

Appreciative Onboarding and Professional Development of Academic Advisors

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Abstract

Advisor onboarding and professional development are critical to the success of advising. This article explains the Undergraduate Academic Advisor (UAA) professional development model used in the University Advising Center (UAC) at the University of South Carolina. The Appreciative Education framework (Bloom et al., 2008) informs the practices regarding advisor onboarding and professional development. Beginning at the interview stage and continuing through promotion via the UAC's Advising Career Ladder, advisors are encouraged to develop and contribute to the positive momentum of advising. The advisor onboarding and professional development benefits students in noticeable ways, as UAAs outperform other faculty and staff advisors on virtually every metric.

Keywords

training, onboarding, Appreciative

Decades of research on academic advising have linked high-quality advising to overall student satisfaction with their colleges and universities, retention, and other positive outcomes (King & Kerr, 2005; Kuh et al., 2005; Pasacrella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Because academic advising is important to so many facets of the student experience, advisors should be trained to the utmost standards. Effective academic advisor training and development programs “define roles and responsibilities, set expectations (i.e., institutional, program, and students), and provide opportunities for the development and enhancement of attitudes, skills and behaviors essential to creating effective advisor-advisee relationships” (Brown, 2008, p. 309). Rather than a one-time event, “comprehensive advisor development should be an intentional, ongoing process” (pp. 310-311).

In this article, we provide an overview of the Appreciative Advising framework (Bloom et al., 2008), and describe how we integrate the framework in the Undergraduate Academic Advisor (UAA) onboarding, training, and professional development practices through the University Advising Center (UAC) at the University of South Carolina (UofSC). Based on an advising survey and student engagement data, we illustrate the potential benefits of the UAA onboarding and professional development model.

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Overview of UAA Model and Professional Development Needs

The mission of the UAC at UofSC is to provide undergraduate students with academic advising support and coaching that guides progression toward degree. The UAC supports the academic mission of the university by providing undergraduate students, academic advisors, and the advising community with resources, training, services, and assessment in accordance with national best practices. In accordance with the recommendations of the Advising Coordinating Taskforce (ACT), convened by the Office of the Provost in 2015, the Undergraduate Academic Advising initiative aims to provide an equitable advising experience to all undergraduate students assigned to Undergraduate Academic Advisors, or UAAs. The ACT proposed six key recommendations, two of which highlight the UAAs and their onboarding and development: the establishment of a UofSC Advising Center and hiring of First-Year Advisors (since re-titled Undergraduate Academic Advisors, or UAAs), and the provision of training and certification programs for First-Year Advisors and others who advise on the UofSC campus.

The Undergraduate Academic Advising initiative at the university encompasses the ACT recommendations and operates within a shared-split model of academic advising (King, 2008). In this model, the UAC works collaboratively with the 11 academic colleges and schools at UofSC to recruit, onboard, and support 35+ UAAs who provide holistic advisement to approximately 11,000 students annually, roughly 40% of the undergraduate population. These allocations are based on a 300:1 formula. By capping the student to advisor ratio at 300:1, UAAs can optimize caseload management including Appreciative Advising, monitoring, outreach, and intervention. UAAs may advise beyond the first year and several colleges and schools have invested in the UAA model to provide additional full-time equivalency (FTE) positions for the advisement of sophomores and new transfer students. During Fall 2021, UAAs were the assigned advisors for 8,242 total students – 5,541 FTIC students, 698 new transfer students, and 2,003 sophomores or above.

Advisor onboarding and professional development are vital components of successful advising initiatives. During Fall 2019, the UAC facilitated a climate survey to gauge UAA satisfaction with their roles, the strengths of their relationships with the UAC and the degree-granting colleges in which they advise, and their interest in professional development opportunities. The results of the climate survey indicated that while advisors appreciated the professional development opportunities afforded to them as an UAA, they did not feel that their ideas were valued or that they had opportunities to progress in the organization. Results also showed room for growth in UAAs feeling supported by the UAC (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Fall 2019 Advisor Climate Survey Results*

<i>N</i> = 24	Percent Moderately or Strongly Agree
I feel supported by the UAC	83.30%
I believe there are a variety of ways for me to develop professionally in the UAC.	90.90%
My ideas and suggestions are valued by the UAC	58.30%
I believe there are opportunities for me to progress in the UAC	60.90%

Note. Data obtained from internal records.

Consequently, multiple changes to onboarding and professional development have been enacted in the years that followed. In some circumstances new initiatives have been

implemented while in others, existing efforts have been augmented. The Appreciative Education framework was integrated through these onboarding and professional development activities.

Appreciative Education Framework

Appreciative Education is “an intentional and positive approach to bettering educational enterprises by focusing on the strengths and potential of individuals and organizations to accomplish co-created goals” (Bloom et al., 2013, pp. 5-6). It is a theory-to-practice framework based on the positive principles of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) and the tenets of Appreciative Advising (Bloom et al., 2008). Like Appreciative Advising, the Appreciative Education framework consists of six phases (i.e., Disarm, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver, and Don’t Settle).

