



# Show Me the Way

The Power of Advising  
in Community Colleges

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2018 NATIONAL REPORT



Center for  
Community College  
Student Engagement



## Acknowledgments

In 1972, Terry O'Banion wrote, "The purpose of academic advising is to help the student choose a program of study."<sup>1</sup> Forty-five years later, at a time when many colleges are working to transform their institutions with guided pathways, advisors are still asked to do the same thing: help students choose a program of study.

However, even though the core function of advising is the same, the role of advisors continues to evolve and expand. As colleges around the country are redesigning the student experience, job descriptions for advisors are changing. Advisors are being asked to outline each student's sequence of courses, deliver post-assessment information, facilitate student orientations, offer various types of guidance to students (individually and/or in group settings), work with each student to create a personalized plan and continually review the plan to ensure that progress is made, outline information on resources and services the college provides, celebrate success points, assist with transfer and/or career planning, analyze student retention data, and take appropriate steps to promote student success.

Advisors are asked to do all of this and more, while simultaneously building a relationship with every student they advise.

More than ever before, advisors are critical to student success.

This report is dedicated to all the advisors who work closely with students and help them complete their academic goals.

The Center would also like to recognize the support of The Kresge Foundation for generously funding focus groups about advising at three colleges, allowing us to hear directly from students and advisors about this essential service.

Evelyn N. Waiwaiole

*Executive Director*

*Center for Community College Student Engagement*

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# Advising: The Cornerstone of Student Support

Students and faculty consistently report that advising is the most important student service that colleges offer. Recent data from the Center for Community College Student Engagement suggest that students who receive more advising—more time with advisors and more in-depth discussions in their sessions—are more engaged.

## The Value of Advising

Advising is powerful because it attends to core elements of each student's success: setting academic goals based on transfer and/or career interests, developing an academic plan to attain those goals, and staying on track until those goals are met. Each of these big-picture tasks encompasses dozens of smaller ones. These tasks include:

- **Raising aspirations and setting goals.** Advisors meet with students individually and/or in groups to help students explore their academic and career options and set career and academic goals. As part of this process, advisors show students paths they might not have considered—such as transferring to earn a bachelor's degree or pursuing a career path with higher earning potential—to help students improve their economic mobility.
- **Developing academic plans and registering for courses.** Advisors help students develop detailed academic plans to attain their goals. And of course, they help students identify and register for the courses they need each term.
- **Helping students help themselves.** Advisors point students to a variety of supports—including academic, financial, and social service resources—that students

can use to improve their college experience and opportunities for success. This effort to help students better engage with their coursework, peers, and instructors often starts with orientation and continues throughout the students' years at the college.

- **Focusing on the big picture.** Advisors analyze student retention data and use the findings to identify actions the college can take to improve overall student outcomes.

“

For this semester, I didn't go to an advisor. I chose to skip, and I think I'm sort of paying the price for it.

— STUDENT

”

The multilayered benefits of advising are well established: “Advisors help students make choices in a complex environment, often by explaining the costs and benefits of each available option, and they guide students to additional resources that will help them make good decisions.”<sup>2</sup>

These good decisions have benefits beyond putting students on track to meet their long-term goals. In addition, they help students feel welcome and engaged. Perhaps most important, they help students experience early successes—meeting financial aid deadlines, enrolling in courses that advance their career goals, and so on—that build their confidence. Over time, these early successes accumulate and give students a strong foundation for persevering and meeting the challenges of completing college.

Advisors have a variety of titles, including academic advisors, career advisors, counselors, coaches, and mentors. This report uses the term *advisor*, and it incorporates all of these roles.



## The Need for More Advising

Even though the benefits of advising are well established, Center data indicate that not all students are getting everything they need. Among students who have been enrolled at their colleges for more than one semester, 78% report meeting with an advisor. Of those students, 47% report being *very satisfied* with their advising experience, 44% say they are *somewhat satisfied*, and 7% say they are *not at all satisfied*.

If colleges consider the 22% of students who report not meeting with an advisor at all, along with the 44% who report doing so but being only *somewhat satisfied* and the 7% who say they are *not at all satisfied*, it becomes clear that many students need more when it comes to this important service.

Given the evidence about the impact of advising, why aren't more students advised? Why don't they all experience these critical points of early engagement that help them feel as if they belong at their college? Why don't they all get the kind of advising that is proven to help students start accumulating successes from the moment they begin their college experience?

This report aims to help colleges better understand advising, including how advising's structure, content, and intensity help shape the student experience. While some colleges use digital platforms and tools to support advising, *Show Me the Way* focuses on the human interactions of advising.

The report includes returning student data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), entering student data from the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), and faculty data from the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE).

## A Wise Investment in Advising

*"The investment in 42 academic advisors resulted in an additional yearly cost of \$2 million, but it more than paid for itself because the increased retention rate meant more revenue for the school."*

**Timothy M. Renick, Ph.D.**

*Vice President for Enrollment Management & Student Success; Vice Provost and Professor  
Georgia State University*

While Georgia State University (GSU) is a four-year institution, it is a public university that serves high percentages of low-income students, students of color, and first-generation students and does so with a shrinking pool of state funds. Yet GSU increased its graduation rate by more than 20 percentage points in a little more than a decade with great gains for students of color. In fact, Black and Hispanic students now have graduation rates that are comparable to or higher than those of White students.

GSU made this progress while transforming its educational approach. Its reforms mirror the guided pathways approach now being implemented at community colleges across the country.

“

For the first advising appointment, we try to get as much information from the student as we can ... what their career goals are, what their major goals are, if they have plans to transfer because that is going to affect what program they're in. . . . We definitely have conversations about if they're working outside of school and their time management.

— ADVISOR

”

# Advising Today: Progress and Challenges

While the big-picture goals of advisors have remained consistent over time, colleges are now asking more of their advisors and of the advising process—that it be more intrusive, more equitable, and more holistic. Around the country there are pockets of innovation, and evidence of this type of innovation is beginning to appear in Center survey data.

For example, in the 2011 *SENSE* administration, 56% of entering students said an advisor helped them set academic goals and create a plan for achieving them. In the 2016 administration, that figure rose 11 percentage points to 67%.

Even as the role of the advisor becomes more complex, advisors continue to face the same long-standing challenges: high student-to-advisor ratios; the need to advise the majority of students in a short time frame; and competing demands for students' time, including work and childcare.

Moreover, with the changing landscape of community colleges, new challenges require advisors to have broader skill sets. Advisors increasingly must, for example:

- Have in-depth conversations with students not only about degree plans and transfer opportunities, but also about current job markets, specific career opportunities and their earning potential, and career decisions based on those data points.
- Be intentional about avoiding bias by addressing each student's challenges and helping each student meet his or her goals.

These new aspects of advising call upon colleges to consider whether additional training would help advisors better serve their students.



## An advisor helped me set academic goals and create a plan for achieving them

Entering students 2011

56%

(N=28,835)

Source: 2011 *SENSE* administration data

Entering students 2016

67%

(N=27,854)

Source: 2016 *SENSE* administration data

“

Our caseloads . . . are still too large to really be able to follow up with students. . . . In a perfect world, we'd have three times the amount of advisors.

— ADVISOR

”

# Students Who Are Advised Are More Engaged

Students who report meeting with an advisor are more engaged across all CCSSE benchmarks than their peers who have not met with an advisor. This finding is not surprising, given that students and faculty consistently describe advising as *very important*. In fact, it is called *very important* more often than any other student service.

