SDSU | San Diego State University

LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Chief Advising Officer

Office of the Vice Provost



This search is being conducted by Opus Partners on behalf of San Diego State University.

Opus Partners

THE OPPORTUNITY

San Diego State University seeks a visionary, nationally engaged leader to serve as its inaugural Chief Advising Officer.

This is a rare opportunity: an elevated, university-wide leadership role devoted solely to advising, created with the direct support of the President and the Provost. The Chief Advising Officer will set the institutional agenda for advising, unite a talented advising community across Academic Affairs and Student Affairs & Campus Diversity, and build a coordinated, technology-enabled advising experience that becomes a point of pride for SDSU and a model for the nation.



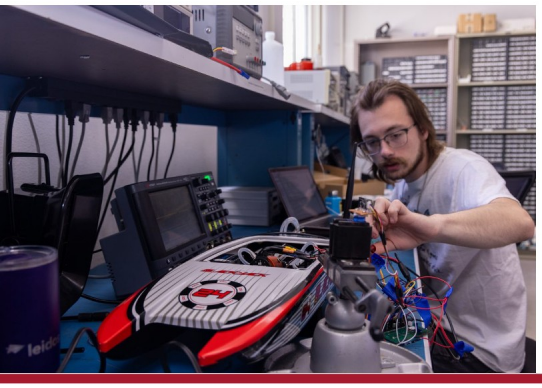
THE ROLE

Position Summary

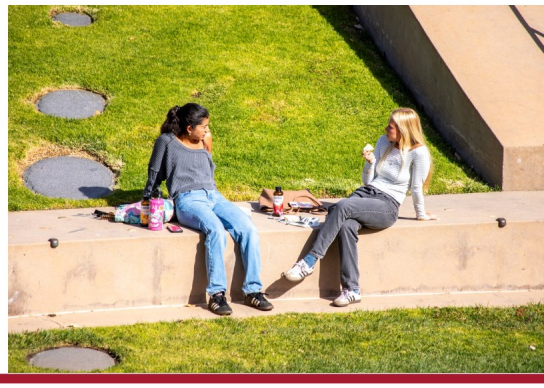
The Chief Advising Officer (CAO) serves as the university's senior leader for undergraduate advising, providing executive leadership, strategic vision, and institutional oversight for a comprehensive, integrated advising enterprise that advances student success, academic excellence, equitable outcomes, and institutional effectiveness. Reporting to the Vice Provost, the CAO leads the development and implementation of university-wide advising strategies, policies, governance structures, and initiatives that promote student persistence, timely degree completion, and a coordinated, student-centered advising experience across all undergraduate programs.

Sitting at the intersection of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs & Campus Diversity, the CAO leads with a mix of authority and influence. The role provides general direction to five of the college-based Directors of Advising and matrix leadership for academic advisors across all eight academic colleges, with dotted-line partnerships with the Associate Dean of Students and the Director of Residential Education and Student Success Initiatives. The CAO also works in close partnership with leaders of advising functions housed across the university, including coordinated care, career services, financial aid, study abroad, and athletics advising, as well as with the deans, the Registrar, Enrollment Services, and Institutional Research. The CAO will play a central role in shaping the advising structure, including hiring a planned intermediary leadership position.

As the university's chief advising strategist, the CAO serves as the institution's primary resource on advising policy, practice, and organizational effectiveness; champions the advisors who do this work every day; and represents SDSU in CSU systemwide and national conversations, advancing advising as a high-impact educational practice that supports student learning, retention, career readiness, and lifelong success.







THE OFFICE

The Office of the Vice Provost

The Office of the Vice Provost provides executive leadership for undergraduate education, academic success, and institutional initiatives that advance student achievement, persistence, timely degree completion, and educational excellence. The office collaborates with academic colleges, Student Affairs and Campus Diversity, Enrollment Management, faculty leadership, and other campus partners to develop and implement strategies that enhance the undergraduate student experience and advance the university's strategic priorities.

The office provides institutional leadership for the university's undergraduate advising enterprise by establishing strategic direction, governance, policy, and shared standards that promote a coordinated, student-centered advising ecosystem. Through cross-divisional collaboration, organizational leadership, data-informed decision-making, assessment, continuous improvement, and the effective use of student success technologies, the office advances an integrated advising model that supports student success, equitable outcomes, academic excellence, and institutional effectiveness.

