The University of Iowa
Academic Advising Center (AAC)

Additional Information about AAC and the Position of Academic Advisor

1. **General Operations**: The Academic Advising Center is a large, busy office serving over 9,500 undergraduate students, most of them first-year students and sophomores. 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); students with declared majors in other Liberal Arts and Sciences departments; and students in academic crisis (changing goals, experiencing academic difficulties). AAC also administers a number of student success and retention programs.

The AAC staff currently includes 38 advisors, 4 support staff members, 10 work-study employees, and a 5-person administrative team. The Academic Advising Center is located in the Pomerantz Center, on the east side of campus.

2. **Philosophy and Goals**: The Center was established to provide students with advising support as they plan their programs of study. Advisors use a proactive philosophy, offering advice and guidance to all assigned students, but also reaching out to students who are experiencing academic difficulty or who have special needs.

An important goal of the Center is to support students as they choose their majors and develop academic plans. Advisors teach students how to gather information, how to use that information to make well-informed decisions, and how to evaluate and re-evaluate those decisions. Our goals are to teach students to be in charge of their education and to help students learn to negotiate a large, complex university successfully.

3. **Characteristics of Advisors**. We seek individuals who:
   - Are genuinely interested in becoming involved in the details of students' lives (during much of the year, the entire workday is spent talking individually with students);
   - Understand the typical situations of undergraduate students and the demands of the classroom;
   - Work well one-on-one with students and are not overly directive or judgmental;
   - Are able to solve problems and teach students how to solve problems;
   - Are direct, diplomatic, patient, and compassionate;
3. Characteristics of Advisors. We seek individuals who:
   • Are emotionally resilient enough to experience and control a range of emotions (including frustration, joy, pity, anger, sorrow, and triumph) in the span of a single day and in no particular order, as one student replaces another in the office chair;
   • Function well in stressful situations and are resourceful and capable in interactions with people who are distressed or angry;
   • Work well with details, and are able to adjust quickly when those details change;
   • Respond flexibly and constructively to changing or unexpected circumstances;
   • Work quickly and accurately against deadlines;
   • Work productively in a context in which the workload ebbs and flows with the advising cycle;
   • Collaborate well with teams of other advisors;
   • Are able to work in a professional manner with AAC colleagues as well as faculty and staff throughout the University;
   • Are committed to ongoing professional development in the field of academic advising; and
   • Are open and responsive to feedback and learning.

4. The Position of Academic Advisor at AAC
   • Academic Advisor is a 3/4-time to full-time professional appointment with fringe benefits. An AAC advisor appointment may be 3/4, 7/8, or full-time. Appointments are negotiated when employment offers are made and are based on Center needs and funding.
   • Each advisor is responsible for a caseload of approximately 250 to 330 students (caseloads are prorated by the advisor’s percentage of time). Advisors can anticipate at least two conferences per semester with each advisee; in addition, advisors track and contact students on probation, students who are struggling academically, and students who have special advising needs. Advisors are fully involved with advising during new student orientation programs throughout the summer.
   • Advisors are responsible for keeping detailed records of their contact with each student.
   • After the first year, advisors are expected to contribute to professional service for the office (e.g., develop and present recruitment and retention programming; serve as liaison to an academic department, program, or college). Advisors are also expected to serve on AAC committees in addition to direct work with students.
4. **The Position of Academic Advisor** (continued)

- Advisors participate in an intensive training program, followed by an extensive staff development program. Advisors are expected to learn the course requirements for majors and programs in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Tippie College of Business, to learn the application requirements for selective programs within the University, and to become familiar with campus resources and University rules and regulations. Advisors are also expected to learn and to use advising knowledge, skills, and attitudes appropriate for advising undergraduates at The University of Iowa.

- Advisors need to be able to present concise, accurate information to students, faculty, staff, and/or parents at meetings and programs.

- Peak periods of advising activity are during Summer Orientation in June and July and during planning and registration periods in mid-August through late November, mid-January, March, and April. The position requires the ability to work rapidly under pressure, the flexibility to adapt rapidly to changing situations, and the ability to exercise consistent professional judgment.

- The Advising Center is open from 8-5 daily and has some evening hours as well during the academic year. Advisors work at least four hours each weekday and may be requested to work specific hours to provide adequate staff coverage. During peak traffic periods, advisors may be required to work additional hours.

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

- The work Academic Advisors are asked to perform at the Center can be very demanding. Traffic at the Center is heavy during most of the year, and the crises and problems in students' lives tend to be unpredictable. The entire workday is filled with student appointments for periods of weeks at a time. Because the Center works by appointment, advisors have little flexibility in their schedules during the workday.

- Many factors that influence students' academic progress are not under the advisor's control. At times, the work may be emotionally draining, but it has many high points and rewards as well, including the opportunities to make a difference in students' lives and to work with diverse colleagues in a collaborative work environment.