



Open Pathway

Quality Initiative Institutional Proposal Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative proposal represents the work that the institution will undertake to fulfill the Improvement Process of the Open Pathway.

Signature of Institution’s President or Chancellor

Date

Steven C. Bahls, President

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Augustana College

Name of Institution

Rock Island, Illinois

City and State

The institution completes the Quality Initiative proposal by responding to the questions in each category of the template. The institution may choose to include a brief implementation plan that addresses many of the questions below and replaces portions of the outline. Proposals should be no more than 4,500 words.

Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a title and brief description of the Quality Initiative. Explain whether the initiative will begin and be completed during the Quality Initiative period or if it is part of work already in progress or will achieve a key milestone in the work of a longer initiative.

Title: Academic Advising: Elevating our Practice

Description:

Augustana College is a small, private, residential college with an enrollment of approximately 2,500 students. As a small residential college, one of our strengths is the degree to which students form meaningful and lasting relationships with faculty. One key relationship between faculty and students is that of the advisor and advisee. This Quality Initiative seeks to leverage the advisor/advisee relationship to help students identify and engage in experiences—academic, co-curricular, and extracurricular—that align with their developmental stage and preparation for life after graduation.

A 2010-11 program review of our academic advising program, including a self-study and external review, revealed both strengths and weaknesses in our program. Areas of concern included a lack of organizational structure for an Academic Advising Program, a culture of advising on campus that is inconsistent with current best practices in academic advising, and minimal assessment of the advising program and student experiences in the program.

We designed a portion of our 2011-2012 Senior Survey to dig deeper into the student experience in academic advising. These data demonstrate that our advisors do a satisfactory job of information transfer to students regarding college policies and procedures, and advisors generally relate well with students; however, we are missing opportunities for student growth by referring students to appropriate campus resources, and we often fail to help students examine their educational experience holistically.

Our current model of academic advising is primarily a prescriptive model focused on navigating registration procedures, college policies, and graduation requirements. Expectations for academic advisors vary substantially across departments as does student understanding of the educational role of academic advising. This Quality Initiative is the first step in a larger initiative to transform our academic advising program to a model rooted in the philosophy that advising is teaching and the advising curriculum should foster student growth, empower students to effectively manage their own academic growth, and enrich students' self-awareness. At the same time, academic advising will help students explore, articulate and achieve their educational, professional, and life goals.

Augustana College is on an accelerated timeline for the Quality Initiative Project; however, transforming our advising culture on campus is a long term project composed of three overlapping phases.

Phase I

- A. Implement an improved organizational structure of academic advising campus-wide
- B. Provide faculty development opportunities to shift our advising philosophy

Phase II

- A. Develop advising resources for academic advisor and student use
- B. Implement advising curriculum

Phase III

- A. Assess impact of modifications to advising program on student experience
- B. Modify and adjust curriculum as necessary

We seek to implement Phase I (A & B) and Phase II (A) over the next 18 to 24 months. Phase II (B) and Phase III will occur within the next five years.

Our key measurement for this Quality Initiative Project will be Senior Survey responses to the advising related questions below for our 2014 cohort. Results will be compared to those obtained from the 2012 and 2013 cohort.

1. My adviser connected me with other campus resources and opportunities (Student Activities, CEC, the Counseling Center, etc.) that helped me succeed in college.
(1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)
2. How often did your adviser ask you about your career goals and aspirations?
(1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Very Often)
3. How often did your adviser ask you to think about the connections between your academic plans, co-curricular activities, and your career or post-graduate plans?
(1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Very Often)

Sufficiency of the Initiative's Scope and Significance

2. Explain why the proposed initiative is relevant and significant for the institution.

RELEVANCE

Current Practice

We currently operate under a decentralized advising model. We have a director for First Year Advising who assigns first year students to their first year advisor. First Year Advisors are faculty members who receive a modest stipend for advising approximately 14 first year advisees from their first day on campus until they declare a major. Major declaration occurs during the spring of the first year or during the sophomore year. Upon declaring a major, students are transferred from their first year advisor to a major advisor. Department models and expectations for major advisors vary widely across campus, and we do not currently have any campus-wide organizational structure to oversee major advising.