As part of the Office of the Provost, the unit fosters a culture of shared responsibility for student success by aligning advising, academic support, and student success initiatives across Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Campus Diversity, and other university partners. The office promotes innovation, organizational effectiveness, and evidence-based practices that strengthen undergraduate education and position the university to meet its strategic, accreditation, and student success goals.



THE CHARGE

Opportunities and Priorities

SDSU's students are succeeding; the opportunity for the inaugural CAO is to connect existing strengths into one coordinated, data-informed, student-centered system. SDSU's student outcomes compare favorably with peer institutions, including strong four- and six-year graduation, retention, and transfer student success rates. The CAO will build on that foundation.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Unify the advising model into one standard of care.

Bring coordinated care advising (years 1–2) and college-based major advising (years 3–4 and transfer) under shared expectations, outreach, handoffs and escalation paths. Within a hybrid structure that honors the distinct needs of each college, ensure students experience one seamless journey, including a personalized set of success markers from first year to graduation.

Drive retention and graduation through early alert and data-informed intervention.

The CAO will lead the strategy to meet CSU graduation and retention goals for the fall 2027 entering class, with particular attention to first-to-second-year retention, transfer students, Pell-eligible students and out-of-state students. Standardize use of EAB Navigate and partner with IT, Institutional Research, Enrollment Services and Financial Aid to integrate data, predict risk, and strengthen advisor literacy on financial aid and academic standing.

Professionalize advising and build a sustainable career pathway.

The CAO will be a visible advocate for the advising community and will champion advising as a profession, design career ladders, support ongoing professional development and NACADA engagement. Promote a positive, respectful, and high-performing workplace and equip advisors with culturally sustaining practices for a diverse student population that includes many first generation and working students.

Lead change by influence across divisions, colleges and campus partners.

Build trust and shared ownership among Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Campus Diversity, Deans, Assistant Deans, faculty, and Career Services. Communicate policy and curriculum changes clearly and early, honor faculty mentoring while transitioning integrated academic advising to a staff-led model, and navigate resistance with transparency, restorative practice and realistic use of available resources.

Advance advising through technology, AI and student outcomes.

Use existing platforms to automate transactional work, expand access, and free advisors for higher-impact conversations, with guardrails to protect accuracy and the human relationship. Shift measurement from outputs (appointments) to outcomes (persistence, graduation, career readiness, internships and job placement) and connect advising to career pathways and alumni engagement.

THE FIRST YEARS

Measures of Success

In the first years of the appointment, success for the Chief Advising Officer will include:

- Quickly developing a comprehensive, data-informed understanding of where advising happens across SDSU, how well it is working, and where gaps exist, and serving as the trusted source of answers on advising for the President, Provost, and executive leadership.
- Articulating and advancing a clear, university-wide advising agenda and strategy developed in collaboration with partners across divisions.
- Establishing personalized student success markers and a clearly communicated advising journey that students understand from the start of their first year.
- Measurably improving advisor morale and engagement and launching a defined career pathway that supports retention and advancement of advising professionals.
- Advancing gains in retention and graduation rates, including for out-of-state students, in partnership with deans who share responsibility for student success metrics.
- Expanding effective, student-centered use of EAB, AI, and other advising technologies.

THE WORK

Major Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership, Institutional Partnerships, and Matrix Leadership

- Provide executive leadership for the university's undergraduate advising enterprise by establishing and advancing a shared institutional vision that supports student success, persistence, timely degree completion, equitable outcomes, and academic excellence.
- Develop and implement university-wide advising strategies, policies, governance structures, standards, and initiatives that promote a coordinated, student-centered advising experience while respecting the unique missions and needs of SDSU's academic colleges and programs.
- Serve as the University's senior leader for undergraduate advising, advising executive leadership on institutional priorities, emerging trends, policy development, organizational effectiveness, and initiatives that strengthen undergraduate student success.
- Chair the University Advising Council and provide leadership for cross-divisional committees and strategic initiatives that advance advising excellence, student success, and institutional effectiveness.
- Foster an integrated advising ecosystem by building strategic partnerships among Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Campus Diversity, Enrollment Management, Institutional Research, Information Technology, Career Services, academic colleges, faculty leadership, and other campus partners and programs.
- Provide strategic leadership through a matrix leadership model that aligns advising and student success efforts across the university, including maintaining a collaborative dotted-line relationship with the Senior Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Campus Diversity and providing strategic leadership to designated advising and student success leaders, including college lead advisors, the Associate Dean of Students, the Director of Residential Education and Student Success, and other functional leaders supporting undergraduate student success.
- Exercise collaborative leadership through formal and informal reporting relationships, including a dotted-line relationship with the Senior Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Campus Diversity and matrix leadership responsibilities with designated advising and student success leaders to advance an integrated, student-centered advising ecosystem.
- Lead institutional initiatives that strengthen collaboration, communication, and shared accountability across advising and student support units to improve organizational effectiveness and the student experience.
- Represent the university in CSU systemwide initiatives and national professional organizations related to undergraduate advising, student success, and higher education, thereby fostering external partnerships and advancing institutional best practices.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Advising Excellence, Training, and Professional Development

