



# Holistic Advising Approach to Student Success

*Awards Recognize Advising Innovations*

*Excerpted from the Advising Success Network ([advisingsuccessnetwork.org/holistic-advising-awards](https://advisingsuccessnetwork.org/holistic-advising-awards))*



**T**he Holistic Advising Awards, funded by the Advising Success Network—a network of six major organizations convened by NASPA—recognize higher education institutions that have undergone holistic advising redesign efforts. The institutions demonstrate the exemplary use of cross-functional teams to increase completion and success indicators for Black, Latino/a/x, Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific Islander students and poverty-affected students.

The following case studies showcase the 2023 award winners: institutions implementing advising solutions that reduce educational inequalities and model successful approaches to redesigning advising practices within a variety of higher educational contexts. Through varied approaches, the awardees display efforts to understand their unique student populations and address assumptions and biases about students in advisor–student interactions, policies, and technologies.

# Shifting the Culture Through Whole-Life Advising

ARCADIA UNIVERSITY

**A**rcadia University created a new Division of Student Success in February 2021. Generating a culture shift, the new team laid a foundation for holistic advising with written advising goals, advising expectations for students and advisors, assessment tools, student feedback surveys, and a new centralized hub of advising information. The team highlighted opportunities for students to make connections—academic connections to meet immediate needs, career connections for the future, and faculty connections for research.

To become the connective tissue of the university ecosystem, the student success team sought to overlap with programming for the first-year experience, peer mentoring, first-generation students, and transfer students. Whole-Life Advising reframes the university's advising objectives to encompass the student's whole life as they pursue academic and life goals at Arcadia and beyond. The initiative focuses first on improving the quality and consistency of undergraduate academic advising while continually reassessing the structures, supports, and technologies of advising. A core element of this initiative involves increasing the advisor's insight into their students holistically and across students' full experiences. The Whole-Life Advising framework maximizes collaboration between faculty and professional advisors. To promote collaboration and the regenerative

nature of this approach, the university maintains a department liaison system and a Student Success Hub focused on ongoing professional development.

Department liaisons are professional advisors in the undergraduate success area, fostering two-way communication between departments and the student success team to improve advising support. Department liaisons become champions of collaboration across campus for centralized information sharing and promoting professional development opportunities.

The student success team works to develop predictive models of student success to analyze data sets that identify programs effective at helping students persist, complete their degrees, and succeed after graduation.

The Student Success Hub then allows teams of formal academic advisors and informal advisors—such as residential life staff, athletic coaches, financial aid counselors, disability support staff, career education staff, and more—to share student information used to provide holistic assessments and proactive assistance in connecting students with support and opportunities. The at-a-glance reference and communication tool allows the university to break down silos and better understand students' experiences, fostering the Whole-Life Advising approach.

## Implications for Practice

Arcadia University is committed to transforming its approach to advising to ensure advising is not merely academic but Whole-Life Advising. Critical professional development and equity-focused data training bolster the culture shift at Arcadia. Department liaisons champion the collaborative work of advising across the campus and can contribute to enhancing the advising culture. Advising teams at institutions may begin to shift their own cultures by building similar department liaison systems and promoting perspectives on student success that embody the Whole-Life Advising model.



## STUDENT CHOICE AWARDS

Student Choice Awards are presented to those institutions that reflect a commitment to the inclusion of student voices and perspectives in the advising function.

Recipients of the 2023 Student Choice Awards include:

- ▶ College of Lake County
- ▶ Muskingum University
- ▶ Nashville State Community College
- ▶ Purdue University—Main Campus
- ▶ SUNY Schenectady County Community College
- ▶ Truckee Meadows Community College



# Customizing Advising Through a Personalized Survey

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, SCHENECTADY COUNTY  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**F**rom day one through graduation, the college provides a dedicated support system for students. During New Student Registration Day, students complete an intake form, My Survey to Success, answering questions regarding student goals, technology needs, academic preparedness, and personal responsibilities and concerns. Each student's support team—advisors, faculty mentors, and coaches—receives the results to inform how the team can work to meet individualized needs and remove barriers to success.

SUNY Schenectady's academic advisors are part of the college's Division of Strategic Initiatives and Planning, overseen by a vice president for strategic initiatives and planning. The advisors, student success coaches, and career services team report to the dean of academic affairs. The admissions office, the Educational Opportunity Program, federal TRIO programs, and early college programs all operate under this division—a structure that promotes cross-planning, training, and developing strong ties to reinforce a holistic student support system.

