

Advancing Academic Advising Project (3AP), University of Toronto Mississauga

# Recommendations Sub-Project Final Report

Recommendations for Advancing UTM's Academic Advising Program

# Executive Summary

## The power of academic advising

UTM believes in a bright future – where more of our students thrive in their programs, find communities and belonging, and gain from their U of T experience a lift that lasts a lifetime.

Academic advising helps make this future possible. Improvements in academic advising, as research discussed below suggests, will connect our students with the supports, communities and expertise they need to progress successfully in their studies, from pre-admission to graduation and beyond. Here's how.

## The Advancing Academic Advising Project: Review and report

This report presents recommendations of the Advancing Academic Advising Project (3AP), all of which reflect our campus and tri-campus priorities to foster student success and re-imagine undergraduate education. These recommendations:

- Emerge from a comprehensive review based on best practices from NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising and CAS: The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education.
- Draw on substantial internal and external research, including consultations with UTM advisors and with colleagues at more than 20 other universities, and direct engagement with students, both through focus groups and through a fall 2023 survey with more than 2280 responses.
- Leverage our community's diverse expertise, including on a core project team and seven working groups, which brought together more than 65 staff, faculty, librarians, and students.

The review:

- Identified advising strengths, rooted in the power of UTM's people. Our academic advisors and leadership demonstrate exceptional commitment to, and passion for, students' success. This commitment drives many high-quality advising efforts now, including work informed by sound research, investment in advisor professional development, and mature systems and technologies.
- Highlighted areas for improvement, especially in the inconsistency of our advising operations, which are spread across the Office of the Registrar, student affairs portfolios, and eighteen academic departments and institutes. This decentralization hinders widespread adoption of best practices and creates barriers to efficient, effective service provision and program-wide planning and development activities.

These challenges have material impact for our UTM:

- students, who have a second-year retention rate of 90%, as compared to U of T's 93% average, and a six-year graduation rate of 69%, compared to a rate of close to 82% at U of T's faculty of arts and science.
- advising and related student-facing staff, many of whom describe heavy workloads, competing priorities, and uneven training, support, and community connection.

So, UTM has an opportunity to do better, making positive change that benefits our 16,100+ students and advising staff and sets a model from which other campuses and universities might learn.

## Priority Recommendations

In that spirit, the 3AP Recommendations Sub-Project Team has identified 10 urgent and impactful recommendations for the future of academic advising at UTM.

1. Add academic advising capacity to further support the success of UTM students.
2. Explore new academic advising models, such as:

- a. Transitioning to a unified academic advising model, creating a leadership position with oversight for all academic advising.
  - b. Delineating advising responsibilities clearly across two complementary teams: one dedicated exclusively to pre-program support and the other to in-program support.
  - c. Organizing in-program advisors in “neighborhoods,” where advisors for related programs work together.
  - d. Creating positions dedicated to academic advising and others dedicated to program administration.
  - e. Establishing management positions, to provide portfolio leadership capacity and increased support for academic advisors.
3. Finalize and broadly disseminate a vision, mission, values and goals for UTM’s AAP.
  4. Develop cross-portfolio advising communities, including:
    - a. Refreshing UTM’s academic advising community of practice, to support its ability to provide academic advisors: community; voice; role-specific training; and professional development opportunities.
    - b. Creating a community for the leaders of academic advising and other student support units, to support collaboration on the development and implementation of inter-unit activities and holistic advising.
    - c. Convening a committee of staff and faculty members, to explore faculty’s role in the provision of formal academic advising.
  5. Create a comprehensive, standardized academic advisor on-boarding, training and professional development program.
  6. Develop and implement a comprehensive assessment plan, grounded in consistent, transparently reported student outcome metrics.
  7. Press our systems and technologies advantage, including by:
    - a. Implementing the centrally supported Salesforce Student Success Hub for Higher Education software (locally called “Student Advising Service”).
    - b. Exploring the feasibility of implementing a customer relationship management (CRM) system for current students.
  8. Streamline communication planning and activities, by:
    - a. Convening a dedicated student advising communications table and appointing a dedicated communications lead, to facilitate cross-portfolio collaboration and drive the implementation of communication-related advancements.
    - b. Creating a student-focused, accessible, user-friendly website to synthesize all advising-related resources.
  9. Make academic advising spaces consistently easy to find, accessible, and supportive of student comfort.
  10. Enhance academic advising programs and services, including by:
    - a. Piloting a peer advising program, through which more experienced students are assigned to support populations of new-to-UTM students.
    - b. Prioritizing the provision of additional holistic, developmental and proactive academic advising.
    - c. Developing an early alert program that leverages predictive analytics to guide proactive interventions with students identified to be academically at-risk.
    - d. Identifying and supporting students who do not gain entry to their preferred program(s) of study, while exploring possibilities to allow students to avoid “parking” in programs of study they do not intend to continue in.

## Report Structure

The rest of this report provides detailed rationale informing each of these recommendations. It also:

- Describes this project’s genesis, contexts, and goals;
- Introduces the core project team, working group membership, and review process; and
- lists all recommendations advanced by project working groups and explains the consultative process used to prioritize and synthesize their ideas.

These recommendations, like good academic advising, reflect the power of collaboration. The project team shares our most sincere thanks to all the collaborators who have made this work possible.

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# Introduction

## Background

The University of Toronto Mississauga's (UTM) Advancing Academic Advising Project (3AP) is sponsored by Vice-President and Principal, Alexandra Gillespie and was officially launched in October, 2023 as a campus-wide initiative focused on creating a best-in-class academic advising program (AAP) at UTM.

Prioritization of efforts to advance academic advising was driven by: consistent feedback from UTM students and staff, that there was opportunity to enhance our AAP; opportunity to enhance UTM retention and graduation rates and significant evidence that improving academic advising is an effective pathway through which to do so; tri-campus focus on enhancing academic advising; and UTM commitments and accountabilities captured in our Strategic Framework, including our commitment to fostering students' success through developing effective, innovative, and integrated approaches to student advising.

Three goals were identified for the 3AP:

1. Identifying a goal state for UTM's AAP and recommendations for advancing to that state.
2. Creating a strategy for implementing recommendations.
3. Engaging the UTM community, to leverage local expertise and support stakeholder readiness for program redevelopment.

To achieve these goals, it was planned that the 3AP would include two consecutive sub-projects:

- The *Recommendations Sub-Project*, which would focus on identifying the goal state for UTM's AAP and recommendations for advancing to that state; and
- The *Implementation Planning Sub-Project*, which would focus on the viability and development of recommendation implementation plans.

## Recommendations Sub-Project

### Project Team

UTM's Project Management Office (PMO) was charged with leading the 3AP and organized a Recommendations Sub-Project Team (henceforth called the Project Team) to advance the sub-project, consisting of membership from the PMO and representatives of areas involved in delivering UTM's AAP. Membership on the Project Team included:

- Olha Fihol, Assistant Registrar, Registrarial Services, Office of the Registrar
- Svitlana Frunchak, Assistant Registrar, Academic Advising Services, Office of the Registrar
- Brian Ingoldsby, Senior Project Manager, Project Management Office
- Sharon Marjadsingh, Academic Advisor and Program Administrator, Department of Historical Studies
- Pascal Michelucci, Professor, French Studies, Department of Language Studies
- Felicity Morgan, Director, UTM Career Centre
- Sandra Ngan, Senior Project Manager, Project Management Office
- Jessica Silver, Director, Student Engagement, Centre for Student Engagement

The Project Team was charged with planning and leading the work necessary to identify a goal state for UTM's AAP and recommendations for advancing to that state. Complete Terms of Reference for the Project Team are available in Appendix A. The group was supported by the 3AP Executive Steering Committee, consisting of:

- Mark Overton, Dean of Student Affairs & Assistant Principal, Student Services
- Anuar Rodrigues, Executive Director, Strategy, Office of the Vice-President and Principal
- Nicholas Rule, Vice-Principal, Academic & Dean

Process

The project plan developed by the Project Team was significantly influenced by the AAP review and enhancement processes suggested by NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising (NACADA) (2017) and the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) (2023).

The processes recommended by both organizations involve institutions engaging in self-study, where the professional association provides standards against which the institution compares their AAP. Each organization calls for the collection of significant local evidence to support evaluations of the extent to which the local AAP complies with the provided standards and reviewers are charged with generating recommendations for bringing their local AAP into compliance where opportunities are identified. The Project Team determined that the 3AP Recommendations Sub-Project would follow a similar process.

The CAS self-assessment guide for Academic Advising Programs (2023) divides AAPs into twelve (12) “parts” and has standards associated with each; NACADA’s program identifies key performance indicators for each of their nine (9) “Conditions of Excellence.” The Project Team reviewed these parts and Conditions of Excellence and identified nine (9) areas of focus for UTM’s project. (Figure 1)

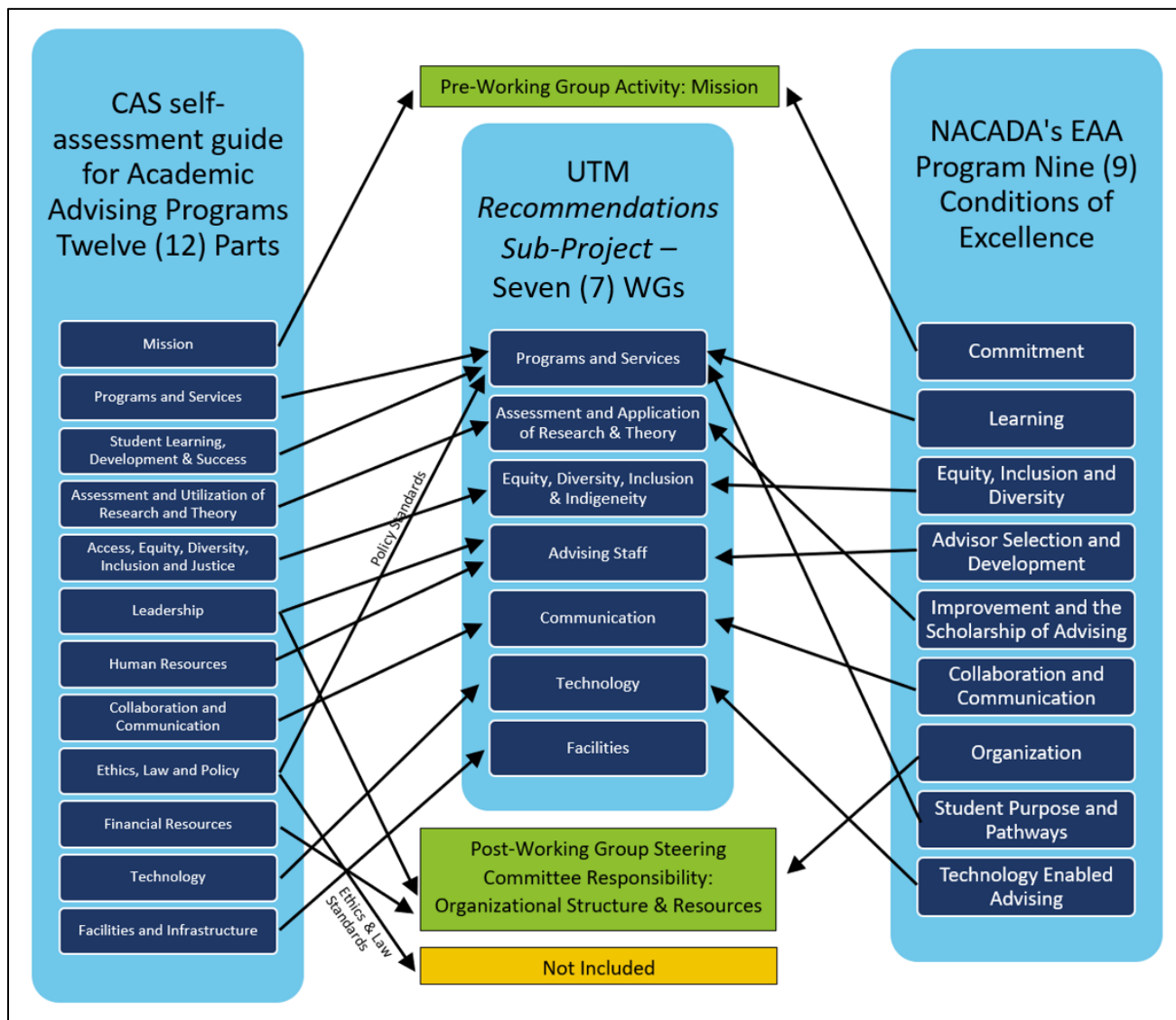


Figure 1 – Relationships between 3AP focus areas and CAS “Parts” and NACADA’s Excellence in Academic Advising “Conditions of Excellence”

Standards were confirmed for each focus area (see Appendix B) and it was determined that working groups would be struck to review and develop recommendations for seven (7) of the areas. The remaining two (2) focus areas: Mission and Structures and Resources, were identified as areas for which the Project Team would lead review and recommendation development activities. Table 1 (below) shares guiding questions associated with each focus area.

Focus Area		Select Guiding Questions
<b>Reviews Led by Working Groups</b>		
Advising Staff		Are institutional expectations and procedures related to employment practices generally being followed? Does a comprehensive training and professional development program exist? To what extent does the program support staff wellbeing and community?
Assessment		To what extent does UTM's AAP utilize assessment to guide program development? Do program staff value assessment? Do comprehensive assessment plans exist? Is data collected, analyzed, reported on and acted on?
Communication		How effectively do communication practices support the program's mission and goals? To what extent is communication working? Does the program have a culture where communication is valued? Does a comprehensive communication strategy or plans exist?
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity		Do EDI&I goals exist? Are they regularly updated and pursued through community partnerships, hiring practices, professional development activities, and the design of programs and services? To what extent does the AAP provide accessible, equitable and inclusive environments and programs and services?
Programs and Services		To what extent do the programs and services provided by UTM's AAP achieve the program's mission and goals? Do they do so equitably for all populations? Are interventions coordinated across the program? Are they based upon research, theory and best practices and aligned with relevant policies/standards?
Space and Environment (Facilities)		To what extent do our spaces support the goals of our academic advising program? Are they conveniently-located and accessible? Are they welcoming and comfortable? Do they provide sufficient privacy?
Systems and Technology		How effectively do our academic advising systems and technologies support program success? Is sufficient functionality available? How are planning and enhancement activities managed? Does sufficient stakeholder training occur?
<b>Reviews Led by Project Team</b>		
Mission		Does the AAP have a mission and goals? Does that mission/goals testify to our program's commitment to supporting our students' success? Do they align with campus and tri-campus priorities and goals? Were they developed collaboratively and are they shared widely? Do they guide practice?
Structure and Resources		Does UTM's AAP have the staffing necessary for accomplishing program goals? Are resources equitably distributed across the program? Does the program's structure support program development and goal achievement?

Table 1 - Focus Areas for UTM's 3AP Recommendations Sub-Project

### Working Groups

In November 2023, a campus-wide call was made for 3AP working group members, resulting in the recruitment of more than 50 staff, faculty, and librarians, with faculty and staff representation from close to 30 unique campus units. Student volunteers were added to working groups early in the Winter 2024 term, increasing working group membership to over 65 community members. Each working group was co-chaired by a Project Team member and one or more community members with expertise in the focus area. Table 2 (below) identifies the co-chairs for each working group.

Working Group	Co-Chairs	
	Project Team Member	Subject Matter Expert(s)
Advising Staff	Svitlana Frunchak	Monica Seymour, Assistant Director, Human Resources
Assessment	Pascal Michelucci	Silvana Miller, Senior Project Specialist, Reporting and Analytics, Office of the Vice-President and Principal
Communication	Sandra Ngan	Patricia Lonergan, Director, Marketing and Communications, Office of Communications
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity	Sharon Marjadsingh	Rebeca Mahadeo, Supervisor, Intercultural Fluency and International Student Development, International Education Centre
Programs and Services	Jessica Silver	Michelle Kraus, Associate Registrar, Academic Standards, Advising & Financial Aid, Office of the Registrar
Space and Environment (Facilities)	Felicity Morgan	Monika Farrell, Assistant Director, Planning and Design, Facilities Management & Planning
Systems and Technology	Olha Fihol	César A. Mejía, Associate Registrar, Systems, Scheduling & Examinations, Office of the Registrar  Anthony Betts, Director, Information & Instructional Technology Services

Table 2 - 3AP Recommendations Sub-Project Working Group Co-Chairs

Working groups officially launched in late 2023 and, following guidance from CAS, each working group completed a process that included:

- familiarizing themselves with the standards for their focus area;
- familiarizing themselves with relevant UTM resources, collated in the 3AP Data Library;
- engaging in additional, focus area-specific research;
- assessing the extent to which local evidence indicated compliance with their assigned standards;
- developing recommendations to bring their allotted area of UTM’s AAP into compliance with assigned standards; and
- drafting a final report, documenting the process they engaged in, their findings and associated rationale, and their recommendations (and associated rationale) for moving their assigned area of UTM’s AAP towards compliance.

Final reports were submitted to the Project Team throughout the month of April, 2024.

