A Message From the
Associate Vice Provost for Student Success

Greetings TennACADA! I am thrilled to join The University of Tennessee and be a part of the Volunteer family. Academic advising is a field I hold close to my heart. As a first-generation, working class student my own academic advising was limited. I remember feeling everyone else had a playbook that told them how to navigate the university and I did not. That feeling of disequilibrium stayed with me for a long time. Advising, years ago, was seen more as a transactional process of registering for courses rather than a transformational experience. Today we know that good academic advising is teaching, meeting the student where they are on their educational journey and facilitating their academic progression towards degree attainment.

My Vision for Student Success
Community is vital for creating an atmosphere which fosters student success. As educators we invite students in to a community of scholars. We scaffold knowledge, building on experiences, both curricular and co-curricular, which help students to learn, grow and critically reflect on their experiences at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

“There are no insignificant conversations” is one of my favorite quotes from Dr. Larry Roper. Every interaction we have with a student, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem, has the power to impact that student’s life in a positive way. The smallest kindness can have a lasting effect. As Schlossberg (1989) noted when people are marginalized they feel they do not matter. The knowledge that one person cares about your academic success on campus is vital for helping students persist. Our goal is not to bring students in to survive, but instead to challenge them to thrive. The elements of student success include:

• **Persistence**-student’s desire and ability to progress toward degree completion. Involves the skills, supports, and abilities students bring with them on their educational journey.
• **Academic Advancement**-students achieve satisfactory results in courses and progress in major and degree requirements.
• **Retention**-what the university does to facilitate student progression, i.e. recognition of barriers which impede student progress, and removal of barriers when possible.
• **Degree Attainment**-completion of the requirements for a degree.
• **Transition**- into graduate school or the world of work.

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Although persistence and retention are often used interchangeably, I differentiate between them. Persistence is the skills, abilities, networks of knowledge and resources which allow students to keep making forward progress even in difficult circumstances. Retention is the university’s ability to keep a student enrolled and progression through graduation. Retention examines institutional practices and processes which impact students. While the two terms are related, retention is the by-product of a good educational experience and not an end in itself (Tinto, 1997).

The entire campus community, from facilities to academic advisors, faculty to residence life, academic coaches to athletics is involved in student success. Working together creates a holistic community in which our students and their success are our priority. We model to our students every day that learning never stops. And we do this by being engaged in our own ongoing learning. Advising is a discipline with research and theory which underpins our work. We must challenge ourselves to look critically at our practice and engage in scholarship and research. As you read this, I am sure some of you might say, “I don’t have time.” And I understand that, but can you give up one lunch hour a week? You know have 53 in a year. Imagine what you can do with 52 hours. You can write an article, craft and submit a presentation, read multiple articles about student academic success and advising to name a few.

My other favorite quote is “No one rises to low expectations” by Vincent Tinto. And it is true. We must have high expectations for ourselves as well as our students. We advise, coach, foster and facilitate student success. Thank you for the work you do every day supporting our students.

Karen Sullivan-Vance is the new Associate Vice Provost for Student Success.

In this role, she will provide campus-level oversight of the university’s centralized student success units, including the Student Success Center, First-Year Studies, the Educational Advancement Program, and the Office of National Scholarships and Fellowships. She also will work closely with the Academic Advising Leadership Group, the vice provost for academic affairs, and the vice provost for enrollment management in promoting a campus culture that supports student success.

Spring 2018 Events: Save the Dates!

We have several exciting TennACADA events planned for Spring 2018. Please block your calendars for the following dates so that you are able to attend! Locations are to be determined, and we will include the finalized location for each event in our January newsletter.

Thursday, February 22, 2018 at 5:00pm: TennACADA Happy Hour
Thursday, March 22, 2018 at 3:00pm: The Family Friendly Advisor
Thursday, April 19, 2018 at 3:00pm: Advising the “Difficult” Student
Thursday, May 3, 2018 at 3:00pm: TennACADA Awards Reception

We hope to see you at our spring events! We will provide you with a detailed description of all TennACADA events in January.

Happy holidays! We wish you all a great end to the semester!
Recommended Readings

To professionally grow as an advisor, it is critical to keep up to date with the scholarship in your field. Here are a few short articles, which have provided keen insight and furthered scholarship in the field. We hope that you are able to apply some of these philosophies and techniques to your advising strategies. Happy reading!

**Survival in the Face of Stress and Fear: How the Advisor Can Respond to Fight or Flight in Student Behavior** by Christina Curley, Georgia Southern University

**Adapting Solution-Focused Questioning into Advising** by Kyle Ross, Washington State University

**Advising Mindfully: Increasing Attention and Effectiveness** by Deborah Hendricks, Bowling Green State University

**Advising Against the Clock** by James R. Wicks, Texas A&M International University

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**Professional Development Workgroup Liaison**

Are you interested in becoming more involved with the TennACADA advising community? There is a new position that has been created to work with TennACADA and the Professional Development Workgroup. If interested, we encourage you to apply!

