Haʻi Moʻolelo: Telling Our Story

The Status of Academic Advising at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa

written and compiled by

The CAA Status of Advising Workgroup

Denise Nakaoka, Chair (COE)
Leona Anthony (SOEST)
Ruth Bingham (PAC/CASSAS)
Jennifer Brown (SONDH/MTCC)
Pattie Dunn (SPAS)
Megumi Makino-Kanehiro (MAC)
Rikki Mitsunaga (Shidler)
Kathleen Normandin (CASSAS)

Council of Academic Advisors (CAA)
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience” (Light, R.J., 2001). Academic advising plays a critical role in the experiences of our diverse student population at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM). It is no coincidence that in Spring 2014 UHM graduated its largest class to date, four years after implementing two major advising initiatives: mandatory advising, and widespread availability of program sheets and four-year academic plans.

This report serves to inform campus stakeholders of the role academic advising plays in the recruitment, retention, graduation, and overall quality of students’ experiences at UHM. In addition to summarizing new and ongoing advising initiatives, this report will provide a definition of academic advising and recommendations for improvement.

Academic advisors have been working diligently to implement campus wide initiatives, provide timely and accurate information to students, and create a campus atmosphere that is welcoming and supportive for students throughout their academic careers at UHM. The following are highlights of recent advising accomplishments:

- In the last three years, all academic advising units have engaged in assessment activities, which include developing mission and vision statements, student learning outcomes, and assessment goals. Data is compiled to inform and improve advising practices, and annual summary reports are submitted to the UHM Assessment Office. [https://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/spprog/update/view.php](https://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/spprog/update/view.php)
- Online advisor training modules have been created to formalize information, ensure consistency, and provide uniformity in baseline training.
- Academic advisors collaborate on professional development activities such as presenting at local, national, regional and international conferences, planning local and regional conferences, publishing scholarly works in advising journals, and creating innovative programs to improve advising services.

Advising initiatives and accomplishments have contributed significantly to UHM’s recent increases in retention and graduation rates. Based on the innovation and productivity of UHM’s advisors and advising units, academic advising has become widely recognized as a vital component in students’ academic success at UHM. Continued improvement in students’ success will require expansion of, and investment in advising in the following areas of pressing need:

- Technology
- Advisor and Support Positions
- Expanded Peer Advising Programs
- Adequate Advising Space

Academic advisors are actively working to fulfill the University’s mission and vision. With additional support and resources, advisors will continue to increase UHM’s retention and graduation rates and create opportunities for students’ engagement and academic success.
ACADEMIC ADVISING AT UHM

Fundamentally, academic advising is teaching and thus integral to the mission of higher education. Academic advising engages students beyond their worldviews, and synthesizes and contextualizes students’ educational experiences within the frameworks of their individual aspirations, abilities, characteristics, values, and motivations as they enter, move through, and exit UHM (Gordon, Habley, Grites, & Associates, 2008).

Advisors often serve as the first point of contact for students and provide them with a unique perspective in terms of navigating their academic careers. UHM has a diverse student population, and the campus provides an exciting and stimulating environment for personal growth. Advisors recognize that their students’ cultural and socio-economic backgrounds are defining forces that shape their academic journeys, and advisors foster supportive partnerships that enhance students’ learning in and outside the classroom.

Academic advising is a series of intentional interactions with a curriculum, pedagogy, and a set of student learning outcomes (Gordon et al., 2008). Advising at UHM aligns with institutional learning outcomes, such as helping students understand the value of general education, the relationship between different requirements, and the integration of curricular and co-curricular experiences, all while fostering continuous learning and personal growth.

Advisors also serve as campus liaisons between students, faculty, staff, administration, student services, and academic units. The advising community collaborates and fosters collegiality in order to ensure consistency between different academic units and uniformity across campus.

Advising initiatives and accomplishments contributed significantly to UHM’s recent increases in retention and graduation rates. Based on the innovation and productivity of UHM’s advisors and advising units, advising has become widely recognized as a vital component in students’ academic success at UHM. Through academic advising, students learn how to be members of their higher education community, to think critically about their roles and responsibilities as students, and to become educated citizens of a democratic society and global community.

