

Cover Page

Issue 1 November 2025

Academic Advising Quarterly

The Art of Advising - How Advisors Paint, Sculpt & Compose the Possible

Student Success Leadership in uncertain times - Five Imperatives for Academic Advisors and Administrators

From Imposter Syndrome to NACADA President - Embracing Your Unique Strengths

Page 2

Editor's Note

Academic Advising Quarterly

What in the world are we doing? Academic Advising Quarterly was an idea that spawned after participating as a coeditor on a NACADA Pocket Guide and interviewing Ryan Braeger for the Adventures in Advising podcast. Ryan shared about an online publication he developed with colleagues at Utah State University.

The thought of bringing that concept to life for academic advisors and being a coeditor on a new publication was something I couldn't pass up. This was an opportunity to create a publication as a form of public facing scholarship and to open the doors to invite anyone in the academic advising realm to feel comfortable submitting their piece and sharing their story.

Will this continue for years to come? Who knows. If this just becomes a one-off special issue and sparks motivation and continued interest in anything academic advising related, then this magazine did its job.

If there's a lesson to learn, it is to throw all your ideas at the wall and see what sticks. This one did and we moved forward creating something we hope you enjoy and can pick up at least one tip from these amazing individuals.

Thanks for reading and keep advising!

~ Matt Markin

Page 3

Editor's Note

Academic Advising Quarterly

Why in the world are we doing this? There are so many answers to that question. Like Matt said, opening doors, inviting engagement, and sharing were all part of our Why. We do love an interesting idea made real, too.

But the truth is, neither of us are experts in magazine making. We don't have extensive backgrounds soliciting authors for submissions. We've never edited articles or designed layouts. We've simply never done this before.

Not only have Matt and I never done this before, but *WE* have never done this before, not as a profession. Obviously, there were academic advising publications before. The earliest NACADA newsletters are quite the read... if you can find them. We all benefit from the ongoing, current publications in the scholarship of academic advising, of course. And what our friends in Europe have started with *Waypoint* is of particular interest.

Here, though, we're drawing on the grassroots, DIY, counter-cultural ethos of the Zine scene, one that doesn't wait for someone else to do something, doesn't ask for permission. And we're looking for collaborators who connect with that feeling. We want to see where things go and won't worry about things like tradition, perfection, or peer review.

So, I guess my answer to the original question is an emphatic Why Not?

~ Ryan Scheckel

Page 4, 5

Guiding the Future: Student Success Leadership in Uncertain Times

Melinda J. Anderson, Ed.D. Executive Director, Network Engagement Achieving the Dream

Sydney Moman, Senior Academic Advisor University of Cincinnati

The headlines are familiar to all of us by now: enrollment declines, growing student mental health challenges, debates over the return on investment of a college degree, and the dizzying executive orders that create and cause confusion. But behind the statistics and confusion lies a more profound truth: higher education is at a crossroads, and academic advisors and administrators who support them are poised to help determine its future.

In an era of rapid change and rising student needs, academic advisors are no longer just course schedulers or registration guides. They are holistic educators, crisis managers, and advocates who help students navigate campus bureaucracy, ever-changing academic curriculum, and the dynamics of campus life. As such,

academic advising has continued to evolve with universities' missions as they fine-tune themselves to define and deliver better student success outcomes.

Students Are Changing. So Must We.

Today's students are more diverse than ever in race, age, background, interests, and life experience. Many work full time, support families, or are the first in their families to attend college. Their challenges are not confined to the classroom: they span food and housing insecurity, mental health, and technology access. These students need more than information; they need connection, flexibility, assurance, and purpose to reach their goals of earning the credentials they seek by attending college.

Academic advisors and administrators are uniquely positioned to meet this moment. Few others possess insight into the student journey. However, to realize this potential fully, institutions must rethink how they support and structure the advising enterprise.

Page 6,7

Five Imperatives for Academic Advisors and Administrators

If higher education is to adapt to this new reality, both frontline advisors and the leaders who guide student success strategy must commit to bold, coordinated action:

1. Elevate Advising as a Strategic Priority

Advising must be considered an academic function critical to student retention and degree completion. That means reducing caseloads, ensuring competitive compensation, and including advising perspectives in institutional planning and governance.

2. Build Integrated, Holistic Support Systems

Students don't separate their academic, financial, and personal lives—and neither should we. Advising teams should work closely with financial aid, mental health services, career development, and faculty to ensure that support is coordinated and student-centered. These entities may not exist on the same physical plane, but it is necessary that they operate as one streamlined network.

