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**TEXAS A&M**  
UNIVERSITY  
CENTRAL TEXAS

DETERMINING AND PLANNING A REALISTIC  
ADVISOR 'CASELOAD'

**ISAIAH VANCE**

Director of Academic Advising & Retention



***Abstract:*** Every advisor has been asked the question, “How many advisees do you have?” The question touches on the issue of caseload and comparisons are naturally made between the sheer number of students for which various advisors may be responsible. What is often overlooked in such discussions is the actual nature and responsibility of each advisor’s work. This session will identify a number of areas for which advisors are responsible (including what might be called ‘non-standard advising’, such as committee work), and work towards establishing a realistic and meaningful expectation of a ‘caseload’. This strategic planning could be applied to any advising office, regardless of structure or advisor type. The goal of this session is to identify the responsibilities and priorities of each advisor, and to examine ways to improve processes and student interaction.



# Learning Outcomes

- **Identify** academic advising responsibilities across institutions [cognitive]
- Begin to **create** a plan for improving advising processes [behavioral]
- **Appreciate** how a variety of factors (in-as-much as they pertain to each office) should be weighted in establishing a reasonable caseload [affective]



What does a “caseload” mean?

Why is it difficult to establish a uniform caseload recommendation across institutions?

Why is it important to establish a target caseload for your office or for specific advisors?

What factors should be used to determine caseload?

Competency-Based-Education  
Theory  
Curriculum  
Probation  
Philosophy  
Advising  
Faculty  
Reactive  
Graduation  
Retention  
Appreciative Degree  
Internships  
Transfer  
Certifications  
Audits  
Completion  
Prior Learning  
Advising-as-Teaching  
Program-Attrition  
Developmental  
New-Students  
Prescriptive  
Proactive  
Registration  
Suspension Online  
At-Risk  
Cohorts



*“[Academic advising programs] must provide adequate resources to ensure that academic advising caseloads are consistent with the institutional mission and stated goals... Factors that affect determination of advising caseloads include mode of delivery, advising approach used, additional advisor responsibilities, student needs, and time required for this activity...”*





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*...Workloads should reflect that advisors may work with students not officially assigned to them and that advising related responsibilities may extend beyond direct contact with students.”*

*– Excerpts from CAS Standards  
for Academic Advising Programs*



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“Although frequently asked of NACADA, meaningful case load comparisons remain elusive because too many factors affect advising delivery... Therefore, rather than focusing on comparing case loads, leadership should consider all of the factors that determine the optimal case load for meeting student needs and programmatic goals.”

– Rich Robbins,  
*Implications of Advising Caseload*



## **The Perspective of Administration:**

*If the advising goals are being met, then it is an appropriate caseload*



# The Importance of a Mission

*“A mission statement for academic advising reflects the specific purpose of advising on the campus and serves as the road map to achieve the vision and affirm the stated values for academic advising.”*

- Robbins, *Implications of Advising Caseload*  
(emphasis added)

*“[Academic Advising Programs] must provide adequate resources to ensure that academic advising caseloads are consistent with the institutional mission and stated goals”*

- *CAS Standards for AAP* (emphasis added)



# Impact of Advising Leadership

How does technology impact the caseload?

What manual tasks could be automated (or eliminated)?

What should advisors *not* do?

**How do these questions affect the issue of an advisor's caseload?**



**Take 2 minutes to think about one change that can be made administratively – no matter how big or small – that would have an immediate impact on your office and/or your specific workload.**

**In groups of 2-3 briefly (~1 minute each) discuss your idea and give a bit of feedback about that change.**



The easiest change to identify is the addition of  
new staff...

What would be your response if you were told  
that your office would receive five new  
positions?



This may not be a good sign...

this usually results from one of three causes:

- (1) a failure to assess the need in a timely manner
- (2) anecdotal operation
- (3) a recognized need but lack of funds.



# CAS Standards & the Advisor

If there is *not* enough time in your week then there are three possible results (or a combination of any of these three):

- (1) some responsibilities are being overlooked,
- (2) the quality of your overall work is suffering or
- (3) you are working extended hours



# Some Time Considerations

## OTHER OBLIGATIONS:

- TIME OFF
- DEPT. MEETINGS
- TRAINING
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- GENERAL WALK-INS, PHONE CALLS & EMAIL
- COMMITTEES
- RECRUITMENT/ADMISSIONS
- TRANSFER PROGRAMS
- SPECIAL PROJECTS

## CASELOAD ISSUES:

- ADVISING
- PHILOSOPHY/THEORY
- COMPLEXITY OF CURRICULUM
- ACADEMIC STANDING
- PROGRAM ATTRITION RATE
- PROACTIVE V. REACTIVE
- PERCENTAGE GRADUATING
- GENERATION OF AUDITS
- COURSE SCHEDULING
- CERTIFICATIONS
- FACULTY INVOLVEMENT
- TIME TO COMPLETION
- REVIEW OF TRANSCRIPTS



# Caseload Calculation

## CURRENT STATE

### Advising Variables

(includes mission, student demographics,  
advising philosophy, and responsibilities)

+

### (Necessary Time

x

### Students

(broken up by major/department, or  
other division) )

=

### Caseload Demand

(total time)

## PLANNING

### Caseload Demand

(total time)

-

### (Advising Variables

(includes mission, student demographics,  
advising philosophy, and responsibilities)

x

### Necessary Time)

=

### Students

(broken up by major/department, or  
other division)



## Final Thoughts

Caseload should always be conceived of in two ways: the present reality and the ideal. The main consideration should be what the difference between the two numbers means – *what is being sacrificed because the reality and the ideal do not match?*



# References & Resources

- CAS Standards for Academic Advising Programs (<http://standards.cas.edu/getpdf.cfm?PDF=E864D2C4-D655-8F74-2E647CDECD29B7D0>)
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TEXAS A&M  
UNIVERSITY  
CENTRAL TEXAS

## *Presenter Information:*

**Isaiah Vance**

**Director of Academic Advising & Retention**

**Texas A&M University-Central Texas**

**[i.vance@tamuct.edu](mailto:i.vance@tamuct.edu)**

**(254) 519-5480**