The UAA onboarding and professional development is designed with the Appreciative Education framework in mind including consideration of advisor strengths and the well-being of individual advisors. These onboarding and professional development activities intentionally include opportunities for the development of positive, generative relationships with UAC staff and colleagues. The goal of the onboarding and further development experiences are to leverage advisor strengths and passions to co-create and accomplish individual and organizational goals.

Disarm

In the Disarm phase, administrators’ role is to create “a safe and welcoming space” (Bloom & McClellan, 2016, p. 196). As the first interaction, in which academic advisors engage with their supervisors and other advising administrators, it is vital that a positive groundwork of trust and mutual respect be created early in the onboarding and training stage. Throughout the early stages of an employee’s tenure, advising leaders may focus on establishing trusting relationships early by “demonstrating integrity, competence, loyalty, openness, and consistency” (Bloom & McClellan, 2016, p. 200).

Discover

Once trust has been established, administrators can work with new advisors to assist them in discovering their own potential in their new role. For those who are new to the role of advising, this phase might entail helping advisors make connections between their prior experiences and their new role. For more seasoned advisors, this step may be done by helping them to bridge their advising skills and talents learned at other institutions or within other departments to the expectations of their new role. Administrators can accomplish this phase by asking generative, open-ended questions to learn their new advisors’ stories. According to the simultaneity principle of Appreciative Inquiry, inquiry and change occur in the same moment (Orem et al., 2007). The questions asked early in an advisor’s tenure will guide their actions in the role over the long term. Generative, potential-oriented questions will encourage advisors to think critically and guide their behavior in a particular direction. The questions themselves set the foundation of discovery (Orem et al., 2007). Leaders can and should utilize a constructivist mindset, recognizing that knowing who an advisor is as an individual and as a professional and how they developed is a reliable predictor of what they can become (Orem et al., 2007). By understanding what personal and professional experiences lead advisors to their new roles, administrators may better aid advisors in mapping out professional development plans and future goals.

Dream

Throughout onboarding and development, advisors should be encouraged to dream about future possibilities both professionally and personally, as a result of taking on the new role. This step provides an opportunity for supervisors to learn advisors' hopes and dreams for their future and to think critically about ways to help new employees achieve their goals. The anticipatory principle of Appreciative Inquiry suggests that hopes for the future can influence behaviors in the present (Orem et al., 2007). Accordingly, supervisors should encourage new advisors to dream big early in their new roles and to discover the congruency between their personal and career goals.

Design

Once the new advisor's envisioned future is clear, the supervisor can begin to co-create plans to achieve desired results. The advising administrator's role is to act as a guide as the advisor charts a course for their new professional role. As Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Education are grounded in organizational contexts, advisors should be encouraged to lay out action plans that utilize departmental trainings and professional development opportunities to meet their anticipated outcomes. When possible, advisors' individual goals and dreams can be codified in their performance evaluation planning stages to provide additional incentive.

Deliver

Through regular interactions, in the Deliver phase advisors and supervisors work to enact the plans made in the initial stages of the Appreciative Education model. Leaders plan and facilitate regular one-on-one meetings with new advisors to check on their development and encourage progress in their action plans. Furthermore, leaders can use these individual meetings to highlight early successes and accentuate advisor strengths. At times, supervisors may also need to help advisors reframe setbacks and challenges faced as learning opportunities. According to the poetic principle of Appreciative Inquiry, most stories can be reframed to incite hope (Orem et al., 2007).