While the majority of all students report meeting with an advisor, returning students are more likely to report doing so (78%) than are entering students (62%). As less than 50% of first-time-in-college students return to the same institution the following fall,<sup>3</sup> this discrepancy suggests that early advising might contribute to increased retention.

“

My advisor has . . . been there with me the whole step of the way. She definitely doesn't sugarcoat anything, and she lets me know what I need to know.

— STUDENT

”

## Most Students Meet With an Advisor

Entering students who report meeting with an advisor

62%

(N=37,316)

Source: 2016 SENSE entering student data

Returning students who report meeting with an advisor

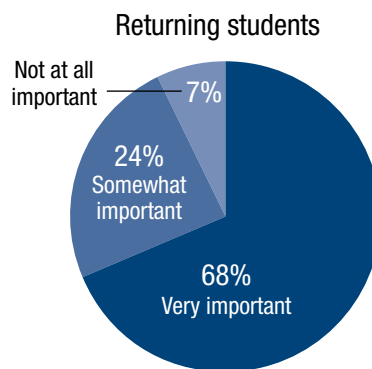
78%

(N=92,342)

Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data

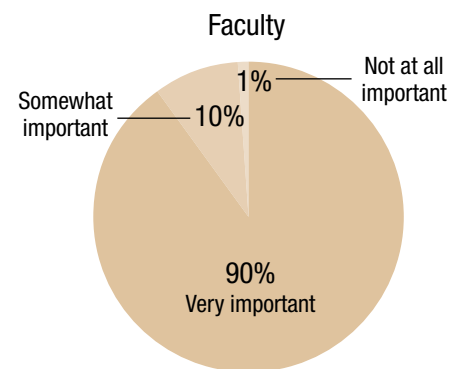
## Most Students and Faculty Report That Advising Is Very Important

How important is academic advising/planning?



(N=86,349)

Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data; includes student respondents who report not meeting with an advisor



(N=9,184)

Source: 2017 CCFSSSE data

Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.



## Methodology

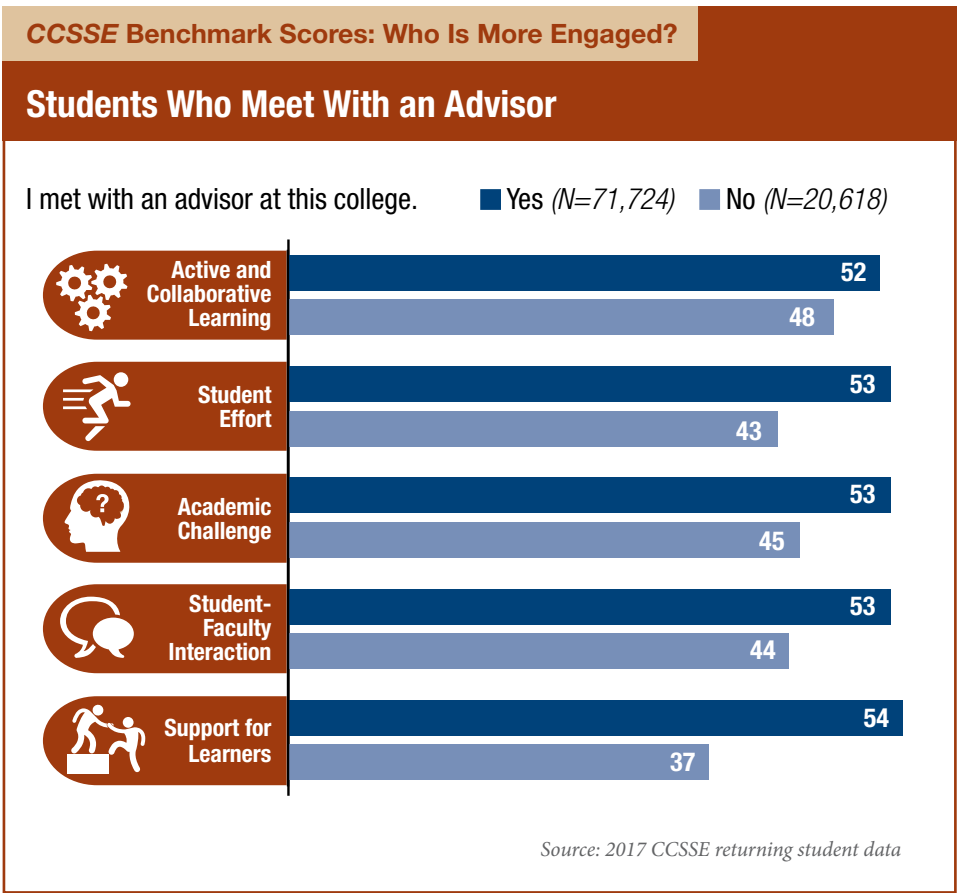
CCSSE 2017 was administered to 179,672 students at 297 colleges. Of those colleges, 188 administered the academic advising and planning item set to 113,315 respondents, of which 93,815 were returning students no longer in their first term of college. Unless otherwise noted, all analyses in this report using CCSSE data are based on this respondent set. Counts for the individual items vary due to missing data. Analyses presented throughout this report are weighted by enrollment status.

CCFSSE 2017 was administered at 86 colleges to 9,577 faculty.

SENSE 2016 was administered to 42,056 students at 102 colleges. Of those colleges, 94 administered the academic advising and planning item set to 39,784 entering student respondents. Unless otherwise noted, all analyses in this report using SENSE data are based on this respondent set. Counts for the individual items vary due to missing data. Analyses presented throughout this report are weighted by enrollment status.

The majority of the student data presented exclude respondents who indicated that they had not met with an advisor. The discussion of the data points identifies rare cases in which these respondents are included. The full methodology details include a complete description of how the group of students who met with an advisor was defined.

For more information about the methodology used in this report, visit [www.cccse.org/nr2018](http://www.cccse.org/nr2018).



# Structure Matters

*SENSE* and *CCSSE* data suggest that requiring advising may lead to more student success, particularly for entering students.

In addition to requiring advising for the majority of students, colleges should consider how other policies and structures influence advising. Some approaches, such as guided pathways, build academic planning and advising into registration and require it for all students. Some colleges build advising into classes, and students who report that an advisor visited at least one of their classes are more engaged.

Other policies, however, may hinder advising. If, for example, entering students are allowed to register a week before classes start, it is unlikely that the college will be able to provide comprehensive advising services for all of them before they select their first classes.

Students turn to various sources for academic planning and guidance, and these sources differ based on students' time in college. More than two-thirds of returning students (68%) report that college advisors or instructors are their main source of advising, compared to only 47% of entering

students. Entering students are more likely than returning students to rely on friends, family, or other students for advising. That said, *SENSE* data show that 47% of entering students rely on advisors now compared to 43% in 2011.

“

**I think we find out their commitments semester by semester because . . . our students, their lives, they change a lot.**

— ADVISOR

”

The faculty role in advising varies across colleges. Not surprisingly, full-time faculty are more likely than part-time faculty to report advising as part of their role. At some colleges, advising is an explicit formal role for full- and part-time faculty as specified in their contracts. Many colleges, however, provide a mix of formal and informal advising, and most institutions likely would see differences between full-time and part-time faculty in this area.

