ACG Workload Survey report
Submitted 3.10.2016 to UAAEC Chair, Dr. Susan Poch

BACKGROUND:

The academic advising context for Washington State University is quite varied with multiple advising offices throughout Pullman and the urban campuses. Some offices use a somewhat centralized office of several advisors while others use single departmental advisors or faculty advisors. Challenges include differences in workloads, differing core job requirements, numerous non-advising requirements, minimal performance standards in many cases, a varied range of department and degree graduation requirements, and continuing budget restraints that often impact hiring practices and therefore optimal advisor performance.

OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of this survey was to collect system wide data on workloads of advisors in terms of the number of advisees, the type of job activities, and to compare actual job activities to job descriptions to clarify and support current discussions and future assessment of both WSU's advising system and the Advising Strategic Plan. Additional comments, observations, and recommendations were solicited, including a request for respondents to identify areas in undergraduate advising that could be improved. Limited statistical analysis is available for much of this report due to the exploratory nature of the questions, self-report data, and the challenges of the many differences in advising practices.

OVERVIEW:

The survey was developed by an ACG committee consisting of Tom Whitacre, Director of Advising, College of Arts and Sciences, and Committee Chair; Jessica Cassleman, Assistant Dean, Honors College; Dr. Jeremy Lessmann, Clinical Assistant Professor (and Advisor), Chemistry Department; Karla Makus, Academic Coordinator, School of Economic Sciences; and Megan Comstock, Academic Coordinator, Carson College of Business. Potential respondents were identified as all primary advisors in Pullman (including Global Campus) with an advising workload during the 2014-2015 advising year as listed in the myWSU student information system. A pilot qualtrics survey was initiated the last week of September 2015 and the final survey was disseminated the first week of October with a cover letter from Dr. Mary Wack, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education.

The Survey was organized to collect the following sets of information.

> S1. Total number of official advisees as of 10th day for Fall 2014
> S2. Total number of official advisees as of 10th day for Spring 2015
> S3. Advising Methods(s): face-to-face, via email, via telephone, or group advising
> S4. Advising duties (percentages) for the 2014-2015 academic year were divided into
>> • Core to advising
>> • Student related, non-advising activities
>> • Other duties (non-student, non-advising activities)
> S5. What aspects do you most enjoy about advising?
> S6. What areas need to be improved in advising?
> S7. If there is anything else you would like to mention about undergraduate advising at WSU, or if you have comments about this assessment.

For data analysis, categories were identified according to self-reported relative numbers of advisees: Under 100 advisees, 100 to 250 advisees, 250 to 400 advisees, and 400 and above advisees.

SURVEY RESULTS FOR S1. S2. AND S4. (ADVISEE WORKLOAD):

- 186 invitations were sent with 73 surveys completed for a 39% rate of return.

- 47 Professional advisors responded (64%).
- 26 Faculty advisors responded (36%).

- 65 Pullman advisors responded (65%).
- 4 Global advisors responded (4%).

- All colleges were represented.
- All non-college advising units were represented.

ADVISING WORKLOADS:

Respondents identified common specific tasks for three types of workload:
- **Fourteen "Core advising duties."** (Providing student advice in selection of major courses and degree plans, e.g. during orientations, course selection, exceptions, policies, procedures, career options, degree progress, certification, advisement reports, course transfers, reinstatement, petitions, graduation, referrals, and change of majors).
- **Twelve "Student, Non-Advising activities."** (Other significant departmental responsibilities involving students, e.g. recruitment, scholarships, awards, internships, study abroad, clubs, and teaching).
- **Fifteen "All other Non-Student, Non-Advising duties."** (Responsibilities with no direct contact with students in an advising capacity, e.g. recruitment support, web sites, textbooks, schedule of classes, report generation, department grades, and committees).

Respondents then self-reported their **ACTUAL** percentage of workload for these duties compared to the percentage of workload as assigned for these duties by their **JOB DESCRIPTION**.

