Organizing Centralized Academic Advising Services and Considerations for Transitioning to a New Model

Custom Research Brief

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Research Methodology
II. Executive Overview
III. Overview of Profiled Advising Programs
IV. Operations: Budget and Staffing Considerations
V. Transitions to Centralized Advising Services
VI. Advising Technology Tools
VII. Assessment

THE ADVISORY BOARD COMPANY
WASHINGTON, D.C.
I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Project Challenge:
A member institution approached the Council with the following questions about the structure of centralized academic advising programs:

- **Scope of Advising Services:** What is the student-advisor ratio at other institutions? Are advisors faculty members, professional advisors, or a combination thereof? What are the job responsibilities of academic advisors? What do contacts at other institutions identify as especially innovative and effective practices associated with their advising system?

- **Transition Process:** What were the primary challenges for academic advising systems that recently became more centralized?
  - **Staffing:** How do universities staff a new centralized program? What qualifications or other requirements do contacts set for advisors? Are low-level advising tasks like degree mapping delegated to centralized professional advisors or online self-service options? If so, how does the centralized advising office coordinate with major advisors (e.g., professional advisors dedicated to a particular major or faculty advisors)?
  - **Technology:** How do administrators at other institutions manage the consolidation of student data as advising services are centralized? What data management tools do institutions use? Do centralized advising units handle academic records (e.g., credit approvals, degree plan changes) or are those tasks split among other administrative units? Does advising technology interface with the broader student information system?
  - **Budget and Facilities:** About how much money did other institutions spend in transition to a centralized advising system? What is the approximate per-student cost of academic advising at present? If a contact institution has transitioned to a centralized model, how does the operating cost of the current model compare to that of the former, decentralized model?

- **Guidance and Assessment:** What are the advantages and disadvantages of the centralized model? Have contacts evaluated whether the transition improves student satisfaction or utilization? What metrics are used to track efficiency?

Project Sources:
- Advisory Board's internal and online research libraries ([www.educationadvisoryboard.com](http://www.educationadvisoryboard.com))
- Contact institution Web sites

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I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Parameters:
The Council interviewed administrators of academic advising programs at six research universities and one large master's university. The study provides an overview of the advising models at all profiled universities and especially highlights those contact institutions that recently transitioned to a more centralized model than existed previously.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Approximate Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University A</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>39,700</td>
<td>Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University B</td>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>45,200</td>
<td>Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University C</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>29,100</td>
<td>Research Universities (high research activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University D</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>28,100</td>
<td>Research Universities (high research activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University E</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>11,500</td>
<td>Research Universities (very high research activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University F</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>7,100</td>
<td>Research Universities (high research activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University G</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>20,700</td>
<td>Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
II. EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Key Observations:

☐ All seven profiled institutions employ what the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) calls a shared advising system in which students are assigned both a departmental advisor and a centralized, professional advisor during their academic careers. Centralized offices primarily serve undeclared, transfer, and pre-professional students, though the centralized advising center at University D serves all first-year students regardless of declared status.

☐ Student-to-advisor ratios at profiled institution range from 250:1 to 625:1. University B holds the lowest ratio at 250:1, and University F operates with the highest student-to-professional advisor ratio at 625:1, although faculty advisors support professional advisors and provide significant developmental and academic planning advice.

☐ Across profiled institutions, duties of centralized advisors include both prescriptive advising tasks (e.g., registering students for classes) and developmental advising duties (e.g., counseling and mentoring). Centralized advisors at three contact institutions perform primarily developmental advising, while advisors at two contact institutions perform primarily prescriptive advising. Advisors at the remaining two profiled institutions perform both types of duties.

☐ Engaging faculty in advising is reportedly not a priority for most centralized advising offices. Contacts at University D suggest faculty members with limited time are not suited to follow the changing regulations around advising.

☐ At two contact institutions, centralized advisors work out of college-based advising centers, thereby gaining subject matter expertise. Additionally, at University A, leaders of about 85 percent of departments contract centralized advisors to work as departmental advisors.

☐ Contacts report that centralized advisors typically possess one to three years of work experience, hold a bachelor’s degree, and earn between $28,000 and $40,000 per year. Six advising offices require advisors to hold only a bachelor’s degree. University B is the sole contact institution to require a master’s degree.

