



## 2025 PROGRAM REVIEW REVIEW TEAM REPORT ACADEMIC ADVISING

SALT LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

APRIL 2025

### **Purpose and Goals of Program Review**

The program review process is a structured evaluation conducted every five years to assess the effectiveness of departments within Student Affairs. It requires departments to analyze their core functions, services, and outcomes to determine what is working, what needs improvement, and how to better align with institutional priorities. The process includes a self-study and an external review, bringing objective feedback and actionable recommendations. Program review supports data-informed decision-making, strategic planning, and goal alignment, ensuring departments remain accountable and responsive to student and institutional needs.

## **The goals of the program review**

**Strategic Alignment:** Ensure the department's activities and initiatives directly support and enhance SLCC's mission, vision, values, and strategic goals.

**Systemic Collaboration:** Foster robust collaboration and support across departments to enhance the student experience at SLCC

**Excellence and Efficiency:** Achieve and maintain high-quality, efficient, and effective departmental functions and service standards.

**Student Impact:** Maximize the positive effects of departmental services on student success, development, retention, and overall experience.

**Continuous Improvement:** Identify and leverage departmental strengths while addressing areas for growth to drive ongoing improvement and innovation.

**Source:** <https://www.slcc.edu/ssvp/program-review.aspx>

## **SLCC Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Goals**

The following are the mission, vision, values, and strategic goals of SLCC as they existed at the time of this program review.

### **Mission**

Salt Lake Community College is your community college. We engage and support students in educational pathways leading to successful transfer and meaningful employment.

### **Vision**

Salt Lake Community College will be a model for inclusive and transformative education, strengthening the communities we serve through the success of our students.

## Values

- Collaboration: We believe we're better when we work together.
- Community: We partner with our community in the transformative, public good of educating students.
- Inclusivity: We seek to cultivate an environment of respect and empathy, advanced by diverse cultures and perspectives.
- Integrity: We do the right things for the right reasons.
- Innovation We value fresh thinking and encourage the energy of new ideas and initiatives.
- Learning: We learn as a college by building outstanding educational experiences for students and by supporting faculty and staff in their professional development.
- Trust: We build trust by working together in good faith and goodwill to fulfill the College's mission.

**Source:** <https://www.slcc.edu/about/mission-vis>

## Strategic Goals

SLCC's Vision Matrix is an 18-month plan launched in January 2025 to focus the college's efforts on achieving three key goals: 50,000 annual enrollments, a 50% completion rate, and a \$5,000 increase in median earnings. Developed in collaboration with the Board of Trustees and the Vision Matrix Internal Advisory Group, the plan reflects input from 125 college areas and over 1,200 students.

The Vision Matrix outlines six strategies—built on existing programs—to drive progress toward these goals by 2027. This focused effort will lay the groundwork for the college's next strategic planning process.

**Engage:**

- Enroll and retain more Salt Lake County residents in higher education
- By 2027, SLCC will increase enrollment to 50,000 students

**Complete:**

- Increase timely certificate and degree completion, leading to transfer & meaningful employment
- By 2027, SLCC will increase timely completion to 50%

**Thrive:**

- Increase each student's return on investment
- By 2027, SLCC will increase median earning of graduates by \$5000

**Source:** <https://www.slcc.edu/vision-matrix/index.aspx>

## **Review Committee**

As part of the program review process, department leadership selects a team of three reviewers who guide the evaluation by conducting stakeholder interviews, collecting and analyzing feedback, offering recommendations, and producing a final report. This report supports strategic planning and helps align departmental efforts with broader institutional goals.

The review team is intentionally composed of two external professionals from institutions outside Salt Lake Community College and one internal representative from within SLCC. This structure ensures an objective external perspective and a contextual understanding of the college's environment.