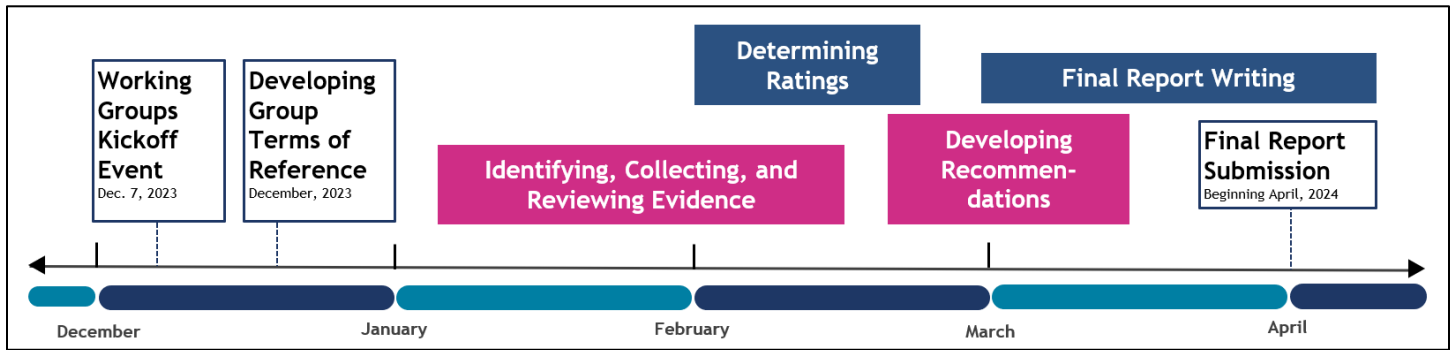


Figure 2 - Working groups activity timeline

### *Project Team Focus Area Review and Recommendation Activities*

In addition to each leading a working group in the review and development of recommendations related to a particular focus area, Project Team members also collaborated to review the Mission and Structures and Resources focus areas. For the Structures and Resources focus area, the group followed a process consistent with that occurring in the working groups, in that the group familiarized themselves with the standards related to the focus area, engaged in extensive research review, discussed and made judgements related to compliance, developed recommendations, and documented their work in a final report.

The review and development of recommendations related to the mission and goals of UTM's AAP followed a slightly different process, as UTM's AAP did not have a mission or associated goals at the launch of the 3AP. Heeding guidance from colleagues at institutions that had undertaken similar AAP redevelopment projects (Sindt & Weise, 2020 and J. Hegeman & B. Norris, personal correspondence, June 15, 2023), that the clarity provided by mission development was integral to project advancement, the Project Team facilitated the development of a draft vision, mission and goals with close to 50 working group members at the 3AP Working Groups Kick-off Event in December, 2023. This resulting draft vision, mission, and goals was then shared widely among project contributors, to help guide project work, before being reviewed and evaluated following an approach consistent with that used for the other focus areas.

### *Research Activities*

Both the CAS and NACADA AAP redevelopment processes call for collection of significant local evidence, upon which project contributors can base their findings. Specifically, NACADA's Excellence in Academic Advising (EAA) process calls for this data to be organized in a "data library" that is accessible to all project contributors. The Project Team embraced two tactics to build such a library for this project:

- 1) aggregating existing information related to academic advising from sources across campus; and
- 2) engaging in significant local research activities.

Both tactics were successful; the project team unearthed more than 40 internal resources related to academic advising (reports, presentation, previously unanalyzed survey results, etc.) and undertook significant research activities that resulted in additional library content.

Major Project Team-led research activities facilitated between November 2023 and March 2024 included:

- **Student Focus Groups** – Five (5) focus groups were facilitated, gathering feedback from 26 current UTM students about their experiences with academic advising.
- **Consultations with Academic Advisors** – The Project Team collected feedback from 15 current academic advisors, first through a survey and subsequently through follow-up interviews, regarding a variety of academic-advising related topics.

- **Consultations with Academic Advising Collaborators** – Similar to the process for collecting feedback from academic advisors, 21 UTM community members who collaborate with academic advisors to deliver academic advising programs and services completed a survey and/or engaged in an interview, sharing feedback on strengths of UTM’s AAP and opportunities for enhancement.
- **Environmental Scan** – The Project Team collected feedback from colleagues at 10 comparator institutions, regarding a variety of topics, including AAP structure, degree of standardization, programs and services, and strengths and challenges.
- **Fall 2023 Academic Advising Survey** – All undergraduate students were invited to complete a survey focused on their academic advising engagement, needs, and satisfaction and the impact of UTM’s AAP. The survey contained both qualitative and quantitative questions and 2284 valid responses were received (14.3% response rate).
- **Academic Advising Staff Identification** – Website reviews and consultation with leadership of the Office of the Registrar and academic units resulted in the creation of an inventory of all current academic advisors, including faculty currently holding positions with formal academic advising responsibilities.
- **Inventorizing and Mapping Processes for Accessing Academic Advising** – Project Team members reviewed online materials and consulted with academic advising colleagues to identify the ways students can engage with academic advisors and how information about those access methods is shared.
- **Academic Advising Capacity Survey** – Academic unit staff providing academic advising were surveyed to determine the percentage of their time dedicated to academic advising, compared to other responsibilities, and to learn more about units’ ability to offer academic advising should select staff be unavailable.
- **Consultation with Subject Matter Experts** – In addition to reviewing academic advising-related scholarship, the Project Team interviewed leaders in the field of academic advising at Canadian institutions.

In addition to leveraging the consolidated existing resources and reports on new research completed by the Project Team, select working groups engaged in focus-area research, reviewing topical scholarship and gathering additional local feedback.

#### *Recommendations Synthesis and Prioritization*

Equipped with reports on each focus area and having familiarized themselves with resources they were able to collect and the findings from their research (local and external), the Project Team organized the 3AP Collaborators’ Summit to help support them in defining the goal state for UTM’s AAP and synthesizing and prioritizing recommendations for advancing to that state. All working group members were invited to the full-day retreat and, following presentations from each working group, the attendees synthesized recommendations and identified those they agreed were most integral to UTM’s AAP’s advancement.

The Project Team leveraged the results of the Summit to identify 10 priority recommendations. These recommendations are supported by project findings in the following section.

## Key Findings and Recommendations

The research completed as part of the 3AP Recommendations Sub-Project revealed that a significant strength of UTM’s AAP is its people. Academic advisors in the academic units and academic advisors and advising leadership in the OR consistently demonstrated a commitment to, and passion for, supporting students’ success. The Project Team also identified numerous examples of quality practices in place across UTM’s AAP, including instances of strong collaborations across units, mature systems and technologies, investment in staff wellbeing and professional development, interventions built upon solid research foundations, and communications campaigns reflecting best practices. However, the review of UTM’s AAP also revealed significant inconsistency across the operation. Too often, quality practices like those mentioned above are only occurring sporadically, with wider adoption prevented by

challenging workloads and a complex structure that is both difficult for community members to navigate and a barrier to efficient, program-wide planning and development activities.

The Recommendations Sub-Project identified close to 60 recommendations for overcoming existing barriers and moving UTM's AAP towards compliance with the standards set out by CAS and NACADA. Complete lists of these recommendations, organized by focus area, are included in the *Focus Area Reports* section of this document. This section will focus on introducing the 10 recommendations identified by the Project Team as most integral to UTM AAP advancement, referencing findings to support of each.

**Recommendation #1 – Add academic advising capacity, to further support the success of UTM students.**

Rationale:

Our staff complement levels indicate a need to increase academic advising capacity, especially since research demonstrates that more advising capacity will increase our students' success.

- *Academic advising is proven to increase students' success*
  - Bettinger and Baker (2014), Castleman and Page (2014), Kot (2014), Bai and Pan (2009), and Tippets et al. (2022) each found impacts of academic advising interventions on student persistence while utilizing study designs and analysis methodologies to control for covariates.
  - Reporting on survey data from over 1300 institutions, Shaw, C. et al. (2021) identified a consistent finding: that decreasing academic advisors' caseloads by 100 students/advisor enabled institutions to more successfully implement select advising best practices and resulted in a 1% increase in Y1→Y2 student retention.
  - In addition to positive impacts on student retention and persistence, research shows that academic advising plays a critical role in students' satisfactions with their post-secondary experience. (Young-Jones et al., 2013)
  
- *Evidence suggests that academic advising interventions have extra benefits for equity deserving populations*
  - In August 2020, Civitas Learning, a provider of student success software in the higher education sector, shared the results of a yearlong study of over 300 student success initiatives at 29 partner post-secondary institutions, which found that a) academic advising and degree planning was the intervention type that showed the greatest impact on students' success, and b) that academic advising was the intervention that most consistently "moves the needle" (p. 8) for historically underserved and vulnerable populations. (Civitas, 2020). In addition to having consistent impacts for both male and female students, the authors shared findings that academic advising and degree planning interventions had more than 3x the impact on students predicted to be most at risk compared to those predicted to be least at risk. (Figure 3)

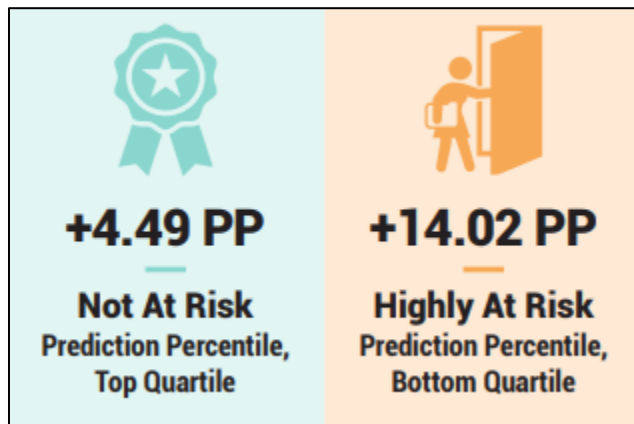


Figure 3 - Impact of Advising and Degree Planning, by Level of Predicted Vulnerability or Risk (Civitas Learning, 2020)

The assertion that additional advising capacity is needed is supported by a) current UTM academic advising engagement levels and b) evidence of existing academic advising capacity challenges.

- *Room to significantly improve academic advising engagement levels*
  - National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) results for 2023 indicate that U of T students engage in academic advising at rates significantly lower than students at our comparator institutions. (UTM PMO, 2023a) Efforts underway to enhance our academic advising program will aim to increase those engagement levels and, because our existing academic advising capacity is already being exhausted (see below), increasing engagement with academic advising will necessitate additional capacity.

The contention that our existing academic advising capacity has limited opportunity to provide additional service is supported by evidence of the program’s current inability to a) consistently provide students access to timely academic advising and b) provide students access to proactive and holistic academic advising.

- *Inconsistent access to timely academic advising*
  - Students report that academic advising is often not available a) when needed and b) via their preferred method. They reported that this is especially true when key enrolment deadlines approach. (UTM PMO, 2023c; 3AP, 2024a; 3AP & Miller, S., 2024).
  - Data from the Fall 2023 Academic Advising Survey indicated that while only 17% of students reported their preference was to engage with academic advisors through AskRegistrar, 72% did so. (3AP & Miller, 2024) Staff from the Office of the Registrar (OR) confirmed that they are aware of this misalignment but are unable to support more students through their preferred method due to volume challenges. (S. Frunchak, personal correspondence, March 15).
  - In addition to indicating that U of T students report below average *engagement* with academic advising, NSSE 2023 results indicate that U of T students report below average *access* to academic advising. (UTM PMO, 2023a) This sentiment is echoed in Student Experience at the Research University 2021 survey results, where U of T students reported lowest-in-class access to academic advising when needed. (PMO, 2023b)
  - Consistent with these results, 2024 consultations with academic advisors revealed that the most pressing challenge to their work was insufficient time to handle existing student volume. (Frunchak, 2024) This was up from 2019 consultations with the academic advising community, where a lack of sufficient resources was the second most pressing challenge, following insufficient training. (UTM PMO, 2023d)
- *Lack of proactive and holistic academic advising*
  - The Fall 2023 Academic Advising Survey revealed that UTM students’ greatest satisfaction gaps are related to the provision of proactive and holistic advising. (3AP & Miller, 2024) Table 2 identifies the 4 aspects of academic advising (of the 19 students reported on) with the greatest gaps between importance and satisfaction. (Likert scale responses converted to numerical scores ranging from 1-7 [i.e., highly unimportant/highly dissatisfied = 1 → highly important/highly satisfied = 7].) As seen, proactive advising was the aspect with the greatest importance/satisfaction gap, followed closely by opportunities to discuss: career options; concerns about being successful; and goals and future plans, three topics often left uncovered when capacity doesn’t permit focus on issues beyond the transactional.

Academic Advising Aspect	Importance (Avg. = 6.27)	Satisfaction (Avg. 5.04)	Avg. Imp. – Avg. Sat. (Avg. 1.23)
My advisor(s) reaching out proactively, to alert me to matters related to my academic progress	6.02	4.21	1.81
Opportunity to discuss career options	6.35	4.67	1.68

Opportunity to discuss concerns I have about being successful in school	6.36	4.73	1.63
Opportunity to discuss my goals for my academic experience and future plans	6.37	4.89	1.47

Table 3 - Aspects of Academic Advising with the Greatest Importance/Satisfaction Gaps, Fall 2023 Academic Advising Survey.

- Requests for increased proactive and holistic advising were also consistently shared by students in response to open-ended questions included on the Fall 2023 Academic Advising Survey. (Ma & 3AP, 2024)

**Recommendation #2 – Explore new models for academic advising, such as:**

**Note:** 3AP working groups and the 3AP Project Team found significant evidence that the UTM’s current academic advising model limits the institution’s ability to fully leverage academic advising to support students’ success. Accordingly, it is recommended that new models be explored. This report identifies five examples of what an alternative advising model could entail. These recommendations may be explored further, and more detailed recommendations developed, during the implementation phase of this project.

**Addendum:** The 3AP Phase II Advisory Team added an addendum related to this recommendation that is included at conclusion of the report.

**a) Transitioning to a unified academic advising model, creating a leadership position with oversight for all academic advising.**

Rationale:

UTM currently employs a hybrid academic advising model, with pre-program and degree-focused advising provided by the OR Academic Advising Team and program advising provided by academic advisors located across the campus’ 18 academic units. This approach, that rests responsibility for overseeing UTM’s AAP with 19 different staff and faculty, is a significant barrier to program advancement and results in program inconsistency, complexity, inefficiency and lack of collaboration.

- *Inconsistency and complexity*
  - A constant finding across AAP focus area reviews was the presence of inconsistency in UTM’s program. For example:
    - the Systems and Technology working group found evidence of inconsistent adoption and use of advising notetaking and appointment booking software systems (Systems & Technology, 2024);
    - the Advising Staff working group noted uneven access to training and support for academic unit academic advisors (Advising Staff, 2024); and
    - the Assessment working group noted inconsistent assessment practices, suggesting that “the highly decentralized and siloed approach to academic advising on our campus” (Assessment, 2024, p. 5) makes development of a shared culture and practices difficult.
  - This inconsistency results in significantly different experiences for students, dependent upon the unit and/or advisor they are engaging with for support.
  - Additionally, inconsistency creates increased complexity within UTM’s AAP. An apt example is the complexity students currently navigate determining how to engage with their various academic advisors. Results from the Fall 2023 Academic Advising Survey reveal that over 30% of students who reported not engaging in academic advising over the previous 12 months identified not knowing how to contact their academic advisors as reason for their lack of engagement. (3AP & Miller, 2024)

Investigation into the processes for connecting with academic advisors across UTM's APP provided just cause for this uncertainty, as there are currently at least 8 different methods for engaging with academic advising being employed across campus and few units publicizing their contact methods in consistent ways. (3AP, 2024b)

- *Inefficiency and lack of collaboration*
  - The decentralized nature of UTM's AAP also results in inefficiency. Many academic unit academic advisors are the sole academic advising staff in their areas and, as a result, are responsible for activities including advising-related communication and assessment. This results in many staff spending portions of their time working outside their areas of expertise, rather than the program centralizing such work with specialists able to handle it more efficiently and effectively.
  - Additionally, the AAP's lack of centralized leadership presents significant challenges to efficient collaboration. (3AP, 2024c) Rather than having a single point of contact for connection, those interested in partnering with academic advisors are currently faced with the prospect of needing to engage staff from 19 unique units.
- *Program-level planning and activities*
  - UTM's AAP currently lacks a shared vision, mission, and goals. Additionally, our program lacks coordination between participating units in areas including staff training and support, assessment, systems and technology, communication and programs and services.

One possible approach to attending to challenges presented by UTM's current academic advising model could be to transition to a more unified approach, through creating a position with oversight for all academic advising. Such a model could support: increased consistency/decreased complexity; increased cross-campus collaboration; more efficient and effective approaches to functions including training, assessment and communication; and the development of a shared mission and goals for the program. Additional rationale for exploring the creation of a centralized leadership position includes: a) significant local community support, b) greater opportunity for 3AP recommendation implementation, and c) significant evidence of such a service model working within the University of Toronto community.

- *Significant community support*
  - Despite understanding that adding an academic advising leadership position with oversight for all academic advising would impact reporting lines, 3AP contributors at the Collaborators' Summit identified the addition of centralized leadership and a shift to a more unified model as one of their foremost recommendations. This prioritization was supported by conversation throughout the day identifying the challenges presented by the current lack of leadership capacity in UTM's AAP and acknowledging that many of the changes to UTM's AAP that the community was recommending may be difficult to implement within the current model.
- *3AP recommendation implementation capacity*
  - As noted above, 3AP working group members voiced significant support for centralized leadership *because* it may better enable UTM's AAP to implement necessary recommendations. Community members identified that continuing to have 19 different units with responsibility for academic advising could necessitate significantly more work to generate recommendation buy-in, with no guarantee that that work would be successful and system-wide implementation achieved. This perception, that centralized leadership better enables substantive change, was supported by consultations with comparator institutions. Those advising teams that shared evidence of significant changes to enhance their programs were those equipped with centralized leadership. (3AP, 2024d) Two such operations

also reported recently making the transition to a more centralized approach and shared positive feedback on the changes. While consultations with comparators also revealed evidence of best practices in place at institutions with more decentralized AAP structures, such practices were seen less frequently and colleagues from those institutions reported that implementing those practices a) took a long time to achieve and b) could have been achieved much faster with a centralized model.