☐ Contact institutions that recently transitioned to a more centralized advising system report the following challenges: resistance to change among current advisors, cost of hiring new staff, and physical office space allocation. Contacts at University E indicate that administrators invested approximately $250,000 for staff expansion, scheduling software, and website improvements when overhauling advising in 2008.

☐ The most popular technological tool among contact institutions is a centralized note-taking system. Other tools that facilitate centralized advising include mid-term grade alerts and online self service resources.

☐ Contacts note that student satisfaction surveys and advisors’ job performance assessments are important tools in evaluating the quality of advising. Additionally, several contacts describe tracking advisees’ graduation and retention rates and comparing student success data across student subpopulations as useful assessment methods.
III. OVERVIEW OF Profiled Advising Programs

The chart below offers a structural overview of all profiled advising centers, each of which operate what the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) calls a shared advising system wherein students receive advising services both through advisors based in academic departments and through a centralized advising center. Across contact institutions, professional staff members comprise centralized advising teams. However, the staffing structure for departmental advising is determined by department leaders, with some department heads appointing faculty members to this role and others hiring professional staff. Even within a single institution, departmental advising structures vary by department.

Structure of Profiled Centralized Advising Programs

The primary demographics served by centralized advising offices are first-year students and undeclared students (i.e., students who have not declared a major). Additionally, at most contact institutions, a centralized advising office serves transfer students.

清扫 Undeclared Students

At University B, University C, University E, University F, and University G, centralized advising centers serve only undeclared students. At University E and University F, students do not declare a major until the second semester of their sophomore year, and, therefore, centralized advisors have de facto responsibility for all first- and second-year students.

清扫 All First-year and Undeclared Students

Contacts at University D report that the centralized advising center serves all first-year students regardless of their college or major of interest. The center also advises non-first year undeclared students and students on academic probation.

清扫 Undeclared Students and Students in Most Majors at University A

At University A, the centralized advising office offers exploratory advising for undeclared students. Additionally, college and department leaders may choose to contract advisors from the centralized office as college advisors. The role of centralized advisors in a particular college is governed by a prior agreement between the office and college administrators. In some colleges, centralized advisors placed in a college and advisors hired directly by the college have the same responsibilities, and, in other colleges, college-based centralized advisors fulfill different roles than independently hired college advisors.

清扫 Undeclared Student Center

清扫 College- or Department-based Advising Center

清扫 Centralized advisors dedicated to undeclared students work out of this central location.

清扫 Centralized advisors are contracted by college leaders and are overseen by a site supervisor who liaises between the college administration and the centralized office.

清扫 Reported Advantages

清扫 Central training ensures centralized advisors understand university policies and regulations.

清扫 Centralized office presents cost effective way to secure effective departmental advisors.


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III. OVERVIEW OF PROFILED ADVISING PROGRAMS

Coordination with Departmental Advising

When students declare a major, they are assigned a faculty advisor in their department, a professional advisor in their department, or both faculty and professional advisors. Several contacts explain that small colleges operate a single advising office for all of their students, rather than employing individual advising teams for each department. For example, the College of Engineering at University D has a single advising office, whereas each department in the College of Liberal Arts operates its own advising office. Contacts at University B indicate a formal process of transitioning students from centralized to departmental advising only when the department requires students to apply for admission.

Departmental Advisors are...
...professionals or faculty members at University B and University D. Contacts explain that each department's leaders decide whether staff or faculty will assume departmental advising responsibilities.
...faculty members at University E.
...faculty members or administrators at University F.

Role of Centralized Advising Office in Declared Students' Development

Contacts at University E explain that advisors from the centralized advising office continue to meet with students even after they declare a major. Centralized advisors remind students about important deadlines, approve each student for graduation, and reach out to students if they receive a D or F mid term grade or if an instructor reports unusual absences.

Faculty Engagement in Advising

Contacts report few efforts to promote faculty engagement in advising. Contacts indicate several reasons for reducing faculty involvement in advising:

☐ Competing Priorities: Faculty already juggle teaching and scholarship expectations, whereas professional advisors view advising as their most important job responsibility.