We are missing opportunities to link students to meaningful experiences

Student self-reported data from our 2012 Senior Survey indicate there are strengths and areas for improvement in our current advising programs. For example, 78% of the 509 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: My advisor genuinely seemed to care about my development as a whole person. 73% agreed or strongly agreed that their advisor helped them select courses that best met their educational or personal goals. However, only 51% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: My advisor connected me with other campus resources and opportunities (Student Activities, the Community Engagement Center, the Counseling Center, etc.) that helped me succeed in college, and only 45% reported that their advisor asked them to think about the connections between their academic plans, co-curricular activities, and their career or post-graduate plans often or very often. We gather from these data that our advisors do a satisfactory job of conveying information to students and they generally relate well with students; **however, we are missing opportunities for student growth when only half of our students recognize referrals to campus resources or attempts to examine their educational experience holistically.** For each question related to advising on our Senior Survey, the variance in average scores for departments was large. In other words, academic advising in some departments is exemplary while other departments are struggling to connect with students and meet their needs.

During the 2010-2011 academic year, we completed a Program Review of our academic advising program. Our self-study identified several causes for concern within the program, including effective transfer student advising, tracking undeclared sophomore students, advisor knowledge of the post-graduate environment, and time constraints of advisors within majors. External reviewers pointed out a lack of a strong organizational structure of our advising program, few assessment measures, and a culture of advising on our campus following an old school model of prescriptive advising rather than the more current model—Advising as Teaching—accepted by the National Association of Academic Advisors (NACADA). In the preamble to their Concept of Academic Advising, the NACADA states,

Academic advising is integral to fulfilling the teaching and learning mission of higher education. Through academic advising, students learn to become members of their higher education community, to think critically about their roles and responsibilities as students, and to prepare to be educated citizens of a democratic society and a global community. Academic advising engages students beyond their own world views, while acknowledging their individual characteristics, values, and motivations as they enter, move through, and exit the institution (2006).

SIGNIFICANCE

Our Vision for our Students

The Dean of Academic Affairs initiated conversations across campus earlier this year with a goal of articulating a vision for Augustana Students. The Vision Statement below has emerged:

Augustana students are intellectually sophisticated and curious by disposition; well-rounded in their experiences they are passionate lifelong learners.

Confident yet self-aware our students take initiative as socially responsible independent thinkers engaged in a diverse and changing world.

We provide myriad academic, co-curricular, and extra-curricular experiences through which students can achieve this vision; however, a strong, intentional, academic advising program is necessary to:

- a) help students identify experiences that will be most beneficial for them and their personal growth,
- b) help students make connections among their various college experiences, and
- c) help students make connections between college experiences and post-graduate plans.

3. Explain how the proposed initiative aligns with the institution's mission and current operational or strategic priorities.

Our mission statement and strategic priorities align to develop students who stand out as leaders in our diverse and changing world. A robust academic advising program which promotes self-discovery and self-authorship enhances the learning experiences students have during their academic career at Augustana.

Mission Statement

Augustana College, rooted in the liberal arts and sciences and a Lutheran expression of the Christian faith, is committed to offering a challenging education that develops qualities of mind, spirit and body necessary for a rewarding life of leadership and service in a diverse and changing world.

2011 strategic plan: Authentically Augustana-Part 2.

Strategic Imperative 1: Preparing our students to stand out

One goal of Strategic Imperative 1 is "Re-conceptualizing our advising system to develop a mentoring/one-on-one teaching program that highlights high-impact learning experiences and the positive outcomes of an Augustana education and makes advising a priority" (Authentically Augustana-Part 2, 2011, p6).

Improving our current academic advising at Augustana is **the top priority** of the Office of Academic Affairs at this time.

4. Explain the intended impact of the initiative on the institution and its academic core.

The intended impact of improved academic advising is to enhance the degree to which students can demonstrate connections between their various experiences as an Augustana student and the learning and development necessary to succeed in life after college. How will we make this happen? We will

restructure our academic advising program to provide accountability for advising, at the level of the individual advisor, department level, and program level. We will develop an advising curriculum that begins before first year students arrive on campus in the fall and builds and shapes student learning through graduation. The curriculum will be developmental and focused on student self-authorship. We will imbed self-reflection milestones and goal setting exercises throughout the curriculum to initiate conversations focused on connections between student experiences and personal growth, goals, and life after Augustana. These activities will be archived in an electronic format, and goals documents will be reviewed and updated frequently.