The following individuals have been selected to participate in the Academic Advising 2025 Program Review:

- Ella Aho – Director of Career Services – Salt Lake Community College (Chair)
- Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski, PhD- Assistant Vice Provost, Academic Advising- University of Arizona
- Samantha Cusenza – Associate Vice President of Student Success – Davis Technical College

## **Review Format and Areas Interviewed**

Questions were customized by the review committee based on each interviewee's initial survey responses, professional background, and the time allotted for their interview. Despite these variations, the committee established a consistent set of baseline questions to ensure uniformity across interviews. These core questions were posed to most participants to gather comparable insights and maintain alignment with the review's overall objectives:

- What is the role of the Academic Advising Center in accomplishing the mission of SLCC and the Division of Student Affairs?
- What are the strengths and challenges of Academic Advising in addressing the unique needs of students?
- What opportunities exist for stronger collaboration?

The answers to these questions are provided later in this document, along with specific recommendations from the review committee. The insights gathered through this process are directly aligned with the goals of the Program Review.

### **Interviewees**

- |                                           |                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| • VP Student Affairs                      | • Admissions                                      |
| • AVP Student Success                     | • Financial Aid                                   |
| • Registrar ORAR                          | • Career Services                                 |
| • SLTC Faculty and Deans                  | • Student Engagement, Experience, and Achievement |
| • UG Faculty and Deans                    | • Student Life and Leadership Thayne Center       |
| • Student Peer Mentors                    | • Accessibility & Disability Services             |
| • Transfer Office and UG Transfer Schools | • Human Resources                                 |
| • Academic Advising                       | • Student Affairs Budget Liaisons                 |
| • Orientation and Student Success         |                                                   |

## **Program Review Findings**

### **Organizational Structure and Administration**

The practice of student support through academic advising at SLCC is accomplished by a centralized organization referred to as Academic Advising. All academic advising personnel are assigned to this organization, which is part of the Division of Student Affairs and reports to the AVP for Student Success.

Academic Advising is managed by a Director and four Assistant Directors. The staff includes an Administrative Assistant, two Front Desk Specialist, a Transfer Coordinator, eight Academic Advisor 3, twenty-five Academic Advisor 2, and seven Academic Advisor 1, seven part-time Advisors and five part-time Front Desk Specialists for a total of 61 staff. Currently, 37 students are employed as Peer Mentors and ESL Legacy Mentors.

This staff is responsible for advising across the entire institution at all campuses and Salt Lake Technical College. Through using the Guided Pathway/Program Model, the academic advisors have expertise in certain academic areas. Appointments with an advisor are generally organized around expertise in a pathway.

### **Internal Collaboration**

Academic Advising at SLCC is widely recognized as a central, student-facing resource and a critical contributor to student retention and success. Faculty, staff, and leadership commend the advising team for their collaborative spirit, strong interdepartmental relationships, and commitment to student advocacy. Advisors maintain effective partnerships with Financial Aid, Records, Career Services, and ORAR, allowing for warm hand-offs and coordinated support. Their engagement with first-generation student initiatives, SEEA, and OSS demonstrates a proactive and inclusive approach. Faculty especially value advisor participation in departmental meetings, and leadership acknowledges advising as one of the most important—though often misunderstood—functions within the institution.

Despite these strengths, opportunities exist to strengthen and formalize internal collaboration. Not all departments consistently include advising in their planning, and training gaps leave some

faculty and staff unclear about advising's full scope. A more structured approach is needed—such as assigning Assistant Directors to regularly attend academic department meetings, offering campus-wide training on advising roles, and increasing collaboration with the Concurrent Enrollment program. Additionally, while some support exists for integrating advising resources into Canvas, broader faculty engagement is essential to make this a reality. By building on its strong foundation and addressing these gaps, SLCC can create a more cohesive and aligned advising model that enhances communication, efficiency, and ultimately, student success.

