

Stephen F. Austin State University



ACADEMIC ADVISOR HANDBOOK

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HISTORY OF ACADEMIC ADVISING AT SFA

Prior to 2002, all academic advising at SFA was performed by deans, faculty, and dean's assistants. In 2008, the State of Texas issued a mandate requiring public institutions to add professional advisors to their staff. By 2009, the university employed eleven full-time professional advisors. As of 2019, the professional academic advising staff has grown to include 24 full-time professional advisors additionally; faculty members continue to advise across each of the six colleges.

MISSION AND PURPOSE OF ADVISING

SFA Mission Statement

Stephen F. Austin State University is a comprehensive institution dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, scholarship, creative work and service. Through the personal attention of our faculty and staff, we engage our students in a learner-centered environment and offer opportunities to prepare for the challenges of living in the global community.

Academic Advisors at SFA are bound by the university's mission and goals. It is the responsibility of advisors to support the University's foundational goal of meaningful and sustained enrollment growth through intentional advising efforts and core values.

The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) holds that the core values of academic advising are caring, commitment, empowerment, inclusivity, integrity, professionalism, and respect. It is through NACADA's mission and these core values that academic advising is understood and delivered, empowering advisors to provide comprehensive guidance according to the mission statements of their institutions and values of the advising profession (NACADA).

The supporting goals of SFA intertwine with the core values of NACADA. For instance, attracting high-quality academic advising staff aligns with the NACADA values of caring, commitment, and professionalism. Fostering academic and co-curricular innovation to meet the needs of our students, helps to instill a sense of empowerment to encourage our students to be successful, lifelong learners. In attempting to redefine university culture, adhering to the values of inclusivity and respect for all leads toward the goal. Finally, to increase connections with students, the integrity of academic advisors is integral for a positive and encouraging experience for our students, contributing to "the quality of life of everyone we touch" (SFA Envisioned).

SFASU Strategic Plan/Mission [SFASU Strategic Plan](#)

NACADA Core Competencies [NACADA Core Competencies](#)

NACADA Mission [NACADA Mission](#)

60X30TX - Texas Higher Education Strategic Plan [60X30TX Information](#)

ACADEMIC ADVISING DEFINED

According to Kuhn (2008), academic advising takes place in "situations in which an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter. The nature of this direction might be to inform, suggest, counsel, discipline, coach, mentor, or even teach" (p. 3).

O'Banion (1972) describes advising as "a process in which advisor and advisee enter a dynamic relationship respectful of the student's concerns. Ideally, the advisor serves as teacher and guide in an interactive partnership aimed at enhancing the student's self-awareness and fulfillment" (p. 62).

Kuhn, T. (2008). Historical Foundations of Academic Advising. In Gordon, Habley and Grites. *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Campus Process*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

O'Banion, T. (1972). An academic advising model. *Junior College Journal*, 42, 62-69.

<https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Definitions-of-academic-advising.aspx>

SFA ORGANIZATIONAL ADVISING MODEL

SFA has a **shared** organizational structure of delivering advising services. The definition of shared is "where some advisors meet with students in a central administrative unit (i.e., an advising center), while others advise students in the academic department of their major discipline" (NACADA).

SFA uses the **Split Model** of advising where "advising is carried out by faculty in their departments, as well as the staff of an advising center" (NACADA). Students may be assigned to an advisor based on their major, professional program, classification, or academic standing.

<https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Organizational-Models-for-Advising.aspx>

ACADEMIC ADVISING APPROACHES

Academic Advising approaches are multifaceted and constantly evolving to better provide support for diverse and changing student populations. Academic Advising approaches can include but are not limited to:

Learning Centered Academic Advising- Advisor provides feedback and helps students set clear and positive goals along with high expectations to motivate students toward academic success.

Appreciative Advising – Advisor asks positive, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their personal goals and full potentials.

Strengths Based Advising – Advisor helps to identify and affirm students’ talents and increase awareness of strengths. Helps students plan specific steps for applying their strengths to challenges and meeting specific goals.

Intrusive or Proactive Advising – Advisors deliberately intervene to address causes of students’ concerns and/or difficulties, and reach out to students before they ask for help.

Coaching - “Coaching is about understanding where the student wants to go and creating an action plan and accountability to get them there.” Nealy, 2008

See link to [NACADA Resources](#) or [NACADA Advising Info](#) for more information.

Drake, Jayne K., ed. Jordan, Peggy, ed. Miller, Marsha A., ed. Academic Advising Approaches: Strategies That Teach Students to Make the Most of College. Jossey-Bass: 2013.

