

# Belmont University

## Vision 2020: Student Mentoring and Academic Advising Committee Report

### *Belmont University Vision 2020*

#### **Strategy 1:**

*Students are the answer to the question, “Why Are We Here?” WE WILL strive to attract, retain, and graduate extraordinary students by:*

- connecting students to faculty through academic advising, research, and faculty and staff support of general student activities;...
- involving students in appropriate decisions at the departmental, college and university levels;...
- clearly communicating community responsibilities and accountability to students and parents;...

#### **Student Mentoring and Academic Advising Team Charter**

**Senior Leader Contact:** Thomas Burns, Provost

**Facilitators:** April Hefner and Linda Holt

**Committee Members:**

Mrs. Maren Bishop, Admissions Coordinator, CVPA

Dr. Michelle Corvette, Assistant Professor, Art

Dr. Jimmy Davis, Professor, Communication Studies

Mrs. Tina Dishman, Director, Curb College Academic Advising

Ms. April Hefner, Editorial and News Content Director, Office of Communications

Dr. Linda E. Holt, Associate Dean, CLASS, and Associate Professor of English

Dr. Kelley Kiningham, Associate Dean and Professor, Pharmacy

Mr. Beau McGinnis, Honors Student (Finance/German)

Dr. Martha Minardi, Assistant Professor, Ministry Program Advisor

Ms. Valerie Nichols, Liberal Studies Director

Dr. David Sneed, GPS Director

Mr. Richard Sowienski, Associate Professor, Media Studies

Dr. Thomas Spence, Dean, College of Sciences and Mathematics

Mrs. Tracy Wilson, Instructor, School of Nursing

**Rationale:**

As Belmont seeks to find ways to develop the whole student, we must begin with the most basic of academic relationships – mentoring and advising, an essential component to student success. While traditional academic advising can often be seen as simply helping students select courses, in reality mentoring and advising is much more complicated, and the development of comprehensive mentoring and advising programs can take on many formats. Tools like DegreeWorks, for example, can help, but the importance of interpersonal relationships and deep conversations must be emphasized to make sure that we provide all of our students an opportunity to grow and develop fully while they are at Belmont. What types of training should we offer to faculty and staff members? How can we better define the roles and opportunities for adviser and advisee? How can we ensure that students are ready and able to fully participate in mentoring and advising?

**Project Objectives:**

- Research and explore current advising and mentoring activities across campus.
- Identify characteristics of effective advising and mentoring that strengthen the connection between faculty and students.
- Provide a recommendation to Senior Leadership that includes steps required over the next six months to implement a model that supports consistency of student experience across academic disciplines and strengthens the connection between faculty and students through accurate curriculum planning and effective mentoring.

**Section 1:****Academic Advising: Best Practices and Current Scholarship**

Historically, the academic advisor has been responsible primarily for assuring that students know which courses to take in order to graduate with a degree in a particular major. Since faculty within disciplines are in the best position to deliver this information, they served as advisors for the students who majored in their areas of expertise. At many universities, academic advising still follows this basic premise. The twenty-first century campus has seen many changes, however, and while most students are still advised by a professor within their major area, the goals of advising have changed significantly. According to NACADA, The National Academic Advising Association, key elements of advising include working in partnership with advisees to do the following:

- Develop suitable educational plans
- Clarify career and life goals
- Select appropriate courses and educational experiences
- Interpret academic requirements
- Evaluate progress toward graduation
- Develop decision-making skills

- Become independent learners

These key elements are indicative of the shift away from advising as a “graduation checklist” procedure and toward a learning-centered interaction between students and a university official (often a professor) whose goal is to work alongside students as they navigate their educational futures. According to an article in the *NACADA Journal*,

...academic advising clearly includes helping students understand academic disciplines and ways of thinking, helping them develop their sense of themselves, teaching them how to respond to academic experiences, facilitating their self-interpretation through personal transformations, and helping them make sense of their education as more than choosing courses or majors. Academic advisors work at the vital junction between student self-understanding and their navigation of their educational experience. (Schulenberg and Lindhorst qtd. Rentz 49)

Increasingly, students and their parents have come to expect that advisors will do more than simply release advising holds after a fifteen-minute conversation. Higher education is expensive, careers are competitive, and everyone is bombarded with too much information and too many choices. Institutions of higher education have looked closely at their advising practices and have made changes such as hiring professional advisors, requiring that professors complete a certification process before they advise, and creating a curriculum requirement for all students that addresses the key elements listed above.