- *Evidence of service model success*

- U of T's Executive Director of Student Life Programs and Services, Heather Kelly shared that Student Life employs a service model very similar to the one recommended by the Project Team herein, in that Student Life staff are integrated within units across the St. George campus, but report centrally. (H. Kelly, personal correspondence, May 16, 2024) Kelly noted that Student Life transitioned to a "on-location" model of service 8-10 years ago and that there were numerous benefits to this approach, including: enhanced ability to ensure business continuity; increased escalation capacity; increased consistency and quality; and decreased barriers to collaboration. Kelly also noted that while academic unit, college, faculty, and administrative unit leaders were initially concerned about centralized reporting resulting in decreased local integration and quality of service, such concerns have been mitigated by: a) ensuring that embedded Student Life staff embrace a highly relational approach and fully integrate themselves in the units they are implanted with and b) annual check-ins with campus partners, focused on maintaining the health of the partnership. Overall, Kelly noted that transitioning to an on-location model is a huge lift, but one worth doing.

**b) Delineating advising responsibilities clearly across two complementary teams: one dedicated exclusively to pre-program support and the other to in-program support;**

Rationale:

It is recommended that UTM explore the possibility of the Academic Advising Team in the Office of the Registrar transitioning to become a "pre-program" advising team, focused exclusively on providing support to students prior to program enrolment, and advisors currently working in the academic units transitioning to become "in-program" advisors, providing both degree and program advising for students post-program enrolment.

UTM currently divides degree and program advising between the advisors in the OR and the academic units, respectively. Additionally, because students often have more than 1 program advisor, it is not uncommon for students to have 3 or more advisors/advising offices assigned to support them. The Project Team consistently heard feedback from across the UTM community that students were struggling to navigate this model. Specifically, students shared that a challenge of UTM's current AAP is uncertainty as to who to access for particular supports. (3AP, 2024; UTM PMO, 2023c; Ma & 3AP, 2024) Additionally, even when successful in identifying the appropriate academic advisor for support, both students and academic advising staff report students frequently being "bounced" from one office to another, because their needs are multi-faceted and extend beyond the scope of any one advisor or team. (3AP, 2024; Frunchak, 2024)

Specific to the division of degree- and program-level advising, a scan of 12 comparator institutions revealed that only one other institution divides these advising responsibilities similarly to UTM. (3AP, 2024d) Instead, the majority of consulted institutions have the same advisors provide both degree and program advising. Primary benefits of this approach include: 1) simplification of the academic advising landscape and 2) decreased frequency with which advisors need to refer students out, due to their inquiries extending beyond the advisor's area of expertise.

In addition to decreasing system complexity and limiting student "bounce," such a redistribution could provide increased opportunity for the OR Academic Advising Team to focus on providing comprehensive support for students

new to UTM. Students transitioning into higher education or to new institutions encounter significant challenges (for a review of challenges, see Thompson et al., 2021) and creating an academic advising team focused exclusively on helping students navigate these challenges could help these students adapt more effectively, progressing and graduating at higher rates. (Nettles et al., 1999, as cited in Kuh et al., 2006)

**c) Organizing in-program advisors in “neighborhoods,” where advisors for related programs work together.**

Rationale:

The Project Team identified that organizing program advisors into small “neighbourhoods,” where 2-3 advisors are cross-trained and work as a team to support students, could enhance UTM’s AAP by: a) reducing single-failure points, b) reducing system complexity, c) helping balance student-to-advisor ratio differences across programs, and d) enabling increased consistency, efficiency and collaboration. Keeping these neighborhoods small and ensuring high levels of unit integration could support advisors in maintaining unit-specific knowledge and connections.

- *Eliminating Single Failure Points*
  - A March 2024 survey completed by all academic advisors working in academic units asked respondents to indicate the extent to which academic advising was available in their unit when they were away. Survey results and subsequent consultation revealed that only 6 academic units are currently able to maintain full service in such situations, with an additional 6 units being able to maintain some level of advising service and 7 reporting inability to maintain any level of service. (3AP, 2024e) The presence of such “single-failure points” constitutes a significant risk for UTM’s AAP: in more than 2/3rds of our academic units, should the academic advisor be unavailable for any reason, students are currently unable to access fulsome academic advising support until the advisor returns or alternative staffing arrangements can be made.
- *Reducing system complexity*
  - In addition to reducing single-failure points, creating academic advising neighborhoods is one strategy that could support further simplification of the advising landscape. Academic units (and associated programs) could be grouped so as to maximize the number of students who are receiving academic advising from one neighbourhood. Reducing the touchpoints for program-level advising could further attend to the complexity and “bounce” challenges detailed in the rationale for the previous recommendation.
- *Balancing Student-to-Advisor Ratios*
  - Academic advising resources are not equitably distributed between academic units. Rather, program enrolment and academic unit academic advising capacity data reveal that student-to-advisor ratios currently can vary by more than 350% between units. (3AP, 2024e) (Figure 4) Grouping academic units into neighbourhoods could help to decrease variation between academic units.
- *Increased consistency and efficiency*
  - Organizing academic advisors into neighbourhoods could enable increased collaboration and consistency on many advising practices, like the methods through which students can engage with academic advising and how those methods are advertised. Additionally, neighbourhoods could promote more efficient and effective collaboration, by limiting the number of distinct units that must be engaged.

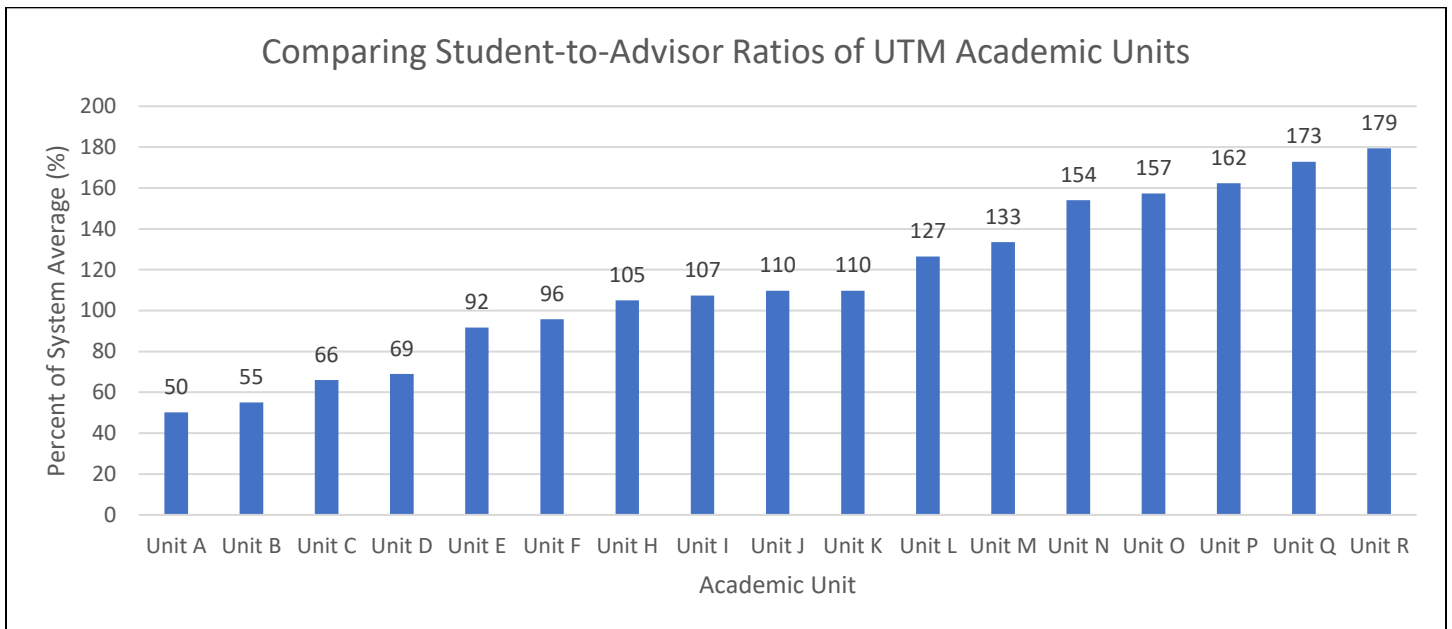


Figure 4 - Student-to-Advisor Ratios of UTM Academic Units

One concern explored by the Project Team, related to the creation of neighbourhoods, was that tasking academic advisors with supporting students across 2-4 academic units could result in advisors losing some of the benefits that come with their current level of unit-specific focus, including:

- depth of unit-specific knowledge;
- ability to customize service to meet the needs of students enrolled in unit programs;
- the agility that can come with being a lone actor; and
- the increased personalization that can be provided for students when an advisor has fewer total students to know.

Limiting the size of neighbourhoods and ensuring high levels of integration between neighbourhood advisors and the units they support could help to limit reduction of these benefits.

**d) Creating positions dedicated to academic advising and others dedicated to program administration.**

Rationale:

As of March, 2024, UTM had 25 staff contributing to academic advising in UTM’s academic units (20 staff in roles with academic advising as a primary responsibility and 5 additional assistants/administrators). However, the majority of these staff report spending the majority of their time on responsibilities other than academic advising. Specifically, academic advisors reported spending an average of:

- 40% of their time on academic advising responsibilities;
- 26% of their time on processing responsibilities (e.g., graduation checks, special consideration requests, etc.); and
- 34% of their time on other administrative responsibilities unrelated to academic advising (e.g., course scheduling, managing classroom spaces, etc.) (3AP, 2024e)

Appreciating that the Project Team is recommending that transitioning to a unified academic advising model be explored, and that a situation should not be created in which academic advisors could be completing significant non-academic advising work on behalf of academic units while not reporting through those units, it is also recommended

that UTM explore the possibility of creating roles focused specifically on academic advising and others focused specifically on program administration.

Figure 5 illustrates this potential change, depicting the current state, where academic unit academic advisors are splitting their time between advising and administrative responsibilities, and a potential future state, in which academic advising and program administration positions are dedicated to those areas of work. The new positions dedicated to academic advising could report through a centralized academic advising model and the program administration positions could be added to academic unit teams.

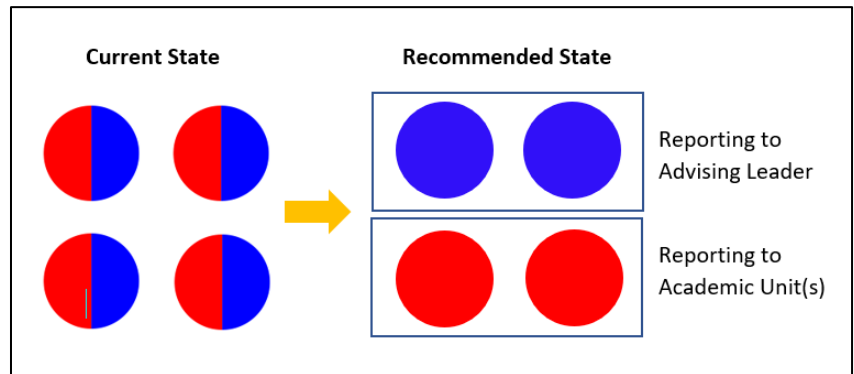


Figure 5 - Proposed Modes for Academic Unit Positions

**e) Establishing management positions, to provide portfolio leadership capacity and increased support for academic advisors.**

Rationale:

In addition to exploring the possibility of adding a senior academic advising leader to oversee UTM’s AAP, it is recommended that adding two additional managerial positions be explored. Should UTM opt to move forward with transitioning to pre- and in-program advising teams, each position could be responsible for overseeing one of the teams, in addition to taking point on complex cases and working with the senior academic advising leader to ensure leadership of AAP portfolios, including training and professional development, communications, assessment, systems and technology, space and environment, and programs and services.

Should UTM opt to move forward with a more unified academic advising model, this level of managerial support would be consistent with levels for other student service units, including:

- International Education Centre (3 managerial positions among 11 staff);
- Student Housing & Residence Life (4 managerial positions among 19 staff);
- Centre for Student Engagement (3 managerial positions among 17 staff); and
- Career Centre (3 managerial positions among 28 staff).

**Recommendation #3 – Finalize and broadly disseminate a vision, mission, values and goals for UTM’s AAP.**

Rationale:

As previously noted in this report, UTM’s AAP did not benefit from a unifying vision, mission or goals for the impact of the program on students at the outset of the 3AP and, heeding guidance from institutions who have engaged in similar AAP redevelopment efforts, the Project Team facilitated a process to develop a draft vision, mission and goals at the 3AP Working Groups Kick-off Event in December, 2023. (Available in Appendix C)

In alignment with CAS standards (2023) and guidance from NACADA (2017), the Project Team strongly recommends that the draft vision, mission, and goals, and corresponding values, be finalized through continued consultation with program stakeholders. The resulting resources should then be disseminated broadly, to both students and employees, along with clarification regarding the specific roles that various actors have in helping achieve the noted goals. Such explanation would help attend to significant uncertainty voiced by community stakeholders as to how UTM’s AAP is structured and

whom students should access for support. (UTM PMO, 2023d; Frunchak, 2024; 3AP, 2024c; Ma, G. & 3AP, 2024; 3AP, 2024)

Additionally, developing goals for the program's impact on students would provide the foundation from which the program could begin work toward implementing a "curricular approach," where overarching program goals are broken down into specific program and learning outcomes and interventions are intentionally (re)developed and organized to achieve them, further enabling and promoting collaboration across student service units. (Kerr et al, 2017)

Further rationale for this recommendation can be found in the high levels of community support it received. During the recommendation synthesis and prioritization process facilitated at the 3AP Collaborators' Summit, recommendations related to a) confirming AAP mission, vision, values and goals, b) transitioning to a curricular approach to academic advising, and c) providing increased clarity about roles and responsibilities were all prioritized by the community. (For additional details about the outcomes of the Collaborators' Summit recommendation synthesis and prioritization process, see Appendix D.)

#### **Recommendation #4 – Develop cross-portfolio advising communities, including:**

- a) Refreshing UTM's academic advising community of practice, to support its ability to provide academic advisors: community; voice; role-specific training; and professional development opportunities.**

Rationale:

Staff in the Office of the Vice-Principal and Dean (OVPAD) and OR currently collaborate to maintain UTM's Academic Advising Community of Practice (AACoP), a structure that aims to connect academic advisors across UTM, support the distribution of relevant information, and provide advisors opportunity for feedback/input on topics relevant to their roles. The AAC includes a Microsoft Teams channel and semi-regular community meetings (typically 2 meetings/semester). Additionally, evidence suggests that advisors on the OR Academic Advising Team benefit from significant community and knowledge sharing within their team.

To build on these promising practices, academic advisors have suggested a number of enhancements to community development and knowledge sharing efforts. Specific to the UTM AACoP, advisors noted that while having semi-regular meetings is a good start, the Community would benefit from: increased organization; more frequent and/or longer meetings; greater opportunities for discussion; an increased focus on professional development; and more opportunities for socializing. (Kraus et al., 2024) These suggestions align with feedback shared by academic advisors through the 2019 and 2024 interview processes and noted by the Advising Staff working group following their review: that lack of connection and community impact both wellbeing and professional development. (UTM PMO, 2023d; Frunchak, 2024; Advising Staff, 2024)

In addition to recommendations from academic advisors that the AACoP be redeveloped, rationale for redeveloping UTM's AACoP was identified through consultations with colleagues at comparator institutions.

Specifically, the University Lead, Academic Advising at York University shared that they "could not overstate the importance" of creating and sustaining a rich community of practice. (C. Bregar, personal communication, February 6, 2024). Early in their redevelopment efforts, the team at York created a community where academic advisors could connect, discuss current topics/issues and develop and engage in professional development activities and Bregar noted that that community helped academic advisors to establish an identity and connections across units and has been integral in developing a culture of continuous improvement, where changes can be lead from the ground-up.

Similar attestations to the impact of creating a structure where advisors can connect and, among other things, discuss and elevate concerns are noted in The Chronicle of Higher Education's guide to academic advising challenges and opportunities. (McMurtrie, B. & Supiano, B., 2022)

**b) Creating a community for the leaders of academic advising and other student support units, to support collaboration on the development and implementation of inter-unit activities and holistic advising.**

Rationale:

While review findings indicate that there is currently strong collaboration between academic advising leadership in the OR and leadership of select Student Affairs & Services units, including the Career Centre, International Education Centre and Centre for Student Engagement, it was noted that this collaboration developed over time and was a product of strong interpersonal connections. It is recommended that such collaboration not be left to chance, but intentionally supported through the creation of a table for these leaders and formal responsibility for each to engage at that table.

Similar to rationale for the creation of a community for academic advisors, additional rationale for this recommendation comes from consultation with colleagues at York University. In addition to developing a community of practice for academic advisors, AAP redevelopment efforts at York University have included the creation of a similar community for the leaders of various student advising and service units. Similar to the community of practice for academic advisors, this community has been highly impactful, improving the service and support available for students through helping establish community across units and promoting information and resource sharing, collaboration and creative solutions. (C. Bregar, personal communication, February 6, 2024).

The recommendation is further supported by research published by Tyton Partners (2020), that noted that the most collaborative institutions (as measured by community members' responses to questions related to: clarity of lines of responsibility; cross-functional communication; and integrated support) experienced the largest increases in retention rates over a five-year span.

Finally, enhanced connections between student service units will support the implementation of holistic advising practices, which strives to help students achieve both academic and non-academic goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional resources (Grites, 2013) and is recommended for enhancing the success of UTM students (Recommendation #10b).