3. Use Technology Thoughtfully

CRM tools, early alert systems, and degree planners can help identify at-risk students and streamline service. However, technology should augment, not replace, the advisor-student relationship. Data should inform outreach and support, not reduce students to risk scores. Progressive and responsible assessment practices are not just for the classroom, they are vital to the success of the advising unit.

4. Center Equity in Advising Models

Equity is not a buzzword; it's a responsibility. Advisors and administrators must examine

policies, processes, and assumptions that create disparate outcomes. This includes everything from how advising appointments are scheduled to how probation policies are enforced to how success plans are completed.

5. Support the Professionals Who Support Students

Advisors are experiencing high levels of burnout. Institutions must provide ongoing training, manageable workloads, and clear pathways for advancement. A culture of care must extend to the professionals who provide the care.

A Shared Opportunity

Higher education's current disruption is not just a crisis—it's a call to reimagine the student experience. No group is better positioned to lead that reimagination than academic advisors and student success professionals. This is the time to turn passion into productivity and lay a solid foundation that will carry this work forward.

But this moment requires more than individual effort. It calls for institutional investment, leadership vision, and a collective commitment to making higher education more humane, equitable, and effective. It means listening to students, trusting advisors, and building systems designed to enroll and support them through graduation and beyond. It means strategic planning, innovation, and courageous conversations.

If we're willing to act, this era of disruption can become a foundation for renewal. And it starts—quietly but powerfully—with each conversation in an advising office, each intervention that changes a student's path, and each decision to center student success not as a slogan, but as our shared mission.

Page 8,9

NACADA Region Conferences flyer

Page 10, 11

From Imposter Syndrome to President: My Journey as a NACADA Leader

Wendy Schindler, Director, TRIO Student Support Services, Northern Kentucky University

Page 12, 13

In October 2024, I stepped up to the podium on a stage in front of over 2,500 people, took a deep breath, and said, "My name is Wendy Schindler, and I am absolutely thrilled and deeply honored to be your next NACADA President." The moment was surreal. When I joined NACADA in 2011, the Board of Directors was the furthest thing from my mind, let alone being elected President. So, how did I end up here?

I'm almost finished with an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership, and my dissertation is an autoethnography focused on the ways my lived experiences don't align with the current normative paradigm of *leadership*. What I've learned is that leadership isn't about fitting into a mold; it's about breaking barriers and embracing your unique strengths. I am White and cisgender, which affords me a tremendous amount of privilege and access to spaces denied to others. However, those are just two facets of my identities; I am so much more.

My journey to leadership has been anything but conventional. I am autistic and have severe ADHD. I am queer, fat, disabled, and live with a dormant brain tumor. These identities are not what society typically associates with leadership, yet here I am, thriving in my role as President. Each of these identities shapes the way I move through the world. My experiences have taught me that leadership is not about perfection. Instead, leadership comes from authenticity and a willingness to engage with others.

It took years of self-discovery, but I've come to love the person I am, including my strengths and weaknesses. After all, my weaknesses remind me of the importance of community. Where I may be lacking in a particular skill, a colleague can shine. I see this play out all the time in NACADA. When any group – a steering committee, task force, or even the Board of Directors – is comprised of people with diverse experiences, skills, and knowledge, the conversations are richer, and the overall work is elevated. So it follows that the more people we have engaging with NACADA leadership opportunities, the better our association will be.

Volunteer leadership is vital for the growth and development of NACADA. It provides opportunities for professional growth, networking, and making a meaningful impact. Whether running for office, presenting at conferences, or writing for publications, engaging in leadership roles helps shape the future of academic advising. You might think this doesn't include you, but I assure you, it does.

Imposter syndrome is a common barrier that prevents many from pursuing leadership roles. It's the feeling of being inadequate despite evident success. I can't count the number of times I've heard a member say they're not ready to be (or worthy of being) a NACADA leader. I know the feeling well. The first position I ran for in NACADA was chair of the LGBTQA Advising & Advocacy Community. The previous chair nominated me and encouraged me to run. I only agreed because I assumed I would lose the election. "Surely," I thought, "someone more qualified will be elected." When the ballot became available, I was shocked to find I was running unopposed. But you know what? I received a lot of support from NACADA members and the Executive Office, and I ended up loving my time as a community chair!

This set me on a trajectory of leadership in NACADA. I've presented at conferences, been published in the journal and blog, and run for many other leadership positions.