400+ Advisees
(12 Advisors, Average # Students, 536)

	Actual	Job Description
Core advising duties	71.2	52.3
Student, Non-Advising	27.5	23.7
Non-Student, Non-Advising	15.4	8.9

High # advisees: 960   Low # advisees: 400
#Professional: 11   #Faculty: 1
#Pullman: 12   #Global: 0

Observations:
1. The average advisor in this category works beyond their job description in all three areas.

2. The average advisor works <u>18.9% beyond</u> their job description for core advising (71.2% actual vs. 52.3% job description).
3. The average advisor works <u>3.8% beyond</u> their job description for Student, Non-Advising (27.5% actual vs. 23.7% job description).
4. The average advisor works <u>nearly twice as much</u> beyond their job description for Non-Student, Non-Advising (15.4% actual vs. 8.9% job description).

250-400 Advisees
(12 Advisors, Average # Students, 276)

	Actual	Job Description
Core advising duties	71.5	62.0
Student, Non-Advising	24.6	26.7
Non-Student, Non-Advising	16.1	12.8

High # advisees: 380   Low # advisees: 252
#Professional: 12   #Faculty: 0
#Pullman: 11   #Global: 1

Observations:
1. The average advisor in this category works <u>10% beyond</u> their job description for core advising (71.5% actual vs. 62.0% job description).
2. The average advisor works <u>2.1% less</u> than their job description for Student, Non-Advising job description (24.6% actual vs. 26.7% job description).
3. The average advisor works <u>3.3% beyond</u> their job description for Non-Student, Non-Advising, (16.1% actual vs. 12.8% job description).

100-250 Advisees
(14 Advisors, Average # Students, 177)

	Actual	Job Description
Core advising duties	65.1	70.8
Student, Non-Advising	27.3	23.3
Non-Student, Non-Advising	22.0	23.8

High # advisees: 238   Low # advisees: 120
#Professional: 11   #Faculty: 3
#Pullman: 12   #Global: 2

1. The average advisor in this category works <u>5.7% less</u> than their job description for core advising (65.1% actual vs. 70.8% job description).
2. The average advisor works <u>4% beyond</u> their job description for Student, Non-Advising (27.3% actual vs. 23.3% job description).
3. The average advisor works <u>1.8% less</u> than their job description for Non-Student, Non-Advising (22.0% actual vs. 23.8% job description).

Under 100 Advisees
(31 Advisors, Average # Students, 29)

	Actual	Job Description
Core advising duties	20.7	23.5
Student, Non-Advising	35.2	42.9
Non-Student, Non-Advising	32.3	35.4

High # advisees: 94   Low # advisees: 7
#Professional: 11   #Faculty: 20
#Pullman: 31   #Global: 1
(Note, one advisor is both Pullman and Global)

Observations:
1. The average advisor in this category works <u>3% to 7% less</u> than their job description requirement for all categories.
2. Of the four advisee categories, the "Under 100" group has the largest number of advisors.
3. Of the faculty who responded to this workload question, the "Under 100" group represents 83% (20/24) of faculty advisors.

RESULTS FOR S3. (ADVISING METHODS):

Advising Method	Response	%
Face-to-face	49	96%
Via Email	32	64%
Via telephone	23	46%
Group advising	11	22%

(Percentage results are based on the total responses for this question.)

Observations:
1. Nearly all advisors use face-to-face advising (96%). Global campus advisors generally do not.
2. Email and telephone advising also have significant roles for respondents (64% and 46%).
3. Group advising is being used by 11 advisors (22%): Education, Honors, Communication, Pre-Health, Psychology, Business, School of Design and Construction, Civil Engineering.

SUMMARIZED RESULTS FOR S5. (What aspects do you most enjoy about advising?) (See Attachment 1):

Observations:
1. Forty-six responses reflect that advisors have a broad range of personal and professional motivators as they work with students.