### **Contribution to Institutional Systems**

The practice of academic advising is focused on communicating campus policy, curriculum, and resources to empower students to achieve their goals. In so doing, Academic Advising makes the following contributions:

**\*\*SLCC Mission:** Academic advisors guide students through educational pathways and appropriate resources leading to transfer and/or meaningful employment. Academic Advising at SLCC uses advising approaches to engage with students to achieve the mission of SLCC.

**\*\*Guided Pathway/Program Model:** Academic Advising is actualizing this model, which connects student interests to the academic offerings at SLCC. The advisors are the hub for information that guides students to academic programs and campus resources.

**\*\*Essential Service Delivered over 7 SLCC campuses:** Academic Advising is open 8 AM to 7 PM and covers 7 SLCC campuses through a variety of staff schedules and delivery modalities (in-person, virtual, Express Advising, email). This service model supports the needs of students through the spirit of delivering the mission.

**\*\*Implementation of MySuccess:** Academic Advising was the first office to fully implement the usage of this technology tool to schedule appointments, maintain case notes, manage advisor program assignments, and develop caseload student lists. Due to their pioneering spirit, the rest of the campus has been able to use this tool with success. Unfortunately, Academic Advising has not benefited with direct access to data in MySuccess to document utilization and address further innovations in delivery.

## **Professional Standards and Practices**

Academic Advising is aware of three key entities that establish standards of practice in academic advising. The first is NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. This organization offers a broad range of services and resources that support the field of academic advising. It offers annual memberships, regional & annual conferences, special events, professional journals, and the Academic Advising Core Competencies. The second entity is guidance for academic advising that have been established by the Council on Academic Standards (CAS). CAS for academic advising is updated regularly by those in the field. Finally, the Utah Advising Association (UAA) offers understanding of advising within the state of Utah. Through annual gatherings, SLCC advisors' network with advisors from other Utah institutions, which has a positive impact on students who are considering a transfer. Additionally, literature on community college practice is shared and offers direction. The Guided Pathway/Model emerged through the Community College Research Center (CCRC).

Academic Advising at SLCC is well aware of recommended standards and practices for academic advising at a community college. The Review Committee commends them for their on-going support to students to achieve the institutional mission even though recommendations made by Academic Advising based on best practice are not approved for this essential service. These recommendations include paid membership in professional organizations, appropriate caseloads, career ladder for advisor retention, and resources for professional development.

## **Continuous Assessment**

In the last 5 years, Academic Advising has participated in two different surveys that provided feedback. Between Spring 2020 through Fall 2022, a post-appointment survey was administered by Academic Advising to collect student satisfaction with the academic advising experience. The items focused on the advisor's knowledge on curriculum, policies, and resources. Using a Likert scale, the student response to the items was 83% Agree or Strongly Agree. Data from this survey were used to improve services and identify advisor training needs.

Within the last year, SLCC conducted a survey as part of the vision matrix plan. Academic advising was included in the survey and received feedback. It included that 49.8% of those



surveyed identified Academic Advising played a role in their timely completion plans as well as Academic Advising was in the top 5 responses for one thing that you (student) would change about SLCC that would improve your experience. Students identified scheduling appointments and interactions with advisors as pain points.

There are some tools used to evaluate advising services. Academic Advising would benefit from a formative assessment plan that addresses student satisfaction as well as evaluating students' needs and anticipated student learning outcomes. They might consider a tool from a professional organization or *CCSSE*. Additionally, data on appointment supply and demand from MySuccess would offer perspective on the capacity and establish retention and completion metrics as well as other Key Performance Indicators (KPI) of those students who participate in academic advising vs. those that do not.