Some of my proposals were accepted and some rejected. In some elections, I won and in others, I lost. And that's ok. The key is to keep moving forward. There are always new opportunities, and I wouldn't be where I am today without the incredible encouragement and support I received from my #NACADAcommunity.

I generally don't have to deal with impostor syndrome anymore (at least, not in my professional life). After battling a brain tumor, my self-perspective has changed dramatically. Life is simply too short to doubt myself. But I certainly wouldn't wish a brain tumor on anyone else, so here are some other strategies I've learned to challenge self-doubt and embrace my inner awesomeness:

1. **Acknowledge Success:** Record of your accomplishments and revisit them when impostor syndrome creeps in. When I receive kudos via email, I save them to a specific folder and read them when I need a reminder of my leadership abilities.
2. **Seek Support:** Connect with mentors and peers who can offer encouragement and a different perspective. I have a group text with three NACADA colleagues who have become dear friends. We are constantly acting as sounding boards, cheerleaders, and truth-sayers for each other.
3. **Embrace Your Uniqueness:** Recognize that your diverse experiences are valuable! No one has lived the same life as you, and your unique perspective is essential. I am constantly reminding myself that no one person has a full view of the world, but everyone has a piece of the puzzle to share – that includes me, and it includes you, too.

Give these strategies a try and see what you think. They might take some practice, but over time, it'll get easier.

So, are you ready to take the leap and engage with leadership opportunities? I'm happy to be your cheerleader! You have the potential to make a difference, just as I have. Start by volunteering for committees, submitting proposals for conferences, or writing for publications. Remember, you're not alone; NACADA offers a supportive community that will help you succeed. Whether it's front and center on a stage in front of thousands or behind-the-scenes supporting the academic advising profession, there's a place for your valuable contributions.

Leadership is about embracing your unique strengths, showing up authentically, and making a positive impact. Diverse leadership enriches our community and drives innovation. If I can thrive in my role despite societal expectations, then I promise, so can you. Take the first step towards leadership and join me in shaping the future of academic advising!

Advisortown: Everyday Helpers

John Sauter, Niagara University

Digital painting

Page 16

Advisortown: Everyday Helpers invites you to reflect upon all the advisors that are necessary for students to succeed. Whether it is improving the profession, advising, connecting with students on campus, or just being there for a student when life gets in the way, the help that advisors provide is crucial for students as they navigate college and achieve success. This piece imagines all the advisors required to help students succeed.

Set in a fantastical version of Pittsburgh, P.A, it features the Mount Washington neighborhood that rises above downtown. Scattered throughout are several local landmarks including the Duquesne Incline, one of Schenley Park's Tufa bridges, and the Grandview Overlook. To embrace the diversity of experiences and challenges of advising within higher education, representations of buildings from ten local colleges and universities are spread across the hillside.

Advisortown embraces the aesthetic of Richard Scarry's Busytown illustrations, in which innumerable anthropomorphic animals served in various roles throughout the town. This composition is framed by a student entering college at the bottom of the hill and a graduate celebrating at the pinnacle of the mountain in a cap and gown with diploma in hand. A meandering set of pathways in between the two figures represents the college experience as students pass by all of the college buildings and advisors along the way.

As everyday helpers, advisors represent a wide variety of identities, skills, and experiences. Throughout the poster, you will find thirty different figures based on real advisors. While the original plan was to represent students overcoming the struggles of college, this piece evolved to focus on the helpers. When asking for volunteers, John inquired about their hobbies. This created an incredibly fun challenge of representing them accurately while also incorporating their hobbies. The volunteers' suggestions and messages made this project very enjoyable. While you may recognize a few advisors in this piece, there are many that you may not know. Often, we focus on the roles of advisors and not always the people behind them, or how their interests influence their own wellbeing and help them connect within their communities. As you explore this poster, consider your own hobbies, how often you get a chance to share or explore those with others, and how they may influence your advising practices.

Page 17

The Art of Advising: How Academic Advisors Paint Futures, Sculpt Identity, and Compose the Possible

Kevin P. Thomas, Ed.D., Vice President of Enrollment Services & Student Success,
University of Central Arkansas

In my world, I am constantly surrounded by metrics, dashboards, and predictive analytics. In these moments, I wonder if the soul of the work we do in higher education is unseen. Academic advising is frequently framed as a service or support function, but for those who work in the advising community, we know a deeper truth: excellent advising is an art form. It is intuitive, improvisational, and expressive. Excellent advising requires mastery of both craft and emotion. It thrives in ambiguity and flourishes in complexity. And with this perspective, advisors are revealed not as mere guides or dispensers of information, but as artists, crafting meaning, shaping identity, and curating journeys through the beautiful gallery of higher education.

