**CAS Academic Advisor Training Program**

**Coordinator: Anna Chow**

**Committee Members: Rebecca Prescott**

**Rebecca Liao**

**Alicia Woodard**

1. **Purpose**

The number of individuals entering higher education is growing due to help from government grants, loans, and universities that admit more students and take down barriers that used to exist many years in the past. With this large number of students entering colleges and universities, academic advising has become more important than ever. As the rules and regulations grow more complex each year, the ability to understand how to get from admittance to graduation has become imperative to student success and progression.

Learning the complex rules, exceptions, and requirements is a daunting task and is only getting more complex as time progresses. In addition to these requirements, an academic advisor must learn the technology (computer programs, software, applications, etc.) that goes with the position. Degree audit reports that show the progress of the student are often complex and confusing to not only the student but the advisor as well. Training in how to read this information is critical to helping the students graduate. Interpreting the information incorrectly will cost the student precious time and money since each credit can cost upwards of 400 to 600 dollars, depending on the institution they are attending. Comprehensive training is therefore critical to helping students graduate.

Comprehensive training must start at the beginning of their career and continue as supplemental training to minimize and potentially eliminate costly mistakes, such as incorrect course advisement or miscounting of credits. Thus, the purpose of this program is to:

* Supplement existing university training, such as Advising 101, 102, 103, HRS trainings, WSU ACADA offerings, NACACA webinars, etc.
* Offer additional CAS training on topics specific to our college that will keep advisors current on recent changes within the field.
* Provide shadowing opportunities with a CAS advising staff from the first day of hire, and continue with additional training opportunities each semester.
* Further enhance our existing CAS efforts to invite outside experts to make presentations and otherwise train CAS advisors.

The CAS Academic Advisor Training Program (AATP) will be an annual program.

\* Please note that the steps listed above do not occur in a linear fashion, and in some cases, might happen concurrently.

1. **Participants**

* Recently employed CAS advisors who often are experienced WSU academic advisors (Note current applicants for CAS academic advising positions are required to have 1-2 years of advising experience to be eligible for selection as a CAS Advisor). Occasionally an advisor lacks the 1-2 years of experience and will benefit the most from the program elements of the CAS training program.
* Experienced CAS advisors and Faculty members serving as advisors for their departments who may want to develop a better understanding of the field so as to better serve their students.
* Other university staff and student interns who desire to pursue a professional advising career.

1. **Benefits**

Current CAS advisors at all levels of advising experience will benefit from the training program. As CAS advisors continue to develop their personal and professional skill sets, student performance and satisfaction will continue to improve.

Potential individuals (such as graduate students and office staff in CAS) who wish to bridge into an advising career will also benefit from the training program. By allowing these individuals to engage in this training, we are laying the foundation for a set of trained advisors to move into our system (or other university units) and be ready to perform their duties in an efficient manner.

As students are exposed to improved advising sessions, we will be able to improve retention and graduation rates. The training sessions will allow advisors to streamline and share best practices. Participants will gain advising knowledge while reducing levels of confusion and frustration associated with the current informal training practices. With the implementation of a formal CAS advisor training program, the staff, faculty and students in the College of Arts and Sciences will recognize immediate benefits.

1. **Organization**

The CAS Academic Advisor Training Program is a part of the CAS Advising System (CASAS). It will be administratively located in the CAS Advising Center and is sponsored by the CASAS Advising Council. The program reports to Ana María Rodríguez-Vivaldi, CAS Associate Dean, Student Affairs and Global Education, and Tom Whitacre, CAS Director of Advising. The Program Committee includes: Anna Chow, Becca Prescott, Rebecca Liao, Alicia Woodard, and Bonnie Quick for administrative support.

CASAS advisors with particular areas of expertise will provide instruction for advanced training topics. They will be referred to as “leads.” They serve the needs of the College of Arts and Sciences by providing specific training to all participants in this program. Some examples of training topics are: zzusis exceptions, milestone fulfillment, advising database opportunities, OBIEE report generation, petitions training, foreign language completion, etc. Other University staff and experts who have previously provided training to CAS will continue as guest speakers or workshop facilitators.

A survey was sent to all CAS advisors during Fall 2014 to gather feedback on training topics and session ideas. These training topics have been separated into four areas: University Required Training, Essential topics, Secondary topics, and Recommended topics. Additional training topics will be added throughout as necessary. A pilot program, conducted during Spring 2015, has also served to guide future topic selection and offerings. Surveys will be sent on an annual basis to gather input and feedback from participants.

1. **Training topics\***

**University Required Training** needs to be completed as soon as possible when a new employee is hired. These include Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Prevention Training through HRS, and FERPA through RoNET. The Committee also highly recommends completing Advising 101, 102, and 103 through the Academic Success and Career Center, (ASCC) within the first two weeks of hiring.

**Essential topics** are topics to develop essential skills to become an affective academic advisor. Topic “leads”, or trainers, are in the process of being selected but will require agreement on the experience and knowledge of those selected. It is our goal to video record as many training sessions as possible. The recorded video sessions will be available to program participants through a secured online portal/site. The Committee recommends completing as many of these video sessions as possible within the first two to three weeks of hiring. Please refer to Section 9: Potential projects and undertakings for more information about the online portal/site.