### **Exploring Academic Advising and Mentoring at Belmont University**

In our initial conversations as a team, we discovered that advising practices on our campus vary widely from college to college; consequently, much of our work over the last 12 weeks has been to gather information. We began by subdividing our team into smaller groups: group one looked at current research on advising and mentoring practices; group two created questions and interviewed faculty advising representatives in each of Belmont’s colleges; group three investigated advising practices at benchmark institutions (Appendix 9); and group four focused on mentoring initiatives. An examination of NSSE data from 2014 indicated a slight drop in levels of satisfaction with advising, so in order to more fully understand the issues associated with advising from the perspective of students, we conducted three separate focus groups with students ranging from freshmen to seniors and in various majors.

With the exception of three colleges (COBA, CEMB, and UC), students at Belmont are advised exclusively by professors within their majors, and this is in line with practices at private universities nationwide—according to NACADA data, 93% of students at private universities and colleges are advised by faculty. The advisor to student ratio varies considerably across campus, however; some

advisors have just a handful of advisees, while others advise as many as 50 per semester. COBA, CEMB, and UC have staff members whose primary task is to advise: In UC, the Program Manager has 75 advisees, and the three Staff Advisors have 130; in COBA, the Student Advising Coordinator advises 300 students every semester; and in CEMB, the Director of Advising and the Transfer Advisor each advise approximately 500 students every semester (Appendices 2 and 4).

According to NACADA, the advisor to student ratio is not as significant as the *outcomes* of advising: “meaningful case load comparisons remain elusive because too many factors affect advising delivery.”

### **Characteristics of an Effective Advising and Mentoring Program**

Numerous scholarly sources describe guidelines for the development of an effective advising program that is linked to student learning outcomes, and it is generally accepted that quality advising aids in retention, academic achievement, and student satisfaction. According to Eric R. White, “the success of academic advising rests with acknowledging that it is as much a part of an institution’s educational mission as is disciplinary instruction” (272). Below is a step-by-step summary of the components of an effective advising program, adapted from an article entitled “Academic Advising in the New Global Century: Supporting Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes Achievement”:

- Develop a mission and vision statement for academic advising that links to the mission and vision statements of the institution;
- Develop clear outcomes for the delivery of academic advising that are guided by the mission and vision statement;
- Develop an assessment plan that focuses on what students are expected to learn as a result of academic advising;
- Implement professional development programs for individuals involved in academic advising;
- Develop a rewards system that recognizes high-quality advising.

### **Advisor Characteristics**

Belmont’s June Vision 2020 Summit and August Board Meetings identified the characteristics of an effective advisor and an effective mentor as follows:

An effective advisor is:

- Knowledgeable
- Detail-oriented
- A good listener

- Personable
- Holds a specialized degree

An effective mentor is:

- Mature
- Experienced in his/her field
- Available
- Engaged

*Works Cited for this section can be found in Appendix 10.*

## **Section 2:**

### **Current State of Belmont’s Academic Advising and Student Mentoring**

Through both statistical and anecdotal evidence, our Vision 2020 team discovered that excellent academic advising and student mentoring does occur frequently on Belmont’s campus, particularly in certain pockets and with a number of individual faculty members. However, we also found areas across the University that could benefit from new approaches to processes, education/development (for students and faculty), communication and improved focus as related to advising and mentoring and their impact on student success. As an institution, Belmont attracts prospective students and their families with the promise that students will know—and be known—by their faculty members, developing strong connections that will promote their education in the classroom, enhance their collegiate journey and prompt networking opportunities in the careers that follow. Belmont has historically delivered well on that promise, and our team’s goal is to ensure those deep connections continue to flourish alongside our growth. From 2014 survey data, interviews and focus group research, it is clear that increased attention on academic advising—and the individualized student support it offers—will be beneficial in making certain those bonds are strong and consistent across campus.

### **National Survey of Student Engagement**

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data from 2014 shows that Belmont first-year students rate their relationships with faculty quite high, with 81 percent ranking them at a 5 or above on a 7-point scale. Though this is a slight drop from 2010 and 2012 figures, 84 and 82 percent respectively, it still exceeds national and Carnegie Class rates of 74 and 73 percent. However, the same survey indicated much poorer responses to Belmont’s emphasis on providing support for students’ overall well-being (65%),

using support services (59%) and providing support to help students succeed academically (68%). The latter figure in particular is disturbing as the six-year trend in first-year responses regarding “providing the support you need to help you succeed academically” had dropped considerably from 84% in 2010 to 81% in 2012 to the 68% in 2014.

