

**University Student Success Center  
Submitted to Faculty Senate  
February 13, 2020**

As the University reviewed the effectiveness of Tech's current advising structure, we began by answering the questions below recommended by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA).

- Are advisors accessible when and where students seek academic guidance?
- Are financial, personnel, and physical resources available to support and staff the structure that is in place?
- Are reporting lines clear to all advisors? Is there a high level administrator who oversees education requirements, the major and minor subject areas, honors courses, pre-law or pre-medicine curriculum, exceptions to policies, academic probation, graduation, etc.? If students have multiple advisors, is there a center to make advising referrals?
- Do advisors understand the structure and their role within the larger system? If the structure is decentralized, is there an advising resource and training center?
- If the structure is decentralized or shared, does the structure promote communication and cooperation among advisors in all units?
- Is the structure conducive to sharing information and collaborating with other academic and student service units to create and implement policies that promote student development and success?

**Timeline**

October 2018: Research and campus visits of institutions with first-year professional advising models

November 2018 – March 2019: Review of visits, NACADA data and other information

February 2019-- During the Tech Tomorrow Steering Committee Meeting on February 27, 2019, recommendations were made for student support and focused heavily on the need for more consistency with advising across Tennessee Tech. Key points that were shared from this meeting were:

1. We need to create consistency with advising across Tennessee Tech.
2. Advisors should be the primary touch point with students during the application for graduation.
3. Recommendation for the perspective of serving the entire university – The advisement model should not be approached at the college-level, but rather at the university-level.

4. Faculty “mentors” vs Professional Advisors – Using Professional Advisors helping students select courses while Faculty Mentors guide students through their educational and professional goals.

February 2019 – Exceptional Stewardship, within the Graduation Process Recommendation, includes the following text, “The advisement model looks different across colleges and departments. Providing consistency in the advisement may strengthen a student’s experience as he approaches graduation”.

Spring 2019: Meeting with the Exceptional Stewardship Workgroup to respond to questions related to Tech advising.

April 2019: President’s meeting which included the Provost, Chief of Staff, VP of Enrollment Management, Executive Director of Student Success, Director of Advisement & Retention Services and all Student Success Center Directors/Program Leadership.

May 2019: Meeting with Professional advisors to share the President’s initial proposal

November 2019: President’s final proposal signed to establish a first year advising center

November 2019-December 2019: VP of Enrollment Management individual meetings with all College Deans

December 2019: VP of Enrollment Management attends the Academic Advising Council to share details and timelines of reorganization

December 2019: VP of Enrollment Management and the AVP of Human Resources meets with Academic Advising Council and professional advisors who will be reorganized to provide details and timelines of reorganization

December 2019: Implementation Committee begins meeting

January 2020: Professional advisors impacted by reorganization submit an interest form and resume to facilitate Human Resources’ process.

March 2020: University Funded Professional Advisors will be notified as to which student success center they will be assigned to.

May 2020: Relocation of university funded professional advisors as needed based on service area assignments. Prepare for the start of pre-enrollment on May 1. University Student Success Center will function in temporary space.

## **Overview:**

Create University Student Success Center (UNIV-SSC) to be housed in a suite/space that will be the main advising resource for: 1) freshmen students; 2) first-time in college students; 3) undeclared/General Curriculum students regardless of classification; 4) Special-Undergraduate Non-Degree Seeking students; and 5) new transfer students admitted as General Curriculum/Undecided or General Health Studies.

## **Purpose:**

Change is necessary to address the following issues:

1. We have not reached our retention goals and freshmen retention has been inconsistent year to year.
  - a. Fall 2015 freshman cohort had an overall retention rate of 79%.
  - b. Fall 2016 freshman cohort had an overall retention rate of 78.5%.
  - c. Fall 2017 freshman cohort had an overall retention rate of 75%.
  - d. Fall 2018 freshman cohort had an overall retention rate of 77%.
2. Resources were not originally distributed across campus with consistency. We will more evenly distribute resources and provide more resources for students who are either formally or informally undecided on major.
3. Students move across units at a significant rate without a formal practice on how students are transferred from one student success center to another. This movement and transition is extremely difficult to monitor in current structure.
  - a. 65.6% of the fall 2015 freshman cohort were retained (fall-to-fall) and continued in their original academic unit.
  - b. 63.3% of the fall 2016 freshman cohort were retained (fall-to-fall) continued in their original academic unit.
  - c. 62% of the fall 2017 freshman cohort were retained (fall-to-fall) continued in their original academic unit.
4. Pre-enrollment prior to SOAR has not been consistent and should be. All new freshmen will be pre-enrolled prior to SOAR allowing more focus on relationship building during SOAR.
5. Flexibility in serving students based on changing interest and enrollments is a challenge in current structure. This change will allow us to adapt advising to the changing student interest more seamlessly during their first year on campus.
6. Current structure has ongoing challenges in the management of professional staff. Student Success Centers have a mix of college-funded and university-funded professional advisors that formally report to separate units on campus.

