

*This document was written as a companion to the proposed Academic Advising Career Ladder as presented to Human Capital Services at Kansas State University. The below sections serve as documentation of the thought process behind the specific parts of the tiered career ladder. This also serves to describe how the authors based the design upon NACADA's Academic Advising Core Competencies Model.

Core Competency: Conceptual Component

1. History and role of academic advising in higher education
 - a. Across the tiers, this part of the Conceptual Component develops as the advisor gains understanding of the history and background for the advising procedures and policies in their unit. Advisors move from a basic knowledge of what the procedures and policies are to an understanding of the reasons and purposes for which they exist. Over time, they gain perspective as to why advising is handled the way it is as part of a larger picture relative to the workings of the other academic units connected to the advising office/advisor.
 - b. Advisors need to understand the history of academic advising as a profession. Understanding the challenges faced by the field greatly influences the ability to understand how local advising practices fit with best practices across the field and at other institutions. This knowledge also helps move the field forward rather than spending time developing programming that will work against institutional values and goals.
 - c. This competency is supported by the constant exploration into creating and refining their personal advising philosophy relative to the goals and mission of their unit/university. This becomes more complex as the advisor moves across the tiers and as their understanding of their unit/university missions and goals deepens. At the later tiers, the advisor should have and be able to articulate how their philosophy supports and strengthens the unit goals and missions.
2. Core Values of Academic Advising
 - a. The seven NACADA core values of caring, commitment, empowerment, inclusivity, integrity, professionalism, and respect drive this area of the career ladder. Each tier of the ladder represents a new level of understanding in each of these areas that enables the advisor to develop their own processes, their own methods of delivery, their own ways of interacting with students/faculty/staff. At the upper tiers, advisors should become a mentoring resource to help newer staff develop their understanding in the same core values. Experience in a wide variety of interactions with students and staff will offer opportunities to develop these values.
3. Theory relevant to academic advising.
 - a. Advisors need to develop a broad understanding of theory relevant to advising and to remain current on newly developing advising-related theories. Advisors may begin their career with little understanding of relevant theories that inform advising practice, but as they advance, they should be able to pull pieces from many different theoretical perspectives together to develop their advising philosophy and to guide their practices. Relevant theories have developed in a number of related fields and should be explored by the advisor as they progress.
4. Academic advising approaches and strategies
 - a. An advisor should not be a "prescriptive or appreciative" advisor, but rather should draw from their understanding of a variety of approaches, and use the tools they provide, in their daily interactions with students. Each student presents a unique set of requirements and a unique level of preparedness. As an advisor progresses across tiers, they need to develop the ability to recognize what specific needs each student brings to the meeting and how to use the appropriate method to address those needs.
 - b. At the higher tiers, advisors should be able to serve as a resource for other advisors/faculty/staff in how to approach students or how to interact with families, etc. using the most appropriate methods. This will also connect to the mission/goals of the individual unit.

5. Expected outcomes of academic advising
 - a. The demands of members of the higher education community have evolved and increased significantly over the last few decades. While not specifically detailed in the career ladder, it is expected that at the early tiers advisors would be spending most of their efforts understanding the unit Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and how to measure them. At the higher tiers, it would be natural to expect an advisor to be part of the conversation developing new SLO's and designing appropriate methods of assessment related to those SLOs.
 - b. Across the tiers, advisors should steadily move beyond the immediacy of getting through individual appointments and solving only the issues presented by the student. Advisors should develop the ability to develop a longer view of barriers facing the student, how long-range education plans benefit the student, identify reasonable goals for the individual, and pull together pieces information from multiple sources to develop a complex solution for each student.
6. How equitable and inclusive environments are created and maintained
 - a. At the early tiers, advisors will exhibit a basic understanding of multicultural awareness in a general sense. New advisors should work to understand the broad strokes of their student population and be sensitive to those differences when working with students.
 - b. As the advisor moves through the tiers, they would be expected to develop a deeper understanding of the many different types of identities and cultural pieces that make up any individual student. Each student is unique in their own mix of these parts and advisors should be able to think through and provide a safe place for each student to come and work and be supported.
 - c. Advisors should also be expected to reflect upon their own biases, cultures, and thoughts. As they move through the tiers, they should be developing a deeper understanding of how their own biases may be creating barriers and should be very thoughtful about creating an environment that is inclusive and supportive of students.