While those support areas all represent potential spots where effective advising can be helpful, the NSSE 2014 module on Academic Advising provides an even clearer picture of these issues. First-year students reported interactions below the national average across the board in terms of the number of meetings held with an academic advisor as well as on questions asking to what extent an academic advisor has:

- Been available when needed
- Listened closely to your concerns and questions
- Informed you of important deadlines
- Helped you understand academic rules and policies
- Informed you of academic support options
- Provided useful information about courses
- Helped you when you had academic difficulties
- Helped you get information on special opportunities (study abroad, research, internships, etc.)
- Discussed your career interests and post-graduation plans

However, seniors’ responses to these same questions signified improved results, with every category noted above performing slightly higher than the national averages. Our committee interpreted this data to indicate that the advisor-to-advisee relationship strengthens considerably as students become more immersed in their specific disciplines.

Another important note from the NSSE module was that Belmont students do not immediately turn to Academic Advisors when they need assistance. Of the 358 first-year students who responded to the survey, less than one-third (100, 28%) indicated that their assigned academic advisor had been their primary source of advice regarding academic planning, while 149 students (42%) sought assistance from family, friends or other students. Fifty first-year students (14%) spoke with faculty or staff who were not formally assigned to them as an advisor. Again, improvements were seen by the senior year in this category with 40 percent of seniors reporting that their academic advisor was their primary source of advice on academic planning (24% indicated friends, family or other students, and 15% turned to faculty or staff who were not assigned as their advisor).

## **Survey of Academic Advising Processes**

Our team then analyzed how each college conducts academic advising, beginning with when and how students discover who their academic advisor is, what expectations and preparation they are given for advising and how academic advising is currently assessed at Belmont. Summaries of our findings can be found in Appendix 1, but a number of concerns were raised:

- There are no universal processes or expectations given campus-wide for academic advising
- Many new Fall 2016 students were not assigned advisors until mid-October
- Several colleges/departments are relying on antiquated or unprofessional means for advising appointments, from Sign Up Sheets taped to office doors to unaffiliated “Sign Up Genius” websites
- Advising appointments are generally for 30 minutes with little flexibility in timing
- Most often, undergraduate advising preparation points to DegreeWorks with few mentions of preparing students for conversations beyond the transactional course planning
- Little advising occurs outside of the 11-day advising window
- Ratios of advisees to advisor vary drastically across campus with several areas at a volume that appear to exceed capacity and impact student outcomes
- Little assessment of advising is occurring at all

## **Student Input**

In addition to having thoughtful input from the student serving on our committee, team members spoke with and asked questions of a First Year Writing class and conducted two focus groups consisting of students from a variety of majors/class years. In addition, several faculty on the committee sought input and experiences from students in their classes.

### *Summary Feedback from Oct. 13 First Year Writing class:*

- Few first-year students knew what academic advising meant
- Less than half the class knew who their advisor was at this time
- About half the class had discussed a 4-year plan within their department
- None of the students had been told about study abroad
- Only 3 students (all nursing) had heard from their advisor since school began
- Students with undecided majors hadn’t talked to anyone.
- Only 5 students knew what classes to take next semester
- Only 2 students knew what “learning community” courses are

- Only theatre students had talked to about what kind of career they want to pursue
- Only 6 students knew ClassFinder was available
- The whole class agreed that they felt overwhelmed with information during summer orientation and most didn't remember any of the information they received (several students thought orientation occurred too early in the summer and was too close to their high school graduation as they indicated they weren't yet ready to think about college)

*Anecdotal Feedback from Student Focus Groups/Conversations:*

Seventeen students from a variety of majors and class years participated in focus groups related to academic advising and mentoring on Belmont's campus, and they shared diverse experiences. Many students noted positive relationships with faculty, expressing that they have often experienced faculty who help students outside of class, "go the extra mile" and knew their students well. Science students spoke warmly of mentoring opportunities during summer research programs as well as relationships built during Friday coffee hours, disc golf department outings and conference attendance. Public relations students noted similar connections among their small department and mentioned that their faculty know them well and help steer them to specific internship sites that are strong fits for their skills and interests. One student who switched majors noted her surprise with the interest her advisor took in her, moving from a checklist of requirements to conversations about post-graduation plans and needed recommendation letters. "It's fascinating to see the evolution. My expectation was that advising would help me with planning my classes, but it's become so much more than that now."