## Guided Pathways Are Transforming Colleges: What Does This Transformation Mean for Advising?

Colleges across the country are implementing guided pathways, and that effort typically requires undertaking large-scale transformational change, including re-evaluating and updating advising models. Colleges take on this challenging work to improve rates of college completion, transfer, and attainment of jobs with value in the labor market—and to achieve equity in those outcomes.

The American Association of Community Colleges uses the following explanation of pathways:

*The Pathways Model is an integrated, institution-wide approach to student success based on intentionally designed, clear, coherent, and structured educational experiences, informed by available evidence, that guide each student effectively and efficiently from her/his point of entry through to attainment of high-quality postsecondary credentials and careers with value in the labor market.*

*Central to the pathways model are clear, educationally coherent program maps—which include specific course sequences, progress milestones, and program learning outcomes—that are aligned to what will be expected of students upon program completion in the workforce and in education at the next level in a given field. Students are helped from the start to explore academic and career options, choose a program of study, and develop a plan based on the program maps. These plans simplify student decision-making, and they enable colleges to provide predictable schedules, frequent feedback, and targeted support as needed to help students stay on track and complete their programs more efficiently. They also facilitate efforts by faculty to ensure that students are building the skills across their programs that they will need to succeed in employment and further education.<sup>4</sup>*



## Entering Students Are More Likely to Be Required to Meet With an Advisor

Among the 62% (*N*=37,316) of entering students who report meeting with an advisor

73%

report being required to meet with an advisor before registering for classes their first term  
(*N*=23,079)

Source: 2016 SENSE entering student data

Among the 78% (*N*=92,342) of returning students who report meeting with an advisor

51%

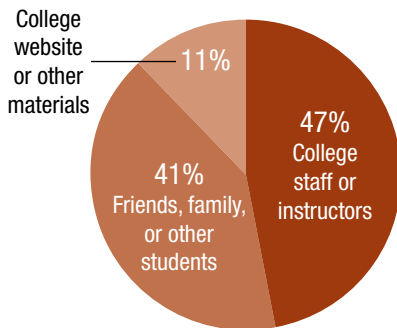
report being required to meet with an advisor before registering for classes for the current term  
(*N*=71,724)

Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data

## Returning Students Are More Likely to Rely on College Advisors

Who has been your main source of academic advising?

Entering students

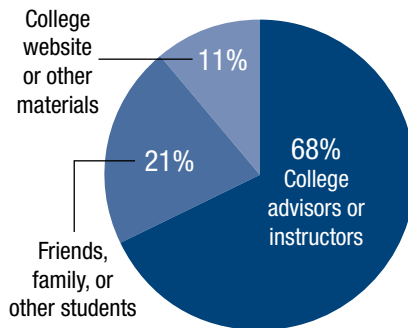


(*N*=20,732)

Source: 2016 SENSE entering student data

Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Returning students



(*N*=67,154)

Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data

“

Once you're past your freshman year, it seems like you're pretty much on your own, just picking your classes. You'll get recommendations, but you . . . just [use] the website.

— STUDENT

”





“

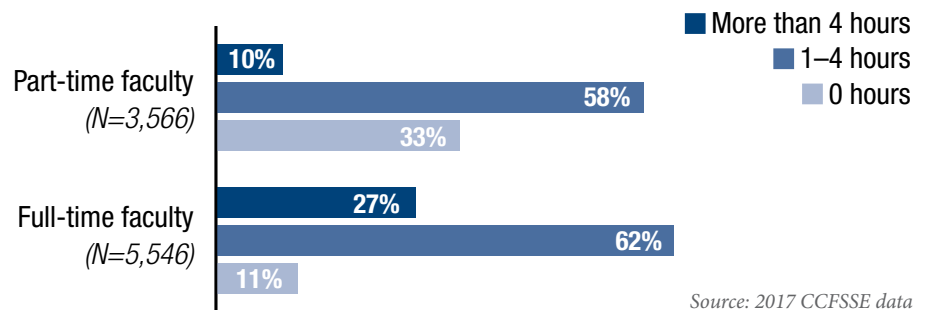
As a student, you really need to feel like someone is an advocate for you.

— STUDENT

”

## Most Faculty Spend Few Hours Per Week on Advising

About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week advising students?



Source: 2017 CCFSSSE data  
Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

## Less Than a Quarter of Students Say an Advisor Came to One of Their Classes

An advisor came to one of my classes to speak about my academic goals and planning.  
(N=60,627)

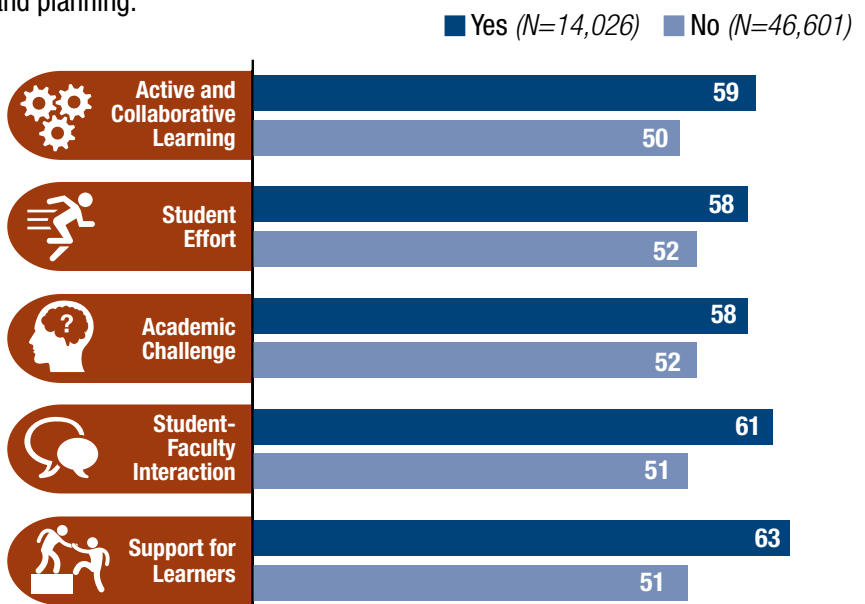


Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data

## CCSSE Benchmark Scores: Who Is More Engaged?

### Students Who Say an Advisor Came to One of Their Classes

An advisor came to one of my classes to speak about my academic goals and planning.



Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data

# Content Matters

The large majority of students who meet with an advisor get advice about class registration, and a slightly smaller number receive information about support services. Beyond that, however, the content of advising sessions varies.

An even smaller number of students have conversations that cover topics such as setting career goals, making an

academic plan, considering commitments outside of school, and understanding employment opportunities. However, as students who experience these more in-depth conversations are more engaged, colleges may better serve their students by making more comprehensive advising the norm.

“

[My advisor] squeezed as many transfer credits as she could out of what I had previously done. I came out feeling very prepared for the semester and really excited about the classes I was going to take.

