On March 9-11, 2015 two consultants from the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) visited Eastern Washington University (EWU) to conduct an academic advising program review. The team included Dr. Nancy King, Executive Assistant to the President for Strategic Initiatives and Vice President Emeritus for Student Success and Enrollment Services, Kennesaw State University, and Dr. Karen Sullivan-Vance, Director of Advising, Western Oregon University. The consultants’ charge was to conduct a thorough review of the academic advising program at EWU. In particular we were asked to recommend a model for the program and to determine whether or not EWU currently meets students’ advising needs and is in line with best practices in the field of academic advising. In addition, we were charged with making recommendations for the improvement of the entire advising program.

On March 4, 2015 we had a phone conference with Dr. Chuck Lopez, Vice Provost, Undergraduate Studies and Student Success, and Ms. Heather Page, Director of General Undergraduate Academic Advising (GUAA) to discuss our upcoming visit. We also received in advance of our visit a number of resources in addition to the EWU website. These resources included a Complete Advisor List, Regional-West School Data, Business Process Outcomes, an Academic Advising Workgroup’s (AAW) listing of issues in advising; and a recent Internal Audit of Academic Advising at EWU. (As consultants we chose not to read the Internal Audit in order that our audit and report would not be biased). We also received CSRDE 2014 retention data for EWU. In addition, we were given feedback regarding some consultants/speakers who have recently visited EWU, most notably Vincent Tinto, John Gardner and Betsy Barefoot. Without question, EWU leaders have spent a
great deal of time identifying the strengths and weaknesses at the university and making a number of recommendations to improve academic advising and positively impact student success, retention and completion rates. Building upon the considerable work that has already been done, our report will put forward our perspectives of the current state of advising at EWU; and the campus culture that impacts all areas of the university, including academic advising. We will also offer some specific recommendations—both long range and more immediate—that we believe will make significant improvements in academic advising at EWU.

Our report is based upon the written materials we received both prior to our visit and while we were on campus and from the interviews we conducted during our two and a half day review of the EWU advising program. We met with members of the Academic Advising Task Force, the Academic Advising Workgroup, and both faculty advisors and advising practitioners including the general advisors in the General Undergraduate Academic Advising (GUAA). We also met with representatives from a variety of specific populations—CAMP, TRIO, Eastern Advantage, Honors, Athletics, International, Africana Studies, and American Indian Studies. In addition, we met with individuals from Transfer Services, the Office of Information Technology, the Student Success and Retention Committee, and the Implementation team. We were also included in a meeting the Provost and Vice Presidents were having with a representative from the architectural firm Integres to discuss future advising facilities. We had another meeting with the Provost and the Vice Presidents to discuss the current state of advising at EWU. Unfortunately we were unable to meet with the President; however, we heard from several groups and individuals that improving academic advising is among her top priorities. Clearly in order for significant improvement to occur in the current academic advising program, there must be support from senior level leadership; and that appears to be true at EWU.

It was extremely important that we talk with students to get their input on advising since they are the reason universities provide advising in the first place. We conducted interviews with two classes, two smaller focus groups, as well as talking to randomly selected individual students. What we heard from virtually all
of these students was essentially the same message: advising at EWU is “not working well.” It appears at best to be “hit or miss.” Although there are pockets of effective advising, on the whole, it is not providing the support that most students very much need from their academic advisor. The themes that emerged from these conversations with students clearly support the critical need for improvement in academic advising at EWU. As one student expressed, “The bottom line is that advising at EWU is just not helpful at all...and I’m certainly not alone in feeling that way.” Indeed, our conversations with students would support that student’s feeling. Their concerns cluster around a number of themes:

• Advisors appear not to have the time or interest to spend with students. Two things need to be noted, however. The students we interviewed were very understanding about the fact that advisors are busy and, as one student, said, “Advisors are stretched in a lot of directions.” Nevertheless, they are frustrated by not receiving the help they need.

• A large number of students who are not successful in finding their advisors or getting correct information end up self-advising. The great majority admitted “that didn’t work so well.” Indeed many of the students with whom we spoke said they were facing delayed graduation because of mistakes that occurred as a result of their self-advising or inaccurate information they had received from advisors.

• Another common theme we heard centered on transfer students. Complaints concerned not being able to locate an advisor and not having their transcripts evaluated in a timely manner so that they knew what they should take at EWU. Since transfer students are a big part of EWU’s enrollment, it is critical that they receive the support they need.