Don't Settle

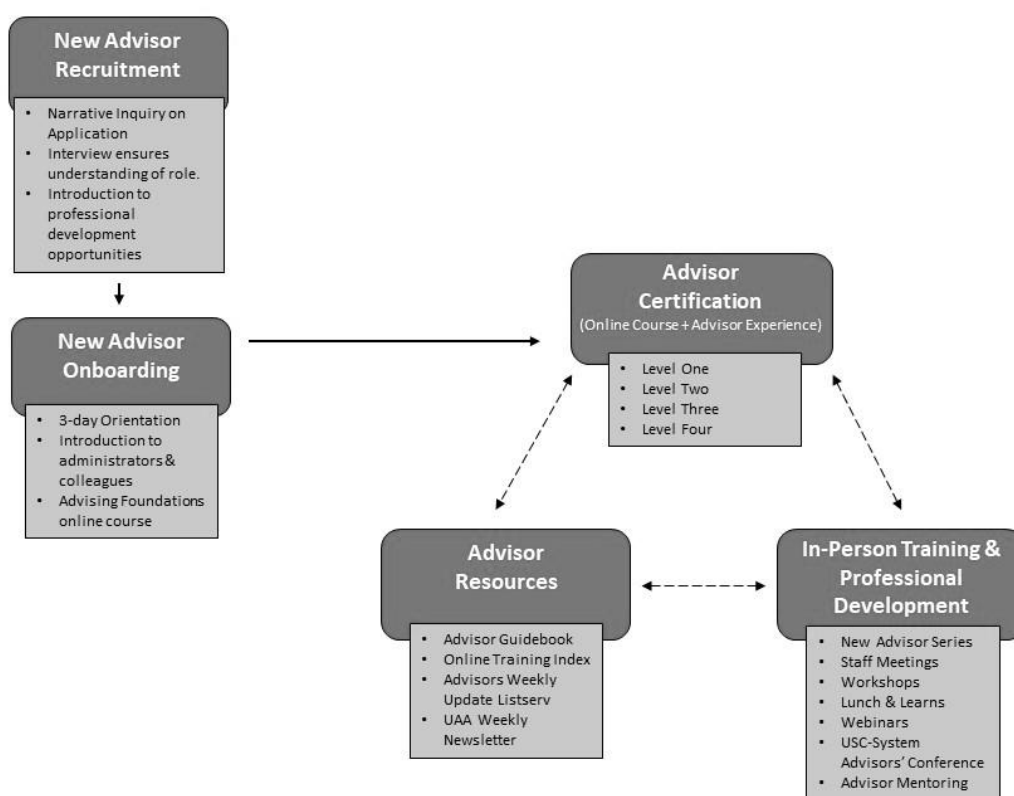
Recognizing that professional development is not a one-time event, appreciative supervisors encourage continued growth throughout an advisor's time in their position. Supervisors should strive to provide new opportunities for advisors to use their skills and grow as professionals and individuals. As advisors gain proficiency in the skills and knowledge needed to successfully perform their role, new and further advanced responsibilities can be added to an advisor's portfolio, which may take the form of promotion through an advising career ladder through which an advisor can earn advancement opportunities in their current role (Taylor, 2011). Advisors might also expand their capacity, skills, and knowledge through committee work at their home institution and within national organizations, such as NACADA, the Global Community for Academic Advising. Finally, advisors can be encouraged to share what they have learned in and about the role of advising through trainings on their campus, presentations at regional and national conferences, and scholarly publications. Appreciative supervisors help employees find best-fit opportunities for advancement and professional development.

UAA Onboarding and Professional Development

The Appreciative Education framework (Bloom et al., 2013) informs UAA onboarding and professional development at UofSC (see Figure 1). Beginning at the point of application and continuing through promotion via the UAC's Advising Career Ladder,

advisors are encouraged to develop and contribute to the positive momentum of advising at UofSC. Increased emphasis has been placed on the recruitment process as an informal stage in new advisor training. Initial onboarding was expanded from a one-day process to a three-day experience in which the UAC leadership builds rapport and relationships with advisors while learning about their professional goals. To combat advisors' concerns that their ideas are not valued, multiple opportunities for peer-to-peer leadership have been enacted. Through engagement with communities of practice advisors envision the UAC and advising at UofSC in its best state and help move the organization forward in a positive direction. Advisor mentorship gives new UAAs a space to be heard while elevating seasoned advisors as leaders within the organization. Training and certification remain robust aspects of advisor development at UofSC. Finally, advising career ladders were already in development prior to the climate survey, but significant progress has been made increasing the number of advisors pursuing this career growth. In this section, we describe each of these practices in detail.

Figure 1. UAA Appreciative Training and Development Model



New Advisor Recruitment

The UAC's appreciative onboarding process begins at the point of application. Interested candidates submit an application that features three narrative inquiry questions that get at the heart of the role of advising and candidates' commitment to the work of advising:

1. Describe your academic advising and/or student organization advising experience.
2. Describe your approach to advising an incoming freshman or transfer student in their first year at USC-Columbia.

3. Explain your level of commitment to working with students in transition and articulate how your previous experience has increased your passion for advising as a career.

The first two questions direct candidates to reflect on their prior experiences and make meaning of how these experiences have prepared them for the UAA role. The third question encourages candidates to reflect on their true level of commitment to the nature of advising. The UAC strives to identify candidates who want to pursue academic advising as a career. Many young higher education professionals today see advising as a step on their career ladder. Through this last supplemental question, UAC administrators are better able to gauge candidate's serious commitment prior to the interview phase.

In the first round of interviews, significant time is dedicated to helping candidates understand the shared-split model of academic advising employed by the UAC (King, 2008). In this model, the UAC works collaboratively with the 11 academic colleges and schools at UofSC to recruit, onboard, and support 35+ UAAs who provide holistic advisement to over 11,000 students annually. By the nature of this model, UAAs report to a college supervisor in their assigned school who provides direct day-to-day supervision and receive general oversight and guidance from the Associate Director of Undergraduate Academic Advising in the UAC. Because knowing and becoming are inextricably linked, it is important that advisor candidates can see themselves operating successfully in this environment (Orem et al., 2007).

