Academic Advising as a Tool for Student Success and Educational Equity

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About the Advising Success Network

The Advising Success Network is a partnership among higher education organizations and leaders who believe advising is the bright star in a constellation of student support services. The Advising Success Network is facilitated by NASPA and comprised of Achieving the Dream (ATD), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), EDUCAUSE, NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising, and the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. The Advising Success Network provides thought leadership, resources, and services to advance academic advising as a tool for helping institutions pursue equity and excellence in their support of students.

About the Publisher

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition was born out of the success of the University of South Carolina's much-honored University 101 course and a series of annual conferences focused on the First Year experience. The momentum created by the educators attending these early conferences paved the way for the development of the National Resource Center, which was established at the University of South Carolina in 1986. As the National Resource Center broadened its focus to include other significant student transitions in higher education, it underwent several name changes, adopting the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition in 1998.

Today, the Center collaborates with its institutional partner, University 101 Programs, in pursuit of its mission to advance and support efforts to improve student learning and transitions into and through higher education. We achieve this mission by providing opportunities for the exchange of practical and scholarly information as well as the discussion of trends and issues in our field through convening conferences and other professional development events such as institutes, workshops, and online learning opportunities; publishing scholarly practice books, research reports, a peer-reviewed journal, electronic newsletters, and guides; generating, supporting, and disseminating research and scholarship; hosting visiting scholars; and maintaining several online channels for resource sharing and communication, including a dynamic website, listservs, and social media outlets.

The National Resource Center serves as the trusted expert, internationally recognized leader, and clearinghouse for scholarship, policy, and best practice for all postsecondary student transitions.

Institutional Home

The National Resource Center is located at the University of South Carolina's (UofSC) flagship campus in Columbia. Chartered in 1801, UofSC Columbia's mission is twofold: to establish and maintain excellence in its student population, faculty, academic programs, living and learning environment, technological infrastructure, library resources, research and scholarship, public and private support and endowment; and to enhance the industrial, economic, and cultural potential of the state. The Columbia campus offers 324 degree programs through its 15 degree-granting colleges and schools. In the 2020 fiscal year, faculty generated $279 million in funding for research, outreach, and training programs. South Carolina is one of only 32 public universities receiving both Research and Community Engagement designations from the Carnegie Foundation.

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About the Editor

Chelsea Fountain is Program Coordinator for the Advising Success Network, a grant-funded project advancing equity in holistic advising redesign throughout higher education. In 2019, Chelsea earned a Master of Education from UofSC's Higher Education and Student Affairs program. She was previously a graduate assistant in the Office of Sustainability and an intern for the National Resource Center. Chelsea's passion is advocating on behalf of marginalized populations, which grew from her experiences abroad in Spain and Nicaragua and through her work as a college advisor at West Bladen High School. As part of the NC State College Advising Corps, Chelsea worked primarily with low-income, first-generation college students to advance enrollment and postsecondary success. Her research interests include access to education for the incarcerated and Latinx students and understanding the barriers which prevent students from postsecondary education.

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Foreword

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The higher education community has committed to providing students a high-quality education that enables them to achieve their academic, personal, and career goals, regardless of their starting point, race, income level, or any other social identity. As a result, institutions are working to improve traditional structures, policies, and practices that may have impeded students along their path toward a degree. In this pursuit to become more student-centered, one approach institutions have used is to create a more holistic and integrated suite of support services designed to better address students' diverse needs.

Advising is a critical component to this holistic approach and, if implemented correctly, can be an excellent tool to help more students see the success higher education promises. This notion of student success through holistic advising can be achieved by developing an advising structure that effectively integrates academic, career, financial, and basic needs counseling and encourages strong advisor-advisee relationships, in which students have developmental conversations with advisors through-out their tenure at the institution. Holistic advising also includes nonacademic supports, such as student success courses and one-on-one time with faculty and staff. By implementing these foundational aspects, institutions are more equipped to proactively identify student needs and to provide a more tailored and seamless experience.

This is especially important because, at every juncture of a student's college experience, there is an opportunity to make a decision. Such decisions are often critical and complex. In addition to seeking guidance on how to balance college and other competing priorities, students may look to staff and faculty to guide them through several unfamiliar situations and decisions. For example, a student may explore their options for selecting a major with the intent to understand how a career in that field might lead to certain earnings upon completing a credential. In a similar example, some students may start their decision-making process about whether to apply for a loan to cover college expenses by considering if job prospects after graduation will make repayment feasible. As students navigate these and other multifaceted decisions, high-quality and holistic advising is more vital to their progress than ever.

Klempin, et al. (2019) states that coordination among student support providers of various types can result in better-aligned services. To recognize the full benefit holistic advising can have on the student experience, institutions need to understand the current state of their advising program, establish greater coordination among student support offerings, and provide the necessary resources for campus staff to effectively perform their roles and responsibilities. This type of holistic advising effort works well when systems and processes are in place that ensure professionals have the technology, training, and knowledge to appropriately advise students across domains. Holistic approaches also require ongoing communication and a consistent feed-back cycle from students, faculty, and administrators to address emerging needs. Institutions that commit to providing high-quality advising services will need to invest significant time and resources. However, the return on that investment is worth it, as the efforts will ultimately prepare students to make important college decisions.

Throughout the years, institutions have made progress at achieving this ideal of holistic advising. Now as institutions reaffirm their commitment and continue in their pursuit to provide a high-quality education, there is an opportunity to accelerate this progress by focusing more on the advising experience. Investing in holistic advising will bring clarity and alignment between advising and other relevant student supports and facilitate a more student-centered institution where all students have a clear path to success.

Klemin, S., Kalamkarian, H.S., Pellegrino, L., & Barnett, E.A. (2019). *A framework for advising reform*. Community College Research Center. https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/framework-advising-reform.pdf

Introduction

Chelsea Fountain

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition is pleased to be a core partner in the Advising Success Network (the network), a grant-funded initiative aimed to elevate advising as a priority, improve advising practice, and ensure success for all students, particularly racially minoritized students. As a part of our thought leadership on this grant, the National Resource Center took charge in collecting high-quality, assessed advising programs and initiatives that aim to support the success of all students but with a particular emphasis on African American, Black, Latinx, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, and otherwise historically marginalized populations on their campuses. Educational equity is central to the network's mission and vision and is a concept grounded in the principles of justice, "do no harm," and the acknowledgement of and commitment to rectify historical injustice toward minoritized populations. As a result, the goal of this collection is to help the field at large better understand the needs of students from a wide range of backgrounds and identities and support their learning, development, and success through advising.

Context

The American postsecondary education system is the most complex in the world and features colleges and universities with considerable diversity in their control, foci, degree offerings, and students served. At the same time, the higher education landscape in the United States—reflective of volatile social, cultural, and political forces—has seen considerable upheaval since the global financial crisis of 2007 (Joslin, 2018). The original social contract in higher education—as White (2015) names it—is in disarray:

> The current contract, which depends upon having faith that students will learn as they engage in higher education, that employment postgraduation will be readily available in environments where newly learned skills can be used, and

that society as a whole considers the portion of taxes that supports students in higher education well spent, has been seriously compromised. (p. 269)

At the same time, campus administrators and student affairs officers are facing budget cuts, COVID-19, and reinventing themselves daily to meet the pressing academic, physical, emotional, and financial needs of students. Historically, academic advising has served a primary role in setting students up for success in their coursework while managing a diverse range of responsibilities—from orientation, degree planning, course selection, personal development, and career decisions to directing students to important resources and special opportunities. In the current pandemic climate, academic advisors hold significant value as they are often gatekeepers for students transitioning into the campus community. If a student's initial transition to college is aided by an advising or orientation program, they are more likely to make the immediate and positive connections needed to remain on campus (Nutt, 2008). Furthermore, advisors assist students in investigating resources available throughout the campus and support students in the pursuit of their interests and the exploration of their identities. And, advising is a fundamental component of first-generation student support. Regular contact with a knowledgeable, caring professional who provides guidance and encouragement is one of the most powerful tools that enhance student success programs (Whitley et al., 2018).

Now, amidst two national pandemics—one viral and one situated in longstanding racial injustice—the position or social contract of higher education is called into question by its students, parents, alumni, state legislatures, government, and investors. It is evident that higher education practitioners demonstrate innovation, visionary leadership, and forge partnerships with advisors to support student success. The key to success in delivering on the postsecondary promise is bringing equity more intentionally into daily and strategic decisions so higher education institutions can ensure they are designed to support students in achieving their goals, regardless of how societal structural bias

has historically impacted their access to opportunity (Ream et al., 2017). The result? Not only will students benefit from a more equitable experience, but institutions will witness improved student outcomes through holistic advising redesign.

Academic Advising for Student Success and Equity

National data indicate that academic advising is the most commonly used initiative in first-year experience programs and the second most frequently cited support targeted to sophomores (Young, 2019; Young et al., 2014). In addition, academic advising is embedded in a host of high-impact practices and educational initiatives that extend beyond the first few years of college, including transfer, internships and supervised practice, capstone experiences, study abroad, career exploration, and undergraduate research. Furthermore, academic advising is a critical support structure that is effective when targeted toward student identities such as first-generation students, academically underprepared students, students in academic recovery programs, veterans, international students, and students with learning differences, ADHD, and Autism Spectrum Disorder (DiRamio, 2017; Fox & Martin, 2017; Shea et al., 2019). Finally, academic advising can provide a safe space within higher education where student voices can be heard, personal stories can be shared, and campus climate issues can be unearthed, particularly for students from historically underrepresented, marginalized, and hidden identity groups in higher education (Harper, 2020).

In practice, redesigning academic advising so that equity is central requires more than piece-meal enhancements. Rather, institutions must pursue transformative change, which requires organizational growth and development along with changes to structures, processes, and attitudes (Karp, 2015) through both individual and systemic equity actions (Golom, 2018). Equity should become the primary lens through which all student success efforts are viewed (Lawton, 2018). In addition, institutions should give thought to how ongoing academic advising structures and processes will address equity for current and future generations as student needs and life experiences evolve. Creating holistic student supports through academic advising incorporates continuous-improvement mechanisms that enable the institution and advisors to be responsive to a changing environment while maintaining a stable core that anchors advising to its mission. According to Lawton (2018), only when individual and systemic actions are pursued in tandem as part of an overarching strategy will the student experience of academic advising be transformed to support equality of opportunity at scale. In conclusion, Lawton (2018) put forth several recommendations to promote promising practice in advising, including the following:

- placing culturally responsive academic advising prominently in the institution's strategic plan and accreditation priorities;

- developing an academic advising curriculum;

- providing robust, ongoing professional development opportunities focused on culturally responsive pedagogy;

- creating protocols, structures, and technologies that make it standard practice for different functional areas to work collaboratively so academic advising becomes one of many entry points to other services offered;

- equipping advisors to develop meaningful relationships with their students through a case management approach and encouraging them to dedicate more time to students with a higher need for academic advising support;

- placing primary role advisors in feeder schools or colleges that have the least resources or a lower college-going rate to target support to more historically underserved students; and

- gathering information from every incoming or applying student on factors known to be common obstacles to success.

Its prevalence on campus makes academic advising a bright star in the constellation of student supports, highlights the advisor-advisee relationship as crucial support to students as they identify and attain their academic, career, and personal goals; and underscores its value as an area of ongoing examination and study. Advising is more than course selection and academic planning. It is a student-centered process that assists students in making intentional connections, creating coherence out of the disparate parts of the curriculum, and reflecting on the similarities and differences among ways of knowing and how they complement each other. Effective advisors build trusting relationships with advisees to help them recognize and accept responsibility as active participants in their educational journeys (Fox & Martin, 2017). The network defines holistic advising

redesign as the process of identifying, implementing, and refining high-quality, effective institutional practices that support students as they work toward achieving their personal, academic, and career goals. Recognizing that changes in advising will impact other areas of an institution, this type of redesign typically requires cross-functional collaboration and a focus on people, processes and technology. Successful holistic advising redesign promotes an institutional culture of being student-ready. The best advising system is the one that reflects the campus culture, meets institutional and student learning outcomes, and is supported by campus personnel, resources, and infrastructure to the fullest extent (Joslin, 2018).

About This Collection

The purpose of this case study collection is to demonstrate innovation and institutional transformation around academic advising and is focused on identifying initiatives that advance equity. Advisors serve as cultural navigators, support students' transition to college, provide resources and connections to campus, and support overall academic and student success (Nutt, C., 2008). As partners in the Advising Success Network, we recognize that the amount of time and effort students put into their coursework is as important as the ways institutions allocate resources and organize learning opportunities and services to induce students to participate in and benefit from such activities (Kuh et al, 2010). Further, academic advising is often the only structured activity on campus in which all students have the opportunity for one-on-one interaction with a concerned representative of the institution (Habley, 1994). Advisors and advising administrators must lead the campus community to value advising as much more than scheduling by continually connecting advising to the teaching and learning mission of the institution (Nutt et al, 2017).

Another key component of this collection is raising the standard for equity as a deliberate and intentional basis for supporting students. The equity mission of this project required institutions to meet certain criteria such as enrolling 40% Pell-grant receiving students and/or a 25% or higher underrepresented student minority population (IPEDS, 2020). In addition, cases were intentionally sought in order to represent a variety of institutional types (e.g., public and private; two-year and four-year; liberal arts, HBCU, Tribal, HSI, etc.) and a range of advising structures (e.g., orientation, academic, faculty, professional, hybrid, etc.). Due to the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts to recruit cases were challenged, but we are very pleased with the diversity of approaches to advising we collected and thus have presented in this volume. As a result, our collection of 12 case studies is organized alphabetically and without preference to the institutional type or case content. Consequently, three consistent themes arose from the collection: technology-enabled advising (advising programs that have implemented technology as a critical tool in improving the student advising experience), scalable advising solutions (a diverse set of institutional programs and initiatives which either currently, or in the future, show promise for campus-wide adoption), and differentiated advising support (specialized programs that are designed to meet the needs of a specific major, living-learning community, or marginalized student populations). We hope this collection serves as a catalyst for considering academic advising as a transformed landscape for student success and educational equity.

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Glossary of Terms

Student success: The outcome of a personal, rigorous, and enriching learning experience that culminates in the achievement of a student's academic goals in a timely manner and fully prepares them to realize their career aspirations (Lawton, 2018).

Educational equity: The Advising Success Network defines racial and socioeconomic equity as centering the lived experiences, talents, and aspirations of students from low-income backgrounds, as well as Black, Latinx, Native American, and Asian/Pacific Islander students. The network seeks to raise awareness from an institutional perspective, focusing on how the institution's design systems, policies, and processes either build healthy inclusive cultures or perpetuate systemic inequities. Moreover, the network seeks to change the institution's understanding of how legacy practices and policies affect student performance, and impact student economic mobility and personal, academic, and career success—to address systems of power, privilege, and race through analysis of advising policies and procedures.

Minortized students hold identities that were not considered when the system and institutions of higher education in the United States were originally designed. Examples include but are not limited to: first-generation; low-income; adult students; students of color; marginalized orientations, gender identities, and intersex students; students with second-language backgrounds; undocumented students; veterans; students with disabilities; students with dependents; foster care youth; formerly and currently incarcerated students (Lawton, 2018).

Intrusive Advising involves proactive interactions with students, with the intention of connecting with them before a situation occurs that cannot be fixed (Varney, 2007).

Proactive Advising: Earl (1988) describes Proactive Advising as a deliberate, structured student intervention at the first indication of academic difficulty in order to motivate the student to seek help. Proactive Advising uses the good qualities of prescriptive advising (experience, awareness of student needs and structured programs) and of developmental advising (relationship to a student's total needs).

1 | Albany State University Academic Advising as a Tool for Student Success and Educational Equity

Angela W. Peters and Kenyatta Johnson

Institutional Profile

Located in Albany, GA, Albany State University (ASU) is the largest public Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the state. ASU is home to 6,509 students (FTE 5,676) and is a proud member institution of the University System of Georgia. The University's mission focuses on access, equality, and diversity, ensuring all students have an opportunity to pursue a degree. For example, more than 23% of students are first-generation college students (i.e., neither parent completed a four-year college or university degree), while more than 80% receive some form of financial aid with 55% receiving the Pell Grant. Approximately 28% of the student population reside on campus, and the remainder (72%) are commuters. Undergraduate students account for 94% of the enrollment, and graduate students account for 6%. The University's demographic make-up includes 72% female, 27% male, and 17% over 25 years of age. Regarding race and ethnicity, 77% of students are Black or African American; 11.4% are White; 6.1% are Hispanic/Latino; 2.4% are multiracial; 2.9% are undeclared; and less than 1% are American Indian, Alaska Native, or Asian. First-year students (i.e., those with 0-29 earned hours) account for 40% of the total enrollment, and sophomore students (i.e., those with 30-59 earned hours) account for 24% of the total enrollment.

Technology-Enabled Advising

In 2017, ASU merged with the local junior college, Darton State, to form the new ASU, which combines the strengths of both institutions to fulfill the access mission while offering workforce-related degrees. The consolidation of the two institutions has demanded more rigorous academic advising geared toward supporting and ensuring each student's opportunity to graduate. The University offers a broad array of graduate, baccalaureate, associate, and certificate programs at its main campuses in Albany as well as strategically placed branch sites and online instruction. For the past three years, ASU has invested time and resources into establishing a quality advising system that is consistent across campuses and provides appropriate training and evaluation of students and faculty.

Because of ASU's varied student population, including first-generation, commuter, and minority students, as well as those of diverse ages, ethnicities, abilities, and socioeconomic back-grounds, our success in advising is attributed to the use of the case management approach and intrusive advising. According to the NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising (NACADA), case management is a collaborative process of assessment, planning, and advocacy for services that benefit students, and intrusive advising involves personal contact with students to develop a caring relationship aimed at intervention (Pierce, 2016). Based on the model described by Richardson (2008), ASU's advising practices include the following:

- reliance on detailed advising notes and student records;
- use of requirements of academic programs of study;
- intentional referrals to other departments and services;
- advocacy for policies that promote student success;
- evaluation of the advising process, and
- consistent direct contact with the faculty regarding the progress of students.

The advising model at ASU is a combination of centralized and decentralized services. For example, incoming students use the Academic Advising and Retention Center (AARC). With a focus on effectively transitioning students to college academics,

the AARC success coaches (i.e., professional advisors) are the first point of contact for students with fewer than 60 earned hours (i.e., first-year and sophomore students). Therefore, the AARC is the first academic home for 100% of each year's incoming class. This includes students who have decided on a major, those who are undecided or exploring, and those who have not yet met the entrance requirements for specialized programs of study. Finally, students are required to meet with their advisors at least twice a semester and are encouraged to visit or conference with them whenever they feel it is necessary.

For the past three years, the AARC has supported students in their progress toward graduation. The responsibilities of the success coaches include the following:

- develop plans of study with clear pathways to achieve academic goals;
- facilitate connections with faculty and academic support services;
- facilitate connections with the University's resources, including disability services/counseling, career services, and student affairs' organizations;
- review or monitor students' academic performance and send them emails with observations or questions about their academic record; and
- provide workshops as well as individual and group training sessions covering a range of topics to ensure a successful academic and social transition to university life.

The success coaches use various methods of outreach such as the EAB platform, which sends messages to the student's university email account, and the learning management systems email. Text campaigns are generated through the university artificial intelligence chatbot named Goldie. Also, the majority of the advising contacts are scheduled appointments with very few walk-in appointments. Regardless of the approach—case management and/or intrusive advising—the goal is to build a strong and structured advisor-advisee relationship to support the success of the student at ASU.

A Cross-Functional Approach to Advising

At ASU, the 60-hour mark includes the completion of all general education courses and entrance into the core content

curriculum. Once students earn more than 60 hours, they are assigned faculty/program advisors within their department with whom they meet to follow their program of study until the completion of their program. This group of juniors and seniors are not able to enroll in their classes without consultation with their faculty advisor. The hand-off at 60+ hours is seamless because of the effective communication and work done on the front end to build a meaningful student experience between the success coaches and the faculty advisors.

The AARC is housed in Enrollment Management and Student Success; however, faculty advisors are located in Academic Affairs. Both divisions have seen early and sustainable success with advisement by collaborating, communicating, and interacting frequently on matters, including, but not limited to, policies and standard operating procedures, which promote student success and the integration of academic support services. For example, the Center for Faculty Excellence provides advising workshops and training sessions regularly, in which success coaches and faculty advisors attend. The director of advisement meets with department chairs during their monthly meetings with the provost, and interestingly many of the meetings include the registrar, who is a former faculty advisor.

Department Advisors

The faculty advisors play a critical role in student development relative to students' career goals and their particular program of study. Before this advising transition, the success coaches and the faculty advisors communicate frequently not only to share information and check on students' progress but more importantly to review potential roadblocks or situations that could hinder a student's progression toward degree completion. For example, advisors manage early alert progress report cases to ensure the student has received the appropriate interventions to be successful in the course(s). This initiative is part of the University's strategic plan to increase student retention and academic success. The progress reporting system provides outreach and support to students who are struggling academically early enough in the semester to help them find the resources they need to be successful at ASU.

Research has shown that quality interactions between students and faculty, peers, and staff increased retention (Drake, 2011). At ASU, the success coaches and faculty advisors promote an advising relationship with students that supports academic success. We are confident that the success we have in advising is because of the knowledgeable and informed faculty and staff who demonstrate care and respect in helping students navigate through the university experience. Moreover, the cross-functional home of advising provides opportunities for collaboration, creating clear goals, setting priorities, effective communication, and cross-training.

Assessment Methods and Design

ASU uses enrollment management software for advising students with 60 or fewer earned credit hours. The EAB Student Success Collaborative-Navigate is a web-based retention and advising platform used to schedule advising appointments, communicate with students, issue alerts for students who might be in academic danger and refer students to tutoring and other academic support services. In this quantitative case study, data were collected from digital appointments using the advising platform, comparing students registered at ASU who had some form of advising interaction documented for them, typically an in-person appointment (Population A), to the overall population of first-year, sophomore, and junior students (Population B). The data represent distinct students who have interacted with an advisor for registration purposes. The assessment focused on the number of students who registered in Fall 2019 and again in Fall 2020.

Assessment Findings

When comparing fall-to-fall (2019-2020) registration, there was a 5.1% improvement for Population A students (Table 1.1). Underperforming students with GPAs less than 2.39 who interacted with an advisor through the Navigate scheduling system had a 1.4% higher retention rate than ASUs student population overall with GPAs below 2.39 (Table 2.1). In addition, this same group of students showed significant academic improvement over a one-year period, raising their average cumulative GPA from 1.88 to 2.23 (an 18.6% increase). We took the data one step further to predict degree attainment for the underperforming students. By raising a student's cumulative GPA 18.6%, we also increased the likelihood they would graduate from 20.8% to 37% (see Figure 1.1). Based on ASU's historical 6-year graduation rates, improving a student's GPA historically shows an improvement of

20.8% to 37%. At ASU, academic advising is a major factor for the successful transition of first-year students. The data indicated an increase in retention from fall-to-fall for students who interacted with an advisor. These students were retained at higher rates. We have also seen an increase in persistence rates due to registering students for at least 15 hours per semester. The advising system at ASU aligns with student success outcomes such as increasing the fall-to-fall retention rates, increasing persistence rates to align with retention rates, and increasing the four-year and six-year graduation rates. The advising model at ASU has strengthened the following initiatives to improve retention, persistence, and graduation:

- including intrusive advising and outreach for students with low GPA and intentional intervention for returning previously suspended students within the advising model;

- establishing priority and early registration for first-time first-year students;

- expanding collaboration between advising/coaching and tutoring and increasing tutoring options, including online on-demand tutoring;

- increasing the completion of Momentum Year courses, such as core English and mathematics during the first year; and

- achieving on-time degree completion by enrolling in at least 15 hours each semester of enrollment.

Research has shown that frequent advising interactions can positively affect student retention (Bland et al, 2012). It is evident that the student–advisor interaction at ASU has the potential not only to increase retention, but to also help students persist to degree attainment. The student's decision to remain

Table 1.1 *Students with Appointments (A) versus ASU Overall (B), Fall 2020 Registration Freshmen, Sophomores, and Juniors*

Enrollment summary	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Percent retained
A: Enrolled	2,236	1,536	68.7%
B: Enrolled	4,463	2,840	63.6%

Table 1.2 *Students with Cumulative GPA between 0.1 and 2.39*

Enrollment summary	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Percent retained
A: Enrolled	521	360	69.1%
B: Enrolled	623	422	67.7%

Figure 1.1 Degree Attainment for Underperforming Students

Academic Advising as a Tool for Student Success and Educational Equity
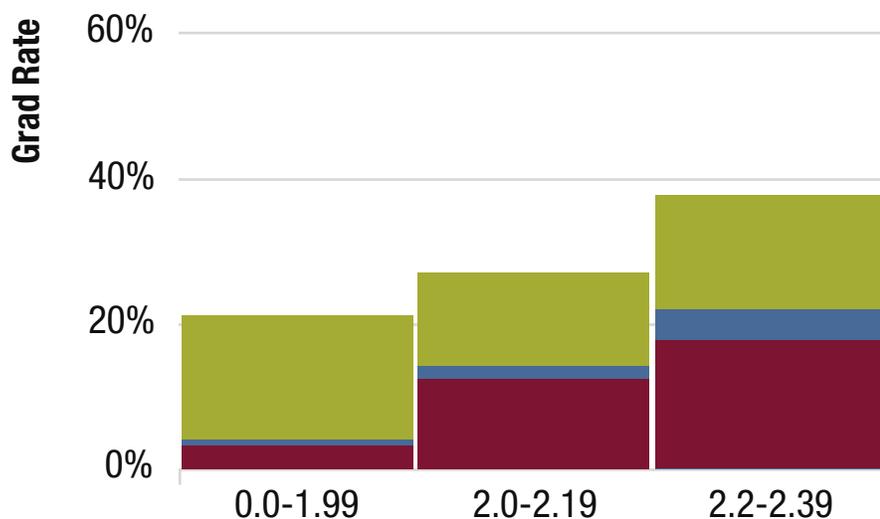
at ASU is strongly influenced by personalized engagement with a faculty and staff advisor, a peer, or even an alumnus at the University, such as a faculty and staff advisor, a peer, or even an alumnus.

Implications for Practice

We are combining multiple strategies at ASU to create a comprehensive program that addresses academic, social, and cultural factors of student success, retention, persistence, and completion. This includes key areas that must work collaboratively at an optimal level in order to ensure student success. These areas align with the University's strategic plan and include the following: academic advising, financial aid, technology, early warning and progress reports, and co-curricular activities/experiential learning.

A large component of student success at ASU focuses on lowering student debt and ensuring that students do not have an unreasonable debt load when they graduate. Because a large percentage of our students come from modest backgrounds and receive financial aid, we are cognizant of the reality that some students will reach their maximum grant or loan prior to completing their degree programs. Examples like this help us identify challenges that could impede a student's academic progression. At ASU, students who experience academic difficulties or under-preparedness respond well to case management/intrusive approaches to advising. We do a great job identifying problem areas early that could hinder progress towards degree attainment and providing deliberate opportunities for academic and non-academic support. This structured approach to program completion and strategic emphasis on enhancing the student experience makes ASU unique.

Success and degree attainment at ASU depend on students receiving continued support, not only in their first-year, but also throughout the college career. At ASU, we pride ourselves on personalizing and customizing the undergraduate experience. Advisors make early contact with students during the pre-advising sessions/early registration days. They closely monitor student progress, and they meet with students several times per semester. The advisors work hand-in-hand with academic support services, student affairs, and counseling services to evaluate the whole student to ensure academic success, social integration, and wellness. The competent and caring success coaches and faculty advisors at ASU have created a supportive environment that has resulted in students being retained beyond the first-year.

For the past three years, post-merger, enrollment has increased, including transfers, for programs that lead to certifications and/or licensures, specifically nursing and teacher education. This influx has increased the need for higher-level transcript evaluations and course substitutions. Therefore, going forward we will capitalize on the success of the advising model by adding embedded advisors within certain departments. These staff members will report directly to the department chair. All other departments at ASU will continue to follow the success coach/faculty advisor model. Lastly, the implications of the advising model at ASU have far-reaching contributions to cross-campus collaborations in support of student success.