Other students, particularly in larger programs like within Curb College, remarked that they didn't have such personal experiences and had trouble making connections with faculty due to the size of their classes, changing staff/adjuncts within departments and lack of communication. Frequently, conversations with advisors in some areas revolved around only the technical aspect of selecting courses and reviewing DegreeWorks. Due to the limited interactions, students also felt "on their own" and "set back" because they aren't receiving advice on how to make external networking connections outside their college. Many mentioned that their advisors do not appear comfortable discussing any academic issues that aren't specific to their discipline either, which is difficult since students also consistently expressed a lack of understanding about Learning Communities and other aspects of the BELL Core. Knowledge outside their programs also means faculty aren't often prepared to consult students on minors or double majors.

Students were also asked where they go for help when confused about academic requirements and planning, and many indicated that they turn to the website, DegreeWorks and the GPS office for assistance. Some also mentioned that they spoke with other students or posted questions in their Facebook Class of 2020 group.



### Other Points of Pain Students Noted

- Different Gen Ed requirements for different majors makes system complicated
- Chaotic summer orientation (*Ex. One MBU student was told to just register for whatever was open and it would be fixed in the fall. She ended up with FYW, FYS and 3 PSYC courses and didn't know how to change them until it was too late.*)
- Ratios of students-to-advisor varies drastically across the University
- Frustration about not getting into required classes / too few course sections
- The complexity of the BELL Core
- Inconsistencies in Degreeworks (doesn't always place courses in multiple categories where they should count)
- Resources on advising are difficult to find and follow
- Curb College advising is overwhelmed and understaffed making it difficult or impossible for many students to receive advising prior to registration

Students tossed out a number of ideas for improving their academic advising experience at Belmont, including:

- Have a student "advisor" to talk with because they can relate and give the best advice by having gone through the process
- Provide informational emails or videos
- Make advising a uniform process across all departments so students can ask their friends questions about the process
- Give out contact information for advisor during summer orientation
- Have advisor meet with students earlier in the semester (before midterms) or set up meetings more than once per semester
- Send more emails that include advising information, including when ClassFinder goes live

### Faculty Input

The Faculty Handbook already lists Academic Advising as a critical component of the work to be done by faculty as seen below from section 2.7.1:

*Academic advising forms a secondary part of each faculty member's teaching responsibility. Sound academic advising supports the learning process of students by helping students understand the value and benefit of his or her entire academic program, including general education and the major, and by helping students make responsible choices within the framework of a degree program.*

*Beginning with their second year of an appointment to the Belmont faculty, faculty members are expected to advise students and to assume an appropriate number of student advisees within the overall number of students enrolled in an academic program. Faculty members are expected to be informed academic advisors, with current knowledge about and attentiveness to the following:*

- *General education, major, and minor requirements;*
- *General academic policies, including processes for filing paperwork related to a student's academic record;*

- Available resources for students with difficulties and disabilities in the Office of the Dean of Students;
- Campus resources for career planning and other academic and personal assistance.

*Although students have ultimate responsibility for their academic progress, faculty members are expected to monitor their advisees' academic progress, working with any advisee not showing adequate academic progress to determine the cause and to seek campus resources to cope with academic or personal challenges, if necessary.*

Improving academic advising isn't adding a new expectation, but empowering faculty to more fully live into our current, published expectations. However, there are currently no standards set for assessing academic advising, rewarding faculty who exceed expectations in this area or providing additional development for faculty who fall short.

Statistically, the 2014 HERI survey indicated that Belmont faculty believed that "developing a sense of community among students and faculty was an institutional priority 55 percent of the time" as compared to 72 percent of their peer faculty at other four-year religiously-based institutions. The same survey also revealed that only one-third of Belmont faculty believe "There is adequate support for faculty development," compared to nearly two-thirds of their peers.

To gain more insight into faculty members' perspectives on academic advising, 22 one-on-one interviews were conducted with faculty from across campus. The number of interviews in each college was based loosely on enrollments. The purpose of the interviews was to develop an understanding of what methods of faculty/student engagement are most common and useful at Belmont. **A number of interesting themes emerged:**

**Time spent outside of class is important for improved connections between faculty and students.** This contact is often student-initiated. Examples:

- meet for coffee
- attend conferences with students
- book clubs
- study abroad trips
- social events related to the major
- doing service projects together
- attend community events together
- advise student organization

- stop and talk to students in common areas of the building
- go for a hike
- The Hatchery

**In-class connections make a difference too:**

- Teach them in more than one class
- Field trips
- Learn all their names by week 2 (make flashcards or some such with pictures and names)
- Schedule individual meetings to review test results and/or work on paper drafts....but really, the point is to see how they are doing and get to know them better
- Discussion-based classes, often found in upper-level courses in the major, seem to make for stronger connections between faculty and students