☐ Limited Time for Training: Contacts at University D argue that increased complexity of state and university regulations surrounding advising require continuous training.

☐ Limited Exposure to Retention Service: Without formal training around factors in academic success, such as financial aid or family challenges, faculty advisors are in difficult positions when faced with advisees who are at risk of dropping out.

Centralized Advising Office Assists with Faculty Training

University B's advising program coordinators, who function as liaisons in individual colleges, may train or provide resources for faculty members serving as departmental advisors.

Retention Services

Through University G's centralized advising center, administrators offer five programs designed to retain students at risk of dropping out.

- Three reactive programs, seeking out students on academic probation
- One proactive program, targeting students with poor reading skills
- One opt-in program, designed for students seeking help with academics

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III. OVERVIEW OF PROFILED ADVISING PROGRAMS

Retention Services (Cont.)
As part of each retention program, students must meet with a volunteer peer advisor three times per semester and fulfill a variety of other skill-building and accountability requirements. For example, students must log hours in a monitored study system, complete a series of papers, and attend supplemental sessions on time management, finals preparation, and other soft skills.

Responsibilities of Centralized Advisors
Contacts at University B, University E, and University G explain that centralized advisors perform primarily developmental tasks, while contacts at University F and University C report centralized advisors spend most of their time carrying out prescriptive advising functions. Contacts at University A and University D maintain that centralized advisors carry out both types of responsibilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prescriptive Advising</th>
<th>Developmental Advising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Informing students of degree requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Registering students for classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Dropping or adding students from classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Changing major or school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Counseling students about suitable majors given their interests and priorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Developing bonds with advisees to encourage better communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Location: A Case for Housing Centralized Advisors in College-based Offices
Both University A and University D permanently station centrally employed, professional advisors in college-based advising offices.

College-based Advisors Gain Discipline Expertise at University A
Central advisors who work in college-based offices receive uniform training in counseling practices and university regulations but operate entirely out of a college center. As a result, advisors become familiar with the common concerns of students in their home departments. Regardless of what college centralized advising staff members are stationed in, they remain under the supervision and on the payroll of the central advising office.

Previous Education Advisory Board research, Meeting Student Demand for High-Touch Advising, suggests that a significant weakness of a shared advising program is the inability of professional advisors to address stumbling blocks associated with specific disciplines. College-based offices may mitigate this weakness.
IV. OPERATIONS: BUDGET AND STAFFING CONSIDERATIONS

Overview of Staffing and Budgets

The information listed below applies to the university’s centralized advising center, not college-based centers, with the exception of the student-to-advisor ratios at University A and University G (in these cases, the student-to-advisor ratio quoted is university-wide).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Advising Staff</th>
<th>Student-to-Advisor Ratio</th>
<th>Population Served</th>
<th>Approximate Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University A</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>350:1*</td>
<td>Undeclared students and students in most majors</td>
<td>$1.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University C</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>403:1</td>
<td>Undeclared students</td>
<td>Unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University B</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>250:1</td>
<td>Undeclared and transfer students</td>
<td>$2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University D</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Unavailable</td>
<td>All first-year, undeclared, and probationary students</td>
<td>Unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University E</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>260:1</td>
<td>Undeclared students</td>
<td>$1.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>625:1</td>
<td>Undeclared students</td>
<td>Unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University G</td>
<td>2†</td>
<td>390:1*</td>
<td>Undeclared students</td>
<td>$1.2 million **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Ratio is university-wide (i.e., including all academic advisors not only those housed in a central office).
† University G’s centralized advising office has two full-time academic advising staff, but nine additional staff members are expected to carry at least a small advising load in addition to other job responsibilities.
** Approximately 20 percent of this sum pays for advising-related expenses; the remainder covers the center’s educational support and retention services.

Staffing Considerations

Advisor Qualifications

At most contact institutions, administrators require entry-level, centralized advisors to possess a bachelor’s degree, though administrators at three profiled institutions prefer candidates with master’s degrees. However, at University B, advisors must hold a master’s degree and have previous advising experience. Similarly, at University A, advisors must possess two years of prior work experience, preferably in an advising or counseling capacity.