RESULTS FOR S6. (What areas need to be improved in advising?)
(See Attachment 2):

Observations:
1. Forty-three responses indicate a broad range of concerns and suggestions including balancing/reducing advising workloads/workload issues (13 comments); need for consistency in advising practices (10 comments); better communication and documentation (7 comments); better job descriptions/hiring (2 comments); and need for better training (2 comments).
2. Generalized categories of concerns are a.) Process, policy and procedures, b.) Staffing, hiring and training, c.) Communication and administration, d.) Excessive/additional workload, (both in student advising and non-advising taskings), and additional data input and report generation.
3. Advisors seem especially concerned with many systemic and departmental issues.
4. There is a perception of too frequent changes to campus-wide advising expectations.

RESULTS FOR S7. (If there is anything else you would like to mention about undergraduate advising at WSU, or if you have comments about this assessment, please type in the space provided below.) (See Attachment 3):

Observations:
1. Eight responses with comments about the survey, training advisors, faculty concerns with advising efforts, how heavy workload restricts both professional development and the ability to take vacations, and resentment that other advisors with fewer students have more time for committee work.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The committee considers this survey to have been a worthwhile exploratory study to clarify system wide data regarding advisor workloads, the number of advisees, the type of job activities, and a comparison of actual job activities to job descriptions. The additional comments, observations, and recommendations provide valuable insight to the status of advising as reflected by a significant portion of academic advisors on the Pullman campus.

With this snapshot of University advisor workloads and the general effects of various levels of advising workloads, the committee provides these recommendations:

1. Primary challenges include a continual need for standardization in many areas: a.) advisor job descriptions, b.) Initial and annual training, c.) Annual evaluations, d.) Career ladder for promotions for full time advisors, e.) Advising assessment.
2. Hire additional advisors for those departments who see more than 400 advisees and make efforts to reduce the non-advising workloads of advisors with more than 250+ advisees.
3. Because faculty advising has many practices, challenges, and frustrations throughout the colleges, a comprehensive survey should be conducted to clarify issues such as standardized practices, evaluation of advising efforts, need for advisement training, and inclusion of

advising responsibilities for tenure and promotion. Solutions are needed and future WSU assessment practices should address these issues.

4. Consider a Provost sponsored effort to institutionalize review and assessment of University academic advising with an on-going program for improvement initiatives to enhance quality of advising, advisor morale, and consistency of job expectations, all of which should help improve student retention and graduation rates.

5. Although many factors impact advising workloads issues (unit size in terms of staff, faculty and students, departmental resources, funding streams) this survey generally supports efforts to collect additional information and the need to do more to resolve a broad range of systemic advising issues.

SUMMARIZED RESULTS FOR S5. (What aspects do you most enjoy about advising?):

- Helping students reach their goals.
- Working face to face with students, listening to their stories, helping them reach their goals - comradery of advisors within college and in WSU ACADA.
- Working directly with students, helping them define and refine goals for academics and beyond higher ed.
- I enjoy connecting with students all over the world and learning about various cultural issues they face.
- Celebrating successes, encouraging them, teaching them resiliency. Developing techniques to better assist students through higher ed. Having resources available to learn and develop my own advising skills.
- Mentoring students as they prepare for graduate school and a career and sharing with them information about opportunities for which they are eligible. I love it when I can help a student see his/her potential for something that the student has not yet considered but is excited to pursue.
- Helping students who want to help themselves, but don't know how.
- I enjoy knowing that I make a difference in a student's life.
- As advisors we are someone that they can turn to with questions and concerns. I enjoy watching the students grow and see who they will become. The development that occurs from freshman to senior is huge, and to watch them along their journey is pretty neat. Especially when you consider faculty might only see them for one semester, but we have 2-4 years to watch them mature and figure out who they are.
- Developing trusting relationships so students feel comfortable coming to me with problems. Helping students meet goals.
- I enjoy supporting students both academically and emotionally. It is rewarding when a student is confident and excited about their academic and professional goals.
- Upon graduation, keeping contact with them regarding job placement and seeing how successful they become.
- Seeing students succeed. Knowing that the students I advise will be the next generation of professionals in Agricultural Education.
- Enjoying working with students and teaching them to becoming accountable and advocating for their own academic careers and goals. When students are on probation or deficient, and begin to really understand their academic goals and the purpose, really makes watching them grow rewarding.
- I like knowing students over a period of time. I love seeing them come in as freshmen and then grow and develop over time. I am also really grateful for the collegiality (most of the time) between the CAS advisors.
- Interacting with the students and independence, autonomy, and flexibility of the position. Coming up with creative solutions for solving problems in the moment.