— STUDENT

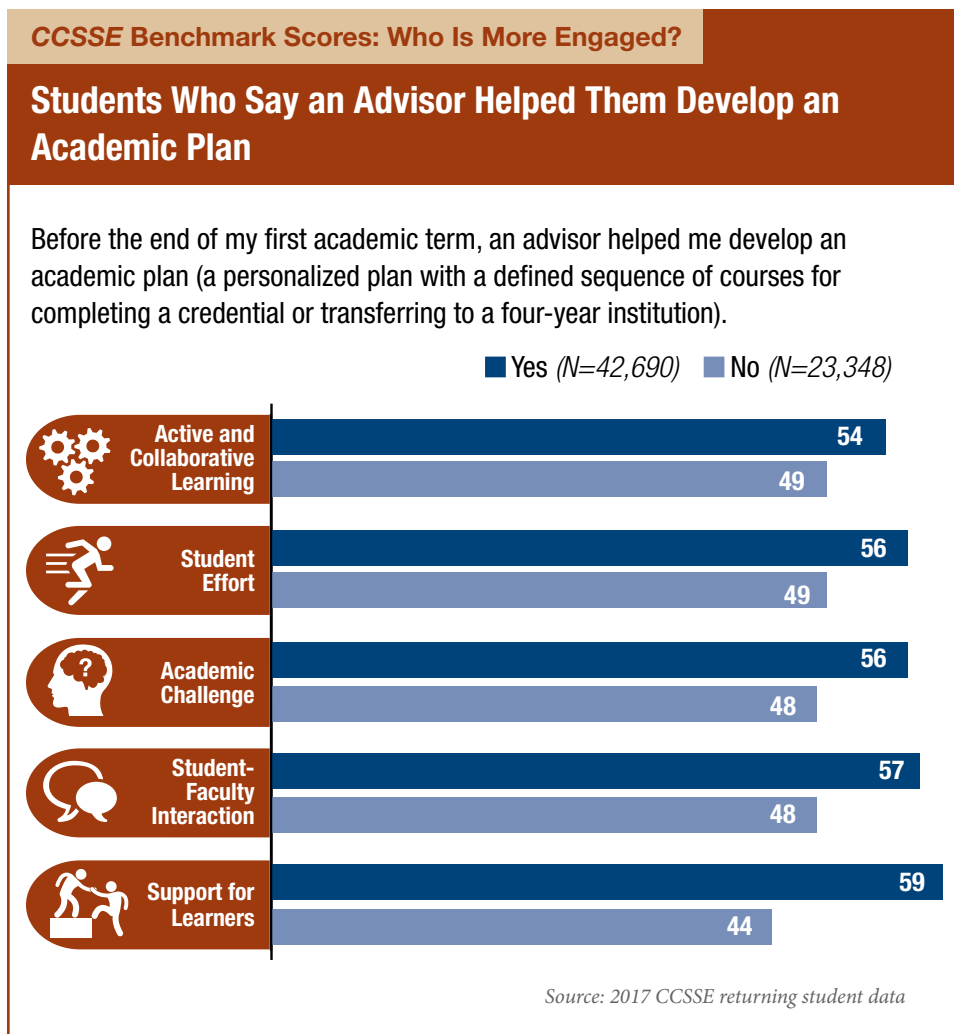
”

“

We are assigned an advisor for our degree, and they know our degree path. It's the same advisor each and every time [and that] makes it easier.

— STUDENT

”



“

We want to make sure [part-time students] are taking a balanced schedule so they can be successful.

— ADVISOR

”

“

My first year, I didn't know we had a writing center, a math lab. . . . I was struggling a little bit with papers and just the work itself. . . . Then when I got introduced into these [resources], I started getting better. I got As and Bs. . . . I just wish [those supports] were more broadcast because I didn't know anything about [them].

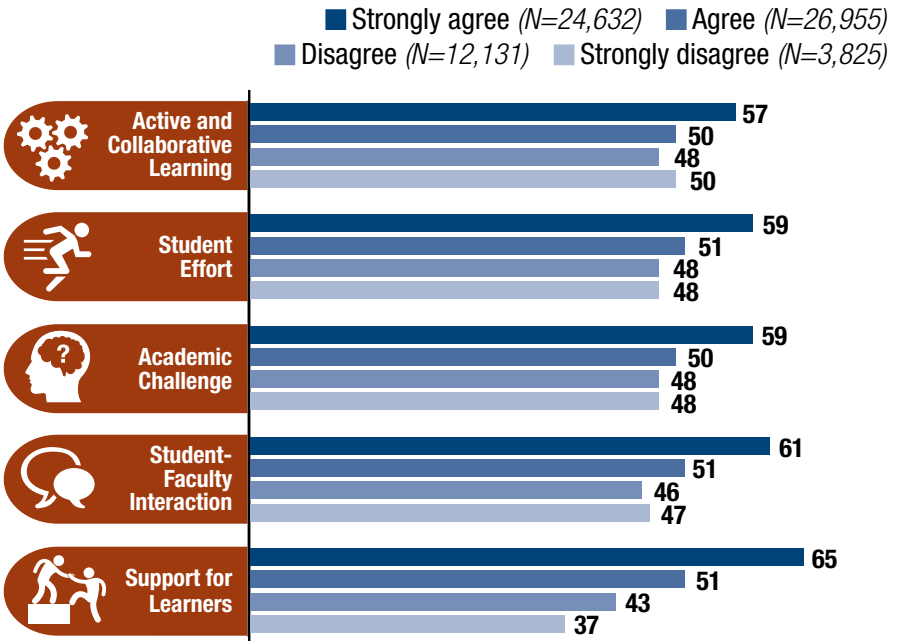
— STUDENT

”

CCSSE Benchmark Scores: Who Is More Engaged?

Students Who Say an Advisor Gave Them Information About Academic Support Services

An advisor provided me with information about academic support services (tutoring services, writing center, math skill lab, etc.).

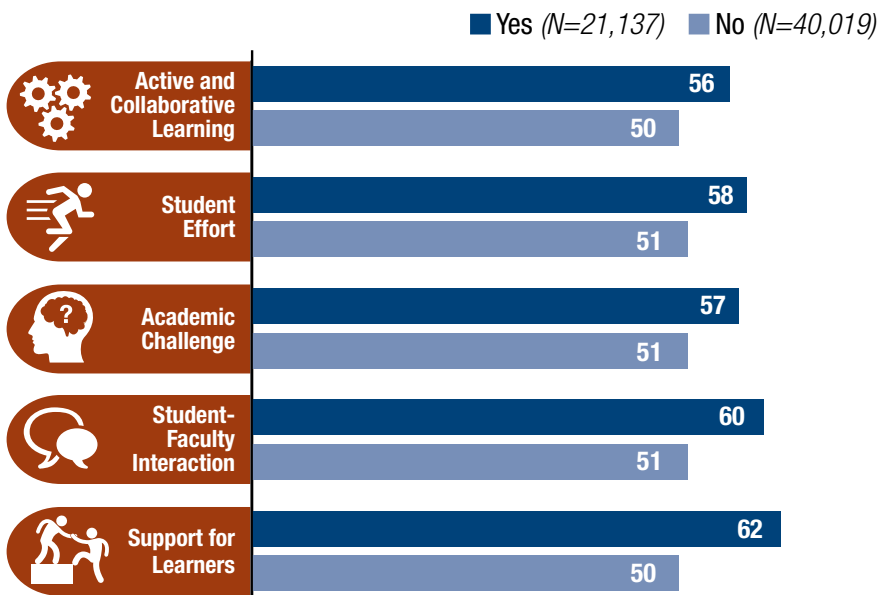


Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data

CCSSE Benchmark Scores: Who Is More Engaged?

Students Who Say Their Advisor Discussed When Their Next Session Should Be

During my most recent meeting with an advisor this term, he or she discussed when my next advising session should be.

