AAC Meeting Minutes: March 25th, 2021

In attendance: Jazmyn Thomas, Sarah Roth, Clint Smith, Lana Summers, Crystal Nourie, Emily Ullsmith, Derrek Drenckpohl, Janet Tulley, Soemer Simmons, Brent Kane, Wendi Whitman, Amy Hurd

I. Chair's remarks
   a. Award Acknowledgement
      Congratulations to Lana and Brent!
      i. Lana Summers – Outstanding New Undergraduate Advisor
      ii. Brent Kane – Stan and Sandy Rives Excellence Award

II. Secretary/Treasurer Report
   a. Approval of minutes
      i. Motion to approve by Brent, second by Clint.
      ii. Non-voting members cannot motion, firsts or seconds.
   b. Budget Update – Sarah
      i. Plaques came in at $291. We had budgeted for $350.

III. Old Business
   a. AAC Subcommittee Session Attendance – Wendi
      i. HR said they do not have a baseline academic advisor job description. These are vastly different from department to department. Trying to consider caseload equity now, but this is challenging because there is no static entry level position description.
      ii. Pointed out description on the EMAS website and HR said they hadn't seen it. We thought HR helped us create it (may have been with previous staff). Current HR staff unaware of the previous description and said they would want to proceed with caution due to high variation. Each department/school ultimately makes their own decisions.
      iii. HR is unfamiliar, and wanted to know precisely what we were asking for.
      iv. Each unit has control over their own positions, but could AAC work with HR or chairs and directors to establish expectations? Certain things that are really important for academic advisors like going to training and being educated on the tools that are essential to academic advisement.
      v. Provost's Office has logged over 300 student complaints this year. They need access to CS advisor notes- that's much easier than calling individuals.
      vi. Can AAC take a stronger hand in establishing a common expectation? Do advisors have too high of a caseload for this?

vii. Lack of consistency across descriptions points to a larger problem about lack of consistency when it comes to advisement. Provost is aware and working on enhancing advisor support. They are connected issues.

viii. All academic advisors are keeping notes somewhere, why isn't it in the same place? It's not necessarily more work.

ix. Academic advisors don't have the opportunity to get desk audits according to HR. We know job descriptions aren't correct. Is it our responsibility to add to those descriptions?

x. Go to chairs, directors, and deans regarding expectations and position descriptions for academic advisors. Need to know to encourage (or at the very least allow) academic advisors to participate in training.

xi. A baseline job description would need to be very basic. The differences between roles are part of the nature of our educational system.

xii. If we set guidelines, is there something the department chair could do to allow advisors to attend these trainings? Need to look at duties outside of advisement, and have realistic expectations. Don't want this to take too much time away from advising caseload and do a disservice to the students.

xiii. Should address other important advisor-related topics that could be included in this conversation with chairs/directors/deans, not just trainings.

xiv. Form a team to think through expectations, caseload size, job duties

xv. Concern about adding more work to job descriptions. Descriptions also aren't updated regularly.

xvi. How do graduate advisors fall into this? They are typically called Grad Coordinators and the duties are typically part of their job, but they are external from AAC.

xvii. Existing document created by AAC as a baseline job description: https://emas.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/aaac/advisor%20job%20description%20AAC.docx This is an outdated document that would need to be updated.

xviii. If something came from AAC to chairs/directors/deans, could be educational and informative outreach, an Advising 101, not necessarily a set job description. Could dovetail with staff success work that's happening in Academic Affairs. Can Clint, Brent, and Sarah join Wendi in working on this? Yes.

b. Advisor Caseload Concerns – Brent
   i. Conversations happening with the Provost who recognizes this is an issue. Nuances beyond the caseload numbers- how many sequences, other types of work like scheduling/recruitment/website, and multiple advisors from one area listed for one student.

IV. New Business
   a. PDT Presence on FISSE – Jazmyn
      i. PDT co-chairs want to have a connection with EMAS professional development opportunities led by Stacy Ramsey and Corey Burgess. The

PDT co-chairs were asked to join the group, which has had a number of professional development programs primarily focused on diversity and inclusion. EMAS doesn't want to overlap with what AAC is doing- they want academic advisors to attend the sessions.

b. SLATE Usage – Wendi

   i. Just about everyone in attendance today knows Slate. Not everyone on campus does, some people confuse it with CS or other programs. Getting current student information into Slate is on the list of EMAS projects- very big project, likely a couple of months out.

   ii. Right now it's just Admissions information. Wendi is working on getting information for transfer students and Transfer Days. Advisors may want to use Slate to text message specific groups of students. That may have come from AT. This will not be readily available quickly.

   iii. Slate is another big tool and will require training and a lot of communication to properly utilize it. It will be some time before advisors are going to have text messaging capability.

   iv. ChatBot pilot is not the same thing as Slate. Some may be getting the two confused. They can function somewhat similarly, but are very different things. Stacy Ramsey is the contact for ChatBot. Financial Aid using it to encourage students to complete the FAFSA.

   v. Concern for both Slate and ChatBot that advisors will not know what communication is happening with students. Also, not all advisors will want to use these. AAC Tech is aware of this.

   vi. Non-transfer day appointments currently can't go into Slate? Derrek and Wendi are going to investigate this. Want students to attend Transfer Days as much as possible to get all the information they need. This changes if Transfer Day appointments are full or if Transfer Days are over.