NACADA ACADEMIC ADVISING CORE COMPETENCIES MODEL

<https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreCompetencies.aspx>

The purpose of the Core Competencies Model is to identify the broad range of understanding, knowledge, and skills that support academic advising, to guide professional development, and to promote the contributions of advising to student development, progress, and success. It is intended that the model may be used by:

- **Primary Role Advisors** for self-assessment and evaluation, and to guide learning, career development, and advancement.
- **Faculty Advisors and Advising Administrators** to clarify academic advising roles and responsibilities, and to highlight the contributions of academic advising to teaching and learning.
- **Advising Supervisors, Managers, and Mentors** to identify strengths and areas for staff development, and to guide hiring, training, and evaluation.
- **Learning Professionals, Trainers, and Researchers** to support curriculum development, establish learning priorities, and advance the scholarship in the field

Framework

- The **Conceptual** component provides the context for the delivery of academic advising. It covers the ideas and theories that advisors must understand to effectively advise their students.
- The **Informational** component provides the substance of academic advising. It covers the knowledge advisors must gain to be able to guide the students at their institution.
- The **Relational** component provides the skills that enable academic advisors to convey the concepts and information from the other two components to their advisees.

NACADA CORE VALUES OF ACADEMIC ADVISING

<https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars.aspx>

Caring:

Academic advisors respond to and are accessible to others in ways that challenge, support, nurture, and teach. Advisors build relationships through empathetic listening and compassion for students, colleagues, and others.

Commitment:

Academic advisors value and are dedicated to excellence in all dimensions of student success. Advisors are committed to students, colleagues, institutions, and the profession through assessment, scholarly inquiry, life-long learning, and professional development.

Empowerment:

Academic advisors motivate, encourage, and support students and the greater educational community to recognize their potential, meet challenges, and respect individuality.

Inclusivity:

Academic advisors respect, engage, and value a supportive culture for diverse populations. Advisors strive to create and support environments that consider the needs and perspectives of students, institutions, and colleagues through openness, acceptance, and equity.

Integrity:

Academic advisors act intentionally in accordance with ethical and professional behavior developed through reflective practice. Advisors value honesty, transparency, and accountability to the student, institution, and the advising profession.

Professionalism:

Academic advisors act in accordance with the values of the profession of advising for the greater good of students, colleagues, institutions, and higher education in general.

Respect:

Academic advisors honor the inherent value of all students. Advisors build positive relationships by understanding and appreciating students' views and cultures, maintaining a student-centered approach and mindset, and treating students with sensitivity and fairness.

SFA ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Understand degree requirements and effectively communicate them.
2. Provide a safe space in which the students can share thoughts, aspirations, concerns, and interests.
3. Listen carefully to the student's questions, concerns, and points of confusion.
4. Maintain confidentiality.

5. Refer the students to quality resources.
6. Encourage and support students as they gain the skills and knowledge necessary for success.
7. Assist the students in choosing courses and making major decisions.

SFA ADVISEE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Check university-issued email on a regular basis and respond to all correspondence from advisor.
2. Research academic program prior to the first advising appointment.
3. Meet with assigned advisor at least once per semester to discuss progress, goals, and the classes for the following semester.
4. Register for classes prior to the start of the semester and as early as possible to avoid closed classes, which may slow progress in degree completion.
5. Monitor degree audit and let advisor know if there are any problems.
6. Monitor progress in each course and inform advisor if having problems.
7. Check for and resolve holds on mySFA account.
8. Comply with all academic policies at SFASU and the college's program requirements.
9. Follow through on any recommendations agreed upon with advisor.

FACULTY ADVISING

Advising is conducted by both professional and faculty advisors which ideally cultivates cooperative relationships to mutually benefit one another, the assigned advisees, the academic programs, and the institution. This section of the Academic Advising Handbook addresses the role of the faculty advisor in the advising process with the understanding that different academic programs approach the role of faculty advisor differently.

Advising Structure of the Academic Programs

To begin, faculty advisors function under different programmatic advising structures, and as such, faculty advisors should be aware of and fulfill the responsibilities of the unique advising structure of their academic unit. In the event that an academic program has an ambiguous advising structure with unspecified roles and responsibilities assigned to the faculty advisor, faculty advisors should work, inasmuch as they are able, to clarify roles and responsibilities with their academic unit heads and one another.

Three basic structures are used for faculty advising. As structure is enacted uniquely within the academic unit and operates with its own sets of limitations. First, academic programs may use faculty advisors for all advising functions, termed a faculty-only model. This has been classified as a decentralized structure, in that faculty fulfill all relevant advising roles and responsibilities independent of an advising center (Pardee, 2004). With the advent of professional advisors, advising centers, and the like, a decentralized model is less and less prevalent. Where faculty-only advising exists, faculty

are solely responsible for all functions and objectives of advising including completion of graduation paperwork.

Second, academic programs may coordinate with a professional advising center to generate interdependent roles and responsibilities associated with the advising process. This organizational structure is a shared model, in which faculty and professional advisors negotiate how to most appropriately and effectively fulfill the advising needs of the students within their care (Pardee, 2004). Shared models are quite common and require clearly defined roles and responsibilities as well as relationship development between faculty advisors and professional advisors.