RESULTS FOR S6. (What areas need to be improved in advising?):

- Streamline the process [MyWSU] Balanced advising loads.
- We're still understaffed in VCEA. Making sure we have the advisors in place to help students when help is needed. We also need to do a better job in helping struggling students find a place where they can be successful, either in our college or elsewhere.
- Better communication between units on campus and advisors (last ones to hear of ALEKS test score changes- had already been advising students) - administration needs to realize that to promote good advising at WSU, advising loads need to be restricted to 300 advisees - everything else is just a band aid - good advising needs to receive credit for increasing retention and keeping students on a 4 year plan to graduate
- Advising oversight, consistency.
- The deliberate and careful hiring of advisors is crucial to the success of students at WSU. WSU has not done a great job in too many cases and this impacts students dearly. Advisors should have better preparation academically as well as social skills to deal with very comprehensive and difficult situations.
- Job descriptions, training, inconsistent policies, procedures and advising programs. Workload issues.
- It would be wonderful if TCRs could be updated every time there is a change, not just updates to the advisement report. Our university records should be accurate across the board. 2. The improvement to MyWSU has been incredible over the last two years, and continued attention to things that can be improved has been helped with the addition of the ESG email, etc. The improved communication has been fantastic. 3. In some departments, better connections between the advisors and the Chairs would result in far better enrollment management....this is better for students, advisors, and faculty. 4. Easier access to data!!! This is so needed on this campus and accurate data in the form of reports is still hard to obtain quickly.
- Streamlined processes, lower student numbers per advisor.
- Administrators understanding of what advising is - that it's not once a semester, selecting classes. Providing better support and understanding of this. I feel like some administrators get this, but not the ones that the advisors report to. Continuing to support advisors and academic coordinators. There is more than the 5% other duties that take away from the good work that we can be doing. And recognizing how connected advisors are/can be to recruitment and retention.
- Within our college, I believe we have a great program for our students. Each advisor has a full time advising load with a project that they are responsible for. Campus wide, advising has good reputation I believe. However, I hear others have many struggles with their loads in relation to the work that has to get done. In the past system issues have made it hard to do your job well but I feel that WSU is moving the right direction with new technology that will really help us do our jobs better and allow students to have a better experience.
- Advisors need to have their workload reduced so that they can give more attention to each student. When I meet with Honors students, I often hear from the first-year students that they have not received quality advising at the start (advice that is not helpful and/or does not correct a situation, erroneous information, etc.). Also, I meet with students often who have been advised to graduate early "because they can", when I can see that a particular student could benefit enormously from taking advantage of opportunities around campus if he/she stays at

WSU for 4 years. Advisors often have a shortsighted focus on getting students through the system, without considering their future success in grad. school, professional school, or the job market.

