# Academic Advising Working Group Final Report

# May 30, 2016

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**Charges:** During the spring 2010 semester, the administration created the Academic and Career Planning Advisory Committee. The group surveyed students and faculty advisors during the fall 2011 semester. The group summarized the results in the Academic Advising Report on July 9, 2012. It was determined that although this report provided many models and recommendations that may improve academic advising at the Behrend Campus, a mechanism for adaptation implementation was required.

In order to suggest improvements to academic advising campus wide, Faculty Council Chair Matt Swinarski, created the Academic Advising Working Groupin spring 2014.

This group was charged with the following:

* Prioritize the recommendations from the July 2012 Academic Advising Report
* Recommend specific actions that are required to determine implementation
* Suggest new or modified policies, procedures and/or practices required to implement each recommendations including which group will be responsible
* Present draft of suggestions to Faculty Organization for approval and implementation
* Schedule follow-up meetings with the administration to discuss timelines and implementation progress

Summary: The Academic Advising Working Group met 20 times between February 19, 2014 and April 2016. Minutes for each meeting and ancillary materials are available upon request. These meetings included an open presentation to the faculty with our recommendations on April 18, 2016.

Using the advising goals (appendix I) established by **The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA)** & approved by our working group, we propose the following recommendations:

1. Define Behrend’s academic advising goals

* adopt tenets of advising (appendix II)
* widely adopt learning outcomes (already established by ACPC)
* assess advising (SRTE type)

2. Clean-up procedures

* adopt guidelines & best practices for advisor assignments (appendix III)
* develop common form for changing advisors

3. Create competency based training program (appendix IV)

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Halmi

Chair, Academic Advising Working Group

**Appendix I: Advising Goals**

* Assisting students in considering their life goals by relating their interests, skills, abilities, and values to careers, the world of work, and the nature and purpose of higher education
* Assisting students in developing an educational plan consistent with their goals and objectives
* Assisting students in developing decision-making skills
* Providing accurate information about policies, procedures, resources, and programs
* Referring students to other institutional or community support services
* Assisting students in evaluating progress toward established goals and educational plans
* Providing information about students to the college or program

**Appendix II: Tenets of Advising at Behrend**

* Advisors are responsible to the individuals they advise.
* Advisors are responsible to Penn State, higher education & their educational community.
* Advisors are responsible for involving others, when appropriate, in the advising process.
* Advisors are responsible for their professional practices and for themselves personally.

**Appendix III: Guidelines: Advisor Assignments**

**Guidelines:**

1. Faculty assigned by department chairs.

2. Assignments should be discussed with faculty.

3. Any full-time faculty *may* be assigned advising responsibilities, except first-year faculty. Second-year faculty should be limited.

**The following procedures are also suggested:**

1. Student requests will be honored.

2. Students remain assigned to their former advisor if appropriate.

3. The number of advisees per advisor is level-loaded within the faculty who are advising for that discipline.

4. All schools must prepare a report for the students under their majors/disciplines to assure that all students are represented and reviewed by someone.

5. Faculty who are not assigned advisees due to preference of the faculty or preference of the faculty chair will be assigned to additional service areas to assure distribution of responsibilities within the department.

6. Faculty who are assigned to an advisor role will serve in that role on an ongoing basis; faculty may not elect in and out of the advisor role on a year-to-year basis.

7. Students who have been with an advisor for several years may be moved if that advisor’s assignment role is changed. Care should be taken to assure that communication is made with students who are moved or transition should be made by attrition.

**Appendix IV: Create competency based training program**

1. Attitudes: The attitudes of the advisor are critical for facilitating the development of the advisor/advisee relationship. Compassion, high standards & expectations for self & students, accessibility, open mindedness and positive attitude & collegiality are all essential qualities.

2. Skills: Academic advising entails relationships based largely on one-on-one interactions between a mentor and a student. Thus a number of communication, technology, and advising-specific skills contribute enormously to the success of those relationships. These qualities include communication, advising specific skills, and technology skills. These skills can be learned with training.

3. Knowledge: Without institution-specific knowledge, an advisor is not capable of helping students navigate the complex information and procedures required to be successful. A thorough understanding of academic degree information as well as University Policies and Procedures is essential.

With the onset of LionPath and StarFish, there is no better time in Penn State history to require a training program for academic advisors here at Behrend.