

ACADEMIC NAVIGATION

Proficiency Model

Cane Navigator and Senior Cane Navigator

Purpose

This model defines what proficiency looks like for Cane Navigators and Senior Cane Navigators at the University of Miami giving Cane Navigators and Senior Cane Navigators alongside their managers, clarity on an individual's strengths, areas to target for growth, and talking points for goal setting and performance evaluations.

It is built on the NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model: NACADA's three components and twenty competencies are the organizing structure, and the systems, policies, and practices specific to UM are embedded within each one. The framework is the profession's; the content is Miami's.

NACADA designed the Core Competencies to guide hiring, training, evaluation, and professional development, so organizing our model this way keeps UM aligned with the professional standard, gives every Navigator a professional identity and language that travels with their career, and still delivers the practical focus for our institutional context.

Foundations

Our mission and standards

At the U, we have a **Mission-Based Strategy** that keeps us focused on our path forward. Our **purpose** is to transform lives through teaching, research, and patient care in service of our community. We intentionally shape our culture by adhering to a set of core principles, service standards and leadership expectations. Our **core principles** of excellence, value, and integrity provide the foundation for all of our behaviors. Our **service standards** of safety, caring, responsiveness, and professionalism provide guidelines for how we treat one another and those we serve.

The mission of the Center for Academic Navigation and Success at the University of Miami is to empower all undergraduate students to excel academically and achieve their educational goals. The Center fosters an inclusive and student-centered culture that equips students to own and navigate their academic journeys successfully through personalized guidance, comprehensive resources, and collaborative support.

Academic Advising at UM

The University of Miami transitioned in 2024 from decentralized school and college advising to a centralized model within the Center for Academic Navigation and Success. Through Memorandums of Understanding with schools and colleges, this model clarifies partnership expectations and supports more consistent, mature advising practices across the undergraduate experience. The change reflects a significant institutional investment in reducing gaps in student support, adapting to changing student needs, and helping students navigate complex curricula, policies, and academic pathways across organizational structures. Cane Navigators and Senior Cane Navigators are expected to continue growing as advising professionals and to serve as knowledgeable guides for the programs and policies their students encounter.

Professional grounding

The model draws on **NACADA's Pillars of Academic Advising** that include the: 1) Definition of and Scope of Practice for Academic Advising, 2) Core Values of Academic Advising, 3) Core Competencies of Academic Advising, 4) Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education: Standards and Guidelines for Academic Advising, and 5) Academic Advising Conditions of Excellence. To learn more about each of these individual pillars, [please visit NACADA's website](#).

Cane Navigators practice a range of academic advising approaches and incorporate a range of student development theory into their interactions with students based on the individual needs of the student in front of them (or on the other end of the screen). Some of these academic advising approaches include, but are not limited to: prescriptive advising, developmental advising, proactive advising, teaching as advising, coaching techniques, appreciative advising, and many others. Some of the student development theories include but are not limited to: Baxter Magolda's Self-Authorship Theory, Dweck's Growth Mindset Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Tinto's Theory of Student Departure/Student Integration, and many others.

Applying these approaches and theories demonstrate a teaching and learning partnership that supports student learning, persistence, progression, and timely graduation, not a transactional registration service.

The Proficiency Scale

Every competency uses the same five levels, defined once here. The two shaded rows are the role targets: Proficient is the expected standard for a Cane Navigator, and Advanced is the expected standard for a Senior Cane Navigator. The scale is a map for growth, not a label for people.

Level	Meaning
5 Expert	The growth edge for every role. Models and elevates practice across the Center and helps shape shared standards. No one is expected to be Expert everywhere.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	The expected standard for a Senior Cane Navigator: independent mastery, sound judgment in complex cases, and mentoring of peers.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	The expected standard for a Cane Navigator: consistent, accurate, independent practice across the caseload.
2 Developing	Emerging practice applied inconsistently. Focused coaching and support close the gap.
1 Foundational	The entry point, not a deficiency. Expected of Navigators new to advising or new to UM, with structured training and support in place.

Reading the scale across roles. A Cane Navigator working at Advanced in several competencies is building strength beyond the Cane Navigator standard. A Senior Cane Navigator is expected to sustain Advanced practice and grow toward Expert in areas of strength.