**Advising is a way to connect:**

- Many faculty use advising office visits for career exploration and not just class scheduling
- Many faculty like advising, a lot, and see it as a central part of their job. These faculty attend workshops and training sessions and read (and save) their emails regarding improved advising and registration processes
- However, glitches in registration create consternation and frustration and often require re-advising. This happens when:
  - The registration system goes down
  - Students have in mind that they must take a certain class at a certain time in a certain semester and it is unavailable... they often lack the flexibility to make another choice. For some students the presence of a suggested curriculum plan from their department supports their understanding that they “must take this course now” or be doomed to delay graduation
  - Prerequisites are incorrect in Banner...this sometimes creates registration bottlenecks ....when this happens it’s not usually one or two students, it’s a large pileup
  - Changes in the curriculum in their area or in another area escape the notice of faculty advisors. Once these changes make their way through the approval process and then go into the catalog, there is no notification of the change so things that have worked for years suddenly do not work any longer
- Advising both graduate and undergraduate students can create difficulty for individual faculty members because of developmental and curricular differences between the two sets of students
- Some faculty face advising with fear and dread.

- Advising is a high pressure event...faculty may feel wholly responsible for the student's future and ability to graduate on time
- They only look at the overall curriculum a couple of times a year and are, therefore, unfamiliar with it
- When DegreeWorks has an error it creates significant anxiety
  - i.e. something is counting as an elective when it should be counting as meeting a requirement
  - They do not know what work-arounds are available so solving the problem seems overwhelmingly difficult.
  - Note that faculty who have attended training sessions generally say that they know who to call to get problems resolved and aren't often vexed by such issues
- The course substitution process is a mystery for some faculty and this makes them feel like the system is unfriendly and inflexible
- Significant numbers of students take courses elsewhere and transfer them back to Belmont and faculty members are unsure of how best to help their advisees navigate this process

Faculty were also asked how they learned to advise Belmont students, and there wasn't a unified process across campus. Some reported sitting in on advising sessions with department chairs or colleagues, others mentioned that they attended BELL Core/DegreeWorks training sessions and some admitted they feel like they are still trying to figure it out. Only a few noted that their departments had set standards for academic advising, and many expressed frustrations that students do not come prepared for sessions. Multiple faculty also express concerns that they do not have enough time to hold effective advising sessions with large numbers of advisees, and, as a result, focus attention only on the transactional issues.

Moreover, practices on who advises and when vary dramatically across campus. In many colleges new faculty are given a "gap year" of sorts on advising—they do not advise during their first year on campus until they learn more about the institution and the required curriculum. In others, new faculty advise in their first semester on campus, often without training, orientation or even an advising manual to guide them. In addition, lecturers (full-time adjuncts) do not advise students in some colleges, while in others—including CEMB with lecturers advising a 45-student load—lecturers are a critical part of academic advising, though their compensation does not reflect these additional duties.

### **Mentoring at Belmont**

When students were asked about mentoring opportunities, about half of those interviewed reported having a mentor, though it was most often an unofficial relationship. Many said they would like the opportunity to connect on a personal level with a faculty member, alum or external individual and for that connection to have a professional, discipline-based focus. Conversations across

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campus indicated that most mentoring opportunities appear to work best when developed organically rather than being forced, an observation supported by a conversation with Dr. Mary Clark regarding the Bridges to Belmont mentoring program: “Forced mentoring doesn’t work... you must find common bonds and both sides must be invested in the process.”

While students do want mentoring to occur within the advising relationship, they also seek mentoring input from other faculty within their discipline and from upperclassmen peers in their majors. Other places where students mentioned that mentoring currently occurs included GPS, Career & Professional Development, Bridges, on campus employers, University Ministries, Student Org Advisors and several academic department programs.

While the bulk of the recommendations that follow in our next section will address strengthening the connection of faculty and students by improving mentoring within academic advising, conversations on the topic of mentoring indicated that more broad-based programs could be a potential subject matter for future work. Providing more opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring, alumni-to-student mentoring and faculty/staff-to-student mentoring beyond advising could be beneficial to the institution and appears to be something students desire. Finding a way to create opportunities for those connections may incorporate ongoing collaborations between departments (Alumni Relations with Career and Professional Development, for example) or could involve lengthening the commitment and development of student leaders like Tower Team leaders or Spiritual Life Assistants.

