleges and universities. Lack of clear communication regarding vision, expectations, guidelines, policies, and procedures can lead to a decline in employee morale and performance as well as the quality of service to students. In this session, we will explore what effective communication looks like, and how to implement strategies to ensure communication to constituents at all levels. We will explore the types of relationships that exist within institutions and strategies for promoting effective downward, upward, diagonal, and lateral communication within and across constituencies.

Speaker Bios: Welcome & Opening Remarks

Dr. Rebecca Karoff, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs The University of Texas System



Dr. Rebecca Karoff joined The University of Texas System in February 2016 as Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. She is responsible for leading and supporting student success initiatives systemwide. Her work addresses the student success continuum, PK-20 and into the workforce, and recognizes the remarkable responsibility and opportunity of the UT System to achieve more equitable access and outcomes for the state's increasingly diverse students. She is the primary architect of the UT System's student success framework, which is focused on student financial well-being, effective advising, and deepening students' sense of academic and social belonging. All of her work is data-informed, equity-minded and quality-driven, and she is interested in expanded approaches to measuring student success. She received Ph.D. and M.A. degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She earned a B.A. with honors from Brown University.

Dr. Vistasp M. Karbhari, President The University of Texas at Arlington



A visionary leader and accomplished scholar, Dr. Vistasp M. Karbhari took office in June 2013 as the eighth president of The University of Texas at Arlington. He is a professor in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering and the Department of Civil Engineering.

As president, he is committed to advancing UT Arlington's national and international profile while strengthening excellence in research and teaching and ensuring the success of UT Arlington's students in campus-based and online degree programs in Texas and around the world. Under his leadership, UT Arlington has achieved Carnegie R-1 status, was named a Hispanic-Serving Institution, and is ranked as the top educational institution in the State of Texas for Veterans and Adult Learners, in addition to having nationally ranked programs in each of UT Arlington's schools and colleges.

President Karbhari earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a master's degree with a specialization in structures from the University of Poona in India, and a Ph.D. with a dissertation in composite materials from the University of Delaware. During his more than 25 years in higher education, he has received numerous awards for research, teaching, and innovation.

Speaker Bios: Keynotes

Dr. Brett McFarlane, Executive Director of Academic Advising University of California, Davis



Dr. Brett McFarlane currently serves as the Executive Director of Academic Advising at University of California, Davis where he oversees campus-wide advising initiatives, assessment of advising, advising training and professional development, advising technology, and collaborative programming between academic and student affairs serving approximately 30,000 undergraduates. Brett also serves as a consultant with the NACADA Academic Advising Consultant and Speaker Service.

Prior to UC Davis, Brett served as the Director of Undergraduate Programs for the College of Engineering at Oregon State University (OSU) where he worked with faculty, staff, and advisors to improve the student success and persistence of approximately 5,000 undergraduate engineering students and worked on several campus-wide advising initiatives. Before OSU, Brett served as the Director of Student Services for the School of Business at Portland State University (PSU) where he oversaw academic and career advising for approximately 3,200 undergraduate business students. Prior to re-joining higher education, Brett served as the Director of Audit for a publicly traded company in the

Portland, Oregon, area with a staff of 16 global auditors and a multi-million dollar budget. He is a Certified Public Accountant in the State of Oregon (lapsed).

Brett has served in a variety of leadership positions for NACADA, the global community for academic advising, including Administrative Division Council representative, Chair of the Finance Committee, and Region 8 Chair, among others. He is currently a member of the NACADA Board of Directors. His research interests include student persistence and retention, first-year advising, and assessment of advising. He presents regularly at statewide, regional, national, and global conferences on topics, including advising administration, advising and student persistence, leading change, technology in advising, and making assessment accessible. Brett is co-author on a chapter entitled "Advocating for Academic Advising" in *Beyond Foundations: Developing as a Master Advisor* (2016). He has taught undergraduate courses in leadership, career development, college success, and accounting at the undergraduate level and coursework on first-year college students at the graduate level. Brett holds a B.S. degree in Accounting from the University of Oregon, an M.S. in Postsecondary Adult and Continuing Education, and an Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership, both from Portland State University.