How to Read Each Competency

Each of the twenty competencies below has a scope statement, a line describing what it includes at UM, and a full rubric describing practice at all five levels. The shaded rows mark the role targets: Proficient (3) is the expected standard for a Cane Navigator and Advanced (4) is the expected standard for a Senior Cane Navigator. Descriptors are observable: they describe practice you can point to, not attitudes.

The rubric is guidance, not a scoring instrument. It exists so every Navigator can see what the expectation at each level looks like and what growth toward the next level requires alongside integration of supervisor expectations and ongoing development conversations. Ratings, evidence, and development planning happen in the companion Self-Assessment & Development Planning Tool.

The Competencies

Conceptual Component

Concepts advisors must understand. The Conceptual component provides the context for the delivery of academic advising.

C1. The history and role of academic advising in higher education

The purposes of academic advising as a profession, and how advising has evolved in higher education and at UM.

At UM this includes: UM's transition from decentralized school and college advising to centralized Academic Navigation, and the purpose and philosophy behind the Cane Navigation model.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Acts as a steward of UM's advising story: articulates it to external audiences, orients others to it, and helps inform its evolution.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Uses professional and institutional history to explain the reasoning behind current practice, orient newer colleagues, and navigate school and college relationships.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Explains the purpose of academic advising and why UM centralized advising into Academic Navigation, and describes the Cane Navigator role in those terms to students and campus partners.
2 Developing	Explains why UM centralized advising and how advising supports persistence and graduation, with some gaps or task-focused framing.
1 Foundational	States UM's mission and describes the Cane Navigator role and the purpose of advising in basic terms.

C2. NACADA's Core Values of Academic Advising

NACADA's Core Values (*caring, commitment, empowerment, inclusivity, integrity, professionalism, respect*) as the ethical foundation of practice.

At UM this includes: UM's service standards of Safety, Caring, Responsiveness, and Professionalism as the local expression of the Core Values.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Models the values across the Center, strengthens shared practice through templates, messaging, and mentoring, and serves as a reference point for values-based judgment.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Applies the values with sound judgment in complex or sensitive situations, and helps colleagues work through values-based decisions.
3 Proficient CANES NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Demonstrates the Core Values and UM service standards consistently in everyday advising, and uses them to guide routine decisions and follow-through.
2 Developing	Applies the values consistently in everyday work; sensitive cases, family interactions, and policy conflicts still call for guidance.
1 Foundational	Knows the Core Values and UM service standards and demonstrates them in routine interactions, checking with a supervisor when situations get complicated.

C3. Theory relevant to academic advising

Theories of student development, learning, motivation, transition, and identity that inform advising practice.

At UM this includes: Cane Navigation's proactive, developmental advising philosophy, and the coaching approaches used in unit training.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Deepens the team's theory base: leads training on theory-informed practice and connects scholarship to unit strategy.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Integrates theory deliberately across outreach, appointments, and interventions, and contributes theory-informed strategies to team practice while balancing practical realities.
3 Proficient CANES NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Uses core advising theory to structure interactions, normalize transitions, and support student goal setting, and can explain the reasoning behind guidance.
2 Developing	Applies basic theory concepts in some interactions, but application is inconsistent and often intuition driven.
1 Foundational	Building familiarity with core advising theory through training; practice is guided mostly by established process.

C4. Academic advising approaches and strategies

The repertoire of advising approaches (proactive, developmental, coaching) and the judgment to match approach to situation.

At UM this includes: Proactive outreach expectations, appointment structure, and advising campaign strategy in Cane Navigation.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Shapes how the team advises: designs approaches, leads practice training, and raises the standard across Navigation departments.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Adapts strategy in complex, high-stakes, or difficult situations, and models developmental advising practice for peers.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Selects appropriate strategies for routine work: preparation and agenda setting, reflective questioning, goal-oriented planning, and timely follow-up.
2 Developing	Uses appropriate strategies in most routine situations; proactive follow-up and appointment structure are still inconsistent.
1 Foundational	Conducts accurate, respectful advising interactions with close support, relying on established processes and templates.

C5. Expected outcomes of academic advising

What advising is expected to produce: student learning, persistence, progression, timely graduation, and belonging.

At UM this includes: Persistence and progression milestones, and the Navigate analytics, dashboards, and documentation trends used to spot risk early.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Leads outcome assessment for the Center: defines indicators, produces analyses leadership relies on, and shares evidence-based strategies.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Anticipates barriers before they surface, uses data to target intervention, and explains outcome reasoning to students and colleagues.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Connects daily advising actions to persistence, progression, and timely graduation, and monitors milestones across the caseload.
2 Developing	Connects actions to outcomes in some cases, but attention stays mostly on immediate tasks rather than proactive milestone monitoring.
1 Foundational	Learning what advising is expected to produce; focus is on completing accurate individual interactions.

C6. How equitable and inclusive environments are created and maintained

The conditions that make advising equitable and inclusive, and how advisors create them.

At UM this includes: UM's culture of belonging, consistent standards across student populations, and accessible communication and practice.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Advances equitable practice across the Center: identifies systemic barriers, advocates for process improvements, and builds team capacity.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Recognizes patterns of barriers affecting specific populations, adapts practice and outreach accordingly, and recommends process changes that improve access.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Communicates respectfully and inclusively, applies consistent standards across the caseload, and connects students to resources when barriers arise.
2 Developing	Shows growing awareness of barriers and bias; recognizing and responding to them is still inconsistent.
1 Foundational	Communicates respectfully with all students and follows established inclusive-practice guidance.

Informational Component

Knowledge advisors must master. The Informational component provides the substance of academic advising.

I1. Institution-specific history, mission, vision, values, and culture

UM's identity and how it shapes the student experience and the advising role.

At UM this includes: UM's mission to transform lives through education, research, innovation, and service, and the Center for Academic Navigation and Success and its place in the university.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Articulates UM's identity and the Center's story to any audience and helps shape how the unit presents itself across the university.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Draws on institutional context to exercise judgment in cross-department situations, and helps colleagues understand why UM practice works the way it does.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Accurately explains UM's mission, service standards, and the Center's role, and connects daily practice to them with students and partners.
2 Developing	Explains the Center's place in the university with some gaps; connections between daily practice and institutional context are emerging.
1 Foundational	States UM's mission and service standards and describes the Center's role in basic terms.

12. Curriculum, degree programs, and other academic requirements and options

The degree structures, requirements, and options students navigate.

At UM this includes: Bulletin requirements, Areas of Knowledge and cognates, graduation requirements, and Graduation Planner plans for four-year and transfer pathways.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Sets planning practice for the Center: develops pathway templates, trains others, and advises leadership on curriculum and planning issues.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Resolves complex planning scenarios such as double majors, cognate double-counting, and timeline recovery, and audits or improves plans built by others.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Independently builds and maintains accurate Graduation Planner plans for four-year and transfer students, and teaches students the logic of their curriculum.
2 Developing	Builds accurate plans for common pathways independently; transfer credit and non-standard timelines still require help.
1 Foundational	Builds a basic four-year plan with support, relying on templates and verifying requirements with colleagues.

13. Institution-specific policies, procedures, rules, and regulations

The policy environment governing student academic decisions.

At UM this includes: University and school/college policies, residency requirements, transfer credit evaluation, study abroad programs, graduation policies, and the change of school process.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Recognized policy authority across Navigation: consulted on precedent-setting cases and contributes to policy clarification with schools and colleges.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Resolves exception-heavy, multi-policy cases, identifies policy conflicts or gaps, and briefs leadership with sound analysis.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Applies university and school/college policy accurately across routine and moderately complex cases, cites authoritative sources, and guides change of school steps correctly.
2 Developing	Applies common policies correctly without lookup; complex cases such as transfer credit, study abroad, and exceptions need review.
1 Foundational	Locates answers in the Bulletin and policy guides and verifies interpretations before advising students.

14. Legal guidelines of advising practice, including privacy regulations and confidentiality

FERPA and the legal and ethical boundaries of practice. Compliance is expected at every level; the growth dimension is judgment in ambiguous situations.