Third, an academic program may acquiesce academic advising responsibilities to an advising center and focus on career advising in the faculty advisor-advisee interactions. This is more indicative of a centralized model of advising (Pardee, 2004). At SFA this model is utilized in the College of Education. Such a model also requires relationship development between faculty and professional advisors because faculty propose and implement curriculum changes that impact the academic progress of students that professional advisors, in turn, provide guidance to students regarding.

It is the responsibility of faculty and their unit heads to understand what model of advising is being used in their programs and clarify program-specific guidelines for faculty advising.

Advisee Academic Needs

Faculty advisors attend to the academic needs of the advisee. Similar to professional advisors, faculty members should acquaint themselves with policies, procedures, and resources to enhance academic advising and accurately counsel advisees. Knowing and counseling students may encompass:

- Changing or declaring a major
- Changing or declaring a minor
- Changing or declaring a certificate
- Substituting Courses
- Registering for classes
- Establishing and evaluating academic plans and goals
- Reassessing progress toward academic goals if the advisee's performance merits
- Referring students to other campus offices (e.g. Early Alert Program, AARC, etc...)
- Obtaining copies of transcripts
- Applying for graduation and the accompanying process

Even if the faculty advisor's academic program uses a professional advisor to fulfill academic advising needs, the faculty advisor may be asked informally for counsel. It is not unusual for a student to ask faculty as a class is dismissing how to apply for graduation or what to do to declare a minor. Answers to these questions are often the name of an office or a form to complete. Knowing these policies, procedures, and resources, may not be necessary for some faculty advisors who do not formally advise, but this knowledge may enhance less formal interactions with students, their relationship with faculty, and their perception of the university.

Additionally, faculty advisors may be well-positioned to:

- Prepare advisees for the expectations of their program of study and specific classes
- Balance scheduling of classes based on unique needs and interests of the advisee
- Direct advisees to elective coursework to complement academic and professional goals
- Navigate course rotations and program course scheduling to prevent delays in academic progress and course substitutions
- Anticipate program and course changes affecting advisee's academic progress
- Provide information and resources about career options within field of expertise

Advisee Interpersonal Relationship

Faculty advisors attend to the interpersonal advisor-advisee relationship constituted through their interactions. This relationship is construed as a valuable pathway to student-institution identification and retention. Recommendations to enhance the interpersonal advisor-advisee relationship include but are not limited to:

- Customizing academic and career counsel for the advisee based on the advisee's academic and professional goals
- Demonstrating care and advocacy for the advisee
- Referring the advisee for assistance when his or her needs exceed the scope of the advisor-advisee relationship

Formal versus Informal Faculty Advisor-Advisee Relationships

Finally, faculty advising roles should be clearly defined as to not create role confusion and to fulfill all advising aims. This aptly characterizes the more formal functions of the advising relationship. However, the informal faculty-advisee relationship is constructed by everyday communication between faculty and students. Faculty develop helpful, professional relationships with students that facilitate positive impression management with students and SFA, their academic programs, and their prospective careers.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ADVISING ORGANIZATIONS

Professional development opportunities are important for advisors to gain new skills and knowledge, to keep current on programs, policies, and trends at the University and in advising in general. In addition, professional development encourages teamwork and collaboration across advising faculty and staff. These opportunities can take many forms, from one-hour seminars to conferences out-of-state. They can include but are not limited to:

The Professional Academic Advising Council (PAAC)

PAAC is the university's campus-wide advising organization that serves all academic advisors. PAAC provides professional development opportunities and updates on the latest information about SFA policy, procedures, and services on campus. All advisors are encouraged to attend PAAC monthly meetings and to join the PAAC email distribution list.

PAAC Mission Statement: *The Professional Academic Advising Council promotes student success by providing information, resources, professional development, and networking opportunities. PAAC empowers and educates the university community to better serve students while supporting the mission of SFA.*

Please see the [PAAC Webpage](#) for information on meetings and events.

Lunch & Learn Sessions

Lunch & Learn sessions are brief informational meetings, usually lasting about an hour, that are hosted in the middle of the day to allow minimal interruption of regular schedules. Topics include SFASU advising technology, policy, procedure, and best practices, as well as to learn about other areas on campus and the services they can provide to advisors and/or students.

Information Sessions Hosted by Other Departments

Often other departments will host informational seminars in order to educate the SFASU community about services offered. This is a great way to learn more about the resources that you might recommend to your advisees.

NACADA Website

NACADA's website contains articles that address many issues in academic advising. These topics include the practice of advising itself, information about various populations served, and institutional best practices.

NACADA Webinars

Webinars are brief, usually one-hour seminars presented through NACADA. These webinars cover many different subjects related to academic advising, from practice to policy. Often departments or organizations will present or attend in a group.