Our academic core will be impacted by our larger advising initiative in numerous ways that are difficult to predict at this point in our planning process. However, one essential modification we plan to implement is related to student self-reflection. A hallmark of our Senior Inquiry experience, our version of a senior capstone, is a reflective essay in which students discuss the nature of knowledge and inquiry, self-awareness and connection with others, or the relationship of individuals to a community. This reflective piece is a substantial component of our Senior Inquiry project and is an indication that we value the learning that takes place through critical self-reflection (as faculty, we are ourselves, reflective practitioners). Many faculty have embraced student self-reflection and incorporated reflective assignments into their courses. Additionally, a handful of departments have integrated reflective sign-posts in their curricula to develop and strengthen students' skills in connecting their experiences to learning. Critical self-reflection involves a deep analysis of how student experiences (ie a field trip, service learning, international study, an internship, student research, etc) contribute to one's understanding of self, others, and/or course concepts. Our goal is for reflection is to move beyond simple description of experiences to clear and convincing demonstrations of connections between the experience and course material, past experience, and/or personal goals. This complex analysis of attitudes and behaviors leads to learning, and we plan to embed reflective sign-posts into all majors through this advising initiative with the goal of increasing student self-awareness of achieving self-authorship.

Clarity of the Initiative's Purpose

5. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.

This Quality Initiative project is part of a long term project designed to elevate our academic advising practices. The goals of this project are to develop the organizational structure, faculty development models, and resources for advisor and advisee use in order to be successful in achieving our long-term vision for academic advising, stated below.

Vision for Academic Advising at Augustana College:

Academic advising is central to student learning and development at Augustana College. The partnership between student and advisor empowers students to intentionally develop and attain their educational goals.

Two weaknesses of our current academic advising model are that there are no campus-wide expectations or resources for academic advisors. The result is a "hit or miss" advising model that varies greatly based on a student's major and their advisor, which we find unacceptable. We aim for academic advising to align with the College mission (stated above) and the Academic Advising Program mission (below).

Academic Advising Mission Statement

The academic advising program at Augustana College nurtures student development, empowers students to effectively manage their own academic growth, and enriches students' personal growth and self-awareness through partnership with academic advisors.

The vision and mission statements above are products of an Academic Advising Working Group formed Fall term-2012 and tasked to outline a robust advising program, which will contribute to deep learning. The Working Group was also charged to develop a plan to implement and assess the program. The recommendations of the Advising Working Group are due to faculty during the spring term and will be the foundation of the implementation plan for this Quality Initiative.

6. Describe how the institution will evaluate progress, make adjustments, and determine what has been accomplished.

We will use a multi-pronged approach to evaluate our progress on each of the goals of this initiative.

Implement an improved organizational structure of academic advising campus-wide

The main components of this goal are to:

- A. Appoint a Director of Advising
- B. Implement a transition procedure to facilitate a smooth transition for students from their first year advisor to their major advisor
- C. Implement a transition procedure for transfer students to facilitate a smooth transition for transfer students from their transfer advisor to their major advisor
- D. Implement mechanisms to distribute advisees equitably across campus

Student focus group data, experience and satisfaction surveys, and advisor feedback will inform our progress on our advisor transition procedures. Mechanisms to reduce advising load for faculty in departments with heavy advising loads will be determined in conversation with those departments and the faculty most likely to pick up extra advisees. Comparisons of the number of advisees for faculty in different departments will tell us how equitably we have distributed advisees. Student and faculty surveys will inform us about how well the mechanisms function and where modifications should be considered.

Provide faculty development opportunities to shift our advising philosophy

Faculty needs assessments will help us prioritize advising topics/skills for faculty development. We expect faculty self-assessments of advisor competencies to be the most useful tool to measure our progress in faculty development. Our faculty development priorities during this Quality Initiative Project will be referrals to campus resources, initiating and nurturing conversations on career goals and future plans, and prompting advisees to seek connections between college experiences and post-graduate plans.