Coaches and advisors work together to ensure students' resource needs are met. Students are matched with a professional advisor based on their program of study. Advisors are cross trained in all programs of study so they can remain a student's advisor even if the student changes majors. Each academic division has an advising liaison who attends all division meetings and stays up to date with essential information and curricular changes. The advising team meets biweekly to share all divisional news. The faculty play a key role in

mentoring students in their area of expertise, and every major has a faculty member assigned as the faculty mentor. SUNY Schenectady has a robust training manual to prepare all advisors and faculty members for work as part of the success center. This collaboration between advisor, faculty, and student creates a dedicated support team to foster retention and completion.

Following a campus Deep Dive Data Summit, metrics used to measure advising effectiveness were identified, including the number of contacts an advisor makes, the amount of time spent with students, and student retention rates. The college also dives into student trends based on cohorts aligned with related strategies and initiatives. Data dashboards focus on a five-year review of enrollment, graduates, and cohort success. Coaches and advisors have access to data to conduct outreach and ensure student success.

## Implications for Practice

The My Survey to Success guides a support team, which immediately begins its work with conversations to ensure each student is in a program that fits individual goals. The college's culture shift, aligned with diversity, equity and inclusion practices and in response to student feedback, has cultivated trust among faculty and staff to build stronger relationships with students, resulting in more frequent advising visits. An advising manual is a useful tool to align all members of the student support team for a true, holistic approach to advising.

**SUNY**  
**SCHENECTADY**  
COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Creating a Village Where Students Thrive

NUETA HIDATSA SAHNISH COLLEGE

**T**he identification of a dynamic team, working with a model called THRIVE, is central to holistic advising success at Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish (NHS) College. The vice president of student services oversees holistic student support and student success, with a team that encompasses recruitment, onboarding, persistence, learning support, retention, completion, and other areas. This proactive team of diverse professionals maximizes holistic student success by providing a cohesive “warm blanket” of wrap-around services and as-needed supports. The THRIVE model creates an earth lodge-like village that echoes the voices of students’ ancestors while strengthening their skill sets to be tribally educated and globally prepared for work in a modern world. This model also features a cross-functional advising team: Academic advisors receive support from student services staff and—sometimes informally—from other college personnel with whom students are comfortable.



Students receive a specific academic advisor, but all faculty and staff support students formally or informally. Academic advisors working with students in a general education program encourage students toward a more specific program of study. The team uses advising checklists, regular faculty orientation, continual cross-departmental communication, and purposeful benchmarks and checkpoints to promote collaboration. Most importantly, the team hosts monthly Institutional Success

Huddles to further integrate the collaborative components of the earth lodge village support model—academics, student services, campus services, and institutional research. These huddles provide

the opportunity to evaluate progress, dig into data, align strategic planning, and improve communication to promote student retention.

Through the college’s research, including discussions with faculty and staff, student surveys, and valuable input from student senate meetings, key components for student success and student learning outcomes have been evaluated and redesigned. Every department also created a degree tree and degree sequence plan to help students choose classes and understand progress made toward their respective degrees. These degree trees support the college’s commitment to student success, which the team defines as “degree completion to employment, one successful semester at a time.”

## Implications for Practice

NHS College considers its approach to advising as intrinsic to Indigenous thinking. Administrative leaders maintain a stance that a person knows best about their own culture; this respect is applied to all racially minoritized students and poverty-affected students. Onboarding at the college includes establishing the concept of loving and supporting students within the earth lodge village model. The team integrates cultural principles to honor the past for those living in the present while shaping the future. NHS College stands as a leader in holistic advising with a model that supports students to be tribally educated and globally prepared.

### THRIVE MODEL

- T** tuition and finances
- H** health and wellness
- R** resources and support
- I** instruction and academics
- V** vocation and career paths
- E** extracurriculars and events



# Introducing Appreciative Advising

CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY

**A**dvising is success coaching at Clafin University, and it involves four cross-functional teams: success coaches, first- and second-year experience staff, academic success center, and faculty liaisons from each of the university's four schools. Success coaches receive training through Florida Atlantic University's Appreciative Advising Institute to help students articulate their goals, create a plan, and identify ways to address challenges. Coaches implement the appreciative advising phases to build relationships with students and create an environment for students to explore and grow. The appreciative advising model embodies tender care in aligning a student's strengths, interests, and skills to "optimize educational experiences."

