

**Faculty Senate Working Group  
Draft Campus Advising Practices  
Updated and revised by the Academic Advising Advisory Committee, Feb 2023**

**Mission Statement**

Academic advising at Rice University strives to create an unparalleled environment for undergraduates to explore opportunities, identify goals, and implement plans to reach those goals.

**Philosophy**

Rice aims to provide an undergraduate experience marked by personalized academic plans, intellectual and personal relationships with faculty, and acquisition of both general knowledge and discipline-specific expertise. We value the breadth of perspectives provided by faculty, professional, and student academic advisors who work collaboratively to guide and introduce students to the multitude of academic opportunities and resources across campus. Rice expects all students to take ownership of their undergraduate experience by proactively exploring, consistently reflecting, and deliberately planning as their goals evolve over time.

**Goals**

The overarching goals for undergraduate academic advising at Rice are to:

1. Provide assistance with and accurate information about academic policies, procedures, resources, and programs and how to be successful within them.
2. Help students match their personal goals to their educational experiences, develop an academic plan consistent with their goals, and evaluate progress toward those goals.
3. Help students develop strategies to succeed both in and out of the classroom.
4. Provide assistance with co-curricular opportunities at Rice, including discussion of how to achieve school/life balance.
5. Help students explore career options and how to achieve them.
6. Help students develop a sense of self (e.g., clarify their values, understand their abilities, interests, and limitations).
7. Help students develop decision-making skills.
8. Refer students to appropriate support resources and university entities.

**Delivery Strategies**

Rice works to achieve these goals with a multifaceted community of academic advisors who guide undergraduate students through their academic experiences. Academic advising is faculty-led, but supported and supplemented by professional advisors and student advisors, and centrally coordinated by the Office of Academic Advising (OAA). The figure below illustrates the “Community of Advising” at Rice and its eight main academic advising units. Each of these units has distinct responsibilities (for advisors and advisees), methods of selecting advisors, training needs, evaluation approaches, and recognition and rewards for advisors. The remainder of this document describes those for each advising unit at Rice.



### **The Office of Academic Advising (OAA)**

The OAA is the central organizing, coordinating, and supplemental academic advising office at Rice and reports to the Dean of Undergraduates. It consists of professional advisors who research and implement best practices informed by the National Academic Advising Association, the annual Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE) Advising Deans Conference, and other advising-related professional resources. The office coordinates advising across campus and provides leadership, direction, training, and resources for all academic advisors at Rice. It also provides advising-related programs, events, and individual advising for all undergraduates.

#### Responsibilities of the OAA:

- Direct, coordinate, and support campus-wide advising through regular interaction with school deans, department chairs, residential college magisters, divisional advisors, college associates, major/minor/transfer advisors, and the student-led advising teams.
- Provide training and comprehensive resources to all faculty, professional, and student advisors. Training and informational resources focus on: Rice’s advising mission, philosophy, model, and the “community of advising;” academic rules and regulations; general graduation requirements; academic resources and educational opportunities; and guidance on advising strategies, techniques, skills, and best practices for all of the different advising units on campus.
- Disseminate academic information directly to students through systematic programming in the residential colleges. Individual advising on general topics is available to all undergraduate students, and specialized advising is afforded to:
  - new students

- student athletes
- students interested in health professions
- pre-law students
- transfer students
- readmitted students and students seeking readmission
- students undecided about their major
- international students
- students in need of academic support services

**Responsibilities of Advisees:** All undergraduate students at Rice University are considered advisees of the OAA.

- Familiarize themselves with the services and tools offered by the OAA by exploring resources and materials on the OAA website.
- Take advantage of events and programs that the OAA provides, including orientation sessions, the academic fair, and academic planning/advising sessions.
- Take ownership of their undergraduate academic and personal goals by proactively exploring, consistently reflecting upon, and deliberately planning them with guidance from faculty, professional, and student advisors.
- When meeting with their advisors, students should be prepared to discuss:
  - Broad personal and academic interests
  - Personal and academic goals at Rice
  - Academic background and preparedness for courses (or progress towards degree)
  - Previous study habits and time management
  - Commitments and balance of curricular/extracurricular activities
  - Developed academic plans, as well as choices, questions, and issues about those plans
  - Referrals to specialized advisors and other resources
  - Available advising tools
  - Scheduling follow-up communications

**Selection:** The OAA is comprised of professional advisors with both broad and specific responsibilities. Some advisors are dedicated specifically to support student athletes and ensure compliance with National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) rules and regulations. Leadership of the OAA is provided by the Director of Academic Advising, who is recruited and hired through standard hiring practices executed by the Dean of Undergraduates office. All other professional advisors and support staff members are recruited and hired through standard hiring practices executed by the Director of Academic Advising.