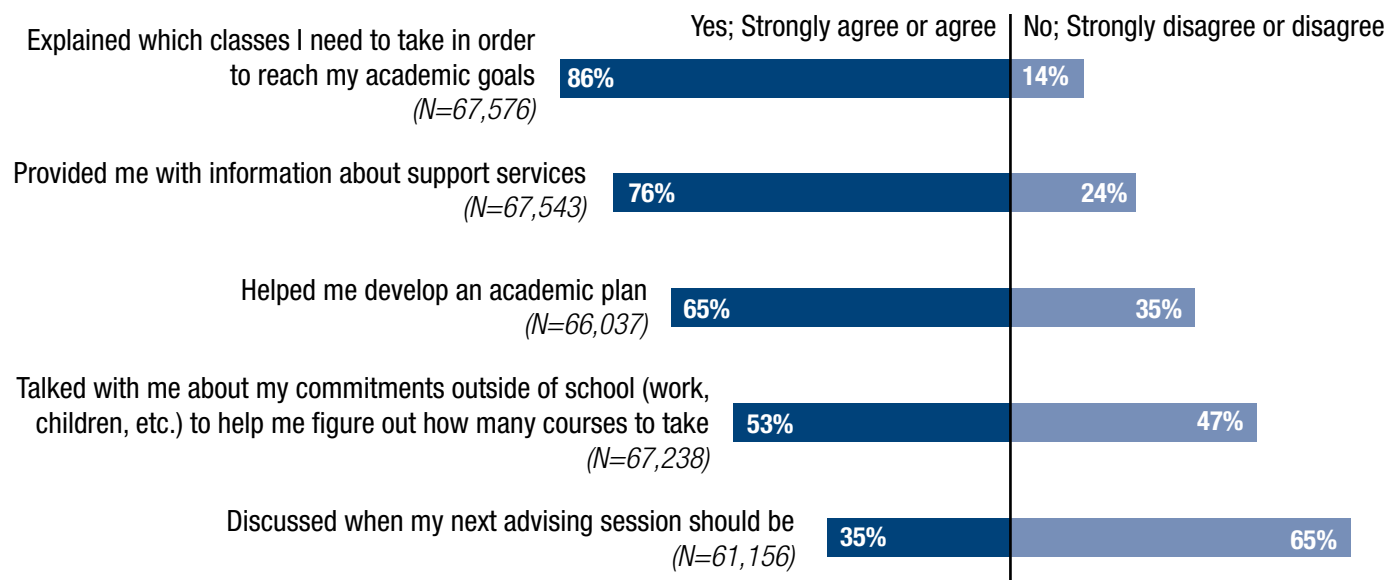


Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data

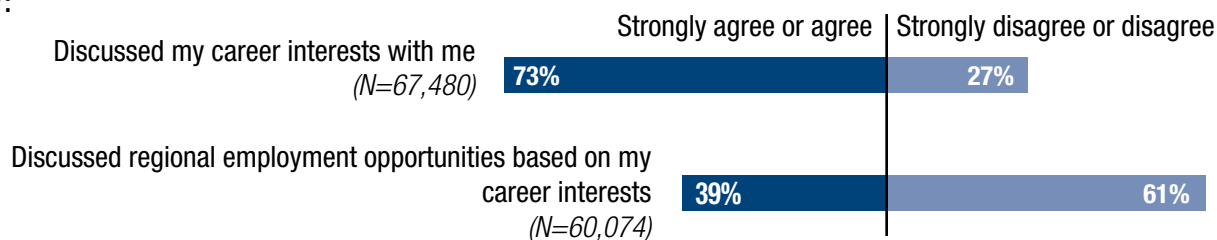


## Smaller Numbers of Students Get More In-Depth Advising

### An advisor:



### An advisor:



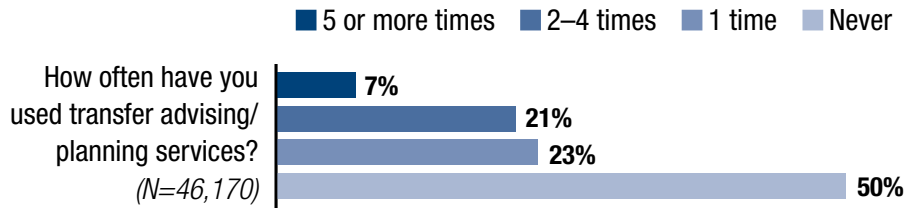
Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data

# Transfer-Seeking Students Who Use Transfer Advising Are More Engaged

Half (50%) of returning students who report transfer as a goal have *never* used their college's transfer advising services. Yet students who intend to transfer and use transfer advising services are more engaged—and the more they use transfer advising services, the more engaged they are.

## Half of Transfer-Seeking Students Do Not Use Transfer Advising

Among students who report transfer as a goal:

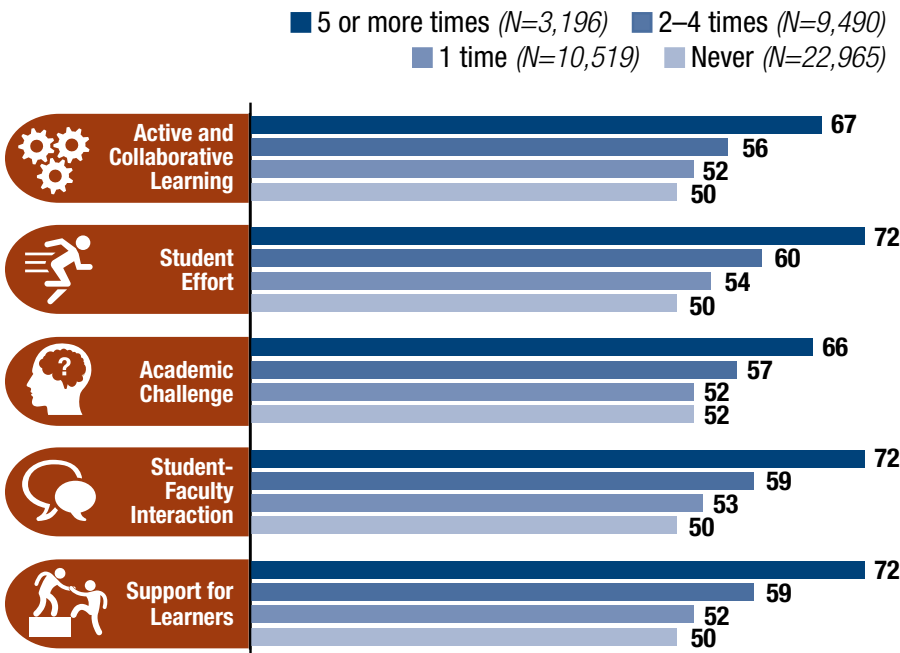


Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data  
Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

