ARC
NETWORK at JMU

The Advising Resource and Collaboration (ARC) Network 2024-2025 Annual Report

2023-2026 Reporting Cycle

Report Finalized: July 8, 2025

2024-2025 ARC Network Working Group Members
From left to right, Katie Fisher, Amy Strunk, Jess Kyllo, Kelly Schuhmann, Amber Loyacano, Annette Fornadel, Danielle Maxham, Elaine Kaye, Aimee Stright, Audrey Burnett, and Jennifer Jackson.

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Introduction

The Advising Resource and Collaboration (ARC) Network leadership team remains committed to supporting the needs of the JMU advising community and the mission of advising at JMU. Our group continues to meet regularly and to find incredible value and empowerment in our work to fulfill a need for community building and conversation within the advising community at JMU.

2024-2025 is mid-way in the three-year planning and assessment cycle that will take us through 2026. The following purpose, values, and goals guide our work through this cycle:

Purpose and Values

We are a self-organized **network** of **advising** partners who are committed to the *essential work* of building **community**, sharing **resources**, and **collaborating** for the benefit of students, advisors, and campus partners.

As a group, we **value and center:**
- Supporting advisor inquiry
- Amplifying community voices
- Equity in our work
- An ethic of care for our network & community

2023-2026 Goals

1. Empower advisors to leverage campus resources to the benefit of their students and to be efficient and supportive of advisors' time.
2. Create awareness of the role, capacity, and reality of advising services on campus to support meaningful partnerships.
3. Foster community among advisors and partners in order to share advising practices, trends, and context.

Operations and Structure

All participation in the ARC Network is considered a form of professional service, and the group currently operates without a dedicated budget.

The ARC Network operates through three working groups, led by two co-chairs, who meet regularly to carry out responsibilities and work towards the annual action items:

1. **Communications and Reporting (C&R)**
2. **Partnerships and Programming (P&P)**
3. **Annual Conference Planning (ACP)**

The Leadership Team, comprised of the co-chairs and ARC Network Coordinator, meets regularly to coordinate activities across the working groups. The **ARC Network Coordinator** provides operational oversight, facilitates leadership meetings, and is the primary network representative.

All JMU faculty and staff who serve in an advising role are considered **general members** of the ARC Network. **Advising partners** are faculty, staff, or departments who support advising without holding an advising role.

Executive Summary

The ARC Network continues to serve as a self-organized community of advising professionals at James Madison University, committed to building community, sharing resources, and fostering collaboration to enhance the student and advisor experience. Now past the midpoint of its 2023–2026 planning cycle, ARC has made significant strides in advancing its goals through strategic programming, campus partnerships, and internal development. As the network grows in scope and impact, it has reached a critical point where seeking formal recognition and funding is imperative.

2024-2025 Annual Report Highlights

Throughout the 2024–2025 academic year, ARC made significant progress in advancing its mission and goals. Key accomplishments highlighted in this report include:

1. **Leadership and Strategic Growth:** The Leadership Team strengthened institutional alignment by collaborating with Student Academic Success (SAS), laying the groundwork for a formal proposal to Academic Council to secure sustainable funding and recognition. The team also hosted ARC's first all-member end-of-year wrap-up meeting, fostering reflection and collaborative planning for the future.

2. **Professional Development and Programming:** Delivering relevant and inclusive professional development remained a central focus this year Workshops addressed topics such as study abroad advising, military-affiliated student support, and post-conference reflections from NACADA attendees. The annual conference continues to be a success, this year introducing Focused Community Discussions (FCDs), which created space for identity- and interest-based dialogue, and refined the conference structure to better align with advisor roles and preferences.

3. **Assessment and Communication:** ARC's digital presence was enhanced through website updates, centralized communications, and institutional sharing of collected data. The group also refined its suite of assessments and developed a new Working Group Member Survey to capture internal experiences. These efforts contributed to a more consistent and data-informed approach to evaluation and storytelling.