• There is also frustration with the process of changing majors and identifying an advisor in the minor in addition to the major advisor. One student voiced this frustration by saying: “It’s just too confusing! I would like to have one advisor for everything.”
A very few of the students acknowledged that their experience with advising had been positive which led to a discussion of what students say they would like from their academic advisor. It is worth noting that their description does not vary from what students all over the country have observed. In short, they would like their academic advisors...

- To know the correct information to give them. Again, in an effort to be fair towards advisors, a student stated, “I understand they can’t know everything, but I would like for them to know how to tell me to find the right answer.” According to one student, his advisor admitted he did not “know anything about advising and would only sign forms.” Clearly it is understandable that students want to receive correct information from their advisors.

- To be available for appointments with students. A number of them complained that their advisor was never available (even during posted office hours) and did not return emails or phone calls in a very timely way.

- To want to get to know them. Frequently the comments centered on “my advisor acted like I was a big inconvenience” or “my advisor doesn’t even know my name.” Virtually all the students with whom we spoke expressed an interest in having their advisors know who they are.

Even while students were expressing their frustration with the advising process, they were very clear in supporting the many fine faculty and staff at EWU. In fact, it was almost as if they felt the need to excuse the poor advising. One student with whom we spoke summed it up this way: “We have good people here. I just think they don’t know how to advise.”

**Framework of Consultants’ Visit**

It is important to clarify the consultants’ perspective on academic advising as a preface to our general observations and recommendations. We both very much
endorse NACADA’s view of advising. NACADA, The Global Community for Academic Advising, has numerous resources that address the philosophy and practice of academic advising. Links to several important documents can be found on the NACADA website: (www.nacada.ksu.edu) including Concept of Academic Advising; Statement of Core Values; and Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education: Standards and Guidelines for Academic Advising. Advising programs that are considered “best practices” in the field will reflect the advising philosophy and approaches contained in these documents. For the purpose of framing the context of our review of EWU’s advising program, the following points address our major assumptions about academic advising:

- Academic advising is best viewed as a form of teaching and is integral to the success of the teaching and learning mission of higher education institutions. As Marc Lowenstein (2005) observes, “an excellent advisor does the same thing for the student’s entire curriculum that the excellent teacher does for one course.” Advisors should teach students to value the learning process, to apply decision-making strategies, to put the college experience into perspective, to set priorities and evaluate experiences, to develop thinking and learning skills, and to make informed choices.

- The NACADA Concept of Academic Advising identifies three essential components of advising: curriculum (what advising deals with), pedagogy (how advising delivers the curriculum), and student learning outcomes (the results of academic advising.) These student learning outcomes are based upon what we want students to know, to be able to do, and to value and appreciate as a result of participation in the academic advising process.

- Best practices in advising programs consistently address three major areas: providing professional development opportunities for advisors, recognizing and rewarding advisors; and creating an on-going assessment plan for advising.
Finally, we are convinced that, when done well, academic advising has a significant impact on student success as reflected in an institution’s retention, progression, and graduation rates.

**General Observations:**

We were very impressed with EWU’s beautiful campus. Many of the facilities such as the Library and its Learning Commons are clearly exemplary. It is also obvious that the great majority of faculty, staff, and administrators at EWU are invested in their students’ success. Throughout our visit, we heard a sincere concern for students in all of our interviews, and we were struck by the genuine passion that many institutional agents have for the university and its students. However, we also heard a tone that indicates that morale at the university is low. Several factors appear to contribute to this low morale. First, many individuals feel as if they are overworked with little reward; others expressed concern that “their voice is never heard;” and others noted that “although we talk about making changes, we never seem to get to the point of actually implementing those changes.” As one individual put it, the “advising train is moving along, but people are concerned it won’t happen” because of past experiences at EWU. Many with whom we spoke readily admitted that academic advising is an area of the university where improvements are clearly needed and there is support for actually making the changes that will result in improvement.