**Professional Development Workgroup Liaison:**
- The individual will be a liaison between the Professional Development Workgroup, TennACADA, and the Advising Community.
- The Liaison is encouraged to attend a NACADA event or conference annually.
- The Liaison will serve a two-year term. The Liaison will not hold the same position for more than one consecutive term (2-year limit).
- The Liaison is encouraged to attend all TennACADA and PDWG meetings and events.

**Qualifications:**
Individual must be a full-time advisor at The University of Tennessee for at least two years before they are eligible to apply for the Professional Development Workgroup Coordinator position.

**Nomination Process:**
Individual must be nominated by their college’s Director of Advising. Individual must submit a nomination packet, which includes the following items:
- A resume or curriculum vitae
- Two letters of support outlining why the nominee is qualified to serve in this position
- One letter of support must be written by their Director of Advising
- An interest letter outlining why the individual is interested in the position and how this role will help the individual achieve their professional development and career goals.

**Selection Process:**
Nomination packets must be submitted by December 15th. The TennACADA Executive Committee will review nomination packets of qualified candidates, and submit finalists to the Professional Development Workgroup, which will select the Liaison for the upcoming term.
Advisor Spotlight:

MEGAN STEED

Megan Steed is an academic advisor in the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences. She completed her graduate coursework at the University of Louisville and has been in her current role since May 2017.

How did you get into the academic advising profession?
During my undergraduate career, I faced a lot of uncertainty about my major choice and career path. Ironically, I became well-versed in helping most of my friends arrive at their own major and career-related decisions, and I felt a great sense of accomplishment in helping them find solutions when faced with these challenges. During this time, I also volunteered with Big Brothers Big Sisters. Volunteering as a big sister helped me discover my passion for mentoring. Some of my friends that work in higher education eventually helped me connect my interests, abilities, and values to a career in advising and the rest is history!

What is your favorite quote?
“Imperfections are not inadequacies; they are reminders that we’re all in this together.”

Tell us about your proudest moment that has occurred while working with a student.
Some of my greatest advising victories are when I can educate student on the wide array of career opportunities within their choice of major. Debunking the initial myth that major always leads to one parallel career path can be really eye-opening for students. I thoroughly enjoy learning about a student’s interests and referring them to resources to empower them to reach informed decisions regarding major and career.

What is your favorite thing about working at UT-Knoxville?
One of my favorite things about working at UT-Knoxville is the vibrant atmosphere. I earned my Bachelor’s degree from UT so working at UT has truly felt like coming home! I love the energy and excitement on campus before a football game.

What are some of your hobbies?
I love to travel as much as possible, watch SEC football, binge watch reality TV, read, and visit craft breweries.
Advisor Spotlight:

ELLIE MULHERIN

Ellie Mulherin is an academic advisor in the Haslam College of Business. She completed her graduate coursework at the University of Dayton and has been in her current role since May 2017.

How did you get into the academic advising profession? I was a business major at the University of Dayton (UD) and was fortunate enough to serve as a Peer Advisor in the advising office. I got a taste of what it was like to work with students and really make a positive impact on their collegiate journey. I was a Peer Advisor for three years and knew after the first year I wanted to go on to graduate school to work in Higher Ed.

What is your favorite thing about working at UT-Knoxville? I am going to sound like a student, but I really enjoy having the different food options! Being next to the Union and a quick walk to Cumberland is so convenient when I forget my lunch.

Tell us about your proudest moment that has occurred while working with a student. My proudest moment was when a student wrote me a Thank You card expressing how appreciative he was of the advice and guidance I gave him. He told me how I not only impacted his quality of education, but also is quality of life. It was great being reassured I am making an impact on the student experience.

What is your favorite quote? I have too many to name, and most of them are probably from Grey’s Anatomy. But something I have in my office that I like to remind myself is “Mondays are for fresh starts.” I think it’s much needed to come into work each with a new and positive attitude.

Tell us one fun fact we didn’t know about you. In grad school I fostered service dogs in training. We worked specifically on their socialization skills, so the dogs were able to go everywhere I did. It was such a great experience!
Advisor Spotlight:

WILL MCDANIELS

Will McDaniels is an academic advisor in the College of Communication and Information. He completed his coursework at UTK and has been in his current role since May 2017.

How did you get into the academic advising profession?
I have always appreciated academic advising, even as an undergraduate student. I had a great advisor during my studies, and I wanted to be able to have that type of positive impact on students.

What is your favorite thing about working at UT-Knoxville?
I really do enjoy the people I work with and the students I help. There is a great rapport not only amongst my peers in the advising office, but also throughout the entire College of Communication and Information. People genuinely care about each other and help make it a productive environment to work in.

Tell us about your proudest moment that has occurred while working with a student.
I have participated in several diversity panels and I always try to be informative, as well as entertaining. I thought it was cool when a student approached me several weeks after a diversity panel I participated on and told me he really appreciated what I said and the points I brought up. He also told me that he and his friends thought I was hilarious, so I think I entertained them!

What are some of your hobbies?
I love spending time with my wife and our (My boys) dogs. I like playing and watching sports, mainly football, basketball, and tennis. I also enjoy playing video games, mostly Madden on PS4.

Tell us one fun fact we would not know about you.
I’ve always wanted to do stand-up comedy. I think I will someday, but not a lot of people know that I’m serious about it.