NACADA Conference

The NACADA conference, held in a different location in the US each year, provides an opportunity to network with other advising professionals and to learn and share information about various advising practices, topics, and institutional policies and procedures. The conferences do require more cost than other professional development options. The NACADA Regional Conference is held yearly as well. SFA is part of the South Central Region 7 which includes Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Kansas, Arkansas, and Missouri.

Texas Academic Advisor Network (TEXAAN)

The TEXAAN conference is held annually in different locations around the state of Texas. This conference provides an opportunity to network with other advising

professionals and to learn and share information about various advising practices, topics, and institutional policies and procedures. The conference does carry more cost than other professional development options; however, it is generally less expensive than the NACADA conference.

ASSESSMENT OF ADVISING

Each advising office handles assessment differently. Contact college advising leadership for information on individual and departmental academic advising plan of assessment.

ADVISING CAREER LADDER

An advising career ladder has been approved for use across the university. Each advising office will implement this differently. Contact college advising leadership for information on how the career ladder functions in each department.

See the SFA [Human Resources](#) page for information regarding the advisor compensation and classification.

TOOLS FOR ADVISING

Student Success Collaborative-NAVIGATE

The success of students is at the core of all we do at Stephen F. Austin State University. In order to assist students with timely completion of their degrees, the University is utilizing the Student Success Collaborative and Navigate. Navigate is an academic advising tool that utilizes predictive analytics to assess if a student is likely to complete their selected degree. It identifies students who are at risk of failing to complete their degrees and suggests roadmaps to a degree based on the student's academic strengths and past successes.

[Student Success Collaborative](#)

Banner

Banner is a comprehensive computer information system that contains information on students, faculty, staff, academics, registration, financial aid, billing, academic advising, residence life, campus life, etc.

[Banner Login](#) to Self-Service (SSB) and Banner 9

Banner allows you to save frequently used Banner screens as well as rename their description.

Frequently Used Banner 9 Screens:

SMASADJ-Student Targets, Waivers and Substitutions (used for entering substitutions)
SGASTDN-General Student (view general student information such as major, last term attended, etc.)

SOATEST-Test Score Information (view available test scores)

SOAHOLD-Hold Information (add, remove, or edit student holds)

SHATERM-Term Sequence Course History (view detailed record of coursework at SFA)

SHATRNS-Transfer Course Information (view detailed record of transfer coursework)

entered by Admissions. Also includes course name, title, etc. from host school.)
SPACMNT-Person Comment (detailed comments about student's record) SFAREGS-
Student Course Registration Form (view detailed student schedule)
GOAEMAL-Email Address (view student's email addresses on file)
SOAIDEN-Person Search (search for a person by ID or name. Use % if you do not know
the full name)
SPAIDEN-General Person Identification (view detailed information about a student)
SAAADMS-Admissions Application (view information regarding admissions status)
SGAADVR-Multiple Advisors (add/remove advisor assignments)

Semester dates are entered using the year and semester. 10 is for Fall, 20 is for Spring,
25 for Maymester, 30 is for Summer I, and 40 for Summer II** (may change with the
new summer?) Example: Fall 2018 would be 201810

Curriculum Advising and Program Planning (CAPP)

CAPP is a Banner feature that tracks a student's progress toward the completion of their
degree requirements.

To run a degree audit in CAPP/Banner see [Degree Audit Instructions](#)

ADVISOR RESOURCES

GPA Calculator

An online [GPA Calculator](#) is available for use in estimating a student's GPA. Please note
that this is only an estimate and will not reflect an official GPA.

Disclaimer: The GPA generated by the online calculator may not accurately reflect a
student's term GPA as it does not include important factors such as grades for repeated
classes. The official SFA term and cumulative GPA are included on the unofficial
transcript after end of term processing is complete. An unofficial transcript may be
accessed through mySFA if students do not have holds.

Texas Success Initiative (TSI)

TSI is a state-mandated program designed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating
Board to help students succeed in their postsecondary studies. The program evaluates
each student's abilities in the areas of mathematics, reading, and writing to determine
college readiness. Students are enrolled in appropriate developmental coursework as
necessary.

- Developmental coursework must be started the first semester of enrollment
(fall/spring) and must be continued each term thereafter until successful
completion of the developmental coursework sequencing
- All students with a TSI obligation will have a TSI hold. In order to have the hold
released for the next term, students must meet with a TSI advisor to discuss

developmental coursework enrollment and register for appropriate developmental coursework

- Math developmental coursework is determined by TSI Assessment math score *and* by major
- Combo coursework pairs developmental and college-level classes into one term. These classes are six hours: 3 hours for the developmental course and 3 hours for the college-level course. Developmental coursework does not count toward graduation hours but does count toward attempted hours. The college-level class of the combo course does count in GPA, attempted, and graduation hours

The TSI office is located in the Student Success Center in Steen Library, room 203. Phone number: 936-468-5803; email: tsi@sfasu.edu. Details about TSI may be found at www.sfasu.edu/tsi.