Objectives
Within a relationship founded in trust and mutual respect, students are, more often than not, willing to discuss their goals, abilities, concerns, and interests. Advisors acknowledge each student as an individual and tailor tools and services to his or her needs and interests. The primary goals of academic advising remain: (1) increasing student academic success as demonstrated through student persistence and timely graduation, (2) creating a cultural norm of a four-year bachelor’s degree, and (3) improving the transition and transfer of students from matriculation through graduation and into the workforce. Academic advisors guide and mentor students toward a successful college experience by fostering essential opportunities and skills, including the following:
Critical thinking skills;
Decision-making skills;
Civic engagement opportunities;
Leadership opportunities;
Oral and written communication skills;
Pathways toward employment and careers;
Study, time management, and planning skills;
Tutoring; and
Enhanced learning through career and field mentors.

Advisors are the primary conduit for articulating to students the University’s mission, philosophy, and rationale underlying requirements. All advising units have clearly articulated missions and learning outcomes that align with UHM’s Institutional Learning Outcomes, and engage in assessment related activities. Data collected informs and improves advising practice, furthering advising as an essential resource in developing appropriate programs, policies, and procedures leading to greater student persistence and timely graduation.

Structure of Advising
At UHM, regardless of the diversity of programs, populations, and advising models, advisors embrace the three components of academic advising: (1) curriculum (what advising deals with), (2) pedagogy (how advising does what it does), and (3) student learning outcomes (the result of academic advising) (Gordon et al., 2008). Additionally, advisors and advising units agree on the nationally accepted concept of academic advising: “Academic advising is a multi-dimensional and intentional process, grounded in teaching and learning, with its own purpose, content, and specified outcomes” (NACADA Concept Statement on Academic Advising, online).

Most UHM advisors are specialists in their fields, providing expert advice within defined parameters, and consequently, students may have anywhere from one to five advisors, depending on their major, college/school, co-curricular programs, and long-range plans. Individuals provide advising within a variety of positions, including instructional faculty (I-Faculty), professional advisors (S-faculty or APT), student peer advisors (undergraduate or graduate), and administrators. In some units, advising is divided between college/school professional advisors and instructional faculty in departments, while in others, advising is provided solely by individual instructional faculty.

The decentralized structure of advising at UHM carries an inherent danger of fragmentation, which is mitigated by a shared philosophy and continuous collaboration within the Council of Academic Advisors (CAA) and the broader academic advising community.

The Advising Community
Deliberate, continuous collaboration makes it possible for advisors to remain apprised of changes in campus policies, procedures, and best practices, and thus to advise students successfully. CAA facilitates much of this collaboration: it includes representatives from all advising units, as well as the Registrar, STAR, Admissions, Catalog and General Education Office. These partnerships
are essential to high quality advising, the exchange of ideas, and the coordination of activities and services.

CAA is an integral part of the decision-making process at UHM and is frequently consulted on academic matters such as grade replacement and suspension of academic action, and academic advising contributes to almost every academic program and initiative on campus. Notably, the Final Reports from two WASC visits commended CAA: the 2010 Capacity and Preparatory Review Report (Ray et al.) described CAA as a unit that “considers policies and practices with strong implications for student success; it has literally energized the campus wide conversation on best practice” (p.14); the 2011 Educational Effectiveness Report (Ray et al.) described CAA as “promot[ing] consistency between colleges and schools . . . and improv[ing] the overall quality of academic advising on campus” (p. 27).

The infrastructure for camaraderie, mutual support, and sharing of information is provided through CAA: monthly meetings, a listserv, an annual summer conference, and the website.

In part because of CAA, UHM advisors frequently collaborate on professional development activities such as presenting at local, regional, national, and international conferences, planning local and regional conferences, publishing scholarly works in advising journals, and creating innovative programs to improve advising services. Significantly, advisors now collaborate not only with colleagues within their own units, but also with colleagues throughout campus and the UH System.

Advisors serve as engaged members of the broad network of key offices and services, as well as the greater UHM and UH academic communities. They collaborate with colleagues from a wide variety of disciplines, resulting in new programs, professional development activities, and advising initiatives, as exemplified by the vast majority of UHM’s academic support programs which were started by advisors and grew into campus-wide programs, such as First Year Programs and the ACE learning communities; the First Year Advising Center and Mānoa Advising Center; Student Athlete Academic Services; the Pre-Health/Pre-Law Advising Center; Hoʻola Mālamalama and its Options in Health Professions program; Kaʻieʻie and the Mānoa Transfer Coordination Center; Sophomore Experience; the Mānoa Peer Advisor Programs; and UHM Program Sheets and Academic Plan Templates.

UHM advisors share purpose and vision, resulting in a strong professional community dedicated to improving and elevating the student experience at UHM.