**Training:** As the OAA hires new professional advisors, the Director is responsible for delivering, directly or indirectly, training and on-boarding with industry and Rice-specific knowledge necessary in academic advising.

**Evaluation:** The OAA evaluates its work in a variety of ways.

- Individual professional advisors undergo a yearly performance appraisal including self and supervisor evaluations, post-advising student appointment surveys, goal-setting, and performance deliverables.
- For programs and events, OAA administers a number of post-event surveys to assess the perceived value of services, presentations, trainings, or events. Focus groups with students also provide feedback to the OAA.
- Rice administers advising-specific questions in the Survey of All Students and the Senior Exit Survey in an attempt to evaluate professional, faculty, and student advising.

Recognition and Reward: All staff members in the division of the Dean of Undergraduates are eligible for merit-based salary increases, bonuses, and awards as deemed appropriate by the Dean of Undergraduates.

### **College Magisters**

College Magisters are tenured faculty members in residence who oversee all aspects of their residential college, including academic advising. They live in a house that is adjacent to the college, and they cultivate a variety of academic, intellectual, and cultural interests among students.

#### Responsibilities of Magisters:

- Understand the “community of advising” and their role in this greater community.
- Recruit, engage, coordinate, oversee, and support other faculty advisors in the colleges—specifically, associates, divisional advisors (DAs), and resident faculty associates (RFAs: resident faculty associates who agree to take on additional responsibilities to assist with academic programming in the college, which may include advising).
- Oversee the academic progress of students in the college, both individually and in coordination with DAs, RFAs, and the OAA. Specifically, this includes:
  - Ongoing assessment of students’ academic progress based on grade reports at specific intervention points (midterm and end of semester).
  - Review of registrar notifications for students placed on probation or suspension.
  - Identifying and intervening with students who may need academic assistance.
- Be familiar with the material on academic advising being delivered to students during Orientation Week (O-Week). This material includes information about academic culture, standards, and support systems at Rice. It also includes the college’s divisional advising system and the associates program (both structure and goals).
- Work closely with the OAA to provide oversight and guidance to peer academic advisors (PAAs) and student academic fellows/mentors.
- Stay up-to-date on academic policies throughout the academic year through regular communication with the OAA and the Office of the Registrar.

Responsibilities of Advisees: The college magister's advisees are all students in the residential college. The students are responsible for seeking out the magister's assistance with academic progress as needed and responding to the magister when he or she reaches out to a student about academic progress.

Selection: Magisters are appointed by the Dean of Undergraduates following a search process conducted by students and core members of the residential college (e.g. resident associates, college coordinator) with guidance from a tenured faculty member who is currently serving as magister at another residential college. As part of the recruitment and selection process of magisters, the Dean of Undergraduates provides an information session for prospective magisters to clarify the scope of the role, including the academic responsibilities. Selection of magisters should include an assessment of the candidates' abilities and willingness to perform these advising responsibilities.

Training: The OAA provides academic advising training to the college magisters. This training includes information about the structure of the advising system at Rice (including these guidelines), academic rules and regulations, academic resources across campus, and advising strategies and techniques. Given that many of the academic responsibilities may be delegated or shared with the RFA, similar training will be provided to them.

Evaluation: The Dean of Undergraduates is responsible for ensuring that magisters execute and/or manage the academic responsibilities for their respective colleges.

Recognition and Reward: Magisters who execute their academic advising responsibilities at an exemplary level should be recognized for their contributions at the end of each year.