Clafin had a faculty-only advising model when it embarked on a culture shift to success coaching. Through the process, some faculty advisors organically became faculty liaisons to champion student success within their respective schools. The faculty liaisons contribute valuable knowledge to the coaching teams related to course content and career paths associated with program majors. Faculty liaisons promote the cross-functional nature of success coaching across the campus. Regular meetings within and between the cross-functional teams and the deans, department chairs, and faculty of academic units occur throughout each semester with additional departments invited as needed. Success coaches add suggested strategies from these discussions to each student's coaching plan. Recognizing students receive and respond to information best presented through social media, coaches engage students where they are to provide critical messaging about goal attainment.



While journey maps provide a visual guide, it is through conversations and interest inventories with success coaches that students can dream and explore. Campus leaders—including the president and members of the president's cabinet—also host meetings to collectively strategize activities and ways to improve student success from a holistic perspective. A comprehensive university needs assessment included a survey of stakeholders who identified academic advising as the top priority for restructuring and redesign. Campus leaders embarked on a journey of advising redesign to move the needle of the student advising experience to increase retention and graduation rates. Clafin is also working with the United Negro College Fund to create a data-based retention model connected to effective advising and student success coaching practices. This work in progress is part of a commitment to continual improvement with student success and holistic advising.

## Implications for Practice

Clafin University is dedicated to moving forward with student success coaching using a faculty liaison model. The cross-functional team with a faculty liaison enhances direct conversation with students about career goals while connecting coursework and cocurricular engagements with a student's future. Institutions transitioning from a faculty-only advising model may integrate components of empowering faculty advisors as department liaisons and advocates to move toward a success coaching approach to holistic advising.

# Creating Field-of-Interest Teams

COLLEGE OF LAKE COUNTY

The College of Lake County created a student success framework aligned with its strategic plan. The Lancer Success Framework, named after the institution's mascot, includes holistic advising support for students, defined as helping them identify goals and plan their paths while championing them along their way. An Equity in Student Access and Success Plan uses the framework as its key foundation. The plan is a road map within the student experience and responds to inequities identified through quantitative and qualitative evidence.

A statewide goal in Illinois influenced the forward motion of the college's strategic plan. The statewide goal is to achieve a 60 percent higher education credential rate by 2025.

The college set an ambitious target to move from a 29 percent graduation rate with significant equity gaps to a 45 percent graduation rate for the group of students that start in fall 2024 with no equity gaps. An analysis of retention rates revealed the need to attend to students' onboarding, first-year experiences, and advising.

The College's Lancer Success Council, in partnership with onboarding and advising, sought to create a seamless experience for students by forming a cross-functional task force. A holistic, case management model of advising with a team of field-specialized academic success advisors is an essential component of the student support model. To create a barrier-free environment, the team reviewed systems to identify and address instances of power, privilege, and inequity in policies, procedures, and processes, resulting in a cohesive student support model and corresponding policies

to maximize success. Student development leaders created a hiring plan to diversify teams and ensure team members mirror the student population.

The onboarding and advising team helps each student make a successful transition to the college, explore their interests, develop an academic plan, and engage in educationally meaningful experiences by providing holistic, personalized advising in an inclusive environment where all students feel welcome and valued. Field of Interest (FOI) teams are a key component of cross-functional collaboration. The FOI teams regularly connect faculty, academic success advisors (ASAs), career center staff, and others to lend their field-specialized knowledge to support students.

Working through the FOI teams, ASAs simplify and streamline collaboration and communication as

the one primary point of contact for all advising needs, questions, and concerns. Teams apply an appreciative advising approach in their work with new and current students.

## Implications for Practice

What would it take for the College of Lake County to achieve a 45 percent graduation rate? This question became a pivotal point as the college sought to redesign the entire student experience to achieve this ambitious goal. The journey was guided by an Equity in Student Access and Success Plan throughout the redesign. Fostering FOI teams to build bridges of collaboration to benefit students is an exemplary practice that other institutions may begin to implement immediately. **LE**



For a complete description of each case study, see [advisingsuccessnetwork.org/holistic-advising-awards](https://advisingsuccessnetwork.org/holistic-advising-awards).