Develop advising resources for academic advisor and student use

The Advising Working Group is generating a list of resources that should be readily available to advisors and students. Many of these resources will be housed on an Advising website. We currently have an academic advising website, but the site needs to be reconceptualized to a more user friendly site. Both the Director of Advising and the Director of First Year Advising will continuously seek feedback from advisors and students regarding resources they would like to have developed.

The impact of this Quality Initiative Project will be measured via our Senior Survey for the 2014 cohort. Our aim is to increase the percentage of students who recognize referrals to campus resources, engage in

conversation about their career goals, and seek connections between college experiences and post-graduate plans. Our 2012 and 2013 cohorts will serve as a baseline for this measurement.

7. Describe potential challenges and issues in implementing the initiative.

This project fundamentally shifts the culture of advising on Augustana's campus for both advisors and advisees. On the faculty side, clearly defined advisor expectations and faculty development to provide necessary academic advising knowledge and skills must pave the way for this culture shift. We will need to communicate expectations and learning outcomes for advisees. Students are not used to having specific assignments for advising, and we expect some resistance to the idea of requiring work for zero course credit.

Few faculty on campus will argue against changes in academic advising; however, the reality of time constraints leaves many faculty wondering how they can add more tasks to already strained schedules. In other words, faculty may see modifications to the advising structure as an increase in workload for no additional pay. Part of this issue will be allayed by giving students more responsibility in the advising relationship. Through faculty development, we will provide models for occasional group advising that will meet student learning outcomes without compromising the student expectations of one on one time with advisors. We will also focus professional development on how to promote student self-authorship via the questions and prompts advisors provide students. Our sense is that advisors can begin conversations with questions that lead to more productive conversations yet do not take more time than what advisors typically spend with their advisees now.

Currently, there is wide disparity across campus in the number of advisees faculty advise. We plan to work with departments with particularly high advising loads to identify "back up" advisors for those majors with the aim of more equitably distributing advisees.

Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative

8. Describe the level of support for the initiative by internal or external stakeholders.

First, faculty unanimously voted to address academic advising in our Quality Initiative Project. Furthermore, when a working group focused on identifying best practices for academic advising and formulating a plan to implement those best practices was formed on campus, numerous faculty and administrators volunteered to work in the group.

Second, there is broad support from administrative offices including: the Office of Academic Affairs, the Director of First Year Advising, the Registrar's Office, and the Office of Student Affairs. Over the past year, the Director of the Community Engagement Center, which houses our Internship Office, Career Development, and Center for Vocational Reflection, has been working closely with the Academic Affairs Office to develop a "Roadmap for Success" called the COMPASS. This tool was rolled out to first year students and first year advisors this past fall with plans to add more resources and reflection points for students at all stages of their academic careers.

Third, one of the initiatives of our current strategic plan is to make our students stand out. Academic Advising was specifically mentioned in the strategic plan as a way to make our students stand out. Thus, this Quality Initiative has the backing of the President's Office and the Board of Trustees.

9. Identify the groups and individuals that will lead or be directly involved in implementing the initiative.

This initiative is being led by the Office of Academic Affairs, including the Dean of the College, the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Student Academic Success, and the Director of First Year Advising. The Advising Working Group discussed in question 8 is responsible for articulating a plan to improve our academic advising. Implementation of the initiative will directly involve individuals listed above plus the Associate Dean for Faculty Development, the Director of the Center for Vocational Reflection, and all academic advisors on campus. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and the Assessment for Improvement Committee will be involved in assessment and data analysis.

10. List the human, financial, technological and other resources that the institution has committed to this initiative.

The Office of Academic Affairs has been setting the stage for quick movement on this initiative for the past year. The following key resources were developed during the 2011-12 academic year.

