

# **The University of Iowa Academic Advising Center (AAC)**

## **Additional Information about the AAC and the Position of Academic Advisor**

### **Operations**

The AAC is in the Pomerantz Center, on the east side of campus. The AAC is open to students from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. daily. Advising appointments occur in person and through Zoom. This position requires work be performed in-person at a designated campus work location. There may be opportunities for remote work at specific times around the academic calendar when most students are not on campus, such as Fall, Winter, and Spring Breaks, plus in the summer during and after Student Online Advising & Registration.

### **Staff**

The AAC staff currently includes 38 advisors, 3 administrative staff members, 10 student receptionists, and a 5-person director team. The AAC also supports 14 instructors and 21 student study group leaders for courses administered in the AAC.

### **Philosophy and Goals**

Advisors use a holistic philosophy, offering advice and guidance to all students in their caseloads.

An important goal of the AAC is to support students as they choose their majors and develop academic plans. Advisors teach students how to gather information, use that information to make well-informed decisions, and evaluate and re-evaluate those decisions. Advisors empower students to be actively engaged in their education, helping them transition to campus and learn to navigate a large university successfully. Advisors proactively support all students, including those experiencing academic difficulties and other barriers to success.

The AAC supports the University's commitment to creating a welcoming and respectful environment. Specifically, we foster an accessible environment; commit to ongoing learning and development of our staff; and advocate for fair practices across campus.

### **Caseload**

The AAC serves over 9,500 undergraduate students, most of them first and second-year students. AAC advises Open Majors (students who have not declared a major); students seeking admission to a selective program (e.g., pre-business, nursing interest, elementary education interest); pre-professional majors (e.g. pre-law, pre-medicine); and students with fewer than 30 semester hours who are in declared majors in the College Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Each advisor is responsible for a caseload of approximately 300 students. Advisors can anticipate at least two appointments per semester with each advisee, including a mandatory meeting with each advisee for Registration Authorization. Advisors track their caseloads and regularly outreach to students for a variety of reasons throughout the academic year.

## **Training and Development**

Advisors participate in an intensive training program that spans the first year. Our training program is guided by the Core Competencies of our professional association, NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising and the Vision, Mission, Program Goals and Learning Outcomes of the AAC. This training focuses on the conceptual, informational, and relational skills needed for excellent academic advising.

All new advisors are partnered with an experienced advisor as a working-partner during their first year in the AAC. The working partner relationship is an opportunity for formalized mentorship.

All AAC staff engage in extensive, ongoing professional development that is guided by the same principles as our training program (mentioned above). We share a philosophy that ongoing growth and development is an essential aspect of academic advising. Our ongoing professional development is planned intentionally through regular staff meetings and other opportunities to engage, such as workshops, reading discussions, and webinars. Professional development through campus-wide opportunities, professional associations and conferences is encouraged.

Advisors are encouraged to contribute to professional service for the AAC. Opportunities for professional service are varied and advisors are able to self-select experiences that align with their strengths and interests. Examples of professional service include participation in AAC committees, teaching, and serving as liaison to an academic department, program or college.

## **Advising Tools and Systems**

All advisors on campus use MAUI, a homegrown student records system, for student records and management, processes and procedures.

Advisors use MAUI Advising tools daily in their work with students:

Advisors keep detailed records of their contact with each student in Advising Notes. Advising Notes are viewable by all advisors and advising administrators; Advising Notes may also be shared with other departments who serve undergraduate students and with the student in MyUI, which is the online system used by students.

Advisors use a variety of views and reports in MAUI Advising to maintain and communicate with their caseloads. Advisors coach students on how to use academic planning tools in MyUI: Schedule Builder, Sample Plans, and MyPlan. Advisors also teach students how to search for courses and navigate other content in MyUI.

## **Academic Cycle**

**Student Online Advising & Registration:** Advisors meet with students throughout SOAR, which typically lasts from late May through mid-July. SOAR is an intense time of the advising cycle. Advisors prepare in advance to meet with each student by reviewing student records and suggesting coursework to each student using MAUI Advising and MyUI. Advisors meet

with students individually to help students register for classes. During SOAR, advisors move quickly among preparing for students, holding SOAR Advising Appointments, and meeting the needs of continuing students in their caseload.

**Planning/Registration:** Advisors meet individually with all students for a planning appointment each semester. The planning appointment is a time to talk about majors and academic goals, transition to the University, academic progress, long-term planning, etc. The registration period is in November and April. This is a busy time when students who are primarily advised in the AAC are required to meet individually with their academic advisor to be authorized to register for classes.

Vacation may be taken during times when the University is not in session (mid to late May, mid-July through early August, mid-December through mid-January, and mid-March). It is typically not possible to take extended vacation at other times.

The work of Academic Advisors can be demanding. Student traffic is heavy during most of the year, and the needs of students tend to be unpredictable. Workdays can be filled with student appointments for weeks at a time. Because the AAC works by appointment, advisors often have little flexibility in their schedules during the workday. The work may be challenging, but it has many high points and rewards as well, including opportunities to make a difference in students' lives and work with fantastic colleagues in a collaborative environment.