Speaker Bios: Keynotes

Dr. Stephanie Foote, Assistant Vice President for Teaching, Learning and Evidence-Based Practices, John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education



Dr. Stephanie M. Foote is the Assistant Vice President for Teaching, Learning, and Evidence-Based Practices at the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education. Prior to joining the Institute staff in August 2017, Stephanie was the founding director of the Master of Science in First-Year Studies, professor of education in the Department of First-Year and Transition Studies, and faculty fellow for High-Impact Practices at Kennesaw State University (KSU). Before joining the faculty at KSU, Stephanie served as the founding Director of the Academic Success Center and First-Year Experience at the University of South Carolina Aiken and was the Associate Director for Student Orientation and Family Programs at Stony Brook University. Her scholarship and consultative work span a variety of aspects of student development and transition, including the role of first-year seminars and experiential pedagogy on student engagement in the early college experience, the community college transfer student transition, self-authorship development, engagement and learning in online environments, faculty development, metacognitive teaching and

learning approaches, and high-impact educational practices. Stephanie is a recipient of the McGraw-Hill Excellence in Teaching First-Year Seminars award, and a past recipient of the NODA Outstanding Research Award for her research on the effects of first-year seminar participation on the experience of students in the early college experience.

Dr. Sue Ohrablo, Higher Education Consultant



Dr. Sue Ohrablo is a nationally recognized speaker and author in the areas of academic advising and student services. Her presentations blend theory and practice, and include real-world scenarios for professionals to apply as they work to support students. Sue's areas of expertise include comprehensive developmental advising, student engagement, advising adult and online students, supporting students at a distance, advisor skill development, and advising administration.

Sue has over 30 years of experience in higher education administration, working in public and private institutions and with diverse student populations, ranging from freshman to doctoral level students. She has held positions as director of academic advising, academic advisor, personal counselor, career counselor, and employment specialist. Sue is the author of "High-Impact Advising: A Guide for Academic Advisors" and currently works as a higher education consultant and serves as an adjunct professor at St. Thomas University.

Speaker Bios: Presenters and Moderators

Dr. Cassandre Giguere Alvarado, Executive Director of Student Success The University of Texas at Austin



Dr. Cassandre Giguere Alvarado is the Executive Director of Student Success at The University of Texas at Austin. Over the past five years, she has designed and led student success innovations that have dramatically improved student success at UT Austin. She was one of the chief architects of UT Austin's recent 4-year graduation rate breakthroughs and her work has been recognized by the Association of Public & Land Grant Universities, the National Academic Advising Association, and the National Resource Center on the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. In addition to her national awards, Cassandre's innovations in student success have been replicated across the country and within all eight academic institutions in the UT System. Cassandre is a Clinical Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy and teaches graduate classes on student success research and strategy.

Angelica Maldonado Barrera, Interim Associate Vice President for Student Success and Director of Academic Advising The University of Texas at San Antonio



Angelica Maldonado Barrera is an advocate for higher education access and success and works in higher education to create programs and opportunities for students to achieve their educational aspirations. She has 14 years of experience in higher education institutions in various areas such as academic advising, policy development, assessment, leadership development and research.

Before joining The University of Texas at San Antonio, Angelica served as the Director for the PACE (Personalized Academic & Career Exploration) Advising at Texas State University, which was recognized by NACADA in 2016 as the Outstanding Institutional Advising Program. Angelica began her career in higher education at Texas A&M University as an academic advisor, Texas A&M University-Kingsville as a Senior Academic Advisor and served as Director of Academic Advising at Texas A&M University-San Antonio.

She earned both a Bachelor of Science (2000) and Master of Science (2001) in Kinesiology from Texas A&M University-Kingsville. She lives in San Antonio with her husband, Michael, and children, Mia and Christian.

Speaker Bios: Presenters and Moderators

Dr. Gabriel Bermea, Director of Academic Advising Center The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley



Gabriel Bermea currently serves as the Director of the Academic Advising Center at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. From 2010-2015, Gabriel took on several roles at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, including Assistant Director of Student Academic Services, Coordinator for Undergraduate Studies and Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Studies. With 10 years of higher education experience, Gabriel's focus is developing innovative and strategic student success solutions to guide first-generation, Latinx students and other marginalized populations to degree completion. Gabriel earned his B.A. in Communication Studies and his M.Ed. in Higher Education Administration from Texas Tech University. He also earned an M.A. in Communication and Leadership Studies from Gonzaga University and his Ed.D. in Higher Education and Organizational Change from Benedictine University.

Meredith Goode, Director of Academic Policy and Analytics The University of Texas System Administration



Meredith Goode currently serves as the Director Academic Policy and Analytics at The University of Texas System Office of Academic Affairs. She directs and contributes to a variety of policy initiatives and programs that include student success in academic advising, the tuition and fee approval process which includes affordability and transparency initiatives, online education, student affairs, and academic planning. Meredith earned bachelor's degrees in Economics and Political Science from Carson-Newman College and a master's degree in Public Affairs from The University of Texas at Austin. Meredith also served on the planning committee for the Advising Institute.