Page 18, 19

What element fuels their craft? Human potential.

Every advising conversation is a canvas. Every student is a living sculpture of progress. Each academic plan and journey is a symphony of aspirations, constraints, and discoveries. The truly great advisors do not simply disseminate knowledge; they translate dreams into paths. The truly great advisors harmonize the friction between policy and person. In being these artists, they create something beautiful, durable, and unique - a student who believes they can become something more.

Advisors as Sculptors

Students arrive on our campuses chiseled by experience but unfinished, burdened by the internal and external pressures. Academic advisors listen for what's embedded beneath the surface as they seek out the spark of curiosity, an ambition that was once buried, a quiet fear of potential success. And like any artist, advisors are ready with their tools - their questions. These questions allow advisors to help students chip away at the unnecessary to reveal their own emerging identity and a greater world of possibility.

The timing of this process is not always fast. This process is not always predictable. Like stone, students sometimes resist the shaping. Students come with edges that are formed in inequity, doubt, discouragement, and uncertainty. One of the greatest traits of the academic advisor is to be patient while continuing to work and progress, even when progress feels invisible. The artistry lies in holding the vision of what could be, even when it feels out of reach or the student cannot yet find that belief.

Advisors as Composers

Academic advising is structured and rhythmic. There are credits to be counted, prerequisites to be sequenced, requirements to be fulfilled, but advisors don't just follow the score; they compose. Advisors interpret, adapt, and improvise. Advisors design rhythms of learning that suit each student's tempo. They find harmony amid conflicting demands - financial constraints, family obligations, mental health challenges.

In these moments and situations is where artistry meets strategy. A good composer understands both theory and feeling, and a good advisor knows the policies and the person. They create academic plans that do not just check boxes, but make meaning. Advisors understand that a well-timed semester off, or a challenging elective, or a change in major can be the critical notes that transform a student's entire song.

Advisors as Artists

Artists look beyond the surface. In their work, they seek layers, emotion, and essence. Advisors must do the same. The data provided in the student's record is just a sketch. Does GPA matter? Does course history matter? Does their declared major matter? Of course! But a student is made up of more than those data points. The full composition of a student is their family stories, their values, their traumas, passions, and dreams that define the layers of who they are as a person.

To advise well is to see all the layers and view the student fully. It is to ask not just, "What do you want to do?" but also, "Who are you becoming?" It is to hold space for identity exploration, to validate complexity, to name strengths students do not yet recognize in themselves. The best art is not always flattering, but it is always honest. And the best advising is not always about pleasing the student, but is instead, about empowering them to see themselves more clearly.

Advisors as Performance Artists

Advising happens in the moment. It is live and in that moment. No scripts. No edits. The advisor walks into every appointment prepared but not rehearsed. Even in that preparation, an advisor never knows what is going to happen. The student brings emotion, confusion, and urgency. The advisor brings knowledge, presence, and intuition. What comes next is a kind of improvisational performance. This performance is responsive, dynamic, and created in real time. It's a collaboration of art between the student and the advisor.

And like performance artists, advisors are vulnerable. Advisors must adapt to uncertainty, hold tension, and sometimes absorb pain. Oftentimes, the advisor experiences unexpected outcomes. Advisors are balancing the emotional triage, providing the quiet advocacy, and offering a gentle reframing. And because of the weight of these experiences, the advisor leaves the advising session changed, even if they don't know it or show it.

Why This Matters Now

If academic advising is an art, then higher education is currently facing a crisis of underinvestment in its artists. Advisors are asked to do more with less, to scale the unscalable, to navigate systems not built for creativity or care. The pressures of enrollment, retention metrics, and compliance regimes often reduce advising to transactional checklists. But the moments that change lives happen outside the checklist.

In an era defined by automation and algorithmic prediction, the human artistry of advising becomes even more valuable. Artificial intelligence can generate degree plans. Only a human can recognize when a student's voice trembles while choosing one. Predictive analytics can flag risk. Only a human can ask, gently, "What's been hard lately?"

The Future of Advising is Artistic

If we want a future where higher education is inclusive, responsive, and transformative, we must treat advising not as clerical work but as relational work. We must invest in training that enhances not just compliance knowledge, but emotional intelligence, cultural fluency, and creative problem-solving. We must build structures that allow for reflection, experimentation, and storytelling among advising professionals.