- The Office of Academic Affairs was restructured to create the Associate Dean of Curriculum and Student Academic Success position. Elevating our academic advising practice on campus is a key initiative of this position.
- A professional advisor was hired as the Director of First Year Advising. This position was formerly held by faculty members.
- The Office of Academic Affairs increased staffing in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment to support data collection and analysis associated with this Quality Initiative and other HLC accreditation projects.
- The Director of First Year Advising and members of the Information Technology Services Department worked extensively with Symplicity™ to integrate the CARE alert system into our resources for advisors and student services.
- The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the Director of First Year Advising, the Director of the Reading and Writing Center, and faculty in the Psychology Department developed a Student Readiness Survey to assist with advising for incoming first year students.
- The Office of Academic Affairs implemented a goal setting exercise, called *The Start*, for incoming first year students during our Summer Connections Event. Summer Connections is a daylong event where incoming first year students meet each other, representatives from numerous campus offices, and register for fall term courses.
- The Director of the Community Engagement Center, Director of First Year Advising, Director of the Center for Vocational Reflection, and Director of Career Services created a COMPASS document as a guide for students to better understand how to utilize the many services offered to them on campus. Questions to answer and prompts to reflect upon are presented for students in each year of their college experience.

This academic year:

- The CARE alert system was rolled out for campus use when classes started Fall, 2012.
- The Fall 2012 Faculty Retreat keynote address presented by Maura Reynolds, Director of Academic Advising, Hope College, and several breakout sessions focused on best practices in advising.

- First Year Advisors were provided with Student Readiness Survey results for each of their advisees as well as guides on how to utilize this resource. Advisors were also provided their advisees' *The Start* document to begin discussing academic, professional, and personal goals.
- The COMPASS was rolled out to faculty/advisors to begin circulating to students.

Future Commitments:

- All of the resources above
- Defining and filling a Director of Advising position. This position will likely be filled by a faculty member currently on campus and funded through course release(s).
- Faculty development resources (speakers, workshops, etc)

11. Describe the plan for continuing the work and sustaining the results of the initiative.

The implementation of our new Academic Advising Program will not be complete at the end of this initiative. The aims of this quality initiative lay the groundwork for a substantial change in academic advising. We predict the implementation of a new advising curriculum, assessing, and making modifications will take at least three years after this quality initiative is complete. We recognize that a change in culture takes sustained effort in advisor training and time.

Each of the resources developed during this initiative will continue to be a part of our academic advising program. These resources include the Office of Academic Advising, a Director of Advising, faculty development programs, and advisor resources. One of the functions of the Office of Academic Advising will be to sustain academic advising as vehicle for deep learning consistent with campus-wide student learning outcomes and the mission of the College.

Appropriateness of the Timeline for the Initiative (The institution may include a brief implementation or action plan.)

12. Describe the primary activities of the initiative and timeline for implementing them.

Our primary metric of success of this quality initiative project will be an increase in the mean score of student responses to each of the Senior Survey questions listed below in comparisons of the 2014 cohort to the 2012 and 2013 cohorts. We will interpret an increase in the mean score as an indication that our academic advisors are having the types of conversations with advisees that we consider important. We would also be pleased with a decrease in the standard deviation of student responses on these questions, indicating that our academic advising across campus is more consistent.

1. My adviser connected me with other campus resources and opportunities (Student Activities, CEC, the Counseling Center, etc.) that helped me succeed in college.
(1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)
2. How often did your adviser ask you about your career goals and aspirations?
(1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Very Often)
3. How often did your adviser ask you to think about the connections between your academic plans, co-curricular activities, and your career or post-graduate plans?
(1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Very Often)

Another metric we will follow in this project is the result of faculty self-assessments of advising competencies pre and post faculty development workshops. While these results will be self-assessments, we will be able to identify areas of perceived weakness in our academic advisors' skill sets—and we will prioritize further faculty development efforts based on these data.

Proposed timeline of project:

Academic Advising Working group report to faculty Spring 2013.

Implement an improved organizational structure of academic advising campus-wide

Summer 2013-Define job description of Director of Advising

Summer/Fall 2013-Appoint Director of Advising

Provide faculty development opportunities to shift our advising philosophy

Winter 2013-Faculty self-assessments of academic advisor competencies

Winter 2013-Spring 2013 Faculty development workshops

Spring 2014-Faculty self-assessments of academic advisor competencies

Develop advising resources for academic advisor and student use

Summer 2013-Spring 2014

Resources include: academic advising webpage, advising syllabi, web-based COMPASS, etc

Institutional Contact for Quality Initiative Proposal

Include the name(s) of the primary contact(s) for the Quality Initiative.

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Institution