Then in the second round of interviews, questions are focused on operations performed by UAAs and challenges faced by UAAs in their day-to-day work: work with transfer students, academic intervention, the pace of academic advising, effectively resolving student questions, influencing students, building trusting relationships, and staying up to date on emerging trends in higher education. Consistent with the simultaneity principle, described earlier, these questions set the tone for the role prior to candidates being hired. Questions and responses in the interview phase set the stage for discovery and these discoveries lead to opportunities presented and action plans co-created throughout an advisor's first years in the job.

New Advisor Onboarding

After their hire is finalized, UAAs participate in a three-day onboarding process to provide them with both a big picture understanding of the UAC and its mission as well as the technical skills to perform their role effectively in their first weeks on the job. Through this process, UAAs interact with various members of the UAC Administrative Team and complete Advising Foundations, the first piece of an extensive online course and the component necessary for all advisors to obtain technology permissions. Upon completing Advising Foundations, the university's data steward grants new advisors access to advising technologies (e.g., Banner, EAB Navigate, and DegreeWorks). Completion of Foundations as a gateway to technology access ensures that new advisors understand the privacy and confidentiality of student information as well as other legal and ethical considerations prior to having access to that information.

This extended onboarding also provides advisors with an understanding of the background and functional areas of the UAC and the importance of their role within the greater organization. One-on-one meetings are set for the new advisor or advisors with each member of the University Advising Center Leadership team, or a representative from each functional area. This strategy emphasizes the Disarm phase of Appreciative Education – new staff members build rapport and connections with multiple staff members who will be a part of supporting their work.

The onboarding process itself is a means of Appreciative Inquiry, developed by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987), the organizational behavior theory that “provides a positive rather than a problem-based lens on the organization, focusing members’ attention on what is possible rather than what is wrong” (van Buskirk, 2002, p. 67). By demonstrating to new advisors how their work will directly integrate and support the greater mission of the organization, it creates an experience of buy-in to the organization. It also makes it clear, by forming ties to institutional mission, that their role has value.

UAA Mentors

One of the individuals that UAAs meet during their initial three-day onboarding is their Undergraduate Advising Mentor. All new UAAs are paired with a seasoned academic advisor who serves as a mentor during an advisor’s first year. UAA Mentors fulfill an important leadership role in the Undergraduate Academic Advising program. They help welcome new UAAs into the advising community, provide guidance in the delivery of high-quality, developmental advising, and offer additional support with individual advisor development. Mentors guide and support mentees on their roster through their first year as an advisor. Through their mentorship, they expand the capacity of the UAC to support and develop new staff while developing a supportive relationship with their mentees from their first days as UAC advisors.

University Advising Center Training and Certification

The Academic Advisor Training and Certification Program provides all academic advisors the knowledge and skills needed to effectively support and guide students to degree completion. It is a multi-faceted program that covers seven different competency areas, which are aligned with the NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model and framework (NACADA, 2017). Advisors must complete online courses, attend in-person training, and meet experiential requirements to obtain certification.

The program competency areas include:

1. Advising Practices at UofSC
2. University Policies & Procedures
3. Academic Programs & Requirements
4. Advising Technology
5. My UofSC Experience & Campus Resources
6. Undergraduate Students & Special Populations
7. Advising Profession & Practice

Online Courses. The online courses include the introductory, Advising Foundations, and levels 1-4. The courses are comprised of topic specific modules, which include videos and quizzes, that cover the seven competency areas. Depth and complexity of information presented increases as advisors move from Advising Foundations through level 4. For example, Advising Foundations introduces the concept of student experiential learning and levels 1-3 provide a more in-depth look at specific pathways for experiential learning that students can pursue.

Designed as an “orientation” to advising at the University of South Carolina, Advising Foundations covers essential information for all new advisors at UofSC-Columbia. New UAA’s complete Advising Foundations on their first day as it is required for access to

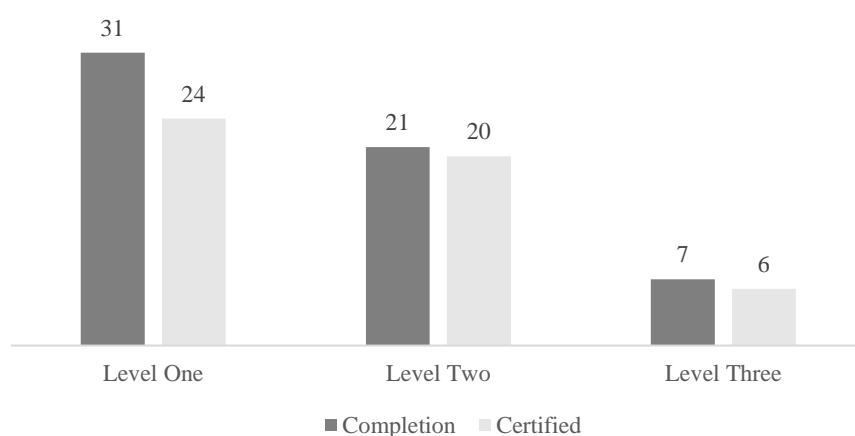
advising technology and student information systems. Content includes overviews of the institution's advising structure, Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), general education requirements, advising technologies, campus resources, and the Advisor Training and Certification Program. This foundation allows advisors to better understand how their role fits in to the greater advising structure and the multitude of advising related training and professional development opportunities available to them at the institution.