Most of all, we must stop asking advisors to prove their worth in quantifiable terms alone. The best artists are not always the most productive. They are the most resilient. The ones whose work lingers, haunts, heals. Advisors are artists, and their medium is possibility. And each year, their masterpieces walk across commencement stages.

In letting advising be advising, let us finally see academic advisors for what they are: artists. They are creators. Let's commit to giving them a canvas, the time, and the admiration they deserve.

Page 20, 21

Reflections on Creating the 'Advisor Exchange' Podcast and Advising Community

Declan McLaughlin, Senior Lecturer, Queen's University Belfast

In the Academic Year 2022-2023, I enrolled on a course called 'Developing Leadership in Educational Practice'. As part of the final symposium for the course, participants had to give an oral presentation on a pilot scheme of an area of development they would like to see in their work. I chose to focus on the resourcing of Advisors of Studies within my teaching Centre. Like many further or higher education institutions around the world, every student in my institution is assigned an Adviser of Studies. This term is akin to those of Academic Advisor, Personal Tutor, Senior Advisor etc. At my institution, its

academic staff member who guides students on module choices, degree requirements, and other academic decisions. In speaking with colleagues, they voiced concerns that they feel they often work in isolation within their departments. When I first became an Advisor of Studies, I quickly realised there was little in way of resources or university-wide support for the role. Since 2020, there also ceased to be any formal centrally organised training at the institution. Each School handled advising in its own way, and there was no easy forum to share experiences across the institution. I felt like I was constantly reinventing the wheel, unsure if colleagues in other schools faced the same issues or had better solutions. I was constantly asking questions from colleagues who I worked alongside, to see if I was doing the right thing. This lack of connection meant good ideas stayed siloed, and many advisors were left uncertain about how effective our advising was beyond fulfilling the basic administrative duties. This fragmented landscape made me want to try and find a solution to a more collaborative approach. For my symposium topic, I developed a resource pack for new advisors. I initially started to collate a collection of support materials for myself e.g. a list of hyperlinked resources to various university services, email templates to send to students at different times of the year, PowerPoint presentation summaries of university processes etc. However, I knew from experience and from broader conversations that advising could be more impactful if advisors learned from each other. In fact, the research suggests that academic advisors develop their professional identity through interactions with colleagues and participation in a forum. We become better advisors by sharing experiences and building a common identity around our role. I trialled sharing this resource pack with my immediate colleagues who were also in an Advisor of Studies role in my Centre. What I didn't realise at that time, was this was the first step in bringing our scattered advisors together to learn and grow collectively.

Page 22, 23

Advisor Exchange Podcast: From Idea to Impact

Along with my colleague, Olivia Hamill, from the Centre for Education Development we set about creating a platform where Advisors of Studies could exchange ideas, discuss challenges, and celebrate successes. A podcast felt like the ideal medium that suited the role of advisors, being conversational and accessible. The added benefit, we hoped, would be at it would have the reach to get to busy colleagues across all Schools. We named our podcast, 'Advisor Exchange', to emphasise the two-way sharing of experiences among our peers. Each episode took the 'normal' format of a podcast, with a candid conversation with one or two advisors or professional support staff, about their experiences. Our goal wasn't to preach best practice, but to draw out personal stories and practical tips from the those with experience of advising. Admittedly, we were entering new territory as neither of us had podcasting experience, and before the first recording I was nervous. There was always a fear that we wouldn't have enough to

discuss, or worse still, that no one would listen! Those nerves melted away once we got into the studio and our producer Stephen Mullan pressed 'record'. The dialogue flowed naturally, and enthusiasm took over.

To our delight, the response to the first episode was overwhelmingly positive. Colleagues from various departments reached out to say they related to the stories shared. One advisor mentioned she listened during her commute to work and felt relieved hearing others grapple with the similar dilemmas. This feedback was encouraging and affirmed my belief that we were meeting a real need for connection. I also found that each conversation on the podcast prompted me to reflect more deeply on my own advising approach. The whole idea, after all, was that the experience was a two-way street, an advising exchange.

