Collaboration's the Name, Advising's the Game!

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Kristy Gutierrez, Miwako Nakamoto, and Mary Stender

Overview of Presentation

- History of Vancouver Advising Committee (VAC)

- Nuts & Bolts

- Benefits & Positive Outcomes

- Getting started on your own advising committee

Initial Questions

- What kind of advising communication/collaboration do you already have in place at your college or university?

- How is your voice currently heard and your opinion valued?

History of VAC

- Department Academic Advisors began meeting bi-monthly as an unofficial group when the current campus location opened in 1996.

- The VAC was **officially** formed under Academic Affairs in 2009 in part as a response to the Chancellor's Retention Task Force work with an outside consultant.

Why was this committee formed?

- Advisors needed a place where they could go to address specific concerns, ask questions, receive support from colleagues and be properly trained

- To have a voice and influence in larger academic issues

- To build support for developmental advising and professional advisors on our campus

WSU Vancouver Academic Advising Vision

- Academic Advising is a developmental and collaborative process in which students seek and receive guidance in the development and achievement of meaningful academic and career goals that are consistent with their interests, values and abilities.

- While the ultimate responsibility rests with the individual student, academic advisors guide students as they think critically, seek out resources, and develop action steps in an atmosphere of mutual respect and learning.

- Students, advisors, and the institution's administration all play a role in achieving this vision of academic advising.

What other professionals have to say about collaboration…

- **2010 NSSE Survey states that:**
  - ▪ "Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate working and social relations among different groups on campus."

- **'Academic Advising and student retention and persistence' by Charlie L. Nutt**
  - ▪ "…successful academic advising programs cannot be solely responsible for retention rates on a campus. As the hub, advising is one piece of the retention puzzle. Retention efforts must focus on all components of the campus and building strong and effective connections between the advising program and the various components of campus."
  - ▪ "…it should be clearly established that academic advising is the direct link between the academic affairs and student affairs components of a campus that can build a culture of student retention."

collaboration…

- **'Developing a working relationship with the Registrar's Office' by Maura M. Reynolds**
  - "As usual, communication between offices is the key to effective collaboration – and to improved learning for students."
  - "If the college or university has an advising council which meets periodically, inviting staff from the registrar's office to be members of the council is a wonderful way to ensure communication and to build bridges in support of student learning and success."

- **'Professional Advisors and Faculty Advisors: A Shared Goal of Student Success' by Joan M. Krush & Sara Winn**
  - "Where the advising relationship is shared, it works best when all stakeholders make decisions together for the betterment of their students."

- '**Collaboration – A Win, Win, Win, Win Situation' by Jo Stewart**
  - "No one can do this alone; we must collaborate within and between departments and institutions if we are to bring a well-rounded education to our students."

VAC
Nuts & Bolts

Purpose

- **Purpose of VAC**
  - Within the context of the Advising Vision, VAC:
    - shares information and discusses issues
    - recommends policy and procedures related to student advising to appropriate campus bodies
    - promotes the missions of academic advising and best practices through professional development and assessment activities
    - reports directly to Academic Affairs

Membership

- **Members**
  - Academic Coordinators
  - Admissions Counselors
  - Faculty Advisors
  - Registrar
  - Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
  - Additional staff and faculty as needed

- **Diversity**
  - The diversity of the membership is what gives the committee added value of seeing the big picture of a student's tenure at WSU Vancouver.

- **Number of members**
  - There are currently 27 active members
  - 44 total staff and faculty on the e-mail list-serve

Advocacy & Support

- **Academic Affairs**
  - Liaison representative from this office attends all VAC meetings
    - Brings issues brought up in VAC, to Academic Affairs
    - Brings Academic Affairs issues back to VAC
  - Receives a copy of all of our meeting minutes
  - Supports advising survey development, approval, administering, data collection, and reporting
  - Tracks VAC annual budget and approves Professional Development Committee expenditures

- **Funding**
  - VAC has been awarded professional development funds of $4000/academic year to support on campus trainings and to ensure advisors across campus have equal access to advising related conferences.