4. **Working Group Member Experience Survey:** This survey showed a strong sense of community, empowerment, and skill development among members. While feedback was positive, opportunities for growth were identified in communication between leadership and working groups. These areas include improving meeting efficiency, and the inclusivity of leadership language regarding meeting purpose and access.

Recommendations

ARC enters the next academic year with momentum and a strong foundation for continued growth and institutional impact. The following strategic recommendations will guide its work:

1. **Deepen Strategic Partnerships and Formalize ARC's Institutional Role:** Finalize the Academic Council proposal, align with university priorities, and clarify ARC's evolving role, especially as the ARC Coordinator transitions from a Libraries liaison to an advising professional.

2. **Strengthen Communication and Coordination Across the Network:** Implement a comprehensive communications plan, increase all-member meetings, and ensure timely, inclusive messaging to the entire advising community.

3. **Build a Structured and Inclusive Professional Development Framework:** Develop a tiered model of core and boutique offerings, institutionalize Focused Community Discussions, and maintain accessible learning options.

4. **Finalize and Operationalize Assessment and Communication Plans:** Complete the assessment framework, train members on tool use, and launch a year-round communications calendar to share ARC's impact and opportunities.

2024-2025 Actions and Accomplishments

The following recommendations were made in the 2023-2024 annual report:

1. Strategically expand our professional development options.
2. Explore and address specific advising community members/groups.
3. Build materials and work with partners to elevate understanding of the advising role of advising.
4. Refine and maintain ARC team norms and structure.

At the start of the academic year, our leadership team identified a few key areas to focus on that would help us make progress towards our goals and address these recommendations. The table below summarizes these action items and the progress status, followed by a more detailed summary of accomplishments by functional area.

Action Areas and Progress

Action Area	Overview & Steps Taken	Associated Goals	Status
Build an intentional communications plan and expectations for promoting PD opportunities.	C&R began discussion but prioritized other action items in AY 24-25 with goal to address this in the following AY.	1 & 3	Not started
Explore ways to allow for additional participation in P&P events (e.g., intentional workshop times, consistent hybrid offerings, intentional marketing to populations with historically low participation).	Hosted one completely virtual session and two hybrid sessions to increase accessibility options for all advisors. Based on feedback, offered workshops at "faculty friendly" times using the class schedule to determine timing for events.	1 & 2	Complete
Facilitate sessions for NACADA Annual Conference attendees to prep and debrief the conference.	Hosted a virtual session with 4 individuals who attended NACADA and shared insights. 22 participants joined to learn more and discuss how to apply concepts at JMU.	1 & 3	Complete
Co-host NACADA webinars and facilitate conversation about applying concepts at JMU. Includes securing funding from key partners.	University Advising purchased NACADA webinars. ARC co-hosted and participated in sessions. No funding secured for webinars, but funding was received for the conference. Ongoing discussions with SAS leadership about future funding.	1	Ongoing
Build upon the success of past annual conferences.	Established a theme aligned with advisor interests based on past survey data. Piloted Focused Community	1, 2, & 3	Complete

	Discussions based on affinity group feedback. Strategically scheduled sessions to increase relevance and satisfaction.		
Identify other areas of professional development that are needed, and which areas could be developed and put online for anyone to access.	Collected feedback through surveys, reviewed CFI and Libraries offerings, and brainstormed how ARC can support or complement existing events.	1 & 2	Ongoing
Better understand how Advising is valued within annual evaluation and promotion and tenure.	Added question set to event registration and post-assessment, initiated review of P&T documents, and had FCD at conference related to faculty advising. P&T document review will continue into following AY.	2	In-progress
Create shareable format of reports that can be accessed directly by stakeholders and are included on our website.	Developed executive summaries of the annual reports and General Member Surveys. Shared on the ARC website and with SAS leadership.	2	Complete
Complete an assessment plan that documents the aligned goals, key performance indicators (KPIs), and how each assessment measures the KPIs.	Refined the suite of assessment tools for the conference, workshops, and internally to align with ARC goals and support long-term evaluation.	2	In-progress
Continue to refine the role and purpose of the Leadership team and how to best leverage meeting time, communications, and workflows.	Reshaped meeting format to include structured updates, open discussion, and working time. Focus shifted to strategic initiatives as working groups became more self-sustaining.	1	Ongoing
Follow up with new members and current to gather specific recommendations for joining ARC, being part of ARC, suggestions for onboarding etc.	Create year-end survey for ARC working group members. Results shared in this annual report.	1	Complete