As we released more episodes, I noticed that more advisors started referencing things they heard on the podcasts in our monthly meetings and training sessions. The opportunity for meeting, discussion and idea sharing has helped move advisors working in a silo to a more collaborative, campus-wide approach to problem-solving. For instance, after an episode on supporting at-risk students, another advisor told me she tried a similar outreach strategy in her School, inspired by what she had heard. This example of knowledge transfer and sharing was exactly what we had hoped for. The podcast also highlighted the often invisible work that goes into academic advising. By giving advisors a voice, it highlighted their dedication and creativity, helping others and even the institution, recognise advising as an essential component of student success. I like to think that 'Advisor Exchange' wasn't just a place for swapping advice, but instead it has helped advisors take pride in their role and feel part of something larger.

Establishing a Community for Advisors

Building on the podcast's momentum, we began to establish a more formal and frequent-meeting network for advisors, essentially a Community of Practice. In practical terms, we began hosting monthly online meetups open to all Advisors of Studies. Each session had a loose theme, often inspired by the recent podcast topic or a common advising concern pertinent to the academic year and was kept informal and collegial. Attendance at these gatherings has grown steadily, initially from a handful of early participants to dozens of advisors from every faculty. Many were relieved to discover that their challenges were not unique to their School, hearing others echo similar issues created an immediate sense of camaraderie.

What helps make the community thrive is a balance of structure and spontaneity. We occasionally invite guest speakers or prepare mini-training segments, for example a

short demo of a new AI advising tool or a refresher on academic regulations, but most of the time sessions are devoted to open discussion. Often, the best insights emerge when colleagues could freely share a story or ask for advice. In these peer-to-peer exchanges, abstract policies and 'best practices' have turned into relatable anecdotes, and colleagues offered concrete solutions or reassurance. Over time, we've developed trust and mutual support. Advisors feel safe admitting when they don't have an answer, knowing someone in the group might have faced a similar situation and could offer guidance. In one meeting, for instance, an advisor brought up a difficult case of a student in crisis, and several colleagues responded with thoughtful suggestions and moral support. That kind of collective empathy and problem-solving was something new and powerful in our context. The community became a space of shared learning and encouragement which is exactly the network we had long felt was missing.

On a personal note, being part of this community also transformed how I viewed myself in the advisor role. I had initially seen my Advisor of Studies role as just another administrative duty I had to fulfil. Now I regard it as a core part of my professional identity, one that I actively cultivate, and of all the administrative duties I undertake, the one I enjoy the most. Seeing the passion and ingenuity others have brought to advising has inspired me to elevate my own efforts. I've taken part in national conferences on advising, spoken with colleagues from outside of my institution, region and indeed country. It has reinforced the idea that through community participation and reflection, advisors get a stronger sense of identity and commitment to the role. I no longer feel like an island in my institution. Instead, I feel connected to a university-wide team of academic advisors who are all striving to help students succeed.

Page 24

Development and Recognition

These initiatives have led to many positive outcomes for both advisors and the institution. Many colleagues have reported improvements in their advising confidence and skills. Newer advisors now have a support network to turn to rather than struggling alone, and experienced advisors feel valued as mentors and contributors. I've observed advisors adopting ideas from our conversations and becoming more proactive and student-centred in their approach. Advising at Queen's is increasingly seen not as a solitary task but as a shared mission fuelled by collective wisdom.

At the institutional level, the project has gained attention as a model of effective peer-led professional development. University leaders have noted that better-supported advisors can lead to better student outcomes. We have also been invited to present our work at national conferences, such as the UK Advising and Tutoring Annual Conference and the

Advance Higher Education Teaching and Learning Conference, which further validates its impact. Perhaps most importantly, we have started to see a culture change where advising is being recognised as integral to the student experience.

Looking Back and to the Road Ahead

Looking back, I feel both proud and grateful. What began as a tentative idea grew into something that has impacted colleagues across the university and, indirectly, countless students. The process reinforced for me the importance of stepping back and reflecting, both alone and together, on the work we do. By sharing our stories and listening to each other, we learned new techniques and found affirmation and renewed purpose in our advising roles. Crucially, for our meetings, we try to keep the tone friendly and inclusive rather than formal, so people felt comfortable joining in and sharing openly. Just as we do with our students. Culture change doesn't happen overnight, but each conversation and each small exchange of ideas strengthens our network and ultimately helps our students. What started as a simple exchange of advice has become a catalyst for professional growth and community spirit. I am excited to see this advisors' network continue to flourish. This journey has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my career, and it continues to inspire. Even in a large institution, we've proven that we are not alone in our commitment to helping students succeed.