At UM this includes: FERPA in daily practice, privacy in CaneLink records and Navigate documentation, and family and third-party interactions.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Serves as the unit's reference point on privacy practice: shapes documentation standards and coordinates guidance on difficult disclosure questions.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Exercises sound judgment in ambiguous disclosure situations, including safety concerns and external requests, and advises colleagues on privacy questions.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Applies FERPA and UM privacy expectations correctly in daily practice, including documentation quality and family or third-party conversations.
2 Developing	Applies privacy expectations correctly in routine situations; third-party and family situations still prompt frequent verification.
1 Foundational	Completes required FERPA training and follows privacy rules in daily work, asking before releasing any information in doubt.

15. The characteristics, needs, and experiences of major and emerging student populations

Who our students are and what shapes their paths.

At UM this includes: The populations Cane Navigation serves, including transfer students, exploratory and change of school students, international students, first-generation students, and student-athletes.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Builds unit expertise on student populations: develops resources, informs outreach strategy, and trains colleagues.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Anticipates population-specific barriers, tailors outreach and campaign strategy to them, and shares population expertise with the team.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Recognizes the needs of UM's major student populations and adjusts guidance, planning, and referrals accordingly.
2 Developing	Recognizes common population-specific needs; adjusting guidance and referrals for them is still inconsistent.
1 Foundational	Learning the characteristics of UM's major student populations through training and observation.

16. Campus and community resources that support student success

The student support ecosystem and how to connect students to it.

At UM this includes: The Success Advocate team, Dean of Students, Counseling Center, Office of Disability Services, and other campus partners; warm referrals and continuity of care.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Builds and maintains the referral network itself: strengthens partner relationships and improves referral and change of school processes across Navigation.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Handles sensitive, multi-office cases with sound judgment, and serves as a go-to resource for colleagues on referral pathways.
3 Proficient CANES NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Recognizes student needs early, makes warm referrals with context, and follows up on outcomes.
2 Developing	Refers appropriately in most cases but sometimes misses early signs or refers without context or follow-up.
1 Foundational	Knows the major support offices and refers when a student explicitly asks; escalates uncertainty to a supervisor.

17. Information technology applicable to relevant advising roles

The systems and tools of advising practice.

At UM this includes: CaneLink (directives, plan stack changes, add/drop/waitlist, query requests and results); Navigate (appointment summaries, campaigns, templates, analytics and reports); Microsoft tools including Word, Excel, and Copilot.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Serves as a Center-level systems resource: identifies improvements, partners with technical teams, sets documentation and reporting standards, and trains others.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Troubleshoots unusual record issues, requests targeted queries to meet team data needs, builds reports, campaigns, and template resources adopted by others, and uses analytics to set outreach priorities.
3 Proficient CANES NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Executes core CaneLink transactions accurately, uses standard query results, maintains complete and timely Navigate documentation, runs campaigns and standard reports, and uses Microsoft tools effectively in daily work.
2 Developing	Handles most transactions and documentation independently, with occasional errors or slowdowns on waitlists, plan stacks, query results, or campaign setup.
1 Foundational	Completes routine CaneLink transactions and files Navigate appointment summaries using guides and existing templates; asks for help on plan stack changes, query requests, and campaigns.

Relational Component

Skills advisors must demonstrate. The Relational component enables advisors to convey the concepts and information from the other two components to their students.

R1. Articulate a personal philosophy of academic advising

A personal philosophy of advising that guides practice.

At UM this includes: A philosophy consistent with Cane Navigation's proactive, developmental model, revisited annually in the Self-Assessment & Development Planning Tool.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	A philosophy visibly anchors their practice and leadership, and helps shape the unit's shared understanding of what advising is for.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Refines the philosophy through evidence and reflection, and uses it to help colleagues develop their own.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Articulates a personal philosophy consistent with UM's advising model, and can point to where it shows up in daily practice.
2 Developing	Describes a philosophy in general terms; the connection to daily practice is still developing.
1 Foundational	Beginning to form a personal philosophy of advising through training, observation, and reflection.

R2. Create rapport and build academic advising relationships

Building the relationships that make advising work.