### **Divisional Advisors**

Divisional advisors (DAs) are faculty members who serve as academic advisors for students in a residential college who have not yet declared a major. They represent each of the four large schools at Rice—Engineering, Humanities, Natural Science, and Social Science—and each residential college has at least one DA per school. Additionally, there are campus-wide DAs for the three smaller schools—Architecture, Business, and Music. A DA is assigned to each incoming student based on the student's academic interest when they enter Rice University (e.g., students interested in Engineering have the Engineering DA as their advisor). A DA continues to advise the student until the student officially declares a major or changes to another school. DAs play a critical role in the academic development of pre-declared students.

Responsibilities of DAs: In general, DAs are expected to:

- Engage students in conversations about the significant academic and career decisions that students make at Rice.
- Help their advisees connect with appropriate resources within the university.
- Be present in the college often enough that their advisees feel comfortable approaching them (e.g., attending lunches and/or dinners, participating in Associate's Night at the college).

- Understand the “community of advising” and their role in this greater community.

More specifically, DAs must:

- Attend the annual DA training session organized by the OAA prior to O-Week.
- Participate in O-Week events where DA presence is requested and attend individual or small group meetings with advisees.
- Participate in each semester’s college academic planning session (held during the two weeks when students are choosing courses for the next semester).
- Monitor the academic progress of first-year advisees through midterm and end-of-semester grade reports. DAs should communicate directly with underperforming advisees to advise and assist them. Underperforming students can be reluctant to meet with their advisors; in extreme cases, the DA may need to obtain the magisters’ and/or OAA’s assistance in placing a registration hold to compel the student to meet.
- Try to meet with advisees (individually or in small groups) at least once per semester until the students have declared a major. These meetings should remind students about the role of the DA, guide students toward majors/minors and major/minor advisors, help students with course selection, discuss academic progress, and advise on other issues/questions students have.
  - An example of what these meetings could look like for group advising is holding a well-advertised lunchtime advising session during the weeks before registration each semester and then meeting with individual students who require/desire more personalized advising.
- Document student advising appointments in Navigate.
- Be knowledgeable and helpful in connecting students with other academic resources in the community of advising.

Responsibilities of the Advisee: The DA’s advisees are all students at their residential college who have an interest in the DA’s school and, especially, the pre-declared major students (first- and second-year students). The responsibilities of the advisees are to:

- Know their DA and interact with them regarding their academic life.
- Respond to communication from their DA.
- Work with a DA to develop a prototype schedule for their undergraduate career that would fulfill degree and distribution requirements for their intended major(s) or minor(s).
- Be prepared to discuss career possibilities and future plans after Rice.
- Attend academic planning sessions at the college.
- Attend advising meetings with their DA.

Selection: The Dean of Undergraduates works with magisters and school deans to identify a pool of prospective DAs and then consults with the OAA to select candidates. DAs should be

selected by April 30 of the prior academic year so that training can occur over the summer and DAs are in place for O-Week.

Training: DAs will be trained by the OAA and attend an annual training session before O-Week. Faculty who cannot attend must attend an alternative session prior to the start of O-Week. Additional training sessions will be offered throughout the year in the form of DA lunches hosted by the OAA.

Evaluation: DAs should be evaluated by their magister in collaboration with the Office of the Dean of Undergraduates and results of that evaluation shared with all relevant parties.

Recognition and Reward: Service as a DA is recognized and rewarded in several ways.

- DA service should be acknowledged and counted as university service for promotion, tenure, and retention for all faculty.
- DAs receive a stipend each year in appreciation of their service. The stipend amount should be reevaluated regularly.
- Outstanding DAs may be recognized in their division in an appropriate forum.
- DAs are eligible for the OAA's annual award for Excellence in Advising for Divisional Advisors.

### **Faculty Associates**

Faculty associates are faculty members who affiliate with a Rice residential college, provide informal mentoring and advising to students within that college, and more generally, share their unique experiences, interests, and perspectives with students in an effort to enrich the intellectual, cultural, and social life of the college. Faculty associates are part of the broader college associates program, which includes faculty, staff, and community members.

#### Responsibilities of Associates:

- Mentor and advise students within a residential college, referring students in need to appropriate Rice resources.
- Participate in O-Week activities and engage with O-Week groups during O-Week and throughout the year.
- Participate in college organized activities for associates that occur throughout the academic year.
- Attend a university-wide associates program orientation. As part of this orientation, gain a full understanding of the “community of advising” and their role in this greater community.
- Attend a college-specific associates program orientation.