Core Competency: Information Component

1. Institution specific history, mission, vision, values, and culture.
 - a. To provide the foundation for developing competency in the Conceptual Component, advisors must understand the core values, culture, and history of their unit/university. This should exceed the local unit information and should move to knowledge of the university level ideas as well as how they were guided by/interact with local and state communities. At the early tiers, the advisor should know the policies and the values, but at upper tiers, the advisors should be able to understand the decision-making process from the top down. This allows stronger communication with administration as well as a greater ability to ensure conversations and decisions made with students are in line with university values/vision/mission.
 - b. At the higher tiers, advisors should be able to articulate how decisions/policies are made at the university as well as the particular stakeholders involved. They should also be able to explain how these processes were involved and why the university has developed these structures over time.
 - c. At upper tiers, it would be natural to expect advisors to be able to communicate to newer advisors decisions made by administration as well as predict future responses by supervisors. Senior advisors should be able to, within reason, serve to guide newer advisors as the newer advisors encounter difficult or complex situations with students that will require multiple campus resources to solve.
2. Curriculum, degree programs, and other academic requirement and options.
 - a. At the early tiers, advisors should be mastering knowledge of their individual department/responsibility area programs and options. There will be some base knowledge about university structures and support offices but it is likely the advisor will need plenty of direction in either referring students to correct places of connecting directly with the correct offices/staff to get things done.
 - b. As the advisor advances across tiers, it would be expected of them to gain greater knowledge of programs and curricula outside of their immediate department (perhaps common dual majors or minors/certificate programs). Advisors should also develop a stronger knowledge of the many support offices on campus available to students as well making personal connections with the appropriate staff in those offices to best serve students.

3. Institution specific policies, procedures, rules, and regulations.
 - a. Same as above. The advisor should be aware of departments and support programs, but also materials those departments make available to students and common misinterpretations. Advisors will develop a greater understanding of common requests, errors, misunderstandings, and incorrect assumptions on the part of the student. As they advance across tiers, they should move away from being reactionary and move towards being more proactive. They should develop a greater ability to anticipate problematic decisions and tools on the university's part and be ready to explain the nuances as they arise.
4. Legal guidelines of advising practice, including privacy regulations and confidentiality.
 - a. During the early tiers, advisors would be expected to know and conform to appropriate legal guidelines pertaining to privacy, inclusion, safety, etc.
 - b. As the advisor progresses through tiers it would be expected that they would become specialists in certain areas (i.e., FERPA or International student requirements, etc.) in order to better develop office procedures and policies and to train newer staff. They would also be expected to develop a network of support in this area to seek support for more complicated questions.
5. The characteristics, needs, and experiences of major and emerging student populations.
 - a. Each unit/university hosts a unique population of students. Advisors need to recognize that students are working with a number of advisors and officers across campus based upon the different individual student characteristics. Advisors must have knowledge of the many different needs the student population brings to their meetings. Advisors need to develop an ability to comfortably interact and support their students and must have an understanding of the many different needs the student population brings to their meetings.
 - b. As advisors progress across tiers they should develop a network across campus of experts and resources related to the different sides/pieces students bring with them. At the upper tiers advisors should themselves become experts in certain areas and become a resource for other and newer advisors across campus. It would also be natural to expect to see senior advisors participating in program development, presentations, other awareness campaigns, or even scholarly research to advance knowledge in their chosen fields of expertise.
6. Campus and community resources that support student success.
 - a. As stated earlier, advisors are expected to increase their understanding and knowledge of campus resources and support offices as they progress through the tiers. However, they also should be able to provide the student with resources and options in both the surrounding local/state area and in the broader view of life. Advisors in the lower tiers would tend to focus on concrete examples of specific university resources and work to expand their knowledge about local/state resources.
 - b. As the advisor progresses across tiers, they should be able to offer a much greater view of how current choices (classes, programs, curriculum, etc.) will impact/be impacted by life and the career world beyond college. Advisors should develop a greater understanding of local resources in the community that may exist outside university structures in order to support/solve student issues. Advisors should develop a greater ability to articulate the importance of current coursework and campus events in the student's life now and the connection to life beyond college.
7. Information technology applicable to relevant advising roles.
 - a. Technology on campus creates an ability for newer advisors and senior advisors to collaborate to develop programs that best serve their students. Senior advisors will be expected to be able to discuss the many different technological platforms at play on campus from the local office to the major platforms used in centralized offices. Newer advisors may bring with them experience using newer technologies and platforms as well as perhaps a better understanding of which programs students are using currently.
 - b. Advisors at all tiers are expected to remain current on programs used at the university and to find more efficient ways to use the available platforms. As resources shrink and options eliminated, offices will need to become creative to find ways to utilize existing technology to meet new demands and to create new and engaging programs for our students.
 - c. Senior advisors should work toward finding ways to utilize the existing technologies to support assessment and development of new SLOs.