## Section 3: Goals and Recommendations

### GOALS

To strengthen faculty-student connections and foster improved academic advising and mentoring practices, we see the need to:

- Improve processes and communication around orientation, academic planning, advising and registration
- Better prepare students for academic planning by educating them on requirements, flexibility and short and long-term planning
- Better prepare faculty in academic advising by developing skills and enhancing systems
- Create more opportunities for faculty-student interactions outside the classroom to foster mentoring and deeper connections
- Balance workloads related to advising across campus

### Immediate Recommendations (next three months)

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Tactics</i>	<i>Examples/Notes</i>
<b>1) Provide resources and better communication regarding academic advising to help students prepare for the “transactional” aspect of advising and set advising expectations</b>	Create web-based FAQs and resource “Advising Web Site” to guide students through the advising and registration process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Include new videos on DegreeWorks, Learning Communities and Cornerstone/Capstone courses</li> <li>○ Create additional videos addressing common areas of confusion</li> <li>○ Create checklist of items for students to consider/review in advance of advising</li> </ul>	Web Resource: <a href="http://www.butler.edu/learning/advising">www.butler.edu/learning/advising</a>  DegreeWorks Video: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SvPTYVY8zc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SvPTYVY8zc</a>  See Appendix 8 : College of Wooster Educational Plan Guide
	Create communication plan around advising and registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensure ALL NEW STUDENTS receive the name and contact info for their faculty advisor <u>prior</u> to the start of classes</li> <li>○ Remind students of their role and responsibility in academic planning</li> <li>○ Provide faculty with resource links</li> </ul>	See Appendix 1—many new students for the fall do not learn who their advisor is until October  Students need reminders on how to find advisor, when Classfinder is available, online resources, etc.

## Phase Two Recommendations *(next six months)*

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Tactics</b>	<b>Examples/Notes</b>
<b>2) Give students more “just-in-time” information on, and expectations for, academic advising</b>	Create Advising “Triage Centers” in various spots around campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Students will seek help when it is put in front of them—staff triage centers in high traffic areas during busy hours Include computers with videos playing to explain DegreeWorks, LCs, etc.</li> <li>○ Ensure Learning Centers and GPS have the resources they need as well as train Belmont Central on advising basics</li> </ul>	--Areas could include Ayers lobby, Belmont Central, Johnson lobby --Recently created videos like “Understanding DegreeWorks”: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SvPTYVY8zc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SvPTYVY8zc</a> --Faculty with low advisee loads can contribute here, and this will also help undeclared, major switches and others find help.
	Offer more touchpoints for students to explore options and for faculty to check on progress/comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Include mentoring/ advising “check in” as part of all First Year Seminar individual student meetings. Already required—Add specific structure.</li> <li>○ Activate the “What If” view in DegreeWorks for students so they can ponder options for major changes</li> <li>○ Consider tech solutions that warn advisors when advisees steer off course (See Georgia State example)</li> <li>○ Activate DegreeWorks view on all students for every faculty/staff advisor</li> </ul>	Georgia State “early warning system” prompted 51,000 in person advisor-advisee meetings in one year: <a href="http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/10/30/499200614/how-one-university-used-big-data-to-boost-graduation-rates">http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/10/30/499200614/how-one-university-used-big-data-to-boost-graduation-rates</a>  Students indicated seeking input from advisors other than their assigned person
<b>3) Create systems to develop faculty skills in advising and mentoring and monitor/adjust advising workload in needed areas</b>	Hire a full-time Director of Academic Advising to train faculty, be a resource for students, monitor workloads and foster a theory of advising that works best for the Belmont culture	This position designs, implements, improves, monitors and ensures the delivery of state-of-the-art, comprehensive academic advisement model. This individual will lead faculty/staff advisor development and support a consistency of student experience across the disciplines.	See Appendix 3 for suggested job description and specific responsibilities.

	Charge director with creating a new campus-wide committee consisting of faculty, staff and students to discuss and implement best practices: University Academic Advisory Council (UAAC)	UAAC would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Vision &amp; Mission statements for advising that align with those of the University</li> <li>• Define expectations for Academic Advising</li> <li>• Establish work groups on training &amp; development, assessment &amp; data collection, policy and procedure</li> <li>• Offer ideal Outcomes and means of assessment</li> </ul>	
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<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Tactics</b>	<b>Examples/Notes</b>
<b>4) Address advising workloads across campus, particularly in the Curb College, since volume is primary hindrance for mentoring opportunities</b>	Analyze areas with high volume and consider adding faculty/staff and/or shifting assignments	Workload and volume issues can be addressed in different ways. Below are <i>potential</i> approaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consider hiring new faculty in key areas to move toward NACADA average 25:1 advisees to faculty advisor ratio</li> <li>○ Hire additional CEMB staff to move toward NACADA median of 333:1 advisees to professional staff advisor</li> <li>○ Consider course reduction for “star” faculty advisors based on assessments and shift more students to those faculty</li> <li>○ Train lecturers in all colleges for advising roles and offer appropriate compensation increase</li> <li>○ Use underutilized advisors to assist in Triage Centers, teach 1-credit seminars (Appendix 6), assist with undecideds, etc.</li> </ul>	Faculty advising caseload median: <a href="http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Implications-for-faculty-advising-2011-National-Survey.aspx">http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Implications-for-faculty-advising-2011-National-Survey.aspx</a>  Professional staff caseload median: <a href="http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor-Load.aspx">http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor-Load.aspx</a>  See Appendix 2 for current Curb College faculty and professional staff advising loads  See Appendix 4 for Argos report on current faculty advising loads across campus