- My. WSU - need up to date transfer credit reports. Currently they are not and they do not always match with the Academic Requirements report.
- Getting them in the right math. I have students who are in 105, but that is useless to science majors.
- Communication and documentation.
- We need more advisors to handle the growing number of students.
- I rarely see things taken off advisors' workloads. Instead it feels like a treadmill where the incline button and the speed button keep being increased. In a regular advising session I am expected to make sure my student is on track with classes, mention the writing portfolio, explain what a pre-req is, talk about the test and volunteer requirement their specific program has, answer questions about summer school, double check the following: transfer work, ALEKS scores (and when it was taken) and their writing placement score along with asking open ended questions about who they are, and what their goals include. This doesn't even touch on if they are homesick, having troubles with classes, issues with roommates or making healthy choices. Then I turn around and do it eight more times a day. Five days a week. For ten weeks in a row. I love my job and I love my students, so I don't want this to seem like a "poor me" kind of answer, but I think every time someone above me says, "oh let's just have advisors talk about this during their sessions" or "let's just have the advisors take on this role" I wish they would do what we do for a couple of weeks to really see if it's realistic or not.
- Consistency and clarity of message to students across all academic units; Training and Awareness of other majors in order to effectively off board students to other areas; advising load needs reduced so that we can spend more time with each student.
- Lower advisee per advisor percentages.
- I think right now we do not emphasize "personal responsibility" to the students as much as we should. The reaction to poor performance has been to create more "hand-holding". The students who do well are those who realize that using initiative and taking personal responsibility for their own education is a key step in growing up and becoming a productive member of society! If our graduates don't have this sense of responsibility when they leave, our degrees will shortly be worthless to employers....
- Consistency of advising practices. Advisors across campus need training. There are individuals in advising without proper training or education that makes me question their ability to effectively do the job. There also needs to be mandatory professional development. This is not a profession that one can neglect professional development as policies change throughout the departments, university, and federal levels. Advising loads also need to be consistent across campus.
- Better communication and input on changes to policies.
- Holding students more accountable for their degree requirements.
- Reinstatement. There is nothing holding students to the appointments, etc. From what I see. The hold system. Secondary advisors. They are not allowed in some situations. So students meet with one advisor who is not connected to an academic department and get misadvised on courses.
- More collaboration between departments and understanding of what each office does and how they prefer to do it.   I also feel strongly that there needs to be a shift in how we respect and treat students. I am so often hearing other advisors post negatively on Facebook or complain

constantly about the students, but we have amazing students at WSU.   For the ones that are struggling or need some more development, that's an opportunity we have as advisors to help them learn and grow.

- Communication and consistency in common procedures.
- Overall commitment and buy-in that advising is important.
- N/A for now …
- Salary and clear steps to advancement.
- The lack of directions and expectations for all advisors to utilize the same tools (ex: Advising notes) and follow the same protocols.
- Clear communication of changes in student requirements to Advisors and Student Service specialists; sufficient funding of Registrar's Office so that they have adequately trained and knowledgeable personnel who can identify red flags in student programs when students file for graduation. The current policy of shifting as much of this oversight responsibility on the advisors and student service specialists as possible is not working.
- Since I work with a population of students who are still exploring major options, I am frequently referring them to other departments on campus to gather more information as it pertains to them. The issue we run into is every advisor has a different way of arranging appointments and a policy on how they advise (seniors first, group sessions, only certified students, etc.). Without consistency in practice across all of WSU's advising, I can certainly understand the confusion and defeat students feel when shuffled from one advisor to the next. I would hope each student, no matter what discipline, is getting a similar advising experience.   I would like to see more communication among departments. If there is a change in advising staff, location, policies, curriculum etc. it is necessary for all of us to know to avoid misadvising a student. If we are constantly having to back pedal and correct mistakes, the students will lose confidence in our knowledge.   I am excited about features like MyWSU notes and SSC, but unless all colleges on campus are willing to utilize these resources, they become useless. I feel there needs to be more buy-in from the advising community. I feel electronic notes will benefit everyone involved in the advising process. The features coming from SSC Campus have the potential to really boost efficiency - if we all use it.
- University wide communication, seamlessness of transition between advisors, giving students the information needed to make advisors lives easier (how to register, how to run an advisement report or what if report, how to find someone's contact information, etc.), moving students to a new major because of GPA without actually having a conversation with them about other opportunities, lack of advisor attendance at advising forums and college meetings, lack of advisor oversight on campus, vagueness of whether new technology is mandatory to use or not, lack of campus wide use of advising notes, general culture of thinking students just are not smart or responsible.
- Need to think outside the box. Find better ways to "see" all students. Get rid of "advising season," better structured and more effective group scheduling/advising best practices.
- Students learning that they can see their advisor for academic and non-academic needs.
- Way too many registration holds! More UCORE section offerings. More campus advisors.
- Too many 'other' duties to do to really spend quality time with students. Besides undergraduate advising and all that I do for that program, I have managed the graduate program (and that that requires) in our dept up until last month. For this next year, I'll pass on all these duties to another dept, so my time will be freed up to help recruit/retain more students to our FS major.
- As an instructor and an advisor there is not enough time to do both well. I have a smaller advising load and feel overwhelmed by the amount of time it takes for advising sometimes. To