STUDENT RESOURCES

[The Academic Assistance Resource Center \(AARC\)](#)

The AARC provides students with resources such as 1:1 tutoring, Supplemental Instruction (SI) groups, walk-in tables, learning teams, and power hours. Advisors are a critical conduit to the students who need those resources the most. Therefore, as advisors, being aware of all the resources available through the AARC will encourage student success.

- AARC has four program directors, each a liaison to a set of advisors in a given college
- AARC offers a web portal for advisors and students to assist students in accessing the AARC resources for their classes
- AARC provides advisors with AARC cards to use when counseling students as a tool to encourage students to seek AARC services

[Center for Career and Professional Development \(CCPD\)](#)

Center for Career and Professional Development (CCPD) exists to empower students and alumni to achieve life-long career success. CCPD fulfills this mission through individualized assistance, diverse career development programs, and collaboration with both internal and external partners concentrated on career goal achievements.

[Counseling Services](#)

In keeping with SFA's philosophy of promoting positive mental health and safety, Counseling Services assists SFA students in overcoming obstacles to their personal and academic goals. Counseling Services accomplish this by individual and group counseling for students and through outreach, presentations, training, and consultation for the campus community.

[Disability Services](#)

Disability Services is committed to providing equal opportunities in higher education to academically qualified students with disabilities who demonstrate a reasonable expectation of college success.

Disabled students attending this University will be integrated as completely as possible into the University community. The University shares responsibility with the student for modifying campus facilities and programs to meet individual needs. Students with disabilities at Stephen F. Austin State University have access to tools and resources that will assist them in managing the day-to-day activities of college life.

Graduation, Commencement, Diploma

Please see the [Graduation Webpage](#) for application and commencement, and diploma information.

[Involvement Center](#)

Located in the lobby of Steen Residence Hall is the SFA Involvement Center a one-stop shopping site for involvement on campus. The program is the center for student involvement on our campus, a distribution and receiving site for applications for any number of opportunities on campus and a place for involved students to meet, hang out and collaborate with other students.

Student organizations, departments, and community partners are welcome to promote their upcoming activities through our office. The Involvement Center is a great place to place flyers, brochures. Please contact our office for further details!

[Office of International Programs \(Study Abroad\)](#)

The Office of International Programs provides SFA students with opportunities to enrich their college experience with cultural diversity programs offered on and off-campus. Through faculty-led, exchange or independent study abroad programs, students travel throughout the world to get a perspective on their own culture, encounter new traditions, and expand their horizons – a true life-changing experience. On campus, students can participate in the International Friendship Program or attend Global Gateway presentations organized by SFA international students. Whether in Nacogdoches or abroad, SFA students can be global citizens!

[Office of Community Standards](#)

The mission of the Stephen F. Austin State University Office of Community Standards is to guide students through the conduct process in a learner-focused manner that provides a foundation for success, a commitment to responsible citizenship in a global and diverse community and a desire to make positive lifestyle choices based on the core values of integrity, honesty, accountability, civility and respect.

[Student Success Center](#)

The Student Success Center (SSC) supports undergraduate students by optimizing campus resources through innovative and intentional programs, which empowers students to attain academic success and persist toward graduation and beyond.

The SSC is comprised of several services and programs whose main focus is student success. These services and programs include Academic Advising for undeclared and exploratory students, the Academic Assistance and Resource Center (AARC), Jacks PASS alternative admissions program, Texas Success Initiative (TSI), Peer Mentoring, and SFA 101- student success course. In addition, the SSC houses coordinators who focus on unique areas--transfer students, dual credit students and special student populations including the Generation Jacks program, the Smith Hutson scholarship program, and the Buddy Low scholarship program. The SSC also partners with various departments or units on campus to develop initiatives to help students succeed through their SFA journey.

- **Generation Jacks**

Generation Jacks (GJ) is an extended learning community exclusively for first-generation students. First-generation means neither your parent nor guardian graduated from a four-year institution. GJ is an amazing program that provides a great academic experience and an excellent support network.

- **Jacks PASS Alternative Admissions Program**

First-semester freshman applicants who do not meet the admission requirements may become eligible for admission by enrolling in the Jacks PASS Summer Admission program. Students who complete the requirements to enroll in the program will be pre-registered for the summer II term at SFA and will be required to complete seven (7) semester credit hours including SFA 101. Once the students complete program requirements, they will be fully admitted for the fall semester.

- **Peer Mentoring Program**

The Student Success Peer Mentors assist students in navigating the university, learning about co-curricular involvement, and providing support and guidance to each student they serve. The Student Success Center Peer Mentors serve as role models for other students in striving for excellence and upholding The SFA Way.