Two categories of advisors and corresponding qualifications required at University C:

- **Advisor I** (or Senior Advisor): a bachelor’s degree and at least a year of work experience
- **Advisor II**: a master’s degree and three or more years of work experience

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Staffing Considerations (Cont.)

Advisor Compensation

The highest reported starting salary for an academic advisor is $39,000-$40,000 at University E. The lowest reported starting salary is $28,139 at University A where contacts observe high turnover with one or two advisors leaving their positions each semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University A</td>
<td>$28,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University D</td>
<td>Mid-$30,000s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University E</td>
<td>$39,000-$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University F</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Merit Pay Program

Although University A compensates its advisors at the lowest rate among profiled institutions, administrators in the centralized advising program operate a merit pay system that offers a permanent salary increase to high-performing staff members.

Every two years, advisors submit a binder of information showing their professional achievements.

If advisors’ portfolios are approved, they receive a permanent eight percent salary increase.

Merit pay allows advisors to chart upward progress and corresponding pay increases and does not require the university to bear the cost of a blanket salary increase. Additionally, all advisors are eligible to receive an annual $1,200 President’s Award, which recognizes outstanding advising.
V. TRANSITIONS TO CENTRALIZED ADVISING SERVICES

Of the institutions profiled in this brief, University F, University E, and University D altered their advising models in the last ten years to centralize some advising services. At University F and University E, administrators opened advising offices specifically for undeclared and pre-professional students, and, at University D, administrators reorganized advising services so that a centralized office serves all first-year students.

Overview of Transitions at Select Contact Institutions

☐ University F Creates Centralized Advising Office for Prescriptive Advising

University F operated a decentralized advising system prior to the establishment of its centralized office in 2009. Contacts report that an essential goal of the centralized office is to increase the coaching and mentorship potential of faculty advisors by reallocating prescriptive advising tasks to professionals.

- **Faculty members manage prescriptive advising.**
  - One faculty member or university administrators serve as an academic advisor for approximately 10 to 12 students until the advisees declare majors.
  - Each advisee was required to meet with their advisor every semester before registering for classes. After students declared a major at the end of their sophomore year, a departmental advisor assumed academic advising duties.

- **Professional staff manages prescriptive advising.**
  - The centralized office houses four professional academic counselors who manage prescriptive advising tasks, such as dropping and adding classes and degree mapping.
  - Students continue to meet with assigned faculty members and administrators who serve as academic advisors but these meetings are dedicated to building relationships and coaching students through academic decisions.

☐ University D Standardizes First-Year Advising by Mandating Centralized Advising

In 2009, University D expanded its centralized advising office, originally designed to serve undeclared students, to include all first-year students, regardless of their declared status. Previously, first-year students admitted into a specific college bypassed any centralized advising, immediately meeting with departmental advisors organized by the college in which they enrolled. Contacts report that the quality of first-year advising previously varied between colleges, but, under the new model, the quality of advising and the student-to-advisor ratio is consistent across the first-year class.

☐ University E Consolidates and Centralizes Advising, Restructuring Staff

University E underwent two phases in its transition. First, in 2006 when administrators combined the university’s two undergraduate colleges, administrators also consolidated advising services that were previously divided by college. In 2008, a new advising administrator heralded further change, including staff replacements, staff development, and new technology tools (e.g., an appointments software program). Contacts at University E consider two features essential to the new model:

1. **Centralized advisors with discipline expertise** offer more substantive, individualized advice about courses, potential career paths, and the unique challenges for students studying a specific discipline.
2. **Improved student-to-advisor ratio** allowed for more meaningful relationships between advisor and advisee. Contacts add that securing an up-front financial investment to hire new centralized advisors was a vital part of administrators’ action plan.
V. TRANSITIONS TO CENTRALIZED ADVISING SERVICES

Transition Timeline at University E

The below chart tracks the progress of University E's advising system from the beginning of the centralized system through its later changes.

2005

Men's Undergraduate College

Women's Undergraduate College

Centralized Academic Advising Office

The new centralized center employs 13 advisors and eight support staff. The center serves approximately 5,000 undergraduates and operates on a budget of approximately $800,000.

