

## **ADVISING SNAPSHOT**

### September 2020 Edition

### **Tips and Tools for Virtual Academic Advising**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic face-to-face advising appointments may not be feasible. Like everything else these days, advising may need to go virtual. What has to happen to shift to virtual advising?

#### **Planning for Virtual Advising**

Choose a platform. The UARC has used both Collaborate Ultra (requires you to send students a link to join the appointment) and MS Teams (you can simply “call” the student at the appointment time). In the fall the UARC is exclusively using MS Teams for advising.

1. Benefits of Teams:
  - a. All faculty and students have access to MS Teams as part of Office 365
  - b. Office 365 programs are supported by IT
  - c. Students may already be familiar with using it if they’ve been to the UARC this fall
  - d. Does not require extensive set up prior to appointment
2. Challenges of Teams
  - a. Upon becoming more comfortable with Teams, students may attempt to call their advisor outside of scheduled appointments
  - b. Students may not be familiar with Teams and may need comprehensive instructions (although this could be true of any virtual platform)
3. Instructions for using Teams (<https://uwosh.edu/it/working-remotely/>)
4. Communicate with students in advance. You will need to clearly explain how you will conduct advising and provide detailed instructions, so students are prepared for their advising session
  - a. This link can be sent to students to instruct them on how to set up Teams: <https://uwosh.edu/advising/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/2020/08/Virtual-Appointment-Instructions.pdf>
  - b. Offer an alternative (phone) for students who do not have the technology necessary for virtual advising

5. Test your video before each appointment to make sure the camera is high enough to avoid awkward angles, there is enough light for you to be clearly visible, and that your background is clear of any unwanted or private items.
6. Understand that online advising, like online teaching, takes more time and energy.
7. Use Navigate to facilitate appointment scheduling and documentation of advising. (Click here for Navigate instructions created by Dr. Dana Merriman, Biology Dept. <https://uwosh.edu/advising/for-faculty-advisors/navigate-training-resources/>)
8. Take a look at the student's Advisement Report to prepare remaining requirements for which student needs to plan.

### **Conducting Virtual Advising**

1. Present yourself in a way that is similar to how you present yourself to students when you meet in person.
2. Set-up a "disconnect plan" at the start of each meeting so the student knows what to expect if there are other technical difficulties – i.e. phone number to call if there is a connection issue.
3. Virtual advising works best when both parties use their camera. Let the student know that they are able to use their video if they are able/would like to, but that they do not have to do so. Consider following their lead on whether or not to appear on video and then mirror their choice.
4. Ask how your students are doing; watch and listen for clues in addition to their actual words.
5. Work to connect students to other campus resources beyond just links to additional information they can read on a website.
6. If a student apologizes for being a bother, which is more likely for virtual advising, let them know that they are never a bother and that you are happy to help them.
7. Make sure students feel like virtual interactions are meaningful, and not just a business transaction.
8. Share your screen, when appropriate, to help students better understand what you are teaching (ie: websites, planning sheets, Advisement Report, TitanWeb, etc.). NOTE: be sure other sensitive or private information on your screen is not visible to the student (ie: your email, another students TW page, etc.).
9. Whether at home or in public, be aware of who is around you and what they can hear. Take steps to ensure privacy.
10. Remind the student that the notes from your interaction will be in Navigate (under Reports).

**In some cases phone and/or email advising may be necessary or appropriate.**

#### **Recommendations for using the phone for virtual advising:**

1. Ask your students for a unique identifier such as student ID# or Titan email account.
2. Ask your students if this is still an okay time for them to speak on the phone.
3. Set-up a "disconnect plan" at the start of each meeting so the students knows what to expect if there is a bad connection or there are other technical difficulties – i.e. I will call you back if we disconnect, and if that does not work I will send you an email.
4. Remember that you will not have the same visual cues as face-to-face advising, so it is even more important to listen closely and be patient during pauses.

5. Remind the student that the notes from your interaction will be in Navigate (under Reports).

### **Recommendations for using emails for virtual advising:**

1. Treat each email as an advising session.
2. Add a general greeting and personalized closing message – this helps keep the communication flow and encourages the student to continue reaching out.
3. Anticipate additional information that students may need – i.e. if a student asks for an enrollment deadline, check to see if they have any holds, ask if they know what classes they are taking yet, and ask how they are doing.
4. Use professional language but not overly formal language.
5. Respond to students as quickly as possible, ideally within 2 business days. If you have to find additional information, let the student know and follow-up.
6. Use their UWO email only.
7. Copy or summarize your email exchange in a Report on Appointment in Navigate.

“Regardless of the delivery method, each advising session should make the student feel cared for, understood, and valued, and convey the message that the advisor is competent and knowledgeable about policies, procedures, and student issues. Advisors should continually monitor the quality of their communications through mentally reviewing a checklist.

- Did I include a greeting or warm statement?
- Did I provide the information that the student requested and anticipate the student’s needs by providing additional information?
- Did I reinforce student successes and establish a sense of shared responsibility?
- Did I establish a clear outline of next steps and invite follow-up communication?

Students will appreciate and value your efforts to connect with them. Look for their feedback in their email responses, lift in their voices, or smiles on their faces. This feedback will help you to know the positive impact you are making in the lives of your online students.” (Ohrablo, 2016)

## **Registration Support**

### **TitanWeb Help**

Students: <https://uwosh.edu/registrar/students/titanweb-help/>

Share this link with your advisees to provide them with instructions for using TitanWeb and College Scheduler to register for classes.

### **Peer Advising Liaisons (PALs) in the UARC**

Refer advisees to the PALs in the UARC for virtual registration assistance. Students can request this assistance by calling the UARC at 920-424-1268.

### **Reference: Advising Online Students: Replicating Best Practices of Face-to-Face Advising**

Ohrablo, Sue. (2016). National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Clearinghouse. Accessed September 21, 2020.

<https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advising-Online-Students-Replicating-Best-Practices-of-Face-to-Face-Advising.aspx>

Brought to you by the UARC Faculty Advisor Development (FAD) workgroup.  
Send feedback to: [whalley@uwosh.edu](mailto:whalley@uwosh.edu)

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