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2 | Boston University Time to BU

Laura Johnson and Elizabeth Loizeaux

Institutional Profile

Boston University is a highly selective, private, four-year, Research I institution located in Boston, MA. Its undergraduate student body is composed of 17,404 full-time students, of whom approximately 75% live on campus. Demographics of the undergraduate population include gender (60% female, 40% male), percentage of students over age 25 (7%), racial/ethnic background — Asian (15%), Black or African American (4%), Hispanic/Latino (11%), White (37%), two or more races (4%), unknown (8%), and nonresident alien (21%). In addition, approximately 17% of students identified as first-generation, which BU defines as neither of the student's parents completing a bachelor's degree. Also, 17% of students are Pell Grant recipients.

Unlike many institutions, BU does not see significant gaps in retention (94%) and graduation rates (88%) based on race, income, or first-generation status. NSSE data have shown, however, inequitable engagement in the high-impact practices known to promote deep learning and educational satisfaction. For instance, the 2018 NSSE data showed that while 81% of our responding White seniors engaged in an internship or field experience, only 71% of Black or African American students did the same. Of White seniors, 51% participated in study abroad and 37% participated in research with a faculty member, whereas of Black or African American seniors, 38% participated in study abroad and 28% in research with a faculty member (see Figure 2.1). Similarly, the 2016 NSSE data showed that first-generation and low-income (FGLI) seniors had lower rates of completing an internship (74%) or studying abroad (38%) than the non-FGLI seniors (82% and 48%, respectively; see Figure 2.2). FGLI seniors also expressed less satisfaction with their overall educational experience at BU than their peers.

Figure 2.1 Senior engagement in high-impact practices by race

White | **Black or African American**

Practice	White	Black or African American
Engaged in internship or field experience	81	71
Studied abroad	51	38
Participated in research with a faculty member	37	28
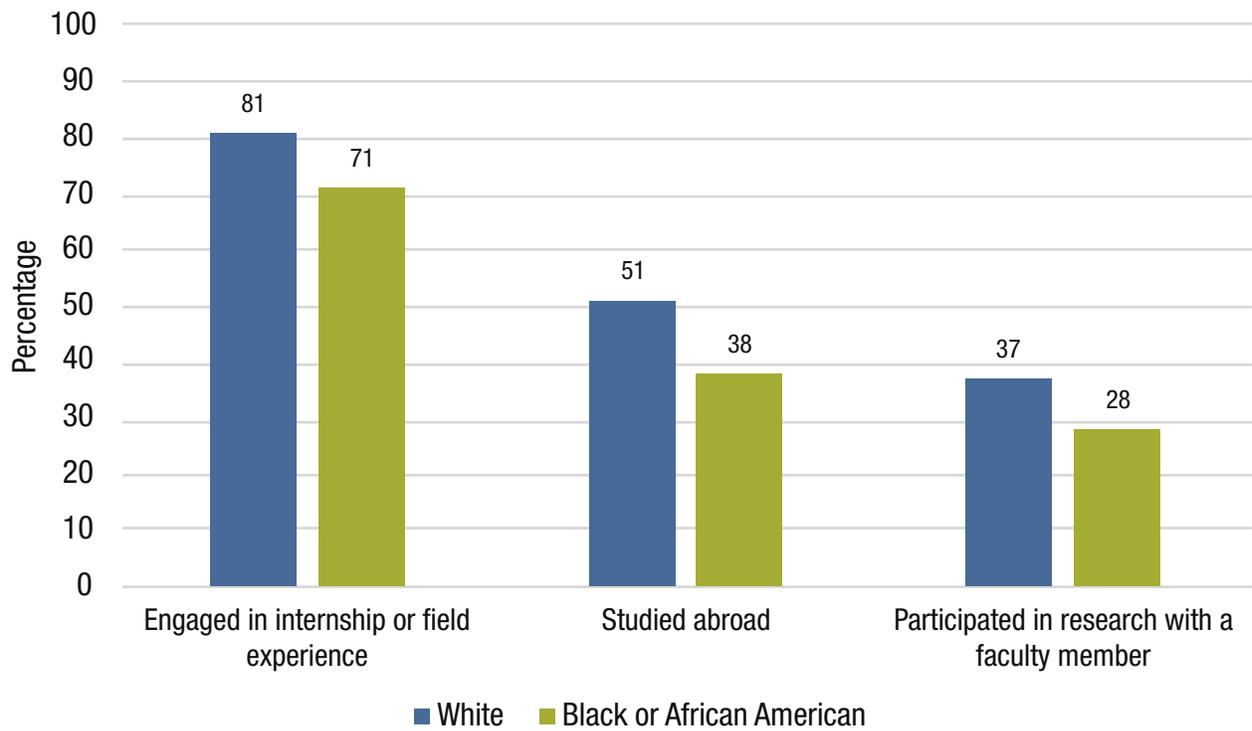
Figure 2.2 Senior engagement in high-impact practices by first-generation/low-income status

Non-FGLI | **FGLI**

Practice	Non-FGLI	FGLI
Completed an internship	82	74
Studied abroad	48	38
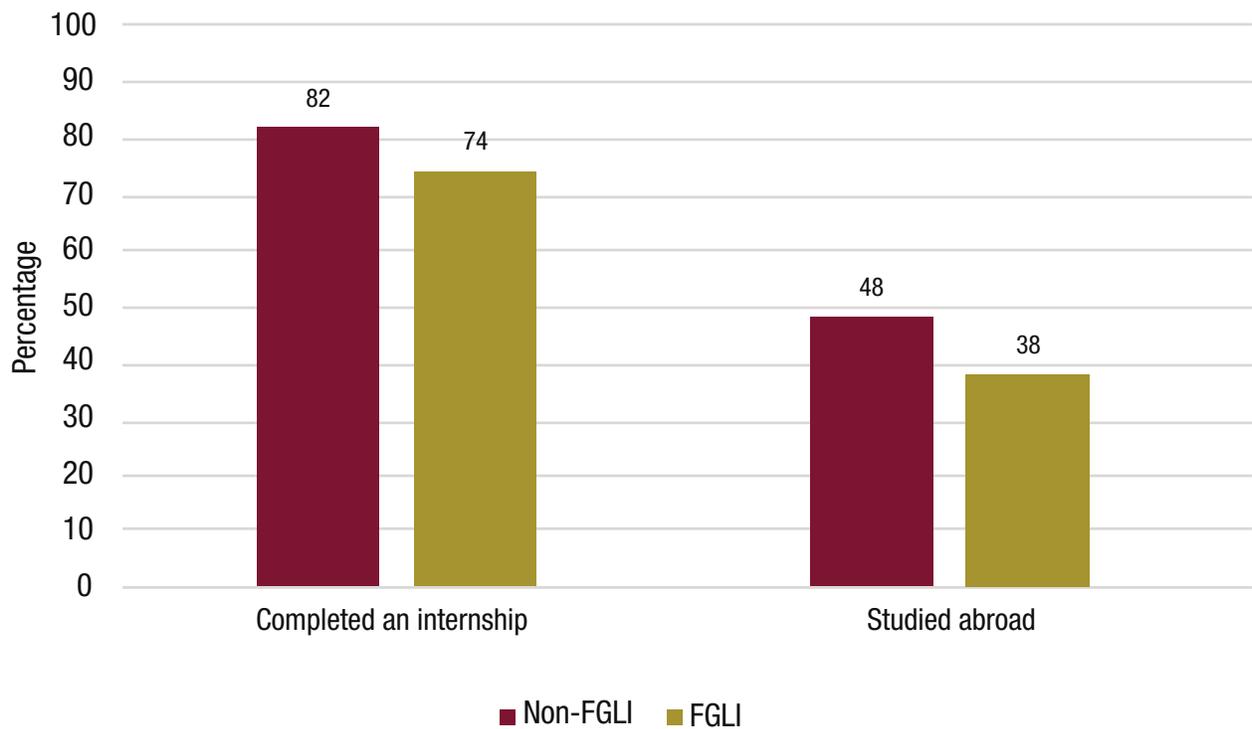
BU Advising Strategy, Equity, and Educational Quality

Time to BU is an orientation program for incoming first-year and transfer students. It serves as a launching pad for rich academic advising conversations and as a moment of social norming when incoming students hear from successful continuing students about the ups and downs they faced transitioning to college. The program lies at the convergence of two university initiatives aimed at improving the undergraduate educational experience.

The academic advising initiative, launched in 2016 with the adoption of a university-wide academic advising mission statement and learning outcomes, is shifting academic advising in BU's 10 undergraduate schools and colleges from a transactional model to a developmental and holistic model. That work has been significantly advanced with the hiring of a campus-wide advising leader in 2017, the development of detailed plans for reaching academic advising goals in each school and college, new professional advisor positions funded by the Office of the Provost, the launch of a central advising website (bu.edu/advising) with resources for both students and professional and faculty advisors, and the first BU-specific, university-wide undergraduate advising survey. This advising initiative aims to assist students in creating educational plans that help them discover and fulfill their personal interests and goals, to further improve further BU's graduation rate, and to ensure that all students fully experience the meaningful, high-impact educational opportunities BU offers.

The second, related initiative is improving the undergraduate experience for low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students. Three important parts of this initiative have recently launched. First, BU has substantially increased need-based aid. In Fall 2018, BU was able to begin meeting full need without loans for all Pell recipients. With the Fall 2020 incoming class, BU committed to meeting the full needs of all domestic students. Second, in 2019, BU expanded its Howard Thurman Center for the Common Ground, with increased staff and programming, into a large, newly renovated space at the center of campus. Founded in 1986 and named for the first Black Dean of the Chapel and Martin Luther King's mentor at BU, the Center is dedicated to the search for belonging and purpose through the exploration of difference and the pursuit of common ground. Third, a new Center for First Generation Students is currently hiring its founding director and will be located in another newly renovated space in the center of campus.

The Time to BU Experience

Time to BU speaks to the institutional values these major initiatives declare. It is expressly designed to engage students in discussions about academic exploration, the purpose of higher education, the meaning one attributes to one's own educational plan, and the complex relationships individuals have with the diverse communities in which they participate.

During Time to BU, well-trained peer leaders facilitate activities and conversations that explore questions of individual values, belonging, and purpose. Modeled in part on the Reflecting On Your Life program developed by Richard Light, Howard Gardner, and colleagues at Harvard University, Time to BU also draws on research showing that light-touch interventions that allow under-represented students to affirm their values and to view belonging as a challenge for all students can raise their average GPA, close racial equity gaps, and have lasting effects on their career satisfaction and success, psychological wellbeing, and community involvement (Brady et al., 2020; Cohen et al., 2009; Cook et al., 2012; Walton et al., 2011).

First offered in 2016, the program evolved significantly in its first two years and settled into its current shape in 2018. For the first four years, it was offered as an optional three-hour pre-orientation program for incoming students. In Summer 2019, 911 of BU's incoming students (first-year and transfer) registered for the program. Because of the program's success, it was scheduled to be folded into the required orientation in Summer 2020. That plan was modified due to Covid-19, and for Summer 2020 the program was offered as an optional 75-minute virtual program, using Zoom. The program originated in the Office of Student Programs and Leadership in the College of Arts & Sciences. It is currently coordinated by the Office of the Provost and offered in collaboration with the Dean of Students Office.

When run on campus, small-group conversations are supplemented by a few large-group activities. When run virtually, the whole program is done in small groups. We experimented with staff-led conversations but found that on their first day on campus, incoming students were more likely to be relaxed and open enough to engage in reflection with peer facilitators. After experimenting with group size, we found that 8 to 14 participants, including one or two peer facilitators, is optimal.

Exploring values and belonging. Students begin the program's carefully sequenced activities and discussions with a "suitcase" activity that explicitly addresses the transition from high school to college (or from one institution to another for transfer students). Students reflect on what characteristics and habits they would like to bring with them to BU and which they would like to leave behind. Engaging next in the Center for Ethical Leadership's Core Values exercise leads into a discussion about students' core values, how those values relate to those held by their families and friends, and what might be exciting and what might be challenging about moving into a diverse community where they will live and learn with individuals who have different values.

The discussion about participating in a diverse community leads to a series of reflections about belonging. Incoming students hear briefly about the psychological and academic benefits of experiencing a sense of belonging, and a peer facilitator shares their own story of finding a sense of belonging at BU, including a description of early challenges and feelings of being lost or isolated. Listening to an excerpt from Brené Brown's *The Gifts of Imperfection* (2010) that describes the difference between "belonging" and "fitting in" leads students into a discussion of their past experiences with various communities and a conversation about how they might start to build community at BU.

Why college? The Why College? activity asks students to step back and consider underlying motivations for joining a college community. They are led to probe the goals and assumptions of people around them – their families, their communities, their peers – and finally to articulate their own personal motivation. Why College? concludes with a discussion of the wide variety of reasons students attend college and a recognition that those reasons can change over time. A peer facilitator notes the relationship between the purpose of education and the quest to lead "a good life," which leads to the Good Life activity. Students read two provocative parables and talk about which one resonates more with them and why.

Time to BU concludes with the students watching a video in which graduating BU seniors open and read aloud from letters they wrote to themselves four years earlier as part of a first-year experience course. The letters normalize feelings of insecurity and anxiety about first-year social life, academics, and finding a passion or sense of purpose, and the video itself illustrates the ability to navigate these feelings and achieve different versions of success. The program concludes by asking the incoming students to visualize themselves as future letter readers.

The goals of Time to BU, then, are twofold. The program encourages students to start asking the exploratory, generative questions about the purpose of education that can lay the foundation for productive academic advising conversations. Through shared exploration, the program itself also fosters the sense of belonging that research shows contributes positively to all students' psychological wellbeing and academic success and is particularly important to the persistence and academic success of underrepresented students.

Assessment Methods and Design

BU now employs several measures to assess the efficacy of Time to BU. A short, program-specific survey is administered at the conclusion of each session. In 2018, we surveyed 274 participants and in 2019, we surveyed 639 participants, and we performed mixed-methods analysis on the data. In addition, we examined first- to second-year retention rates and first-year GPA for students registered for the program, compared them to non-registrants, and broke the data down by race, gender, income, and first-generation status. In Fall 2020, we will do a similar analysis for the 2019 participants, once we have final retention numbers in October.

Assessment Findings

Survey questions were designed to elicit students' feelings of comfort within their diverse Time to BU group and to discern whether students felt they had been able to engage in rich conversations about values, belonging, and purpose. In both 2018 and 2019, 95% of respondents ($n = 274$ and $n = 637$) felt *very comfortable* or *comfortable* sharing their thoughts in their group. Similarly, most of the 2018 and 2019 respondents felt they had engaged in "meaningful, substantive conversation" within their Time to BU group (99%, $n = 269$, and 94.3%, $n = 635$, respectively). Student comments emphasized feelings of acceptance and a recognition that they were not alone in their worries and hopes. One student wrote, "It felt like a safe space where I could share my thoughts honestly and openly," and another student noted, "I've never felt so safe to express myself!" Another student explained, "I learned one important thing the most… that I'm not alone

in this." Students also shared that they had explored valuable questions about identity and purpose. One student wrote: "In a time of discovering my identity, Time to BU has given me a new perspective of being a student at BU." Another student said: "I learned a lot about BU and I gained a deeper sense of self." These themes have been echoed in the responses to the shorter, virtual experience offered in Summer 2020: "it showed me I was not alone," and "the questions [the facilitators] asked were very deep and meaningful and really made me think about my values and why I'm going to college."

Using logistic regression analyses, we found that Time to BU was related to slightly lower attrition rates in all subgroups, but no statistically significant difference. We look forward to seeing what the larger set of 2019 data will show. There is, however, a statistically significant difference in the 2018 group in the first-year GPA for underrepresented minority (URM) students compared to their non-URM peers when controlling for high school GPA. In fact, the Time to BU URM participants had a first-year GPA approaching the GPA of their peers. While we do not yet have longitudinal data, these findings are in line with other research about the positive impact of social-belonging interventions on underrepresented college students' academic achievement (Brady et al., 2020; Cook et al., 2012; Walton et al., 2011).

Implications for Practice

The early data on Time to BU are promising. Especially encouraging are both the quantitative and qualitative data on students' sense of the openness, depth, and significance of the conversations they had during Time to BU. We will continue to assess the program itself and to use our NSSE data and our advising survey data to gather information about participants' involvement in high-impact practices, their engagement with advising, and their satisfaction with their overall college experience. We hope to learn that the habit of exploration and reflection fostered by Time to BU sets the stage for rich, substantive advising conversations that result in increased rates of participation in high-impact practices, enhanced academic performance, and greater satisfaction with the college experience for our low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented minority students.

Finally, the student response to Time to BU has led us to develop additional programming that builds on this orientation experience. In 2019, student facilitators asked us to provide continuing opportunities for BU students to engage in meaningful conversations about values, belonging, and purpose in college. In Summer 2020, we offered the first section of a semester-long co-curricular experience, "Belonging on Campus," that fulfills one of our general education requirements. Demand was strong, and in Fall 2020, we are running three sections of this 0-credit, seminar-style experience.

Figure 2.3 First-year GPA by underrepresented minority (URM) status
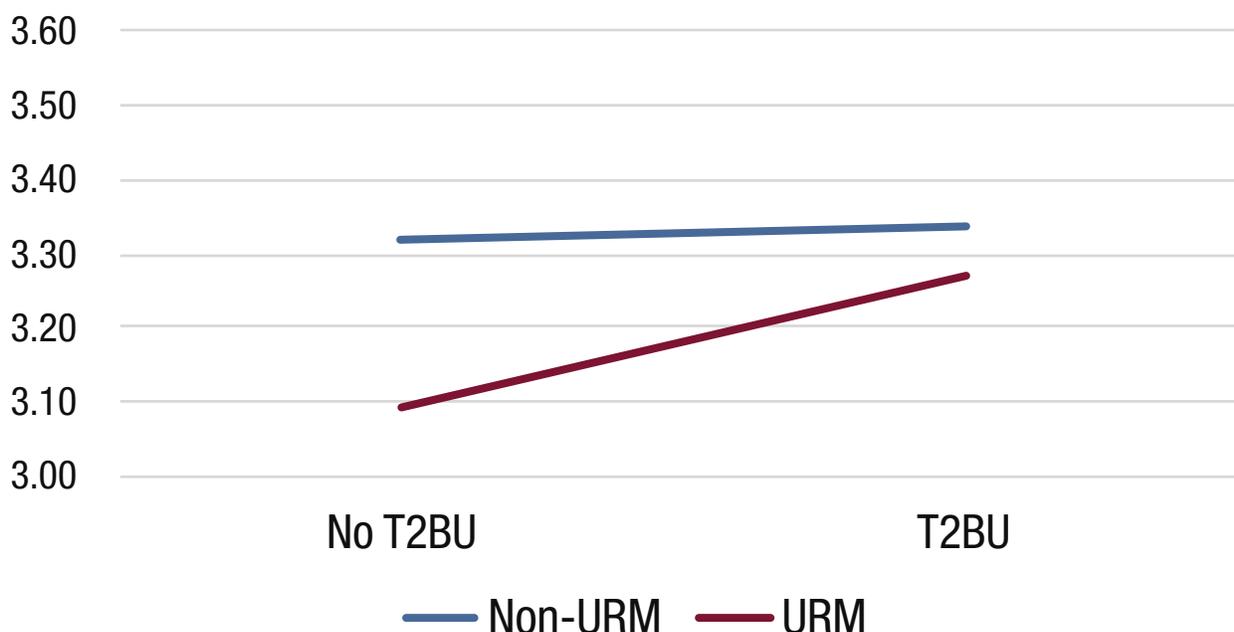
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3 | California State University, Dominguez Hills Destination to Graduation Program

María E. Grandoné and Alma Melena

Institutional Profile

The California State University System (CSU) has 23 campuses including California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH). CSUDH is a comprehensive public university in Los Angeles County. According to CSUDH's internal Institutional Report, it qualifies as a minority-majority campus and designated Minority-Serving Institution[1]. This designation indicates at least 50% enrolled minorities at a campus. As a Hispanic Serving Institution, 25% or more of the total undergraduate population at CSUDH is Hispanic[2].

More than 95% of students commute to campus and nearly one-third are 25 years or older. The student population has a large percentage of first-generation students (students who are the first in their families to go to college, 48%) and those who are low income as determined by Pell Grant eligibility (65%). The majority of CSUDH students who face obstacles to graduation are first-generation, low-income students or students from under-resourced school districts.

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[1]   MSIs refers to total headcounts (i.e., without converting part-time enrollment to its full-time-equivalent) of both undergraduate and graduate enrollment).

[2] Hispanic/Latino (A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race)

Table 3.1 *CSUDH Fall 2020 Undergraduate Enrollment*

Undergraduate Enrollment	Total (including graduate students)	White	Black/African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other Race OR Ethnicity
15,224 FTE	17,027	7%	11%	64%	8%	11%

Figure 3.1 CSUDH Enrollment by Gender Fall 2019

36%

64%

■ Male   ■ Female
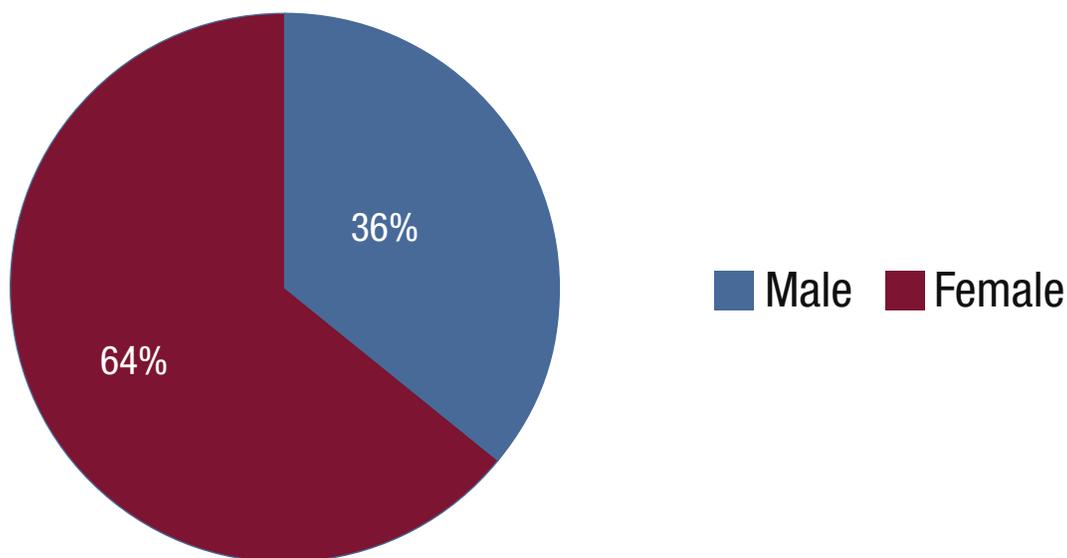
Destination Graduation Program

CSUDH's First-Year Student Experience emphasizes equity, access, and inclusion for all students. We are constantly evaluating the gaps in achievement, providing opportunities to meet the demands of qualified students, and increasing the quality of learning.

The 2014-2020 Strategic Plan was launched after receiving input from multiple stakeholders of the campus community. Goal 2 focused on student success by promoting "student graduation and success through effective recruitment, transition, and retention of our diverse student population." The objectives were to increase the six-year, first-time freshman (FTF) graduation rate to 60% and raise the three-year transfer graduation rate by 10%. To meet these objectives, the program implemented strategies such as the National Model of Student Success (proactive advising that helps students achieve goals),

assessing, enhancing, and coordinating campus academic support units, applying previous recommendations from the University Advising Task Force, and increasing student engagement in community and service-learning.

In 2015, CSUDH launched the DH First-Year Experience to Destination Graduation Program (DHFYE-DGP). With a large commuting student body, the campus successfully established intentional interventions for a sense of connection and belonging through proactive advising. The program includes holistic/proactive advising, peer academic coaching, supplemental instruction, writing tutoring, a first-year seminar, convocation, a progress report system (offering timely interventions to struggling students to support their success in their college courses and programs of study), and a first-year STEM undergraduate experience. Additionally, all first-year students engaged in weekly meaningful interactions with faculty and peers. Since the implementation of proactive advising interventions, first–to second–year (see Figure 3.2) and third–to fourth–year (see Figure 3.3) persistence rates have increased. This high-impact program proved efficient in building community while maximizing limited resources in support of student success and equity at scale.

Figure 3.2 First-year persistence for full-time first-year students, 2009-2015

Note. Data obtained from: https://csusuccess.dashboards.calstate.edu/public/dashboard-index
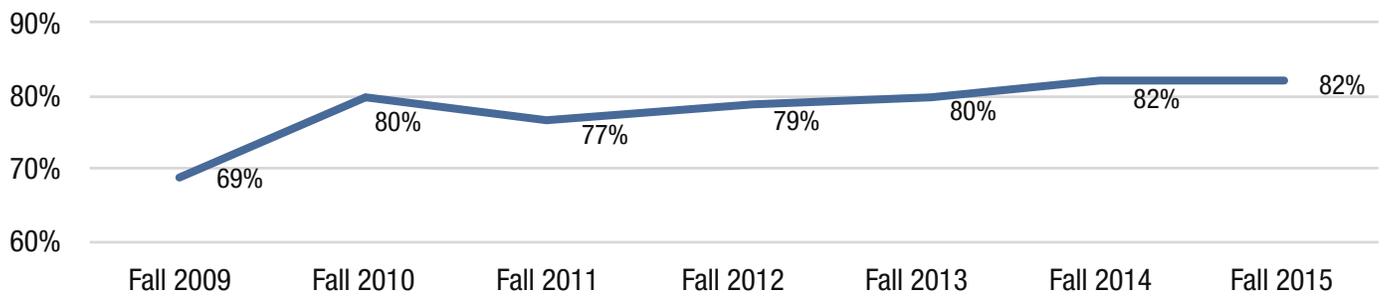
Figure 3.3 Third- to fourth-year persistence for full-time first-year students, 2009-2015

Note. Data obtained from: https://csusuccess.dashboards.calstate.edu/public/dashboard-in
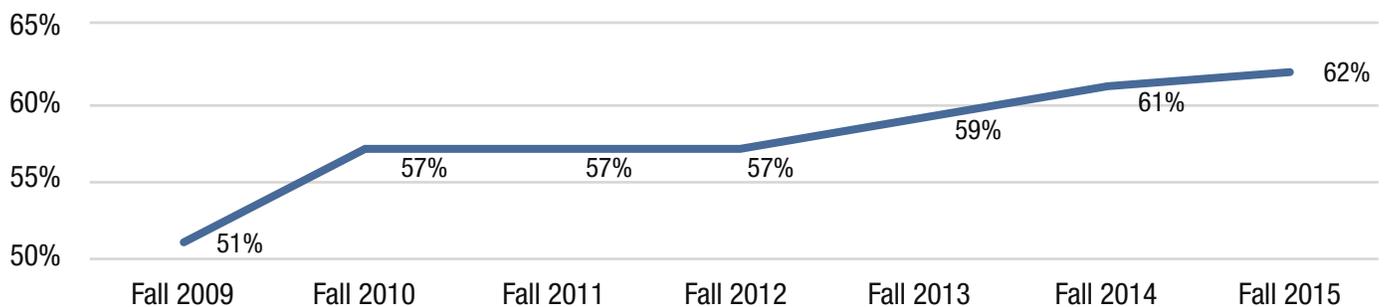
In 2015, 1,294 first-time, first-year students joined the program. Assessment data indicated a positive effect on this cohort's overall success and academic persistence. With intensive investment in efforts through expanded First-Year Experience and Graduation Initiative 2025, we increased the graduation rate from 29% in 2014 (Cohort 2007) to 32% in 2015 (Cohort 2008). Supporting the student experience from connection through completion requires intentional student-centered interventions that are integrated, collaborative, and holistic. In addition, the CSUDH 2014-2020 Strategic Plan Steering Committee invested in the early buy-in of cross-divisional collaboration partners, such as Admissions and Records, Student Financial Services, professional and faculty advisors, University Advisement Center, academic administrators (i.e., deans, associate deans, department chairs); Extended and International education; Supplemental Instruction; and Student Affairs.

As part of the process, the steering committee members identified several best practices for implementation, such as consistent leadership, collaboration and communication across

academic and student affairs, tailoring specific recommendations efforts, and understanding and communicating to all stakeholders about the return on investment on student success and transformational advising. Additional best practices included proactive advising, appropriate technology; and providing data analytics to be better informed about the progress of student success initiatives.

Plans include tracking student data from initial inquiry to graduation and training academic advisers to engage in proactive and developmental advising through:

- Toro Success Collaborative (an EAB tool);
- participating in CA Promise Programs, Finish in Four and Through in Two;
- redesigning the first year of the college experience for all students to create sustainable change for student success through participation in AASCU's Re-Imagining the First-Year Experience;

- implementing targeted, asset-based support services for low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students;
- deploying academic support initiatives, such as supplemental instruction, tutoring, and study groups;
- collecting and analyzing Graduation Initiative 2025 Data;
- training for future faculty advisors through the Faculty Fellows Program; and
- identifying and adopting appropriate advising tracking tools.

As a result of the CSUDH Strategic Plan and the CSU system Graduation Initiative (GI) 2025 to increase graduation rates for all CSU students while eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps, the campus launched the Graduation Innovation Team (GIT). GIT is a cross-divisional team of faculty, staff, students, and administrators charged with increasing our graduation rates and eliminating achievement gaps while sustaining high-quality degree programs. In support of this initiative, the campus developed ambitious goals for graduation rates, which include increasing the FTF 4-Year rate to 31%, the FTF 6-Year rate to 55%, the transfer 2-year rate to 40%, and the transfer 4-year rate to 75%.

The CSUDH 2025 GIT has redoubled efforts to advance large-scale programs that have proven effective. In 2015, GIT conducted an analysis of graduation denials, which were issued to students who did not complete degree requirements by the end of the semester. The GIT identified institutional barriers to graduation and offered evidence-based recommendations to improve student support (Student Success Report, 2017-2018). Recommendations included the development of a degree checkout process and a procedure to track and support graduation denials. Moreover, the analysis helped create the Charge On To Graduation initiative (COTG). This initiative offers required workshops for all students who have earned 74-89 units. Students get timely and practical information about graduation, applying for graduation, requirements, and timelines. The Pay It Forward (PIF) award, a grant available to candidates for graduation who encounter financial challenges during their final term, is also available to students after reviewing the data. Working in collaboration with campus partners, the strategic plan also featured new and ambitious initiatives and analytics to permanently increase the institution's capacity to dramatically shift four-year graduation rates for first-time first-year students and two-year graduation rates for transfers.

Assessment Methods & Design

To assess the effectiveness of intervention strategies such as COTG, GIT implemented of pre-and post-participation surveys. The Charge On To Graduation workshop initiative analyzes the achievement of a set of specific learning outcomes. In addition, data collected for the PIF grant includes demographic information and degree checkout status. Analysis of graduation denial data identifies trends and roadblocks to student success. Graduation rate information is obtained from Institutional Research Student Success dashboards.

Charge on to Graduation Learning Objectives

Data collected is used to measure workshop effectiveness based on established learning outcomes. The workshop learning outcomes are:

- using the Academic Requirements Report to track progress toward degree completion;
- recognizing the Smart Planner as a tool for planning degree completion;
- understanding the difference between graduation and commencement;
- recognizing the 6 requirements for graduation;
- identifying resources to plan for career and post-graduate goals.

Pay It Forward

Students who receive the PIF grant are tracked to ensure completion of their degree. In addition, demographic information for these students is collected from institutional reports which include data such as parental educational level, Pell Grant eligibility, and race/ethnicity. Data is used to understand the population of students who receive the PIF grant for use in future funding proposals.

Graduation Denials

The University Advisement Center analyzed 263 cases of students who had been denied graduation in Spring 2015, finding that:

- 100% of the roadblocks experienced could have been mitigated with academic advisement;

- 18% of students faced graduation deferment due to missing course substitutions for major or general education, pending incomplete coursework, and/or late submission of grade changes;

- no protocol existed to support students who had been denied;

- based on finding, recommendations were made to improve policy and procedures to better support students.

Data to track graduation denials is obtained from institutional cohort reports indicating degree checkout status. The student information is provided to major departments for assessment of missing courses and interventions needed. Data collected include reasons why students are denied, interventions needed to move from denied to cleared status, and the number of students moved from denied to cleared status after interventions. Information obtained is used to improve best practices and make recommendations to reduce graduation denials.

Assessment Findings

Students participating in the COTG workshop have demonstrated growth in learning as measured by the pre-and post-surveys. In Spring 2020, 92% of students understood the Smart Planner as a tool to develop a degree completion plan (an increase of 18% following the intervention). Similar learning took place when students were asked to identify the difference between commencement and graduation, jumping from 72% to 87%.

Since 2017, the PIF grant has helped 425 students overcome financial barriers to degree completion. In 2019, 79% of the 141 students supported were Pell-eligible students, and 70% were identified as first-generation college students.

To prevent graduation denials, proactive interventions are taken by tracking students who apply for graduation. If students are denied, a protocol to support these students has been implemented which includes outreach by the graduation unit, major advisors, and the University Advisement Center graduation specialist. The number of cases of graduation denials has significantly decreased after interventions were provided. For example, students denied graduation in Spring 2019 decreased from 272 to 80 between July 2019 and February 2020 (see Figure 3.4). Outreach to these students was done at various intervals, including registration periods. Students who were at

Figure 3.4 Number of Spring 2019 Denials Cleared
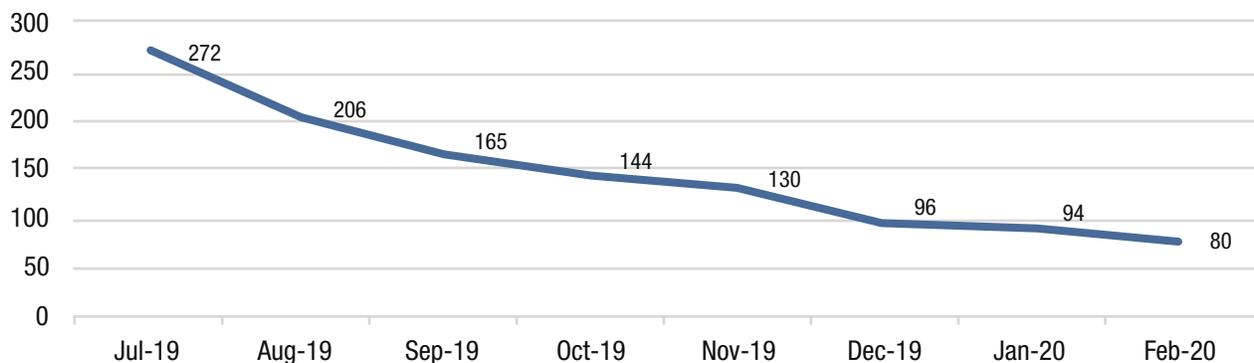
risk for missing more than two semesters of continuous enrollment were also contacted to help them maintain their enrollment status.

The Graduation Initiative Team has contributed to the increase in FTF four- and six-year graduation rates and two- and four-year transfer graduation rates. Significant findings include a nearly 50% increase in the FTF 4-year graduation rate, increasing from 8% for the Fall 2013 cohort to 16% for the Fall 2015 cohort (see Figure 3.5). This achievement also marked the highest FTF four-year graduation rate in the last 10 years. The graduation rates for transfer students continue to increase with a preliminary two-year rate of 37% in Summer 2020 (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7). This is an important milestone since it would meet the CSUDH Graduation Initiative 2025 two-year transfer graduation rate goal of 40%.

Figure 3.5 Four-year graduation rate for full-time first-year students, Fall 2006 to Fall 2015 cohorts

Note. Data obtained from: https://csusuccess.dashboards.calstate.edu/public/gi-goal-trajectories
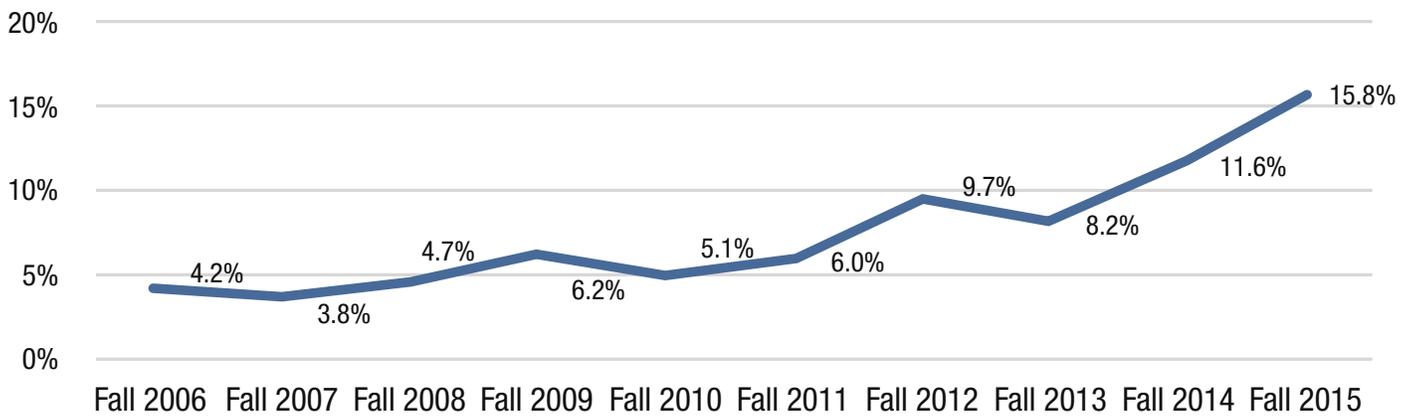
Figure 3.6 Two-year transfer graduation rates, Fall 2012 to Fall 2017 cohorts

Note. Data obtained from: https://csusuccess.dashboards.calstate.edu/public/gi-goal-trajectories
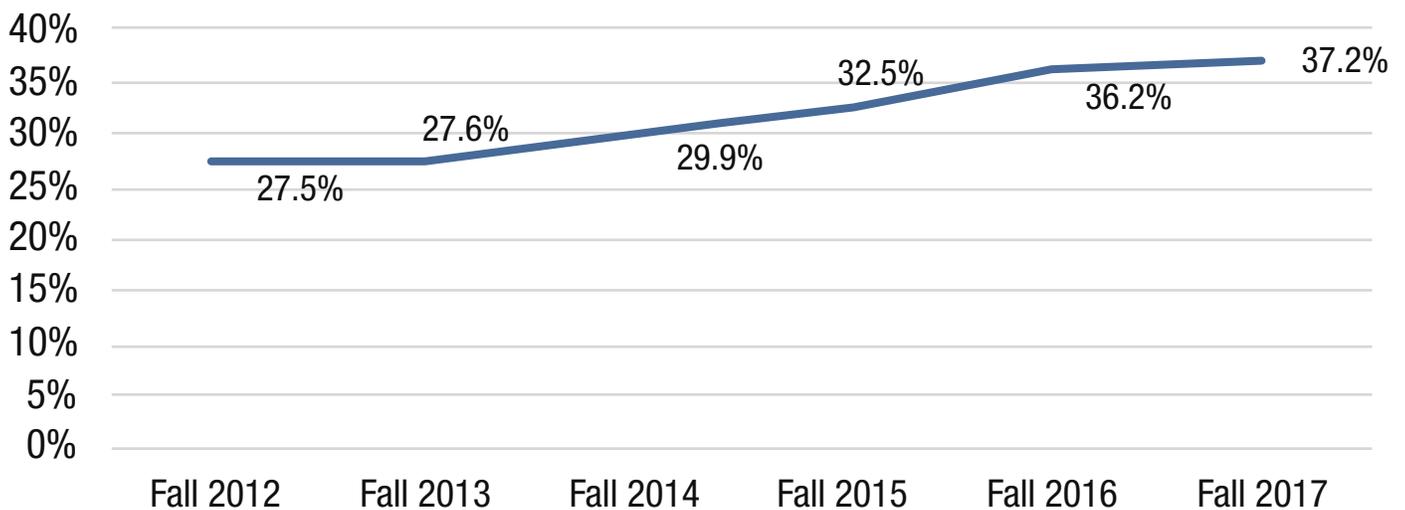
Figure 3.7 Preliminary graduation rates for full-time first-year students and transfers, 2020

Legend: ■ GI 2025 Goal ■ Preliminary Graduation Rate

Bar values:
- 4-Year FTF: 31%, 17.3%
- 6-Year FTF: 55%, 47.5%
- 2-Year Transfer: 40%, 37.2%
- 4-Year Transfer: 75%, 72.2%

Note. Data obtained from: https://csusuccess.dashboards.calstate.edu/public/gi-goal-trajectories
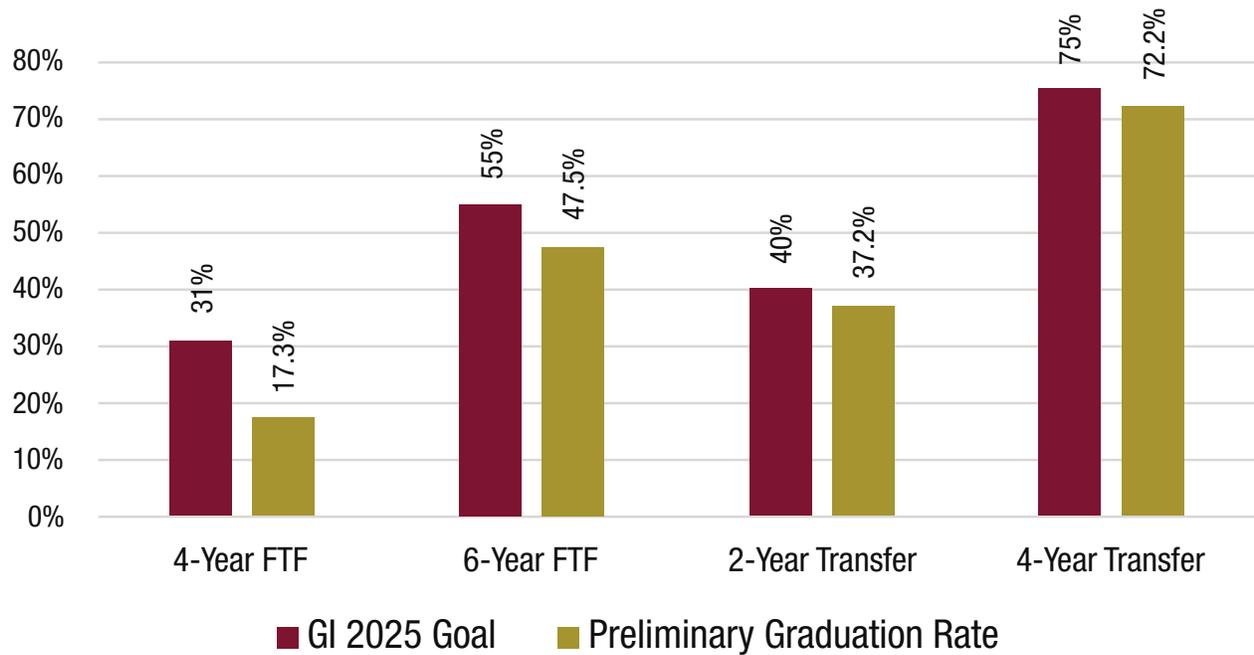
Implications for Practice

The 2014-2020 CSUDH Strategic Plan built on institutional initiatives to achieve equity and enhance academic advising, such as the DHFYE to Destination Graduation program. The DHFYE to Destination Graduation Program serves as a foundation for success for first-year and sophomore students by providing academic support and opportunities for engagement and connection. Cross-collaborations, such as the Graduation Innovation Teams, continue to support students in their junior and senior years to ensure degree completion and success. In addition, GIT oversees the Retention and Persistence subcommittee to continue to advance GI 2025 goals. Through analysis of retention and persistence trends, this committee has provided recommendations to improve student success. The conclusion of the 2014-2020 Strategic Plan is approaching. As the new strategic plan is developed, data collected through the interventions are available to the new Strategic Plan Steering Committee to continue established best practices and develop new initiatives to build on that success.

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4 | LaGuardia Community College Advising in the First Year Seminar for Business

Andrea Francis and Ellen Quish

Institutional Profile

LaGuardia Community College-CUNY (LaGuardia) is a public two-year commuter school located in Queens, New York. LaGuardia serves a diverse student body of more than 15,000 degree-seeking students with 13,000 full-time equivalent students. Approximately 58% of students are female and 42% male, with 59% of all students foreign-born from 150 different countries, and 32% older than 25. Table 4.1 shows the racial and ethnic composition of the student body, faculty, and staff. LaGuardia offers more than 50 majors, ranging from business administration to computer science. Approximately 53% of entering students place into either basic skills reading, writing, or mathematics courses with 72% of full-time students receiving financial aid and 71% of first-time full-time first-year students

awarded Pell grants (LaGuardia Community College, 2019). The percentage of first-generation students, defined here as students where neither parent graduated college, is reported collectively with other CUNY community colleges at 65.7% (CUNY OIRA, 2018).

Academic Advising Initiative

LaGuardia's first-year seminar (FYS) was designed to improve student retention and completion. Launched in Spring 2014, it has engaged more than 31,000 LaGuardia students, many of whom are at high risk. In response to the FYS student experience, LaGuardia's 2018 strategic planning process identified two institutional priorities: (a) building student access and success and (b) building an inclusive community, both of which pursue equity for students and are integral to the FYS course. The discipline-specific seminar helps students transition to college by providing

Table 4.1 *Racial/Ethnic Composition*

Racial/ethnic makeup	Percentage of student body	Percentage of faculty and staff
Asian	22%	16%
Black	17%	23%
Hispanic	48%	24%
White	11%	36%
Other Ethnic Origin	1%	1%
Unknown	1%	0%

an introduction to their selected major, college success content, and comprehensive advising support. In developing a path to graduation, FYS students learn to take ownership of their academic and career plans, using key digital advising tools and practices that support integrated advisement and promote self-knowledge available to students throughout their time at LaGuardia.

LaGuardia has invested significant resources in FYS development and implementation. Such resource allocation has supported comprehensive professional development for faculty and peer mentors preparing to teach the course as well as the intentional integration and program-specific introduction to FYS students of the newest high-impact practice: the ePortfolio (AACU, 2019). The meta-major FYS courses vary from 0 to 3 credits, according to availability in each program curriculum, and are divided into two integrated components: the faculty hour and the studio hour.

The FYS encourages students to engage in a transformative journey of self-exploration. Course content is delivered by a faculty member from the discipline during the faculty hour and built upon under the guidance of a peer mentor known as a Student Success Mentor (SSM) during the affiliated lab session, or studio hour. Common performance objectives include identifying education and career goals; developing a degree plan in the major; engaging with college life through active curricular, advising, and co-curricular participation; locating and using support resources; and practicing academic success strategies.

In recognizing the need to help students feel a sense of belonging in their new college environment, FYS students are supported by relationships with faculty and SSMs. Reciprocal in nature, these relationships help students feel connected to LaGuardia by offering academic and social support, introducing models of success, and providing a student-driven rationale for developing help-seeking behaviors. Faculty and SSMs learn about students and their varied experiences, enabling them to better engage students and address their needs.

Advising in the FYS is strengthened by the faculty-student relationship, in which the instructor serves as a resource to the student. Using a learner-centered approach, faculty guide students in understanding "the logic of the curriculum," while cultivating agency and enhancing students' education (Lowenstein, 2005).

The First Year Seminar for Business (BTF101) is the College's earliest FYS course and is taken by students in LaGuardia's highest enrolling program. It has been used as a model for advising at LaGuardia and thus has been selected by the authors for further examination of advising in the FYS (LaGuardia Community College, 2019).

Advising in the First Year Seminar for Business

BTF 101 is a mandatory, two-credit course, intentionally designed without prerequisites to provide access to a discipline-specific course to students completing developmental and non-credit courses. Advising is integrated throughout the curriculum in a scaffolded, iterative, and intentional way over the 12-week semester. The advising effort takes a holistic approach incorporating both developmental advising and course selection.

Advising is enhanced by relationships between faculty and students and between students and SSMs. Faculty and SSMs go through rigorous professional development about the first-year student at LaGuardia and techniques to engage students, build relationships, and design a curriculum that advances equity. During the first three weeks of the course, students complete assignments related to their mindset about college, the discipline, analysis of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), and write reflections to share with faculty and SSMs. These

activities are aimed at fostering relationships within the course and setting a firm foundation for further advising activities.

Students also explore campus resources with the goal of enhancing their knowledge, access, and self-advocacy. Subsequently, students contextualize their findings while researching careers, transfer schools, and majors. Through this scaffolded process, they critically think about their plans and develop inquiry and problem-solving skills. Faculty then explain all course requirements for graduating, and once students are more comfortable with the logic of the curriculum, they are tasked with mapping their course selections to graduation. Students often find this activity daunting as they must use multiple sources of information to create feasible schedules. However, faculty provide support throughout the process understanding that this element of self-advising is critical to students developing confidence and independent decision-making skills, thus agency.

Advising leverages supporting technology and other tools that help students to engage in reflection, information gathering and analysis, decision-making, and documentation of their work using platforms accessible to them in the present and future (e.g., ePortfolio, Degree Maps, and the LaGuardia Mobile App). After participating in discussion and research during the faculty hour, students use the relevant areas of the Core ePortfolio to reflect, document, and curate their work during the studio hour. Degree Maps provide a roadmap for course selection for both students and faculty, and faculty help students to demystify career options through career tools like the Bureau of Labor Statistics website and LaGuardia's Center for Career and Professional Development. The LaGuardia Mobile App was designed with advisement as a central focus so students have advisement-related resources at their fingertips, and during the course, faculty and SSMs provide training on functions and use-cases. In short, there is a concerted effort to eliminate barriers to untapped resources and develop advisement-seeking behaviors.

LaGuardia students are predominantly first-generation and historically, often need additional support to achieve academic success. Crucial to advancing equity, the student is the central focus of the design and delivery of the BTF 101 course, thus facilitating inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. Furthermore, faculty and SSMs guide students in the development of agency, advocacy, and advisement-seeking behaviors to promote retention and completion.

Assessment Methods & Design

Three separate and independently conducted assessments were performed by the Office of Institutional Research, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and the Academic Affairs Division at LaGuardia, respectively. The assessments have independent objectives, which include (a) sharing the comparison of outcomes between students who take the FYS in the first semester with those who take it in subsequent semesters; (b) reporting survey findings on the student experience; and (c) demonstrating the course's impact on advisement-seeking behaviors. The FYS is a graduation requirement at LaGuardia, thus all students are mandated to take the FYS for their discipline, and new student registration prioritizes placing students into the course by following each department's degree map, which sequences the FYS into the first semester. However, not all students are able to take the course in their first semester based on scheduling and/or capacity constraints and, therefore, may take the course in a later semester.

Since 2014, the Office of Institutional Research has conducted an assessment of next semester retention and GPA for students enrolled in an FYS in their first semester compared to those who were not enrolled in their first semester using data from institutional databases. The objective of the assessment is to compare outcomes across these populations. The sample sizes for the assessment have varied from 2014 to 2018 as the initiative was brought to scale but for Fall 2016, 2017, and 2018, sample sizes were 4,162, 4,008, and 3,694, respectively.

In keeping with its commitment to strengthening the new student transition, the Center for Teaching and Learning gauges course effectiveness by surveying the student experiences. The sample sizes have varied over time, but for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 academic years, sample sizes were 3,582 and 3,552, respectively. The survey provides anonymous feedback about the course, and data are then aggregated to help inform the design and delivery of the course.

The Division of Academic Affairs, as part of an ongoing advising initiative, also conducted an assessment of advisement-seeking behaviors in students. The objective of the assessment was to determine whether initiatives to promote advisement-seeking behaviors resulted in students being advised. Data were

collected from faculty, professional advisors, and peer advisors and aggregated by department. Our findings focus on the Business department, and the most recent data from Fall 2018 has a sample size of 1,314 students.

Assessment Findings

Findings are discussed based on the three separate and independently conducted assessments of this initiative.

LaGuardia Institutional Research Assessment

Institutional data include GPA and next semester retention for students who were enrolled in an FYS during their first semester, compared to those who were not, for first-year and transfer students. All outcomes are significant at the 99% confidence level. As can be seen from Table 4.2, GPAs of both first-year and transfer students are higher for those who took an FYS than those who did not. Although the GPA data are encouraging, they are not the focus of this case. As previously mentioned, the FYS was created to strengthen student retention. Prior to the FYS, on average, 37% of students dropped out by their second semester resulting in a retention rate of, on average, 63% (LaGuardia Community College, 2014). The impact on retention can be

seen in Table 4.3, which shows consistently higher retention for both first-year and transfer FYS students than non-FYS students. Moreover, the retention rate for first-year and transfer students is well over the 63% average retention rate prior to FYS implementation.

LaGuardia Center for Teaching and Learning FYS Core Survey

Select data for the core survey administered to FYS students are shown for the two most recent years of available data. Data will be discussed in terms of the normalized ratings on the scale of 1 to 5 in order to focus on student responses to questions related to the themes of relationship, agency, and supporting tools, thus conclusions about the statistical significance of responses between cohorts are not drawn. As can be seen from the responses, students leave the FYS with a better understanding of themselves, their strengths, and their weaknesses. Students also feel strongly that they have developed concrete educational, transfer, and career plans and that they are able to solve complex problems that may arise related to these areas. They also indicate a strong understanding of the requirements of their major and how they will structure their schedules to fulfill those requirements, which provides insight into the work of faculty to explain the logic of the curriculum, the strength of supporting tools related to the major, and course selection, and ultimately the development of agency

Table 4.2 *First semester GPA by FYS Participation*

Semester	First-year students			Transfer students		
	FYS	Non-FYS	Difference	FYS	Non-FYS	Difference
Fall 2016	2.27	1.66	0.61	2.76	2.44	0.32
Fall 2017	2.58	2.28	0.30	2.99	2.69	0.30
Fall 2018	2.43	2.21	0.22	2.88	2.61	0.27

p <.001

Table 4.3 *Next Semester Retention by FYS Seminar Participation*

Semester	First-year students			Transfer students		
	FYS	Non-FYS	Difference	FYS	Non-FYS	Difference
Fall 2016	82.54%	61.42%	21.12%	82.63%	68.06%	14.57%
Fall 2017	78.92%	67.57%	11.35%	77.54%	64.11%	13.43%
Fall 2018	76.81%	64.05%	12.76%	76.67%	66.44%	10.23%

p <.001

in students. Further highlighting the importance of thoughtful integration of supporting tools, students also positively rate their experience with ePortfolio as a technological tool to reflect, explore career and transfer plans, and make their academic plans visible. The impact of the SSM (FYS Peer Mentor) also garners strong responses with respect to helping students understand course requirements and how to be successful in college.

Division of Academic Affairs Assessment

For the Business & Technology department, in Fall 2018, 87% of students returned to LaGuardia when advised by faculty, professional advisors, or peer advisors, using the Student Success Plan, an advisement tool, which mirrors the components of the FYS curriculum (e.g., goals, career options, transfer plans, resource needs); 62% of students who had not been advised returned to the campus the following semester, which represents a 25 percentage point difference in retention in the two populations.

Implications for Practice

Advising is an institutional priority at LaGuardia that supports and deepens the student experience from enrollment to completion. This case study suggests that advising has the potential to be more effective when it is fully integrated into a culturally responsive, student-centered curriculum and builds on institutional objectives of inclusion and access. The curriculum invites the student to start with who they are—allowing for their identity to be at the core of the process—and to then engage in self-assessment and reflection thereby being prompted to better understand themselves and to use that knowledge in developing their academic and career goals. The relationships students form with both faculty and peer mentors in the first semester offer academic and social support and are leveraged to develop agency and advance equity.

Table 4.4 *FYS Core Survey Responses*

Survey item	Weighted mean[a]			
	Fall 2017 (*n* = 2,124)	Spring 2018 (*n* = 1,458)	Fall 2018 (*n* = 2,296)	Spring 2019 (n = 1,256)
1. In this class, I examined my own strengths and weaknesses.	4.17	4.18	4.19	4.29
2. This course helped me feel more confident as a student.	4.11	4.15	4.11	4.22
3. This class helped me study what successful college students do.	4.20	4.24	4.22	4.27
4. My FYS Peer Mentor helped me to understand what I needed to do in this course.	4.26	4.32	4.33	4.36
5. My FYS Peer Mentor helped me to understand what it takes to be a successful college student.	4.23	4.27	4.27	4.29
6. I choose courses that fulfill the requirements of my major.	4.41	4.47	4.44	4.45
7. I know which semesters I will take my courses to get my degree.	4.27	4.32	4.34	4.35
8. How much has your experience in this course contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in understanding yourself?	4.04	4.09	4.06	4.13
9. How much did this course contribute to your ability to explore and solve complex, real-world problems, such as those you might face in your life, including your career?	4.01	4.00	3.98	4.08
Based on what you know or what you were told, the goal for using ePortfolio in this course was:				
10. To help me develop my own educational goals and plans.	4.29	4.33	4.31	4.31
11. To help me develop my career plans.	4.29	4.32	4.33	4.31
12. To help me develop my plans to transfer or apply to another college or university.	4.24	4.26	4.22	4.25

Note. Question 9 is drawn from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and does not have a comparable question on the CCSSE.
[a] Responses on normalized ratings scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being *strongly agree* and 1 being *strongly disagree*.

A unique and impactful component of the FYS course is the peer-led studio hour where students engage weekly with an academically successful SSM who helps them transition to the college environment. Having been an FYS student just a short time ago, SSMs share their own academic experiences with empathy and a first-hand appreciation for the varied needs of LaGuardia students. While this relationship helps students develop a sense of belonging at the College, it also aims to motivate students to tap into their capacities, strengths, and potential.

The early introduction of supportive advising tools assists students in learning how to navigate the advising process as well as to independently access and use important college resources. Connecting students to these tools and encouraging self-advocacy behaviors are keystones of advising in the FYS that bolster academic success from the first semester to graduation.

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5 | Montana Technological University Freshmen Engineering Advising

Akua B. Oppong-Anane and Amanda Shaw

Institutional Profile

Montana Technological University (Montana Tech) is a public institution located in the historical rural mining town of Butte, Montana. It was established in 1900 to educate the children of miners and others in the surrounding areas to advance educational equity in Montana, and this tradition has continued. Some students reside in rural and low population density towns and counties like Roberts (population 295) and Golden Valley (population 821; United States Census Bureau, 2018). Many students go home every weekend to help on their parents' ranches and farms. In addition, workers in Montana generally earn a lower income than in other states. The Montana median household income of $52,328, which is lower than the U.S. median income of $61,937 (DATAUSA, 2020).

Montana Tech offers certificate, associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees from the School of Mines and Engineering; School of Nursing; College of Letters, Sciences and Professional Studies; Highlands College; or the Graduate School. It was voted the #1 Best Value engineering school in the United States in 2020 (Stone, 2020). Our 2,421-student population has the following demographics: 12% are students of color, 8% race unknown, and 81% are White (Montana Technological University, 2019). In addition, 72.1% of the students are Montana residents, 19.4% are non-residents, and 8.5% are Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) students (Montana University System, 2020a). While all incoming first-year students are required to live on campus, only 17% of the student population resides on campus (M. Kump, personal communication, August 7, 2020).

At Montana Tech, low-income students are defined as those receiving Pell grants and/or other federal grants. In the 2018-2019 academic year, 86% of the admitted first-year students received financial assistance in the form of federal grants and scholarships. In addition, more than one-third of the first-year student population were considered low-income with 33% receiving Federal grants (including Pell grants) and another 10 % receiving other federal grants (Montana

Technological University, 2020). Additionally, first-generation students are identified as those whose parents do not have a college degree. In Fall 2017, 34% of students indicated neither parent completed a college degree (M. Kump, personal communication, August 7, 2020). Due to the demographics of our student population and their low-income or first-generation status, Montana Tech employs intrusive advising with first-year engineering students.

The Freshmen Engineering Advising Framework

Advising is a proven aid in increasing student engagement and retention (Fares, 2020). Intrusive advising involves the advisor intentionally making the initial contact with their advisees and then maintaining contact with students through multiple advising sessions with the goal of establishing an advisor-student relationship (Varney, 2007). Intrusive advising is used to help students cope with the high school-to-college transition which can be daunting for many first-year students, especially those who may also be low-income and first-generation. Students are introduced to academic policies and resources that can help them to succeed academically, which is especially helpful since most of these are unknown to students.

Decentralized advising is practiced at Montana Tech by faculty advisors. In the School of Mines and Engineering, sophomore and upper-class students are advised solely by faculty advisors. Many students leave engineering majors in the first-year because it is perceived as being too difficult. Other students may make multiple major changes. To decrease the likelihood of first-year engineering students changing majors multiple times, or worse, deciding not to pursue engineering during their junior year or later, first-year engineering students are exposed to an intentional model of professional and faculty advising coupled with introductory classes. The Freshman Engineering Program, now Freshman Engineering Advising, was started in the Fall 2014 semester with the aim of improving the advising process and increasing retention rates of first-year engineering students. All first-year engineering students upon admission are assigned a professional advisor or a faculty advisor based on their SAT, ACT, or AP math placement.

Students are assigned to a professional advisor if their math placement is in Pre-calculus or lower; students are assigned a faculty advisor if their math placement is in Calculus 1, which results in a higher caseload for the professional advisor. Both advisors offer the same services and work in tandem through the Freshman Engineering Advising group. In addition, since the faculty advisor also has all the first-year engineering students in their classes, they can serve as an additional touchpoint for in-classroom advising. The faculty advisor also serves as a faculty role model for students and the constant interaction helps the students feel comfortable meeting with their advisors.

The high touch and intrusive advising practiced by the advisors requires first-year engineering students to attend at least four advising sessions during the semester. Advising announcements are sent by email and are also made through the classes taught by the faculty advisor since most of the first-year engineering students take these classes. Announcements are made a week prior to each advising session. The first advising session is an introductory meeting to help the advisor and student get to know each other and to talk about the advising process and requirements. Prior to the advising session, students complete a questionnaire. During the session, the advisor reviews the responses to learn more about the student and to offer help where appropriate. If a student is identified as a first-generation student, they are sent for a follow-up meeting with the staff from the Institute for Educational Opportunities, the Federal TRIO program at Montana Tech, which has additional services for students from minoritized backgrounds.

To decrease attrition, Montana Tech implements an early-alert system using 20th and 40th day grade checks for all first-year students. These serve as the second and third advising sessions, respectively. Students are required to meet with their advisors to go over their grades. The advisors use these sessions to introduce students to intervention methods like tutoring if their grades are dropping. The offices of the two first-year engineering advisors are in the Student Success Center where other student services including Enrollment Services, Financial Aid Services, and the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) for tutoring are located. The advisors are thus able to walk the student over to ACE to set up a tutoring appointment or to the Financial Aid office if the student needs additional help. The fourth advising session occurs at the end of the semester and focuses on registration for the next semester or transfer to a faculty advisor in their engineering department. The metric used to transfer a student from a first-year engineering advisor to a major advisor occurs when a student successfully passes their Calculus 1 class at the end of their first or

second semester. Undecided students will remain with a first-year advisor to explore engineering majors for an additional semester if that is needed.

Another approach Montana Tech has adopted within its first-year advising, is the practice of forming cross-functional partnerships with career services. Career counseling integrated with academic advising has been proven to show an increase in graduation rates. For example, the University of South Carolina (UofSC) recorded a 3.7 % increase in graduation (Aisen, 2019) for students served by an integrated approach. Montana Tech has a high career outcome (or job placement) rate of 93.23% because of the multiple efforts done across campus. Career counseling and other services offered by our Career Services department are emphasized in all of the classes taught by the first-year faculty advisor from the first week of college and onwards (Montana Technological University, 2018). The Director of Career Services introduces the Career Services department and career resources to the first-year engineering students through the first-year seminar class and conducts laboratory class sessions to go over the Career Services website and services. This is done through the Introduction to Engineering Calculations and Problem-Solving class. In addition, the first-year engineering students are required through the seminar class to talk to recruiters at the Career Fair to get a view of what is required of students seeking internships or jobs after graduation. Professors who teach sophomore and higher engineering classes then continue this initiative by having the Director of Career Services visit their classes and help students with their résumés. The institutional culture that all faculty advisors place on our students using the Career Services and attending the Career Fair has greatly helped our career rate. Most students at Montana Technological University go on to have at least one internship, and many get jobs after graduation. This helps to bridge poverty and opportunity gaps, leading to better socio-economic lives for themselves and their families.

Assessment Methods and Design

Montana Tech's first-year student retention data, which measures the number of first-time students who began their studies in the previous fall semester and returned to school the following fall semester, are collected from Enrollment Services student records and analyzed by the Institutional Research office each academic year. Data is also reported to the Montana University System, the Montana higher education repository database. Advising Satisfaction Surveys are completed by advisees at each semester's end. Data are collected on the number of advising sessions scheduled and attended. Satisfaction is measured by the tallied responses of agree and strongly agree on questions about advisors and advising meetings. Major changes are asked but not strongly tracked. The results of retention data and surveys are analyzed by our program each year, and changes are made to improve student services.

Assessment Findings

The high touch and intrusive advising of first-year engineering students at Montana Tech has yielded positive results regarding advising satisfaction and retention. Pell recipient interventions have yielded more than a 70% retention rate as shown in Figure 5.1 (MSU, 2020b). The overall first-ear retention rate has increased to 81% as shown in Figure 5.2 (MSU, 2020c). The first-year engineering retention data is not separated from the overall first-year retention data. Satisfaction Surveys completed by students in the 2018-2019 academic year indicated an above 90% advising satisfaction rate among first-year engineering students.

Implications for Practice

Based on our assessment data, the most significant contributions to our program's success are the multiple advising sessions and the availability of the advisors. As a result of the data, the first-year engineering advisors will continue to provide quality and accessible advising to our students by offering these services. We will monitor our introductory classes and track major changes to determine if our program assists students in determining if engineering is the correct educational path for them. We continue to strive to reach our goal – to provide first-year engineering students with immediate and intentional support through advising. We hope that our approach can be modeled and scaled by peer institutions to promote growth and transparency for the field.

Figure 5.1 Pell Recipient Retention Rate at Montana Technological University
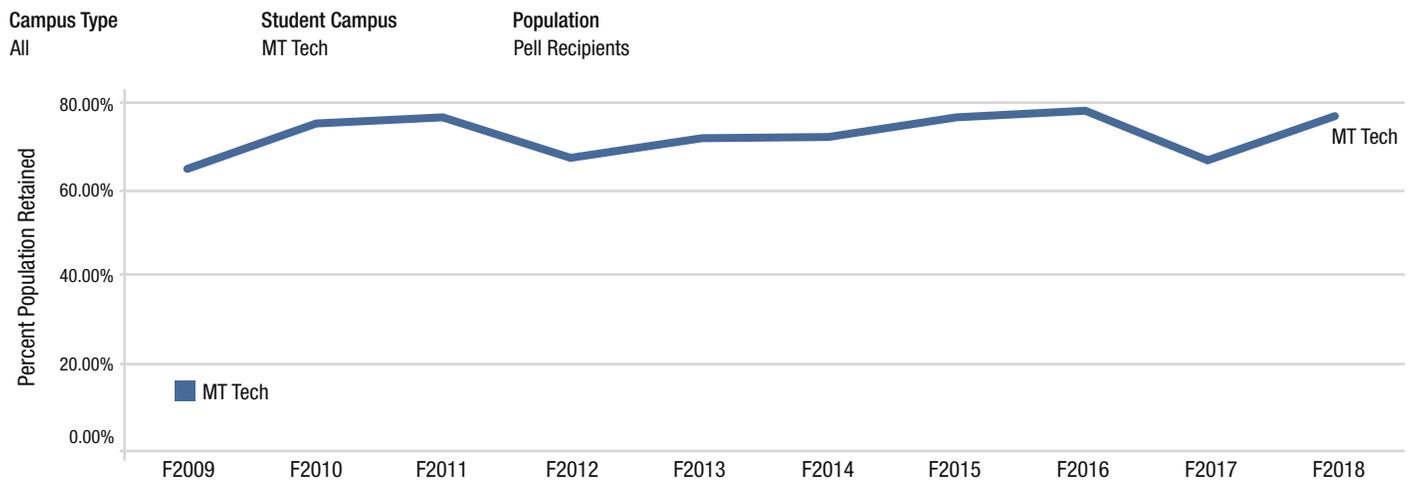
Campus Type	Student Campus	Population
All	MT Tech	Pell Recipients

Note. Reprinted from the Montana University System Data & Reports website.
https://www.mus.edu/data/performancefunding/dashboards/index.html

Figure 5.2 Percentage of Montana Tech First-Time Freshman Retained

Percentage of first time freshman cohorts returning for a second year of enrollment in the MUS
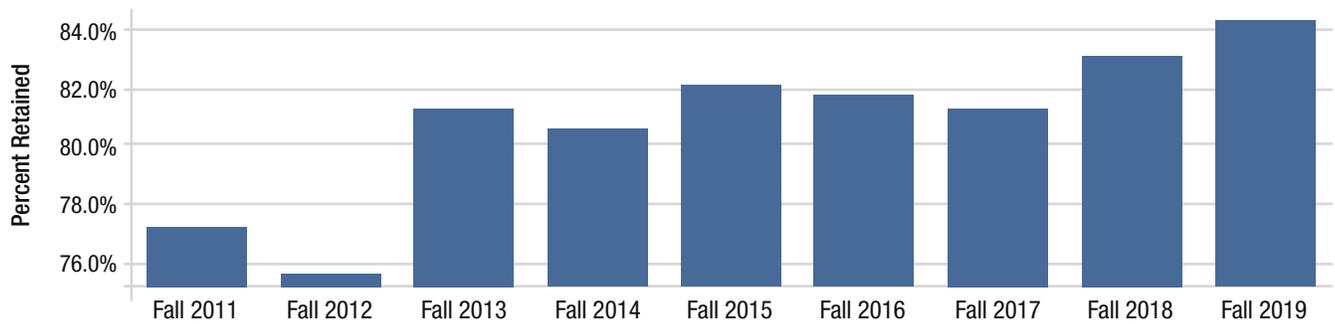
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6 | North Carolina Central University
BAM! Merits of a Blended Advising Model for Removing Barriers and Encouraging Successs

Christina Garrett and T. Leon Lassiter

Institutional Profile

North Carolina Central University (NCCU), a state-supported liberal arts institution, is a public, historically black university in Durham, North Carolina. Founded in 1910, it became a member of the University of North Carolina System in 1971. Total enrollment is more than 8,000 learners with 85% of learners arriving from within NC. NCCU offers a liberal arts education culminating in majors spanning sciences, arts, and business, among other disciplines. In 2018, the first-year retention rate was 76% and the six-year graduation rate was 46% for the 2012 cohort. Graduate and professional degree offerings continue to expand.

Biomedical research programs at NCCU have been particularly successful in pushing the frontiers of life science as highlighted by the awarding of more than $33 million in extramural funding during 2018. NCCU is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and identified as a Community Engaged Institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. NCCU is invested in delivering the transformative power of a college education to students from lower-income backgrounds as well as students from rural parts of NC. Our successes in higher education have been consistently recognized and distinguish our campus as a preeminent higher education destination in the Southeast.

Prior to presenting the blended advising model, it is helpful to detail salient demographic data describing NCCU and the Cheatham-White Scholarship Program (CWSP). (see Table 6.1 for a composite impression). CWSP parallels the larger NCCU enrollment in important ways. Notably, the representation of African American learners is the same (78%). Also, the educational history of CWSP is comparable to the entire student body. At NCCU, a first-generation student is recognized as a student whose parents (both) did not complete a bachelor's degree, or in the case of a student living with and supported by only one parent, a student whose only such parent did not complete a bachelor's degree. CWSP has 28% first-generation students and similarly, the total NCCU campus is 32%. One difference to highlight is the higher percentage of CWSP learners classified as sophomores. Scholars served in the blended advising model arrive with more college credits, and this translates to a larger population of second-year learners (53% CWSP versus 16% total enrollment).

Blended Advising Model

Answering the call for access and affordability to higher education in the state, the Cheatham-White Scholarship Program at NCCU was developed in 2017 in partnership with the University of North Carolina General Administration and the state legislature to attract the highest performing and most academically prepared learners in North Carolina. The mission of CWSP is to prepare students to become exceptional scholars and global citizens proficient in the arts and sciences, and actively engaged in the community. The program provides a remarkable education for students who are well-rounded individuals with a broad range of interests by delivering a fully funded scholastic experience and intellectually challenging enrichment opportunities. Our goals are as follows:

1. Sustain the success of Cheatham-White Scholars through a supportive and highly structured academic environment.

Table 6.1 *Essential Demographics Describing Learners at North Carolina Central University, Fall 2018*

	North Carolina Central University		Cheatham-White Scholars	
	Value	Percentage	Value	Percentage
Full-time Undergraduate Enrollment	5,328	100%	36	100%
male enrollment	1,739	33%	9	25%
female enrollment	3,589	67%	27	75%
Ethnocultural Diversity				
Hispanic/Latino	405	6%	0	0%
Black or African-American	4,998	78%	28	78%
White	408	6%	4	11%
American Indian or Alaska Native	28	0.4%	0	0%
Asian	70	1%	0	0%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	4	<0.0%	0	0%
two or more races	338	5%	4	11%
race and / or ethnicity unknown	170	3%	0	0%
nonresident alien	13	0.2%	0	0%
Age Diversity (> 25 years of age)	997	19%	0	0%
Living Off-campus / Commuting	3,552	66%	0	0%
Sophomore (earned / transferred 30-59 credits)	1,338	16%	19	53%
First-Generation Learner	2,067	32%	10	28%
Pell Grant Eligible	3,674	57%	12	33%

2. Promote a diverse community of highly motivated scholars through enriching, intellectual opportunities aligned with personal and professional experiences.

3. Prepare Cheatham-White Scholars for substantive contributions to North Carolina, the nation, and the world through a culture of leadership in public service.

Building upon high performing students' qualities of scholarship, leadership, integrity, and service, CWSP blends academic preparation and accessible advisor relationships to develop intro/extrospective purveyors of change in an evolving, global community. In alignment with the University Strategic Plan 2019-2024, the current practices of CWSP create a campus-wide Student Success Plan which integrates students' overall campus engagement to increase degree attainment. More specifically, the program supports the following integrated goals and strategies of the University:

- increase access for underserved student populations through expansion to at least two new remote markets, with emphasis on Tier 1 and 2 counties;

- develop a robust scholarship program to support the enrollment of low-income and rural students;

- graduate 25% more students from low-income backgrounds.

High-performing students create change and growth opportunities in the classroom, as their contributions challenge peers and faculty alike to rise to meet these talented students. Fostering academic rigor and reputation benefits the retention of all students by increasing the valuation of the day-to-day college experience and burnishing the significance of earning a degree at NCCU.

At its core, the blended advising model of CWSP delivers an experience unique and intentional to counsel learners holistically during their undergraduate experience. When considering the swift implementation and mandated requisites outlined by legislative initiators of the program, it was evident the scholars would require quality support if their exceptional success were to continue. For the Cheatham-White Scholarship Program, rather than fashioning a supplementary model based upon a paradigm or strategy, less attention was paid to the transactional process of formal academic advising sessions. More consideration was given to long-term relationships and their impact on the student experience. Having recognized the strengths and talents of specific staff members who were working in a shared space, the idea was created

to form an advisory team that would fully support the scholars in achieving their heightened academic expectations.

Being so, Cheatham-White Scholars participate in a tripartite advising approach such that student learning and satisfaction are maximized while exceeding advising learning outcomes. Each student has three advisors: an academic advisor, a program advisor, and an academic coach. It is important to note that each student is advised by the same group of advisors each semester, so ongoing familiarity with group dynamics and overall program expectations has become a critical component of success. The role of each team member is substantial as their combined services provide comprehensive, continuous support guiding the scholars' advancement through the term (see Figure 6.1). Together, the team has identified three areas of focus for each scholar: academic matriculation, program development and compliance, and personal growth and awareness.

An academic advisor meets each scholar a minimum of three times per semester: pre-advising, course registration, and a routine check-in. Through evaluation of high school AP/IB credits and university double majors and dual degree programs, these meetings are used to catalog anything curricular from honors accreditation to athletics compliance records, as students chart the winding path to graduation.

A program advisor counsels each scholar a minimum of four times per semester during the last week of each month for a 30 to 45-minute meeting selected by the student. Students complete a brief inventory prior to their arrival upon which the expectation is to discuss past and future opportunities for personal and academic progress and any impending barriers to success.

An academic coach trains each scholar a minimum of three times per semester on a date, time, and/or modality the student selects. After meeting with an academic coach, students anticipate having an improved aptitude to define academic success and fashioning appropriate skill, will, and resources for effectively identifying and defining personal goals.

Moreover, the advisors establish and maintain communication with each student the summer prior to their first-year and sustain a communication plan each subsequent summer when students have departed campus; thereby increasing student success by providing opportunities for direct access to the advising team until the model begins again the following academic year. The blended advising model practiced by CWSP permits both the

Figure 6.1 Blended advising model: academic advising, program advising, and academic coaching.

Academic Advising

matriculation focus
<u>3 meets per semester</u>
pre-registration
registration
one check-in

registration
progress towards degree
AP/IB credit transfers
major changes
Honors designation compliance
NCAA eligibility compliance

Program Advising

development & compliance
<u>4 meets per semester</u>
one-on-one, monthly
minimum requirement
meets available *ad libitum*
staff availability is critical

progress reports
GPA calculation
goal setting
current personal priorities
recent successes
current/anticipated challenges
discuss nonacademic well-being
review weekly requirements

Academic Coaching

growth/change focus
<u>3 meets per semester</u>
minimum requirement
meets available *ad libitum*

goals dictated by learner
academic success
study basics: how/when/what
time management
effective communication
identity development
maximizing the present
preparing for the future
weighing adaptive choices

advising team and the scholars alike, to define and openly communicate the growing expectations such high performing students covet to enact necessary change and growth opportunities in the classroom.

However, fostering this level of academic rigor does not come without significant investment from all parties involved. These students have similar challenges as other students, plus some additional ones, such as lack of self-identity or self-esteem/ confidence, trouble with relationships, and communication difficulties. Transitioning from high school and being immediately asked to be "the best and the brightest" is no easy feat, especially when surrounded by those whose achievements rival your own, yet the Cheatham- White Scholars do not shirk challenges. For example, campus support services do not often target high-achieving students or their course loads, but rather, focus on assisting at-risk populations and the general education curriculum, and instructors are normally curious as to why students with "A" or "B" markings are so insistent on having feedback and thus, professors are less likely to respond. Considering these challenges, establishing the blended advising model as a form of "concierge-like advising" responds to the targeted needs of these students, thereby positioning staff to become experts in who the student was, is, and will become.

Assessment Methods & Design

The Cheatham-White Scholarship Program seeks to address what successful advising involves at each stage of the blended advising model and how to measure such success. Assessment questions that CWSP seeks to address include the following:

1. What does successful academic advising accomplish?

2. What does successful programmatic advising accomplish?

3. What does successful academic coaching accomplish?

4. Are the accomplishment measures effective for assessing successful advising?

Successful academic advising is quantitatively assessed by the accrual of earned credits per semester, annual progress in academic classification, quantity of withdrawn credits, and cumulative grade point average. Proactive academic advising creates a critically important plane of success wherein programmatic advising and academic coaching can operate in the continued best interest of scholar development.

Assessment of programmatic advising is accomplished by recording the scholars' successful completion of the building blocks of short-term scholarly success inclusive of completion

of weekly study hall hours, documenting weekly interaction with professors, attending weekly scholar development sessions, monthly one-on-one progress report meetings, providing biannual evidence of scholarly development, and providing an annual reflection of successes resultant of programmatic participation. The weekly assessments capture quantitative, participation-based data, while the monthly meetings, biannual reports, and annual reflection capture qualitative evidence of the emerging habits of scholarship.

In addition, academic coaching is a qualitative task that solicits student reflection. Using focus-group-tested questions, students are asked to compare/contrast the current semester to the prior semester regarding transition, identity, communication, intentionality, procrastination, resilience, and past/present/future orientation.

Assessment Findings

The blended advising practices and expectations support scholarly thriving demonstrable as successful academic performance. The Cheatham-White Scholarship Program has already increased the academic profile: the GPA of CWSP (3.86) surpasses averages of learners participating in other campus scholarships and high-touch programs (3.46). Scholars have maintained an average cumulative GPA above 3.80 while attempting and successfully completing 15 or more credit hours per semester (see Figure 6.2). Current practices also support the need to serve specialized populations such that 94% of students were retained from the 2018 inaugural cohort. The immediate year following, 93% of those students returned for their third year in the program, and ever since, one scholar has graduated in under four years. The Cheatham-White Scholarship Program shows student success increases with appropriate intentional academic support alongside the removal of impediments characteristic of undergraduate populations.

Additionally, individual holistic development has been observed in scholars through goals defined by insightful student reflection such as mental health awareness, extracurricular experiences, and professional development. Scholars increased interactions with their professors (at least once a week outside of scheduled instruction time), originally a short-term success practice, which led to additional growth opportunities such as advisory board appointments and permanent research lab assignments.

Figure 6.2 Indicators of academic success: GPA, credits earned, credits withdrawn
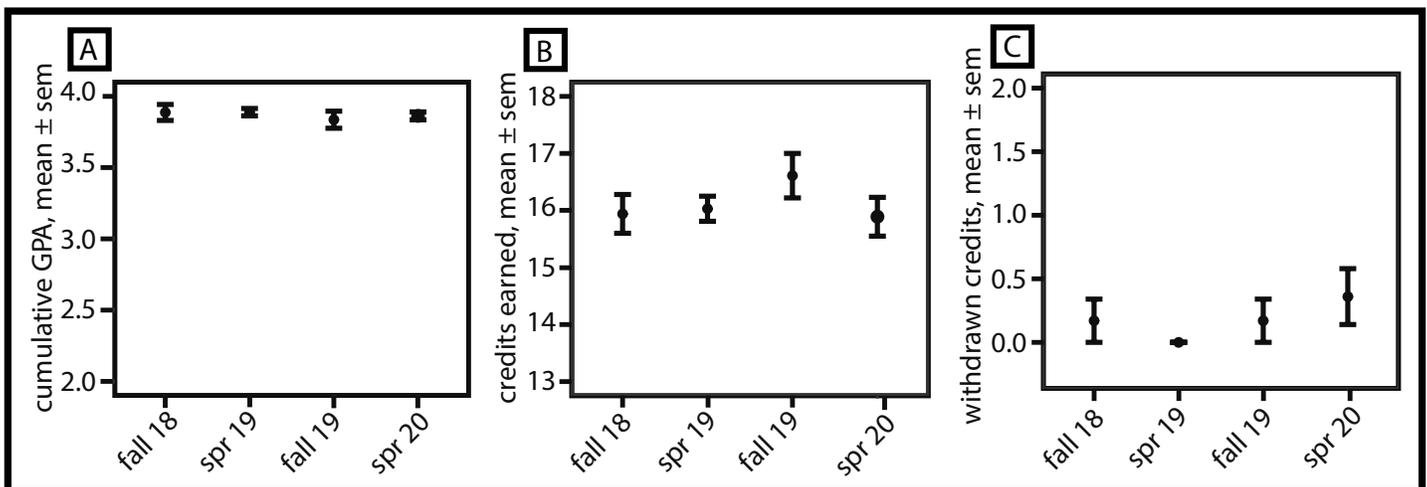
When asked to reflect on their first-year with the Cheatham-White Scholarship Program, one student shared the following:

"My short time as a Cheatham-White Scholar has resulted in some of the most enriching and character enhancing experiences that I have ever had the pleasure of being a part of. Through the program, I have been able to take advantage of numerous opportunities that have allowed me to connect with a multitude of professionals from a vast array of different fields, including my intended field of study… [It] has provided me with a community of scholars and advisors alike who all care about my development and success. All of whom have left an indelible mark on my journey to become a great physicist, engineer, and person."

Implications for Practice

Student-centered success is NCCU's guiding principle. In providing opportunities for college access to students with historically limited access to higher education, the Cheatham-White Scholarship Program will continue to deliver an exceptional educational experience for remarkable scholars, versatile thinkers, and well-rounded individuals. In promoting student learning and development extending beyond the first and second-year, the program will provide a fully funded scholastic experience and intellectually challenging enrichment opportunities to support a highly structured academic environment. Current practices support the need to serve a special population of high-achieving students by creating a meaningful and withstanding advising experience to support an honors focused course of study.

The Cheatham-White Scholarship Program at NCCU has established clearly defined goals for access, equity, diversity, and inclusion, and the blended advising model was designed and strategically implemented to support those goals. Recognizing that equitable and inclusive practices could only be sustained with the efforts of an advising team who is willing to focus their attention on serving student needs, equitable access is provided so student success can be realized.

Furthermore, Cheatham-White Scholars reside together and participate in a living-learning community which provides a distinct setting where students learn to bridge their academic, social, and institutional experiences with their everyday lives. They participate in weekly, non-credit bearing formative seminar series to support

heightened academic expectations, as well as receive guidance from assigned faculty mentors in their field of study. Scholars also complete community service, research opportunities, and international experiences as a cohort under the guidance of CWSP.

The experience of developing this program may be of interest to minority-serving institutions, small/medium-sized universities, and resource-lean campuses. With the implementation of a blended advising model, the Cheatham-White Scholarship Program has proven quality student interaction and engagement can achieve positive student impact. Recognizing there are still other metrics to be determined to effectively measure long- term accomplishments, historical change must begin with building distinctive relationships created to remove barriers and encourage success.

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7 | Northern Virginia Community College GPS for Success

Keri Bowman

Institutional Profile

Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) is an open access, comprehensive community college offering associate degrees and certificates as well as continuing education and community services programs. As one of 23 colleges comprising the Virginia Community College System, NOVA strives to provide equitable access to all and to meet the educational and training needs of people with differing experiences. This is accomplished by offering a variety of curricular and co-curricular programs. In addition, NOVA has six campuses throughout the Northern Virginia region, serving four counties with diverse populations. Five campuses are comprehensive; one is specialized, with a focus on Medical Education courses.

Serving over 73,000 headcounts and almost 32,000 FTE's annually, NOVA's student profile illustrates how it has become a "minority-majority" institution. In 2018, 37% identified as white. Out of the other 63%, 16% identified as black, 24% Hispanic, 16% Asian, and 7% identified as "other". Additionally, most of NOVA's students attend part-time: 67.2% of students were part-time. 57% of students were under 21 years old, and about 26% are 22-29 years old. Finally, about 20% of the population is first-generation, which means the student is the first in their families to attend college[1].

Advising for Equity and Student Success

As a "minority-majority" institution, NOVA's focus on access and equity has always been paramount. Like many institutions that are fully committed to access and equity, NOVA is honing and collectively crafting a diversity, equity, and inclusion statement to ensure that everyone is welcomed and valued. Recognizing the diverse range of experiences that students have with higher education, NOVA has always provided academic counseling to assist students in making sound decisions regarding career, educational, and personal goals. Academic Counselors continuously advise many students to guide them to the curriculum that best suits their needs and interests. In the past, new and returning students were served by any academic counselor or faculty advisor available; no systematic assignments or purposeful case management relationships were fostered. However, in 2012,

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[1] https://www.nvcc.edu/oiess/_docs/oir/QuickFacts-2019-2020.pdf

the college began providing a first-year advising initiative that focused on comprehensive onboarding, academic advising, and orientation services for first-time-to-college students. The college's first quality enhancement plan for SACSCOC reaffirmation centered on the "GPS for Success" program that became the impetus for meaningful change at NOVA concerning advising and student success mandates. The mandates for student success and the processes laid out for GPS for Success, NOVA's 2012 Quality Enhancement plan provided equitable advising and case management to each of the GPS students (new first-time-to-college, recent high school graduates), regardless of campus attended or program of study. It also led to a significant transformational refocus on advising, relationships, and student success. In fact, the "2017-23 Strategic Plan: Pathway to the American Dream" focuses on every student succeeding, explicitly ensuring that "…all students are advised and have access to support throughout their time at NOVA…[2]"

GPS for Success purposefully paired each recent high school graduate, first-time-to-college student, with a dedicated, assigned advisor who met with the student and provided comprehensive case management services. This advisor initially met with the student through attendance at an "early advising session." The relationship continued to ensure that the student had set an appropriate academic goal, stayed registered for the correct courses to attain that goal, and designed an appropriate academic plan to stay on track with the stated goal. These first-year advisors forged relationships with students to teach them planning skills, how to register, and to provide engaging case management. Students remained with the first-year advisors to whom they were assigned for a year and then were systematically "handed off" to a faculty advisor in their declared program of study. Except for a small, specialized program, the process of assigning advisors and case management of new students upon intake was new for NOVA.

To support the more formally structured advising requirement and assignment process for faculty, NOVA identified talented faculty advisors. Not surprisingly, these faculty advisors represented many diverse backgrounds and disciplines loosely reflecting the student population. They would serve as points of contact to help with student assignments and addressing faculty concerns. They also provided support for faculty in need. These "faculty advising managers" (FAMs) forged a unique partnership between the student services and academic divisions, facilitating seamless

transitions for students. These relationships have begun to erode academic/student services barriers and make student success a common goal and seamless endeavor. The connections have generated a team-like atmosphere and enhance the student experience. The faculty-staff cohesion is evident through the collegiality and shared facilitation of training and participation in planning.

NOVA committed to making consistent college-wide processes for student orientation, for the assignment of advisors, for communication, and for case management to yield relationships and improved student engagement. To facilitate these processes, NOVA committed further resources to secure an electronic academic planning and note-taking tool. This tool was intended to enable academic planning for students and allow electronic note-taking to document advising interactions. As IPASS and technology became a more recognized approach for student supports, NOVA further solidified their commitment to providing robust advising technology in both student-facing and advisor-facing platforms.

Additional institutional commitments that began with the GPS for Success initiative were the "Start Strong" registration holds, which centered on benchmarked best practices. These ensured students completed the necessary milestones before registering for classes. Students were prevented from registering if they had not completed placement requirements, participated in early advising, and attended orientation/registration labs. The advent of these holds was a distinct departure from viewing these activities as a "barrier to enrollment" to recognizing these milestones as fundamental for a successful educational undertaking. This change in mindset marked a new era for NOVA, moving toward a culture of investment in all students' preparation and success, not just initial enrollment.

The culture of commitment to student success also yielded another, substantive change — the obligation to use formative assessment and data to make enhancements to the process and the procedures outlined in the Quality Enhancement Plan. This fundamental commitment to continuous improvement has persevered and produced many beneficial changes to both advising and student support programming at NOVA. This continuous improvement also initiated the discussions about scaling services to ensure these supports were available equitably to all students, not just new to college, recent high school graduates. The formative assessments changed procedures for the GPS for Success and the financial and personnel commitment

[2] https://www.nvcc.edu/about/mission/strategic-plan2017-2023.pdf

for the expansion of a central, college-wide advising leadership team. The team expanded to include a director, an advising trainer, a coordinator of advising technology, and an assistant director for orientation and early advising.

The new coordinator of advising technology position was incorporated to scale the availability of advising and orientation information. The use of technology for scaling began with the implementation of online orientation, called New2NOVA. Additional commitments are evident in the implementation of a better system to replace the initial system for academic planning and note-taking. Implementing and mandating the use of a technological tool is a significant commitment for NOVA which recognizes the importance of student support and communication between all student-facing employees to serve students better. This is an ongoing project; we are strategically implementing change management principles to ensure faculty and staff buy-in and maximize utility.

Assessment Methods & Design

Because this began as the institution's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for reaffirmation of accreditation, a robust assessment plan was in place from the beginning. As mentioned previously, the most critical assessment became the formative assessment and immediate flow of feedback for processes that affected student enrollment and success. These feedback loops became an invaluable source of real-time information that allowed for immediate and on-the-go improvements to processes.

Student learning outcomes were established and tracked to illustrate the efficacy of the GPS for Success programming. Outcomes were grounded in the expected metrics that the case management relationship would influence student engagement, retention, gateway course enrollment, and GPA. NOVA's Office of Institutional Research provided a robust analysis of student records to illustrate trends in retention, gateway course enrollment, and GPA, which compared GPS to non-GPS populations.

Comparisons of NOVA's scores on national surveys before and after the implementation of the QEP help illustrate the positive GPS impact. Results from nationally normed CCSSE and SENSE surveys were analyzed to seek evidence that high-quality advising at NOVA fostered engagement. Additionally, data linked explicitly to success metrics of fall-to-fall and fall-to-spring retention, course enrollment, and end of semester GPA were analyzed compared to the non-GPS population.

What is not measured directly is the advent of significant institutional transformation. This transformation is, however, implicitly illustrated through the longitudinal review of policy establishment and enactment.

Assessment Findings

The introduction of formal, structured advising services has created significant supports for NOVA students. As a result, the college has observed gains in student achievement. Additionally, the more meaningful and productive engagement between students and advisors has been illustrated. Overall gains in student success metrics have been illustrated. Mean end of semester GPA, fall-to fall, and fall-to-spring retention remain higher for GPS students (first time in college, recent high school graduates) than other first time in college students at NOVA.

Evidence of student engagement is illustrated in the student responses on the CCSSE and the SENSE surveys. Increases were found in the comparison between versions of NOVA's survey, before GPS implementation and after. Scores reflected student understanding of the "college's emphasis on the frequency of advising" increased by 6 percent, "frequency of career counseling" increased 4 percent, and "talking about career plans with an instructor or advisor" increased 11 percent between 2011 (pre-GPS) and 2015 (during GPS) surveys. A comparison of SENSE results also indicates student recognition of a change in "Early Connections" and "Clear Academic Plan and Pathway" as NOVA went from below the national average and comparative peer groups in 2009 to exceeding in 2015.[3]

Finally, NOVA's survey of graduates showed that satisfaction with faculty advising increased steadily since the implementation of the QEP. The percentage of graduates who rated faculty advising as "good" or "excellent" increased from 61 percent in 2012 to 69 percent in 2016.[3]

Ongoing formative evaluations prompted several processes and procedural changes from the initially implemented plan. The ability to address issues that improve processes in real-time facilitated the success of this initiative. Incorporating feedback,

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[3] NOVA's Quality Enhancement Plan Impact Report, 2017

Figure 7.1 GPS vs. Non-GPS Fall-to-Spring Retention
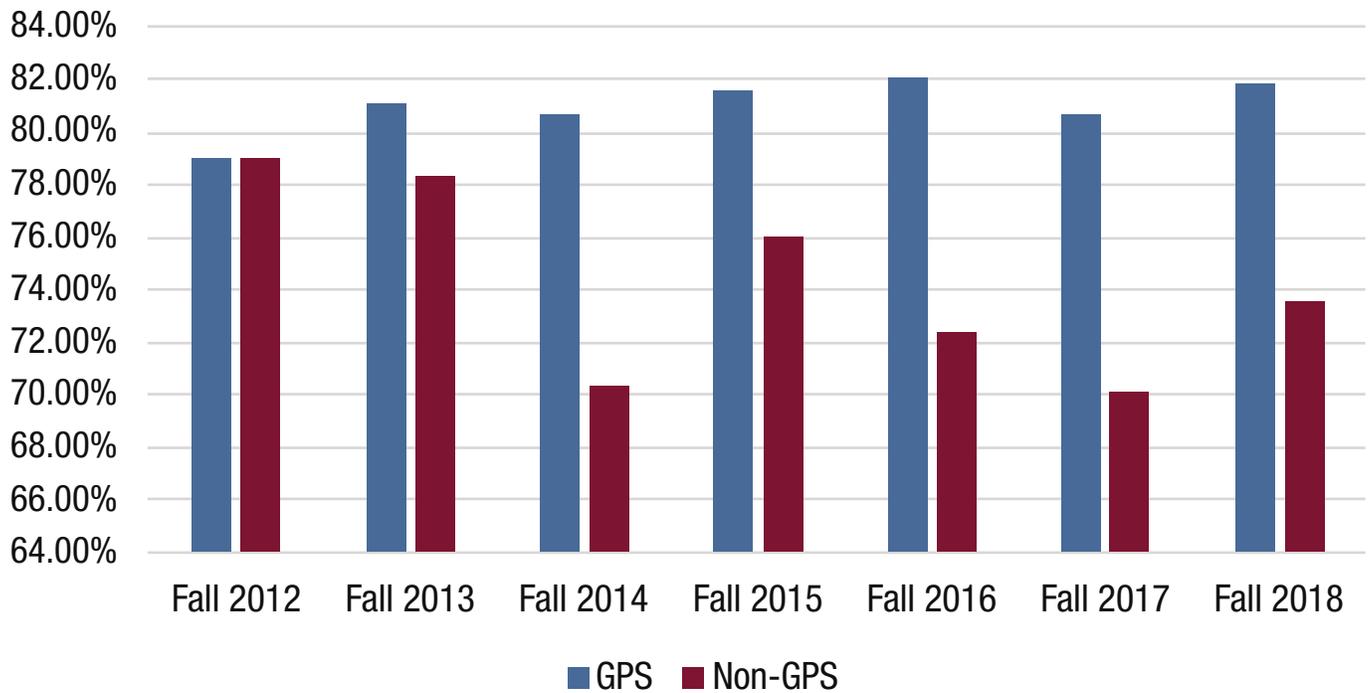
The above bar graph illustrates the gains in first time college students' retention from fall-to-spring in comparison to other new students who attended NOVA in the years of the QEP.

Figure 7.2 GPS vs. Non-GPS Fall-to-Fall Retention
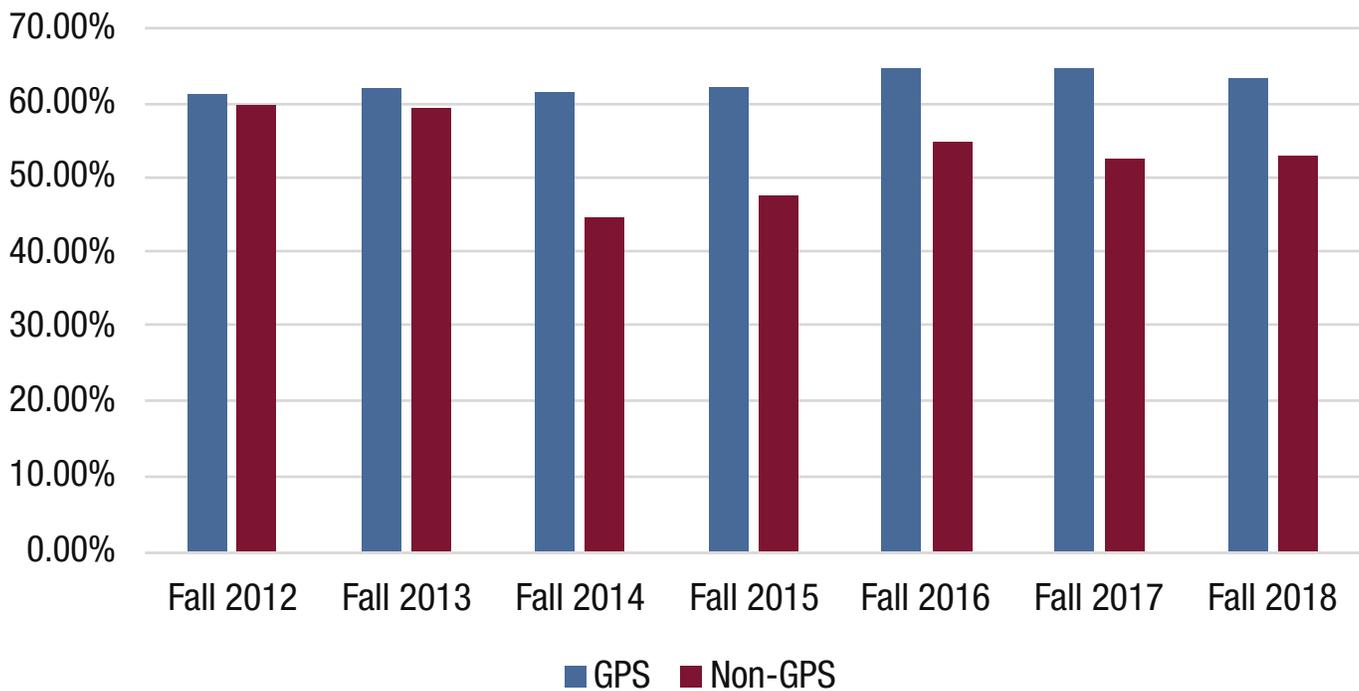
The above bar graph illustrates the gains in new first-time-to-college students' retention from fall-to-fall in comparison to other new students who attended NOVA in the years of the QEP.

examining processes against benchmarks at peer institutions, and accommodating our students' preferences and behaviors helped produce the necessary change to support students appropriately. These changes included the following:

1. implementation of more responsive IPASS technology;
2. changes in the handoff's timing address students' readiness;
3. implementation of "Start Strong" policies to require completion of key preparatory steps before initial enrollment;
4. addition of several positions to support the process;
5. establishment of a college-wide advisory council which shared members with strategic planning committees, policy planning committees, and, eventually, advising redesign committees .

Implications for Practice

The long-term, structural/cultural impact at NOVA happened largely because of the QEP's focus on the following areas:

1. dedicated resources;
2. changes in policy to support students' preparation;
3. the collaboration of faculty and professional advisors;
4. extensive communication, and
5. unwavering commitment from senior leadership.

Commitment from leadership must enhance what is already working at the institution. Take note of the strengths in staff, how students experience processes, and which areas will be most purposeful to change. Capitalize on the momentum gained by maintaining faculty and staff buy-in for whatever support programming is already successful. Constructing seamless partnerships to forge more synergy between faculty and staff to create a culture of teamwork. This teamwork will surround students with support that addresses both the academic and co-curricular concerns.

Commitment from leadership must also illustrate the ability to change formatively, to seek feedback from students and front-line employees. As institutions implement programming to address success and equity issues, a culture that embraces review and feedback will produce responsiveness and motivation to continually improve. This motivation allows an institution to direct valuable resources to address the needs of a dynamic and always changing population, our students.

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8 | University of Alabama at Birmingham Equity in Advising: A Review of the E2E Appointment Manager

Tracy Lyons and Jennifer Wycoff

Institutional Profile

Founded in 1969, The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) is a public four-year research institution. It has a total undergraduate enrollment of 13,836, and its setting is urban. UAB ranks #153 in the 2021 edition of Best Colleges and National Universities. Some 70% of the first-year students live on campus. Seventy-four percent of students are full-time. Demographically, UAB has a student population that is over 60% female, over 17% adult learners, over 40% low-income, and almost 20% first-generation college students. The racial and ethnic mix of UAB is less than 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, almost 7% Asian, almost 25% Black, almost 6% Hispanic, and over 55% White (UAB Office of Institutional Effectiveness

and Analysis, 2019). This study focuses on the applicability to the advising community on the findings from the implementation of an appointment scheduler.

E2E Advising Appointment Program

Changing demographics implores the need for shifts in student engagement with low-income, first-generation, and students of color (Lee, 2018). Three concerns demonstrated the need for a change in practice at UAB. First, data on 8,174 students from Fall 2010 through Fall 2014 first-time, full-time cohorts were collected and analyzed (Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analysis, 2019). The study found that a

considerable number of vulnerable students are not earning degrees from UAB at the same rate as their counterparts. Opportunity gaps were found among the following: first-generation (12% gap); racially minoritized (8% gap); Pell-eligible (4.1% gap), and academically underprepared (27.9% gap) (Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analysis, 2019).

It is also helpful to understand the previous advising landscape. Campus leaders received mixed reviews of advising ranging from extremely helpful to extremely ineffective (S. Austin, 2014). Research indicates that marginalized students are often reluctant to schedule an appointment and even stress out about the advising meeting (Glaessgen et al., 2018). Although, research by Tippetts (et al., 2020) finds that meeting with an advisor just once a semester significantly impacts persistence. College know-how is critical for at-risk students (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2003). "We find that disadvantaged students with limited time and finances to devote to education are often confused about their choices. They do not know how to get the information they need, and small amounts of confusion can evolve into large problems of wasted time and poor decisions" (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2003, p. 124). Finally, research by Sapul et al., 2020) confirms that automated scheduling better conforms to student availability. Previously, UAB advisors spent so much time with scheduling, they had limited ability for proactive outreach and targeted campaigns.

To address these concerns, in Fall 2018, UAB launched the e2e appointment platform designed to provide real-time, quick access for scheduling advising sessions. Students can now access advisor schedules anywhere, anytime, on any device, and select the topics most important for their session. This equalizer grants students more quality time with their advisor since they get to focus the conversation on their needs. The goal was for the platform to allow for improved student-advisor relationships by making scheduling tasks more manageable for the advisor to focus on proactive advising (Sapul et al., 2020).

The aim of the E2E platform was for the management of the advising schedule and session to be put into students' hands. Secondly, the goal was to increase efficiency and productivity for advisors. E2E was also incorporated to address student frustrations related to advisor access and scheduling. The platform allows students to state the purpose of the visit and the things they want to discuss which may make a normally awkward starting conversation much more comfortable for the student and the advisor (Tippetts et al., 2020) E2E is designed to increase engagement between students and their academic advisors as well as be a lift in retention and graduation rates.

The administrative home for E2E resides with the Office of Undergraduate Student Success and Retention in the Division of Enrollment Management. A lead contact from each academic school/college is a trained administrator on the system. All primary and secondary faculty and professional staff advisors have access to use the platform. E2E Platform specifics include the following:

- appointment scheduling - advisors publish their appointment times directly in Outlook;

- students can book appointments from anywhere, anytime, on any device;

- after making the appointment, students receive a confirmation email and a reminder text;

- the E2E platform helps advisors manage their workday more efficiently as they do not need to make appointments themselves, as done previously;

- helps students prepare for the session and engages them in their success;

- helps advisors prepare for the session;

- creates a student-centered process for advising;

- ensures timely communication between students and advisors;

- allows advisors to conduct targeted appointment campaigns;

- empowers student action through text nudges.

Assessment Methods & Design

For the first time, UAB can collect comprehensive feedback on advising. This is important given the fact that students change majors roughly three times at UAB (Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analysis. 2019).

Using a mixed-methods approach, assessment objectives were as follows:

- to assess student's attitude toward online appointment scheduling;

- to explore student's attitude toward support received from advisors;

- to determine the percentage of students satisfied with overall UAB advising;
- to determine the percentage of students satisfied with E2E platform.

Following their appointment, students receive the following survey research questions. Some 49,968 students made appointments and 39,645 advising sessions were held since Fall 2018. There were 1,573 no-shows and 8,750 cancellations. Of these advising sessions, 9,314 students (23.4%) completed the survey questions:

1. I am very satisfied with my experience using and navigating the MyAppointment tool.
2. I am very satisfied with the support received from my advisor.
3. I am very satisfied with the helpfulness of my recent academic advising session.
4. Overall, I am very satisfied with advising at UAB.
5. Overall, I am very satisfied with the new MyAppointment scheduling tool.

Assessment Findings

The mixed-methods approach allowed us to join qualitative and quantitative data to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the students' experiences with the appointment scheduler (Creswell, 2014). Relying on two main data sources: 1) a survey; and 2) open-ended questions, results were as follows:

Quantitative Findings: 9,134 Responses

1. I am very satisfied with my experience using and navigating the MyAppointment tool.

   94.4% strongly agree or somewhat agree

2. I am very satisfied with the support received from my advisor.

   97.8% strongly agree or somewhat agree

3. I am very satisfied with the helpfulness of my recent academic advising session.

   97.6% strongly agree or somewhat agree

4. Overall, I am very satisfied with advising at UAB.

   96.4% strongly agree or somewhat agree

5. Overall, I am very satisfied with the new MyAppointment scheduling tool.

   92.7% strongly agree or somewhat agree

Qualitative Findings: 159 Responses

UAB received comments to the statement, *"Help us improve your next advising appointment by providing feedback about your experience."* Three themes emerged:

THEME 1: Advising Session Experience

1. My advisor was very helpful beyond just classes and showed me some new avenues major and career-wise. Extremely beneficial appointment.
2. Ms. XX was SO helpful and just made this advising meeting go so smoothly. Give her a raise lol.
3. XX is always perfect! She hears my problems and then gives me several options that can help me.
4. Two thumbs up to XX, who was wonderful, very clear and direct about what I needed to do to complete my goals and graduate on time. Thank you!
5. XX is a magician. She took the confused and miserable schedule I had and turned it into everything I needed and more!
6. I was nervous because I went to a community college where my advisor was also my teacher. But XX was very helpful, so I'm really glad to have him as an advisor!

THEME 2: Ideas for Improvement

1. Add via phone or zoom on the account page.
2. Send my class schedule after the session.
3. IT needs to update the information on the advisor's profile.
4. I suspect some students and professors would appreciate a similar scheduling tool for office hours.
5. I feel as though we should be able to talk to them as long as we need. Sometimes 30 min isn't enough to ask the questions you need. Especially for registration.

THEME 3: Thoughts on e2e Platform

1. Advising Appointments using the new E2E scheduling tool is so easy and reliable. I enjoyed my appointment!

2. No cons here! I really like the new check-in system!

3. Signing up for advising times via E2E helped me keep track of when my appointment was and the location. A reminder email was sent out, which was also helpful.

4. My experience was great. Easy to set up an appointment.

5. I'm overall satisfied. The texting reminders help!

Implications for Practice

From the data and observations, the following findings emerged: Initiatives aimed at engagement must include digital services because of the pervasive nature of technology in society. UAB students overwhelmingly like the platform and love getting the text reminders. This technology has minimized advisor and student frustration with scheduling. Passive support models (waiting for students to seek help) and crunch-time advising are not as effective as proactive outreach. By using E2E, advisors have freed up time to reach out to marginalized students and engage in early intervention activities. Office administrative staff and advisor productivity were previously consumed with hours spent scheduling, rescheduling, and modifying appointments via phone and email. The E2E platform automates these administrative functions so advisors spend more time engaging with students.

Research has shown that advisors can impact how students establish a sense of belonging (Lee, 2018). Similarly, by looking at advising scheduling through the lens of self-authorship, students can become better advocates for them-selves. The control the platform gives students in deciding the direction of the conversation is noteworthy when considering a move from scripted, one-sided conversations to co-constructed conversations.

The current initiative was designed to shed light on how academic advisors contribute to the success of students, particularly marginalized students.   Qualitative results do not note any concerns from these populations with their advising experience. However, to ensure the effectiveness of academic advising efforts and to increase vulnerable student use of such services, a deeper dive is needed to better understand how these students experience academic advising.

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9 | The University of Cincinnati Lindner College of Business Undergraduate Advising

Sarah Jernigan

Institutional Profile

The University of Cincinnati (UC) in Cincinnati, Ohio is a public four-year institution that was founded in 1819 and is now recognized as one of the United States' top 20 public research institutions (The World University Rankings, 2020). For the 2020-2021 academic year, UC hit a record of 46,798 total students enrolled, with enrollment numbers steadily climbing over the past eight years. UC's students represent all 50 states and 114 countries outside of the United States. Of currently enrolled students, 28,820 are full-time undergraduate students with 24% being on-campus residents.

A UC sophomore-level student is identified by having successfully completed 30 credit hours, but no more than 60 credit hours. Overall, at UC, 88% of students return for their sophomore year. The University of Cincinnati defines a first-generation student as someone whose parent(s) did not earn a bachelor's degree within six years of graduating high school. The UC first-generation student population constitutes 31% of the student body. In addition, 20% of the UC student population are Pell grant recipients.

The Carl H. Lindner College of Business at the University of Cincinnati was established in 1906 and was renamed the Carl H. Lindner College of Business (LCB) in 2011. The purpose of the Lindner College of Business is to empower business problem-solvers to tackle the world's challenges. This purpose is achieved through a distinctive first-year experience (FYE), cooperative education, in-house study abroad office, and opportunities afforded by being an urban campus. Since its founding, the Lindner undergraduate student population has grown to 4,394 students as of fall 2020. Furthermore, the first-year retention

rate has increased to 93.5%. This impressive retention rate can be attributed to a myriad of factors; however namely, certainly the conscious efforts contributed by academic advisors have been influential. Table 9.1 depicts the current UC & LCB undergraduate student enrollment in relation to gender, race/ethnicity, and age.

Lindner College of Business Undergraduate Advising Office

The Lindner Undergraduate Advising Office serves as an essential proponent of the LCB first-year experience. The office is comprised of four academic advisors, two senior academic advisors, one assistant director, two associate directors, two directors, and one executive director. The average caseload for each advisor is 500 students. Despite heavy caseloads, the Lindner Undergraduate Advising Office continually scores near the top among all UC colleges on the yearly student satisfaction survey. Additionally, the advising office was the recipient of the University of Cincinnati 2020 Advising Unit of the Year Award.

The Lindner College of Business houses an immersive (FYE) that spans the entirety of students' first academic year. One component of the FYE includes a year-long course with students' academic advisors. The goals of the course are to expose students to Lindner business majors and minors, comprehend curriculum requirements for their degree program, prepare them for sophomore year, and facilitate discussions among students surrounding diversity & inclusion. Four weeks of the course in the spring semester are dedicated to efforts surrounding equity. During class sessions, students hear from guest speakers regarding diversity and inclusion on campus, alumni panels related to diversity in the business world, and participate in engaging activities that require introspection and consideration of equity. Additionally, advisors lead a semester-long service-learning project that encompasses students collaborating with local non-profit businesses to promote servant leadership and corporate social responsibility.

The introductory course led by academic advisors sets the precedent that LCB greatly values equity and diversity & inclusion efforts. The college is currently evaluating every business course in order to incorporate material related to equity into each class. By taking a deep dive into diversity and inclusion initiatives during their FYE, students are encouraged to become

Table 9.1 *UC & LCB Undergraduate Student Demographics*

Demographic	UC	LCB
Gender		
Female	14,113	1,447
Male	14,652	2,947
Unknown	55	0
Ethnocultural Diversity		
African American	2,314	154
American Indian/Alaska Native	65	1
Asian	1,234	184
Hispanic	1,129	130
International	2,180	204
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	25	0
Two or more races	1,037	137
Unknown	720	42
White	20,116	3,542
Age		
Over age 25	3,170	113

more civic-minded, empathetic, and cognizant, albeit emphasis on equity does not conclude in the classroom. The Lindner Undergraduate Programs Office has a close partnership with the Lindner Office of Inclusive Excellence, which promotes inclusive leaders, cultural competency, and global citizens.

The Lindner Office of Inclusive Excellence supports three student organizations, which have been developed to support and grow underrepresented minorities within the LCB student body. The first, Business Fellows, supports African American, Hispanic, Latino, and Native American students through a first-year study abroad experience, structured peer mentoring, and support in transitioning from high school to college. The program is structured to empower historically underrepresented students to excel within LCB and beyond. One function of the group is to take students on a study abroad, which may be their first international experience. Two members of the academic advising office accompany students on this trip, which promotes exploration of cross-cultural thinking and empowerment to converse on an international platform.

The second group, Lindner Women in Business, supports emerging female leaders in amplifying their voices, building confidence, empowerment, and crafting a personal brand. Initiatives center around engagements with successful female executives and alumnae coupled with scholarship opportunities and leadership training. Academic advisors support this organization by promoting the group's events in their courses and allowing a member of Lindner Women in Business to spend a few minutes of class time advertising opportunities associated with the organization. It is important to note that the group is not exclusive to only women. Men and non-identifying members are encouraged to attend organizational events as allies.

The third group, Pride at Lindner, supports LGBTQ+ identifying students through an inclusive and empowering environment. Involvement in this group encompasses weekly gatherings for LGBTQ+ students and allies. Efforts are geared toward building connections with LGBTQ+ identifying business leaders in order to encourage students to be their authentic selves both on campus and after graduation. Several members of the advising office attend regular meetings associated with this group and have markers in their office to indicate that they are a Safe Zone ally. Although numerous efforts have been made to promote diversity and inclusion among LCB students, faculty, and staff, there is still more work to be done.

Assessment Methods & Design

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six members of the Lindner Advising Office (two academic advisors, two senior academic advisors, one assistant director, and the executive director). Interviews are "guided question-answer conversations" (Tracy, 2013, p. 131) and provide an opportunity for mutual discovery, understanding, and reflection. Interview questions sought to discern how members of the Lindner Advising Office believes the office supports university equity and inclusion efforts. Specifically, interviewees were asked to consider how we support underrepresented students during their transition from high school to college; how FYE efforts have assisted in maintaining such a high retention rate; and if the Lindner College of Business is diverse.

All interviews were recorded with the interviewees' permission transcribed and coded. While coding, the researcher searched for themes among the data via thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a foundational method within qualitative research design and is a method for identifying and analyzing patterns (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Through a thematic analysis approach, themes are developed. A theme is identified as "something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82, emphasis in original). By grouping data into themes, the researcher was able to discern the most pertinent information related to the assessment objectives. To supplement interviews, university documents and the researcher's personal knowledge/observations were also used to explore the assessment objectives.

Assessment Findings

Transition from High School to College

As a young adult, the transition from high school to college can be intense, overwhelming, and confusing. Given this vital, formative period for students, it is essential for universities to support not only their transition to college but their entire collegiate experience. The Lindner Undergraduate Advising Office, and larger

Lindner community, is dedicated to student success – committed to building students' confidence, problem-solving capabilities, and social development to enable them to thrive in college and long after. The college has continuously prioritized the FYE, given shared beliefs that the stronger their start, the greater their opportunities.

The FYE begins with an orientation, which at UC, is a partnership between the central orientation office and college-specific efforts. Instituting the year-long course taught by an academic advisor allows for a steady progression of information to be presented and processed, rather than squeezing massive amounts of content into a short orientation period. As one interviewee asserted, we must ask, "what is it that students need to know to start the semester with a good foundation? Because you can't cover everything at orientation. That's just impossible." Keeping orientation simplified with specific goals abates the potential for information overload.

Additionally, LCB has concentrated efforts toward parents and guardians during orientation to ensure family members and students receive the same message. One academic advisor stated, "I think the fact that we reach out to parents in orientation and have that same communication that we are here for them, also reinforces that comfortability piece that they can connect with us early." Managing the narrative provided to students' family members creates a cohesive message and mitigates confusion. In sum, orientation has the capability to set the direction for a positive and impactful FYE before the academic year commences.

High Retention Rate

As previously mentioned, the Lindner College of Business has a 93.5% retention rate, much of which advisors attribute to an advantageous first-year experience. As one advisor affirmed, "the first-year experience is huge. It really buys people into what Lindner has to offer and it also treats them like business students right from the beginning." Throughout their first year, students have eclectic experiences that allow them to explore the various majors and minors Lindner offers. Unlike some colleges, Lindner first-year students hit the ground running, with immersive experiences that allow them to start working with real companies on "huge large projects that really give them a lot of great exposure to the business world and what it takes to be on a team like it would for a corporation." Work for real companies is conducted among their first-year learning communities, which allows them to take multiple courses together and "definitely builds a sense of

community and comradery". One advisor remarked that they believe the only reason a student leaves the college after the first year is "truly because business was not a right fit for them." However, what occurs after the first year? How is this momentum maintained?

One advisor postulated that after the first year, students "want to see what's next." Because the FYE is strong, advisors indicated that other experiences, particularly future course work, may pale in comparison. This gap is disconcerting for transfer/transition students, as they do not have the opportunity to encounter the Lindner FYE. This inconsistency may hint at one area of improvement for the college.

Issues of Equity & Inclusion

When asked "is the Lindner College of Business diverse?" all interviewees responded with a resounding "no", albeit, all were also clear to mention that this is ubiquitous in the business industry, which is inundated by white males. With Lindner's demographics reflecting industry, it is clear that change is "not just a business or Lindner cultural change; it's a societal cultural change." Another advisor succinctly stated, "it's hard to recruit students where they don't see themselves represented." The aforementioned student groups, Business Fellows, Women in Business, and Pride at Lindner work to ameliorate feelings of isolation that underrepresented business students may experience. These groups are essential for student success as it "really goes back to supporting the students that are already here. Because if you are supporting students of color… if they are having a positive experience and they feel supported and they feel like there are people in the college that really care about their development and are there for them, they're going to then share that experience with other people. They're going to tell kids from their high school. They're going to tell their cousins. They're going to tell other people that Lindner cares about them. It's not about the headcount. It's about making the heads count" (personal communication).

Through their involvement with Business Fellows, one advisor exclaimed that it is a place that allows students to connect and illustrates that "you are not alone. These are your people. You have a sense of community here." Women in Business showcases "look who's done this before you." Furthermore, courses such as 'women in sales' highlights that there are major differences for women going to work in business. Advisors assert that these types of courses should be expanded to incorporate other majors and student demographics.

Lastly, Pride at Lindner recently underwent a rebranding and is overall nascent. As the group works to establish its brand, the sheer fact that the group has been created illuminates visibility, which as an interviewee stated, "we know that visibility is what literally saves lives, when students see themselves reflected in powerful positions." The assessment findings point toward inequities of opportunity for underrepresented business students as they enter the industry. However, there are meaningful initiatives that both the advising office and larger institutions can undertake in order to promote true equity.

Implications for Practice

Lack of diversity in business education and industry is not an anomaly; disparities exist in many other professions. However, other majors, such as engineering, promote their field early to prospective underrepresented students. Early pipeline attempts are a strategic priority for Lindner, with the enrollment team partnering with the engineering college to combine efforts within local high schools. This partnership holds promise as STEM exists within both fields, and through proper communication, high schoolers may better envision themselves in a business career.

Once students are enrolled, it is important for them to experience a world outside of their direct neighborhood. One interviewee asserted, "so many of our students are local and haven't been outside this world and so they need a worldview beyond Cincinnati." Through careful collaboration with the Lindner International Programs Office, the advising office promotes study abroad opportunities and determines how such experiences will best correlate with the student's academic plan. While Lindner is positioned opportunely as an urban business school, students should also have spaces to acknowledge the vast business world outside of Cincinnati.

Lindner does a superb job of collecting data via surveys from first-year students to determine what was most effective during their FYE. However, additional formal check-ins are sparse throughout the rest of their academic careers. Particularly, there are not any current means to inquire why students remained at Lindner through graduation. This data would be especially insightful to discern why students of color and women were retained. Presently, students are required to complete graduation contracts with their academic advisor the semester before they graduate to ensure they have fulfilled all graduation requirements. This encounter would be an opportune time to either poll students in person, or send a brief follow-up survey after the meeting to determine aspects they enjoyed about their Lindner experience and what needs to be improved. An exit interview with each graduating student would provide invaluable information to improve the college experience for future students.

A shift is slowly occurring at Lindner. As one advisor stated regarding diversity and inclusion efforts, "it's now more of a central goal with the new vision; the Lindner leadership is really taking a conscious effort to try and change something that is so systematically built." As the Lindner Office of Inclusive Excellence is only comprised of two people, the college has created a permanent Inclusive Excellence Council. The council consists of staff, faculty, and student members; their efforts are geared toward a host of issues: recruiting and retaining students, faculty, and staff with diverse backgrounds; promoting a college culture that values diversity, equity, and inclusion; and developing workshops for faculty and staff.

Workshops can provide a valuable means to engage and foster insightful conversations to better support students. However, as many workshops are currently optional, numerous interviewees noted that this allows the people who could benefit most from the workshops to opt-out. Specifically, many staff have degrees centered around student development and therefore are eager to attend, whereas faculty who have degrees within their specific academic field, may view the workshops as superfluous. Mandating certain workshops and training for all faculty and staff could encourage more mindful conversations and encounters with students.

Lindner leadership recognizes a vital opportunity to tightly align their innovative FYE with a strategic emphasis on equity. In this formative period that is undergraduate education, universities are situated in a unique and powerful position for tangible positive impact on students' capabilities; yet, the potential goes well beyond. Empowering mindful problem solvers, Lindner strives for inclusive business learning that serves as an impetus for students' careers. Although the fight for equity is perpetually upstream, higher education may serve as the catalyst that affects more inclusive and represented industries.

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10 | The University of Pittsburgh "Forge Your Own Path" Strategy

April E. Belback and Julia Spears

Institutional Profile

The University of Pittsburgh (Pitt) was founded in 1787 and is one of the oldest institutions of higher education in the United States. As a state-related public research university, Pitt's Pittsburgh campus offers a multitude of degree-granting and other programs housed in 16 undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools. The University system includes the Pittsburgh campus and four regional campuses at Johnstown, Greensburg, Bradford, and Titusville, Pennsylvania. For the Fall 2019 term, the total undergraduate full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) for all five campuses was 23,900.

Pitt defines a first-generation college student as one who is the first person in their immediate family to attend college. Pitt defines undergraduate sophomore-level by the student having earned between 23.5 and 53 credits. See Figures 10.1 through 10.8 for more information about these and additional undergraduate student demographics for Fall 2019, utilizing

headcount (HC) data (n=24,553) (Common Data Set, 2019-2020; University Fact Book, n.d.).

The "Forge Your Own Path" Advising and Mentoring Initiative

The "Forge Your Own Path" (FYOP) strategy at the University of Pittsburgh is led by the Undergraduate Studies, Academic Innovation (AI) Team in The Office of the Provost. The aim is to prepare and empower students for lives of impact through educational experiences tailored to the specific goals and needs of each student (About, n.d.). Vital to the vision of this strategy is the integration of the rich expertise and network of the Pitt community with new and emerging technologies to provide customized, meaningful collaborations and experiences. This vision rests on the integration of four components: people, tools,

information, and infrastructure (About, n.d.). People are at the core of this approach with the realization that advisors and mentors enrich student lives so they may discover and forge a path that uniquely suits their individual needs and aspirations.

Advisors and mentors are among the most salient relationships students will form in their college years (Fox & Martin, 2017). Because students build trusting relationships with their advisors, the FYOP strategy focuses on the Provost's Priorities (2020) of personalizing education and diversity and inclusion, which also align with the university-wide strategic "Plan for Pitt," (2020) goals of advancing educational excellence and promoting diversity and inclusion.

To advance these priorities and goals, a Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring was hired in April 2019 within AI to work collaboratively with professional and faculty advisors and mentors university-wide to implement and improve advising, mentoring, and student success practices. Pitt employs a decentralized, satellite model of organizational advising structure, where "each school, college, or division within the institution has established its own approach to advising" (Habley, 1997, p.39). Thus, Pitt recognized a need for institutional change in order to provide more standardization and collaboration to eliminate gaps in student success.

A National Gallup-Purdue Index study found that "if graduates strongly agreed that they 1) had a professor who cared about them as a person, 2) had at least one professor who made them excited about learning, and 3) had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams, the graduates' odds of being engaged at work more than doubled" (Gallup, 2016). In 2016, Pitt commissioned Gallup, Inc. to survey recent Pitt alumni about their experiences as undergraduates and in the workplace. The survey found that one in ten Pitt graduates strongly agree that they had each of these experiences; while these findings are on par with other large public universities who report at 14%, Pitt's FYOP strategy was borne from the idea that we could do better (Gallup, 2016).

Thus, the AI Team works toward providing consistent and standard information for all units across the University and regional campuses. We strive to provide a more equitable, accessible, and holistic advising experience for all Pitt students by ensuring they are supported with standard information and emphasizing an ethic of care through the power of advising and mentoring relationships. We affirm the belief that "institutions who champion advising reforms help open the door

to higher education for more students at a relatively low annual investment. Additionally, advising reforms that reinforce cross-functional teaming and strengthen data-informed decision making can have positive spillover effects on other areas of student success" (Boston Consulting Group, 2019). There are many ways in which this strategy is operationalized (Appendix B: "Institutional Supports for Advising and Mentoring Initiatives & Timeline"), all of which include championing greater collaborative efforts University-wide towards student success in the four components of people, tools, information, and infrastructure (Tyton Partners, 2020).

First, the convening of advisors and mentors university-wide has provided a space for networking. In 2018, the Mentoring and Advising Summit was launched to share ideas about ways to help students succeed. With a focus on inclusive excellence for the event, the advising and mentoring community at Pitt has been challenged to think more deeply about growing in "capacity to bring together different ideas, critical perspectives, challenges, and lived experiences" (2020 Mentoring and Advising Summit). More recently, the University Undergraduate Advising Committee (UUAC) was launched with the aim of enhancing advising and mentoring at Pitt by sharing ideas, best practices, and information with representatives university-wide. As needs from UUAC emerge, the AI Team offers professional development through the Mentoring and Advising Workshop Series (2020), one of several opportunities advisors and mentors must convene and learn about relevant issues.

The AI Team made a strategic communications plan to ensure advisors and mentors are provided with updated and timely information. This includes curating a list-serv for announcements and sending newsletters/an annual report. An "Advisor Toolbox" was launched in 2020 to provide "resources and referral information for undergraduate advisors and students." This was part of a website redesign to better reflect the compilation of the team's work.

During 2019-20, an intentional effort was made to foster new connections with Pitt's regional campuses, all of which have higher percentages of first-generation and limited-income undergraduate students than the Pittsburgh campus (see Figure 10.2). A Networked Improvement Community (NIC) was established to strengthen advising practices across undergraduate units at the University (2020). The NIC framework offers support with guided activities meant to identify a shared problem of practice and work toward change cycles addressing

Figure 10.1 University of Pittsburgh undergraduate student housing status by campus (Fall 2019)

- ■ % first-time first-year freshman who live in college-owned, -operated, or -affiliated housing
- ■ % first-time first-year freshman who live off campus or commute
- ■ % undergraduates who live in college-owned, -operated, or -affiliated housing
- ■ % undergraduates who live off campus or commute

	PITTSBURGH (N=19,200)	JOHNSTOWN (N=2,462)	GREENSBURG (N=1,439)	BRADFORD (N=1,317)	TITUSVILLE (N=135)
% first-time first-year freshman in college housing	96%	74%	70%	91%	38%
% first-time first-year freshman off campus	4%	27%	30%	9%	62%
% undergraduates in college housing	42%	60%	46%	78%	39%
% undergraduates off campus	58%	40%	54%	22%	61%

Figure 10.2 University of Pittsburgh undergraduate student demographics by campus (Fall 2019)

- ■ % students age 25 and older
- ■ % students male
- ■ % students female
- ■ % students first-generation
- ■ % student Pell-recipient

	PITTSBURGH (N=19,200)	JOHNSTOWN (N=2,462)	GREENSBURG (N=1,439)	BRADFORD (N=1,317)	TITUSVILLE (N=135)
% students age 25 and older	4.3	3.6	6.4	6	30.3
% students male	46.5	56	44.4	43.1	24.4
% students female	53.5	44	55.6	56.9	75.6
% students first-generation	15	36.6	38.2	44.3	56
% student Pell-recipient	15.4	30.7	36.7	46.8	54.8

Figure 10.3 University of Pittsburgh undergraduate sophomore student demographic by campus (Fall 2019)

Legend: ■ % All sophomores ■ % Female sophomores ■ % Male sophomores

Campus	% All sophomores	% Female sophomores	% Male sophomores
PITTSBURGH (*N*=19,200)	21.4	11.7	9.7
JOHNSTOWN (*N*=2,462)	24.2	11.2	13
GREENSBURG (*N*=1,439)	21.9	12.6	9.3
BRADFORD (*N*=1,317)	21.4	11.8	9.6
TITUSVILLE (*N*=135)	47.4	34.1	13.3
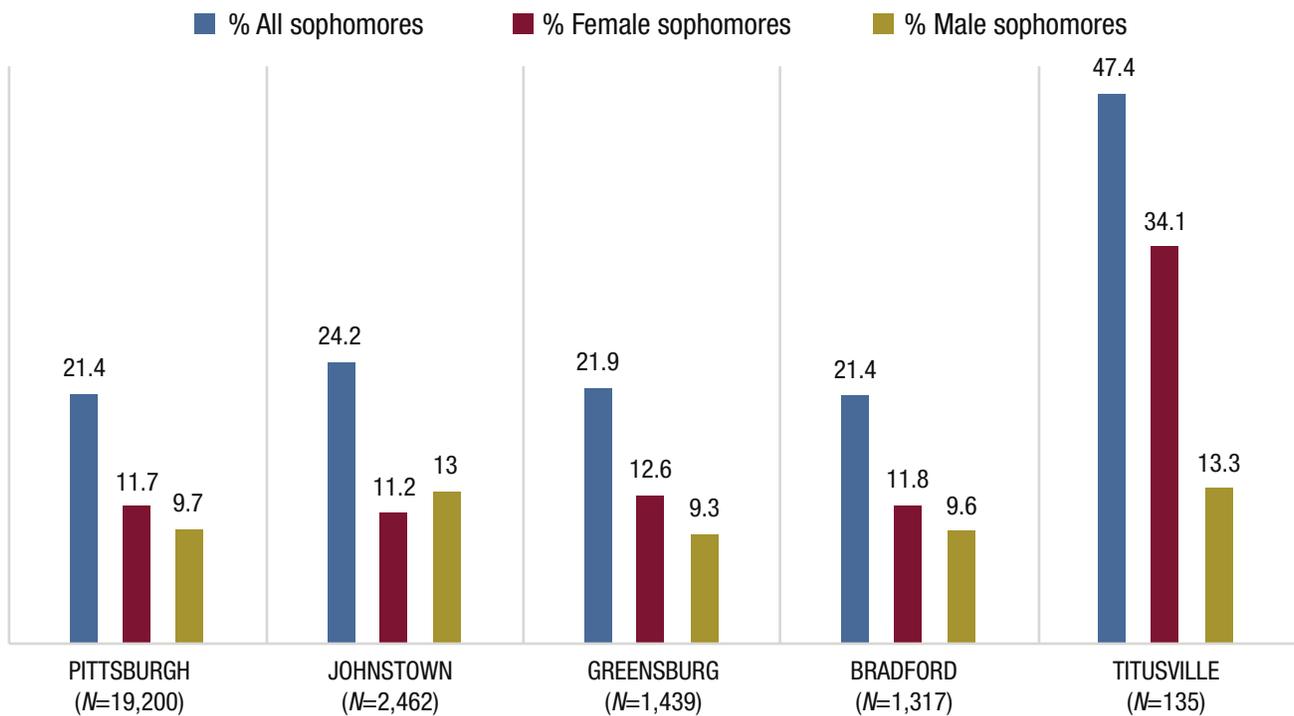
individual solutions (McKay, 2017). To work toward an institutional goal of more coordinated student transitions, the AI Team partnered with the Data Analytics Team to provide access to and training for data dashboards to all NIC teams. The NIC was also a catalyst, which helped to encourage more regional campus participation in the Summit and monthly Workshop Series events.

Assessment Methods & Design

Since the development of the FYOP strategy, The University of Pittsburgh has employed several methods to enhance transparency in the assessment of advising and mentoring practices university-wide. Assessment methods are based on NACADA's (2017) foundational elements in their core competency model for effective advisor training programs and practice, the outcomes of which are conceptual, informational, and relational.

First, the Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring conducted an Academic Advising Landscape Analysis in Spring 2019, with the goal of understanding current advising practices

at the University of Pittsburgh. A data collection tool was created using Excel. First, a content analysis was conducted via the website and advising material reviews. Then, a set of questions were developed for individual meetings with undergraduate advising units university-wide. From a review of the information, important themes emerged, and key recommendations were offered which helped to inform actionable steps for the AI Team.

One action item from the landscape analysis was to develop more standard assessment practices for advising to aid in providing crucial feedback to advisors and advising leadership. Thus, in Spring 2020, The Undergraduate Advising Training Needs Assessment Survey was sent to the University community to better understand faculty and staff training needs for advising. A total of 223 participants completed the survey in its entirety, representing 19 different colleges, schools, and three regional campuses. Topics were grouped into these three areas and participants were asked to rate each for levels of importance, responsibility, and competency.

Assessment Findings

The findings of the assessment methods of the FYOP strategy have helped to inform actionable steps for the AI Team. First, a report from Academic Advising Landscape Analysis, conducted in Spring 2019, was presented to academic units and was made available on the new website. For each college/school/advising center, the following data were collected:

- Headcount data

- Number of advising personnel

- Student success, resource, and referral information

- Advising assessment

- Connections between advising and career

- Advisor/student ratio

- Advising model description

- Description of advising training

- Academic exploration

- Advising at Orientation practices

After a review of the information from the website content analysis, advising material review, and individual interview meetings, important themes emerged:

- each unit has some training in place, but the majority do not have the capacity to employ regular opportunities;

- there was a desire for a more holistic and proactive approach to career and academic exploration;

- student resource and referral information is managed locally and each college/school/center approaches in from a different vantage point;

- transition points (from one academic or support unit to another) can be confusing for advisors and students;

- there are many different roles university-wide in the space of advising, mentoring, coaching and counseling;

- each school/college/advising center approaches advising at Orientation differently;

- the assessment of advising was managed locally.

Then, in Spring 2020, the Undergraduate Advising Training Needs Assessment Survey was launched and 233 faculty and staff mentors and advisors from departments across the University and three regional campuses participated. The survey was based on NACADA's (2017) core competency model's foundational elements for effective advisor training programs and practice and fall under three major areas: concepts advisors should understand, information advisors should know, and skills advisors should demonstrate. Topics were grouped into these three areas and participants were asked to rate each for levels of importance, responsibility, and competency. For every topic, the levels of importance and responsibility were scored higher (respondents indicated these topics are important and part of their responsibility) than the level of competency (respondents indicated they did not feel as competent about these topics), thus, illustrating the need for an advising training program for undergraduate academic advisors and mentors at Pitt. One respondent indicated, "I'm thrilled to see you're using the NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies. NACADA is a wonderful, invaluable resource for academic advisors and they have done a lot of great work on the history, theory, and practice of advising."

Respondents also shared considerations for training at the University-level. The following themes emerged:

- collaboration across the University for training opportunities is important to advisors;

- connecting advisors to campus resources and information is vital to their success;

- Pitt-specific advising and mentoring technology is meaningful to advising training;

- ensuring a balance between university-wide consistent information and departmental referrals should be key to any training opportunities.

Both university-wide assessment methods have informed the FYOP strategic priorities for the advising and mentoring practices at Pitt.

Implications for Practice

In collaboration with the Center for Teaching and Learning, the data from the Undergraduate Advising Training Needs Assessment Survey helped to launch a project that aims to create an online training platform for advisors and mentors, called the *"University of*

Pittsburgh Advising Certification and Training Program (Pitt ACT)" set to be released in March 2021. The following considerations for the project and implications for advising practice at Pitt have only strengthened in the year since the landscape analysis was conducted:

- providing advisors and mentors with standard, consistent, and timely information, including how and when to refer students to campus resources;

- maintaining an online "Advisor Toolbox" resource to ensure equitable access for all Pitt students, advisors and mentors;

- offering additional training programs and opportunities for the campus community to learn, collaborate and network;

- providing resources for advisors and students to better understand their academic choices is vital because academic exploration work is difficult and important to retaining vulnerable populations of students. Therefore, the AI Team is working on university-wide tools for major exploration such as websites and a Catalog of Engagement Opportunities.

Through assessments and increased conversations with advisors and mentors university-wide, it has become clear that standardization is a critical component to ensuring effective institutional processes that enhance student success. The FYOP strategy continues to work toward short- and long-term improvements in support for advisors and mentors through our focused priority of collaboration.

Figures 10.4-10.8 University of Pittsburgh undergraduate racial/ethnic makeup by campus (Fall 2019)

■ % International

■ % Black or AA

■ % American Indian or Alaskan Native

■ % Asian

■ % Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

■ % Hispanic or Latino

■ % White

■ % Two or more races

■ % Race unknown

Figure 10.4 Pittsburgh (*n*=19,200)

0.02
4.94
11.19
0.05
5.25
4.81
1.02
4.48
68.24
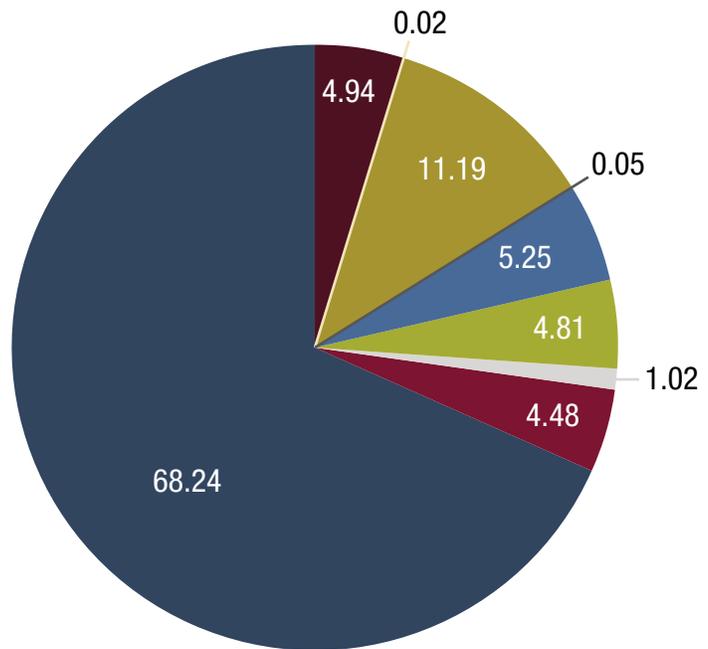
Figure 10.5 Johnstown (*n*=2,462)

0
5.32
2.64
0.04
4.18
1.5
2.8
2.6
80.91
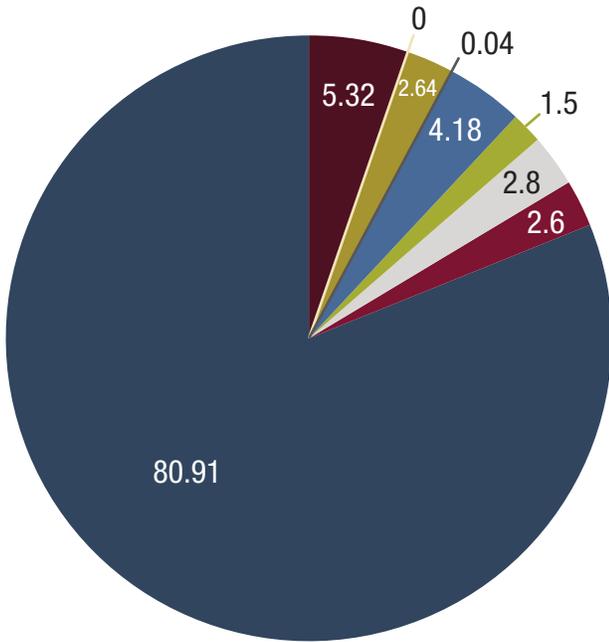
Figure 10.6 Greensburg (*n*=1,439)

0
6.53
3.54
0
5.91
0.42
2.57
3.75
77.28
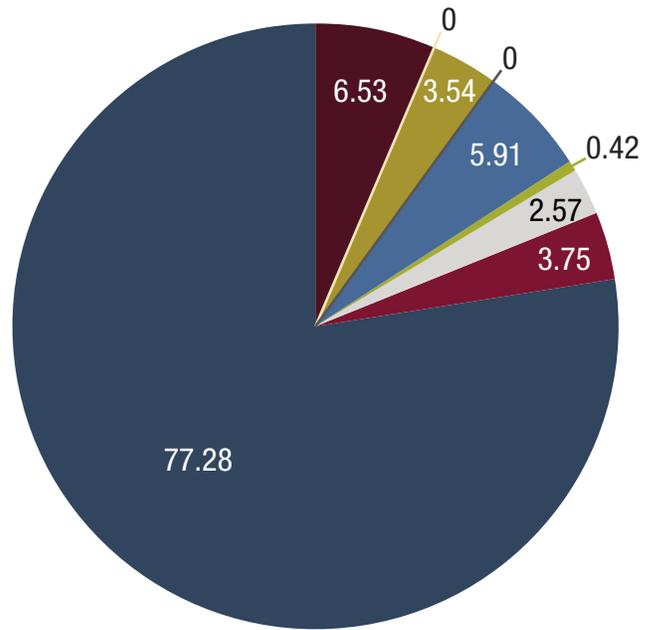
Figure 10.7 Bradford (*n*=1,317)

0
6.01
3.04
0.38
14.05
1.52
3.26
3.95
67.2
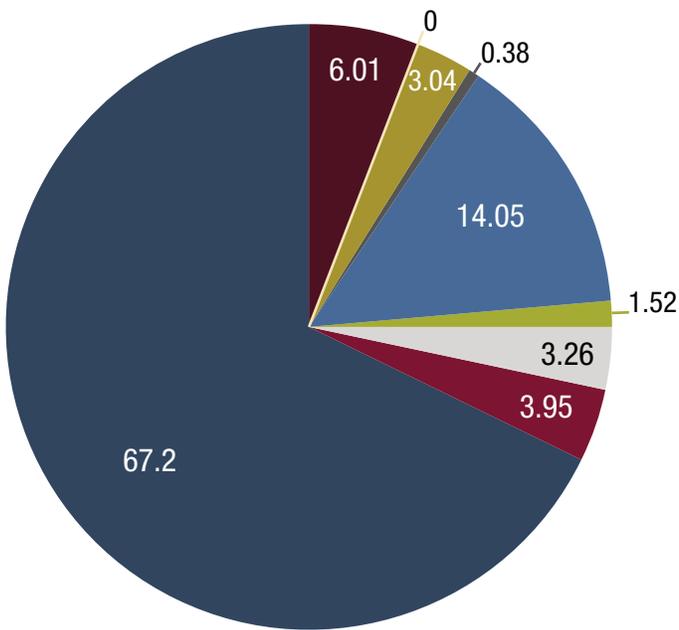
Figure 10.8 Titusville (*n*=135)

1.48
0 0 0.74
10.37
0 0
0.74
88.67

Academic Advising as a Tool for Student Success and Educational Equity
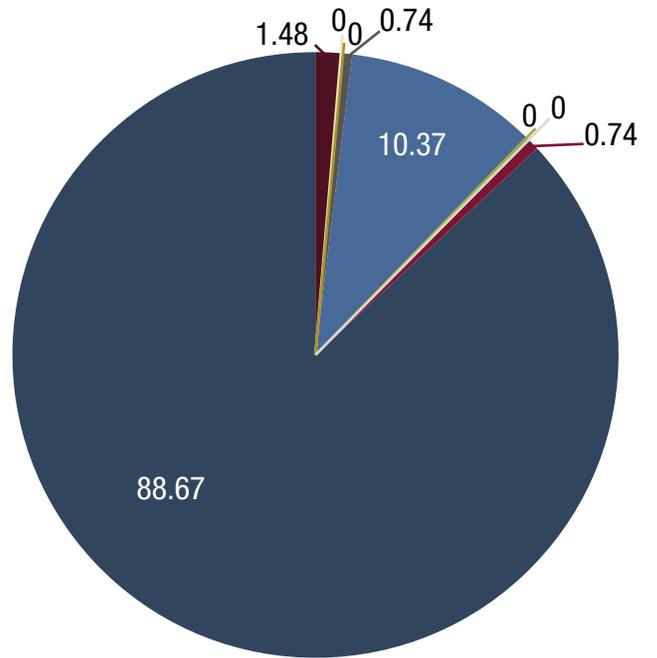
Figure 10.9 University of Pittsburgh Office of the Provost Undergraduate Studies Academic Innovation Team Institutional Supports for Advising and Mentoring Initiatives & Timeline)

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS FOR ADVISING AND MENTORING INITIATIVES & TIMELINE
Undergraduate Studies Academic Innovation

2017-2019
Institutional response – "Personalized Education" aligns w/ strategic plan

Pitt Commons mentoring platform

Launched collaborative efforts

Pathways student success platform

SPRING 2019
Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring hired

Advising Landscape Analysis

Professional development workshop series begins

SUMMER 2019
Networked Improvement Community (NIC)

Access to data dashboards

New connections w/ regional campuses

Strategic communications

FALL 2019
Forge Your Own Path strategy

Website redesign

Retention and outreach efforts

Advisor career ladder project begins

SPRING 2020
3rd annual Mentoring and Advising Summit

COVID-19 response

Advisor Toolbox created

LOOKING AHEAD
Online Advising Certification and Training Program

Tool for exploring academic majors

Catalog of Opportunities

University of Pittsburgh | Office of the Provost

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11 | The University of South Carolina Organizational Restructure Toward Improved Equity for All Undergraduates

Claire Robinson, Mike Dial, & Jane Bouknight

Institutional Profile

The University of South Carolina (UofSC) is a public, four-year, urban campus that serves as South Carolina's flagship university enrolling 34,795 students on the Columbia campus, including 26,733 undergraduate students, 6,213 graduate students, and 1,849 professional students. Undergraduate academic programs are offered through 11 degree-granting colleges and schools. Undergraduate enrollment consists of 55% in-state and 44% out-of-state with approximately 28% of students living on campus (96% in the first-year) and 72% commuting to campus.

UofSC defines sophomore status as a student who has completed the equivalent of one year of full-time undergraduate work, that is, at least 30 semester hours but less than 60 semester hours in a 120-hour program. In fall 2019, 24.53% of the undergraduate population met this definition. Almost all UofSC students receive some form of aid, while 20% of undergraduate students receive the Pell grant. Racially, UofSC undergraduate students are comprised of 76.7% White, 10.2% African American, 4.0% Hispanic, 2.3% Asian, 0.1% Pacific Islander, and 3.2% identify as two or more races. The undergraduate population is 53% female and 44% male. UofSC defines first-generation students as those whose parents

have not completed a four-year degree. This status is self-reported at UofSC though, so it is difficult to identify a true percentage of the undergraduate student population who are first-generation students.

The Establishment of the University Advising Center

Prior to fall 2014, student and parent complaints were directed to the UofSC Office of the Provost regarding the inconsistent and unequal state of advising across UofSC's 11 colleges and schools. At the time, UofSC operated under a decentralized model of advising (King, 2008) wherein each college dictated the style and substance of advising practice. Some academic advising on campus was heavily focused on course selection, and schedule planning and thus was highly transactional. During these years, student and parent complaints were at an all-time high. Concurrently, university leadership sought to improve institutional retention rates in alignment with those attained by UofSC's peer aspirant institutions. With hopes of reducing student dissatisfaction with advising and making meaningful gains in first-year retention, the Office of the Provost convened an Advising Coordinating Taskforce (ACT) to review advising practices at the University. ACT reviewed the information, surveyed students and advisors, and solicited responses on advisement practices from each college/school. At the conclusion of their work, ACT made six recommendations, the first of which was to establish a University Advising Center to standardize advising across a decentralized campus and institute first-year advising.

The University Advising Center (UAC) was established in July 2015 and the First-Year Advising (now Undergraduate Academic Advising) program was implemented in January of 2016. Since 2015, institutional investments in staffing, training, and technology have enabled UofSC advisors to be more efficient, reduce the time needed for transactional advising, and allow advisors to devote more time and effort to building relationships with and providing holistic advising to all students in their caseload. The UAC defines holistic advising as a combination of prescriptive (i.e., the course selection and degree requirements), intrusive (i.e., proactive outreach and academic interventions) and appreciative advising (i.e., using narrative inquiry questions) that supports the student's whole academic experience in and beyond-the-classroom. By standardizing advising without centralizing it, the UAC provides highly trained professional academic advisors with consistent caseloads of an average of 300 advisees to all students in their first-year and to many transfer students.

The UAC supports the academic mission of the University by providing undergraduate students, academic advisors, and the advising community with resources, training, services, and assessment in accordance with national best practices. At UofSC all undergraduate students are required to meet with an academic advisor prior to registering for courses each term. These formal advising appointments often result in conversations that intersect student interests and needs, curricular requirements, experiential learning opportunities, and holistic student support. As such, UofSC Academic Advisors are uniquely positioned to maintain communication with, support, and retain students who are often categorized in an achievement gap at UofSC (Pell-eligible students, males, and African American males). Through the standardization of advising, the UAC seeks to improve the student experience for all students at the University.

The UAC standardized advising on the UofSC Columbia Campus through first-year advising management, advising system management, and the identification of consistent evaluation metrics. All first-year advising is facilitated by Undergraduate Academic Advisors (UAA) employed by the UAC. Caseloads are capped at 300 students per advisor which allows for four hours per student per year of dedicated support. Not all students will need all four hours of an advisor's time. By adopting a population health model, UAAs dedicate their time and energy to those students with the highest need or risk of attrition. Doing so treats each student as a unique individual with specific needs, which allows for greater attention to students that may be facing challenges, like historically URM, low-income, and first-generation college students. Additionally, UAAs are available throughout the semester for 30-minute appointments. Prior to the establishment of the UAC, advisor caseloads may exceed 600 students, advising was sometimes handled in the group, 15- minute sessions, and students often signed up for advising within a two-week window by putting their name on a piece of paper on an instructor's door. UAAS availability allows students to receive support when they need it. Position descriptions across the 34 FTEs are standard, and the performance management process is consistent across colleges.

From a system perspective, technology adoption and access are standardized. UofSC advisors utilize Banner, DegreeWorks, and EAB Navigate to prepare for and during advising sessions. Curricular tools including the UofSC program of study and major maps are developed by the colleges with assistance and support from the UAC. Finally, new academic advising initiatives are implemented campus-wide, rather than in pockets and major changes between degree-granting colleges are designed to allow as seamless a transition as is possible for students.

Today, the UAC comprises 36 professional UAAs, 12 Exploratory Advisors/Academic Coaches, and 12 additional administrative staff. The UAC works collaboratively with the 11 colleges and schools that make up UofSC to recruit, onboard, and support the UAAs who provide holistic advisement to approximately 9,000 students, roughly 33% of the undergraduate population. The UAC solidifies its professional relationship with each of the colleges through signed Memoranda of Cooperation (MOC). As approved by the UofSC Advising Directorate, the UAC allocates advisors to colleges following four rules: 1) all first-year advising is conducted by the UAC in coordination with the colleges, 2) allocation is based on college enrollment (300 students:1 advisor), 3) all first-year students are advised by a UAA, but UAAs may advise beyond the first-year, and 4) if a college/school wishes to move into advising beyond the first-year through the UAC, the funding must come from the college. Since the establishment of the UAC, several colleges have invested in the model as evidenced by a 44% growth in FTE UAA positions from 2016 to 2020.

The administrative team provides advisors support including curricular resource utilization, technology implementation, transfer student advising, and training and certification. Through the leadership of the Assistant Associate Deans Council (AADC), the advising infrastructure is embedded within the colleges. In addition to the UAC's 44 professional staff advisors, the UAC aims to ensure an equitable advising experience for all undergraduate students through the training and certification of an additional 56 full- and part-time academic advisors hired by the colleges and 336 faculty who serve as academic advisors.

Advisor Training

New academic advisors at UofSC must complete Advising Foundations, an online course, which ensures that new advisors understand FERPA and other legal and ethical considerations prior to having access to student information.

Following Advising Foundations, the UofSC Academic Advisor Training and Certification Program is a multi-level program that covers seven distinct competency areas, which are aligned with the NACADA Core Competencies Model and framework (NACADA, 2017).

Specifically related to equity initiatives on campus, Level One of the Advisor Training and Certification program includes a module dedicated to the Opportunity Scholars program and first-generation students. Additional in-person training covers content on supporting students with achievement gaps, namely first-generation students and transfer students. Level Two of the Advisor Training and Certification Program includes content on supporting transfer students and academic success coaching with a focus on a partnership with TRiO Programs (detailed below). Level Three covers veterans and international students. Finally, Level Four requires advisors to attend campus partner training devoted to understanding and supporting LGBTQUI students, international students, student veterans, transfer students, and mental health/suicide prevention training.

To foster ongoing development, the UAC hosts several in-person events including a systemwide advisors conference. The 2020 conference theme was *Every Student. Every Voice. One University: Fostering Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Advising* and featured a keynote presented by Dr. John Dozier, the University's Chief Diversity Officer. Eight additional concurrent sessions covered topics related to diversity, social advocacy, and supporting special student populations including transfers, LGBTQUI students, and first-generation students. Notably, the 2020 conference featured a student-led session titled "Students Call for Equitable Advising." Past conferences have included no fewer than four concurrent session offerings dedicated to supporting diverse student populations. Beginning in summer 2020, the UAC planned and facilitated dedicated in-person training sessions on diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism. These trainings aid advisors in having difficult conversations and supporting students from backgrounds unlike their own.

Transfer Students

The UAC has increased its focus on supporting transfer students for several reasons in recent years. First, one-third of the UofSC Undergraduate population began their UofSC experience as transfer students. Of those only 65.5% graduate from USC compared to 72.3% of FTIC students. Of those who do graduate they earn on average 138 overall credit hours and take 3.4 years

*Figure 11.1* UofSC Academic Advisor Training and Development Model

New Advisor Onboarding
- Advising Foundations online course

Advisor Certification
(Online Course + Advisor Experience)
- Level One
- Level Two
- Level Three
- Level Four

Advisor Resources
- Advisor Guidebook
- Online Training Index
- Three Things Weekly
- Advisors Weekly Update Listserv
- UAA Weekly Newsletter®

In-Person Training & Professional Development
- New Advisor Series
- Staff Meetings
- Workshops
- Lunch & Learns
- Webinars
- USC-System Advisor's Conference
- Advisor Mentoring*

Figure 11.2 Certification Levels of Advisors with Active Caseloads During the Spring 2020 Semester. Based on Internal Data

Chart — Academic Advisors by Training and Certification Level:
- Advising Foundations Only: 280
- Level 1: 88
- Level 2: 60
- Level 3: 24
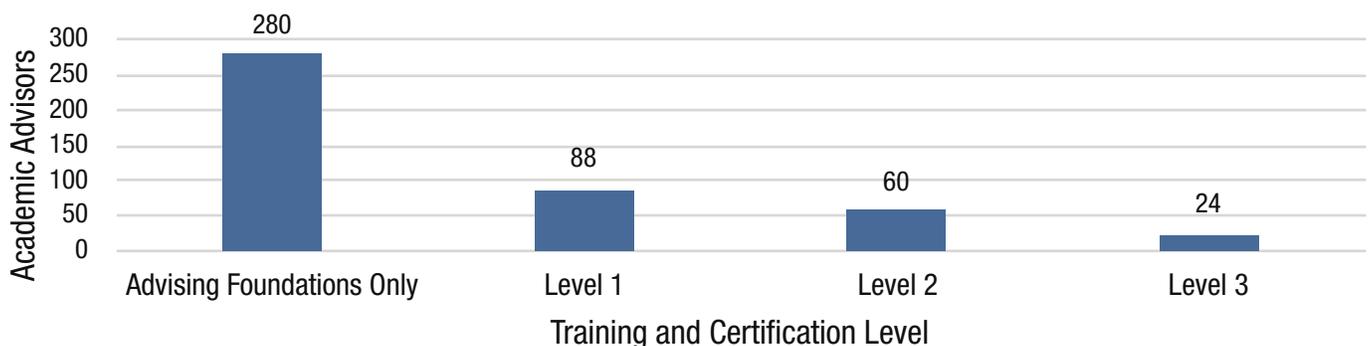
to graduate once first enrolled at UofSC. In spring 2019, the UAC hired an Assistant Director of Transfer Advising and Retention who has spearheaded a campus-wide effort to improve the transfer experience. One specific effort undertaken by the UAC has been expanding advising opportunities for transfer students. Across the colleges, advisors offer drop-in hours early in the term specifically set aside for transfer students, guarantee multiple appointments, or a 60-minute appointment compared to the 30-minute appointment offered to most students.

Partnerships

The UAC maintains several partnerships with the academic colleges and schools as well as programs in the Division of Students Affairs to improve student success outcomes for historically underrepresented students. One example, The Academic Coaching mandate for Gamecock Guarantee and Opportunity Scholars Program (OSP) students, is a joint effort between the Exploratory Advising Office in the UAC and the

Office of TRiO Programs. Students in OSP are first-generation college students from low-income families in the state of South Carolina who also receive financial support through the Gamecock Guarantee grant. This program provides academically talented, low-income, first-generation college students from South Carolina an affordable opportunity to attend USC. The Gamecock Guarantee covers undergraduate tuition and technology fees for up to four years, as long as the student meets program criteria. Approximately 700 students each year receive the Gamecock Guarantee (UofSC Division of Student Affairs, 2020). Students in the OSP Program who do not meet the requirements of the Gamecock Guarantee Memorandum of Understanding or who are classified as academically at-risk, are required to attend at least two Academic Coaching sessions during the semester and complete an Academic Plan with their Coach. They may attend as many coaching appointments as needed/desired. In their coaching sessions, students receive individualized support from their Coaches in the areas of general academic advising and major exploration, academic planning & success strategies, strengths identification, engagement planning & campus involvement, and navigating campus resources.

Assessment Methods & Design

An initial survey conducted in 2014 led to the establishment and funding of the UAC, 25 First-Year advisors, an advisor training and certification program, and implementation of new advising technologies. The UAC continues to reference student feedback when assessing program success and future initiatives.

Measures

Undergraduate Advising Survey. Biannually, an electronic survey is distributed to a stratified random sample of undergraduate students. In spring 2019, the instrument was sent to 12,000 students and yielded an 11% response rate (n=1,087). Survey response mirrors the student population across the colleges and student classification. Survey design is mixed methods and includes Likert-scale and open-ended questions. The survey's intent is to measure students' perceptions of the Undergraduate Academic Advising environment, students' perceptions of advising outcomes, and students' knowledge of policies and procedures related to academic advising.

Transfer Student Survey. During spring 2020, a survey was distributed to all transfer students who entered the University in the fall 2019 cohort and yielded an 8.84% response rate (n=143) and all transfer students who entered the University between 2013 and 2018 and yielded a 6.08% response rate (n=153). The intent of the survey was to evaluate various facets of the transfer experience including admissions, orientation, and advising.

GPA, Persistence, and Retention Rates. Institutional datasets are used to calculate student grades, retention, and graduation.

Assessment Findings

Persistence and Retention

Since the establishment of the UAC in 2015, the institution has experienced gains in both first- to second-year retention as well as four- and six-year graduation rates. As evidence, UofSC attained a 3.7% increase in four-year graduations, as well as a 1% increase in the six-year graduation rate (EAB, 2018). While it can be reasonably assumed that gains have been made across the board, this data has not been analyzed to identify institutional gains in retention or persistence for first-generation students or students who fall within UofSC graduation gaps.

Student Satisfaction and Knowledge of Advising Policies/Procedures

Comparison data from the 2014 and 2019 Undergraduate Student Survey demonstrate an 8% increase in student satisfaction along with increases in 12 categories associated with advising. Categories included students' receiving accurate information (+18%), understanding general education requirements (+49%), and receiving help choosing a major (+74%), referral to campus resources (+56%), and recommendations of beyond-the-classroom/co-curricular opportunities (+55%).

Additionally, internal research has found statistically significant, positive correlations between time in advising sessions and discussions of experiential learning, careers, and graduate school with overall satisfaction in advising. Additional in-person training and educational materials are being developed to share these best practices across campus.

The Transfer Experience

Over the years, UofSC has attempted numerous niche programs with the goal of improving the transfer experience and transfer retention and persistence rates. While it's too early to identify changes in retention or persistence to degree, the improvements to transfer advising seem to be responsible for demonstrable gains in transfer student satisfaction with their advising experience. In fact, results of the Transfer Survey exemplify this as student satisfaction with advising experienced a 0.61-point increase for the fall 2019 cohort when compared to transfer students who entered the University prior to fall 2019.

Figure 11.3 Undergraduate Student Survey % Agree or Strongly Agree Comparison 2014-2019
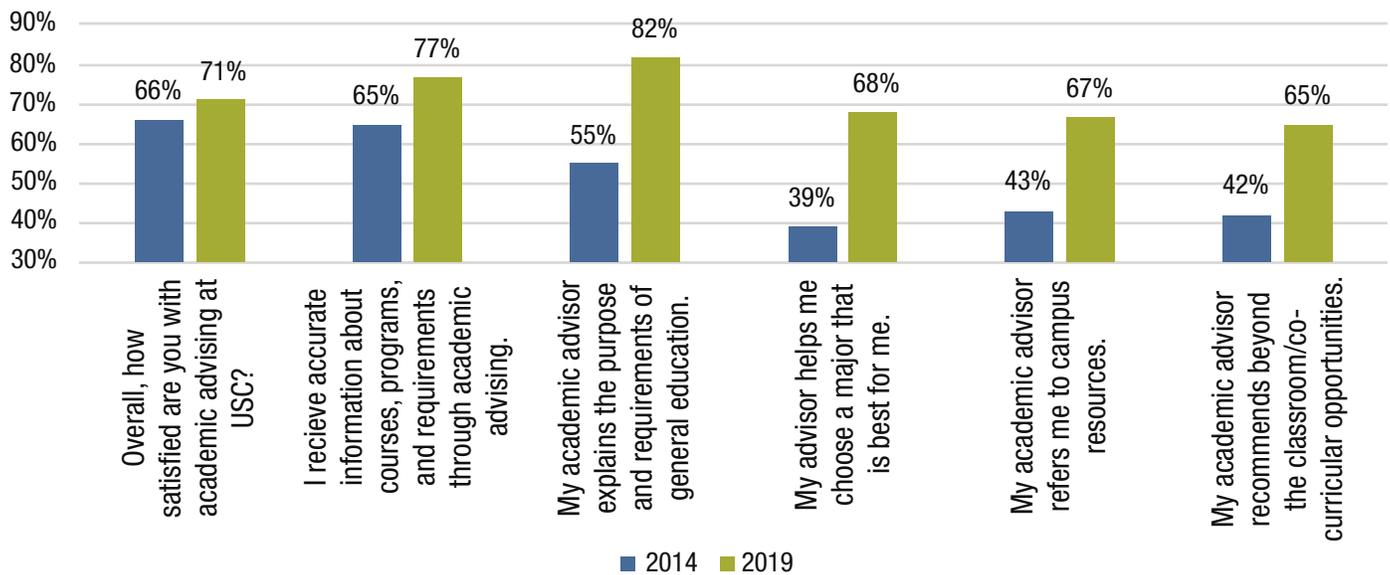

Figure 11.4 Transfer Student Perceptions 2013-2018 vs Fall 2019 Entry Cohorts
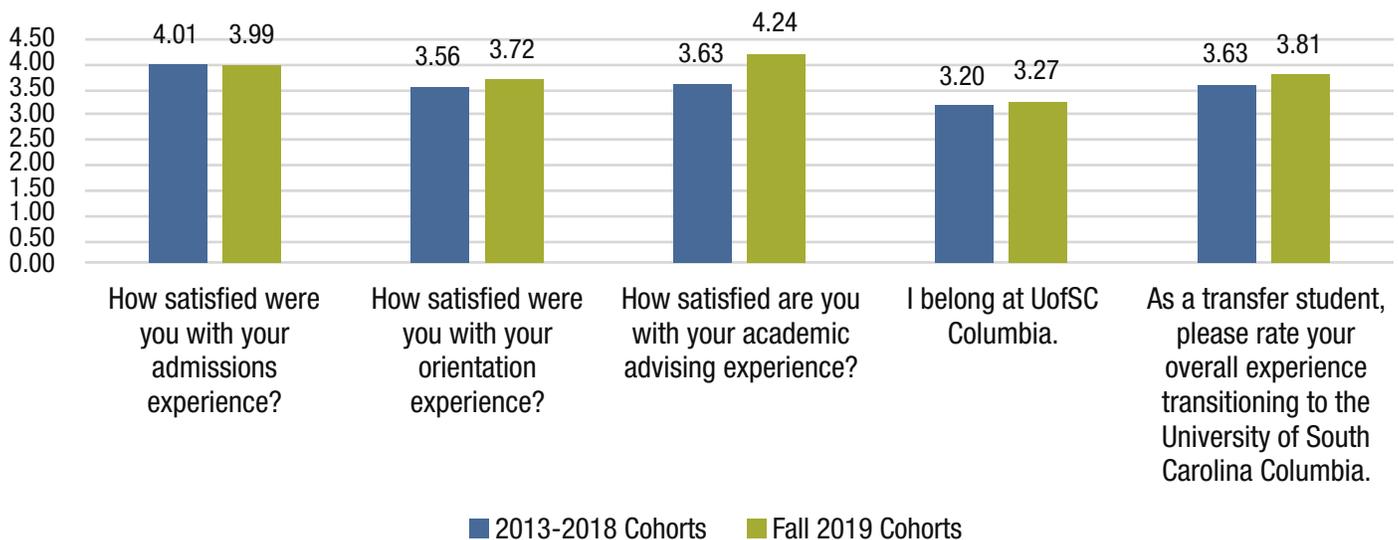
Figure 11.5 OSP Partnership Outcomes End of Semester GPA By Coaching Appointment

Legend:
- ■ At least one academic coaching appointment
- ■ No academic coaching appointments

Chart data:
- GPA above 2.5: At least one academic coaching appointment = 10; No academic coaching appointments = 1
- GPA below 2.5: At least one academic coaching appointment = 10; No academic coaching appointments = 12
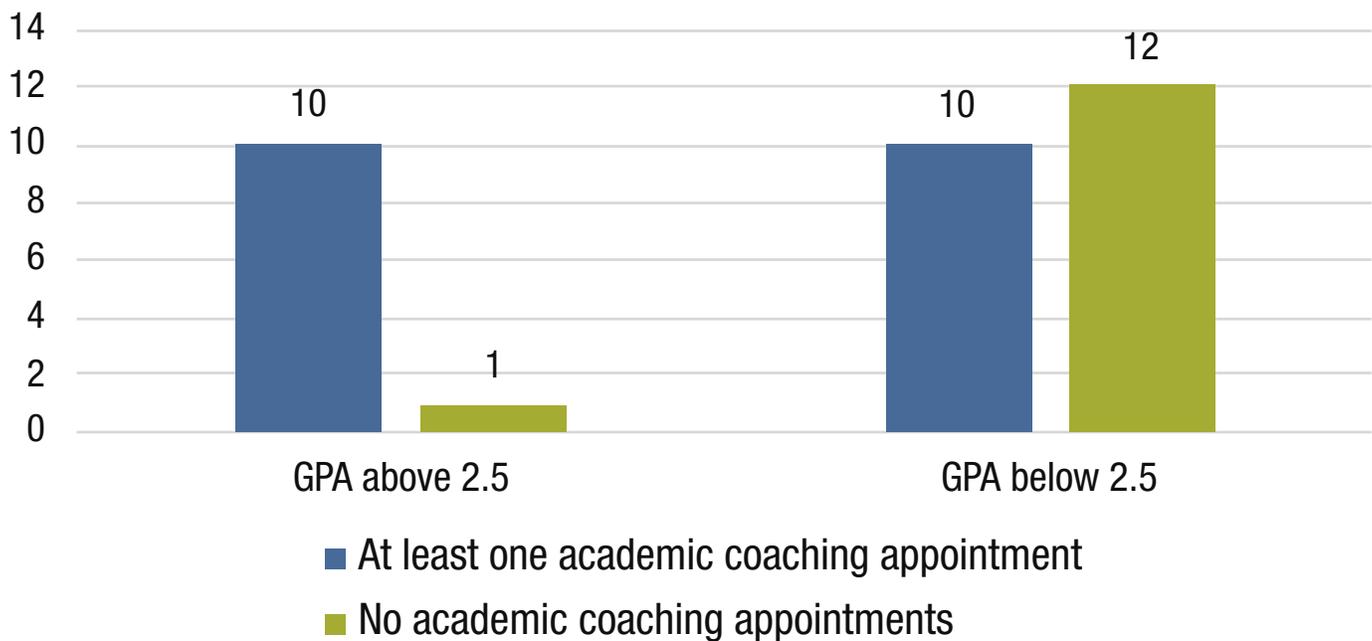
OSP Partnership

There are approximately 450 students in the Opportunity Scholars program across all four classes. During spring 2020, 33 students were referred to Academic Coaching for having GPAs below 2.50/4.00. Of the referred students, one did not return from the fall semester, 25 improved their GPA by an average of .28 points, and 11 raised their GPA above the minimum standard of 2.50/4.00. However, students who attend at least one Academic Coaching (M=1.5, SD=0.51) appointment attain a 2.50 or greater GPA at a significantly higher rate than students who do not attend at least one Academic Coaching (M=1.92, SD=0.28) appointment; t(31)=-2.72), p=.011.

Implications for Practice

For decades, like many universities, UofSC has invested "effort, time, and resources in well-intentioned, yet often disconnected or small-scale" (Lawton, 2018, p. 33) improvement initiatives. According to Lawton (2018), when academic advising is underfunded, understaffed, and underequipped with appropriate advising technologies, students that fall into various opportunity gaps may be disproportionately negatively impacted. Through the UAC, UofSC has made systemic changes to advising with equity at the heart of the transformation. Standard advising practice ensures that all students across campus have access to high-quality, highly trained professionals to assist them into and through the University. Kerr and King (2005) posit that academic advising is perhaps the most important way that first-year students interact with a representative of the institution (p. 320). As evidence of the commitment of the institution to quality academic advising for all students, the Provost's Office now commits $1,884,000 annually toward the funding of 32 full-time UAAs, an Assistant Director, and a Coordinator of Advising and Academic Intervention. In total, the UAC maintains a $3,000,000 operating budget.

Since the initial student survey in 2014, the UAC has learned to better train, support, and utilize full-time academic advisors across campus. As a result, their effectiveness as advisors and utility to students has increased. As evidence of their achievement on campus, the Undergraduate Academic Advising initiative and the Exploratory Advising initiative have been recognized by NACADA as Outstanding Advising Programs.

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12 | The University of Toledo Success Coaching Model

Julie Fischer-Kinney and Denise S. Bartell

Institutional Profile

Located in Toledo, Ohio, the University of Toledo is one of 27 four-year, public research comprehensive universities in the country. For the 2019-2020 academic year, the number of Full-Time Enrollment (FTE) undergraduate students was 13,607; the overall headcount was 15,568. Approximately 24% of all undergraduate students resided on-campus. A sophomore is defined as a student who has cumulatively earned between 30-59.9 credit hours; sophomores comprised 18.7% of the overall headcount for 2019-2020. The undergraduate gender composition was 50% male and 50% female. The average age of undergraduate students was 22 years, with 10.5% age 25 and older. The ethnicity breakdown was: 68.5% white; 21.8% ethnic minority; and 4.2% unknown. The residency composition was 84.6% in-state; 9.8% out-of-state; and 5.6% International students. Of our 2019 total headcount enrollment, 28.3% of students were Pell-receiving, and 23.8% were first-generation (i.e., students for whom no parent or guardian has completed a bachelor's degree).

Toledo Success Coaching Model

Success coaching was implemented at the University of Toledo in August 2013 as a partner to academic advising. UToledo has relatively high caseloads in academic advising, and therefore services focus on the traditional scope of academic plan of study, time to degree, course registration, etc. Students are assigned a professional or faculty advisor from the point of program entry, depending upon their college, and so may have multiple advisors over their undergraduate career. The success coach model sought to create complementary support for advising services, providing students with one constant contact person and holistic support to navigate barriers to success and improve student outcomes.

At inception in 2013, the primary goal of the success coaching program was to increase the first-to-second year retention rate (full-time, first-time students) from 62% to 80% and the six-year graduation rate from 41% to 50% by 2022. While the

current scope still includes these goals, a concerted effort is also being placed on reducing equity gaps to improve student success between majority students and underrepresented minority students (e.g. African American, Latinx, First Nations, and Hawaiian-Pacific Islander) and Pell-awarded students, as guided by the university strategic plan and institutional plan for diversity and inclusion.

In July 2016, the Center for Success Coaching was created to centralize the success coaches under the Office of the Provost in Academic Affairs. Unlike academic advising at the institution, which is decentralized, the Center for Success Coaching is centralized to provide consistent support for all undergraduate students. The Center's mission is to empower UToledo students to thrive academically, personally, and professionally from orientation to graduation through a holistic, student-centered approach. The Center is led by the Assistant Provost for Student Success and Retention, who also serves as the Center Director. Three committees (programming, communications, and assessment) were created within the Center to execute its mission and goals.

Keys to Success

Success coaches are full-time professional staff with assigned caseloads, who act as retention specialists and student advocates, but do not academically advise or monitor degree progress. A success coach is a student's personal GPS. Success coaches provide individualized support to students in the following areas:

- helping students be proactive and empowered through courserelated challenges;

- making referrals to academic support services and other campus resources;

- supporting time management, study strategies, and stress management;

- connecting students to campus engagement and experiential learning opportunities;

- supporting budgeting, navigating financial processes and financial literacy; and

- career and major exploration, career development and goal setting.

Success coaches also proactively outreach to students about opportunities, such as scholarship and student involvement, and areas of concern, such as financial holds on student accounts and academic concerns from instructors. As students navigate from where they are upon entering college, to where they want to be, coaches: offer one-on-one guidance and customized support through caring about all aspects of a student's well-being; serve as a non-judgmental sounding board who provides honest feedback; and provide proactive outreach and communication on key institutional dates, deadlines, opportunities, and events. All undergraduate students are assigned a success coach who is with them from orientation to graduation. While the student may change academic majors/colleges and academic advisors, their success coach will not change during their academic journey.

Coaches document appointments and outreach efforts in Starfish Early Alert and Connect. There were 21 success coaches on staff during the 2019-2020 academic year, a significant increase from the original 12 coaches hired in 2013. Coaches are aligned to all undergraduate students by special student populations and by the academic college. This allows for specialization utilizing the expertise and strengths of each coach to address the needs of different student populations. Additionally, it allows for stronger collaboration and partnerships between success coaches and advisors, who jointly support the students they serve. For example, success coaches are aligned to all international students, to all student-athletes, to all 100% distance learners, and to all military-connected students. In addition, there are other success coaches aligned with domestic students by age, academic preparation, and academic college/major.

The Center for Success Coaching also offers a variety of services and programmatic offerings to support student success, including Success Series Workshops each semester. These one-hour, interactive workshops provide strategies, tools, and resources on topics such as time management and study strategies. Other offerings include Coach Express Events, which are 15-minute pop-up events in locations across campus that provide students with healthy snacks, engagement, and interactive education on topics such as note-taking and beating procrastination. Coach drop-in office hours are offered at various days, times, and locations across campus to meet students where they are at with respect to access, such as Wednesday hours in the campus library. Other initiatives include tabling at key points of the semester, collaborating with Residence Life to offer drop-in hours in residence halls, and partnering with Student Affairs on registration outreach efforts. Coaches are now part of the process workflow with many departments to ensure the timely completion of relevant forms and procedures.

Examples of integration include identification and outreach to students who may be eligible to appeal a college scholarship or financial aid decision (e.g., SAP appeals; communicating registration dates and re-enrollment outreach campaigns for students who stop out of college; working with Residence Life on the completion of housing contracts and exemptions; supporting the completion of incomplete grades from prior semesters; and working closely with the Registrar's Office on administrative adjustments or medical withdrawal processes and appeals). Success coaches also work with Student Affairs in areas such as serving on conduct boards, working daily with the student advocacy office on case management of student issues and concerns, programmatic efforts with the multicultural student success and career services offices, and linking students to the food pantry.

On the communication front, success coaches use Google Voice to text with students individually; send out carefully crafted infographics and visuals through email to provide critical dates, deadlines, and opportunities; push out referrals and/or flags of concern to students through Starfish; leverage three social media platforms using nudging strategies and visually appealing prompts; provide information and tips on the Center website; sponsor a Youtube channel full of engaging videos on various topics; and conduct outreach campaigns through phone, email, and text on key university student success efforts.

Assessment Methods & Design

Given the strategic goals of the university, the most important assessment objectives have involved tracking first-year retention and six-year graduation rates over time, as the success coaching program was developed and expanded. UToledo also examines retention and graduation rates disaggregated for underrepresented minority and Pell-awarded students, to assess the impact of the success coaches on our strategic goal to reduce, by half, equity gaps in retention and graduation by 2022.

To understand students' level of engagement with success coaches, we track the number of student engagements with coaches, peak times and themes for engagement during the semester, the number of coach outreach efforts per student, student satisfaction with and perceptions of engagements with

success coaches, student participation in coach workshops, quantitative and qualitative assessment data gathered in post-workshop evaluations, student focus group feedback, the percentage of students who view coach emails, and social media engagement.

Finally, to understand the impact of success coaches on our campus, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is utilized to ask questions on the quality of engagement with support staff, including the advising module in 2019, which asked students a series of questions about the nature and supportiveness of various kinds of advising interactions. This tool also allows for benchmarking the perceived impact of success coaches at UToledo against those of peer institutions who participate in the survey.

Assessment Findings

Since the inception of the success coach program in 2013, UToledo has improved first-year retention by 10.5%, from 68% for the 2012 cohort to 78.5% for the 2019 cohort (see Figure 12.1). In addition, we have reduced equity gaps in retention for URM students by 30%, from 31.1% for the 2012 cohort to 10.1% for the 2019 cohort, and by 10.8% for lower-income students, from 21.7% for the 2012 cohort to 10.9% for the 2019 cohort. In fact, we have surpassed the strategic goal of reducing these gaps by half and done so two years ahead of schedule. The success coach program, and the development of the Center for Success Coaching, have been instrumental in these gains, as they have allowed us to provide more intentional, holistic support for student success in the critical first year of college. Qualitative student data supports our conclusions about the role of success coaches in our improved retention results. As one student reflected, "During my freshman and sophomore year, my coach was extremely fundamental in my preparation for my engineering classes, co-op, and career."

Six-year graduation rates have improved by 8.3%, from 44.9% for the 2008 cohort to 53.2% for the 2014 cohort (see Figure 12.2). In fact, we saw a nearly 4% increase in the six-year graduation rate during the first complete student cohort cycle under the coaching model. We achieved our 2022 goal of a 50% graduation rate three years ahead of schedule. However, we have not yet seen a significant decrease in equity gaps for six-year graduation rates. As is the case for retention, the Center for Success

## Figure 12.1 First-Year Retention Rates for 2012-2019 Cohorts

				Cohort Year				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
URM	45.16%	51.38%	50.34%	60.75%	58.15%	64.70%	66.90%	70.20%
White	76.22%	76.35%	78.38%	77.99%	77.89%	79.20%	78.90%	80.30%
Overall	68.03%	69.97%	71.85%	74.07%	74.46%	75.90%	76.40%	78.50%
Pell	56.22%	57.52%	59.20%	65.82%	64.97%	66.83%	67.10%	71.20%
Non-Pell	77.94%	78.67%	79.77%	78.59%	79.74%	80.92%	80.80%	82.10%
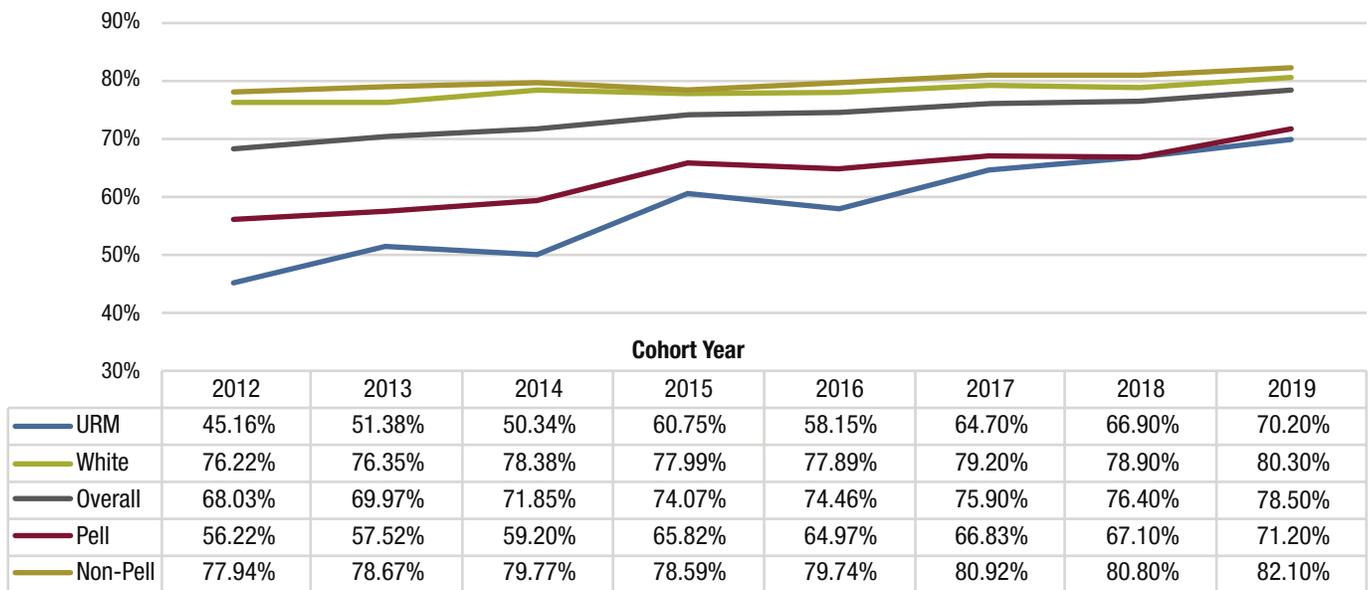
Figure 12.2 Six-Year Graduation Rates for 2008-2014 Cohorts

				Cohort Year			
	2008 (2014)	2009 (2015)	2010 (2016)	2011 (2017)	2012 (2018)	2013 (2019)	2014 (2020)
URM	23.50%	20.21%	22.77%	17.83%	23.80%	29.40%	29.80%
White	50.55%	51.46%	51.65%	53.12%	57.00%	58.90%	61.50%
Overall	44.90%	41.48%	43.27%	41.86%	47.50%	51.10%	53.20%
Pell	30.77%	29.22%	33.79%	28.04%	34.26%	36.70%	38.00%
Non-Pell	50.99%	52.20%	53.42%	55.55%	58.49%	61.10%	62.80%
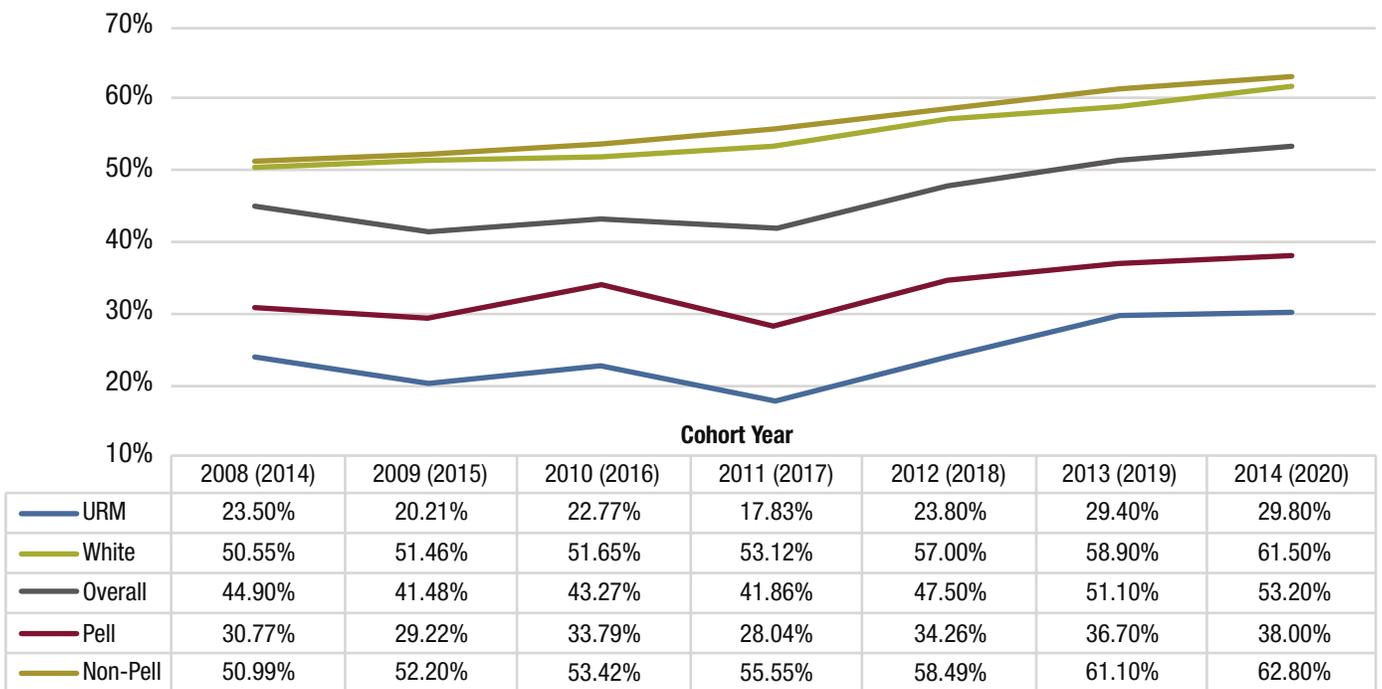
Coaching has played a key role in our overall improved graduation rates, as it provides a single point of contact for student support from the first-year through graduation. The supportive relationships built by this model empower students to engage with coaches at multiple points in the student life cycle when they face challenges to timely progress and completion. Qualitative student data reinforces the key role of success coaches on our improved graduation rates, especially for historically marginalized students. When asked about the impact of success coaches on their success, one student reflected, "My coach ended up being my support system and kept me in check for academics as well as other life activities." And another said, "There aren't words to describe the impact my coach had on my college career – not only helping me improve my grades but also helping me find a major I truly enjoy. Four years ago, I never would have thought I would be in the position I am today and part of that is because of the guidance I was able to receive from my coach and the resources she provided for me."

Since the creation of the Center for Success Coaching in 2016, we have seen a continued increase in student utilization of coaching appointments, in the breadth and depth of coach communications with students, and in outreach engagement such as course presentations and stand-alone workshops (see Table 12.1). Interestingly, during the 2019-20 year, after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of student appointments dramatically increased. This increase reflects the extent to which students, faculty, and staff have come to rely on success coaches as a primary support mechanism for our students. Outreach numbers declined during that time because coaches were engaging more directly with students through appointments, reducing the need for multiple outreach attempts.

Based on the results from the 2019 NSSE Advising Module, UToledo first-year students were significantly more likely than students at other institutions to report discussing advising issues with our success coaches. Our first-year students were also significantly more likely to report that success coaches helped them to develop their academic goals and plans than students from other institutions. These differences, as compared to peer institutions, reflect our efforts to meaningfully engage students in developing relationships with their success coaches during the critical first year. URM and Pell-awarded students reported meeting more often with their success coach and reported their coach to be more helpful than did non-URM and non-Pell-awarded students. These results suggest that the success coaches are playing a key role in our progress reducing equity gaps in retention.

Reviewing our NSSE results from 2015 through 2019, we have also seen a consistent increase in the extent to which UToledo students report our institution as helping them to manage their non-academic responsibilities (e.g., work, family) and providing support for their overall well-being (e.g., recreation, health care, counseling). For example, in 2015 our students reported us as significantly less likely to help them manage their non-academic responsibilities than did students from peer institutions. By 2019, they reported us as significantly more likely to do so. This pattern of results suggests an impact of the holistic approach of success coaches and their increased engagement with students over the last five years.

Implications for Practice

By all available evidence, the success coaching program and the Center for Success Coaching have played a primary role in achieving our institutional strategic plan goals of improved

Table 12.1 *Student Level of Engagement Data*

Type of Engagement	Academic Year			
	2016 - 2017	2017 - 2018	2018 - 2019	2019 - 2020
Student appointments	12,853	13,174	13,524	16,238
Student outreach communications (e.g., newsletters, emails, texts, phone calls)	301,596	434,996	485,789	325,227
Outreach engagements (e.g., workshops, coach express presentations, course presentations)	342	405	722	3,749
Total Points of Engagement	314,791	448,575	500,035	345,214

Note: Student outreach communications and outreach engagements in the 2019-2020 academic year were reduced and halted due to the pandemic.

retention and graduation rates and reduced equity gaps. Both retention and graduation are at historic highs for UToledo. Subsequently, there is a direct and linear relationship between increased student engagement with success coaches via appointments, communications, and workshops, and increases in our retention and graduation rates.

Success coaching provides an important complement to our academic advising services on campus. Given our decentralized model of advising and our assignment of all students to majors from point of entry, as well as the general prevalence of major changes, having a single point of contact for holistic concerns from matriculation through graduation provides essential continuity of the supportive relationships critically important for the success of all students, but particularly for students from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

Key to the broad campus engagement we've achieved with our success coaching model has been the level of collaboration with other student services offices, the intentional efforts to build relationships with college academic advising offices, the gradual expansion of the Starfish platform for early alert and reporting, and the elevated level of support provided to instructors. The intentional building of these connections over the last seven years has allowed us to construct a success coach model that has significantly improved student success at UToledo. Deemed an Ohio High-Impact Best Practice, the success coaching process and structure should be broadly applicable to a variety of two- and four-year institutions that also seek to improve retention and graduation and equity of outcomes for their students.

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Conclusion

Chelsea Fountain

The purpose of this case study collection was to demonstrate innovation and institutional transformation around academic advising focused on identifying initiatives that advance equity. To move beyond persistent racial disparities and to realize a vision for American higher education that is equitable and inclusive, we must first consider racism and its harmful effects on people in postsecondary contexts (Harper, 2012). If all student experiences were created equal, advising would easily be a standardized, consistent student experience. However, students' experiences do differ, yet we continue to remain uniform in student advising. Advising is a known critical component of student success, and a "bright star" in the integrated constellation of student supports at an institution. The advisor-advisee relationship supports students as they identify and attain their academic, career, and personal goals. Further, academic advising is the only structured activity on campus in which *all* students have the opportunity for one-on-one interaction with a concerned representative of the institution (Habley, 1994).

Here, we asked institutions to provide contextual information aimed at depicting their institutional profile, including the percentage of Pell-receiving students, and a campus-based definition of a first-generation college student. In addition, the authors were asked to include a description of their advising initiative, assessment methods and design, and assessment findings, as well as reflections on implications for practice. This resulted in three umbrella themes which we have named technology-enabled advising, scalable advising solutions, and differentiated advising support.

Themes of the Collection

Three consistent themes arose from the collection: technology-enabled advising, scalable advising solutions, and differentiated advising support. The first theme "technology-enabled advising" is characterized by advising programs that have implemented technology as a critical tool in improving the student advising experience. Case studies from three institutions fit with-

in this theme: Albany State University (AARC), Northern Virginia Community College (GPS for Success), and University of Alabama at Birmingham (E2E Platform). Second, the theme "scalable advising solutions" represents a diverse set of institutional programs and initiatives which either currently, or in the future, show promise for campus-wide adoption. The following six institutions fit within this theme: Boston University (Time to BU), California State University Dominguez-Hills (Destination Graduation Program), North Carolina Central University (BAM! Blended Advising Model), University of Pittsburgh (Forge Your Own Path), and the University of South Carolina (University Advising Center). The third theme "differentiated advising support" points to specialized programs that are designed to meet the needs of a specific major, living-learning community, or marginalized student populations. Three institutions fit within this theme: LaGuardia Community College (Culturally Responsive Student-Centered Curriculum), Montana Technological University (First-Year Engineering Advising), and University of Cincinnati (Lindner College of Business Model).

Final Thoughts

The goal of this project began as an opportunity to amplify voices and practices in the field which merit replication and advance quality advising practices. Specifically, our collection was aimed at capitalizing on the rich diversity and varying approaches to academic advising, knowing that promising practice looks different based on student experience, campus context, academic major, etc. One of the greatest strengths of academic advising is its horizontal nature, requiring collaboration from faculty, staff, and students across all areas of the institution. Advising has the power to introduce, develop, and unify the entire campus community. External forces such as funding, organizational hierarchy, and policy will likely always coexist, yet *quality* advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience (Light, R.J., 2001). In a pandemic and politically polarized society, advising is one of the critical unifying tools

in higher education which promotes holistic student success. We hope this collection will serve as a catalyst for considering academic advising as a transformed landscape for student success and educational equity as well as raise the standard for equity as a deliberate and intentional basis for supporting students.

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