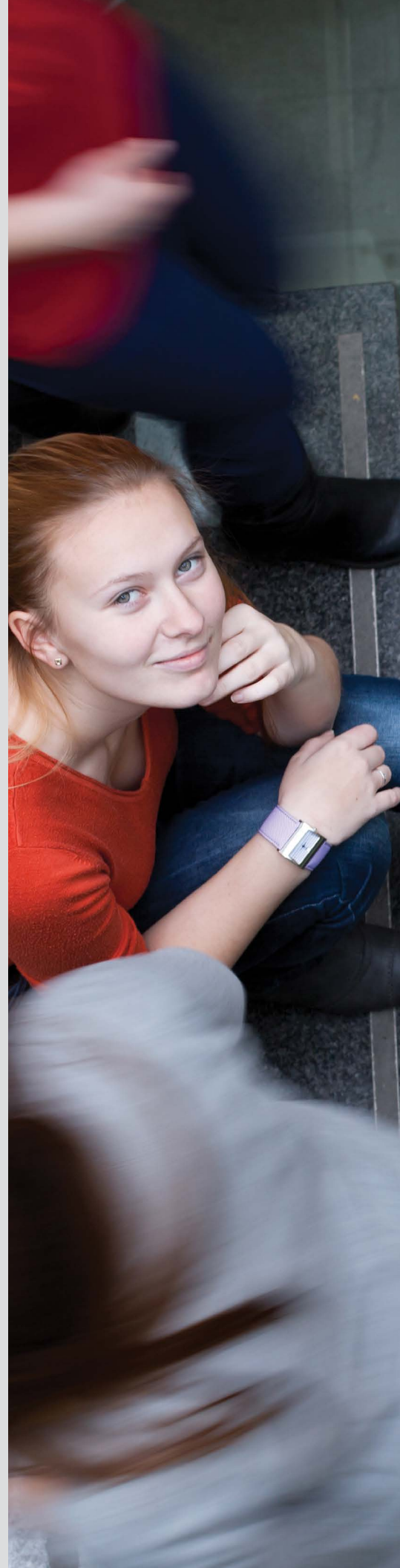
## CCSSE Benchmark Scores: Who Is More Engaged?

### Students Who Say They Used Transfer Advising Services

Among students who report transferring to a four-year college or university as a goal for attending their current college: How often have you used transfer advising/planning services?



Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data



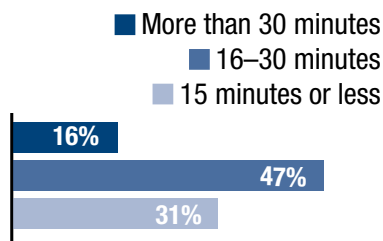
# Intensity Matters

Students who spend more time with their advisors, in either longer or more frequent sessions, are more engaged. However, many students' advising experiences fall on the least-intensive end of the spectrum.

## Smaller Numbers of Students Get More Intensive Advising

How long did your first advising session at this college last?

(N=67,954)

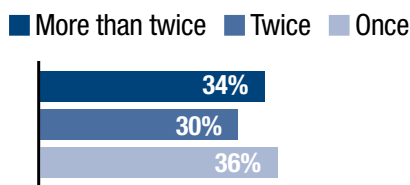


Data for students responding I do not remember are not displayed.

Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data

During this term, how many times have you met with an advisor?

(N=57,713)



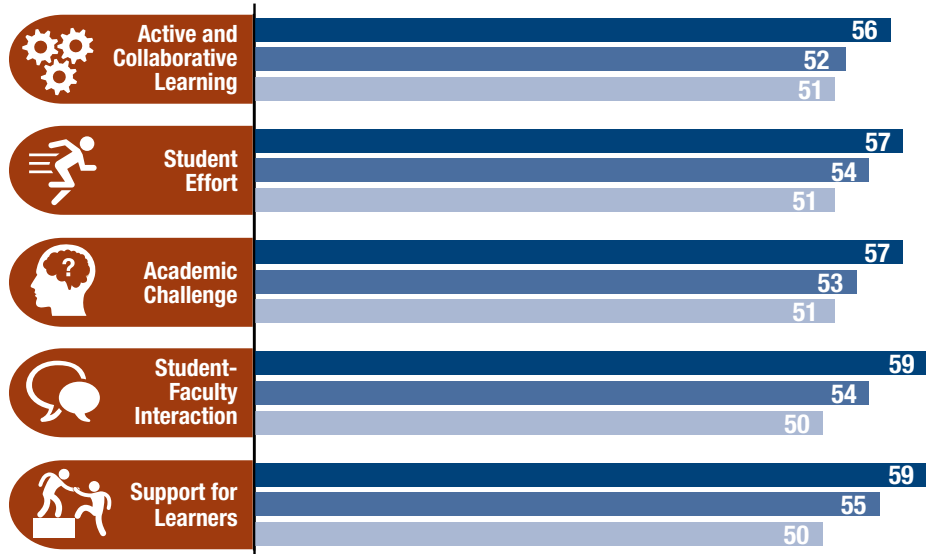
Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data

## CCSSE Benchmark Scores: Who Is More Engaged?

### Students Who Have Longer Initial Advising Sessions

How long did your first advising session at this college last?

■ More than 30 minutes (N=10,632) ■ 16–30 minutes (N=31,681) ■ 15 minutes or less (N= 21,336)



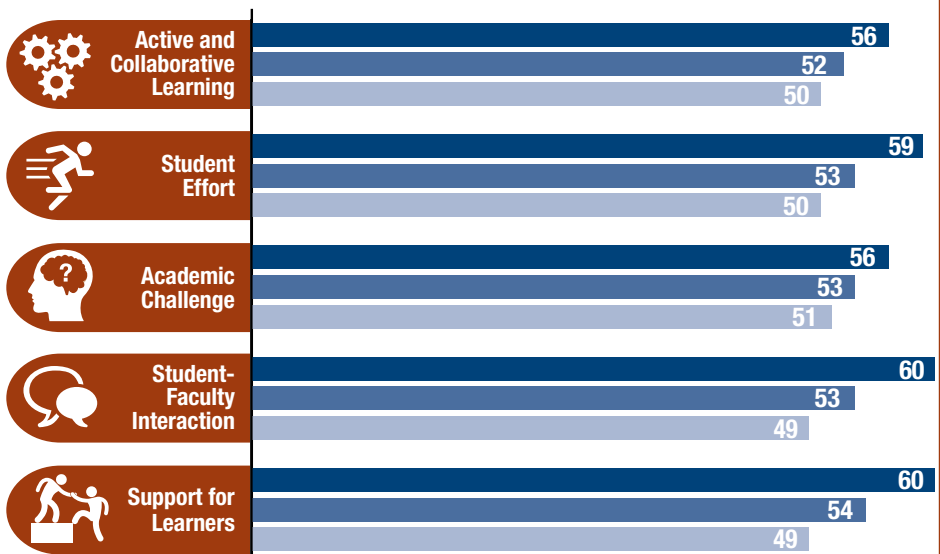
Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data

## CCSSE Benchmark Scores: Who Is More Engaged?

### Students Who Meet With Advisors More Often

During this term, how many times have you met with an advisor?

■ More than twice (N=19,611) ■ Twice (N=17,054) ■ Once (N=21,049)



Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data

# A Different Advising Model: Student Athletes



Most colleges provide more comprehensive advising to at least some students, such as developmental students; cohort-based students like those in nursing programs; and student athletes, who may receive the most intrusive advising of any student group. These focused models demonstrate that many colleges already have approaches to advising that lead to higher engagement. Colleges can use these models as templates for providing in-depth advising more broadly.

Student athletes are more likely to experience a range of advising experiences that are associated with higher engagement. These experiences include being required to meet with an advisor, meeting with advisors more frequently, and meeting with the same advisor throughout a term.

Scaling up a comprehensive advising model that currently is used for only a small group of students may be cost prohibitive. However, colleges can evaluate their processes for small-scale intrusive advising and consider which aspects of this model might be used, in a modified form if necessary, for all students.

Colleges also can consider group advising, which provides opportunities to scale services and encourage relationships among students. For example, many colleges implementing guided pathways have already created cohorts of students with common career aspirations. Collectively advising groups of students such as these can allow for more directive and effective guidance.