Meeting Details

- **Frequency**
  - Meets twice per month during the academic year
  - Meets once per month during the summer
    - Meetings are open to the campus and faculty

- **Minutes**
  - Are recorded at each meeting, including the approval of the previous meeting's minutes
  - At the beginning of each academic year, members sign up to take meeting minutes.

Meeting Details

- **Attendance**
  - Originally attendance was required; attendance did not change when it was no longer required
  - Good attendance because of the importance of information shared and the opportunity to connect to other professionals from across campus
  - Sign-in sheet is sent around at each meeting, simply to record who was present for meeting minutes

- **Meeting Agenda**
  - If you imagine an Advising Committee on your campus, what information would you like to have regularly reported?
  - What guest speakers would you like to hear from?

Communication Between Committee

- **Sharepoint**
  - Online storage of meeting minutes and other advising documents and resources
  - Also a place where sensitive material can be accessed by the entire committee, as opposed to sending everything via email

- **Email List-serve**
  - An email list-serve was created specifically for VAC, so that we can share pertinent information to all members at the same time.

VAC
Executive Committee

VAC Executive Committee

- **Purpose**
  - Exists to address topical issues that arise from the VAC or external constituencies where intensive data collection and analysis are needed.
  - Findings are reported to the VAC membership for discussion and consensus resolution. Exec is then responsible for insuring that VAC solutions are implemented.
  - Create VAC meeting agenda

- **Why was this committee needed?**
  - Some decisions are time-sensitive and require an immediate response. There is always someone available every week to make decisions (this meeting and regular VAC meeting)
  - Members are elected, so all feel represented on VAC Exec

VAC Executive Committee

- **Membership**
  - Consists of five members:
    - One elected from Admissions/Registrar's Office, one Academic Coordinator from the Student Resource Center, and two Academic Coordinators from two different academic units
    - Assistant Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs holds a permanent position on the VAC Executive Committee

- **Details**
  - Elected members serve two calendar year terms.
  - Each member serves as ex-officio on at least one VAC standing committee.
  - Meets twice per month during the academic year
  - Meets once per month during the summer

VAC Executive Committee

- **Election Process**
  - All VAC members are eligible serve on VAC Exec and to vote. All voting occurs via electronic means and tallied by Academic Affairs staff

- The election is held each May with terms to begin each July 1.

- The VAC membership chooses the VAC chair from the elected Exec members slated to serve for the upcoming calendar year.
  - VAC Chair is a one year appointment

Standing Committees

Standing Committees

- **Purpose**
  - To promote progress in critical areas related to advising and retention

- **Members of committees**
  - Members of VAC who volunteer their time
  - People typically make a one year commitment and can serve longer if they wish
  - Committee chairs are non-VAC Exec members
  - One VAC Exec member serves as ex-officio on each committee

Standing Committees

- **Committees**
  - Assessment
  - Professional Development
  - Website/Communications
  - Zzusis/Advising Technology

- **Task Forces of VAC**
  - Task Forces may be established by the VAC Exec for projects, on an as-needed basis
  - Also have a representative from Vancouver in WSU Pullman Committees such as WSU ACADA and the Advising Consultant Group (ACG)

Assessment Committee

Role of the VAC Assessment Committee

- A shared understanding among departments of advising assessment and assessment practices
- Support collaboration around assessment of advising
- Serve as a liaison to the Assessment Specialist in the assessment process

Purpose of Assessment

- To incorporate the student perspective into the advising experience
- To assess student satisfaction with advising service delivery
- To gauge the pulse of advising at WSU Vancouver and develop continuous improvement of the process
- To understand what exists currently
- To continue to understand advising and the student's experience (as a result of changes and for different student populations)

Advising Survey

Academic Advising Survey

- Developed by committee, feedback given by VAC and approved by Academic Affairs
- We have done advising surveys since 2009 in a number of different methodologies and this year we went to an online survey.
- Distribution:
  - Handout with survey link, given to each student after advising appointment
  - Zzusis portal message sent out two times during the corresponding semester
- To avoid survey fatigue, only given to students every other academic year