- Establish and oversee university-wide advising governance structures, policies, procedures, and quality standards.
- Ensure advising practices are in compliance with university policies, accreditation requirements, systemwide directives, and applicable state and federal regulations and reflect and uphold the university and NACADA's core values.
- Design, deliver, and evaluate professional development and training programs for advising staff, faculty advisors and peer advisors to build capacity and ensure consistent, high-quality advising services.
- Stay current with national trends and research in academic advising, best practices, and advising technology; represent SDSU externally (e.g., NACADA conferences), and lead or support advising scholarship and continuous improvement projects.
- Drive initiatives that cultivate a cohesive, collaborative advising culture across departments and colleges.
- Lead ongoing professional development for the undergraduate advising community.
- Collaborate with senior academic and student affairs leadership on cross-cutting institutional initiatives supporting system and campus goals regarding retention, success, belonging, and postgraduate outcomes

Advising Technology and Innovation

- Provide strategic leadership for advising technology, including AI-enabled tools, chatbots, digital degree planners, and student communication platforms, to deliver timely, personalized support where students are.
- Collaborate with Information Technology, Enrollment Services, Institutional Research, and advising stakeholders to oversee, manage, and enhance advising technologies, system integrations, reporting capabilities, and user adoption.
- Lead the functional team responsible for SDSU Navigate (EAB) implementation and operations, and serve as a liaison with EAB vendor.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Assessment and Continuous Improvement

- Identify and address systemic barriers to student success through data-informed decision-making.
- Develop and oversee systematic assessment of advising effectiveness, student satisfaction, and outcomes.
- Track advising activity across units and identify opportunities for streamlined, coordinated and consistent practices to support student success.
- Collaborate with institutional research and assessment teams to develop metrics and dashboards that monitor advising interventions, student engagement with advisors, progression/persistence outcomes, and other key performance indicators; report on outcomes and recommend improvements.
- Coordinate the auditing and evaluation process for advisor training to promote consistency and effectiveness across the advising network.
- Produce annual campuswide advising reports summarizing key metrics, progress, and innovations.

Administrative Leadership and Other Duties

- Develop operational priorities, allocate resources, and ensure effective implementation of strategic initiatives.
- Provide leadership for assigned personnel, budgets, projects, and organizational planning consistent with university policies.
- Perform other duties as assigned in support of the mission of Academic Affairs.



Minimum Position Requirements

- Master's degree in higher education, student affairs, counseling, educational leadership, or a related field.
- Minimum 10 years of progressively responsible experience in academic advising or student success roles in higher education, including supervisory/managerial responsibility and leading institution-wide initiatives.
- Demonstrated ability to lead programs and manage cross-functional relationships across academic and student affairs units, including the ability to lead through influence without formal authority.
- Demonstrated success in developing and implementing university-wide advising and student success strategies that advance institutional goals and improve student outcomes.
- Excellent interpersonal, verbal, and written communication skills; ability to craft and deliver messages to diverse audiences (students, faculty, staff, senior leadership).
- Experience designing and delivering professional development and training programs.
- Experience leading advising system and student support technology implementation.
- Strong analytic skills, including experience working with data, assessing program effectiveness, and making data-informed decisions.
- Demonstrated ability to collaborate effectively across diverse teams and stakeholders, coordinating multiple concurrent projects with precision and strategic alignment.
- A demonstrated commitment to equity, access, inclusion, and the success of diverse student populations.