Core Competency: Relational Component

1. Articulate a personal philosophy of academic advising.
 - a. All advisors have their own theories and philosophies that guide their interactions with students. At the lower tiers, advisors will spend time developing and broadening their philosophies. At the upper tiers, advisors will work with other advisors and administrators in their unit to ensure that their philosophies align with the goals and values of the unit/institution. While all personal philosophies are individual, they should complement the other philosophies and support the shared values of the office.
 - b. Advisors should be able to articulate their philosophy to students and staff in a more comprehensive way as they move through the tiers. At the early tiers, their written philosophy will act as a direct reference document guiding their interactions with students. As the advisor progresses, the philosophy will instead serve to connect theory to practice. The advisor will incorporate new techniques into their philosophy as they learn new ideas from fellow advisors, research, and their own experience.
2. Create rapport and build academic advising relationships.
 - a. Advisors will be expected to develop an extensive toolbox of communication strategies and abilities that will enable effective, efficient, and timely communication between the advisor and student. Advisors will develop appropriate interpersonal skills (eye contact, body language, soft or direct language, etc.) that assist in creating a student-focused experience.
 - b. Advisors must build professional, trusting, and consistent relationships with their students. Additionally, advisors must also build relationships with other faculty and staff to better serve students. In the early tiers, advisors would likely focus on building and maintaining relationships locally within the college and would be expected to start building a cross-campus network. At the higher tiers, advisors would be expected to not only have developed their own network, but be able to make recommendations to newer advisors and to facilitate introductions. Creating the cross-campus network allows for quicker resolution of student issues so advisors must be able to show progress in this area.
 - c. Advisors should be able to build relationships that extend beyond campus. Students benefit greatly from referrals to local recruiters, local clubs and organizations that build positive experiences, and to mentors that are willing to support the student. Advisors should be accessible to community members that have direct questions or need specific advice for prospective students.
3. Communicate in an inclusive and respectful manner.
 - a. Advisors must understand their own biases and skill gaps before they can communicate in an inclusive and respectful manner with others. Advisors in early tiers and newer to the field should be able to communicate with students and staff in a respectful manner. As advisors progress through the tiers they would be expected to demonstrate sensitivity to broader student populations, show increased abilities to understand differences in communication styles based on culture, and mentor new advisors on the same skills. Advisors need to develop an ability to comfortably interact and support their students and must have an understanding of the many different needs the student population brings to their meetings.
 - b. Experienced advisors should also be able to consider factors beyond direct verbal and non-verbal communication. Advisors should review the environment in which they will work with students and be aware of how different student/staff populations perceive that environment. Experienced advisors should be able to recognize—and would be expected to seek to correct—any barriers or biases that are subtly communicated based on furniture arrangement, decorations, appointment times, or other factors.
4. Plan and conduct successful advising interactions.
 - a. New advisors will likely be more reactionary and transactional in nature with their students. Even if highly skilled in relationship building, time and experience is required in any advising position to develop a strong capacity to direct the flow of the average advising appointment. Newer advisors should exhibit active listening skills to understand the issues presented by each student. In the early tiers, advisors will be expected to seek out assistance from Senior Advisors or other knowledge experts in order to know when and how to make appropriate referrals.

- b. At the higher tiers, advisors should be able to anticipate possible conversations that could develop beyond the listed advising topic. They should be proactive, develop responses, and plan possible conversation lines to a large number of possible scenarios that could arise before the student arrives. The advisor should be able to access different handout materials or possible web-based references ahead of time depending on the anticipated conversation with a student. Experienced advisors should also have an advanced working knowledge of the different support offices on campus and be able to make appropriate referrals based upon the student issue and with little to no direction from supervisors.
5. Promote student understanding of the logic and purpose of the curriculum.
 - a. Advisors must develop the ability to assist students in understanding not only requirements of the curriculum, but also the underlying value of each course and how the skills obtained, when taken as a whole, impact their future. New advisors will likely be more concrete in their understanding and be lacking in the history or reasoning behind the curriculum design/course selection requirements. They will likely also have a limited working knowledge of programs beyond their own college.
 - b. Experienced advisors should be researching curriculum design decisions in their units to understand why faculty deem the requirements critical to the program. Advisors in later tiers should also be able to better articulate to students how to find value in every class and how each class builds upon the last resulting in a complete education. Advisors should be able to guide the conversation with students, leading students to their own discovery of the value in their coursework as well as looking forward towards a process of life-long learning.
6. Facilitate problem solving, decision-making, meaning-making, planning, and goal setting.
 - a. Advisors in the lower tiers will likely answer student questions at the basic informational level. Experience and training will develop the skill of expanding the conversation to a level of more comprehensive understanding.
 - b. Advisors in higher tiers should be able to answer a question presented by a student, then probe deeper to determine if there are other concerns that need addressing. Experienced advisors should display the ability to subtly guide the conversation determining whether the issues presented are merely symptoms of a much larger set of problems that require support or resources. Experienced advisors should also be able to answer a question, and then discuss with the student options or problems that may arise in the steps following the immediate decision. Along with this conversation should be appropriate referrals and options for resources both on and off campus.
 - c. Advanced advisors should consider publication, participation in presentations, or research to share with the local and extended advising community after developing best practices.
7. Engage in on-going assessment and development of self and the advising practice.
 - a. Training and professional development should be part of every tier. Early tiers would consist of training and development related to the basic systems and skills necessary in student service. Newer advisors should identify senior advisors that exhibit skill sets that are desirable and develop a mentor/mentee relationship.
 - b. Experienced advisors should be involved in design and implementation of assessment in the unit/institution. They should be skilled at self-reflection to identify gaps in their own abilities and seek out colleagues to support them in their development. Experienced advisors should be available to newer advisors to provide a mentoring relationship.

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