**A Vision for Academic Advising at UHM**

Advising is recognized as one of the ways UHM teaches its students and is part of the teaching curricula on campus, complementing teaching in the classroom and in extracurricular activities. Advising facilitates students making connections between academics, careers/employment, and life enrichment. Advising also functions as the connector for the university, fostering UHM’s network of programs and promoting close ties with and between administration, academic units, and student services.
At UHM, the role of advisors and their scope of practice continue to expand in both breadth and depth. This current rapid change in advising promises more change in the future. Advisors are continuously working to better our systems and are eager to embrace the possibilities and evolution within the field. At UHM, advisors are seeking ways to achieve the following:

- Standardized, foundational training for all advisors;
- Continuous advisor training and development;
- Standardized advising curriculum based on best practices;
- Data-driven advising programming to support the development of all student populations;
- Increased identification and tracking of students and student populations;
- Mandatory academic advising throughout campus;
- Mandatory academic planning;
- Mandatory declaration of major by 55 credits;
- Progress checks throughout the semester;
- Tiered, integrated advising at all levels – peer, professional, and major/departmental advisors;
- Cohesive advising system for UHM at the campus level;
- Increased collaboration between faculty senate, administration, student services, and advisors;
- Cross training between university functions to avoiding “bouncing” students; and
- Paperless systems.

Achieving all of this depends on that final point – developing a paperless system that includes not only electronic student records, but also workflow between units. Advisors embrace technology and are often early adopters. UHM benefits from the positive impact advising can have, as reflected in our graduation and retention statistics. However, the lack of available resources and technological support limit that impact. With support, advisors and advising units will provide high quality advising services to every UHM student.

Recommendations
Advising has proven to be one of the most effective ways to improve retention and graduation rates, and academic advising at UHM is expanding rapidly to meet its students’ needs. In order to continue that growth and impact, advising will need increased support in the following areas:

Technological Needs
Integrating advising and technology is crucial, as it will significantly impact the future of higher education with regard to learner assessment, engagement, and retention (Pasquini, 2011). Many advising units are attempting to streamline and expand their services by integrating technology: examples include online scheduling of appointments, online applications and forms, online training modules, and distance advising via Skype, Blackboard, and other programs. IT support is essential for web development and design, creating online resources, implementing electronic intervention programs, and transitioning to paperless advising offices. Currently, many advisors are spending time trying to provide their own IT support, which takes time away from serving students.
Most critical, and most pressing, is an institution-wide electronic records management (ERM) system with online form-fillable forms and workflow capability. A campus-wide ERM would make paperless files possible and provide better student tracking and data-collection.

Advisor and Support Positions
As advisors play a larger role in the recruitment, advising, persistence, and graduation of students, advising units will need additional advisor and staff positions, including administrative support for CAA. New initiatives to increase retention and graduation rates, such as mandatory declaration of major, mandatory academic planning, and early intervention at-risk programs, will require additional personnel.

With the recent growth in academic advising at UHM, many advisors and advising units are under-resourced; the recommendation for additional advisor and staff positions is consistently mentioned by almost every advising unit on campus as a high priority need.

Expanded Peer Advising Programs
Since many advising units have not had additional faculty positions added to their staff, many advising units use or request peer advisors/mentors to alleviate heavy advising loads. Staffing for the Mānoa Peer Advisor program and additional peer advisor programs are sorely needed.

Adequate Advising Space
As advising services increase, and as students use those services more, advisors need commensurate additional physical space that allows mixed-use areas for tiered services: open areas for peer advising, gathering, and academic planning; sound-contained areas for group advising sessions and workshops; and individual offices that provide confidential one-on-one advising in accordance with FERPA regulations.
ACHIEVEMENTS IN ADVISING

The following achievements were compiled from a CAA survey of advising units on campus. While these accomplishments do not embody all the great work in advising at UHM, they serve to highlight many of the strong initiatives and programs at UHM and exemplify the impact of advising on campus and beyond.

