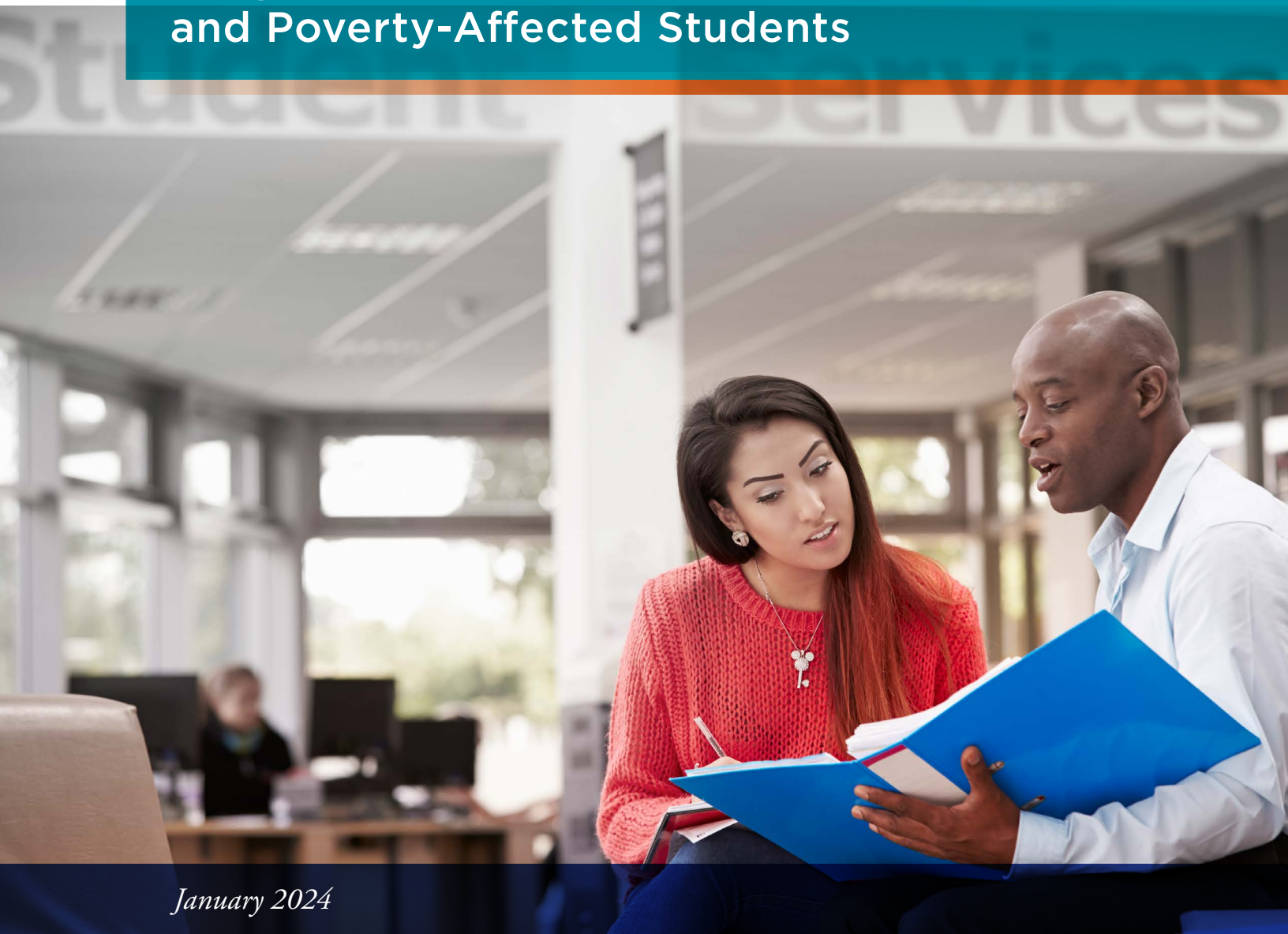




# THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR HOLISTIC ADVISING REDESIGN:

Research to support Black, Latinx/a/o,  
Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific Islander Students  
and Poverty-Affected Students





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# Introduction

The Advising Success Network (ASN), with the support of StrategyForward Advisors, conducted a policy-based literature review to identify research on holistic advising and differentiated student supports for its priority student populations. There is much research on postsecondary advising related to generally supporting all students at an institution and research that examines specific populations of students. However, such research tends to draw heavily from predominantly white institutions (PWI) or may not delve deeply into the institutional context, specifically the systems, structures, policies, resources, and approach to serving key student populations.

This review sought to lean in on guidance and evidence tailored specifically to our priority populations rather than focus on well-established practices for serving all students. For this reason, we sought out research on how best to serve Black, Latinx/a/o, Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific Islander students and poverty-affected students at institutions that are well positioned and intentionally focused on serving these populations. We examined relevant publications from ASN-partner organizations and other leaders in the field and research that came from or focused on historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), minority-serving institutions (MSIs), Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), tribal colleges, and Native-serving institutions.

# Advising Redesign

We identified practices that would position institutions to better serve specific populations across 15 categories:

1. Institutional community commitment
2. Advisor roles
3. Advisor hiring, retention, and care
4. Professional development
5. Definition of student success
6. Students' lived experience
7. Student feedback
8. Cross-functional alignment
9. Policy and process
10. Holistic advising
11. Advising plan for student goals
12. