Andrea Olding: All About Student Success | Moab

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Whether a statewide Utah State University campus has an on-site academic advisor or not, all USU students have access to tools to help make the education and career decisions that are right for them. Thanks to Andrea Olding, director of advising and student success for Statewide Campuses, all USU campuses, big and small, can help students make academic choices.

In her role, Olding guides all USU’s statewide Directors of Students, as well as the 17 academic advisors USU has around the state at its campuses, all from her office at USU Moab.

She advises these personnel on best practices, initiatives and support.

“I collaborate with a lot of great people to move the needle on student persistence and student success,” Olding said of her job responsibilities. “I work closely with directors and student success roles such as academic advisors, success coordinators, and partnering offices and stakeholders to design and implement programs and initiatives that support students, connect students to the right people and resources, provide accurate and timely information to help them make informed decisions, and ultimately, help students have positive experiences at USU that increase their sense of belonging as part of the USU family.”

Olding enjoys participating in projects and tasks that make an impact, both in Moab and across the state.

“Andrea has been an incredible resource for advising at Eastern,” said Liz Prettyman, advising supervisor at USU Eastern. “She has served as a sounding board for our specific goals and initiatives and has been a great advocate for our campus. Andrea has been instrumental in growing our network of support by connecting Eastern advisors with advisors at Statewide Campuses on a regular basis. I am grateful to have her as a colleague and friend.”

Olding joined USU in 2015 after graduating from the school herself with both a pair of bachelor’s degrees and a master’s degree. She began as an academic advisor on campus, then transitioned to a role as Academic Advising Coordinator, which she held for two years. She moved to her current role as Director of Advising in 2019.

Prior to joining USU, Olding had several life choices to make. As a single mother of a one-year-old, she made the decision to move to Moab so her child could grow up in a small-town environment. Getting to town, Olding decided to go back to school and found USU Moab as the perfect place for her.

“For those of us in rural communities in Utah, USU provides access to high-quality programs, great faculty, and direct, on-the-ground support,” Olding said. “It was a win-win for me. I was drawn to Utah State University, and USU Moab in particular because of USU’s great reputation as a high research institution as well as its accessibility locally as Utah’s land grant institution.”

After graduating with her bachelor’s degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, Olding began teaching at a charter school before earning a second bachelor’s degree in special education. She would go on to teach special education and fourth grade. In 2015, Olding saw the opening at USU Moab as an academic advisor, and she knew it was the path she was supposed to take.

“I wanted to be a part of other peoples’ dreams of accessing higher education,” Olding said. “Especially those of us that live, work, and have families in rural communities across the state. So, when an academic advisor position opened at USU Moab, it was an opportunity I couldn’t pass up.”

Olding went on to earn her master’s degree from USU in Instructional Leadership and Higher Ed Administration. This education allowed her to find opportunities at Statewide Campuses. Olding is also grateful that through all her career progress, she has been able to stay in Moab, while still making an impact.

“I feel fortunate to have been able to stay in the town that I love while also pursuing an education and finding a career that aligns so well with my interests and goals,” she said.

As Olding moved to various roles for Statewide Campuses, she was a part of several campaigns to help students succeed. In 2018, she helped create success
coordinators on statewide campuses. These coordinators work with students whose academic advisor is located on the Logan campus. As she entered her current role, Olding was instrumental in creating campaigns that worked to retain students who may otherwise have abandoned their schooling prior to graduation. She also worked to create best practices for advisors and has worked to use CARES Act funding to hire outreach specialists to help bring students back to campus who, for whatever reason, have left.

Since taking her post as Director, USU has seen remarkable returns in advising success. From spring 2019 to fall 2020, Statewide Campuses has seen student inequity scores cut in half. Statewide Campuses advising is leading the way in serving students equitably in the advising experience. Advisors collaborate on success messaging to make sure students get the information they need when they need it, help get degree plans into the hands of students early and focus extra time and attention on students who may be at risk of leaving USU without a degree.

If Olding could let students know one thing, it’s that USU has resources ready to help any student find their right path, no matter which campus they attend classes.

“Statewide isn’t just about serving students virtually or online,” she said. “It’s about the high-level of care and support we offer each student. Whether students are taking online, face-to-face, or blended classes, there are campus resources like the testing center, local tutoring, advisors, success coordinators and faculty, and students can walk in, call in, or Zoom in with questions or for help. USU tailors its services and supports to meet students where they’re at, and I think we do that really well.”

Andrea Olding, Director of Advising and Student Success, Statewide Campuses.

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