- **SFA 101**

It is important that students understand what they need to do to be successful in college and to ensure continued success in their professional careers. SFA 101 is designed to assist first-semester students as they adjust to their new social environment, an increased level of independence and individual responsibility, and new academic demands. SFA 101 promotes active learning, personal growth, and achievement.

- **Texas Success Initiative (TSI)**

TSI is a state-mandated program designed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to help students succeed in their postsecondary studies. The program evaluates each student's abilities in the areas of mathematics, reading, and writing to determine college readiness. Students are then assigned to appropriate developmental coursework as necessary. TSI requirements apply to all students in Texas public colleges and universities.

- **Undeclared and Exploratory Advising**

Academic advisors in the Student Success Center (SSC) serve students who are classified as an Undeclared Major with less than 45 earned college credit hours. In addition, the SSC advisors assist students who are considering changing their

major and exploring other major options. The SSC advisors help students with university policy, procedures, and connect them to campus resources and programs that contribute to student success and retention.

Testing Services

Testing Services promotes the institutional mission of Stephen F. Austin State University and the Division of University Affairs by providing opportunities for students and community members to develop self-knowledge concerning academic and professional goals. Through local, state and national testing programs, individuals will realistically identify, assess, understand and pursue their competencies, course placement, and career opportunities. Testing Services maintains ethical guidelines and standards that govern the profession and adheres to the National College Testing Association Professional Standards and Guidelines.

ADVISING CENTERS PER COLLEGE

Please feel free to contact any of the following Advising Centers with questions specific to their majors and programs:

Nelson Rusche College of Business

Location: McGee Suite, Room 392

Phone: 936-468-4654

Email: cobadvising@sfasu.edu

James I. Perkins College of Education

Location: McKibben Building, Room 118

Phone: 936-468-2901

Email: COEStudentServices@sfasu.edu

College of Fine Arts

Location: Griffith Fine Arts Building, Room 205

Phone: 936-468-2801

Email: cfaacademicadvising@sfasu.edu

Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture

Location: Forestry Building, Room 103E

Phone: 936-468-3301

Email: atcofa@sfasu.edu

College of Liberal and Applied Arts

Location: Ferguson Building, Room 290

Phone: 936-468-2205

Email: libarts@sfasu.edu

College of Sciences and Mathematics

Location: Science Building, Room 127

Phone: 936-468-3902

Email: cosmadvising@sfasu.edu

LEGAL ISSUES IN ADVISING

FERPA Information

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 help protect the privacy of student education records. The Act provides eligible students the right to inspect and review education records, the right to seek to amend those records and to limit disclosure of information from the records. The intent of the legislation is to protect the rights of students and to ensure the privacy and accuracy of education records. The Act applies to all institutions that are the recipients of federal aid administered by the Secretary of Education.

[FERPA General Guidance-U.S. Department of Education](#)

Authorization to Release Information

Students may choose to grant access to his or her educational records to other individuals by filing an Authorization to Discuss/Release Confidential Student Academic Information form (FERPA form) with the Registrar's Office. To do so, the student must present a photo ID and sign the form before a Registrar's Office employee. This form can be completed at the Registrar's Office on the 2nd Floor of the Rusk Building. If a student would like to file a FERPA form and is unable to appear in person, the student may email registrar@sfasu.edu for further information.

[Student FERPA Information and Annual Notification](#)

[SFASU FERPA Brochure](#)

School Officials and Legitimate Educational Interest

A school official is a person employed by the university in an administrative, supervisory, academic, research or support staff position (including law enforcement unit personnel and health staff); a person or company with whom the university has contracted as its agent to provide a service instead of using university employees or officials (such as an attorney, auditor or collection agent); a person serving on the Board of Regents; a scholarship committee, for the sole purpose of evaluating scholarship recipients; an outside individual/entity involved in the financial aid process reviewing information regarding financial aid eligibility; or a student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record to fulfill his or her professional responsibilities for the university. University employees, including student employees, with access to student education records, will annually complete the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

training. Initial training must be completed no later than thirty (30) days from start of employment.

[SFASU Policy on School Officials and Legitimate Educational Interest](#)

Duty to Report-Responsible Employees

A responsible employee is a university employee who has the duty to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the Title IX coordinator or other appropriate designee, or an employee whom an individual could reasonably believe has this duty. Responsible employees include all administrators, faculty, supervisory staff, resident life directors and advisors, and graduate teaching assistants.

Responsible Employees should share any incidents involving gender discrimination, sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual violence, interpersonal violence, and stalking to the Title IX Coordinator or deputy coordinators immediately.