Responsibilities of Advisees: The advisees of associates are the students in a residential college. Student responsibilities are to:

- Welcome associates and make them feel comfortable in the students' space.
- Organize events and activities to include associates and send out timely invitations.
- Interact with associates at events and meals.

Selection: The college magister appoints faculty associates based on recommendations from a designated college selection committee composed of some combination of the college magister, resident associates, college coordinator, and students. The committee should maintain clear criteria for recruiting and retaining associates. Committees should consider diversity in their pool of associates, including diversity across faculty interests, academic departments, and demographic diversity. College coordinators should maintain an accurate and current list of associates.

Training: Two types of training are available to associates:

1. A university-wide associates program orientation session hosted by the Dean of Undergraduates' office for new associates that overviews the associates program, associate responsibilities, campus resources for referrals, and the residential college system at Rice.
2. A residential college orientation for new associates (hosted by the college) to provide information about history, culture, traditions, events, physical amenities, and ways to get involved in the college.

Evaluation: A designated selection committee should evaluate the health of the college's associate program on a yearly basis, assessing recruiting needs and engagement of associates. Specifically, committees should have a mechanism in place to keep track of associates' engagement at the college throughout the year (e.g., college coordinator keeps a spreadsheet) and inactive associates should be asked if they want to continue their affiliation with the college.

Recognition and Reward: Associates are eligible for annual recognition as the Outstanding Associate or one of several Distinguished Associates at their residential college.

### **Major, Minor, and Transfer Advisors**

Major, minor, and transfer advisors are faculty members associated with each department or program that offers a major or minor at Rice. They provide academic advising for students who have declared that major or minor or are prospective students in that major/minor. Students transition from a divisional advisor to a major/minor advisor once they have officially declared a major/minor.

Responsibilities of All Advisors (Major, Minor, and Transfer):

- Be familiar with the curriculum, academic policies, and graduation requirements for the major/minor.
- Be familiar with university resources and other entities in the community of advising to make referrals to appropriate support structures, as needed.



- Be familiar with professional development resources (i.e., research, internships, jobs, conferences, graduate programs).
- Be accessible, responsive, and proactive during the entire *calendar* year (student advising needs sometimes emerge in the summer months). Clearly advertise how and when advisees should communicate with advisors.
- Attend OAA training/information sessions. As part of this training, gain a full understanding of the “community of advising” and their role in this greater community.
- Document student advising appointments in Navigate.
- Help train successors before leaving the advisor role.
- Communicate with the OAA about advising issues, as needed (e.g., obtain clarification on university policies, work together to advise students academically at risk, seek registration holds, refer students to the OAA for non-major advising issues, etc.).

Additional Responsibilities of Major and Minor Advisors only:

- Hold face-to-face advising meetings (individual or group) for pre-declared students. A face-to-face meeting should be required for major/minor declaration. This meeting is intended for students who are considering the major or minor and should cover information about what the major/minor is, major/minor curriculum requirements, career opportunities, and answer student questions.
- Hold face-to-face advising meetings (individual or group) with declared majors/minors, as needed.
- Assess major and minor students who are academically at risk and reach out to them on a semester basis. The OAA can help identify these students.
- Organize department representation at the academic advising fair during O-Week.
- If advisor is also the major/minor official degree certifier: Certify students for graduation and communicate with students that have gaps.

Additional Responsibilities for Transfer Advisors:

- Be knowledgeable about university transfer credit requirements, <https://registrar.rice.edu/students/transfer-credit>
- Review transfer credit requests over the summer and at the start of each academic semester for incoming transfer students. Assist students who request advising on transfer credits, as needed.
- Be knowledgeable about the Study Abroad Office and university requirements related to transfer credits from other institutions.
- Have a departmental mechanism for pre-approving transfer credit for students studying abroad.