**Secondary topics** are those that are deemed necessary but can be taught throughout the training program. The Committee recommends completing as many of these as possible within the first three weeks of hiring.

**Recommended topics** are regarded as important but training within them is left to the discretion of the department or college.

**Shadowing** for the participant has been determined to occur from the first day of hire and runs parallel to and in conjunction with the training topics above. For the purposes of the CAS Academic Advisor Training Program, shadowing occurs when a participant observes a CAS department advisor to gain knowledge and experience for best practices and advising style. Shadowing the CAS contact is an integral part of the program and gives the participant an immediate resource for questions and comments.

\*See Addendum # 1 “Training Topics” for the list of training topics.

1. **Policies and procedures**

Based on the topic sessions identified in the previous section, the Program Committee will invite individuals in CAS and on campus to submit a training session application (See Addendum # 2). In the application, the leads/trainers will identify the length of the training, learning outcomes, and format of the training. They also provide information on how often they can offer the training. The application will be submitted to the Program Committee for approval. Recommendations of topics will be made to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Global Education, and the Director of Advising after the review of training topics. Based on the availability of the leads/trainers, the committee will be able to organize a 12 month overview of all trainings that will be offered each month for participants.

Participants of the program will be provided with an attendance log to fill out as they attend different training sessions (Addendum # 3). The participants will collect a signature from leads/trainers and return the form at the end of each semester to the program committee for record keeping. A sign-in sheet (Addendum # 4) will be provided at each training session to gather attendance of the sessions. This will also provide information on tracking the pace and progress of participants for CAS Academic Advisor Training certification and continuing education purposes. To pilot the training program, we will offer two training sessions each semester to gauge and explore the level of participation and interest of participants and the availability of leads. The two sessions will include one session sponsored by CAS leads, and one session sponsored by campus facilitators. In the near future, the requirements to obtain a CAS advisor training certification will be evaluated and finalized.

To ensure the program continues to improve, participants will be given a short survey at the end of each training session (Addendum # 5). This is to evaluate each individual’s experience and to help monitor the quality of training for each participant. In addition, to better track the effectiveness of training over time, participants will be asked to complete a follow up survey (Addendum # 6) a month after each training session to monitor for positive changes experienced by the participants.

**7) Program Evaluation Strategy**

Evaluation of this program will be multi-faceted. At the end of each academic year, the Program Committee will be administering a survey (same as Addendum # 7) requesting feedback, not on participants’ abilities and progress, but on program effectiveness. Questions in this survey will encourage the participants to thinking about their initial training and additional items they would have included in the discussions. Surveys will also encourage the Program Committee to scrutinize the training topics and to deliver new ideas and program changes that they think would be more effective. The Program Committee will monitor for uniformity of program goals to ensure consistent information for CAS student advisees.

From the responses, the program may be adjusted to improve presentations, expand topic coverage, and enhance the administrative process. Note, training topics can also be excluded because of poor content development, poor fit for the program, or other reasons. New topics may be included in the annual sessions based on participant recommendations.

The CAS Academic Advisor Training Program will officially start its annual cycle in Fall 2015. An annual survey (Addendum # 7) will then be administered to the participants that will encompass all aspects of the training. For continuous improvement, the responses should enhance program curriculum and time management.

Continuous improvement of the program and all elements it contains should always be the goal of evaluation. Components such as time, curriculum, topic, effectiveness, trainee readiness, required vs. recommended, flow, and participant competency upon entrance and completion should be measured, evaluated, and revision made to improve the program. This procedure should occur throughout the program’s implementation regardless of how many times the program is administered. An annual report will be presented during the summer to the Associate Dean and Director of Advising with recommendations by the AATP Committee.

**8) Limitations**

There are several limitations associated with the training program. First, funding may be limited for training materials. Secondly, advisors have time restraints which may minimize their ability to participate in the program. CAS advisors have limited instructor experience which may limit the number of training sessions/topics offered. Lastly, because Program support staff are also advisors within the College, this limits the time commitment to the Program.

**9) Potential projects and undertakings**

There are several projects that the Program Committee is currently undertaking:

* 1. Video record training sessions and guest presentations for CAS Advising Resource Library.
  2. Update the CAS Advising page to include a password-protected CAS Academic Advising Resource Library as a SharePoint site for easy access. The protected SharePoint site can house NACADA webinars (available for CAS purchase), advising related policies/resources, recordings of future CAS training sessions, power point presentations, handouts, notes, and links to online recordings of ESG training sessions, etc.
  3. Create CAS Advising Resource binder--the development of a binder to be given to participants at the beginning of the program is being established. The binder will include the listed required materials (see Addendum # 1) and participants can add their own resources to this binder throughout the program. This will be a valuable resource for the participants as they begin and continue their advising career. In the future, the Program Committee will work on posting binder resources in the secured SharePoint site to make binder materials available virtually.
  4. Record WSU ACADA Level II training sessions for CAS advisors (or make this available through WSU ACADA).
  5. Organize a CAS Advising Hotline for program participants for advising guidance and problem resolution.

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