Speaker Bios: Presenters and Moderators

Liz Hannabas, Senior Director of University Advising Center The University of Texas Arlington



Liz Hannabas began her career at The University of Texas at Arlington in 2004. She coordinated and created PeopleSoft training manuals and training sessions for Academic Advisors across campus for seven years while also developing a campus-wide professional development structure for professional advisors. Currently, Liz is Senior Director in the Division of Student Success and oversees the University Advising Center housed within the division. She has been a member of the UT System Student Success Affinity Group and has a background in marketing and broadcast communications.

Liz earned her bachelor's degree from the University of North Texas and a master's degree in Organizational Development from Abilene Christian University. She has three children, two of whom are UT Arlington alumni and her youngest attends school and plays Division 1 softball at Southeastern Louisiana University.

John Jackson, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Advising The University of Texas Dallas



John Jackson has worked at The University of Texas at Dallas since 1997. He has worked at several levels of academic advising, including his current role as Associate Dean in the Office of Undergraduate Education. As part of his current role, he coordinates the undergraduate advising offices across the university's eight schools, serving as chair of the Undergraduate Advising Directors committee. In his time at UT Dallas, John has advised undeclared students, NCAA athletes, academic team competitors, as well as students in distress seeking academic remedies. John also serves on various other university committees. John earned his bachelor's degree at Louisiana State University and his master's degree at McNeese State University.

Speaker Bios: Presenters and Moderators

James Kumm, Executive Director for Veterans Programs The University of Texas at Arlington



James Kumm, combat veteran and seasoned higher education administrator, joined The University of Texas Arlington on May 22, 2017 in the newly established position of Executive Director for Veterans Programs, providing leadership and coordination for all veteran services on campus and serving as a resource for student veterans, faculty and staff. James served 14 years with the United States Army and Colorado Army National Guard. He earned his B.S. in Sociology from Colorado State University – Pueblo, and M.S. from Grand Canyon University in Counseling. Throughout his career, James has worked in recruitment, admissions, career development, and veteran services, being a vocal and engaged advocate for veteran support in higher education.

Elizabeth Mayer, Senior Research and Policy Analyst The University of Texas System Administration



Elizabeth Mayer is a Senior Research & Policy Analyst at The University of Texas System where she advises leaders in the Office of Academic Affairs on a variety of policy and programmatic issues. She provides research and policy analysis on topics, including academic program planning, dual credit, transfer, educator preparation, and online education. Elizabeth received her B.S. in International Relations & Diplomacy from Seton Hall University, and a master's degree in Public Affairs from The University of Texas at Austin. Elizabeth also served on the planning committee for the Advising Institute.

Speaker Bios: Presenters and Moderators

Dr. Wanda Mercer, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs The University of Texas System Administration



Before joining The University of Texas System, Dr. Wanda Mercer was Vice President for Student Life at Tarleton State University for 18 years. Prior to that, she served 16 years at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, including eight years as Associate Vice President and Dean of Students. In these roles, she was responsible for staff, programs, budgets, facilities, planning and assessment, and crisis response for all departments in Student Affairs. In addition to overseeing student affairs programs, over the years she had responsibility for financial aid, student recruiting, new student orientation, disabled student services, diversity initiatives, first-year success programs, and academic support services. She has developed successful federal and state grants and was a member to the graduate faculty in the Department of Educational Leadership at Tarleton State University.

Wanda received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas and her Doctorate of Education from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

She has made numerous presentations at regional and national conferences and to academic and civic groups. She and her husband, Jim, are the parents of three children.

Erin Nance, Academic Advisor II and Athletic Advisor The University of Texas Permian Basin



Erin Nance has been affiliated with The University of Texas Permian Basin since June 2008. She started in the Advising Center, advising for the College of Arts and Sciences. In November 2010, she became the Transfer Advisor and merged with the College of Business and Engineering in 2012. Erin received her master's degree in Public Administration in 2013 and received NCAA certification for athletic advising through NACADA and Kansas State to take on the duties as Athletic Advisor.

Erin was recently named Advisor II and Athletic Advisor turning over the transfer duties after her mentor recently retired. She loves helping her students excel in the classroom and helping them participate in the sports that they love. She and her family make all the games they can to root for the Falcons.