Accomplishments by Functional Area

ARC Leadership Team

The ARC Leadership Team is the core of the ARC network. The regular meeting of working group chairs and the ARC Network Coordinator is essential to maintaining and shaping the role of the ARC network on campus. An essential part of a core team is to bring continuity to the work of ARC and create a space for members to gain essential leadership skills. In this space, chairs can coordinate working group efforts, receive feedback and guidance, and support each other's leadership development.

2024-2025 Leadership Team members:

- Elaine Kaye, ARC Network Coordinator, JMU Libraries partner
- Audrey Burnett, C&R co-chair
- Katie Fisher, P&P co-chair
- Danielle Maxham, C&R co-chair
- Aimee Stright, P&P co-chair
- Kelly Schuhmann, ACP co-chair

Initially, the Leadership Team focused on supporting co-chairs and coordinating ARC's annual work. But as the working groups became more effective and self-sustaining, the Leadership Team was **able to shift its focus toward broader strategic initiatives and relationship-building across campus.** While there is still internal work to be done to ensure smooth operations, the structure appears to be working. The working group model allows the Leadership Team to be **more responsive to campus partners, contributing to ARC's established credibility and value** as an organization at JMU. Additional highlights and accomplishments include:

1. **Reimagined Leadership Meetings:** Continued regular meetings while reshaping the format to better support working group co-chairs. Meetings now include structured updates, open discussion/advice time, and dedicated working time, creating a more collaborative and responsive environment.

2. **Collaboration with Student Academic Success (SAS):** The Leadership Team had two meetings with Student Academic Success (SAS) leadership to strengthen alignment between ARC and institutional priorities. These meetings were the result of shared data from the General Member Survey and 2023-2024 Annual Report. Outcomes included:
   a. An invitation to propose sustainable funding support and co-sponsorship for the evolving ARC Conference proposal to Academic Council.
   b. Providing consultation and personnel support for Global Advising Week and the Advising Awards.

3. **Consultation with Institutional Research:** ARC Leaders met with the Associate Director of Planning, Analytics, and Institutional Research (PAIR) to review ARC's processes and timeline for establishing a formal network. PAIR had expressed interest in developing a Data Community of Practice to support data-informed advising and recognized ARC as an established and successful community of practice to possibly emulate.

4. **Continued Organizational Sustainability and Continuity Efforts:** ARC's long-term stability was strengthened by hosting the first all-member end-of-year wrap-up meeting to collaboratively reflect on accomplishments and to plan for the next academic year. The Leadership Team also successfully recruited and onboarded new working group members and began planning for the transition of the ARC Network Coordinator role. This work is particularly important because contributions to ARC are in a service context.

The Leadership Team is excited to continue its work and plans to focus on the following in the next academic year:

1. **Finalizing and submitting a formal proposal, including a budget, to the Academic Council.** This will involve coordination with SAS and campus partners to determine **a sustainable funding and support model.**

2. Staying informed about university-wide strategic planning efforts to **ensure ARC's goals and initiatives remain aligned with institutional priorities.**

3. **Continue refining the meeting schedule to support effective collaboration across working groups.** Plans include a required in-person kickoff meeting at the start of the year (with working group members invited), a mid-year "all hands" virtual meeting focused on conference planning, and an end-of-year wrap-up session to reflect and plan. All with the intention of increasing transparency and empowering members to consider leadership roles.