Responsibility of Advisees: The university expects all Rice students to exercise personal responsibility over their actions. Students are responsible for knowing and following all information, policies, and procedures listed in the General Announcements. Additionally, students should:

- Know who their major/minor/transfer advisor is and interact with them regarding academic life. Know how to arrange meetings with the advisor and schedule meetings as needed.
- Monitor their progress toward graduation via Degree Works and initiate a conversation with a major/minor/transfer advisor if they suspect any gaps or deficiencies or want confirmation on appropriate progress. It is the student's responsibility to ensure sure they are on track for graduation and do not have any last semester deficiencies.
- Respond promptly to communications from their advisor. Be on time for appointments and in the case of unavoidable appointment cancellation, provide as much advance notice as possible.
- Attend advising meetings. Arrive prepared, considering in advance the choices, questions, and issues they hope to discuss with their advisor. Additionally, students should prepare by considering their personal academic goals and reviewing Rice curricular requirements, policies, deadlines, and resources.
- Be proactive in seeking out necessary advising resources. This may include requesting additional advising meetings, seeking out multiple sources of advice, and continuing to expand their connections with Rice's community of advisors.
- Keep an open mind regarding educational and career goals.

Selection: Major, minor and transfer advisors should be faculty members chosen by the department chair or program director, keeping in mind the following:

- Advisor must be a faculty member.
- Advisor must have institutional, departmental, and curricular knowledge.
- Advisor must be accessible, responsible, organized, and proactive.
- Advisors should serve a three-year term with possible reappointment upon mutual agreement.
- Advisors should be selected and names should be provided to the OAA by April 30<sup>th</sup> each year.

Training: Three types of training are available to major, minor and transfer advisors:

1. The OAA will provide an orientation session and/or training materials in early May for new advisors to introduce them to university-wide policies and resources.
2. The OAA will host university-wide advising sessions during the academic year for major/minor/transfer advisors, similar to the DA trainings. The topics will vary but will include opportunities to share information and best practices among advisors.

3. In-program training: Each academic department/program should hold a meeting with the department chair/program director, the major/minor/transfer advisors, and/or members of the undergraduate committee to ensure appropriate transfer of information to new advisors.

Evaluation: The department chair/program director should meet with advisors once per year to evaluate the advising process. The Student Exit Survey (SES) includes questions on advising that departments/programs can use as part of this evaluation (they also can add their own questions to this survey by contacting the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE)).

Recognition and Reward: All major/minor/transfer advisors should have their service recognized as part of any review process and be compensated for their work, if that work goes above and beyond standard “departmental service.” Department chairs should consider either:

- A teaching reduction (likely limited to departments with one advisor who does major, minor, and transfer advising and that person is tenured or tenure track).
- A D-fund for advising (more appropriate for departments with a large number of advisors or advisors who are non-tenure track and not currently eligible for a teaching reduction)

Additionally, major, minor, and transfer credit advisors are eligible for annual academic advising awards.

### **Student Academic Advisors**

Student-led academic advising is a formal part of the advising community at Rice. It occurs primarily through two groups of student leaders: peer academic advisors (PAAs) and O-Week advisors.

#### *Peer Academic Advisors (PAAs)*

PAAs are the primary source of student-led academic advising for undergraduate students; they serve as liaisons between students, faculty advisors, and the OAA. They offer a unique student perspective on classes, research opportunities, studying abroad, and academic rules, regulations, and procedures, or other academically-related topics. The PAAs include student directors, O-Week PAAs, head PAAs, and year-long PAAs.

#### Responsibilities of PAAs:

- Lend academic knowledge and experience to first-year students.
- Offer accurate advice regarding specific classes, research opportunities, study abroad, and academic rules, regulations, processes, and resources as it relates to academics.
- Be knowledgeable about the resources available on campus, and be able to make referrals to these resources.
- Be visible, proactive, approachable, open, and kind to students seeking help or advice.
- Collaborate with college PAA team to coordinate group and individual activities to strengthen academic advising at their respective colleges (e.g., academic planning

sessions, midterm study breaks, DA appointments during O-Week, academic fair during O-Week, etc.).

- Assist with the general course planning and academic advising specific to O-Week and specialized populations.
- For those serving as O-Week PAAs, prepare and provide academic materials for new students (as instructed by the OAA).
- Attend training sessions hosted by the OAA, including any online engagement, feedback loops, and activities. As part of this training, gain a full understanding of the “community of advising” and their role in this greater community.

Responsibilities of Advisees: Advisees of the PAAs are all students in their residential college, and specifically, incoming first-year students in the case of O-Week PAAs.