Page 25

UK Advising and Tutoring flyer

Page 26, 27

My First NACADA Annual Conference Experience

Jing Yao, Academic Advisor, The University of British Columbia

I am incredibly grateful to have been selected as an emerging leader for the 2024-2026 cohort of the NACADA Emerging Leaders Program (ELP), which gave me the incredible opportunity to attend the 2024 NACADA Annual Conference in Pittsburgh. At the conference, I made meaningful connections with colleagues from other institutions, gained insight into NACADA's organizational structure, attended thought-provoking sessions, and felt inspired to further explore topics that piqued my interest.

The ELP orientation, scheduled a day before the conference began, allowed me to meet my fellow mentors, mentees, and members of the ELP executive team. With 2,700 attendees filling a vast convention center, it would have been easy to feel lost or isolated. However, the connections I made at the orientation helped me feel more comfortable and less intimidated during the three-day event. Every morning, I joined other mentors and mentees for breakfast, which gave me a sense of community.

Additionally, we met during lunch to share our conference experiences and gathered for dinner to bond outside of the sessions.

The orientation also introduced me to NACADA's organizational structure, which helped me understand how I can get more involved as a member and work toward accomplishing my ELP goals. Armed with this new information, I decided to join my regional division to build my network with colleagues from the same area. I also narrowed my focus to advising communities that align with my interests, allowing me to dive deeper into the topics I care about. The mentors generously shared their experiences and provided invaluable tips on writing and presenting, which made me feel more prepared and supported in my journey.

Throughout the three-day conference, I attended many sessions that sparked my curiosity and inspired me to continue learning. For example, one session on supporting high-achieving students deeply resonated with me. After the conference, I researched the topic further and hosted a community of practice session at my office to share what I had learned and exchange ideas with my colleagues. I also attended a session about advisors' experiences as students, which led me to step out of my comfort zone and approach the presenters to discuss my thoughts on the topic.

One of the highlights of the conference was when I recognized Jennifer Bloom among the attendees. Having taken her appreciative advising course and watched her videos the previous year, it was thrilling to meet her in person. She graciously agreed to take a photo with me, which made the experience even more memorable.

Overall, attending the NACADA conference was an enriching experience. I gained valuable knowledge, found inspiration, and expanded my professional network. Plus, I had the opportunity to explore Pittsburgh, a beautiful city filled with rich history and stories. I'm thankful for the chance to have experienced it all, and I look forward to continuing to build on what I learned.

Page 28, 29

The Synchronous Communication Revolution:

Welcoming a New Norm in Academic Advising

Matt Plescia, Alex Advisor, Hamilton College

Higher education underwent significant shifts during the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing universities to provide students with critical support services—like academic advising—at a distance. Before 2020, advising was primarily face-to-face, but campus closures drove a rapid adoption of synchronous communication technologies (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams) to maintain continuity of advising services.

Remote Academic Advising (RAA) is no longer just a backup option—it's becoming part of a new advising norm (Wang et al., 2022).

Academic advising is inherently a relational practice. Advisors help students navigate educational options, requirements, and personal goals through discussion and trust-building. Moving these conversations online introduced both new opportunities and challenges. Remote advising offered flexibility—students could meet from the comfort of their home or between other commitments, and advisors could connect with a wider range of students regardless of location.

Early experiences during the pandemic showed that both students and advisors had to adjust their expectations. According to Wang et al. (2022), remote advising during this period revealed gaps in knowledge and perception among students, and between students and advisors, about how to best utilize these new tools.

Yet, despite initial growing pains, many advising interactions continued successfully online. One student shared:

“In-person advising with my advisor was so beneficial when I initially started at the university... She explained my plan in an intuitive way and made me feel welcome and able to ask questions. Now I email her whenever I have questions, but this has been made easy because of the relationship built face-to-face. I believe this relationship could have been built through video chats” (Wang et al., 2022).

One key lesson from the rapid shift to remote advising is that technology, when used thoughtfully, can enhance connection rather than impede it. Video calls allow for eye contact, tone of voice, and immediacy that email cannot provide. Advisors began using features like screen-sharing to review degree audits or course schedules together, making the session interactive and visually rich.

The use of video is often cited as beneficial for students' emotional and cognitive engagement, especially for first-time students or those new to remote advising. By turning the camera on, advisors send a message of presence and attentiveness. According to Wang et al. (2022), incorporating video in RAA may aid in building rapport similarly to an in-person meeting.

Technology is only a tool, however. Building genuine connection remotely also requires advisors to adapt their communication styles—being more explicit, using shorter but more frequent check-ins, and adopting a casual yet professional tone to match the medium.