Preferred Qualifications

- Terminal Degree
- Experience serving in a leadership role in a large, public, research-intensive university setting and operating within a broader university system.
- Familiarity with advising technologies (degree-audit/planning systems, early-alert tools, CRM platforms) and advising research literature.
- Active involvement or engagement with NACADA or similar professional advising organizations.
- Experience in campus-wide strategic planning and organizational change management in advising or student success environments.
- Experience serving as an executive sponsor or functional lead for student success platforms.
- Demonstrated ability to lead advising and student success professionals in addressing complex student concerns, including crisis situations, through effective intervention, resource coordination, and student-centered decision-making.
- Experience in both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs contexts, and leading initiatives that integrate curricular and co-curricular strategies.
- Experience using technology and digital tools to enhance academic advising, student support, and student success.

Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- Deep understanding of academic advising as a teaching and learning process and its role in institutional student success frameworks.
- Ability to build trusting relationships across organizational units, facilitate collaboration, and navigate complex organizational structures.
- Commitment to building positive, respectful relationships with employee unions and to collaboration and open communication in support of a strong advising work force.
- Awareness of the evolving needs of today's students, including the ways mental health, financial pressures, and other life circumstances can shape their academic experience, and a commitment to advising approaches that take the whole student into account.
- Capacity to translate strategic goals into actionable plans and programs, manage multiple priorities, adapt to changing environments.
- Strong leadership and staff-development skills including mentoring, coaching, performance management, and fostering a high-performing team culture.
- Skilled in developing and delivering presentations, workshops, and training; adept at representing advising at senior leadership levels.
- Competence in using advising and student-success analytics, and ability to interpret and communicate findings to non-technical audiences.
- Commitment to continuous improvement, innovation, and evidence-based advising practices.
- Familiarity with federal financial aid, including federal student loans, and a willingness to partner with Financial Aid and related offices to help advisors guide students through aid-related decisions.
- Ability to evaluate and responsibly deploy technology to improve advising effectiveness while maintaining appropriate human oversight, equity, transparency, and student trust.

THE INSTITUTION

San Diego State University

San Diego State University is a leading public research university dedicated to high quality, research driven education, community engagement and global understanding. With expanding campuses, global partnerships and a commitment to equity, free expression and student success, SDSU advances opportunity, research excellence and public impact.

Founded in 1897, SDSU is an R1 institution serving over 46,000 students offering broad academic programs and certificates across disciplines and emphasizes faculty mentorship, innovation and access. For over 128 years, SDSU has been rooted in one of the nation's most dynamic and diverse regions. Located 30 minutes from the U.S.–Mexico border on Kumeyaay land, the university is defined by cultural connection, curiosity and a strong sense of community. A major driver of economic mobility and regional growth, SDSU generates billions in statewide economic activity and strong returns for graduates.

The mission of SDSU is to transform lives and transcend borders through education, research, and enriching experiences. The community strives to create a more equitable, compassionate, and prosperous world. As a top Hispanic-Serving Institution and an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution, SDSU welcomes students from every background. Students discover new possibilities, broaden their perspectives and prepare for a future with purpose.

What Makes SDSU Stand Out?

- 220+ academic programs across high-demand fields
- 400+ student organizations, D1 athletics, and a college campus full of life
- $540K average 20-year ROI (PayScale)
- Hands-on learning through internships, research and study abroad
- Located in vibrant, innovation-rich San Diego
- More than 500,000 alumni worldwide, strengthened by a San Diego community that embraces SDSU as its hometown university.
- Supportive community for military-connected, first-generation, and LGBTQIA+ students, with nationally recognized programs for student success and belonging

THE INSTITUTION

Why Students Choose SDSU

REAL-WORLD LEARNING THAT SETS YOU APART

With more than 200 undergraduate and graduate academic programs and dozens of research centers, SDSU helps students turn ideas into measurable impact. Internships, fieldwork and faculty-led research connect what's learned in class with hands-on experiences across industries like biotech, education, health, media and engineering, giving students a head start on their careers.

INCREDIBLE VALUE, MEANINGFUL RESULTS

An SDSU degree opens doors and delivers long-term value. Ranked among the top colleges nationwide for return on investment, our workforce-ready graduates launch careers at organizations like Google, Amazon, Qualcomm and the City of San Diego. With an average mid-career salary of $127,700 and a 20-year net ROI of $540,000 (PayScale), SDSU offers a smart, future-focused education.

