

# The State of UC Advising

July 2025

An introductory report from the UC Undergraduate Academic Advising Council

## Introduction

The [UC Undergraduate Academic Advising Council](#) (UCUAAC) is the formal organization of academic advising leaders from each UC campus. We collaborate across campus lines to improve and advocate for undergraduate student learning and the academic advising profession.

In this report, we highlight the identities, impacts, and needs of UC academic advisors. Our goal is to illuminate the work of academic advising across the UC, and to develop a stronger connection between campus student support professionals and systemwide leadership.

Our work encompasses complexity, depth, and breadth. It ranges from directly advising students from diverse populations on their academics and career preparation, to a wide scope of critical administrative responsibilities. We are a diverse, engaged, and mission-driven community. While we see the transformative impact of our work, we also identify institutional gaps that limit our ability to fully support students. This report provides an introduction to academic advisors and our work across the UC system.

## Who advisors are

**Academic advisors are our system's best experts in supporting student learning, development, and success.** Our expertise is built on ongoing academic training and professional experience. A recent survey by Soria et al. (2023) showed that 82% of academic advisors have master's or doctoral degrees, enriching our profession with intersecting expertise. Our work is rooted in the NACADA Core Competencies: conceptual (advising approaches and theories), informational (academic policy and institutional knowledge), and relational (nurturing partnerships and building rapport).

Advisors must be intellectually nimble and insightful, often operating in grey areas, navigating conflicts, and remembering a wealth of institutional knowledge. The variety and complexity of our work requires strong skills in critical thinking, ethical decision-making, collaboration with a variety of constituents, and cultural humility and competence.

To better understand and support our professional community, UCUAAC will survey UC advisors on personal backgrounds, professional and academic history, and experiences in their work. We also hope to gather aggregate data from colleagues at UCOP.

Advisors at all levels except management recently became union represented. Pay, advancement opportunities, and staffing levels are perennial concerns for student services professionals. We hope for a mutually beneficial contract that works toward fair work conditions despite the challenges of our current climate and budget crises.

**Data from the most recent UC Undergraduate Experience Survey shows the impact of advisors on key measures of student success.**

**83% of undergraduates sought advice from an advisor, and most had positive experiences.**

While the largest share of respondents sought our advice about academic planning (58%), our conversations also included major exploration (44%), financial concerns (19%), careers (18%), and extracurriculars (17%).

72% of UC undergraduates said advisors helped them develop strategies for achieving academic goals.

83% said advisors helped them understand policies.

63% said advisors helped them explore career goals.

Students felt that information from advisors was accurate (89%), clear (88%), and consistent (88%).

**Advisors' positive impact on learning goes beyond our obvious job responsibilities:**

57% of students said advisors helped them build communication skills, while 54% said advisors helped them understand people from other cultures and backgrounds.

## Systemwide Policy Impact

In 2024, UCUAAC helped improve systemwide policy with a proposal to replace the word “probation” with “academic notice” in our academic standing regulations. This aligns our official language with advising, prioritizing student support over penalties.

Our colleagues in the UC Senate enthusiastically accelerated the approval process, writing that “UCUAAC represents the opinion of people who work closely with students and in many respects know the students and their academic circumstances better than anyone else; we trust their judgment.”

## Highlights of Advising Work

**BioSci Learning Communities at UC Irvine** are an advisor-created program combining strategic enrollment management with student engagement. First-year majors are enrolled in cohorts for key courses, including an advisor-led seminar on navigating college. Participants report that LCs helped them form at least one close connection (91%), contributed to a sense of belonging (72%), and positively impacted their academics (67%).

**The Pre-Professional Advising Team at UC Santa Barbara** highlights how advisors create comprehensive and coordinated resources: The team provides advising and programming for pre-health and pre-law students and alumni, including workshops, panels, presentations, alumni partnerships, a Pre-Law Mentorship Program, and a collaboration with UCLA Health that connects doctors with undergraduates in a 2-unit course.

## What we do

Academic Advisors play a critical role in student learning, retention, and institutional well-being. Along with academic planning, our programming supports key success factors including teaching problem-solving and goal-setting, cultivating engagement, and fostering belonging.

**New advising modalities make us increasingly accessible.** Along with traditional one-on-one meetings, most of us now offer virtual appointments and online chat. Group advising in workshops and orientations helps us efficiently advise larger populations and cultivate student connection. Advisors also engage students through email, newsletters, and social media. We’ve increased access points — but without additional resources to support the rise in demand, this has increased advisor workload.