“

On this campus, Coach knows everybody. . . . [If] you miss class, and the professor is aware that you're an athlete, Coach is going to find out. . . . Coach expects to see zero [absences]. If there are [any], there are going to be consequences.

— STUDENT ATHLETE

”





## A Model for Comprehensive Advising: Student Athletes

Student athletes are more likely to:

	Athletes	Non-athletes
Meet with an advisor two or more times in the current term	<b>72%</b> (N=1,930)	(N=55,171) <b>63%</b>
Meet with the same advisor each time in the current term*	<b>69%</b> (N=1,731)	(N=45,762) <b>55%</b>
Be required to meet with an advisor before registering for classes for the current term	<b>67%</b> (N=2,128)	(N=64,558) <b>54%</b>
Have an advisor talk with them about their outside commitments (work, children, etc.) to determine how many courses to take	<b>66%</b> (N=2,172)	(N=64,342) <b>52%</b>
Have an advisor discuss regional employment opportunities based on their career interests	<b>47%</b> (N=1,985)	(N=57,415) <b>39%</b>

Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data

\*Data for students responding I have only met with an academic advisor once this academic term are excluded from analysis.

# College Examples: Advising in Action

Center data reveal changes in the way colleges are approaching advising and incorporating it into the student experience. Many colleges are implementing innovative advising models that provide more in-depth advising to larger numbers of students.

The following examples show how five colleges are rethinking all aspects of advising, including who is required to have it, who provides it, what it includes, and how intensive it is. The Center hopes these examples will be helpful as your college evaluates its own advising approach and considers changes that will better serve all students. See page 20 for questions that can help your college guide its conversations about strengthening advising.

## **Asheville-Buncombe Technical College: Advising for Transfer Students Mandates Entering a Pathway**

At **Asheville-Buncombe Technical College (NC)**, 45% of students pursue transfer-related associate degrees such as Associate in Science, Associate in Arts, Associate in Fine Arts, and Associate in Engineering. An increasing demand for college transfer courses and a statewide articulation agreement with North Carolina's four-year colleges and universities led the college to develop a new approach to transfer advising.

### Question for Colleges



How does your college determine how many advisors it needs?

Thus, since fall 2016, all new students enrolled in a transfer program are supported through the Transfer Advising Center, which is staffed by

a coordinator, two full-time advisors, and one part-time advisor. Students enrolled in terminal degree programs (who do not intend to transfer) will continue with the

college's prior advising model: Advising is required for all students to enable registration, and students are advised exclusively by faculty members in their individual programs of study.

New students with a goal of transfer are assigned an advisor from the Transfer Advising Center during a transfer orientation session. All new transfer degree-seeking students are placed into a College Transfer Success course, which is mandated at the state level. In this course, students complete career exploration and then declare one of 19 pathways of study within the transfer degree programs. Career exploration includes researching careers of interest, investigating the credentials necessary for each career, and determining which four-year colleges and universities offer the credentials they are seeking.

After a student declares a pathway of study, the Transfer Advising Center assigns him or her a discipline-specific full-time faculty advisor from within the student's chosen pathway. At this point in the College Transfer Success course, the student sets up an initial meeting with that advisor. Students are required to have this initial meeting before registering for courses for the following semester. The student will work with this advisor each semester throughout his or her college career unless the student has more complex needs. In those cases, the student will receive guidance directly from the Transfer Advising Center's staff.

The College Transfer Success course is taught in a variety of time frames throughout the semester, including eight-week and 16-week versions. Consequently, students choose pathways of study and are assigned a pathway-specific advisor at different points throughout the term. The college's goal is for all new students to select a pathway during their first semester. The full impact of the pathways project and all of its components, including the Transfer Advising Center, will not be realized until the first of the students who entered in fall 2016 are projected to begin graduating.



## Community College of Philadelphia: More Intensive Advising Correlates With Increased Persistence

As part of its guided pathways reform efforts, the **Community College of Philadelphia (PA)** implemented a new advising model for the 2016–17 academic year. The college shifted away from a structure in which faculty advised all students on a part-time basis and adopted a more intensive advising model, which has an intake process that clarifies student goals and career direction and includes progress tracking and individually designed support.

While faculty still assist with drop-in advising, the college now employs nine full-time advisors, who are assigned to individual students and also assist with walk-in advising requests. The full-time advisors were initially assigned to students in the largest curricula at the college: health care, liberal arts, business, computer information systems technology, psychology, and justice programs. Beginning in fall 2016, almost three-quarters of first-time students (72%,  $N=4,059$ ) at the college were assigned to a full-time advisor.

The full-time advisors provide extensive and proactive academic advising to students using a number of formats: one-on-one, group, and virtual advising through Skype. They also stay in touch with students via e-mail; phone; and Starfish, the college's retention software. All contacts with students are documented in Starfish, and advisors use this program to refer students to tutoring and other academic support services as needed. Using Starfish, advisors also can track whether students have followed through with the referrals.

Every student who sees an advisor creates an educational plan, and students then register based on this plan. In addition to meeting in the advising offices, advisors attend sections of the college's first-year-experience course (which is required for all students in health care, business, and liberal arts) to begin the students' creation of their educational plans.

The new advising model, along with other reforms, such as the implementation of first-year-experience courses, appears to be increasing persistence. Among first-time-in-college students in the new-advising-model curricular areas, the 2015–16 fall-to-fall persistence rate was 45% ( $N=1,601$ ).

After the college implemented the new advising model, the 2016–17 fall-to-fall persistence rate was 51% ( $N=2,891$ ).

Additionally, among students who were assigned an advisor, the fall 2016 to spring 2017 persistence rate was 75% ( $N=2,891$ ), compared to a 70% ( $N=1,168$ ) persistence rate for students who did not see an advisor. While initial analyses demonstrate a positive impact, the college plans to continue measuring persistence rates moving forward.



## Question for Colleges

Have expectations for advisors changed at your college in the past five years?

## Chaffey College: GPS Centers Facilitate Early Engagement

**Chaffey College (CA)** launched its Guiding Panthers to Success (GPS) Center in 2013. GPS was developed to meet requirements of the California Student Success Act of 2012, which include students' participation in matriculation services such as assessment, orientation, and educational planning. The philosophy behind the program is that students increase their likelihood of persistence and success if they begin college with an informed goal, participate in orientation and educational planning, and understand their placement in math and English.

The GPS infrastructure—which began as a pilot in the college's old administration building—has become the first point of contact for the majority of new students and is an integral component of the new student experience. GPS



Centers are now located at all three Chaffey College campus locations. Each facility has a full-time counseling faculty member as well as support from part-time counseling faculty and graduate school apprentices (known as success guides).

After completing orientation and assessment, students receive counseling assistance to develop their initial education plan. Success guides and counselors also provide workshops on college readiness, assessment preparation, financial literacy, academic success for probationary students, and career planning. In addition, the Centers serve as the primary support service providing registration assistance for first-time and continuing students.

Additionally, the GPS Centers help students access and use online student support resources including self-service student planning (educational planning and degree audit), the student portal, and distance education. Continuing students may meet with a counselor or success guide to audit progress toward completion of their educational goals.

Other forms of advising also occur at the college: A cadre of full- and part-time counselors provide continuing students with more comprehensive advising, and through an instructional faculty advising program, students are advised by faculty members within their programs of study. The GPS Centers, on the other hand, serve as the primary intake and triage centers for new and returning students. Students can drop into a Center at any time for one-on-one support. Since their inception, the Centers have provided more than 45,000 orientations and assisted in developing nearly 40,000 initial educational plans. In the 2016–17 academic year, the Centers served more than two-thirds of Chaffey College's students ( $N=29,000$ ).

