

students, releasing holds, changing majors. etc. Remarkably, there was not a single response that was associated with the education of the student. In contrast, responses to the second question clearly indicated that advisors are aware of their role in educating the student and that they represent a member of the student's support team in their education process at our institution. Here are some examples of the responses to the second question regarding what advisors think their role or function should be.

"key member of a student's academic team"

"We should advise, mentor, advocate and coach students!"

"Professional academic advisors wear many hats – we are guiders, counselors, listeners, researchers, motivational speakers, realists, policy informant, monitors, and resource connectors."

E.R. White, a former NACADA president, affirms the mindset of our professional advisors when he asserts that academic advising is a part of an institution's learning and teaching mission, and not merely a service. Our advising mission, goals, and learning outcomes are aligned with these concepts. I invite you to review them on the MGA advising website: <https://www.mga.edu/advising/mission.php>

What is the role of academic advisors?

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where they advise students with a variety of majors from different Schools. This model is most often used for freshmen and sophomore students and is advantageous in advising students who are undecided or unsure about their major and career path. In contrast, the decentralized model is one where advisors are distributed to individual Academic units or Schools and they primarily serve students whose program of study is housed in the Academic unit. The greatest advantage of this model is associating students with the school in their selected area of interest which helps to foster relationships and identity. A significant disadvantage is the tendency of isolation and a “siloeing” effect. Some institutions use a shared model which consists of elements from the centralized and decentralized models. After reviewing data from the ACT Fifth National Academic Advising Survey, Habley and Morales concluded that the centralized, decentralized, and shared advising models can be effective. I believe the appropriate and most effective model for an institution depends on its mission, its student population, and the ability of the institution to integrate advising with its other student support services.

Academic Advising at MGA

The advising structure: In keeping with our School-based strategy, MGA has moved from a shared advising model to a decentralized one where all 23 of our professional academic advisors are distributed among six academic units. With an optimum caseload of 300 students per academic advisor, the number of professional advisors assigned to each School is based on the volume of students with declared majors within each School. Faculty members in each School are also expected to participate in student advising and mentoring. The distribution of professional advisors is shown in the table below.

| SCHOOL | ASSIGNED PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Arts and Letters | 3 |
| Aviation | 2.5 |
| Business | 3* |
| Computing | 2.5 |
| Education and Behavioral Sciences | 3.5 |
| Health and Natural Sciences | 7** |

*One advisor is also a transfer specialist. *

the assignment of advisors to students (advising caseload), the School's advising process, availability of advising at our various campuses, assessment, and accountability.

As mentioned previously, a disadvantage of the decentralized model is that it places emphasis on the Schools which has a siloing effect that can result in isolating advising into the individual academic units.

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<https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/2014/08/toward-a-theory-of-advising/>

Michael, A and Vasudevan, N. (2013). Undergraduate Academic Advising Structure. Trends at large Public Research Institutions.

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