Outreach to the Community
UHM outreach programs are essential to the success of our diverse student population, specifically to those who are achieving degrees through non-traditional means, living on neighboring islands, or part of our international community. Academic advisors play a key role in community outreach, including the following:

- The Medical Technology program (MEDT) provides direct academic advising to Kapi‘olani Community College Medical Laboratory Technician students each semester;
- Shidler College of Business (Shidler) provides evening advising each semester for the Johnson Hall Residential Life Program and facilitates study abroad opportunities by expanding its travel scholarships and creating new partner school agreements;
- Outreach College offers UHM bachelor’s degrees through the Interdisciplinary Studies Program on Maui;
- Ho’ola Mālamalama, a consortium of advisors from UHM health related programs, runs Options in Health Professions, a program that introduces 300-400 local high school students to UHM each year; and
- The College of Education (COE) advises over 100 students in American Samoa, as well as provides satellite advising at all the UH system community colleges and has established Memorandum of Agreements with a number of UH Community Colleges to enable AA/AS articulation with the B.Ed. Elementary and Secondary Education programs.

Early Admit Programs
Early admit programs allow for students to make a smooth transition into UHM and specific degree paths. They also help to ensure appropriate academic preparation and support, resulting in higher persistence and graduation rates in these programs. Advisors play a key role in overseeing and managing these programs, in addition to meeting with participating students:

- High school students can apply to direct-admit programs in business, nursing, and education to allow early access directly to the majors;
- Outreach College hosts both a Summer Scholar Program for high school sophomores and juniors and an Early Start Program during the summer that helps students to transition into college;
- Honors & Regents and Presidential Scholars Program (Honors) and the Pre-Health/Pre-Law Advising Center (PAC) assist in running the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) Early Admission Program; and
- Student Athlete Academic Services (SAAS) offers a summer bridge program.
Addressing Student Populations

UHM has a very diverse student body that includes students with specific needs. Academic advisors and advising units across campus serve these populations in a number of ways:

- The new advising office in Public Health (PH) provides students another interdisciplinary field to consider, and a bachelor’s degree in Public Health will be established in Fall 2014;
- The new advising center, Mānoa Transfer Coordination Center (MTCC) is the only center that directly addresses the transfer student population. MTCC will help Kaʻieʻie students to transition from the Kapiʻolani, Leeward, Honolulu and Windward Community Colleges. From Fall 2013 to Spring 2014, the Kaʻieʻie Pathway Program has increased its enrollment by approximately 50%;
- Honors provides high-achieving students with a supportive environment, an opportunity to be challenged academically, an opportunity to engage with likeminded peers and committed faculty;
- The Mānoa Advising Center (MAC) offers IS 197, a new course entitled “Academic Exploration through Advising,” designed to help exploratory students select a major;
- PAC is now able to identify its over 2700 pre-medical, pre-health and pre-law students via the Educational Goals in MyUH Portal;
- Student Support Service (SSS) has worked to ensure 257 of 266 first-generation /low income students who applied, received financial aid, totaling $3,567,144; and
- In the future, CASSAS will divide into individual colleges to better serve their specific college populations.

Access to Advising through Peer Advisors/Mentors

The Mānoa Peer Advisor Program (MPA) is a cross-campus training program that places peer advisors with advising units that request assistance. MPAs, peer advisors, and peer mentors are extensively trained by UHM advisors and provide a unique opportunity for students to share their college experiences and expertise:

- This year, 13 advising units are using 30 MPAs. Over the four years it has been in existence, 77 peer advisors have been trained in the program and 18 different campus advising units have benefitted from their service;
- The College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR) alone has five departments that use peer advisors;
- COE trains 15 Puahia students to mentor 100+ first year students; and
- The School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology (SOEST) uses student ambassadors to serve as liaisons between the students and administration as well as hires a part-time SOEST tutor to provide tutoring to SOEST majors in math, chemistry and physics.
Promoting Diversity
UHM’s diverse student population is unique, and advisors recognize their students’ cultural and socio-economic backgrounds as defining forces that shape their academic journeys, and advisors foster supportive partnerships that enhance students’ learning in and outside the classroom:

- Students in Shidler and the School of Pacific and Asian Studies (SPAS) are encouraged to participate in the Study Abroad or Mānoa International Exchange Program (MIX) to fulfill their requirements and to broaden their perspective on cultural diversity;
- School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene (SONDH) provides support and funding to its Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students, through its ‘Ike Ao Pono program;
- Hawaiʻinuiakaa helps to promote a Hawaiian place of learning through its focus on serving Native Hawaiian students; and
- COE’s Puʻuhonua and Tinalak programs target Native Hawaiian and Filipino students. This year, 1500+ Native Hawaiian Students were reached through 56 recruitment and retention events sponsored by the Puʻuhonua Student Support Services program by COE, and 46 Native Hawaiian undergraduate students graduated with B.Ed or post-baccalaureate certificates in teaching. Tinalak council members created and taught a multicultural education course from a Filipino perspective, provided admission test stipends to Filipino students, and conducted outreach to high schools with high percentages of Filipinos.