**Advisors spend significant time on critical administrative tasks** to uphold the basic functions of our institutions: evaluating transfer credit; writing, revising, and upholding policy; program development and management; hiring and managing student staff; facilitating scholarships; curriculum development; enrollment management and course scheduling; event coordination. Every class taken and every degree certified happen thanks to an advisor managing processes behind the scenes.

**Effective academic advising requires ongoing professional development.** For nearly 20 years, the annual UC Academic Advising conference has provided a space for reflection, improvement, and engagement in our work. With roughly 300 attendees annually, it’s one of our best opportunities for highly-relevant professional growth. However, like most advisor development, it’s self-funded and self-organized, with no systemwide support.

Intellectual learning communities for advisors deepen engagement in the profession, facilitate innovation, and cultivate belonging for staff and students. The Advising Communities of Excellence (ACE) Professional Development Program at UCLA provides a top example of institutional support, with a full-time director and a strong community of contributors to a variety of professional development initiatives.

However, ACE is an exception, as UCs generally lack centralized advisor training or development: In our 2024 survey of the UC advising landscape, we found that only 2 of 9 undergraduate campuses have staff dedicated to advisor training and development; only 2 campuses have required advisor-specific training; and only UCLA has centralized training for new advisors.

## Challenges & Needs

**Advisors seek greater recognition for our expertise.** Confusion about what academic advisors do and underestimating our expertise lead to misuse of our time and missed opportunities to utilize our skills. We need to define our professional scope and competencies, and build systemic support for our best work. In our 2024 survey, UC advising leaders shared that only 4 of 9 undergraduate campuses have learning objectives for advising or centralized

## Mission Statement of the UC Undergraduate Academic Advising Council

UCUAAC promotes student success by advancing the field of academic advising throughout the University of California system.

We provide vital opportunities for professional development for academic advisors; we collaborate systemwide to promote continuous improvement; we advocate for policies and procedures to promote the success of our students. Through the advancement of academic advising theory, research, and practice, we foster student development and respond to the unique needs of California's diverse student population.

## Recent UCUAAC Leadership

2025-26: Jill Richardson, EdD,  
UC Irvine

2024-25: Raven Avery Yoshitomi,  
MEd, UC Irvine

2023-24: Brett McFarlane, EdD,  
UC Riverside

2022-23: David Spight, EdD,  
UC Irvine

2021-22: Stacey Sketo-Rosener,  
UC Santa Cruz

coordination. Academic advising and student affairs positions are frequently used as catch-all roles, assigned tasks unrelated to advising or student success. This misuse of advising staff time increases workload and distracts from our primary responsibility of supporting student academic success. We hope greater recognition of advising expertise will include representation at UCOP, and stronger strategic collaboration with faculty and campus administrators.

**Academic advising sees high burnout and attrition due to heavy workloads and compassion fatigue.** Approximately 41% of advisors feel burned out once a week or more (Soria et al., 2023) and 40% say they plan to leave the profession in the next five years (Civitas Learning, n.d.). These nationwide trends are exacerbated in the UC by budget cuts, uncertainty around unionization, and high costs of living in communities near campuses.

**Many UCs provide students with too few advisors.** Data gathered in 2024 shows student-to-advisor ratios across the UC range from 185 students per advisor to as high as 1,515 students per advisor. While NACADA's recommendation of 269 students per advisor is often cited, we agree with the Boyer Commission 2030 report that even 300:1 is "no longer adequate ... to best serve post-pandemic and increasingly diverse and complex undergraduate student populations, whose complicated academic career options and life circumstances require more, not less, expert academic and personal guidance."

**We need technology that is updated and integrated.** Archaic systems lead to hours spent on inefficient and error-prone manual processes, rather than direct student contact. Campuses have failed to integrate critical systems, such as degree planning tools, transfer course articulation, registrar data, and advising data. In our systemwide survey, we found that UC advisors reference up to 10 distinct systems daily for basic information.

Advisors seek support in the basic quality of our work life. We would like campuses to ensure continued hybrid and flexible work options, improved onboarding for advisors, and more opportunities for career development and growth, such as regular salary equity reviews and advancement opportunities. We hope a closer partnership with colleagues at UCOP will help uplift UC advisors, and UC students through our well-supported work.

## References

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