In addition to completing Advising Foundations, new UAAs also complete level one and begin level two during the onboarding process. The intention is that by the end of the initial 3-day onboarding process UAAs will have learned advising related information common to all advisors at the institution prior to receiving training on the specifics of their advising unit and curriculum.

Experiential Learning. Experiential learning activities must also be completed beginning with level one to meet certification requirements. Examples of experiential learning includes advisement of a specific number of students, case study responses, and developing a personal philosophy of advising. The development of a personal philosophy of advising showcases the Discover phase of Appreciative Education as the advisor spends time in reflection and telling the story of their own strengths as it contributes to their advisor role.

Advisor Certification. Advisors may be certified at levels 1-4 by completing the online course modules, in-person training, and meeting experiential requirements established at each level (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. *UAA Course Completion and Certification*



Note. Data obtained from internal records.

Certification opens opportunities for advisors to further their professional development through activities such as attending professional conferences at the regional and national level, participating in the Appreciative Advising Course and Institute, and participating in NACADA online eTutorial courses. Certification relates to the Don't Settle phase of Appreciative Education as these opportunities provide advisors continued professional growth and development.

In-Person Training & Professional Development

There are many opportunities for advisors to participate in in-person training & professional development events. These opportunities enhance advisors' growth as professionals while preparing them for future roles and goals, and are related to the Deliver phase of Appreciative Education in which staff members can choose events to attend that will

help them achieve their professional goals established in the Dream and Design phases. Presenters include campus partners, content experts, and advisor peers. Topics addressed include advising best practices, University policy and procedure updates, and current advising trends. UAAs are encouraged to share their expertise by facilitating training workshops.

In-person trainings focus on the knowledge/skills necessary to perform current advisor job duties. The “what, when, how” of advising related to the topic are addressed and topics align with the training course curriculum and may include policy/procedure information and updates, general education notes, advising technology, advising special student populations, support services & referral process, Appreciative Advising workshop, etc. In-person trainings have measurable learning outcomes that are assessed.

Professional development opportunities enhance the advisor’s growth as a professional and prepares them for future roles and goals. Topics may include advising best practices, theoretical concepts, current advising trends, article/book discussions, advisor presentations related to conference attendance, etc.

UofSC System Advisors’ Conference

The Office of the Provost and the UAC host an annual UofSC system-wide conference for advisors focusing on best practices, student support, and innovative strategies. All advisors and campus partners from the UofSC-system campuses are invited to attend and submit a proposal to present during a concurrent session. This conference provides an opportunity for about 200 attendees to come together around a common theme and share their experiences and knowledge with each other. UAAs often take the opportunity to present at this event.

Advisor Resources

Additional resources are available to advisors including information and tools to help them in their advising role. The UofSC Academic Advisors Weekly Update listserv email, UAA Weekly Newsletter, and UAA listserv provide advisors with relevant and timely information related to their roles. The online “Training Index” is a searchable repository of over 200 training videos and resources that have been created for advisors. For those who prefer print materials, the Academic Advising Guidebook (AAG) is a comprehensive, 200-page companion resource to the online training and certification program.