**Systemic Change:**

Before a discussion of recommendations for improving the advising system at EWU, it is helpful to include a brief discussion of systemic change as the efforts to improve advising at EWU are definitely systemic in nature. Jenlink (1998) recommends the following principles for a successful change initiative:

- Create an overall image for the ideal *(advising)* system
- Continuously engage knowledgeable and committed stakeholders
- Recognize that all parts of the *(advising)* system are connected
- Provide careful planning for implementation
- Commit resources to conduct ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the change
As previously stated, we met with many stakeholders of the advising system when we visited the university. Clearly EWU leadership as well as faculty and staff recognize the need for change in the advising program in order to give students the support they need. Systemic change takes time and cannot be accomplished overnight. Indeed there is no “quick fix” that will correct all of the issues connected to advising. According to Eccles (1994), “Timely strategic change is not the same as the fastest change….It requires a talent for combining carefulness with speed.” He argues that the most effective change occurs when the organization:

- Employs reflective, information-based analysis
- Gathers comprehensive, relevant data
- Debates before deciding
- Embraces innovation and action
- Creates a culture that is united and change-oriented
- Has an understanding of the twin needs for speed and care (p. 261-262)

We believe that most with whom we spoke are ready to work through the changes necessary to implement best practices in advising at EWU. Be aware that some changes will achieve buy-in rather quickly, while campus cultural change admittedly takes far longer. Patience, diligence, and inclusiveness of all stakeholders are essential to an effective change process.

**Recommendations:**

We believe that many of these recommendations will work to move the EWU advising community’s philosophy of advising toward what we described earlier as our conviction that academic advising is part of the teaching and learning mission of the university.

- **Academic advising leadership**

  Identify an individual and office with responsibility for actively overseeing the entire university’s academic advising program. The person identified must have coordinating advising campus-wide as his or her primary role. Specifically, this position’s job duties would include overseeing advisor training and professional development campus-wide, developing advising
resources, and chairing the Advising Council as described in the next recommendation. In addition, the individual’s title (many campuses call this position “Executive Director of Academic Advising) and the support of senior administration must reflect the importance of this position to the entire campus. Without this clarity regarding responsibility for advising, the inconsistency and confusion that currently exists will continue. The leadership for advising should be aligned with academic affairs and have regular access to the President’s leadership team, college deans, and other campus leaders whose units support or partner with advising.

- **Advising Council**

Create an institution-wide Advising Council. This Council should include a representative from all constituencies of the campus with a stake in academic advising and should model the need for campus-wide collaboration in order to bring about the necessary changes in the advising program at EWU. The Advising Council should be chaired by the campus leader for advising. The official Charge to the Council should be made by the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies and Student Success. The Council, in conjunction with campus and college leadership, should work to establish academic advising approaches, policies, and procedures that support student success. Changes in advising policies and recommendations for new policies would first be reviewed by this Council. The current membership of the Academic Advising Task Force, Academic Advising Workgroup, and Advising Implementation Team could serve as a departure point for appointing the first members of the Advising Council. The Council should be permanent with members serving rotating terms.

- **Academic advising vision, mission, goals, and learning outcomes**

Develop a shared advising vision, mission, goals, and learning outcomes that clearly articulates that academic advising falls under the teaching/learning mission of the institution. As noted by Susan Campbell in *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook*, “Outstanding academic advising programs do not simply emerge. They are conceptually
grounded—both theoretically and institutionally—and guided by statements of vision, mission, goals and program objectives that codify the values, philosophy, approach, and central purposes of academic advising. Taken together, the vision, mission, goals, and program objectives are an essential set of components for any advising program for they anchor the academic advising program, communicate the program’s intentions, and provide the framework for the development of student learning and advising delivery outcomes that are at the heart of the advising program’s assessment plan.” Leadership for the development of the vision, mission, goals and learning outcomes should come from the person appointed to oversee the advising program and members of the newly appointed Advising Council.

Resources:

Academic advising mission statements:
http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Academic-advising-mission-statements.aspx

Sample advising mission statements:

• **Advising Syllabus**

Develop an advising syllabus based upon the newly vetted advising vision, mission, goals and outcomes of the university. An advising syllabus is a tool which allows advisors to outline the advising relationship and experience for their advisees. A syllabus contains, among many things, contact information of the advisor, expectations (responsibilities) of both the
advisor and advisee, and a list of the student learning outcomes. Given to a
student at their first advising meeting, it helps set the stage for an ongoing,
developmental relationship between advisor and advisee. The advising
syllabus is an important tool needed to change a campus advising culture
from course registration to advising as teaching and learning

Resources for Advising Syllabus:

http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-
Articles/Creating-an-Advising-Syllabus.aspx

Sample syllabi:

http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-
Articles/Advising-Syllabi-Resource-Links.aspx

NACADA Pocket Guide, Academic Advising Syllabus: Advising as Teaching in
Action

• Student learning outcomes:

To make the change in philosophy and approach to advising, it is
recommended that the institution establish student learning outcomes
(SLO) for advising. The SLOs should articulate what students are expected
to know (cognitive learning), be able to do (behavioral learning), and value
(affective learning) as a result of their involvement in the academic advising
experience.