- Take initiative to reach out to PAAs, attend events, and seek PAA guidance.
- Prepare for advising meetings, considering questions and topics you wish to discuss.
- Keep an open mind to the advice provided by PAAs with varying perspectives.
- Be responsive and interactive when speaking with PAAs.
- Treat the PAAs at your respective colleges with respect.

Selection: The OAA manages the competitive selection of O-Week and head PAAs; year-long PAAs are chosen by the head PAA team in conjunction with the OAA. All PAAs apply in January. Each candidate is interviewed in February by a member of the OAA staff or by the college’s head PAA team. All PAAs are selected and inducted in March to serve for the next academic year.

Training: All PAAs receive training by the OAA prior to serving in PAA positions. Training sessions are delivered in a number of different ways, including in-person, online, and web-based. PAAs are required to do their training before starting the position.

Evaluation: Each individual college tracks attendance for PAA-related events. There are also a number of informal check-in points with the OAA to monitor team progress and individual participation. Head PAA teams report the progress and participation of their teams to the OAA prior to review and selection for the next year. Students are evaluated based on their contributions, participation, and assistance to students at their colleges and either invited back to the program or not. Students can opt out of future participation, if desired.

#### Recognition and Reward:

The OAA, with nominations from peers and adult leadership, recognize an Outstanding PAA of the Month throughout the academic year. At the end of each academic year, the OAA recognizes PAAs with the Excellence in Academic Advising Awards. Candidates for this award are nominated by peers or college teams and chosen by the OAA.

#### *Orientation Week Advisors*

O-Week advisors are student leaders with responsibilities specific to O-Week, who focus on college transition and acclimation and have considerably lighter academic advising responsibilities.

Responsibilities of O-Week Advisors:

- Attend training by the OAA in preparation for their role in assisting new students in transition to Rice; as part of this training, gain a full understanding of the “community of advising” and their role in this greater community.
- Assist the O-Week PAA teams at their respective residential college during academic planning sessions by assisting their O-Week groups and facilitating activities.
- Share their specific insights and experiences as it relates to majors, minors, or special populations (e.g., pre-med) while recognizing the limitations to those insights and experiences.
- Make referrals to appropriate resources for additional perspectives and more detailed advice and assistance.

Responsibilities of Advisees: Advisees are the incoming first-year students assigned to each advisor’s O-Week group.

- Attend all O-Week activities related to academic advising.
- Follow directions of the O-Week advisors with regard to planned events and activities.
- Understand that academic advice from O-Week advisors can be useful but that there are limitations to the academic knowledge, insights, and experiences of O-Week advisors. Seek advice from faculty advisors and PAAs to supplement.

Selection: O-Week advisors (~30/college) are selected by a college process facilitated by the Office of Student Success Initiatives (SSI). They are chosen with the understanding that each of these students is invested in assisting new students with their transition to Rice. Considerable focus is placed on social, emotional, cultural, and academic acclimation for new students.

Training: Academic advising training is provided by the OAA during advisor training week (prior to O-Week) and includes both general academic information, rules, processes, regulations, policies, and also practical academic advising training in the form of scenarios and advising tools to use when working with incoming students.

Evaluation: SSI administers evaluation for O-Week advisors.

Recognition and Reward: SSI recognizes and rewards O-Week advisors.

## **Collaborative Offices**

The collaborative offices are professionals who support academic advising at Rice through academic-adjacent activities. These offices include (but are not limited to):

- Office of Student Success Initiatives (helping students develop skills needed for academic and personal success)
- Study Abroad Office (helping students with academic enrichment abroad)
- Center for Career Development (guiding students in pursuing career goals)
- Disability Support Services (providing access to the educational environment for students)
- Office of International Students and Scholars (enhancing the Rice experience for international students)
- Center for Academic and Professional Communication (helping students communicate their ideas in writing, orally, and visually)
- Wellbeing and Counseling Center (helping students with wellbeing and mental health concerns so they can develop and thrive as people inside and outside the university)
- Center for Civic Leadership (fostering civic leadership among students through curricular and experiential learning opportunities)
- Doerr Institute (helping students develop their leadership potential)

All academic advisors should be knowledgeable about these offices, and these offices should support faculty, student, and other professional advisors' work with students as needed.