Advising Survey

- Responses were evaluated and a full report was created

- Also using an inductive analysis approach, the Assessment Committee brought student concerns forward to the Administration and Student Success Council

- Now working to develop a survey for Admissions Counselors

Professional Development Committee

Role

- Improve academic advisor skills and knowledge to a standard level of competency
    - Increase scholarly activity among academic advisors
    - Foster an environment of cooperation and respect around advising issues on the Vancouver campus

Professional Development Committee

Purpose

- To collaborate with WSU ACADA, to provide professional development opportunities for WSU Vancouver advisors
  - A small portion of the professional development funds each year are used to ensure all advisors have membership in WSU ACADA.
  - Works to get approval from WSU ACADA for one level 2 training specifically for WSU Vancouver every year
  - Send trainings & presentations back to other campuses as well

- To regularly sponsor on-campus retreats, workshops, and trainings for advisors to learn from each other and outside resources.

- To fund advisors ability to participate in symposium, conferences, NACADA webinars, etc.

Website/Communications Committee

Purpose
- Keep advising website user friendly (easy to navigate and to locate information)
- Maintain advising related information current by staying in touch with campus community
- Provide useful links for advisors and students
- Promote the importance of advising and "Advising Awareness" event and/or advising-related events
- Post and update University Common Requirements UCORE information as it becomes available and make it readily available for students
- Plan VAC social events

Zzusis/Advising Technology Committee

Purpose

- To focus on the technology that advisors use, and provides updates and training as changes occur; WSU has had multiple technology changes in the last several years, and much training has been needed.

- To works with the Enterprise Systems Technology Group, at the WSU Pullman campus, to stay aware of the most up-to-date technology information and upcoming changes

Benefits

Communication, Collaboration & Advocacy

Communication

- Communication between departments

- Everyone is on the same page and knows all resources available

- Cross-talk, creates opportunities for learning

- We all have a voice and are part of the process. You are as much a part of the process as you choose to be.

- By bringing a problem to the committee, you hear a wide variety of solutions that then benefit all of our students

- Creates camaraderie and tight-knit advising community

Collaboration

- Shared responsibilities eases everyone's individual burden

- Cross-talk that creates opportunity for learning and collaboration, sharing best practices and resources

- Easy referrals, decision-making, committee work

- Gives everyone a voice to provide input, suggestions, feedback, different perspectives, and constructive criticism benefiting all students and campus community

Collaboration

- Listening to one another gives all members a chance to be heard and creates buy-in from members of the group

- Provides leadership opportunities in professional development

- All of our advisors have gone through WSU ACADA level I training, everyone participates in Level II trainings

Advocacy

- Acts as a positive change agent for advisors/advising system, students, and WSU Vancouver as a whole

- Promotes the importance of advising across campus

- Creates advocacy opportunities on student issues

- Give advisors a voice in small and large academic issues

- Supports a variety of professional development
  - Advisor retreat, national/regional conferences, WSUACADA Level I & II training

- More effective academic advising by bringing problems/issues forward to administration/management team

Questions to consider

- If you were to implement this at your school:
  - What are going to be the roadblocks?
  - Where would you start to get support or by-in?

- If your college or university already has a committee in place:
  - Is there another population that directly relates to advising who should be included?
  - Are you getting the support you need? Is your voice being heard?

Getting Started on Your Own Committee

Getting Started

- Develop leaders

- Establish a standing meeting time

- Foster atmosphere of commitment to participate

- Have designee to create a meeting agenda

- Schedule an advising retreat/potluck to share best practices. This contributes to camaraderie that you have developed working together.

- You don't have to have money or official recognition to get together and support one another and share best practices.

Our Roadblocks

- Joining disparate voices and creating enough leadership to make a case to the administration as to why we should be an official university committee

- Deciding if you will be housed in Student Affairs or Academic Affairs

- Negotiating support (place to meet, time allowed to do VAC service & professional development, funding)

- Making the experience value-added to advisors

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VAC Committee