Advising Communities of Practices

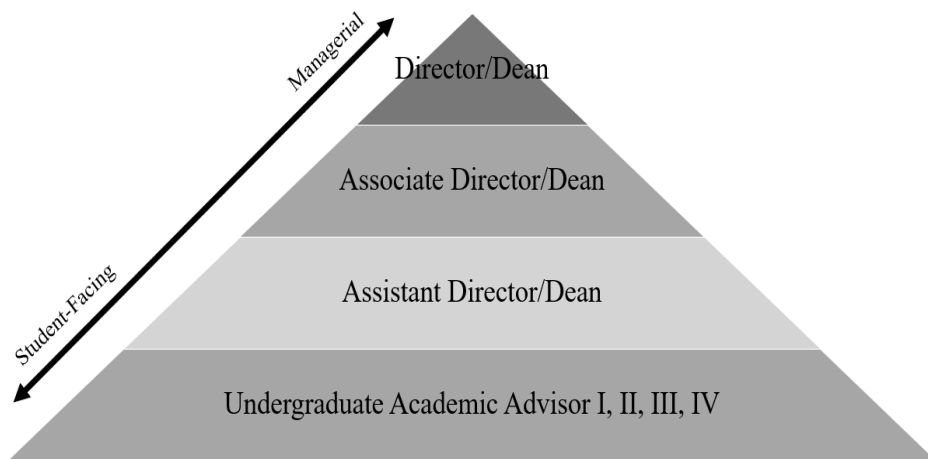
Beginning in advisors’ first weeks of employment, they are eligible to join a community of practice. According to Wenger et al. (2002), “communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis (p. 4).” UofSC Advising Communities of practice are groups of advisors who share interest in a topic related to advising or advisors work-life. Advisors in a community of practice engage in literature, best practice, and intellectual dialogue on topics such as academic intervention, advisor well-being, orientation advising, experiential learning, and flipped advising. They bring their college/department experience to their community. They discuss new solutions, document them, and integrate them into practice. They return to their college/department with expanded capabilities to test the application of their ideas against real world problems. Communities of practice share their learning with the UAC as a whole at regular meetings. Through their expertise they influence strategic direction and decision making at the department and institutional levels. Communities of practice engage in generative dialogue,

and in doing so, challenge existing paradigms surrounding advising and advising administration at UofSC (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006).

Advising Career Ladder

Officially launched in Fall 2019, UAAs can participate in a tiered career ladder that partners job responsibility with tenure in the position. The career leader provides advisors a clear path for advancement in advising positions. This system provides the UAC both leverage in recruiting high-potential academic advisors and a financial and professional recognition system that encourages advisor longevity and creativity in their roles. According to Taylor (2011), this continuity “ensures a common experience for students and allows them to develop more meaningful advising relationships” (p. 133). UAAs are eligible to advance in responsibilities, salary (5-15%), and title every 24 months. The primary goal of the UAA career ladder is to retain high-quality academic advisors in student-facing positions while rewarding excellent work and allowing advisors to shape their professional experiences.

Figure 3. *UofSC Advisor Career Ladder Critical to Retaining Student-Facing Advisors*



When UAAs are eligible for promotion through the advising career ladder, they submit an internal application to the UAC Tier Review Committee. The application requires UAAs to reflect on their past two years, lessons learned, how they have interacted with special populations, academic interventions they have facilitated, communications sent to their advisees, their engagement beyond their role, and trainings they have attended. The application also requires UAAs to reflect on a specific positive comment left by a student in their close-of-appointment surveys. Following application, candidates for a promotion participate in a 60-minute conference with the UAC Tier Review Committee wherein they are asked individualized, reflective questions based on their application. At the conclusion of this review, the Tier Review Committee works with the advisor to co-design additional duties and responsibilities that can be added to their official position description and be sent on to human resources as justification for promotion along the career ladder. These additional duties and responsibilities are often tied to topics or special populations that UAAs are passionate about and build upon advisor strengths. See below for a sample of Tier II Additional duties that have been taken on by advisors who have successfully advanced through the career ladder (UAC, n.d.):

- Assist with Athletic Certifications and serve as liaison between athletic department and assigned college to ensure quality advising for student athletes.
- Serve as the primary advisor for a specialized population of students (e.g., Athletes, Opportunity Scholars Program participants)
- Implement career conversations into advising appointments based on national best practices and strategies.
- Develop and implement specialized advising strategies for transfer students.
- Serve as the departmental contact for all faculty mentorship events, assisting with logistics and coordination of event on the day of. Work with departmental faculty and staff to create a faculty/student mentor network that matches students to appropriate faculty mentor based on student career interests.

In addition to the benefits that this career ladder provides for students, advisors, and the institution, it also generates a “positive restlessness” among advisors as they observe their peers earning recognition and promotions and envision their own future professional growth. The possibility of promotion is a frequent topic of conversation among supervisors and UAAs in one-on-one meetings and is a focus of an advisor’s first annual performance review.