**c) Convening a committee of staff and faculty members, to explore faculty's role in the provision of formal academic advising.**

Rationale:

NSSE 2020 and NSSE 2023 survey results shed light on how often students are discussing their academic interests, academic performance and course selections with various audiences. (Davis, J. & UTM PMO, 2023; UTM PMO, 2023a) At a high-level, this data indicates that students are engaging most frequently regarding the aforementioned topics with a) academic advisors assigned to them (staff or faculty) and b) academic advisors (again, staff or faculty) available to any student. After those two groups, the three most common connection points (closely grouped) are peers; faculty not assigned to them; and student services staff.

Additionally, consultations with academic unit Chairs and Directors in Fall 2023 indicated that 10 UTM academic units report having faculty in positions with responsibility for providing academic advising. (3AP, 2023)

This data helps illustrate the important role faculty play in providing both formal (Faculty Advisors) and informal (student connections with faculty not assigned to be their Advisor) academic advising. Appreciating this fact, the 3AP Project Team recommends exploring those contributions and identifying a goal state for faculty involvement. Consultations with the Vice-Principal, Academic & Dean and Vice-Dean Faculty, along with NACADA colleagues who have led significant academic advising redevelopment efforts at their institutions, identified striking a committee of faculty and staff, to explore faculty's role, as the preferred pathway forward.

**Recommendation #5 – Create a comprehensive, standardized academic advisor on-boarding, training and professional development program.**

Rationale:

Enhancing the training provided for academic advisors was a recommendation that was consistently put forth by working groups and was prioritized by project contributors when the group met in May, 2024. Specifically, there was broad-based support for both creating a comprehensive, standardized on-boarding program for all academic advisors and for investing in on-going staff training and development.

The Advising Staff working group, in particular, focused on reviewing practices related to academic advisor on-boarding, training and professional development and summarized their findings on page 6 of their report, noting:

“AAP personnel at UTM have uneven and limited access to onboarding, training, and professional development. Most units employing academic advisors, with the notable exception of the UTMOR, provide very few onboarding materials.” (Advising Staff, 2024, p. 6)

“Advising staff across UTM, including the UTMOR advising team, have very limited access to externally offered training and professional development. Even when PD opportunities are available, most advisors identify a lack of time and budget as barriers to participation.” (Advising Staff, 2024, p. 6)

Supporting these assertions, the Advising Staff working group reviewed existing on-boarding and training materials and cited interviews facilitated with academic advising staff in 2019 and 2024, which consistently identified lack of training as a significant barrier to efficient and impactful advising.

2019 respondents identified lack of training as resulting in: ill-prepared academic advisors (lacking fundamental expertise); different advisors providing different information to students; and feelings of advisor isolation, while 2024 consultations confirmed that lack of sufficient training was still a significant issue, with staff consistently indicating a) interest in additional training and b) that the current lack of training, in particular related to local resources and supports, impeded their ability to provide students effective referrals. (UTM PMO, 2023d; Frunchak, 2024)

The working group also cited student feedback collected through the 2021 and 2024 student focus group processes, that testified to inconsistent academic advising experiences.

Four additional working groups also recommended that training for academic advisors be enhanced. Specifically:

- The Systems and Technology working group found evidence of varying levels of training being provided to staff regarding advising technologies, noted the importance of training efforts to “ensure consistency and effectiveness across UTM’s AAP,” (p. 7) and recommended a common systems and technology-related training plan for all academic advisors; (Systems & Technology, 2024)
- The Communications working group similarly noted insufficient communications-specific training being provided for academic advisors and recommended cross-portfolio connections to support academic advisors and related staff who are engaged in communications work; (Communications, 2024)
- The Assessment working group identified the need to better educate academic advising staff about our assessment strategy (Assessment, 2024); and
- The Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity working group identified a current lack of investment in developing staff capacity to provide inclusive and equitable service and recommended on-going, AAP-wide training as part of strategy to help attend to that deficit. (EDI&I, 2024)

**Recommendation #6 – Develop and implement a comprehensive assessment plan, grounded in consistent, transparently reported student outcome metrics.**

## Rationale:

The Assessment working group found limited evidence of compliance with a majority of the standards they were assigned to review, indicating significant opportunity for UTM's AAP to advance assessment practices. Specifically, the working group noted that while significant efforts have been undertaken to assess UTM's AAP in recent years, those review efforts have largely been facilitated by parties external to the program and are not indicative of a culture of assessment within UTM's AAP. Additionally, they noted that there doesn't appear to be any comprehensive assessment strategy, with the assessment activities that are occurring within the program largely occurring in silos, tending to be sporadic in nature (no evidence of consistency over time), tending to focus almost exclusively on students' engagement and satisfaction with specific interventions, and seldom being shared beyond the unit facilitating. (Assessment, 2024)

In alignment with CAS standards (2023) and following guidance from NACADA (where assessment is recognized in no less than four of NACADA's "nine conditions of excellence" (2017), the working group recommended prioritizing the development of a multi-year assessment plan that complements the process of defining goals and outcomes for UTM's AAP and intentionally designing opportunities to achieve them.

There was significant community support for this recommendation at the 3AP Collaborator's Summit, indicating that UTM's academic advising community appreciated that the process of developing and implementing an assessment plan will be integral to moving UTM's AAP toward a goal state where assessment: is highly valued; supports continual improvement; is part of a culture of data-backed decision making; and helps UTM's AAP tell their story and contribute to scholarship.

## **Recommendation #7 - Press our systems and technologies advantage, including by:**

- a) Implementing the centrally supported Salesforce Student Success Hub for Higher Education software (locally called "Student Advising Service").**

## Rationale:

UTM is known within the U of T community for being ahead of the curve when it comes to the use of systems and technologies to support registrarial functions, including academic advising. Accordingly, it should come as no surprise that multiple working groups made recommendations related to leveraging systems and technologies to provide academic advising more efficiently and effectively.

UTM's Admin and E-Tools system integrates student information and enhances information sharing between service units. However, the review of AAP-related systems and technologies revealed that, while still providing UTM staff functionality not available on other U of T campuses, this system is burdened by multiple challenges, including:

- uneven adoption (only limited uptake from advising staff in academic units);
- limited integration (does not integrate with Office365 tools including Outlook, Calendars and SharePoint, in ways that would save staff time);
- significant maintenance needs (system is reaching end of life and required significant resources to support); and
- accessibility barriers (system meets minimum accessibility standards but does not provide accessibility consistent with newer systems).

The uneven nature of the adoption has resulted in the persistence of barriers related to the sharing of information between academic advisors, such as instances of staff uncertainty as to why students have been referred to them and students often being required to retell their stories when visiting a new advisor or office. (3AP, 2024c) Additionally, the lack of universal adoption and no student-facing portal has meant the platform isn't able to streamline academic advising access and help reduce system complexity.

UTM should move forward with the implementation of the Salesforce Student Success Hub for Higher Education software (locally called “Student Advising Service”) as comprehensive implementation will immediately support enhanced student experiences and increased staff efficiency, made possible through:

- enhanced communication between staff (access to user notes organized in a shared student file);
- easier access for staff to required student information;
- access for staff to:
  - integrated tools (e.g., email, scheduling, notetaking, etc.);
  - integrated file management;
  - a customized knowledge base; and
  - an integrated referral system;
- capacity to automate routine tasks, such as appointment scheduling, reminders, and follow-ups;
- enhanced accessibility (higher level of AODA compliance);
- enhanced assessment and reporting capabilities (tracking of user interactions across advising program; access to data analytics to help identify trends and inform strategy); and
- decreased resource requirements for Office of the Registrar Systems staff. (EASI, n.d.)

Additionally, implementing the Student Advising Service will enable UTM to benefit from future enhancements to the system, made available through a) system upgrades regularly provided by Salesforce and b) enhancements provided by U of T’s SAS Project Team. Planned enhancements include:

- a student portal, supporting student navigation and access through multiple channels (currently in development);
- alerts, supporting efficient and effective staff identification of students that would benefit most from additional support (currently planned); and
- integration of generative AI tools (currently in development). (EASI, n.d.; SAS ESC, 2024)

**b) Exploring the feasibility of implementing a customer relationship management (CRM) system for current students.**

Rationale:

A consistent finding of research into students’ academic advising experiences at UTM was that key messaging related to academic advising isn’t effectively reaching all students. Through the Fall 2023 Academic Advising Survey, the 2021 SERU survey, and student focus groups facilitated in 2021 and 2024, students repeatedly shared a lack of awareness of the academic advising supports available to them, uncertainty regarding the specific responsibilities of various UTM academic advising staff, and challenges navigating academic advising-related online content. (3AP & Miller, 2024; UTM PMO 2023b; UTM PMO 2023c; 3AP, 2024) This feedback was supported by staff, who noted experiences with students indicative of the challenges listed above. (UTM PMO, 2023d; Frunchak, 2024; 3AP, 2024c)

Challenges effectively communicating information to students related to academic advising is not limited to UTM, as Tyton Partners found that while 98% of post-secondary staff report academic advising being available at their institution, only 65% of students report the same (Bharadwaj, 2023). However, the Communications working group noted that these common sector challenges are exasperated at UTM by the structure of our AAP, which results in our students receiving advising-related messages from as many as three different academic departments, on top of messages from administrative teams such as OR. The group further noted that these messages don’t always work together, creating confusion for students, while also adding to the volume of institutional email students receive. (Communications, 2024)

Based on their findings, and in alignment with the standards related to AAP communication, the Communications working group recommended multiple strategies to enhance collaboration between stakeholders and streamline communication to students. (Communications, 2024) The most ambitious of these strategies is exploring the feasibility of UTM implementing a customer relationship management (CRM) system for current students, similar to the system currently employed to manage interactions with prospective and newly admitted students.

CRMs are software tools that companies use to manage their interactions with current and potential customers. Specifically, CRMs aggregate customer data, mining that data for actionable insights and providing staff easy access to support personalization of future interactions. (Salesforce, 2024) Within higher education, CRMs are commonly used to support student engagement and retention, through enabling targeted, personalized communication with students throughout their education. (Salesforce, n.d.) Additionally, such systems allow institutions to add a measure of control over who has capacity to communicate with groups of students and, through doing so, better support the streamlining and quality of student communications. Furthermore, CRMs can be used as the technology component of early alert systems, uncovering insights that help identify students who are struggling and would benefit from timely, targeted outreach.

The Project Team acknowledges that while a CRM would be used to more effectively communicate information about academic advising to students, the recommendation to explore the feasibility of such a system is beyond the scope for the 3AP. Nonetheless, the Project Team decided to make the recommendation, out of a desire to reflect the considerable community interest in exploring CRM potential and appreciating the U of T is not yet leveraging existing licensing for Salesforce's *Marketing Cloud* CRM.

**Recommendation #8 – Streamline communication planning and activities, by:**

- a) Convening a dedicated student advising communications table and appointing a dedicated communications lead, to facilitate cross-portfolio collaboration and drive the implementation of communication-related advancements.**

Rationale:

As shared in rationale for the previous recommendation (Recommendation #7b) and noted elsewhere in this report (see rationale for Recommendation #2), UTM's AAP faces significant communication challenges, resulting in awareness barriers to students' engagement with academic advising. The Communications working group reported consistently hearing that one such challenge is the lack of ownership for AAP-related communication. This feeling reflects UTM's decentralized advising model, where advising communication happens in multiple portfolios at once, each with different leadership, responsibilities, and supports.

This recommendation aims to promote the sense of ownership needed to drive progress across this distributed structure. With advising communications coming from many sources, we need a single point-of-contact to bring them all together, anchored by a communications lead who can synthesize diverse perspectives. This table takes the next step in this direction, building on the model UTM has set successfully over the past year, including with new cross-portfolio committees for recruitment and anti-melt communications. It will also enable our subject matter experts to conduct additional research and act on new evidence as it arises – in the spirit intended by our strategic framework commitment to continuous, collaborative improvement.

- b) Creating a student-focused, accessible, user-friendly website to synthesize all advising-related resources.**

Rationale:

Findings from the Fall 2023 Academic Advising Survey indicate that approximately 44% of UTM students did not engage with academic advising over the 12 months prior to survey completion. Asked why, 30% reported not knowing "how to

connect with their academic advisor” and 29% reported “not knowing what an academic advisor does or why they would see them”. (3AP & Miller, 2024) The same trend applies for employees, many of whom report confusion about advising roles and structures. (Communications, 2024) This confusion limits our service effectiveness, especially when colleagues don’t know where, exactly, to refer students who ask for help.

This recommendation reflects this context, aiming to synthesize foundational information about advising, both to explain advisors' diverse responsibilities and emphasize why and how students may want to reach out. Participants in student focus groups suggested that all this information should come together on a prominent website. The Communications working group and Project Team agrees, in part because a shared site will express the cross-portfolio integration that our advising communications need. It will also enable broad promotion of our advising resources, driving student and employee traffic to a common online destination.

The result will complement UTM's campus-wide communications strategy, which has improved web content considerably over the past three years. For the advising site, as for all our online pages, we have an opportunity to realize the same long-term goal, as set by the vice-president and principal: to make UTM's digital spaces as useful and beautiful as our physical campus.

**Recommendation #9 – Make academic advising spaces consistently easy to find, accessible, and supportive of student comfort.**

Rationale:

Members of the Space and Environment working group visited approximately half the campus spaces used for academic advising and identified significant inconsistency. Specifically, while some spaces were found to be accessible and provided comfortable furniture, sufficient privacy, daylight, and décor that made the space welcoming, other spaces did not, being situated along noisy hallways, including only institutional furniture, and/or lacking any decor to enhance the comfort of the space. Additionally, working group members noted significant inconsistency in signage to support student wayfinding.

Appreciating the frequency with which students are visiting academic advising spaces, UTM should strive to provide academic advising spaces that are easy to find and help students to feel as comfortable as possible. Nearer-term opportunities that support this goal include:

- implementing consistent, branded signage, to enhance interior and exterior wayfinding and help communicate advisor availability and contact information;
- facilitating an accessibility audit of all spaces used to provide academic advising and prioritizing identified opportunities; and
- investing in furniture and décor that help make the spaces more welcoming.

Longer-term, UTM’s AAP should remain conscious of the accessibility benefits of locating academic advising spaces in proximity to elevators and accessible washrooms, relocating spaces where needed and when feasible.

In addition to being supported by CAS (2023), such changes are proven to support more productive conversations (Sugiyama et al., 2021), while reducing stress and enhancing overall wellbeing. (Peters & D’Penna, 2020; Richardson & Butler, 2022; Zhong et al., 2022) Student members of the Space and Environment working group also attested to how such changes would support feelings of comfort and make difficult conversations easier.

**Recommendation #10 – Enhance academic advising programs and services, including by:**

- a) **Piloting a peer advising program, through which more experienced students are assigned to support populations of new-to-UTM students.**

Rationale:

In addition to prioritizing recommendations related to how UTM's AAP functions, four tactics for enhancing the programs and services provided by UTM's AAP have been identified as integral to program enhancement.

Firstly, the Project Team recommends that a peer advising program be piloted, through which highly-trained, upper-year students are assigned to provide heightened support for pre-program students, escalating issues to advisors whenever needed. These peers could be overseen by academic advisors and their support could be available for the duration of the academic year. Additionally, peers may be leveraged to provide additional services at key points throughout the year, such as classroom talks, ticket triage, drop-in support and more.

Peer support programs have been shown to positively impact traditional indicators of student success, including GPA, persistence, and graduation (Campbell & Campbell, 2007; Colvin & Ashman, 2010) as well as students' satisfaction. (Tenenbaum, Crosby, & Gliner, 2001; Ferrari, 2004) Additionally, they provide valuable learning opportunities for the students providing the support. (Marshall et al., 2021)

Peer advising programs are often included as components of academic advising programs, as evidenced by a 2012 NACADA survey of members which revealed that 45.3% report their institution utilizing peer advising (Axio Survey, 2012). This prevalence was reflected in consultations completed by the 3AP Project Team, which found that multiple institutions utilize peer advising/mentorship as a component of their AAP. (3AP, 2024d) Additionally, there is a rich history at UTM of engaging peers in mentorship-style roles. These sources could be leveraged to help support program success.

**b) Prioritizing the provision of additional holistic, developmental and proactive academic advising.**

Recommendation #10b is closely linked with Recommendation #1 (that academic advising capacity be added), Recommendation #7b (that the feasibility of implementing a CRM for current students be explored) and Recommendation #7c (that UTM prioritize the development of an early alert program).

Rationale:

*Holistic* academic advising recognizes that to best support students' success, advisors cannot focus purely on the academic domain, but rather, should focus on students "as a whole person," (Kardash, 2020) helping students to set academic *and* non-academic goals and achieve them through utilization of the "full range of institutional and community resources" (Grites, 2023, p. 8). A *developmental* approach to academic advising shares many characteristics with a holistic approach, in that it too focuses on students' holistic needs, goals and development. However, employing a developmental approach also entails advisors paying close attention to students' development, customizing support to match, and attempting to support students in their growth. (Grites, 2013) Lastly, *proactive* advising involves deliberate proactive interventions designed to enhance the probability of students' success (Varney, 2012).

Each of these approaches to academic advising have been shown to enhance students' success when compared to more transactional advising (Appleby, 2008; Habley et al., 2012; NACADA, 2006; Karp & Stacey, 2013) and, in the case of holistic and proactive advising, are areas where UTM students have indicated UTM's AAP has the most opportunity for development (see rationale for Recommendation #1).

Reflecting their responses regarding the importance they place on holistic and proactive advising (and the relatively large gap between that importance and their satisfaction with those aspects of our AAP), students repeatedly shared qualitative feedback that academic advising could better meet their needs by being more proactive and holistic. (Ma & 3AP, 2024) One example of a student advocating for more proactive advising is shared below:

"Personally, I think academic advising can better meet my/everyone's needs if they send out emails to student (individually if possible) encouraging them to meet with their academic adviser. This is because I think a lot of students are too afraid to take the first step or to take that initiative to contact their academic adviser. I also think a lot of students don't know how beneficial their academic adviser could be for them, therefore they never bother to contact them." (Ma & 3AP, 2024, p. 14)

For additional rationale related to implementing proactive advising practices, see Recommendation #10c below.

**c) Developing an early alert program that leverages predictive analytics to guide proactive interventions with students identified to be academically at-risk.**

Rationale:

The Systems and Technology working group found that UTM currently has an underdeveloped ability to identify and proactively intervene with students identified to be academically at-risk. Specifically, the group found that while the OR connects with and offers support to students who are on academic probation at the conclusion of each session, and select academic departments employ locally developed processes to identify and intervene with students they determine to be at-risk, UTM capability to identify and contact individual students who may benefit from early interventions is limited by: a) a lack of required systems and technology, b) a lack of community confirmed "at-risk" criteria and c) lack of staff capacity to respond to actionable insights.

- *System and technology limitations*
  - Comprehensive early alert systems enable institutions to a) review historic student data to identify patterns/factors supporting and impeding students' success and b) review aggregated current student data, to efficiently identify students whose experiences predict they would benefit most from additional, tailored support.
  - Through U of T's Student Academic Analytics (SAA) initiative, UTM has access to a robust suite of data tools that support better understanding student retention, progression and graduation patterns. However, the institution does not currently have a system that can efficiently leverage insights generated through SAA data tools, aggregating current student data from systems across campus and mining it to identify students who would benefit from proactive support.
- *Lack of institutional agreement on "at-risk" criteria*
  - While the SAA initiative and support from the Office of the Vice-Provost, Innovations in Undergraduate Education (OVPIEU) has enabled divisions to identify specific academic "risk factors," the Systems and Technology working group could find no evidence of institution-level conversations regarding "indicators" that should be adopted to guide student identification and intervention.
  - Georgia State University has identified more than 800 indicators that serve as early warning signs of student academic risk, ranging from grades to registration for a course not applicable to their degree to failure to log-in to their Learning Management System. (AGB, 2017) UTM stakeholders must engage in conversations to identify the specific criteria that will inform identification and intervention locally.
- *Lack of staff capacity*
  - A 2012 report from the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Higher Education found that academic advising staff are involved in 89% of early alert systems. (Barefoot, 2012) Specifically, academic advisors often serve as the first point of contact with students when more intensive interventions are warranted. However, as previously noted in the rationale for Recommendation #1, UTM's AAP does not have sufficient academic advising capacity to provide additional proactive student support.

UTM's limitations in this area are problematic. Early alert programs have been shown to:

- support student success (Dimeo, 2017);
- generate a significant positive return on investment (Harrison et al., 2016); and
- meaningfully contribute to institutions better understanding their students' needs and the various factors influencing their achievement. (Cele, 2021)

Accordingly, such systems have been identified by CAS as a best practice for AAPs (2023). Furthermore, as shared in the rationale for Recommendation #1, UTM students have also indicated significant interest in UTM engaging in more proactive advising to support their success.

Despite the current limitations noted by the Systems and Technology working group, UTM is ready to begin the journey towards an early alert system and program that enables targeted advising with students who need it most. Specifically, as noted above, the SAA initiative has provided UTM the ability to generate insights regarding students' progression and retention to graduation. Additionally, U of T's institution-wide implementation of Salesforce's Student Success Hub for Higher Education (Student Advising Service) provides a significant opportunity, in that the system has out-of-the-box functionality to provide targeted alerts to users, which has been identified for exploration following initial product implementation. Furthermore, the Quercus Learning Analytics (QLA) project is currently further developing U of T's data capacity. Specifically, curated data from the QLA could be used to alert staff and faculty to actionable data related to students' engagement with course content. (J. Burrow, personal correspondence, February 2, 2024).

Additionally, there is significant interest from the UTM community in pursuing early alert program implementation – indeed, it was the recommendation that received the most support at the 3AP Collaborators Summit. Plus, given that early alert programs, in one form or another, have been utilized at the majority of post-secondary institutions for over a decade (a 2013 Noel-Levitz survey indicated that 92.3% of public four-year institutions utilize an early alert system), there is ample research and experience to learn from.

Lastly, guidance was shared at a National Institute for Student Success event in early April that institutions should not wait to launch student success interventions, instead leveraging the data that they do have to drive interventions before more students miss out. (Clarke, S. & Pedret, K, 2024) UTM currently has access to many relevant insights that lend themselves to targeted interventions. Our community should begin building out the capacity and culture required to pilot and scale such interventions, while corresponding systems and technologies are developed.

**d) Identifying and supporting students who do not gain entry to their preferred program(s) of study, while exploring possibilities to allow students to avoid “parking” in programs of study they do not intend to continue in.**

Rationale:

The Programs and Services working group reported that a root cause of frustration and attrition among UTM students, and volume for UTM's AAP, is the institution's program of study (POSt) enrolment process.

Currently, UTM has a two-step process for students gaining admissions to their programs of study. First, high school students apply for admissions under set admissions categories. Then, after they have completed at least 4.0 credits, students must apply to POSts. There are three Type of POSts, each with unique admission requirements and processes:

- *Type 1* POSts have no designated pre-requisites, no maximum set spaces, and may be applied to at any time of year;
- *Type 2* POSts have no maximum program spaces but may have pre-requisite courses and CGPA and course mark requirements needed to gain entry and applications must occur during designated POSt entry periods (at the end of the Fall/Winter and Summer sessions); and

- *Type 3 POSTs* have limited entry, specified pre-requisite courses, CGPA and course grade requirements and, similar to *Type 2 POSTs*, require applications within designed *POST* entry windows.

UTM community members note that limited program spaces, GPA requirements, and specific course mark requirements often result in students not being able to enrol in their first-choice programs. These students frequently “park” themselves in various *Type 1* programs and continue to pursue *POSTs* that may be unrealistic for them, ultimately resulting in significant frustration for the student, as well as financial losses for both the student and institution, should the student not gain entry to their desired *POST* and resultingly decide to leave UTM.

The Project Team recommends the development of a program that identifies and provides targeted supports for students that do not gain admittance to their first-choice program(s), including: on-going peer and/or professional mentorship, required 1-on-1 support with academic and/or career advisors; required engagement with campus Learning Strategists, and more. Dedicated support has been shown to impart meaningful growth and development for students who are undecided on their academic choices (Thompson, 2009). Providing such support at UTM could help an at-risk population of students to achieve admittance to their desired *POST* or successfully pivot to another program reflective of their aptitudes and interests.

The Project Team also recommends that UTM explore possibilities for allowing students who do not gain admittance to their program of choice to avoid having to “park” in a program they do not intend to pursue.

## Next Steps

This report was the final deliverable of the 3AP Recommendations Sub-Project. Upon submission, findings and recommendations will be reviewed by the 3AP Executive Steering Committee and Project Sponsor. It is planned that the 3AP will then progress to Phase II of the project, focused on developing and actioning implementation plans for those recommendations that receive institutional support. The Implementation Sub-Project is scheduled to launch in Fall 2024. (Figure 7)

As this report has documented, the Recommendations Sub-Project identified significant opportunities to advance UTM’s AAP. The Project Team encourages the prioritization of further exploration of potential AAP models, appreciating the significant time required to define and implement such changes and the impact they could have on addition program enhancement efforts.

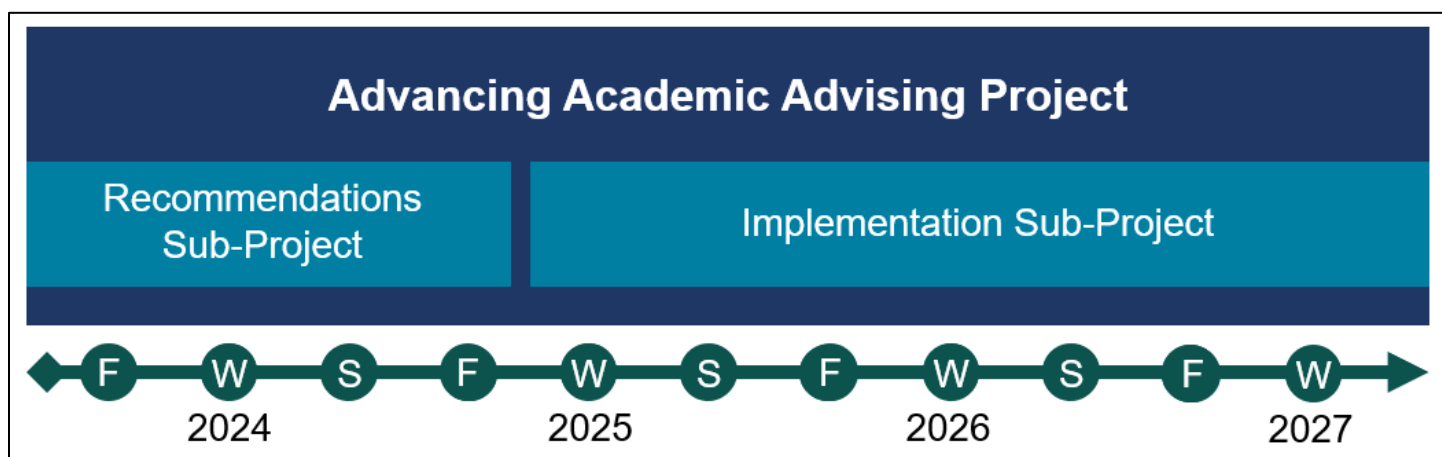


Figure 7 - Advancing Academic Advising Project (3AP) Timeline

## Focus Area Reports

As noted in the introduction, each working group produced a report, detailing findings and recommendations for their assigned focus area. Similarly, the Project Team documented their findings and recommendations related to the Structures and Resources focus area. This section will briefly summarize each of those reports, identifying the membership of each working group, high-level findings, and complete lists of recommendations.

### Advising Staff Working Group

The Advising Staff working group focused on reviewing, and making recommendations related to, the experiences of advising staff, specifically in the areas of: recruitment, training, on-going professional development, well-being and support, and was comprised of the following seven members:

- Sheri Browne, Assistant Director, Career Development Unit, UTM Career Centre
- Kwame Diko, Manager, Diversity Student Recruitment and Admissions, Office of the Registrar
- Sveta Frunchak, Assistant Registrar, Academic Advising Services, Office of the Registrar (Co-Chair)
- Megan Janssen, Undergraduate Advisor, English and Drama
- Cristina Puha, Assistant Director, International Student Supports, International Education Centre
- Monica Seymour, Assistant Director, Human Resources (Co-Chair)
- Truc Tran, Undergraduate Program Coordinator, Institute of Communication, Culture, information and Technology

Key findings of the working group include:

- Academic advising is only one component of a diverse portfolio of responsibilities for the majority of academic advisors working in UTM's academic units.
- Implementation of U of T guidelines, and academic advisor experiences, related to hiring, training, and on-going support are inconsistent across UTM's academic units.
- Academic advisors working in the Office of the Registrar report significantly greater on-boarding, on-going training, and supervisory support than academic advisors working in academic units. The lack of consistent support in this area is identified as a challenge by many academic unit academic advisors.
- Academic advisors across UTM identified lack of time and funding as barriers to participating in professional development opportunities.
- Academic advisors across UTM reported feeling significantly challenged by their workloads and interested in greater community/connection with fellow advisors.

The working group's final report included a total of 13 recommendations, organized into four focus areas:

#### *General Employment Practices*

1. Develop new campus-specific resources, including an:
  - a. overview of academic advisor responsibilities; and
  - b. employment guide summarizing advisor-specific best practices for hiring, on-boarding, training, and performance management.
2. Increase academic advising capacity, creating a staff complement plan that: (a) enables high quality advising; (b) supports staff community building, training, and professional development; and (c) promotes advisor wellbeing.

#### *On-boarding, Training and Professional Development*

3. Develop a comprehensive, UTM-specific, academic advisor training and development program that includes encouraging all AAP staff to participate in offerings through U of T's Academic Advisor Training Program.

4. Create a flexible on-boarding program for all newly hired academic advisors that combines institution-specific and general professional topics and is delivered locally and through participation in the U of T Academic Advisor Training Program.
5. Establish an operational group responsible for creating a Professional Development Strategic Plan for academic advisors. This plan should prioritize:
  - a. identifying and addressing barriers to staff ability to access professional development (PD);
  - b. creating an implementation strategy and resources to support individual PD plans, which include goal-setting and iterative review;
  - c. supporting each AAP members participation in a significant learning opportunity each year;
  - d. creating an annual accessible, low-cost knowledge sharing opportunity for all UTM AAP staff;
  - e. organizing regular and immersive PD opportunities that promote knowledge exchange between UTM's AAP and other relevant units;
  - f. encouraging AAP staff to regularly present at learning and knowledge-sharing forums; and
  - g. expanding access to existing UTMOR academic advisor training and development resources as a cost-effective and temporary solution until a comprehensive program is developed.
6. Redevelop UTM's Academic Advising Community of Practice to increase opportunities for knowledge exchange, discourse on advising-related topics, sharing of ideas for AAP improvement, connections among advisors, and collaboration.
7. Explore establishing a program enabling interested advisors to provide mentorship to students working within the AAP.
8. Assess options to establish a shared knowledge exchange space for academic advisors on campus.
9. Collaborate with the local units responsible for the Teaching Assistant (TA) training program to ensure AAP-related training is integrated.

#### *Wellbeing, Recognition and Community*

10. Align AAP with existing people strategy policies and practices, including by:
  - a. Tailoring alternative work arrangements for advisors to meet campus priorities and operational needs.
  - b. Promoting, and encouraging academic advising staff's use of, health and wellness benefits available to all UTM employees.
  - c. Celebrating outstanding advising work through U of T's employee recognition platforms.
11. Develop AA-specific recognition initiatives, potentially including:
  - a. an annual reception for academic advisors; and
  - b. regularly scheduled celebrations of specific achievements and milestones, such as PD achievements and successful campaigns.

#### *Advising Models*

12. Create a senior staff position with responsibility for managing all academic advisors at UTM.
13. Explore creating an Academic Advising Council, including advisors, AAP leadership, university leadership and students, responsible for helping to ensure UTM develops and sustains a best-in-class academic advising program.

#### *Assessment Working Group*

The Assessment working group focused on reviewing and making recommendations related to the use of assessment to guide the development of UTM's AAP and was comprised of the following eleven members:

- Rosa Ciantar, Academic Advisor & Undergraduate Program Administrator, Department of Language Studies
- Chrystal Colquhoun, Data and Assessment Analyst, UTM Career Centre
- Sara Da Silva, Assistant Director, Academic Planning, Policy and Projects, Office of the Vice-Principal and Dean
- Jonathan Davis, Student Experience Research & Assessment Coordinator, Student Affairs & Services
- Kareena Kailass, Student
- Kristina McCutcheon, Academic Advisor, Department of Political Science
- Pascal Michelucci, Professor, Department of Language Studies (Co-Chair)
- Silvana Miller, Senior Project Specialist — Reporting and Analytics, Office of the Vice-President and Principal (Co-Chair)
- Madison Peters, Academic Culture and English Program Manager, Office of Student Recruitment & Admissions
- Razia Saleh, Student
- Cindy Short, Faculty Liaison — Program & Curriculum Support, Biology

Key findings of the working group include:

- UTM's APP lacks a comprehensive assessment strategy. Current assessment efforts are sporadic, reflecting inconsistent or incoherent priorities.
- The majority of AAP assessment relates to student engagement in, and satisfaction with, specific programs. Few assessment efforts focus on AAP-level outcomes, needs/impact assessment projects and/or follow-up studies.
- Data collection is often: unaccompanied by clear rationale (lack of connection to advising goals); completed in isolation (doesn't seem to take into account past information gathering projects); and/or (until 3AP efforts) focused primarily on quantitative results.
- Analysis of results tends to be mostly descriptive.
- For most assessment activities there is a lack of clarity regarding who results are reported to and how they are going to be used. Actionable recommendations are not clearly articulated with an implementation plan.

The working group's final report included a total of 7 recommendations, organized into four focus areas:

#### *General Recommendations*

1. Develop a multi-year assessment plan that:
  - a. avoids an overemphasis on pure statistical measurement;
  - b. includes iterative exploration of complementary facets of academic advising;
  - c. prioritizes key assessment activities based on potential impact;
  - d. identifies metrics for tracking students' AAP engagement and plans for measuring them over time and across populations;
  - e. aligns with UTM's equity and inclusion goals and can guide focused supports and interventions;
  - f. describes how results will be shared within the UTM community;
  - g. is communicated transparently to UTM constituents; and
  - h. identifies staff responsible for assessment planning and implementation.
2. Articulate clearly needs and opportunities for AAP members to engage with assessment, encouraging academic advising professionals to participate in assessment efforts and contribute to academic advising scholarship.
3. Clarify the connection between our AAP's programs and services and its mission and objectives with agreed upon value statements. Reference these value statements explicitly in future data collection.

#### *Data Collection*

4. Develop standard operating practices for advising data collection that:
  - a. provide guidance on data storage, access and sharing, and retention;

- b. encourage the use of control groups to determine whether or not outcomes are directly attributable to AAP;
- c. include data collection statements indicating that assessments aim to be free of bias, culturally responsible, and attuned to power differentials;
- d. standardize assessment methods to ensure consistency; and
- e. ensure staff completion of data collection training materials.

### *Reviewing and Interpreting Findings*

5. Develop an evidence-informed methodology to analyze, interpret and review academic advising data, which:
  - a. uses appropriate methods that include both descriptive and inferential statistics;
  - b. identifies, addresses, and mitigates biases;
  - c. disaggregates data and uses equity-focused analysis practices, such as oversampling, to gather data that better reflects equity-deserving group trends; and
  - d. grounds research findings in credible, relevant scholarship that focuses on similar demographics to compare results.

### *Reporting Results and Implementing Findings*

6. Use assessment data to:
  - a. inform AAP decision making and future planning;
  - b. review and revise program mission, goals and outcomes in a regular cycle;
  - c. develop programs and services to achieve stated mission, goals and outcomes; and
  - d. demonstrate achievement of program outcomes; and
  - e. advocate for resources that support intended outcomes of academic advising.
7. Promote transparency and future engagement in assessment efforts by sharing assessment results with constituents whenever possible.

## Communications Working Group

The Communications working group focused on reviewing and making recommendations related to AAP communication practices, targeting both students and among university colleagues. The working group was comprised of the following nine members:

- Jenny Danahy, Supervisor, Pre-Arrival Engagement, Centre for Student Engagement
- Judy Duff, Registered Nurse and Campus Health Promoter, Health & Counselling Centre
- Jeff Espie, Director, Strategy and Brand Integration, Office of the Vice-President and Principal
- Michael Gomez, Manager, Student Recruitment Communications, Student Recruitment & Admissions
- Patricia Lonergan, Interim Director, Marketing and Communications (Co-Chair)
- Sandra Ngan, Senior Project Manager, Project Management Office
- Sebastian Santoni Perez De Obanos, Student
- Laura Smith, Outreach and Engagement Coordinator, Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre
- Joanna Szurmak, Interim Associate Librarian, Library & Learning Services, UTM Library

Key findings of the working group include:

- Our academic advising program does not have a comprehensive communications strategy for student-facing nor internal staff communications and while members of our AAP value effective communication, we lack the integrated strategy to achieve this at a meaningful scale.
- Collaborations between the Office of the Registrar and Student Affairs & Services units for select large-scale initiatives serve as examples of collaboration and best practice. However, these initiatives are the exception, as

the distributed advising model of UTM's AAP result in uneven area-specific communication activities that tend to:

- focus on the part, rather than the whole, not always working toward the same goals or within a larger cascade;
- not always share consistent messaging;
- employ diverse designs, that don't always match our university wide brand;
- not always benefit from shared best practices.
- Similar unevenness applies to communications technologies and assessment: the student-facing team in the Office of the Registrar benefits from a comprehensive CRM system and utilizes surveys and engagement metrics to drive communication enhancement, while other units do not.
- Communication challenges create confusion for both our staff and students, many of whom report not knowing about the academic advising supports available or where to go, or refer others, to access them.

The working group's final report included a total of six recommendations:

1. Re-organize academic advising from a distributed to a unified model, recognizing that communications will work more effectively when we have a clearer model and vision to communicate.
2. Convene an academic advising communications table to:
  - a. drive the implementation of communication-related recommendations;
  - b. facilitate cross-portfolio collaboration; and
  - c. conduct on-going research regarding academic advising-related communication.
3. Assess the feasibility of introducing a student communications CRM, modelled on the Slate CRM now used by our recruitment team.
4. Create a student-focused, accessible, user-friendly website to synthesize all advising-related resources, including information regarding UTM's academic advising model, the role(s) academic advisors play, and how to contact them.
5. Develop a comprehensive student-facing communications plan for advising, which should:
  - a. invite ideas from all advisors, academic departments, and student-facing staff, among others;
  - b. set consistent communications goals, priorities, and key messages, tied to the overall mission of advising, and the commitments of UTM's strategic framework, including equity and belonging;
  - c. complement UTM's new campus-wide marcomm plan and strategic enrolment management plan;
  - d. specify the diverse channels through which we communicate with students, along with the different purposes that each channel serves;
  - e. assess the utility of expanding our suite of student communications channels to include, e.g., text messaging and generative AI and live chat, as grounded in ongoing research.
  - f. Promote Defy Gravity brand resources and supports among AAP staff.
  - g. Focus on targeted, proactive outreach to students timed at key points of the year.
  - h. Reflect needs of every step of students' experience – from pre-admission through graduation – recognizing that students follow diverse, sometimes non-linear paths.
  - i. Identify relevant communications metrics to assess success and guide improvements over time.
  - j. Summarize communications tactics to share updates internally among advisors and other staff.
6. Create a plan for internal advising communications, which should involve work to:
  - a. Align internal communications with goals of the student-facing advising communications plan.
  - b. Develop resources explaining the mission of advising for colleagues across portfolios.
  - c. Refresh the scope, operations, and purpose of our advising community of practice to focus on opportunities for open conversation and cross-portfolio relationships.
  - d. Describe shared standards for internal advising communications: e.g., we use X channel for Y purpose to communicate Z times per month.

- e. Consider opportunities to launch new communications channels and information sharing events: e.g., monthly advising newsletters, bi-annual advisor retreats, etc.
- f. Encourage departmental advisors, among other staff beyond OR, to share updates regularly, both at CoP meetings and on other internal advising channels.
- g. Assess the effectiveness of Salesforce as a new tool for internal advising communications.
- h. Incorporate information about advising into on-boarding for all non-advising employees, including as part of new staff, faculty, and librarian orientation.
- i. Ensure new advisor orientation includes introduction to UTM's internal and student-facing advising communications plans, along with communications resources available at U of T.
- j. Expand UTM's communicators network.

### Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Indigeneity Working Group

The Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity working group focused on reviewing, and making recommendations related to, the extent to which UTM's AAP provides equitable and inclusive environments and programs and services. The working group was comprised of the following nine members:

- Brian Cunha, Director, Student Housing and Residence Life
- Kayla Forrester, Undergraduate Advisor, Department of Economics
- Mahnoor Leghari, Equity Project Specialist – Sciences, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Office
- Aimy Lieu, Assistant Director, Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy
- Rebeca Mahadeo, Supervisor, Intercultural Fluency and International Student Development, International Education Centre (Co-Chair)
- Sharon Marjadsingh, Academic Advisor and Program Administrator, Department of Historical Studies (Co-Chair)
- Somtochukwu Nnakenyi, Student
- Kaitlin Phillips, Indigenous Student Support Specialist, Office of Indigenous Initiatives
- Ruhina Shaikh, Resource Centre Coordinator, UTM Career Centre

Key findings of the working group include:

- A lack of evidence EDI&I-related goals historically directing program development.
- Evidence of preliminary efforts to achieve more equitable and inclusive environments and programs and services, such as: partnerships between the Office of the Registrar and campus units that support diverse student needs; assessment of the extent to which select programs and services contribute to student belonging; and focus on the intersection of EDI&I and academic advising in the U of T's foundational Academic Advisor Training Program.
- Limited evidence of proactive efforts to support advisors' capacity to provide equitable and inclusive service, either through professional development or the provision of standards or guidelines for enhancing equity and/or inclusion in their daily practice.
- Data collected through the Fall 2023 Academic Advising Survey indicates that populations of students who have historically been marginalized *tend* to be engaging with academic advising at rates equal to or greater than their peers. However, select marginalized populations, such as students with disabilities, did report significantly less positive academic advising experiences than their counterparts.

Reflecting their findings and the standards identified for their focus area, the working group put forward the following eight recommendations:

1. Support academic advisors in developing their capacity to provide inclusive and equitable services by:
  - a. incorporating equity-focused training in "all-staff" training activities;
  - b. encouraging staff to develop EDI&I-related professional development goals;
  - c. enabling academic advisors to pursue equity-related training activities;

- d. providing guidelines to support inclusive, equitable student interactions; and
  - e. creating a learning framework for advisors, developed in partnership with UTM’s EDIO and OII and U of T’s ARDCO.
2. Continue enabling staff participation in identity-based groups, to strengthen wellbeing and belonging.
  3. Promote barrier-free hiring processes, including through continued education for hiring managers on the value diversity brings to academic advising positions.
  4. Review academic advising programs and services using an identity-based lens, identifying opportunities to develop programming tailored to needs of UTM’s diverse student community, including exploring enhanced collaborations between advisors and identity-based student groups.
  5. Include equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization as explicit goals and values for UTM’s AAP and collaborate with UTM’s EDIO and OII and U of T’s ARDCO to develop implementation strategies accordingly.
  6. Enhance “last-minute” service availability by offering drop-in support during peak demand periods, recognizing the fullness and diverse responsibilities of students’ lives.
  7. Support students’ successful navigation of online resources by:
    - a. providing simplified, accessible, EDI-informed communication regarding available resources, and
    - b. developing a culturally resonant peer-to-peer navigation support program.
  8. Conduct additional research into the findings of the fall 2023 Academic Advising Survey that identified specific populations of UTM students engaging with academic advising less often and/or experiencing poorer advising experiences than others.

### Mission Focus Area

As introduced in the *Process* section of the introduction to the Recommendations Sub-Project, reviewing and making recommendations related to the content, development and use of the mission of UTM’s academic advising program was a task assigned to the 3AP Project Team. This group reviewed the draft mission, developed at the Working Groups Kick-off Event in December, 2023, and found that:

- Mission content was largely compliant with standards, making clear our commitment to supporting students’ learning, development, success and persistence, including through holistic goal development and associated plans, and in alignment with institutional mission, values, priorities and professional standards.
- The mission development process was compliant with expectations, in that the mission was developed with AAP stakeholders.
- The draft mission and goals had not yet been broadly disseminated, though it was being used to guide the work of the 3AP.

Reflecting their findings and the standards identified for the focus area, the Project Team put forward the following three recommendations:

1. Establish a committee to finalize AAP’s mission and values, ensuring continued significant community involvement.
2. Disseminate AAP’s mission and values broadly, ensuring they feature in communications.
3. Use the mission and student impact goals to guide the AAP’s evolution, working toward a curricular approach where all programs and services support shared learning and program objectives.

### Structures and Resources Focus Area

Similar to the Mission focus area, reviewing and making recommendations related to structures and resourcing of UTM’s AAP was a task assigned to the 3AP Project Team. Key findings of the project team include:

- UTM’s AAP lacks sufficient academic advising capacity to: consistently provide timely academic advising in the manner students prefer, nor provide students the more holistic, proactive advising students request and the program aspires to provide.
- The distributed model of UTM’s AAP results in significant barriers to efficient and effective academic advising, including: unnecessary complexity and inconsistency; barriers to collaboration; insufficient specialists to oversee training, communication and assessment practices; and insufficient leadership to support strategic planning.
- Resources are not equitably distributed across academic units nor between degree and program advising.
- Promising practices to support advisor community and knowledge transfer were found, though academic advisors perceive numerous opportunities to enhance these practices and implement additional practices to further support wellbeing and professional development.

Reflecting their findings and the standards identified for the focus area, the Project Team identified the following eleven recommendations:

1. That academic advisor capacity be added, to further support the success of UTM students.
2. That a position with oversight for UTM’s academic advising program and all academic advising be created.
3. That academic advising responsibilities be redistributed, with the Academic Advising Team in the Office of the Registrar transitioning to become a “pre-program” advising team, and advisors currently working in the academic units transitioning to become “in-program” advisors, providing degree and program advising for students post-program enrolment.
4. That advisors providing in-program advising be organized into “neighbourhoods,” where advisors that support programs most often paired by students work together as a team.
5. That in-program advisors invest significantly in relationships with the departments in which they are embedded.
6. Create positions dedicated to academic advising (in-program academic advisor positions) and positions dedicated to program administration.
7. That two academic advising management roles be created, in addition to the position with oversight for all academic advising.
8. That the existing Academic Advising Community of Practice be redeveloped, to support its ability to provide academic advisors: community; voice; role-specific training; and professional development opportunities.
9. That a community for leaders of student advising and/or support units be created, to support community and collaboration on the development and implementation of inter-unit activities.
10. That a committee of faculty be struck to explore faculty’s role in the provision of formal academic advising.
11. That a peer mentorship program be piloted, through which more experienced students are assigned to support and act as a first point of contact for populations of new-to-UTM students.

### Programs and Services Working Group

The Programs and Services working group focused on reviewing, and making recommendations related to, the development, coordination and impact of programs and services provided by UTM’s AAP. The working group was comprised of the following twelve members:

- Brett Beston, Associate Professor and Associate Chair-Teaching, Department of Psychology
- Laura Ferlito, Academic Advisor and Undergraduate Program Administrator, Mathematical & Computational Sciences
- Natasha Hanif, Academic Advisor, Department of Management
- Michelle Kraus, Associate Registrar, Academic Standards, Advising and Financial Aid, Office of the Registrar (Co-Chair)
- Amanda Luongo, Assistant Director, Residence Life, Student Housing & Residence Life
- Kerrie Martin, Program Manager and Learning Strategist, Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre

- Dray Perenic, Academic Advisor, Office of the Registrar
- Panayiota Platanitis, Career Counsellor, UTM Career Centre
- Samuel Ronfard, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology
- Krystle Shannon, Student
- Jessica Silver, Director, Student Engagement, Centre for Student Engagement (Co-Chair)
- Fairly Wong, Student

Key findings of the working group include:

- The identification of 24 programs and services, delivered by the Office of the Registrar, academic units, and/or Student Affairs & Services units, that are a) related to the intended outcomes of academic advising and b) delivered by academic advisors or those working in close partnership with academic advisors.
- Existing programs and services tend to be well designed, benefitting from: clearly identified intended outcomes, basis in research and/or theory, collaborative development; and alignment with UTM and AAP goals.
- There is need for additional support, in the form of AAP-wide strategy and coordination and increased guidance and resources for academic advisors.
- Opportunity exists to engage in: increased assessment of existing programming; enhanced communication practices, to support community awareness of, and engagement with, existing resources; and programming redevelopment, to better meet the needs of UTM's diverse constituents, through increased early-alert, first-year, and probation and suspension support.

The working group's final report included a total of seven recommendations:

1. Identify an academic advising framework (e.g., appreciative advising) to guide campus practices while maintaining advisors' flexibility to adapt to meet their needs and those of their students.
2. Create an "Early Alert" program and increase academic advising capacity to support program implementation.
3. Expand the current New Student Advising program to: extend beyond the course enrollment period and create collaborative, simplified course enrolment and POST application supports.
4. Implement additional supports for students who are placed on Academic Probation, including:
  - a. requiring an appointment with an academic advisor prior to registration in any subsequent academic session, to create a plan to support increased academic success; and
  - b. not permitting enrolment in summer sessions.
5. Implement supports for students who are placed on Academic Suspension, including:
  - a. required appointments with an academic advisor prior to enrolment in an academic session following their suspension;
  - b. mandatory check-ins during their first academic session returning from suspension; and
  - c. maintained access to key university services (e.g., library, internet, select health services, etc.) while on suspension.
6. Create more effective referrals between departments, to minimize students feeling bounced around, by:
  - a. transitioning to a single system for student notes used by all advisors and services;
  - b. creating a comprehensive list of campus services, with access details;
  - c. exploring the possibility of a system to support direct booking; and
  - d. strengthening AAP leadership capacity to support escalation for cases that require multiple stakeholders.
7. Identify and support students who do not gain entry to their preferred program(s) of study and explore possibilities to avoid students "parking" in programs of study they do not intend to continue in.

### Spaces and Environment Working Group

The Spaces and Environment working group focused their review and recommendation development efforts on the spaces where our academic advising program is delivered. To what extent are those spaces, and the environments in those spaces, supportive of the goals of our AAP? The working group was comprised of the following eight members:

- José Chacón, Business and Operations Coordinator, UTM Career Centre
- Stephanie do Rego, Assistant to the Chair/Undergraduate Assistant, Biology
- Monika Farrell, Assistant Director, Planning & Design, Facilities Management and Planning (Co-Chair)
- Taha Memon, Student
- Felicity Morgan, Director, UTM Career Centre (Co-Chair)
- Melanie Peters, Academic Advisor, Office of the Registrar
- Yan Tam-Séguin, Project Manager, Special Projects, Student Affairs and Services
- Bubu Zhao, Student

Key findings of the working group include:

- Overall, academic advising spaces are well-maintained, effectively protect the confidentiality of sensitive information, and generally support student feelings of comfort and safety.
- However, significant variation exists between advising spaces, including level of inclusivity (ergonomically compliant and welcoming spaces), lighting, sound proofing and safety elements.
- Locations of many academic advising offices pose challenges, with some being located along noisy corridors or far from elevators or washrooms (affecting accessibility) and all lacking consistent branding or a recognizable logo that could support their identification as dedicated advising spaces.

The working group's final report included four recommendations:

1. Identify and implement accessibility improvements around advising offices, including by:
  - a. introducing ramps, wider doorways and ergonomic furniture;
  - b. locating advising offices in prominent, accessible places, such as near entrances and washrooms; and
  - c. implementing consistent, branded signage to enhance interior and exterior wayfinding and communicate advisor availability and contact information.
2. Ensure that correspondence with students before in-person meetings include:
  - a. Clear instructions on how to reach the academic advising office; and
  - b. Explicit invitations to request any accommodations needed.
3. Ensure that advising spaces:
  - a. balance the need for both confidentiality and staff safety and
  - b. have reasonable safety tools and systems, such as video cameras and green button software.
4. Include decor in advising offices that supports student comfort, such as welcoming art and furnishings, plants, and natural light.