Title IX Coordinators/Staff, policy/procedures, reporting information resources and reporting forms can be found at the Lumberjacks Care-Title IX Resources homepage:

[Lumberjacks Care-Title IX Resources](#)

Directory Information

Information that can be disclosed without prior written consent, unless the student notifies the Registrar in writing to the contrary. Directory information includes:

- *Name
- *All addresses, including University-issued email addresses
- *All telephone numbers
- *Major field of study
- *Academic classification
- *Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- *Weight and height of members of athletic teams
- *Dates of attendance and enrollment status
- *Degrees and awards received
- *Previous schools attended
- *Photograph and class roster

[SFASU Student Records Policy](#)

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Minimum GPA Requirement

A student must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 to remain in good academic standing.

Academic Probation

A student is placed on academic probation after the first regular semester in which the cumulative GPA falls below 2.0. Students on academic probation whose semester GPA is 2.0 or higher will be allowed to continue on academic probation until the cumulative GPA is 2.0 or higher. Academic probation will continue until the student achieves good standing or is placed on academic suspension.

Academic Suspension

A student on academic probation will be placed on academic suspension if the student's semester GPA falls below 2.0.

Reinstatement

A student on academic suspension may be allowed to continue at the university through any of the following procedures:

1. Meet conditions established by the student's dean
2. Be reinstated on academic probation automatically after one regular semester's absence from the university. Following a second or subsequent academic suspension and absence from the university for two regular semesters, be reinstated automatically on probation. Summer terms are exempt from periods of academic suspension. Automatic reinstatement will not occur if the student takes courses elsewhere and fails to attain a GPA of 2.0 for those courses; or,
3. After the first academic suspension, attend summer school at Stephen F. Austin State University and either raise the cumulative GPA to 2.0 or higher or obtain a GPA of 2.0 or higher for at least nine semester credit hours in courses specified by the student's dean.

[Academic Probation/Suspension Policy](#)

Tuition for Excessive Undergraduate Hours

The State of Texas does not provide funds to state institutions of higher education for excess semester credit hours attempted by a resident undergraduate student. Since funding will not be provided by the state, and as permitted by state law, students who exceed the maximum semester credit hour limit of their program, based on the charts below, will be charged an additional amount per semester credit hour. The additional tuition rate, established by the SFA Board of Regents, will be charged beginning with the term after the student reaches the maximum number of credit hours attempted in excess of the degree requirements. Effective with students initially enrolling in the fall 1999 semester and subsequent terms, excess credit hours are those hours attempted by a resident undergraduate student that exceeds by more than 45 hours the number of hours required for completion of the degree plan in which the student is enrolled. Effective with students initially enrolling in the fall 2006 semester and subsequent

terms, excess credit hours are those hours attempted by a resident undergraduate student that exceeds by more than 30 hours the number of hours required for completion of the degree program in which the student is enrolled. For purposes of excess hours, a resident undergraduate student includes a nonresident student who is permitted to pay resident tuition. The semester credit hours counted toward the limitation include all hours attempted by the student except:

1. Semester credit hours earned by the student before receiving a baccalaureate degree that has been previously awarded.
2. Semester credit hours earned by the student by examination or other procedure by which credit is earned without registering for a course for which tuition is charged.
3. Credit for remedial education courses, technical courses, and workforce education courses funded according to contract hours, or other courses that would not generate academic credit that could be applied toward a degree program at SFA.
4. Semester credit hours earned by the student at a private or an out-of-state institution.
5. Semester credit hours earned by the student before graduating from high school and used to satisfy high school graduation requirements (i.e., dual credit courses). (Effective fall 2009.)
6. Hours not eligible for formula funding.

Maximum Number of Attempted Credit Hours in Excess of Degree Requirements Allowed at Resident Rate

Initial Enrollment in Texas Public Institution of Higher Education	Maximum Number of Attempted Credit Hours in Excess of Degree Requirements Allowed at Resident Rate
Prior to Fall 1999	No maximum
Fall 1999-Summer 2006	45 hours
Fall 2006-Present	30 hours

[Excessive Hours](#)

6 Drop Rule

Under section 51.907 of the Texas Education Code, “an institution of higher education may not permit a student to drop more than six courses, including any course a transfer student has dropped at another institution of higher education.” This statute was enacted by the state of Texas in spring 2007 and applies to students who enroll in a public institution of higher education as first-time freshmen in fall of 2007 or later. Any course that a student drops is counted toward the six-course limit if “(1) the student was able to drop the course without receiving a grade (A, B, C, D, WF, or F) or incurring an academic penalty; (2) the student’s transcript indicates or will indicate the student was enrolled in the course (signified by a W6 grade at SFA); and (3) the student is not dropping the course in order to withdraw from the institution.” Some exceptions for

good cause could allow a student to drop a course without having it count toward the limit, but it is the responsibility of the student to establish that good cause.