## **Enrollment Outcome Goals:**

- Achieve consistent 82-86% First-Time Freshman retention annually
- 4-year graduation rate of 50%

### **UNIV-SSC Objective:**

First-Year students and General Curriculum/undecided transfer students will be assigned an advisor in the UNIV-SSC regardless of incoming credit hours. Students who meet with UNIV-SSC advisor will: 1) discuss their transition to college/Tennessee Tech; 2) evaluate any transfer, AP, and/or IB credit students have; 3) build a course schedule; 4) map their major and track their progress towards their degree; and 5) receive support during their First-Year through engaging career development coaching and academic and non-academic involvement opportunities as shared by their UNIV-SSC advisor. The first-year advisor will contact students several times throughout the semester and their first year on campus to offer multiple in-person sessions. General Curriculum/undecided students will remain with UNIV-SSC until declaring a major regardless of the number of credit hours obtained.

### **Implementation Priorities:**

1. Create a common vision and mission for all Student Success Centers (SSCs) on campus to align operations with common vision/directive.
2. All freshmen are advised in a common space by a team of full-time, professional advisors.
3. Professional advisors within UNIV-SSC will focus on class attendance and instilling other habits of success for freshmen.
4. Consistent advisement experience for all students advised within the UNIV-SSC.
5. Eliminate restrictions of advising populations based on students' major/disciplines to advising populations based on students' academic interest during their first-year.
6. Consistent "Career Ready" training and preparedness from orientation advisement session throughout first-year advisement sessions and programming.
7. Flexibility to adjust advisement resources and schedule based on student demand and needs.
8. All freshman students are pre-enrolled prior to their first term on campus.
9. Develop plans for: 1) transition of university funded advisors to be assigned to the new UNIV-SSC or a college; 2) students to connect and explore with their academic programs or majors of interest while advised by UNIV-SSC; 3) transition of students from UNIV-SSC to college/school advisor and/or Student Success Center; & 4) freshman career development programming partnership with Center for Career Development.

### **UNIV-SSC Location:**

This Center will be located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Volpe Library across from the Tutoring Center and down from the Testing Center. The space of the UNIV-SSC was selected based on the following:

- Centralized and accessible for both on-campus and commuter students.
- Convenient student access to other campus resources.
- UNIV-SSC team is centralized in one office suite.

Note: Approval has been received from State. We are currently in design phase. It is recognized that the permanent center might not be fully completed by first day of Fall 2020 classes. Two temporary spaces have been identified:

- Preferred location: Student study rooms on second/main floor of library. Currently working with ITS and library staff to ensure rooms can handle all necessary workstation functionality.
- Other location: Foundation Hall has space that is much less convenient; however, it is known that workstations can be fully functional.

**Implementation Team:**

**Dr. Julie Baker and Simone McKelvey** will serve as co-chairs of the implementation team.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Department</b>
Benjamin Clark	School of Nursing
Julie Galloway	College of Business
Jerry Gannod	College of Engineering
Richard Pirkle	College of Arts & Sciences
Charria Campbell	Multicultural Affairs
Jeffrey Roberts	College of Arts & Sciences
Julie Baker	College of Education
Simone McKelvey	Advisement & Retention Services
Tristan Pope	Student in College of Agriculture & Human Ecology

All members agreed to serve on the implementation team upon receiving the following invitation:

I [Brandon Johnson] would like to invite you to serve as a member of the university-wide student success center implementation team. Co-chaired by Julie Baker and Simone McKelvey, this team will be asked to successfully implement Tech’s new student success center. There are elements of the success center that have been decided and those elements will be shared with the team during the first meeting. There is still much work ahead to successfully implement the center. Also, further efforts are needed to identify and implement new/enhanced advising programs and strategies focused on best serving students across campus.

A few of the major initiatives that need to be prioritized:

- Ensure clear and consistent communication with all university-wide stakeholders throughout the implementation period

- Recommend name and mission statement for new university-wide student success center, and work to encourage alignment of mission statements for current college-based SSCs
- Identify strategies to establish and maintain positive relationships between university- and college-based advisors in order to ensure consistent advisement and smooth transitions for all students
- Evaluate current first-year related processes and events to define advisor roles and expectations
- Determine professional development needs and identify resources to support those needs

This team will remain intact until October 1, 2020 after successful implementation is achieved next fall.

**UNIV-SSC's Organizational Structure**