### Systems and Technology Working Group

The Systems and Technology working group focused on reviewing, and making recommendations related to, the systems and technology supporting UTM's AAP, specifically in the areas of: available functionality/use; access and training; planning and selection; and compliance/security. The working group was comprised of the following eleven members:

- Safah Asghar, Student
- Anthony Betts, Director, Information & Instructional Technology Services (Co-Chair)
- Jose Chacon, Business and Operations Coordinator, UTM Career Centre
- Olha Fihol, Assistant Registrar, Registrarial Services, Office of the Registrar (Co-Chair)
- Abdirisak Gedleh, Student
- Lynne Hsueh, Assistant Registrar, Student Records & Registration, Office of the Registrar
- Cesar Mejia, Associate Registrar, Systems, Scheduling and Examinations, Office of the Registrar (Co-Chair)

- Chad Nuttall, Assistant Dean, Students and International Initiatives, Student Affairs & Services
- Kate Romanow, Academic Advisor, Office of the Registrar
- Ferzeen Sammy, Academic Advisor, Department of Geography, Geomatics and Environment
- Yan Tam-Seguín, Project Manager, Student Affairs and Services

Key findings of the working group include:

- While the use of technology in academic advising at UTM indicated considerable compliance with established standards, it also revealed varied levels of consistency and effectiveness across different departments. Specifically, the use of technologies, such as eTools, Admin Tools, ServiceNow and MS Bookings, is inconsistent, affecting students' advising experiences.
- Current systems to support early identification of students in need of academic support are limited.
- There are a lack of resources supporting both staff and students use of advising systems and technologies. Staff training varies significantly between departments.
- There are no established processes and/or systems for requesting and managing staff access to advising systems, resulting in unnecessary complexity.
- The working group found that advisors are typically involved in various stages of the technology selection, planning, testing, and implementation processes. However, there is a lack of consistency in assessing functionality, reliability, accessibility, and user experience.
- While advising systems comply with base-level accessibility standards, there is opportunity to achieve higher levels of accessibility compliance through the adoption of newer systems.

The working group's final report included 7 recommendations:

1. Continue advancing campus-wide implementation of the institutionally-funded "Student Advising Service" (Salesforce's Student Success Hub), which will support increased staff efficiency and effectiveness, improve student experiences, and enhance accessibility and data storage.
2. Enhance advisor information system and technology (IS&T) training by establishing:
  - a. a common on-boarding plan for all advisors, which includes foundational IS&T training;
  - b. a community of practice that supports on-going IS&T training and support, including "Connect and Learn" and "Ask Us" style sessions; and
  - c. a dedicated *Teams* channel for peer support and information sharing.
3. More effectively orient students to systems supporting their academic journey, by:
  - a. Developing updated how-to videos for commonly used student systems, and
  - b. clarifying UTM-specific terms that differ from other U of T divisions: e.g., distribution requirements and breadth requirements.
4. Create an IS&T-focused portal for advisors that:
  - a. invites technology-related feedback from advisors;
  - b. enables advisors to "vote" on the usefulness of new features;
  - c. contains a Knowledge Centre for training materials; and
  - d. streamlines access to submitting technical support tickets.
5. Submit a request to the Degree Explorer Working Group to add capacity to the Student Planner tool for users to simulate actions, including: changing a program of study and changing a course status (CR/NCR, EXTRA, LWD, WDR, etc.)
6. Introduce processes and protocols to:
  - a. identify all available systems for advising staff, manage additions, modifications and removals of system access, and review access permissions annually;
  - b. assess advising systems regularly, establishing metrics and standards to measure their effectiveness for, e.g., user experience and data analysis capability;

- c. support advisors in the event of internet or power outages, especially when outages affect scheduled online meetings with students.
- 7. Establish new committees or working groups to:
  - a. support advising-related IS&T strategic planning, including research about generative AI applications for advising; and
  - b. define requirements for an effective early alert system, which expands current risk-identification processes to enable personal outreach to students more frequently and at critical stages of program progression.

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## Appendix A – Recommendations Sub-Project Team (Project Team) Terms of Reference

### Background and Context

Over the past four years, the University of Toronto Mississauga has engaged in consistent efforts to better understand the strengths and opportunities inherent in our academic advising program (AAP). Now, in alignment with our Academic Plan and our Strategic Framework, the Principal is launching a project that will engage stakeholders across campus in the identification of a goal state for UTM's AAP and the development of recommendations for how we should leverage capacity for innovation and collaboration to advance our AAP from its current state to that goal state. This project will be known as the Advancing Academic Advising Project and will be divided into two sub-projects:

- The Recommendations Sub-Project (RSP) will focus on developing a vision of UTM's AAP "goal state" and recommendations for progressing our current AAP toward that goal state.
- The Implementation Planning Sub-Project (IPSP) will focus on developing a plan for actioning the recommendations delivered by Recommendations Sub-Project, identifying the most effective and efficient pathway from our current AAP to the goal state.

### Purpose and Responsibilities

The RSP PT will primarily contribute to Project Goals #1 and #3:

- Goal #1 – Identifying a goal state for UTM's AAP by the spring of 2024 that:
  - maximizes students' learning, wellbeing, belonging, and academic progress;
  - centres equity and inclusion;
  - implements evidence-based approaches that steward our community resources;
  - is built on a foundation of innovation and collaboration; and
  - enjoys widespread leadership and community support.
- Goal #3 – Involve UTM community stakeholders, to: support ongoing stakeholder contribution to the development of the UTM's AAP; and support stakeholder readiness for AAP redevelopment activities.

Specifically, responsibilities for the RSP Project Team include:

- Providing regular updates to, and giving voice to ideas of, senior leaders and colleagues;
- Engaging in academic advising related learning and development activities;
- Designing and facilitating sub-project related data collection;
- Co-Chairing sub-project Working Groups;
- Developing a "goal state" for UTM's AAP that fulfills the project goals.
- Drafting a final Project Team report identifying: the goal state for UTM's AAP; associated rationale; and recommendations for advancing UTM's AAP from the current to the goal state;
- Additional responsibilities as identified, related to the planning and execution of sub-project activities.

Given the significance of these responsibilities, RSP Project Team members are expected to dedicate an average of one (1) working day per week to Project Team-work.

### Composition

- Pascal Michelucci, Professor, French Studies, Department of Language Studies
- Sharon Marjadsingh, Academic Advisor and Program Administrator, Department of Historical Studies
- Svitlana Frunchak, Assistant Registrar, Academic Advising Services, Office of the Registrar
- Olha Fihol, Assistant Registrar, Registrarial Services, Office of the Registrar
- Jessica Silver, Director, Student Engagement, Centre for Student Engagement
- Felicity Morgan, Director, UTM Career Centre
- Sandra Ngan, Senior Project Manager, Project Management Office

- Brian Ingoldsby, Senior Project Manager, Project Management Office

### **Term of Appointment**

The term of appointment will be for the duration of the Recommendations Sub-Project (scheduled to run from September, 2023 through May, 2024).

### **Accountability & Reporting**

The RSP Project Team will be accountable to the Executive Steering Committee and the Project Sponsor or their designate. The Project Manager(s) will generally provide formal updates to the Executive Steering Committee on behalf of the Project Team, though Project Team members may be involved when beneficial.

### **Operations (How will we work together?)**

The RSP Project Team identified values that will guide our work together and practices aligned with those values:

- *Openness/Agility/Curiosity*
  - We are committed to bringing an open mind to this process. We will strive to divorce ourselves from pre-conceived notions as to what the best pathway forward for UTM may be and to let our research guide us.
- *Service-oriented/Altruism*
  - We are committed to embracing this project as an awesome opportunity to improve our AAP for all UTM stakeholders. We will center the experiences of staff and students while focusing on how we can support each other's development and success.
- *Quality and Accountability*
  - We are committed to identifying a goal state and producing recommendations of the highest quality, that are based in extensive research and analysis and have longevity and durability and, being built on a foundation of clearly-defined values, adaptability.
- *Belonging, Authenticity and Trust*
  - We are committed to creating a space where all Project Team members feel they can be their authentic selves. We are committed to maintaining confidentiality regarding group conversations and to trusting each other. We will leverage these commitments to support conversation where Team members don't shy away from disagreement or from voicing any idea.

The Project Team also identified that the group would move forward using a combination of SharePoint, Teams, and email for communication. Specifically:

- SharePoint will be used to sharing files;
- Teams will be used as a chat space; and
- Email will continue to be used for more substantive, group-wide, communication.

## Appendix B – Focus Area Standards

The Project Team adapted standards set by CAS to: reflect guidance from NACADA’s Excellence in Academic Advising program; reduce duplication; and increase the accessibility of the language used.

Standards for each of the nine (9) focus areas are included below.

### Advising Staff

#### **1.1 General Employment Practices**

1. Academic Advising Programs (AAP) communicates and collaborates with institutional and/or divisional human resource departments.
2. AAP aligns employment practices with institutional procedures and expectations for: recruitment; selection, onboarding and training; supervision; professional development; and performance management and evaluation.
3. AAP has clearly stated, current, relevant, and documented organizational charts demonstrating reporting structures.
4. AAP has clearly stated, current, relevant, and documented responsibilities and performance expectations for all personnel.
5. AAP leadership regularly reviews position descriptions.
6. AAP leadership establishes, in partnership with personnel and aligned with institutional policies, work arrangements, scheduling, and modality that achieve department goals, objectives, and outcomes.

#### **1.2 On-boarding, Training and Professional Development**

1. AAP provides a comprehensive learning plan for those involved in the delivery of academic advising, that:
  - a. includes onboarding, training, and development;
  - b. improves competence, skills, and leadership capacity;
  - c. keeps personnel abreast of the research, theories, legislation, policies, and advancements that affect its programs and services.
2. When creating training and development programs or experiences, AAP
  - a. accounts for different learning styles;
  - b. uses a variety of delivery methods;
  - c. provides accessible platforms for delivering training;
  - d. encourages discussion and challenge to ideas and respect for opinions.
3. AAP personnel must have access to resources and receive specific training related to:
  - a. AAP and institutional mission, goals, and core values
  - b. the programs and services they support
  - c. administrative and operational policies, procedures, and protocols (including those related to sexual misconduct, harassment, workplace violence, safety, emergency procedures, identifying threatening conduct or behavior, crisis prevention, response, and reporting)
  - d. privacy, confidentiality and the handling of sensitive student information
  - e. access, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice
  - f. how to recognize and address systems of oppression in the workplace and facilitate a welcoming, inclusive work environment.
  - g. systems and technologies necessary to perform their assigned responsibilities
  - h. all laws and policies that directly affect the delivery of AAP programs and services
  - i. institutional and community resources and services
  - j. how and when to make effective referrals.
4. AAP personnel should have access to continuing and regular professional development that addresses:

- a. widely adopted purposes of academic advising and its relevance to student success at the institution
  - b. academic advising approaches and best practices
  - c. research, assessment, evaluation, and research processes
  - d. strategies that contribute to achievement of student learning and developmental outcomes
  - e. relevant theories, including those related to student development, student learning, and career development
  - f. comprehensive knowledge of the institution's programs, academic requirements, policies and procedures, majors, minors, and certificate programs
  - g. comprehensive knowledge of academic policies and procedures, including institutional transfer policies and curricular changes
  - h. strategies for building strong relationships and connections with students from diverse backgrounds through a variety of advising interactions
  - i. relevant core competencies as defined by professional associations identified by AAP e.g., NACADA; CACUSS/ASEUCC
5. Performance plans are consistent with institutional, divisional, departmental, and individual expectations of personnel.
  6. AAP supervisors seek input from their personnel during the process of writing performance goals, objectives, and outcomes to be used to plan, review, and evaluate work and performance for each performance cycle.
  7. AAP supervisors and personnel have periodic conversations to discuss progress towards goals and needed changes to performance plans.
  8. AAP supervisors use the results of performance evaluations to measure job competencies, identify growth opportunities, and implement individual and/or collective professional development and training programs.

### ***1.3 Wellbeing, Recognition and Community***

1. AAP personnel experience an environment supportive of their wellbeing.
2. AAP personnel experience an environment of diversity, equity, inclusion in the workplace.
3. AAP leadership implement policies and activities to support team morale.
4. AAP personnel are recognized for their contribution to students' success.
5. AAP personnel are provided opportunities for career advancement.
6. AAP personnel contribute to the wellbeing and effectiveness of the unit.
7. AAP leadership engages team members in discourse to reconcile conflict.
8. AAP creates collaborative communities for sharing ideas, strategizing on change and improvements, collaborating on programs and services, and advocating for additional resources.
9. AAP encourages engagement and creates space for discourse on the vision or purpose, mission, goals, and core values.
10. AAP personnel has access to a supervisor for assistance.

### ***Overview Questions:***

1. Are institutional procedures and expectations related to academic advising staffing generally being followed?
2. Are job descriptions available and clear, current and consistent where possible for all academic advising positions?
3. Are policies re. work arrangements suitable for the accomplishment of program goals, objectives, outcomes?
4. Do we have a suitable staff on-boarding, training/professional development, and performance coaching programs, so as to support the AAP mission?
5. In what ways are performance evaluated and recognition provided for exemplary performance?
6. Is the workplace environment conducive to staff wellbeing?

7. Are there structures that support staff feelings of community, support, belonging, and voice?

## Assessment

### **2.1 Assessment Culture, Plans, and Processes**

1. Academic Advising Program (AAP) creates and sustains a culture of assessment that is transparent and valued by its constituents.
2. AAP creates assessment plans and processes in alignment with its mission, goals, objectives, and/or outcomes.
3. AAP engages in an ongoing cycle of assessment activities.
4. AAP assessment plans and processes are created in collaboration with AAP constituents.
5. AAP collaborates with appropriate departments on assessment of AAP outcomes.
6. AAP involves advisors in the design, planning, implementation, and review of student-level and program-level assessment.
7. AAP assessment plans and processes address the role of power and positionality for those conducting assessment.
8. AAP follows socially just assessment practices that intentionally address systems and outcomes of power, bias, and discrimination, including but not limited to, aggregation and disaggregation of data, use of language and terminology, and assumptions based on normative culture.
9. AAP commits fiscal, human, and technological resources to develop, implement, and improve assessment plans.
10. AAP supports professional development for those responsible for assessment.
11. AAP regularly evaluates and updates methods of data collection.
12. AAP develops manageable processes for gathering and evaluating data.

### **2.2 Gathering Evidence and Data**

1. AAP utilizes equity-centered data collection processes.
2. AAP utilizes multiple methods and measures of data collection.
3. AAP employs appropriate and relevant assessment methods informed by the stated intended outcomes of advising.
4. AAP adheres to institutional policies related to data access and management.
5. AAP gathers evidence related to students' persistence and outcomes metrics (e.g., aggregated and disaggregated data on students' academic progression data).
6. AAP gathers evidence related to program effectiveness (e.g., response time, accessibility, accuracy of information, respectful interactions, etc.).
7. AAP gathers evidence related to program engagement (e.g., programs and services use).

### **2.3 Reviewing and Interpreting Findings**

1. AAP analyzes and interprets data using appropriate methods.
2. AAP identifies and addresses bias regarding analysis and interpretation.
3. AAP disaggregates and analyzes data to identify issues related to equity and inclusion.
4. AAP staff compares assessment findings to relevant literature.

### **2.4 Reporting Results and Implementing Findings**

1. AAP uses data-informed decision-making.
2. AAP uses assessment data, research, and theory to review and revise program mission, goals, and outcomes in a regular cycle.

3. AAP uses theory, research, and evidence to develop and implement its programs and services to achieve stated mission, goals, and outcomes.
4. AAP uses data to demonstrate achievement of program outcomes and student learning, development, and success outcomes.
5. AAP avoids deficit-based reporting of assessment results.
6. AAP articulates potential bias in data and reported findings when sharing or reporting results.
7. AAP communicates results and findings to its constituents' using formats tailored to them.
8. AAP shares assessment results with relevant stakeholders.
9. AAP uses evidence from assessment activities and research to inform decision-making and continuous improvement.
10. AAP leads and engages in institutional conversations involving relevant data on undergraduate and graduate student needs, preferences, and performance, for use in institutional decisions and policy.
11. AAP uses relevant, focused data to advocate for resources tied to the intervention strategies and intended outcomes of advising.
12. AAP staff contribute to the literature related to academic advising.

### **Overview Questions:**

1. Does UTM's AAP have a comprehensive assessment strategy?
2. What are the assessment priorities for UTM's AAP and how are those developed?
3. How does UTM's AAP use assessment results to inform improvement? What changes, adjustments, or improvements have been made as a result of assessment activities?
4. How does UTM's AAP share assessment results with relevant constituencies?
5. How does UTM's AAP support ongoing development of assessment competencies for personnel?

## Communication

### **3.1 - Communication Culture, Plans, and Processes**

1. AAP creates and sustains a culture where effective communication is valued by its constituents.
2. AAP creates and implements a program-wide plan regarding the places, formats, and timing of communications to its constituents.
3. AAP collaborates with community stakeholders to determine the intention and scope of strategic communication to each stakeholder group.
4. AAP communication planning activities help foster collaborative relationships across units.
5. AAP communications plan is well understood by all communicators.
6. AAP communication is systematically reviewed and refined.
7. AAP has and follows procedures and guidelines consistent with institutional policy.
8. AAP commits fiscal, human, and technological resources to develop, implement, and improve communication plans and capacity.
9. AAP supports professional development for those responsible for communication.

### **3.2 Communication Activities**

1. AAP provides information, services, and resources that explain its mission, goals, and outcomes.
2. AAP clearly delineates and disseminates information to interested stakeholders (such as parents, significant others, and prospective students) about responsibilities and expectations of advising at the institution.
3. AAP clearly delineates and disseminates information to the campus community about specific advisor responsibilities and expectations.

4. AAP implements strategies for outreach and promotion to constituents who use or might benefit from the programs and services.
5. AAP provides targeted outreach to students related to important academic issues, opportunities, and interventions
6. AAP communicates to students through multiple platforms and venues.
7. AAP communication is accurate, transparent, and free of deception and misrepresentation.
8. AAP communicates with its constituents using accessible formats and modalities
9. AAP communication activities support the achievement of program goals and outcomes.