do the job right I must sometimes meet with a student three or four times in a semester to plan the next semester. This is a lot of time advising when I also need to be prepared to teach that day. It's the number one job expectation that I did not realize when I took this job. 2) Time to recruit new students. Again, the expectation is that I teach a full load and help grow our program and figure out how to pay for recruitment for my major too.

- There is too much strain on our time. Although I had no advisees assigned to me, I meet with half of the MME students as their advisor - which is approximately 450 students. It is difficult to meet with such a high volume of students, advise clubs, do admissions for urban campuses, schedule classes, etc... because each student must be met with face-to-face. We either need more advisors for the volume of students or assistance with the other non-advising tasks.
- More time with my students.
- Academic probation process with the workshops and courses. Some students really tie into this and some just do the checkboxes and don't find the value. The other difficult part is ALIVE, there is so much that is tied to ALIVE that students do not retain, somehow it would be helpful to give them the 'less is more' approach. Undergraduate advising at WSU is important, and I appreciate that being recognized.
- There needs to be some across the college consistency. It would also be great to have a few career advisors (at least one) dedicated to the College.
- Continuity and consistency in quality of advising across the university.

RESULTS FOR S7. (If there is anything else you would like to mention about undergraduate advising at WSU, or if you have comments about this assessment, please type in the space provided below.):

- It might be easier to just look up the student numbers for advisors rather than request the number from advisors. I had difficulty getting 10th day student numbers for Fall 2014 and Spring 2015, and it seems like it would be easier just to run one big report (request the advisor's ID number in the survey, perhaps?).
- WSU ACADA taking control of training of advisors was a great move to WSU, but shouldn't the university offer the best training possible for its advisors. Also, the university should not allow new advisors to advise students until they have shadowed experienced advisors and have learned the ropes of advising.
- Great survey!
- I love advising!
- It was hard to indicate a percentage of time per my appointment. I am a 100% teaching faculty. The job description and expectations do discuss advising, running my lab, teaching, but not in a percentage format. Advising is one of the most important, but also one of the most frustrating aspects of this job. It takes time. Appointments get changed, students fail or do poorly in classes, students take classes that are unexpected, students add majors and endorsements. All of these are aspects of the job and students have lots of choices which is good. But, when events happen (fail a class, add a minor, study abroad) it takes time to help students. I have spent hours advising students to set-up a program of study abroad to then have them switch majors. That's fine and their choice, but the reality for me is that I have spent HOURS advising to get them through one semester.
- Again, all students are officially assigned to Priscilla Hastay for the MME Pullman campus because my "official" responsibility has been to the urban campuses. However, I still meet with between 400-500 students each semester as their academic advisor.
- On this assessment my caseload of students was low because I just began working. At this time, I now have 437 students and doing a lot of other duties and involvement on campus. Sometimes, I feel that I need to not participate in professional development or take vacation in order to keep up with the student's demands.
- I have to say I love my job. I love coming to work and I love WSU. However, I have recently started becoming frustrated because of my advising load. It's not that I can't handle it--I am someone who would rather be busy than not. What I don't like is that it prevents me from doing professional development and it prevents me and my colleague from attending important events. Even then Dean has recently scheduled 2 meetings for all the staff in the college in the third week of October--we open our appointments on October 1st and pretty much immediately the entire month is booked. Then I go to the CAS meetings and hear about all the committees a handful of advisors are on--I have to say it makes me cranky. How do they have all this time to be so involved professionally? At the very least it would be a kindness if more events were scheduled in Sept and late November.