[Adding/Dropping Courses](#)

Tuition for Repeated Courses – “3-PEATS”

The Texas Legislature eliminated funding to institutions of higher education for students enrolled in courses that they have attempted three or more times. An attempted course is any course in which a grade is earned, a repeated course, or a course dropped after the census date (12th class day in fall or spring semesters, fourth class day in summer terms, second class day in Maymester or sessions of five weeks or less). In order to compensate for this loss of state funding, students attempting a course for the third or more time will be required to pay an additional amount per semester credit hour for the repeated course as established by the SFA Board of Regents. In assessing this charge, courses attempted at any other Texas public college or university will be considered.

Exemptions for repeated hours for attempted courses are as follows:

1. Up to 18 hours of remedial and development courses.
2. Hours for special topics and seminar courses that may be taken for additional credit toward a degree.
3. Hours for courses that involve different or more advanced content each time they are taken, including but not limited to, individual music lessons, Workforce Education Courses, manual special topic courses (when the topics change), theater practicum, music performance, ensembles, certain physical education, kinesiology courses, and studio art.
4. Hours for independent study courses.
5. Classes taken prior to fall 2002.
6. A student shall be exempted from payment of higher tuition for any course repeated in the final semester or term before graduation if the course(s) is taken for the purpose of receiving a grade that will satisfy a degree requirement. This exemption applies for only one semester. The exemption does not affect an institution’s ability to charge a higher tuition rate for courses that cannot be reported for funding for other reasons such as the excess credit hour limit.

[3 Peats Policy](#)

Residence Status

The university is guided by state law in determining the resident status of students. Sections 54.001-54.209 of the Texas Education Code provide, in part, as follows:

In essence, the student who has not resided in Texas for 12 months immediately preceding the student’s registration into the university will be classified as non-resident.

A non-resident teaching or research assistant employed at least half-time in a position that relates to his or her degree program shall be entitled to pay the tuition and fees of a resident student during the period covered by the employment.

A non-resident student holding a competitive scholarship of at least \$1,000 for the academic year awarded by a scholarship committee of SFA is entitled to pay the tuition and fees of a resident student during the period covered by the scholarship.

Rules and regulations governing the resident classification of a student shall be available in the Office of Admissions, and any student who is uncertain of status should obtain such rules and regulations and seek a determination of status through that office.

Individual determinations can be affected by death or divorce of parents, custody of minor by court order and active military duty of student or student's parents.

Registering under the proper residency classification is the responsibility of the student.

If there is any question of the right to classification as a resident of Texas, it is his or her obligation to raise the question with the Office of Admissions prior to registration.

Exemptions and waivers for residency status may be subject to acts of the Texas Legislature.

[Residence Status](#)

Graduation with Honors

A student receiving a baccalaureate degree with academic honors has completed a course of study with at least 54 semester hours of SFA residence coursework excluding pass/fail hours and has an overall GPA as follows:

Summa Cum Laude 3.8 to 4.0

Magna Cum Laude 3.6 to 3.79

Cum Laude 3.4 to 3.59

[Honors](#)

Graduation as a University Scholar

Students graduate with the University Scholar distinction on their baccalaureate degree if they meet the following conditions:

1. Have full honors membership status in the School of Honors.
2. Complete 24 credit hours of honors coursework, including 12 credit hours of upper-division honors coursework. Honors courses must result in a minimum GPA of 3.0. No more than two "C" grades and no grade below "C" will count toward honors course requirements.
3. Achieve a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.25.

All honors courses will be designated as such in the student's final transcript.

Students meeting these criteria also have their final transcript noted "University Scholar."

[Graduation Policy](#)

Requirements for Undergraduate Degrees

To qualify for a degree, candidates may choose to meet the requirements of the current bulletin or any bulletin in effect between the dates of their matriculation and graduation, provided that the period between such dates does not exceed six years and provided they were enrolled during the year of the bulletin chosen. In the event students serve on active duty with the armed forces of the United States between the dates of their matriculation and graduation, the six-year limit will be extended one year for each year of active duty served, up to a maximum extension of four years.

Application for Degree/Graduation

Applications are available in the Office of the Registrar or online at sfasu.edu/registrar/147.asp. Deadlines for application are located on the registrar's website under Graduation and Diplomas at sfasu.edu/registrar/455.asp. A student enrolled in classes the semester or summer in which he/she expects his/her degree may not be certain of completing all requirements at the time of commencement exercises because grades have not been processed at that time. Students who have completed all requirements or are registered for the final hours needed to complete degree requirements may apply for degrees and attend commencement. The commencement program lists applicants or candidates for degrees. The appearance of a name in the commencement program and the act of attending commencement exercises is no guarantee of receiving the degree. Diplomas will be mailed to those who are found to satisfy all requirements, and transcripts showing that the degree has been conferred will be available. Those who apply for a degree and pay the graduation fee for a given commencement and who are found to have not satisfied degree requirements must satisfy all requirements, reapply and pay graduation fees again. Access sfasu.edu/registrar for more information.

[Registrar](http://sfasu.edu/registrar)

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