## **Commendations**

- Faculty recognize advising as the first point of contact for students and a key department in retention and transfer.
- Moving advisors closer to academic programs has helped students.
- Academic advising is critical in SLCC's mission and the Division of Student Affairs.
- Advisors act as advocates for students and provide essential support.
- Strong relationships exist between Academic Advising, Financial Aid, Records, Career Services, and ORAR.
- Academic Advising has a strong team dynamic and willingness to help each other.
- Advisors are effective at warm hand-offs and student referrals.
- Advisors support first-generation students through cohorts and course planning.
- Monthly meetings between first-gen support services and advisors have been beneficial.
- Advisors partner well with SEEA and OSS on student success initiatives.
- Faculty appreciate advisor participation in departmental meetings.
- Leadership recognizes that Academic Advising is one of the college's most essential departments.
- Staff recognize the amount of work Advisors put in to serve students

## **Limitations and Challenges High Level**

The Academic Advising team at Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) faces several limitations and challenges that affect their ability to effectively support students. One major issue is the lack of a clear career progression for advisors. The existing career ladder does not provide a natural path for growth, creating difficulties for advisors in planning their long-term careers.

Additionally, there are significant discrepancies in pay and job responsibilities between the Advisor 1, 2, and 3 positions, which further contribute to inequities within the department.

Limited administrative support adds to the strain, as supervisors are responsible for managing an average of 12–14 direct reports, which can lead to burnout and reduced support for advisors.

These factors combined can result in low advisor retention and job dissatisfaction. Furthermore, outdated or inefficient technology tools hinder the ability to track student progress, communicate effectively, and manage advising processes, leading to delays and frustration.

Other challenges include low morale among the advising team, driven by heavy workloads, insufficient support, and limited professional development opportunities. This impacts overall productivity and service quality. The lack of accurate, consistent student data also complicates advising efforts, as advisors are not consistently entering information, and leadership has limited access to necessary data for decision-making. SLCC's multiple campus locations create logistical challenges in communication, consistency, and coordination, making it difficult for advisors to provide uniform service across campuses. Additionally, Salt Lake Tech introduces another layer of complexity with its students participating in short-term programs that require a different type of advising support—one that is more holistic and less prescriptive, further stretching the capacity of academic advisors. These combined issues significantly impact the efficiency and effectiveness of the academic advising team at SLCC.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

The Findings section of this program review highlights key issues that emerged during the evaluation process, organized to support clarity, alignment, and actionable planning. Each finding is categorized under a broader theme to help identify patterns across the department's operations, such as scope of work, assessment, career ladder, or technology. The findings are accompanied by targeted recommendations designed to address the root causes of each issue and

support continuous improvement. These recommendations are based on data collected through stakeholder interviews, internal assessments, and input from external reviewers. By linking each observation to a strategic recommendation, the section provides a roadmap for strengthening departmental practices and aligning services with institutional goals.

#	Finding	Theme	Recommendation
1	Lack of clearly defined advisor responsibilities	Scope of Work	The lack of clearly defined Advisor responsibilities has resulted in departments and programs forming their own interpretations of what advisors should be doing. To address this, the role of Academic Advisors—particularly in serving SLTC students, prospective students, and undergraduate students—should be clearly defined and intentionally marketed to departments and programs to promote better alignment and shared understanding. SLTC Advisors should not have the same job description or priorities as UG Advisors
	Advisors are often tasked with responsibilities outside their primary advising role within units	Scope of Work	Assignments related to Admissions, Academic Programs, Orientation, and the Registrar should be removed from advisors' responsibilities.
	Insufficient advising staff to meet student needs	Scope of Work	Clearly define advising caseloads using NACADA standards and strategically reassign leadership responsibilities to Assistant Directors to advance institutional priorities.

2	Limited career advancement opportunities for advisors	Career Ladder	Develop a career ladder allowing advisors to progress within assigned pathways to increase Advisor retention.
	Unequal promotion opportunities among advising staff	Career Ladder	Ensure career progression is equitable across all levels of Advisors.
	High number of direct reports for Assistant Directors	Career Ladder	Reduce the number of direct reports for Assistant Directors to fewer than 10 or reconsider the scope of work for Assistant Directors to ensure Assistant Directors can lead.
3	Inconsistent access to advising data for reporting.	Assessment	Grant Senior Directors and Assistant Directors super user access to MySuccess and other advising platforms.
	Lack of tracking for advising interactions	Assessment	Implement a system to track phone calls, emails, texts, and appointments for improved student engagement monitoring.
	Absence of student feedback in advising evaluations	Assessment	Collect student feedback on advising experiences to inform service improvements. Use NACADA as a survey standard to inform practices. Establish a set of Student Learning Outcomes for academic advising with a feedback plan.