A CAMPUS FULL OF STUDENT LIFE AND POSSIBILITY

College life at SDSU is vibrant and energized. With more than 400 student organizations, NCAA Division I athletics, concerts, cultural festivals and outdoor recreation, students have endless ways to connect, express themselves and lead.

A GLOBAL, INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

SDSU reflects the world students want to live in. More than half of our students identify as students of color, and we are proud to be a nationally recognized Hispanic-Serving Institution, a top campus for LGBTQ+ students, and one of the most diverse universities in the country. Wherever you're from, you'll find a place to belong and thrive here.

AN UNMATCHED LOCATION

San Diego is a launchpad for opportunity and innovation. From beaches and trails to cultural districts and tech startups, SDSU students live and learn in a region where lifestyle and career growth go hand in hand.

POWERED BY PURPOSE

As a nationally ranked R1 university and a proud member of the California State University system, SDSU is committed to student success, community impact, and global engagement. With more than 500,000 alumni leading across California and beyond, the Aztec network is strong and far-reaching.



Campuses

SDSU has locations in San Diego, Imperial Valley, Mission Valley and an international footprint at SDSU Georgia in Tbilisi, along with longstanding programs in Oaxaca, Mexico and the island nation of Palau.

SDSU San Diego

sdsu.edu

The main campus spans 283 acres and features a mix of Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial architecture, with several buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This is the primary campus serving over 40,000 students with comprehensive undergraduate and graduate programs.

SDSU Imperial Valley

imperialvalley.sdsu.edu

SDSU Imperial Valley provides a uniquely intimate educational experience and offers 10 bachelor's and two master's degrees, including a nationally-acclaimed teacher education program. With locations in Brawley and Calexico, SDSU Imperial Valley offers students the advantages of small classes with convenient accessibility to a dedicated faculty and staff. In 2025, it opened a new, $80 million Sciences and Engineering Laboratories in Brawley, designed to prepare students for careers in the area's burgeoning Lithium Valley project.

SDSU Mission Valley

missionvalley.sdsu.edu

In 2020, the university broke ground on SDSU Mission Valley, which is being designed as a vibrant, medium-density, mixed-use, transit-oriented development that will transform the university and the City of San Diego. SDSU Mission Valley will be a community asset, expanding the university's educational, research, entrepreneurial, and technology programs and supporting community engagement. SDSU Mission Valley will also include Snapdragon Stadium, an Innovation District, housing, a hotel, retail, and more than 80 acres of community parks and open space, including a 34-acre River Park.

SDSU Georgia

sdsu.edu

SDSU Georgia, a U.S. Department of State-funded program in the nation's capital of Tbilisi, is a collaboration with three of Georgia's top universities: Tbilisi State University (TSU), Ilia State University (ISU), and Georgian Technical University (GTU). It was created to address a critical shortage of STEM professionals in the country and to provide an American university education that would strengthen the Georgian labor force. SDSU Georgia offers bachelor's degrees in computer science, computer engineering and civil engineering.



THE SEARCH

To Apply

San Diego State University has retained Opus Partners to support this recruitment. Katie Dean, Senior Partner, Kenna Boyd, Partner, and Marisea Rivera, Senior Associate, are leading the search.

Confidential inquiries and nominations should be submitted by email to Marisea at marisea.rivera@opuspartners.net. To be considered by the University's search committee, candidates must provide a resume and a letter of introduction that addresses the specific responsibilities, expectations, and qualifications described above. The anticipated start date is July 2027. Please consult Opus Partners for more information about the application process.

ANTICIPATED START DATE

July 2027

ANTICIPATED HIRING RANGE

$165,000 – $185,000 annually

CONFIDENTIAL INQUIRIES AND NOMINATIONS

Marisea Rivera, Senior Associate

marisea.rivera@opuspartners.net

SDSU is an Equal Opportunity Employer that considers all qualified candidates for employment and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, ancestry, age, disability, genetic information, gender, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, medical condition, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, covered military and veteran status, or any other protected characteristic or status. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for qualified applicants with disabilities who request an accommodation by contacting Casie Martinez at cmartinez12@sdsu.edu.