## Cleveland State Community College: Graduation Rates Rise After Advising Overhaul

Cleveland State Community College (TN) launched a new advising model in spring 2013 and moved to full-scale implementation in fall 2013. The new model revamps almost all aspects of the advising process.

- **Who gets advised.** The college requires all credential-seeking students regardless of enrollment status to attend advising each term, and students are not allowed to register for courses until they see an advisor, who gives each student a PIN to access registration.
- **Who advises.** New students are required to attend an orientation event in which initial career exploration takes place and after which initial academic advising occurs. After the orientation, students choose a major or academic pathway and then are assigned a faculty advisor in that pathway. While most students experience one-on-one advising with their assigned faculty advisor, they can also use drop-in services in the Advising Center, which is staffed by full-time faculty members and a few select staff, all of whom have completed the college's intensive online training.
- **Content of advising.** To ensure a consistent level of quality, the college developed checklists for each category of students with whom advisors meet. Students must also enroll in a first-year seminar (preferably in the first semester), which covers exploration of career choice in more depth, academic advising and planning, and other topics.

- **Intensity of advising.** Advising sessions for new students may take more than an hour as faculty tailor each advising session to the individual needs of the student, while sessions for students with academic plans in place may take as little as 15 minutes.

Cleveland State developed this new advising approach after the governor announced the state's Drive to 55 initiative, which aims to increase degree completion to 55% of all Tennesseans by 2025. It was launched as part of the college's 2011 accreditation work. The college used both Center survey results about advising and career counseling and internal data such as the Survey of Advising to assist in the implementation of new advising models. The college also hired a consultant from NACADA (a professional organization for higher education advisors) to review advising policies and procedures.

Since implementing the new approach to advising, the college has seen its three-year graduation rate increase from 14% ( $N=718$ ) for fall 2010 students to 22% ( $N=774$ ) for fall 2013 students. The college has also seen an increase in the number of students earning 24 credits in the first year, rising from 10% ( $N=784$ ) in 2012 to 30% ( $N=743$ ) in 2016.

In addition, students are reporting a more positive advising experience. In 2014, 59% ( $N=56$ ) of students surveyed said the advising experience was easy and helpful. In 2017, that figure rose to 78% ( $N=206$ ).

CCSSE 2017 survey results indicate that nearly 50% of students had met with an advisor twice by the middle of the spring term, and of these respondents, 24% had met with an advisor more than twice. Furthermore, 43% of students report meeting with the same advisor each time. The college uses results such as these to target areas for improvement and hopes to continue to see an increase in relationship building between advisors and advisees.

### Walla Walla Community College: Advising Changes Lead Students to Follow Advice

In 2004, Walla Walla Community College (WA) revamped its advising structure and process, including who gets advised, who does the advising, and when and how advising is delivered. The results are impressive: In fall 2017, about 85% of all advised students were tracked via the Degree Navigation Application (an online tracking tool), and all but two of those tracked enrolled in the classes they had

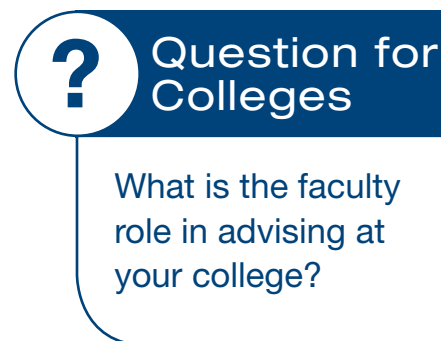
been advised to take. The advising changes came after a comprehensive literature review and a close look at the college's retention rates.

- **Who gets advised and when.** Advising is mandatory for all degree/certificate-seeking students every term, regardless of enrollment status. In addition, students cannot proceed with registration until they have met with an advisor and received a randomly generated PIN, which allows them to access the registration system. The college also mandates an initial intake advising appointment for all new degree/certificate-seeking students, either right before or right after the mandatory new student orientation.

- **Who advises.** Students use the services of professional advisors until they choose a pathway of study, at which point the college pairs each student with a faculty advisor. The college requires that all faculty members serve as advisors and provides advising certification and competency evaluation as well as additional compensation. Faculty members serve as advisors for each student through degree completion and/or transfer.

- **Content of advising.** Advising sessions include a review of the student's identified academic pathway, evaluation of the student's degree audit for pathway course mapping and scheduling, and discussions around financial planning.
- **Intensity of advising.** Advising sessions last anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes depending on the nature of the appointment.

Walla Walla is now tracking students' selected transfer institutions along with their identified career pathways. The college hopes to use National Student Clearinghouse data to determine if students who have selected a transfer institution and career pathway actually have a higher rate of transfer.



**?** Question for Colleges

What is the faculty role in advising at your college?

# Questions for Colleges as They Consider Advising

Colleges should consider a range of issues as they assess their advising policies and practices. Colleges can use the questions below as a starting point for conversations among advisors, faculty, and the entire college community.

1. **How does your college determine how many advisors it needs?** Are all credential- and transfer-seeking students advised every term? Is not advising them every term acceptable? Do 15-minute sessions once per term provide enough advising? If some students need to be advised more than once per term, does your college have the capacity to manage that need? What would it take to meet with all students for the necessary amount of time prior to each term?
2. **Have expectations for advisors changed at your college in the past five years?** If so, has the college updated the advisors' job description? What training does your college offer advisors so that they are prepared for their current role?
3. **Do advisors talk with students about their outside commitments?** Are advisors making sure students have the information they need to balance work, children, and other commitments with coursework?
4. **Does your college's advising include early career exploration?** If so, is it for all students? If not, when does career exploration happen?
5. **How are advisors talking to students about transfer?** Do your advisors ensure that students' courses will transfer to their institution of choice and into their program of choice at that institution?
6. **Is advising consistent at your college?** Are students receiving consistent information from all advisors?
7. **What is the faculty role in advising at your college?** How do faculty members view their role in advising? How do faculty and advisors share information?
8. **How are advisors integrated into the classroom?** Are faculty members encouraged to bring advisors into their classrooms?
9. **How are advisors monitoring student progress?** How often do they talk with students about their progress?
10. **Is your college tracking data on advising and assessing student outcomes based on the data?** Is assessing advising services, and revamping them if necessary, part of your college's student success agenda?
11. **Are some students receiving more comprehensive advising services than others?** What might disaggregated advising and engagement data reveal? Are you ensuring that students of color, for example, are being guided to programs of study that have high earning potential? If not, do advisors need training to ensure that they are intentional about avoiding bias? If different types of students are having different advising experiences, how can your college bring successful models to scale?
12. **What do your students and advisors say about advising?** Consider holding focus groups to capture students' and advisors' thoughts. To download focus group guides to use with students or advisors, visit [www.cccse.org/nr2018](http://www.cccse.org/nr2018).

“

[When I started college] I had no, really, footing. I just came in, took some classes and I was working full-time. . . . I never felt like I had direction. I never felt like anyone was there, had my back, or was helping shape me . . . at least giving me constructive feedback on what I needed to be doing to get where I wanted to go.

— STUDENT

”

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## Endnotes

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## Show Me the Way: The Power of Advising in Community Colleges



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