**Recommendations—Long Term**

<p><b>5) Require each college to create and implement First Year Advising and Mentoring Plan for new students to allow for multiple touch points and open the door for strong connections with faculty from the start of the academic career</b></p>	<p>Anecdotal evidence from focus groups showed several areas where students felt well-informed about academic planning and reported deep connections with their faculty. Further investigations of two areas—CVPA and CSM—provided different approaches that could be emulated by other colleges.</p>	<p>Recognizing that what works for one college/department may not work for all, tactics for this area can be tailored to fit each college or program as needed. The point is that each area must have a plan in place to shepherd new students into their programs and connect them to faculty. The College of Visual and Performing Arts accomplishes this through multiple, planned touchpoints with students and faculty, while the College of Sciences and Mathematics requires a one-credit seminar for all new majors</p>	<p>See Appendix 5 on “CVPA Advising and Preparation Process”</p> <p>See Appendix 6 on “CSM Sample Seminar Syllabus”</p>
<p><b>6) Reimagine academic planning for new students.</b></p>	<p>New students need to be provided more time and attention to understand academic planning both short and long-term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consider changes to summer orientation schedule that prioritize academic planning</li> <li>○ Provide a registration/advising check in opportunity during Welcome Week activities for students with questions about their course selections</li> <li>○ Consider Admissions Counselors assisting with academic planning/ registration during June orientation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Students are overwhelmed with information at orientation and academic planning gets lost in the shuffle</li> <li>○ Undeclared students need special attention during summer registration and library staff may require more help to deal with larger numbers of students</li> </ul>
<p><b>7) Reconsider advising and registration process.</b></p>	<p>Provide a consistent, universal logistical process for undergraduate advising across campus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Create a uniform portal that all students use to schedule time with their advisor</li> <li>○ Follow up email with important reminders as part of communication strategy</li> </ul>	<p>Current approaches vary drastically by department, from sign up sheets on doors to Doodle online polls</p>

	Resolve issues around overloaded servers and Banner issues	Currently being addressed by IT and senior leadership following Fall 2016	
	Review communication plans for all registration holds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review plans with SFS, Registrar, etc.</li> <li>○ Ensure all student communications occur prior to registration to remind students about lifting holds and timelines</li> <li>○ Consider moving day one of registration to Tuesday</li> </ul>	Several students requested a Tuesday start to allow for dealing with holds on Mondays
	Retool Classfinder to make it more user friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Should default automatically to correct term</li> <li>○ List Learning Communities courses together as this visual presentation will aid students' understanding that both must be taken</li> </ul>	A more robust Classfinder is a frequent request of students and faculty. Ex.: <a href="https://www1.baylor.edu/scheduleofclasses/Results.aspx?Term=201710&amp;College=Z&amp;Prefix=ENG&amp;StartCN=Z&amp;EndCN=Z&amp;Status=Z&amp;Days=Z&amp;Instructor=&amp;IsMini=false&amp;OnlineOnly=0&amp;POTerm=Z">https://www1.baylor.edu/scheduleofclasses/Results.aspx?Term=201710&amp;College=Z&amp;Prefix=ENG&amp;StartCN=Z&amp;EndCN=Z&amp;Status=Z&amp;Days=Z&amp;Instructor=&amp;IsMini=false&amp;OnlineOnly=0&amp;POTerm=Z</a>
<b>8) Develop and implement faculty and appropriate staff professional development and advancement options for progress in advising and mentoring.</b>	Create an "Advising and Mentoring" faculty/staff credentialing system	<p>Modules could cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Basic advising and BELL Core review</li> <li>○ Mentoring in advising and teaching—mentoring as a learning outcome</li> <li>○ Advising at-risk populations</li> </ul>	Must have a means, part of development, for rewarding those who become credentialed and/or see positive results on advising assessments
	Work on advising improvements at college level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Implement universal new advisor experience for all new faculty</li> <li>○ Seek creation of "Master Advisor(s)" within each college as a resource</li> <li>○ Add required Advisor Training for all new advisors</li> <li>○ Schedule college-wide meetings on BELL Core review</li> </ul>	