### **3.3 Assessment**

1. AAP assesses the effectiveness of communication activities.

#### **Overview Questions:**

1. Does UTM's AAP have a comprehensive communication strategy?
2. What are the communication priorities for UTM's AAP and how were those developed?
3. How do AAP staff collaborate to ensure streamlined communication?
4. What platforms/systems/channels does UTM's AAP use to communicate with stakeholders?
5. How does the AAP assess the effectiveness of its communication efforts? What changes, adjustments, or improvements have been made as a result of assessment activities?

## Equity, Diversity Inclusion and Indigeneity

### **4.1 – Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity**

1. Academic Advising Program (AAP) establishes goals for equity, diversity, inclusion and indigenization and a process to review, evaluate, and update the goals as appropriate.
2. AAP establishes partnerships with other programs and services on campus that support diverse student needs.
3. AAP establishes partnerships with other programs and services on campus that support equity, diversity, inclusion and indigeneity.
4. AAP creates and maintains accessible, equitable, and inclusive educational and work environments for its constituents.
5. AAP provides equitable access to facilities, resources, and digital spaces for its constituents.
6. AAP identifies and addresses actions, policies, and structures within its operation that perpetuate systems of power, privilege, and oppression.
7. AAP enacts inclusive and equitable practices in providing programs and services.
8. AAP considers the needs of its constituents when establishing hours of operation and developing methods for delivering programs, services, and resources.
9. AAP collaborates with diverse constituents to address their needs.
10. AAP actively contacts students who may benefit from focused interactions and support.
11. AAP considers identity-based differences and needs as students transition into the institution.
12. AAP assesses the extent to which programs, services, policies, procedures, and practices contribute to student feelings of belonging.
13. AAP provides academic advising through multiple modalities and delivery systems (e.g., telephone, email, in person, video conferencing).
14. AAP uses adaptive technologies to provide services and resources to students with learning, mobility, and other differences.

15. AAP personnel take part in ongoing professional development related to equity, diversity, inclusion and indigeneity.
16. AAP personnel are held accountable for applying concepts of equity, diversity, inclusion, and indigenization.
17. When educational and/or workplace accommodations are requested, AAP provides individuals with an interactive process to determine reasonable accommodations.
18. AAP makes a deliberate effort to diversify the workforce, proactively searching for diverse candidates and investing in multiple and continuous sourcing methods.

**Overview Questions:**

1. How does AAP ensure constituents experience a welcoming, accessible, and inclusive environment that is equitable and free from harassment?
2. How does AAP identify barriers to and advocate for access, equity, diversity, and inclusion?
3. How does AAP address imbalances in participation among selected populations of students??
4. How does AAP address imbalances in staffing patterns among selected populations of program personnel?
5. How does AAP ensure cultural competence of its personnel to foster inclusion in the program?

**Mission**

**8.1 Functional Area Mission**

1. Academic Advising Programs (AAP) assists students in delineating their academic, career, and life goals, and develop educational plans that lead them to achieve those goals successfully. AAP advocates for student success and persistence.
2. The AAP mission is aligned with the mission and core values of the department, college, division, institution, and applicable professional standards.
3. AAP mission aligns with the teaching and learning priorities of the institution.
4. AAP mission supports all students and attends to the various degrees students pursue, including vocational, certificate, undergraduate non-degree and degree seeking, and graduate.
5. The AAP mission is appropriate for the institution’s constituents.
6. AAP collaborates and consults with its constituents to advance its mission.

**8.2 Mission Statements**

1. AAP develops, implements, disseminates, regularly reviews, and updates its mission statement.
2. The mission statement references student learning, development, and success.

**Structures and Resources**

**9.1 Funding**

1. AAP has the funding for programs, services and personnel necessary to accomplish its mission and goals.
2. AAP uses professional standards to identify the staffing needs to achieve its mission and goals.
3. AAP uses benchmarks and other relevant data to determine and advocate to leadership for necessary funding.
4. AAP has the required technical and support personnel to accomplish its mission.
5. AAP allocates funds equitably across its units.
6. AAP has the funding to support the professional development of personnel.

**9.2 Structures and Representation**

1. AAP is intentionally organized across the institution to meet the institutional academic mission, goals, and intended outcomes.

2. AAP has structured leadership that:
  - a. advocates for and actively promotes AAP and institutional vision, mission, goals, and values.
  - b. identifies and addresses individual, organizational, and environmental conditions that inhibit the pursuit of mission, goals, and outcomes.
  - c. creates space for discourse on the vision or purpose, mission, goals, and core values.
  - d. acts strategically to bring about positive change in the unit
  - e. engages in strategic planning processes at unit, divisional, and institutional levels.
  - f. engages the team in strategic planning processes aligned with the institution's strategic plan and with AAP's mission, vision, goals, and values.
  - g. utilizes research, scholarship, evidence, philosophies, principles, and values to guide the work of AAP.
  - h. sets goals, objectives, and outcomes based on the needs of the populations served, intended learning, development, success outcomes, and program outcomes.
  - i. develops, adapts, and improves programs and services in response to the needs of changing environments, populations served, current research, and evolving institutional priorities.
  - j. engages diverse constituents and perspectives from within and outside the unit to inform the development and implementation of the strategic planning process.
  - k. develops plans for research, assessment, scholarship, leadership, and service to the institution and the profession.
3. AAP is represented on institutional committees relevant to student needs and challenges, including curriculum committees.
4. All departments are represented in discussions and decisions re. advising policies and practices to support student success.

## Programs and Services

### **5.1 Goals and Outcomes**

1. AAP programs and services goals/outcomes align with the AAPs stated mission, vision, commitments, etc.
2. AAP programs and services goals/outcomes align with institutional vision, mission, core values, etc.
3. AAP collaborates with community stakeholders to identify relevant, desirable, and feasible student learning and success outcomes.
4. AAP uses recognized outcomes frameworks (e.g., CAS Student Learning and Development Domains and Dimensions) to help create written goals and intended outcomes for its programs and services.
5. AAP aligns student learning and success outcomes with the institutional framework for student outcomes.
6. AAP annually reviews, assesses, and considers revising its programs and services goals/outcomes.
7. AAP communicates the goals/outcomes of the advising process broadly, clearly describing intended outcomes for students throughout their academic careers.
8. AAP communicates to its constituents its progress toward meeting the mission, goals, and outcomes.

### **5.2 Programs and Services Design**

1. AAP aligns the components, strategies, and tactics of its programs and services with determined goals/outcomes.
2. AAP provides research- and/or theory-informed rationale for the design of programs and services, strategies, and tactics.
3. AAP uses data and research on student persistence and other success outcomes to inform program design.
4. AAP collaborates with stakeholders across the institution to design programs and services.
5. AAP designs strategies for outreach, marketing, and promotion of its programs and services.
6. AAP establishes and communicates a clear strategy for the implementation of its programs and services.

7. AAP clearly delineates specific personnel responsibilities with respect to program and service design and delivery.

### **5.3 Outcomes**

1. AAP provides programs and services that:
  - a. are consistent with articulated goals and student learning outcomes;
  - b. contribute to student learning, development, and success;
  - c. address the diverse needs of its constituents;
  - d. support students through periods of transition;
  - e. supports students in the establishment and ongoing revision of their educational, career, and life goals;
  - f. encourage academic self-advocacy and decision making regarding their educational, career, and life goals;
  - g. address issues of access, diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion;
  - h. encourage students to consider their shared responsibility in achieving the goals and intended outcomes of academic advising;
  - i. are delivered through partnerships with colleagues and departments across the institution;
2. AAP achieves identified programs and services goals/student learning outcomes.
3. AAP makes advising available to students throughout their time at the institution (including pre-enrollment activities and services).
4. AAP ensures access for, and responds to the needs of, its constituents, including distinct populations.
5. AAP ensures that academic advising caseloads are consistent with identified program and service goals and student learning outcomes.
6. AAP implements strategies for outreach, marketing, and promotion of its programs and services.
7. AAP provides targeted outreach to students related to important academic policies and deadlines through multiple platforms and venues.
8. AAP communicates information to the campus community about specific personnel responsibilities and expectations.
9. AAP uses multiple modes of delivery to meet the needs of its constituents.
10. AAP provides the same quality of academic advising regardless of modality (in-person spaces and virtual platforms).
11. AAP personnel are familiar with and follow all requirements and guidelines related to academic curricula (i.e., programs of study and appropriate academic catalogs) when advising students.
12. AAP personnel make referrals when issues presented by constituents exceed the scope of their position.

### **5.4 Standards, Policies and Procedures**

1. AAP has adopted and regularly reviews standards of ethical practice including those of applicable professional associations.
2. AAP defines and disseminates its standards of care and responsibility through which advising interactions and services will be delivered and assessed, including such commitments as respect, inclusivity, integrity, and professionalism.
3. AAP has policies that clearly define and document the safe retention of and destruction of student information.
4. AAP has policies that clearly define and document ethics addressing disclosure of information in constituents' records.
5. AAP has policies that clearly define and document the responsibilities of AAP personnel who are concerned about students' well-being.

6. AAP personnel ensure the protection of privileged, private, and confidential interactions with students.
7. Advisors are knowledgeable about and sensitive to laws, regulations, policies, and procedures, including those governing: the use of technology, personal relationships with students, privacy of student information, student wellbeing, and equity and inclusion.

**Overview Questions:**

1. What is UTM's academic advising program trying to achieve with students?
2. To what extent is UTM's AAP achieving these goals/student learning outcomes?
3. What are the key programs, services, and resources that support accomplishment of these goals/outcomes?
4. How do the student goals/learning outcomes for UTM's AAP align/integrate with the broader institutional mission and student learning goals/outcomes?
5. Are required standards, policies, and procedures related to students and their experiences a) in place and b) regularly communicated to AAP personnel?

Space and Environment (Facilities)

**6.1 Facilities**

1. Academic Advising Program (AAP) spaces are in suitable facilities to support the AAP's mission, goals, programs, services, and diverse users.
2. AAP staff are involved in the design of spaces and facilities associated with their programs and services.
3. AAP spaces are intentionally designed to engage diverse students and other users.
4. AAP spaces are accessible and welcoming.
5. AAP spaces promote learning, development, and success.
6. AAP spaces support various program and educational needs.
7. AAP spaces are designed to protect the security and privacy of records and ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information and conversations.
8. AAP spaces incorporate universal design principles.
9. AAP facilities and equipment are inspected on an established cycle and comply with codes, laws, and established practices for accessibility, cleanliness, health, safety, and security.
10. AAP assesses the effectiveness of its facilities to ensure they are meeting facilities goals, program outcomes, and diverse user needs.
11. Units contributing to the AAP have processes in place to provide reasonable spaces and facilities accommodations when universal design does not meet an individual's accessibility needs.
12. AAP personnel have access to private spaces for confidential conversations with its constituents.
13. AAP personnel can safeguard the privacy of their work within the space.
14. AAP personnel have well-equipped, clean, and operable workspaces designed to support their work, responsibilities, and well-being.
15. AAP personnel have workspaces that are free from visual and auditory distractions.

**Overview Questions:**

1. How are facilities inventoried and maintained?
2. How does AAP integrate sustainable practices?
3. How does AAP ensure that facilities and workspaces are considered in decision-making?
4. How is AAP intentional about space allocation and usage?

## Systems and Technology

### **7.1 System and Technology Use**

1. Academic Advising Programs (AAP) utilizes technology to support the fulfillment of its mission and goals.
2. AAP has appointment scheduling for student-responsive academic advising.
3. AAP provides degree audit technology.
4. AAP integrates roadmaps with degree audit tools.
5. AAP has an electronic advising notes component that students have access to.
6. AAP has an ability to identify students' risk factors that affect academic performance and persistence.
7. AAP has an early alert warning system to identify students in academic difficulty.
8. AAP offers students robust and responsive technology alternatives to face-to-face advising appointments.
9. AAP ensures that technology used is accessible to diverse users.
10. AAP provides a process for advisors to provide continual end-user suggestions.
11. AAP integrates advising technology with other relevant campus technologies, including primary student information systems and learning management systems.

### **7.2 Technology Access and Training**

1. AAP ensures secure access to departmental data for appropriate personnel.
2. AAP ensures that personnel have access to training and support for the strategic application of technology.
3. All required AAP personnel have access to appropriate advising technology.
4. All students have access to AAP technology.
5. AAP provides ongoing training for all students regarding advising technology.

### **7.3 Technology Planning and Selection**

1. AAP systematically evaluates the technology-enabled advising process.
2. AAP involves advisors in the selection process for advising technology.
3. AAP has a technology plan that includes advising technology with a focus on inclusivity.
4. AAP has a plan to ensure equitable access to advising technology for all stakeholders and, in particular, students.

### **7.4 Compliance and Security**

1. AAP has policies and practices to ensure the integrity of departmental data.
2. AAP has policies on the appropriate use of technology.
3. AAP complies with governmental codes and laws and with institutional technologies policies and procedures.
4. AAP works with IT professionals to ensure data and systems are secure.
5. AAP provides a secure platform for managing operations involving personal information and records, in accordance with industry best practices.
6. AAP has a plan to ensure access to data when systems are down or compromised.

### **Overview Questions:**

1. How does AAP use technology to enhance the delivery of programs, resources, services and overall operations?
2. How are technologies integrated across the AAP and campus?
3. Does UTM's AAP have the required personnel to support effective technology implementation and maintenance?
4. How does AAP ensure competence of its personnel?

## Appendix C – Vision and Goals for UTM’s Academic Advising Program (DRAFT)

At the Advancing Academic Advising Project (3AP) Kick-off Event in early December, 2023, approximately 50 members of the UTM community gathered to begin the work of identifying a goal state for UTM’s academic advising program (AAP). To support their work over the coming months, the group spent the afternoon developing an initial vision and goals for UTM’s AAP. This initial declaration of a goal state for UTM’s AAP will help provide project members a shared foundation as they engage in working group activities and will be revisited by community members as the project advances.

### **Draft Vision and Goals for UTM’s AAP**

*In 5 years’ time, UTM’s Academic Advising Program will:*

- Be guided by a unifying mission
- Be part of a cohesive network of student support
- Leverage data and best-in-class, integrated systems
- Make evidence-based decisions, embracing a culture of continual improvement
- Provide academic advisors with robust, on-going training and professional development
- Employ ground-breaking communication practices

*...enabling our students to experience academic advising that...*

- Provides them easy access to the information and support they need, when they need it, in ways that work for them
- Focuses on their holistic development
- Is caring and relational
- Is personalized and proactive
- Is integrated into a comprehensive first-year transition program
- Provides seamless connections to additional campus services and supports.

*As a result of engaging with UTM’s academic advising program, students will...*

- Be introduced to the career planning process and associated campus resources
- Develop personal and academic goals
- Develop plans aligned with their goals
- Confidently and effectively navigate academic policies and procedures
- Increase their engagement with additional services and involvement opportunities
- Experience increased feelings of belonging and connection to the institution

*Ultimately...*

Enabling more UTM students to thrive and persist, graduating at the highest levels in the U of T system.

## Appendix D - 3AP Recommendations Synthesis and Prioritization Process: Results

### 3AP Recommendations Synthesis and Prioritization Process: Results

Updated 2024-06-24

At the 3AP Collaborator's Summit on May 22, 2024, attendees reviewed the 100+ recommendation developed the seven (7) working groups facilitated as part of the 3AP Recommendation Sub-Project, plus the recommendations shared by the Project Team, related to AAP mission.

Attendees were organized into small groups and asked to identify the recommendations that saw as being most integral to AAP advancement and were encouraged to consolidate similar recommendations where warranted. The results of this synthesis and prioritization process are shared below.

The "Energy" scores were compiled by reviewing the top 12/top 6 submissions from each group and tallying one point for each recommendation that made it into a group's top 12 and two if that recommendation made it into their top 6. In total, 32 recommendations received "points" (were selected by at least one group), with the 19 charted being the most popular.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Energy</b>
Early alert (plus advisors to support)	15
Advisor training (onboarding and ongoing)	12
Assessment plan	11
Centralized leadership/unified model	11
Definition of academic advising and advisor responsibilities	11
Implement Salesforce	9
Increase academic advising roles	8
Advising Council	7
CRM	7
Undeclared/General POST	5
Communications table	5
Inclusive and equitable service capacity development	5
Using advising mission/goals to support curriculum development	5
Mission and values finalization	5
Community of Practice for Academic Advisors	4
New, centralized website	4
Employment practices guide for Advisor supervisors	4
Comfortable spaces	4
Review Advisors' workload	4

## Addendum: Additional Consultations Regarding Academic Advising Models

2024-12-17

Members of the Advancing Academic Advising Project (3AP) Phase II Advisory Team engaged in additional consultation with academic unit chairs and directors, related to the recommendations developed through the first phase of the 3AP, throughout November and December, 2024.

These conversations were invaluable, providing additional feedback on the strengths and opportunities inherent in UTM's academic advising program (AAP). In particular, significant conversation occurred related to *Priority Recommendation #2* from the *3AP Recommendations Sub-Project Final Report*, which recommends exploring new models for academic advising. As work to implement 3AP recommendations is advanced, this feedback will be accounted for, including its focus on the benefits of having academic advisors deeply connected with academic units. Additionally, the team being formed to further explore the merits and challenges of the current academic advising model and develop detailed recommendations regarding any potential updates will continue to engage in consultation with academic unit chairs and directors, along with all community partners, to help ensure that UTM creates a best-in-class academic advising system.

### **The Advancing Academic Advising Project (3AP) Phase II Advisory Team**

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