Resources for Student Learning Outcomes:

http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-
Articles/Constructing-student-learning-outcomes.aspx
• **Advising policies, organization, delivery model**

Once a student-learning context is in place through the advising vision, mission, goals, and outcomes and operationalized through the common advising syllabus, the groundwork is in place to address advising policies and processes as well as organizational structure and delivery. The question driving this piece of the review should be: “Is this policy, process, or delivery of academic advising student-focused and does it support best practices in student advising, retention, success, and graduation?”

Many of the processes students at EWU need to navigate at the university appear cumbersome, opaque, and confusing. Processes for students entering the university as freshmen, freshmen with college credits and transfers need to be streamlined to make the students’ experience clear, concise, and understandable. In addition, the transition points of declaring a major and moving from GUAA to the college of the major need to be transparent as well.

The delivery model should remain a “shared model” but with clarification. First-year students should continue to be advised in the GUAA. However, we recommend a definite change. In addition to first-year students receiving advising in the GUAA, we believe that sophomores who have not declared a major should remain in the GUAA until they are ready to declare. This change would remove the issue of sophomores being left to fend for themselves without receiving the support they need to make an informed decision about a major. We do support the policy currently in place requiring a student to declare by 90 hours.

We heard clearly that many of the GUAA advisors feel that they do not have adequate time to advise their students currently. Their appointments have recently moved from one hour to 30 minutes each which is indeed adequate. Some of the tasks being conducted now, i.e. going over the catalog, can be done in other ways, such as during orientation. We do recognize that there are times when a student is in crisis and an appointment may need to run longer, but that is the exception.
Currently the GUAA has six advisors. Providing they advise 30 hours a week, which is 60 appointments, the GUAA advisors have the capacity to conduct 600 advising appointments a term, which is 3600 available appointments in the Center each quarter. Given that many students are advised in special programs on campus, the actual number of students being advised in GUAA is more likely around 700. We do recognize that with the addition of sophomore advising, it will require hiring additional GUAA advisors once the number of sophomores who need to be served is determined. Too many of EWU students experience the “advisor shuffle” where they are bounced from GUAA to department advisor back to the GUAA advisor and then back to another departmental advisor if the first major does not work. While this happens at every university, if students have developed a solid relationship with their GUAA advisor, the transition will be smoother.

The shared delivery model is very common on campuses the size of EWU. Once students have declared a major, they will transfer to the college/academic department of that major. Currently there are professional academic advisors in all but one college. The numbers of students in many of these departments clearly exceed the recommended caseload. As one college professional advisor told us, there are so many students to advise, that all we can do is “treat’em and street’em.” Indeed students are experiencing unrealistic wait times to see many of the college advisors. We understand that many of these advisors are required to perform other job duties such as recruiting, marketing, and other administrative tasks. Although this situation may have grown organically over the years, it is no longer feasible given the increasing enrollment. Academic advisors across campus need to provide full-time, frontline assistance to your students. In addition, there is a clear need for more professional, full-time advisors to be hired. Once the numbers are determined, these additional advisors should be phased in over a period of time determined by the university budget.
• **Advisors in specific programs**

In addition to the GUAA and college advisors there are a number of advisors in various specific programs, for example, CAMP, TRIO, Africana Studies, American Indian Studies, Eastern Advantage, McNair Scholars, International, and Honors. These advisors serve a unique place on campus welcoming and assisting students from traditionally underrepresented groups navigate the system. These advisors in specific programs need to be included in dialogue about advising as they are an excellent resource.

• **Faculty advisors**

The model of professional advisors providing the “nuts and bolts” advising within the colleges is one that works extremely well on many campuses. However, the model is strengthened if faculty are also included in one of two ways. First, for faculty who have a passion for advising and who are willing to do the necessary training and evaluation, advising should be considered a part of their workload. Their advising load should also not be nearly that of a full-time professional advisor given that faculty’s primary role is classroom teaching and scholarship. Other faculty who are not advising should be strongly encouraged to become faculty mentors who are available to discuss with students career options, graduate study, internship opportunities, and other issues related to their academic disciplines. Indeed the combination of academic advisors coupled with faculty mentors in the disciplines is a powerful resource for students.