Speaker Bios: Presenters and Moderators

Amanda Perez, Academic Online Advisor The University of Texas Permian Basin



Amanda was born and raised in Odessa, Texas. She obtained a B.B.A. in Marketing from The University of Texas Permian Basin in December 2013. Her employment at UT Permian Basin began in June 2010 as a student worker, and she soon joined the Advising Office after graduation. She began in the Online Advising community of UT Permian Basin as it was just getting started. There, she oversaw students in nine different online programs with her colleagues and watched as the program grew from nine majors to twelve in just five years. With the growth of the Online Advising community, she also saw the need to expand the Advising office to become more technologically advanced. Any tweet, handbook or Online Advising webpage change can be credited to having some say in it by Amanda.

Now, after five wonderful years as an Online Advisor, Amanda has switched over to help the office in seeing students face-to-face as an Undergraduate Academic Advisor. While it is a new endeavor for her, she is very excited about the opportunity to help students in the face-to-face office environment and glad to be given the chance to expand her advising knowledge a bit more at UT Permian Basin.

Dr. Ashley Purgason, Associate Vice Provost for Student Success The University of Texas at Arlington



Dr. Ashley Purgason is at The University of Texas Arlington, her alma mater, and serves as the Associate Vice Provost for Student Success. She earned her Ph.D. in Environmental Toxicology from UT Medical Branch in Galveston, Texas and teaches Biology courses at UT Arlington. She leads the Division of Student Success in Academic Affairs and is responsible for retention and completion efforts, including campus advising initiatives, academic support, student coaching, first-year experience courses and more. Ashley's scientific training was completed at the NASA Johnson Space Center and focused on the effects of charged particles on the gastrointestinal tract. She served as the Student Regent on The University of Texas System Board of Regents prior to returning to UT Arlington.

Speaker Bios: Presenters and Moderators

Heather Smith, Director of Miner Athlete Academic Center The University of Texas at El Paso



Heather Smith was founding Director of the Miner Athlete Academic Center (MAAC), the first academic services center for student-athletes at The University of Texas El Paso. Heather has led efforts to improve academic success and personal development for student athletes at UT El Paso for the past 18 years. In recognition of her leadership, Heather received the UT El Paso Distinguished Achievement Award for Service to Students in 2014.

In 2016, Heather was named Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs to lead the institution's vision for integrated, holistic advising as part of the enhanced student success philosophy at UT El Paso. Originally from New York State, Heather earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in English and American Literature from UT El Paso. She is currently ABD in the Rhetoric & Composition PhD program at UT El Paso.

Douglas Vardeman, Advisor for Health and Kinesiology The University of Texas at Tyler



Douglas Vardeman holds both bachelor's and master's degrees in Kinesiology. Prior to his current role, he was a lecturer for about three years at The University of Texas Tyler and now is an advisor and lecturer in the Health and Kinesiology Department at UT Tyler. He advises for students enrolled in Kinesiology, Health Sciences, Wellness and the online Bachelor of Applied Arts and Science (BAAS) degree plan. Some new student success initiatives implemented in UT Tyler advising include Persistence and Retention Teams, Enrollment Forecasting, and follow-up initiatives with students who have become inactive.

Speaker Bios: Presenters and Moderators

Veronica Viesca, Director of University Advising Center The University of Texas at Tyler



Veronica Viesca serves as the Director of the University Advising Center at UT Tyler. She has been in an advising capacity in higher education for 11 years while also adding adjunct professor, mentor, and various other leadership roles to her résumé. She is currently co-chairing the East Regional unit of TEXAAN (Texas Advising Network) and has presented at the National Symposium for Student Retention. Veronica agrees with what Dr. Richard Light said: “Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience.”

Daniel Zarazua, Senior Academic Advisor The University of Texas at Austin



Daniel Zarazua was born and raised in El Paso, TX. He graduated from The University of Texas Austin with his Bachelor of Arts in Government and Sociology. He also holds a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction degree from The University of Nevada – Las Vegas. Immediately after graduating from UT Austin, he joined Teach For America as part of the 2012 Corps in Las Vegas, Nevada where he taught 5th grade elementary for two years.

After his experience in a K-12 classroom for a few years, he moved back to Austin, TX to start working towards his passion within higher education. He started as an Associate Academic Advisor for the College of Liberal Arts in the Department of Iberian and Latin American Languages Department. He is currently a Senior Academic Advisor at UT Austin for the Student Success Initiatives Office in the Division of Enrollment Management. Daniel is one of the UT Austin MAAPS Advisors, under the University Innovation Alliance coalition, where he oversees and advises a caseload of students from all colleges in UT Austin’s campus.



Closing & Special Thanks

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