At UM this includes: Relationship building with students across the caseload, and networking with colleagues and campus partners.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	A known relationship-builder whose network spans students, the team, and campus; others draw on those relationships to solve problems.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Builds productive relationships in difficult contexts, including disengaged, distressed, or frustrated students, and across campus partner networks.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Builds rapport and sustained advising relationships across the full caseload, so students engage proactively rather than only when required.
2 Developing	Builds rapport in most interactions; sustained relationships across the full caseload are still uneven.
1 Foundational	Builds rapport in individual interactions with support; relationships start out mostly transactional.

R3. Communicate in an inclusive and respectful manner

Clear, inclusive, respectful communication in every channel.

At UM this includes: Appointments, email, Navigate documentation, messaging campaigns, and templates, with tone consistent with UM service standards.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Sets the communication standard for the unit: writes and reviews shared templates and coaches others on difficult conversations.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Adapts tone and channel to the audience and situation, de-escalates difficult conversations, and raises team standards through shared templates and modeled language.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Communicates clearly, respectfully, and inclusively across appointments, email, documentation, and campaigns.
2 Developing	Communicates clearly and respectfully in most channels; tone and clarity in difficult or high-volume situations are still developing.
1 Foundational	Communicates respectfully in routine interactions using established templates and guidance.

R4. Plan and conduct successful advising interactions

The craft of the advising appointment, from preparation to follow-through.

At UM this includes: Appointment preparation and agendas, timely appointment summaries in Navigate, proactive follow-up, and unit practice metrics.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Defines appointment practice for the team: designs structures and standards, audits quality, and develops training.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Conducts effective interactions in complex or high-stakes cases, and coaches colleagues on appointment practice.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Prepares for appointments, structures them around student goals, and closes with clear next steps and timely documentation.
2 Developing	Conducts effective routine appointments; preparation, structure, and timely summaries are still inconsistent.
1 Foundational	Conducts accurate advising appointments with close support; preparation and documentation follow checklists.

R5. Promote student understanding of the logic and purpose of the curriculum

Teaching students why the curriculum is built the way it is, so they own their plan.

At UM this includes: The rationale behind Areas of Knowledge and cognates, and plan ownership through Graduation Planner.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Creates the explanations and resources the unit uses to teach curriculum logic, and advises on how curriculum changes affect students.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Builds student ownership in complicated curricular situations, and creates explanations and resources other Navigators use.
3 Proficient CANES NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Teaches students why requirements exist and how the plan fits their goals, so students can explain their own plan.
2 Developing	Explains the purpose behind common requirements; student ownership of plans is still emerging.
1 Foundational	Explains individual requirements accurately; connecting them to the larger curricular picture comes with experience.

R6. Facilitate problem solving, decision-making, meaning-making, planning, and goal setting

Coaching students toward agency in their own decisions.

At UM this includes: Major exploration, change of school decisions, academic recovery planning, and goal setting tied to the student's own purpose.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	A recognized coach: leads coaching development for the team and handles the most difficult student decision situations.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Facilitates high-stakes decision processes such as change of school and academic recovery, and models coaching practice for peers.
3 Proficient CANES NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Coaches students through decisions with questions that develop agency, rather than deciding for them.
2 Developing	Sometimes prompts student reflection and goal setting; defaults to giving answers under time pressure.
1 Foundational	Supports student decisions by providing accurate information and options, with coaching skills in development.

R7. Engage in ongoing assessment and development of the advising practice

Continuous improvement of one's own practice and contribution to the team's. Mentoring, training, process improvement, and professional engagement live here.

At UM this includes: Professional development and continuous learning; mentoring and training colleagues; committees and working groups; process improvement and data-informed practice using unit data and Microsoft tools.

Level	What this looks like in practice
5 Expert	Leads assessment and improvement for the Center, develops other mentors and trainers, and contributes to the profession through presentations, publications, or association work.
4 Advanced SENIOR CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Mentors and trains colleagues, contributes to onboarding and team learning, leads improvement work, and engages in the profession beyond UM.
3 Proficient CANE NAVIGATOR ROLE TARGET	Seeks feedback and development regularly, uses data to improve personal practice, and shares effective practice with colleagues.
2 Developing	Seeks development opportunities and is beginning to use feedback and data to adjust practice.
1 Foundational	Focuses on own learning through required training; shares observations informally when asked.