4	Lack of uniformity for student interaction via Notes	Data Tracking	Train Advisors to use a standardized note taking system to ensure Advisors are entering notes the same. Use the SOAP method.
	Notes stored in multiple systems, making access difficult	Data Tracking	Ensure all Advising notes are entered into one system, such as MySuccess or DegreeWorks.
5	Website referrals sending students to Advisors for enrollment work	Marketing/ Awareness	Update the website to direct prospective to the appropriate department based on their inquiries rather than Academic Advising
	Lack of awareness among students about academic advising	Marketing/ Awareness	Develop a Canvas module explaining Academic Advising's role and benefits. Include the Provost for institutional buy-in.
6	The Academic Advising Department does not consistently attend Academic departmental meetings	Collaboration	Assign Assistant Directors to participate in monthly departmental meetings to stay updated on curriculum and process changes.
	Faculty and staff unfamiliar with advising functions	Collaboration	Offer campus-wide training sessions to educate faculty and staff on the role of academic advising.
	Gaps in collaboration between Academic Advising and Concurrent Enrollment	Collaboration	Strengthen collaboration with the Concurrent Enrollment department to ensure students take courses aligned with academic goals. Assign an Assistant Director over training to train CE Advisors

7	Limited availability of in-person advising appointments	Appointments	Increase the number of in-person advising appointments and develop a strategic approach to appointment modalities to understand student needs and appointment preferences.
	Strategize Rush and Peak seasons	Appointments	The current approach to Academic Advising appointments during peak periods, such as Rush, should be evaluated. Consider shifting to an all-hands-on-deck walk-in model to manage high student volume better and streamline service delivery.
	Advisors not located where specific programs are offered, which inhibits appointments	Appointments	Ensure program-specific advisors are at the correct locations where their programs are offered.
8	Lack of formal training for new advisors	Training & Development	Develop a comprehensive onboarding and training program to ensure consistency in advising practices. Assign an Assistant Director to oversee training and development.
	Lack of ongoing training & professional development	Training & Development	Establish a consistent training program that spans the entire year and addresses advising content, practice, and team building.

9	Underutilization of Advising technology	Software	Assess and optimize Advisor use of systems such as DegreeWorks and Starfish to improve efficiency. Systems need to be properly resourced.
10	Strengthen advocacy for Academic Advising at SALT Levels	Leadership Advocacy	Encourage the VP and AVP to advocate for academic advising in institutional meetings actively.

## Conclusion

The 2025 Academic Advising Program Review Team affirms the critical role that advising plays in advancing Salt Lake Community College’s mission, student success goals, and Vision Matrix outcomes. This review identified key findings across several core themes, including role clarity, advisor workload, career progression, data access, training, collaboration, and technological integration. Recommendations address structural improvements—such as defining advisor responsibilities, implementing equitable career ladders, enhancing training programs, and improving appointment systems—and cultural shifts that require deeper institutional investment and cross-departmental collaboration.

A consistent message across interviews and data sources is that Academic Advising is a vital, student-centered department with committed staff, strong partnerships, and a reputation for high-impact service. However, its long-term effectiveness depends on SLCC’s willingness to invest in sustainable staffing, modern technology, professional development, and transparent processes that allow advisors to focus on their core purpose: helping students navigate their educational journey and reach their goals. By aligning Academic Advising practices with national standards and institutional goals, SLCC can reinforce its role as a leading provider of inclusive, transformative education.