<p><b>9) Create more opportunities for mentoring via “planned collisions” with faculty and external partnerships</b></p>	<p>Promote and budget for additional department-level co-curricular and extracurricular activities</p>	<p>Options could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Research opportunities</li> <li>○ Conference attendance</li> <li>○ Book clubs</li> <li>○ Studio tours</li> <li>○ Create designated area for coffee with faculty in the cafeteria or more opportunities for social interactions in that space</li> </ul>	<p>Students and faculty consistently noted that, while academic advising can be a helpful time for mentoring, they experience it more often in other venues where time isn’t as limited.</p>
	<p>Encourage additional Learning Community options, particularly within majors</p>		<p>This could be particularly helpful in the Curb College where students reported difficulty in creating/keeping connections due to high number of majors and adjuncts</p>
	<p>Encourage colleges to collaborate with Alumni and Career &amp; Professional Development to explore more alumni and peer mentorship programs</p>		<p>See “Career Conversations: Bruin to Bruin” series that’s just been started</p>

## Section 4: Measuring Our Progress

The only way to ensure academic advising improves across campus will be to assess our efforts. We recommend that surveys on academic advising be distributed to all students immediately following the advising period on an annual basis with each college/department reviewing the gathered data. The Massey College of Business provides a good model for this. In addition to asking overall satisfaction with the advisor, COB also asks about satisfaction with the advising process as a whole as well as specific questions such as:

### My Advisor:

- Is available at a variety of times during the advising period.
- Is on time for appointments with me.
- Provides a caring, open atmosphere.
- Is approachable and easy to talk to.
- Knows my name.
- Is a good listener.
- Encourages me to assume an active role in planning my academic program.
- Shows concern for my personal growth and development.
- Has a positive attitude.
- Is a helpful, effective advisor whom I would recommend to other students.
- Provides me with accurate information about requirements, prerequisites, etc.
- Helps me select courses that match my interests and abilities.
- Makes appropriate referrals when he/she is unable to answer my questions.
- Helps me identify the obstacles I need to overcome to reach my educational goals.
- Is knowledgeable about general education course requirements.

All queries are on a 5-point Likert scale with 5 = extremely satisfied or strongly agree and 1= extremely dissatisfied or strongly disagree. In addition to these questions COB also asks certain demographic/descriptive questions such as class standing, major, number of semesters assigned to current advisor, how many times the student meets with advisor, average time spent meeting with advisor, etc. Analyzing responses to such surveys across campus will help pinpoint strengths and weaknesses and target needed areas for development. In addition, this information could be added to the tenure review processes.

In addition, we'd recommend including the Advising Module as part of Belmont's NSSE implementation every two years. Gathering this data comparable to our peer institutions will provide a helpful benchmark on our campus' anticipated improvement.

Finally, we suggest retitling the TK20 section on advising from "Academic Advising" to "Mentorship and Academic Advising." The prompts in this section could be amended to give greater insight on faculty experiences working directly with students in situations other than teaching (advising, research, student orgs, conferences, etc.). The proposed Director and University Academic Advising Committee would be charged with developing specific questions to discover pertinent information.

Ideally, we would hope to see appropriate rewards for faculty who, as part of their professional development, receive advising credentials and/or see positive results on advising assessments. In addition, Belmont should seek opportunities to showcase faculty who work with student organizations, particularly those who exceed expectations in this area.

Perhaps Belmont's own Dr. Patricia Chaffin sums up this best in her 2015 dissertation on *"Creating and evaluating the effectiveness of training: Academic advisor reactions, attitudes and usage of electronic advising tools"*: "Evaluation and assessment shows faculty and staff that the administration takes academic advising seriously. Evaluation must be created to measure the defined goal of the advising programs. Evaluation and assessment should provide valuable information to campus administration for evidence based decision-making. Additionally, reward and recognition may be one of the most important aspects of an academic advising program. Many institutions offer little or no type of reward for advising. This lack of reward system sends mixed signals to academic advisors. An appropriate reward and recognition system must be established by institutions if advisors are to take advising seriously."

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<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0BwuFm6NAJhKsT1R6MW9SY2FOY0E>