Focusing on Retention & Graduation
Advising units are working in alignment with the Do-It-In-Four and 15-to-Finish initiatives to encourage timely degree completion, and many initiatives and successes are seen throughout the entire campus:

- SONDH has implemented 3rd and 5th semester advising for BSN students to encourage timely graduation;
- PAC and Shidler run mandatory academic planning programs for all their students;
- The School of Social Work (SSW) focuses on progress towards academic success and timely graduation and 90.2% of Bachelor of Social Work students have an updated academic plan (92 students, 7 faculty advisors);
- SSS’s mission “is to increase the retention and graduation rates of its students” (first generation college students and/or students with high financial need). 84% of SSS students (603 out of 716) persisted from one academic year (2011-12) to the next academic year (Fall 2012);
- CTAHR sends personalized letters to all freshmen who successfully complete their first semester at UHM;
- MAC sees the work it does on the front end, in conjunction with all of its partners as having a significant impact on how quickly students declare their majors and graduate;
- SOEST has a “back on track program,” which institutes weekly to monthly mandatory meetings for students in academic difficulty. Without these meetings, many students would have been suspended or simply dropped out of school;
- For its at-risk populations, Colleges of Arts and Sciences Student Academic Services (CASSAS) runs SOAR (Students Owning Academic Responsibility) for its
CAH/CLLL/CNS students and SUCCESS for the CSS students;

- In Fall 2013, 343 student athletes earned a semester GPA of 3.0 or higher and 323 student athletes (49.8%) earned a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. (This is higher than the average UHM semester GPA and the average UHM cumulative GPA);
- COE created a retention protocol document that lists information/procedures all advisors should cover when advising academic actions to ensure uniformity in practice; and
- CTAHR created a graduation checklist for students so that they have a guide on all the steps they need to take in order to graduate.

**Integrating Use of Technology**

Advisors feel strongly that adopting and integrating new technologies into advising practices is essential for timely and efficient advising. UHM advisors embrace every opportunity and resource provided for integrating technology into what they do:

- CAA has played a support role in the success of STAR at the development, implementation, and operational stages. The partnership of CAA/STAR has brought together the entire UH system in its advising endeavors;
- SAAS has piloted and implemented Grades First, an online early alert system for at-risk students. Through the use of this online system, faculty reporting on student athlete’s progress jumped from 45-55% to 71-72% in Fall 2013;
- CAA advisor training modules are available online;
- COE developed and implemented an integrated student information system that tracks students from matriculation through graduation. Advisors have also assisted in the creation of online applications and video tutorials; and
- A number of units offer distance advising and online scheduling of appointments.

**Assessment/Evaluation**

All academic advising units have engaged in assessment related activities during the last three years, which include developing student learning outcomes, a mission/vision statement, and assessment goals. Data is routinely collected to inform and improve advising practice. Summary reports are submitted yearly to the UHM Assessment Office: [https://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/spprog/update/view.php](https://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/spprog/update/view.php).

Many units incorporate student feedback through exit surveys (MTCC), surveys to help students identify factors that led to academic difficulty (COE) and surveys to assess how mandatory advising efforts are meeting student learning outcomes (MAC). SPAS and Shidler conduct exit interviews and post-graduation surveys to assess curriculum relevance and career placement. UHM advisors adapt best assessment and data evaluation practices to gather information within their units to establish and improve strong advising programs.
## UNIT ABBREVIATIONS

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>CASSAS</td>
<td>College of Arts &amp; Sciences Student Academic Services</td>
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<td>COE</td>
<td>College of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTAHR</td>
<td>College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources</td>
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<td>HONORS</td>
<td>Honors &amp; Regents and Presidential Scholars Program</td>
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<td>SHK</td>
<td>Hawai‘i‘inui‘kea School of Hawaiian Knowledge</td>
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<td>JABSOM</td>
<td>John A. Burns School of Medicine</td>
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<td>MAC</td>
<td>Mānoa Advising Center</td>
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<td>MEDT</td>
<td>Medical Technology</td>
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<td>SPAS</td>
<td>School of Pacific Asian Studies</td>
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<td>Shidler</td>
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<td>SSS</td>
<td>Student Support Services</td>
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<td>SSW</td>
<td>Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work</td>
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REFERENCES