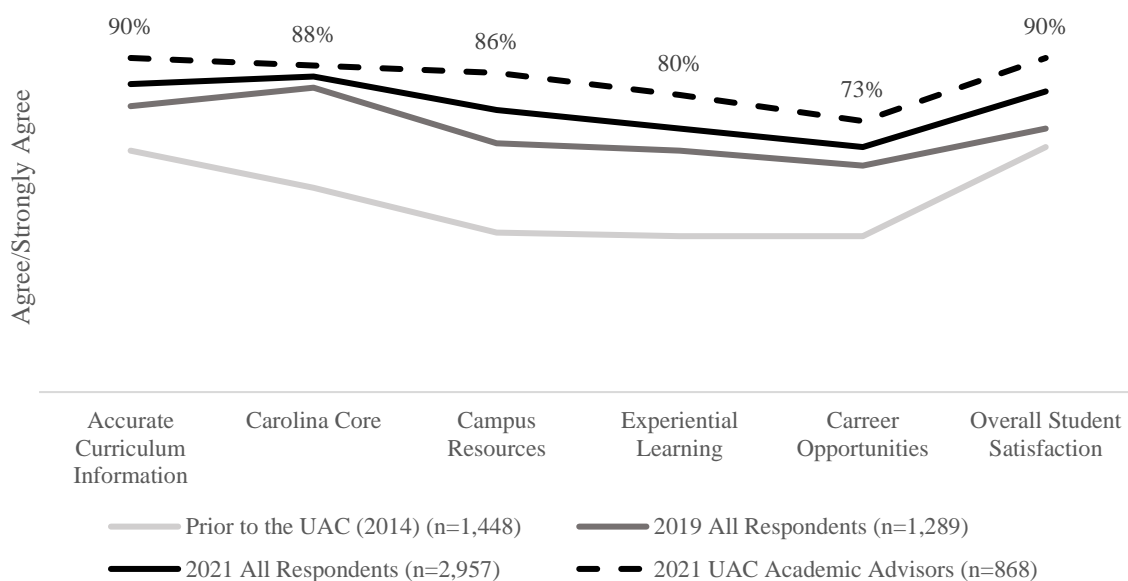
Impact of UAA Onboarding and Professional Development on Student Success

The onboarding and professional development that UAC advisors receive benefits students in noticeable ways. Since the establishment of the Undergraduate Academic Advising initiative in 2016, the institution has experienced gains in both first- to second-year retention as well as four and six-year graduation rates. From 2016 to 2018, UofSC attained a 3.7% increase in four-year graduations, as well as a 1% increase in the six-year graduation rate (EAB, 2018). Although the UAC cannot take all the credit for these positive institutional outcomes, the UAC has significantly improved the student advising experience.

Undergraduate Advising Survey

Biannually, an electronic survey is distributed to undergraduate students. From spring 2014 to spring 2019, the instrument was sent to a stratified random sample. In spring 2021, the survey was sent to all undergraduate students. Survey response has mirrored the student population across the colleges and student classifications. Survey design is mixed methods and includes Likert-scale and open-ended questions. The intent of this survey is to measure students’ perceptions of the undergraduate academic advising environment, students’ perceptions of advising outcomes, and students’ knowledge of policies and procedures related to academic advising. Figure 4 exemplifies the fact that since the establishment of the UAC and advisor training and development programs at UofSC, academic advising has significantly improved. Further, UAAs employed by the UAC who undergo the onboarding and support mechanisms provided by the UAC outperform their faculty and staff advisor peers on several measures.