• **Advisor training**

Ongoing and consistent advisor training is definitely needed for all advisors. We recommend that the individual who is given responsibility for overseeing the advising program be charged with implementing an advisor training program that all academic advisors would be required to take. Based upon the shared goals and learning outcomes, a common curriculum for both faculty and professional advisors should be created for
professional development. We recommend structuring training around the three major areas of concern to advisors: conceptual, informational, and relational elements of advising. Consider the conceptual as the framework in which one considers the other two elements. This approach will emphasize the broader mission and focus of EWU advising and ground it in the teaching and learning paradigm. Each college should supplement the common body of advising knowledge with information unique to its own curricula, policies, and students.

- **Assessment of Advising**

It is important to assess both the advising program and the academic advisors. We would recommend that EWU consider sending a team of advising leaders to the annual NACADA Assessment Institute held each winter in order to develop a comprehensive assessment plan to bring back to the institution.

An assessment plan must be developed to gather data and information to evaluate the outcomes of the changes being made to the advising system. A strong plan will include the instruments and evaluation methodologies, the names of individuals responsible for gathering the data, a timeline for assessing various components, the methods for reporting the results, and the processes by which the assessment will be shared and reviewed for future improvements to the system. The following three specific assessment components are recommended:

1. Student learning outcomes, not simply student satisfaction with advising, should be assessed annually. This will require not only the writing of comprehensive advising learning outcomes for the University, but rubrics and measurements for determining achievement of learning outcomes as well.
2. Changes to all aspects of the advising program must be assessed to determine the effectiveness of the changes and what needs to be done for improvement.

3. An advising program review for each unit/college should be done every 3-5 years that focuses on the quality of advising as evidenced by adherence to the mission and goals and the achievement of learning outcomes.

In order to have a meaningful assessment program it is necessary for decisions to be data-driven. Currently the Office of Institutional Research is definitely understaffed with a staff of one, and that definitely is insufficient.

To develop a baseline for advising assessment we recommend that the university use the online registration process next spring term to ask five straightforward questions. Students will not be able to progress through registration without answering the questions. The questions should be short with one qualitative question at the end so students can fully write both their positive and negative comments.

• **Rewards and recognition**

Establish a formalized system of rewards and recognition for outstanding academic advising. For professional advisors creating a ladder of career advancement is an approach that is used successfully on many campuses. These ladders usually range from Advisor 1 up to the classification of Senior Advisor. Each step should be based upon experience and achievement and reflect an increase in both title and salary.

For faculty advisors being given credit in the Promotion and Tenure process for outstanding advising within the teaching category is an excellent way to reward those who excel in their advising-as-teaching role. In addition, for
faculty who regularly maintain a significant advising caseload, an excellent way to reward their work is to give a course release occasionally.

Finally, recognition of exemplary advisors can be as simple as establishing an awards program for Outstanding Advisors in the categories of Professional Advisors and Faculty Advisors. These awards should be presented at an “impressive” reception and those invited should include senior level university leaders. In addition, the recipients of the campus-wide Outstanding Advisors awards could be nominated for the NACADA advising awards that are presented each year at NACADA’s annual conference. Being recognized at this national level does indeed reward excellence in advising.

• **Transfer students**

We observed some issues regarding transfer students at EWU. There is only one staff member in Transfer Services; however, both Julie Werner, an evaluator, and Julie Mahrer, who manages all of the tech pieces of credit evaluation, assist in the process. Given the large number of transfers, it seems that this area could use more staff. Finally, the advising transition for those who transfer into the university is confusing for students. Transfers need to know as soon as possible the name of their academic advisor and exactly how to make an appointment with that individual.

• **Technology**

We recommend that improvements be made to the EWU website in order to make it more user-friendly. Currently it is too text driven and is confusing to navigate. SOAR is a very helpful tool for both students and advisors; however, there needs to be better marketing and training in how to use this important resource to the fullest. The students we met with spoke highly of SOAR. We were surprised, however, that many students don’t use it to the fullest advantage. A few students also spoke highly of the Scheduler, another excellent technology resource; but the great majority of the students had never heard of it. Clearly there is a need for improved marketing of these technology tools.
• **Student-centered approach**

Finally, and most importantly, students need to be at the center of the decisions being made on the campus. Certainly students are not always right, but their best interests should be at the core of all aspects of the university. As one student told us, “I probably would not have liked having to do mandatory advising, but I really wish I’d had it!” Without students there is no university, and our obligation is clearly to serve them as effectively as possible. We discovered throughout our interactions with students that they do indeed love EWU; but they also often feel abused by many of the processes that are not student-friendly, the lack of access to courses, misinformation that leads to extended time to graduation and increased debt loads, and not having the academic advising they very much need.