Partnerships and Programming (P&P) Working Group

The P&P Working Group serves as the liaison to established and potential community partners to explore and maintain opportunities for future collaborative work. Additionally, this working group seeks to connect new academic advisors at JMU to ARC, advising listserv, and our workshops as part of the training and onboarding process.

2024-2025 P&P Working Group members:

- Aimee Stright, co-chair
- Katie Fisher, co-chair
- Amy Strunk

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the P&P Working Group focused on expanding professional development opportunities and strengthening campus partnerships. Key accomplishments include:

1. **Workshop collaboration:** Partnered with various campus units to host three professional development workshops, offered in flexible formats (two hybrid, one fully virtual) to accommodate faculty schedules. Based on survey feedback, workshops were scheduled during class periods to better align with faculty availability. 2024-2025 partners included:
   a. All Abroad! Helping Students Navigate the Study Abroad Process (9/18/24)
      Attendance: 4 in-person, 7 virtual

Hosted by Erin Smith, Study Abroad Outreach & Partnerships Coordinator & Donna Sharpes, Senior Advisor & Student Support Coordinator.

    b. Post-NACADA Debrief Advisor Panel (11/1/2024)
Attendance: 21 virtual
Virtual panel share out and discussion led by Dr. Quentin Alexander, Dr. Marquis McGee, Dr. Dara Hall, and Danielle Maxham.

    c. Navigating ROTC, VA Benefits, & JMU VALOR (2/26/2025).
Attendance: 19 in-person, 8 virtual, significant faculty advisor participation
Community conversation with Craig Gibson (Army ROTC), Kevin Bibb (Air Force ROTC), Lauren Houff and Kelly Hollembeack (VA Benefits), and Monica Pangle (JMU VALOR).

1. **NACADA Webinar Co-Sponsorship:** 2024-2025 NACADA webinars were purchased by University Advising. All advisors could attend these sessions individually or as part of a group viewing. Members of ARC leadership attended multiple webinars throughout the academic year.

2. **ARC Conference Support:** Collaborated with ACP to identify areas of need and provide targeted support. Contributions included designing a presentation to highlight event co-sponsors and articulate the conference's purpose, as well as recruiting and facilitating a student panel that showcased diverse advising experiences and perspectives.

The team is excited to build on this year's momentum and focus on strategic planning and sustainable programming. Key goals include:

1. **Exploring the distinction between "core" workshops** (recurring, foundational sessions) **and "boutique" workshops** (specialized or one-time offerings). This will inform the development of a standardized annual workshop schedule, allowing the group to rotate topics each year while maintaining consistency.

2. **Continue to strengthen relationships with campus partners** to co-host workshops that reflect evolving advising needs and student support priorities.

3. Continue to **refine its strategy for connecting new academic advisors to ARC resources**, including the advising listserv and professional development opportunities, as part of a more structured onboarding experience.

Annual Conference Planning (ACP) Working Group

The ACP Working Group plans and implements the annual ARC Network conference for advisors within our community (and possibly beyond). This group is responsible for communicating with the core team and with ARC members to develop conference themes, brainstorm needs of the community, and formulating best practices for implementing this professional development opportunity.

2024-2025 ACP Working Group members:

- Kelly Schuhmann, co-chair
- Jennifer Jackson, co-chair

- Amber Loyacano

This year, the ACP Working Group **prioritized responsive and inclusive programming**, with a particular **focus on piloting new formats and refining session design** based on advisor feedback. Key accomplishments include:

4. **Piloted Focused Community Discussions (FCDs):** In direct response to the ARC action item of "exploring affinity groups," the ACP team introduced Focused Community Discussions at this year's spotlight session, shifting from a panel or keynote speaker. FCDs were designed to foster deeper dialogue around shared identities, interests, and advising experiences. Topics were selected based on registration trends and attendance data from P&P workshops to ensure broad campus relevance. Feedback from participants affirmed the value of these targeted conversations.