Figure 4. *UofSC Undergraduate Advising Survey Results 2014, 2019, 2021*

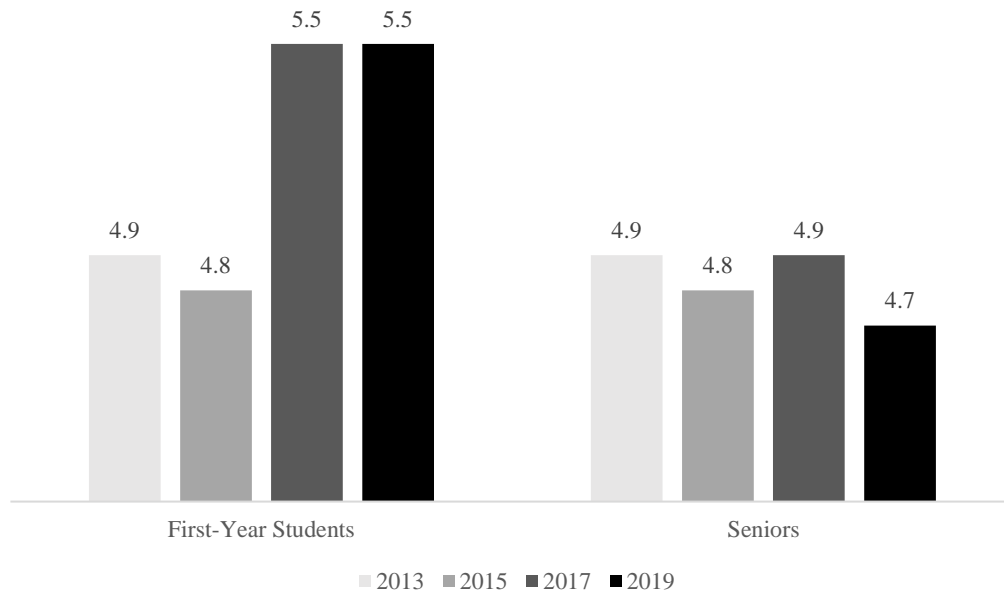


Note. Data obtained from internal records

National Survey of Student Engagement

UofSC participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) every other year. One question on the NSSE asks first-year students and seniors to rate the quality of their interactions with academic advisors. In 2015, prior to the establishment of the UAC and the Undergraduate Academic Advising Initiative, first-year students rated their interactions with academic advisors at a 4.8 mean (out of 7.0) (NSSE, 2015). In the years following the establishment of the UAC and the hiring and training of UAAs, first-year student perceptions of their interactions with advisors have improved to a mean score of 5.5 in 2017 and 2019 (NSSE, 2017; NSSE 2019). Over that same timeframe, seniors’ perceptions of their interactions with advisors has remained relatively constant (see Figure 5). These upper division students are majority advised by non-UAA advisors (faculty and staff) hired, trained, and overseen by staff in the degree-granting colleges. According to the results of the 2019 NSSE results (see Figure 6), the University Advising Center’s approach to training UAAs has shown compelling achievement when compared to other southeastern public secondary institutions and institutions in the University’s Carnegie class. UofSC’s efforts track directly with other leading institutions, topping the charts for first-year student interaction with academic advisors.

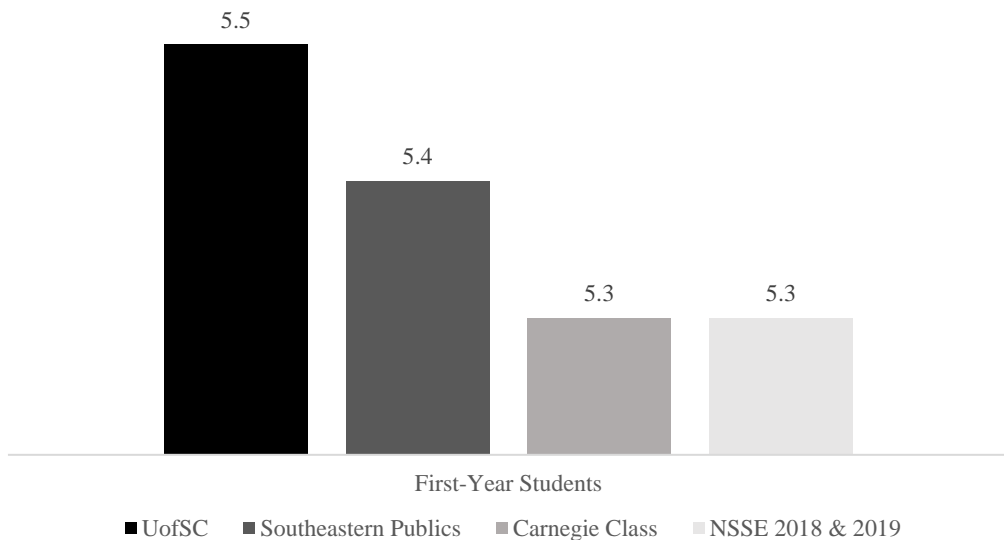
Figure 5. *Quality of Interactions with Academic Advisors - 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019*



Note. Data from NSSE 2017 frequencies and statistical comparisons University of South Carolina Columbia.

https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/institutional_research_assessment_and_analytics/documents/cirp_nsse_reports/2017_nsse_freqstatcomparisons.pdf

Figure 6. *Quality of Interactions with Academic Advisors – Institution Comparison*



Note. Data from NSSE 2019 frequencies and statistical comparisons University of South Carolina Columbia.

https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/institutional_research_assessment_and_analytics/documents/cirp_nsse_reports/2019_nsse_freqstatcomparisons.pdf

Conclusion

The UAA onboarding and professional development model, although time-consuming is worth the effort required of administrators to prepare new advisors for their role while setting them up for success both personally and professionally. The challenge and support (Sanford, 1962) offered to new academic advisors through the UAA training and professional development model is a best practice as evidenced by the gains in student retention and student perception of the quality of their academic advising in the years since the model was established.

Many of the training and development opportunities described herein have been in existence or in development since the foundation of the UAC. Others are newer additions in recent years established as a result of the UAA Climate Survey distributed in 2019. The UAC has rolled much of this model out over the course of two years, which has allowed for each new effort to exist on its own for a time and not overwhelm advisors with new opportunities. Administrators tasked with developing or enhancing onboarding and professional development efforts could begin by surveying staff and faculty advisors to determine shortfalls in the current environment. Then utilizing tenets of the Appreciative Education framework and a robust review of available literature on training and professional social climate endeavor to enact new and improve existing opportunities on campus.

Academic advising is one of the most impactful ways that an institution can improve the student experience. For advising programs to be most successful, administrators need to devote the time necessary to recruiting and developing high-potential academic advisors. The Appreciative Education theory-to-practice framework (Bloom et al., 2013) offers a theory-based, practical means of doing so. Beginning with building trust in the Disarm phase to ensuring that high-performing advisors are continually challenged and learning in the Don't Settle phase, the Appreciative Education framework offers a unique guide for advisor training and development efforts.

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