2006

Leadership Change

Administrators recruit new leadership for centralized advising office in 2008 and allocate $250,000 for staff expansion and other improvements.

2007

New Advising Features

- Increased advisor salaries: a reported jump from $31,000-$34,000 to $39,000-$40,000
- Staffing Shift: Staff increased from 13 to 25 advisors. Substantial turnover occurred, with only 5 pre-transition advisors remaining.
- Specialized Advisors: Newly created teams of advisors develop expertise in specific disciplines; advisors serve students interested in pursuing studies in advisors' discipline concentration. A separate team is devoted to at-risk students.
- Scheduling Software: Purchased SARS GRID, an appointment scheduling software tool, for $18,000.
- New Website: A new website was designed with links to advising resources.

2008

Contacts report an increase in retention from 82 percent to 91 percent as well as fewer complaints and improved student evaluations. Additionally, fewer students request to be assigned to a new advisor.

2009

2010

2011

2006

Advising systems are centralized along with single-sex undergraduate colleges in 2006.

Student complaints and poor staff performance leads to a call for change.

New leaders implement changes to staffing, the appointment system, and the website.

Contacts report positive results and credit advising, at least in part, for improved retention.

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### V. Transitions to Centralized Advising Services

#### Transition Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Challenge</th>
<th>Suggested Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Duplicate Job Responsibilities**  
At University F, contacts indicate that during the transition, faculty advisors expressed concern that the academic counselors in the new centralized advising office would duplicate efforts, assuming the role assigned to faculty advisors. | **Clarify New Job Responsibilities**  
Contacts report that the centralized office used training sessions with faculty advisors to explain the change in advising expectations, clarifying that academic counselors would fulfill prescriptive advising tasks, giving faculty advisors more time to discuss academic interests, course selection, and any other topics with advisees. |
| **New Position and Reporting Structure**  
Similarly, contacts at University D describe discontent among college-based professional advisors who feared for their jobs as administrators transitioned all first-year advising to the centralized office. (Previously, declared first-year students sought advising services from advisors employed by individual colleges.) Contacts also note that the transition disrupted existing reporting lines between first-year advisors previously based in colleges and college administrators. | **Highlight Advantages of New Model for Each Staff Position**  
To assuage the concerns of college-based advisors, university administrators emphasized the advantages of the transition: without first-year advising among their responsibilities, college-based advisors can dedicate more time to remaining advisees. Additionally, contacts indicate that the transition saved money for the college, which college administrators could allocate to in-house advising or any other college-specific need. |

#### 2. Securing Funds for New Staff Positions

Contacts at University E and University D report that lowering student-advisor ratios was an important goal for the transition process. For example, contacts at University E maintain that the previous student-to-advisor ratio of 400-500:1 contributed to academic advising’s reputation as chief among undergraduate complaints. Before beginning the advising overhaul in 2008, the newly appointed advising director petitioned the president for funds for new advising positions; contacts emphasize that without an increase in funding, administrators would have been hard-pressed to substantively improve advising.

#### 3. Physical Space Allocation

According to contacts at University F, the centralized advising office’s eight professional staff, called academic counselors, are spread across three locations within a single building, making communication difficult and confusing students.

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VI. Advising Technology Tools

Most contacts recommend centralized note-taking software that allows staff across colleges and departments to share information about students. Additionally, previous EAB research highlights midterm grade alerts and online self-service resources that help digitally centralize advising services.

Centralized Note-Taking Software
- Quickly Understand a Student’s Advising History

Contacts at University D, University B, University C and University G indicate that both departmental and centralized advisors electronically share notes. Contacts explain that centralized note-taking software...
...prevents students from making the same request of multiple advisors if the first advisor refused.
...helps identify instances in which students were misadvised.
...helps track progress of students who change colleges or departments multiple times.

Midterm Grade Alerts
- Identify Struggling Students and Intervene

Ongoing Education Advisory Board research highlights the benefits of automatic alert systems, many of which notify academic advisors if a student is struggling at the mid-semester mark. For example, administrators at several member institutions report using DegreeWorks software to track midterm grades in 100- and 200-level courses and identify failing students; advisors then contact flagged students en masse via e-mail and phone. Identifying at-risk students early in the semester allows advisors to offer academic support for the rest of the term (the fifth week of the semester is recommended for auditing grades and contacting students). If improvement looks unlikely, advisors encourage students to pursue another major. Focusing early alert efforts on high-attrition STEM or pre-health programs is especially effective in finding at-risk students.

Online Self-Service Resources
- Give Students Instant Answers; Save Advisors’ Time

Static Degree Path

University A publishes documents providing course selection guidance for all majors. The “degree plans” include course suggestions for each term as well as term milestones, which students must complete to remain on-track for timely graduation. Advisors flag a student’s profile as “off-track” after the first missed milestone. After two consecutive missed milestones, advisors block registration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term 1</th>
<th>Hrs.</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENC1101 or higher English</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Complete ENC1101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS Mathematics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>FSU GPA ≥ 2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS History</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS Natural Science</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Source: University A Web site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total hours</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Major Map: Advice and Co-Curricular Activities Designed for Each Major

Major maps at Georgia State University were profiled in previous Education Advisory Board research as an eye-catching and effective way to communicate with students about majors. Each map sets out resources for selecting courses and activities related to a student’s major. Action areas include advising, course requirements, internships, and global awareness. Major maps are also a good source of information for advisors, reminding them when to reach out to students about choosing a concentration or planning study abroad. (A major map example is illustrated on the following page.)
VI. ADVISING TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

A sample of Georgia State University's major maps, similar to an example displayed in Meeting Student Demand for High-Tech Displayed below. That report describes how universities can use technology to facilitate student self-advising. Effective self-encouragement students to instruct themselves about degree requirements, course descriptions and other prescriptive advising make academic advisors to focus on building personal relationships with their advisees.
VII. ASSESSMENT

Assessing the quality of advising programs presents two separate challenges: 1) evaluating the quality of advisors' work and 2) measuring the effects of advising on student outcomes. Contacts report the following strategies to address both aspects of assessment.

Tools for Evaluating Advisor Performance

Student Satisfaction Surveys

Contacts at University A, University F, University D, University G, and University C describe student satisfaction surveys as a tool for assessing centralized advisors' performance. At University G, administrators ask advisees to fill out a 20-question online survey using Qualtrics software both after advising appointments and at the end of every year. Contacts at University A and University C report a 23 to 30 percent response rate to biannual, mass e-mail surveys.

Employee Evaluations

Employee evaluations typically consist of a one-on-one meeting between advisor and supervisor. At University D and University A, the university's human resources department performs evaluations. At University G, evaluations are more informal; an advisor's supervisor will discuss the advisors' notes from 10 to 15 appointments, prompting the advisor to describe successes and strategies for improvement.

Tracking Student Success Data

Retention and Graduation Rates

- Compare Retention Rates for Undecided Students to Campus Average: Administrators at University G report tracking retention and graduation rates for students who enter as undecided. Retention for undecided students is 67 percent compared to the campus average of 73.1 percent, while the four-year graduation rates of both groups are comparable.

- Organize Graduation, Retention, and Attrition Rates by Students' Majors: At University B, the centralized advising office compiles data on the five-year graduation, retention, and attrition rates of its advisees and maps this data to students' college of graduation and the frequency at which students change majors. Administrators publish these statistics online in a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Where Are They Now?" Each presentation includes data from three cohort years.

Student Understanding of General Education Requirements

At University C, administrators reportedly implemented pre- and post-tests to assess students' understanding of general education curriculum requirements after meeting with advisors.
The Advisory Board has worked to ensure the accuracy of the information it provides to its members. This project relies on data obtained from many sources, however, and The Advisory Board cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information or its analysis in all cases. Further, The Advisory Board is not engaged in rendering clinical, legal, accounting, or other professional services. Its projects should not be construed as professional advice on any particular set of facts or circumstances. Members are advised to consult with their staff and senior management, or other appropriate professionals, prior to implementing any changes based on this project. Neither The Advisory Board Company nor its programs are responsible for any claims or losses that may arise from any errors or omissions in their projects, whether caused by the Advisory Board Company or its sources.

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