      1. Should the last Transfer Days be released right away? Some students are scheduling very far out. UC started doing that last year because some students purposely wanted to wait due to the current climate. However, this can be a problem if classes fill before they attend Transfer Day. Some advisors are reaching out to these students to encourage them to attend earlier if possible.

c. Fall Return to Work – Amy

   i. Vaccines are now available to higher ed staff. This is the best protection against COVID.

   ii. We think Illinois is going to move into the next phase in the next couple of weeks. Starting to see an uptick of cases and will likely see more due to K-12 schools having a spring break. Have to stay in 4B for 28 days if

things go well. Best case scenario: we could be into Phase 5 the first part of May.

   iii. Starting to get questions about how we're going to return to work when we haven't been around others in a year. HR is considering a phased in approach to return to work.

   iv. There will be a University wide policy about returning to work- we will not continue to work from home. This is a residential campus and we expect people to be here. There might be some modifications, but don't know those specifics yet.

   v. How do we get people back and what is going to help accomplish that? If we think of things later, let Amy know.

   vi. Some advisors want to be on campus, and feel comfortable working in our offices, but don't feel comfortable meeting in our small offices.

   vii. Will we continue to have a Zoom Pro license? Our understanding is that the University won't cut back on this.

   viii. Zoom has been extremely beneficial for students. It would be very nice to be in our offices and continue to meet with students over Zoom.

   ix. Advisors would like to be back on site, but with flexibility as to how each individual advisor meets with students. Not a directive that we must be in person for advisement sessions.

   x. Need for a transition period this summer? Most advisors know this fall we will be back on campus. However, the summer time frame is more uncertain.

   xi. U College advisors plan to be back May 17 for Preview training.

       1. They also plan to let students choose between face to face, Zoom, or phone options for appointments. Some students are going to want to keep the flexibility.

   xii. If we're in Phase 5, do we need partitions in our offices? If advisors are vaccinated, do we need dividers and PPE?

   xiii. Masks will remain required as long as the CDC says they are required.

   xiv. HR will come out with guidance about who is eligible to work from home. This will likely be those who don't interact with the public. Nothing specific to advisors.

   xv. Ideally, we want to be able to provide choices for students in terms of how they meet with their advisor.

   xvi. A lot of uncertainty and recent changes; hard to pinpoint precise concerns at this time. Not sure how many students will actually be vaccinated in August. Potential concern about passing COVID onto children at home.

   xvii. Some staff say if they're doing Zoom meetings, they can do that from home. Others have no problem going back to the office.

xviii. Ideally, have consistency within the advisement office so students can have a similar experience. Zoom drop-ins a good option, and demand for Zoom tutoring, etc. may continue. Does their need to be consistency across the University?

xix. Students likely want the option of meeting over Zoom.

xx. According to Facilities, those with small offices may not be able to have a partition without it posing a hazard in the case of a fire.

xxi. What are the CDC and IDPH guidelines going to be 5 months from now? As of now, masks are required. Most students are very compliant currently.

xxii. Overall, people have different perspectives and comfort levels.

xxiii. HR committee likely working through sick time issue for the future- could be at home taking Zoom meetings and working independently, but don't want to come to the office and potentially pass cold onto others.

xxiv. Kids don't have access to the vaccine, and may have to quarantine if they're a close contact. Advisors who are parents would need to be able to pivot to work from home and meet virtually with students.

xxv. If students are sick, they could meet with their advisor remotely as opposed to coming into the office.

V. Campus Solutions/Registration

    a. Articulation Corrections in CS & Student Requests for Online Courses – Brent

        i. Registration staying open all next week.

        ii. Process to announce articulation updates and corrections to academic advisors-- Crystal will check with Theresa.

        iii. For students who want online courses, what is the approved communication? Who should we be pointing them to if they're upset that they don't have those choices?

            1. Not going to be a lot of online options, slightly more than normal but not significantly. The announcement from the Provost says we're primarily going to be face-to-face, could use that language.

            2. Working on a new definition for online, face-to-face, and hybrid. Haven't asked faculty for more notes. Most going to be face-to-face. Online classes that are happening tend to be more asynchronous than synchronous as they are larger classes.

VI. Committee Updates

    a. Assessment

        i. Coming up with final report- hopeful to have that by the next AAC meeting.

   b. Technology

     i. Nothing to report.

   c. Teacher Education

     i. Nothing to report.

   d. PDT

     i. Met about Student Success Dashboard. Considering a summer session or how-to/best practices document with a follow-up session. Now trying to determine best person(s) to develop this.

   e. Mentoring & Connections

     i. Nothing to report.

   f. AAC Awards Selection

VII. Student Representative Report

   a. Nothing to report.

VIII. Other Business?

   a. Planning on closing registration May 7. Scheduled to reopen May 17.

   b. GEO 102 sections that are open to current students will go in Advising Wiki later today.

IX. Next meeting – April 8th

Submitted by:
Sarah Roth
April 5, 2021