5. **Strategic Scheduling of Concurrent Sessions:** To better meet the diverse needs of advisors, the ACP group implemented a more intentional approach to scheduling concurrent sessions. Each session block included tracks aligned with different advising roles and interests, allowing attendees to customize their experience. There was a notable increase in satisfaction scores, particularly in evaluations of session relevance and applicability. Additionally, the group continued to offer online access for one session per block. These sessions were selected based on popularity and strategically scheduled in a room equipped with the necessary technology to ensure a seamless hybrid experience.

6. **Continued Success of a Conference Theme**: There was positive reception to the use of a unifying theme in the 2024 post-conference survey. Building on that momentum, the 2025 conference adopted the theme "Connect, Advocate, Elevate: Strengthening Campus and Student Relationships," which was selected based on results from the 2024 General Member Survey. The theme guided the selection of presentations and the structure and tone of the event and resonated strongly with attendees, reinforcing the value of a cohesive, mission-driven framework.

The ACP Working Group is excited to build on this year's success and is already planning for the 2026 conference, with the following goals in mind:

1. **Continue the use of a theme,** which will be selected based on evolving advisor needs and feedback, using data from the 2025 post-conference survey. The theme was discussed during the ARC end-of-year meeting to guide early planning.

2. **Secure the Festival Conference and Student Center as a new venue**, offering expanded space and new possibilities, including improved catering and hospitality, on-site setup support from Festival staff, opportunities to invite outside speakers, and potential to expand registration to advisors from other institutions. A perk of securing this venue is designation as a recurring JMU event with priority scheduling, ensuring long-term consistency and planning stability.

3. **Update the conference blueprint document** to shift the planning timeline earlier, allowing for more manageable preparation and flexibility in response to the new venue and evolving needs. The conference theme and date will now be selected nearly a year in advance to support this new structure.

Communications and Reporting (C&R) Working Group

The C&R Working Group organizes and maintains both internal and external materials, including but not limited to, the website, email communication, and annual and event reporting, etc. This working group functions primarily in support of the other working groups and, therefore, relies heavily on communication and collaboration with other working groups to gather necessary information and data for communications, assessment, and reporting.

2024-2025 C&R Working Group members:

- Danielle Maxham, co-chair
- Audrey Burnett, co-chair
- Jess Kyllo
- Annette Fornadel

This year, the C&R Working Group focused on **improving existing processes, enhancing user-friendliness, and ensuring documentation for long-term continuity**, regardless of future committee membership. Key accomplishments include:

1. **Continued Enhancement of Communications**, including 1) centralizing all ARC communications through the official ARC Network email account to ensure consistency and clarity across working groups, 2) successfully onboarding a new website manager, Jess Kyllo, marking a smooth transition of this key role and reinforcing the group's commitment to sustainability and continuity, and 3) revising the ARC website structure to improve usability, created new webpages and promotional materials for ARC workshops, and developed a dedicated landing page for P&P activities.
2. **Finalized the Spring 2025 General Member Survey and developed a shareable executive summary**. Results were shared with advising leadership in Student Academic Success and University Advising, sparking conversations around potential funding and collaborative opportunities to support the advising community, including Global Advising Week events. The co-chairs also presented survey findings during a concurrent session at the annual conference.

3. **Continued the refinement and expansion of the suite of assessment tools** to ensure goal alignment and continuity. Enhancements included the creation of instructions and checklists to support consistent use, revision of language for clarity and approachability, and the addition of questions related to the role of advising in promotion and tenure (P&T) processes. Also, **new working group members brought fresh insights** that helped make these tools more effective and user-friendly. Notably, Annette Fornadel led the **development of a new Working Group Member Survey** to ensure the member experience is captured in the annual report.

Several projects began this year and will continue into the next academic year, including:

1. The group will continue **reviewing promotion and tenure documents** to analyze how advising is represented and make recommendations to ARC and university leadership.

2. Building on the refined assessment tools, the group wants to return to **the comprehensive assessment plan** started in 2023-2024 that outlines aligned goals, key performance indicators (KPIs), and how each assessment method supports those KPIs.