Insights from a University Study on Remote Advising

To better understand the impact of this shift, Wang et al. (2022) conducted a study at a comprehensive state university in the southeastern United States. The study surveyed

12,019 undergraduate students (539 responses) and 47 academic advisors (28 responses).

The findings revealed wide variation in comfort with technology. Some students were already comfortable with platforms like Zoom, while others were unfamiliar with scheduling virtual meetings. Advisors similarly varied in their confidence. This variation led to perception gaps—students who were tech-savvy might have found remote advising straightforward, while others required more support.

The study also highlighted differing perceptions of effectiveness. Students appreciated the convenience of remote advising, while advisors more often expressed concern over the quality of connection. Despite these concerns, both groups found remote advising preferable to no advising at all.

Effective Practices and Recommendations

To support meaningful advising interactions in remote settings, the following practices are recommended:

- Provide necessary information before the appointment.
- Test your equipment and have a backup plan.
- Use video to enhance engagement.
- Be prepared with documents for screen sharing.
- Consider recording sessions when possible.
- Follow up after meetings to reinforce continuity.

Remote advising has become a sustainable, effective form of student support. What began as an emergency response has evolved into a hybrid model that combines the best of in-person and virtual approaches.

Wang et al. (2022) emphasize that continued success in remote advising requires thoughtful use of technology, consistent communication, and a focus on student engagement. Academic advisors are now well-positioned to innovate and expand student support through flexible and inclusive advising models.

References

Wang, C. X., Houdyshell, M., & Plescia, M. (2022). Synchronous communication technology for remote academic advising at a state university. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 12(1), 111–131. <https://doi.org/10.5590/JERAP.2022.12.1.09>

Editor's Note: This article is based on a presentation given at the 2024 NACADA Annual Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The poster presentation, titled "The

Synchronous Communication Revolution: Welcoming a New Norm in Academic Advising,” was presented by Matthew Plescia (Utah State University) and Erik Sutherland (Dickinson College).

Page 30, 31

The Transfer Experience

Anaya Player, senior, California State University, San Bernardino

What major are you pursuing and why?

I'm pursuing the Kinesiology-Exercise Science major. This pathway has a lot to do with wanting to change the way my loved ones are treated and represented in the medical field and providing long-term solutions for diseases instead of fixing the symptoms.

How did you decide that transferring was the right path for you?

I stayed at my community college longer than I anticipated because I could not decide what I wanted to do. Eventually I started to feel stagnant in my academic journey and knew it was time for me to transition to the next thing.

How did you decide on your destination school? What factors were or are most important in your decision-making?

The most important thing for me was making sure I could meet the requirements. The university's acceptance rate, affordability, and campus culture were also important because at the time I wanted to get involved on campus.

Did you face any obstacles while preparing to transfer?

he biggest obstacle I faced wasn't until I got on campus. It took a while for my documentation to be processed, and it made things stressful and complicated. There was no communication from admissions office and it affected other aspects of my journey like my financial aid and housing for pretty much the first half of my first semester.

What was the most challenging aspect of transitioning to your new institution? Could they have done anything differently?

Adjusting to a new and different environment was the most challenging thing for me. I think it would have been more beneficial for me if they had more involvement during orientation or had other events to share more of the resources offered in the kinesiology department exclusively to help me succeed as a kinesiology student.

What advice would you give to students considering transferring?

Do your own research on the program you are entering to familiarize yourself with requirements and resources they may offer exclusively to your major.

UTILIZE campus resources and build connections with your peers. You will see them throughout your time here and they can be helpful and inform you of things you might be aware of are important.

Lastly, get accustomed to the school's website.

Back Cover

Academic Advising Quarterly

AAQMagazine.com

The content published by Academic Advising Quarterly is intended for informational and educational purposes only. The views and opinions expressed in articles, interviews, and other materials are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of AAQ, its editors, or any affiliated institutions. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, AAQ makes no representations or warranties regarding completeness, reliability, or suitability of the information provided.

© 2025 Academic Advising Quarterly. All rights reserved.

All articles, interviews, images, graphics, and other content published in Academic Advising Quarterly are protected under U.S. and international copyright laws. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, or stored in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without the prior written permission of the publisher or the individual content authors, except as permitted by fair use under applicable law.

Authors retain copyright to their individual works unless otherwise specified through written agreement. By publishing with AAQ, authors grant the magazine a non-exclusive license to publish and archive their work in digital form.

Requests for permissions should be directed to: <https://www.aaqmagazine.com/contact>.