**FIRST STEPS:**

We certainly recognize that not all of the above recommendations to improve academic advising at EWU can be done immediately. Nevertheless, it is critical that some steps be taken to get the process moving forward and to demonstrate to the campus that the changes in advising are indeed going to happen. We suggest that the administration consider the following ten first steps that would be “quick wins” to get the initiative moving.

• Appoint Ms. Heather Page to serve as the Executive Director of Academic Advising. Ms. Page is already seen as an agent of change and it is apparent from all with whom we spoke that she has credibility across the campus. She should remain located in the GUAA; however, this appointment will position her to play a major role in moving advising forward on a campus-wide level. This appointment will be a good first step in demonstrating that indeed the “advising train” is moving.

• Establish an Academic Advising Council, chaired by Ms. Page and charged by the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Studies and Student Success. This should be a permanent Council with members serving rotating terms.
• Begin to develop and adopt a campus-wide mission/definition/goals of academic advising for EWU. In addition, include SLOs for the advising process. These are the items that will provide the foundation for transforming academic advising at the university and helping the campus understand that, when done well, advising is an extension of teaching and learning.

• The Executive Director of Academic Advising with the assistance of the newly appointed Advising Council will develop and implement the first comprehensive advisor training program addressing the conceptual, informational, and relational components of advising.

• Give students the opportunity to evaluate academic advising during spring term 2015 registration for fall term. The survey should be followed by an Open Forum hosted by the President and senior leadership. The purpose of the Forum would be twofold: for the leaders of the university to listen to students’ concerns regarding advising and to assure students of the leadership’s strong commitment to improving academic advising.

• As a first step toward establishing reward/recognition for advisors, create an Outstanding Advisor Awards program. Ideally the President would host a campus-wide catered reception to recognize the award recipients. Consider nominating each of the winners for one of the NACADA awards that are presented annually at the national conference.

• Create a hiring plan for additional professional advisors. Clearly the new advisors would be spread out over the next five years. It is also important to determine—based upon numbers of students served—which areas are most in need of additional advisors.

• Identify high enrollment classes like English and Math and establish a yearly schedule that would accommodate students needing these classes. This multi-term schedule should be shared with advisors who, in turn, can
inform students as to course availability. As a result, students will be better able to plan their academic year more effectively.

- Give first-year students at EWU pre-populated schedules. This new approach should be done for three years in order to assess fully its efficiency and effectiveness. Many institutions have found this approach to be very helpful.

- As clear evidence that it is a “new day” for academic advising at EWU, we would recommend that the name for the General Undergraduate Academic Advising (GUAA) be changed to a more definitive one identifying it as a “Center” that serves first-year and exploratory students through the sophomore year. In addition, the relocation of the Center to Monroe Hall (a move that has been discussed) would further indicate that academic advising is being transformed at EWU with “a new name, a new location, and a new attitude!”

**Summary**

EWU is positioned to make considerable progress in efforts to improve academic advising. Certainly we observed throughout our visit that a great deal of study and conversation has occurred around the topic of improvement in advising. We have heard from stakeholders across campus that advising has been targeted as an institutional priority that supports the university’s focus on improving retention rates, persistence, and graduation rates in addition to enhancing the overall student experience. It was apparent in our interviews that EWU leadership, faculty and staff see advising as an important element to student success. Although many have been frustrated by the lack of movement in making the necessary changes to improve advising, it is apparent that the time is right for change to occur.

We very much enjoyed visiting EWU and appreciate the warm hospitality we received. Without question, EWU has many talented and dedicated faculty, staff, and administrators. We congratulate you on focusing your energies on academic advising. Given the current economic climate and competing priorities within a
campus culture, this demonstrates a strong desire to improve the academic advising program and the overall undergraduate experience. Hopefully you will find our observations and recommendations to be helpful as you work to improve academic advising. We applaud EWU’s commitment to undertaking change on behalf of your students, and we wish for you great success in this endeavor.