3. **A new communication plan** will be developed to ensure early and consistent promotion of ARC events and opportunities. This may be a collaborative effort with University Advising to maximize reach and impact.

Working Group Member Experience

As part of our commitment to fostering a supportive and sustainable professional community, the ARC Network conducted a Member Experience Survey to gather feedback from working group members. Designed with flexibility and care in mind, the survey offered members an anonymous space to reflect on their experiences, highlight strengths, and suggest areas for growth. With a strong 70% response rate, the results provide valuable insight into how ARC is functioning as both a professional development opportunity and a collaborative network for student-facing professionals.

What's working well

- **Strong sense of community and care:** All respondents strongly agreed that ARC fosters a community grounded in an ethic of care.

- **Empowerment and engagement:** Members felt empowered and reported contributing meaningfully to the advising community.

- **Skill development:** Respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they gained new skills, enhanced existing ones, and had their talents utilized.

- **Meeting quality:** Most members found meetings productive, meaningful, and supportive of both community and care.

Opportunities for Growth

- **Communication and structure:** Several comments suggested that the separation between leadership and working groups can create communication gaps. Members expressed interest in more frequent all-group meetings to streamline collaboration.

- **Meeting efficiency:** Suggestions included that more work could be completed during meetings rather than between them, and that task delegation could be more centralized.

- **Perception of leadership:** It was noted that the term "leadership team" can feel hierarchical or exclusive, and suggested exploring more inclusive language.

Recommendations

Based on the accomplishments, feedback, and ongoing initiatives outlined in this annual report, the following recommendations are made for ARC's continued work:

1. **Deepen strategic partnership and formalize ARC's institutional role:** ARC's growing influence, successful programming, and collaborations with Student Academic Success, JMU Libraries, and CFI position it well for formal institutional recognition and sustainable support. Possible action areas include:
   a. Finalize and submit a formal proposal to Academic Council, including a budget and rationale for institutional support.
   b. Maintain alignment with university-wide strategic planning, especially amid leadership transitions.
   c. Continue collaboration with Student Academic Success (SAS) on initiatives like Global Advising Week.
   d. Explore the evolving role of the JMU Libraries Consultant as the ARC Coordinator transitions from an Instructional Designer to an advisor.
   e. Clarify ARC's role and capacity in institutional initiatives to ensure sustainability and preserve ARC's identity as a collaborative network.

2. **Strengthen communication and coordination across the network:** While ARC members report a strong sense of community, survey feedback highlights opportunities to improve transparency, collaboration, and inclusivity. Additionally, ARC recognizes a need for timely and consistent communication across the entire advising community. Possible action areas include:
   a. Finalize and implement a comprehensive communications plan to ensure timely event promotion, consistent messaging, and broad awareness across the full advising community. This would require coordination with University Advising.
   b. Explore more frequent all-working group meetings to enhance coordination, transparency, and shared leadership.
   c. Revisit the language used to describe leadership roles to balance inclusivity with recognition of leadership commitment.

3. **Build a structured and inclusive professional development framework:** ARC has successfully piloted diverse formats (e.g., community conversations, workshops, and the annual conference) and is now positioned to scale its offerings through a more intentional structure. Possible action areas include:
   a. Create an annual PD calendar foundational topics ("core offerings") with specialized ("boutique offerings") integrated.
   b. Operationalize Focused Community Discussions, whether during the conference or as reoccurring programming coordinated by P&P.

4. **Finalize ARC's assessment and communications plans:** ARC has made strong progress on assessment tools and reporting, but a comprehensive, operational plan is needed to ensure long-term impact and visibility. Possible action areas include:
    a. Complete the comprehensive assessment plan, including aligned goals, KPIs, and reporting timelines.
    b. Develop a year-round communications calendar that shares impact stories, upcoming events, and ARC's value with stakeholders.
    c. Use assessment data to inform strategic decisions and demonstrate ARC's contributions to advising excellence at JMU.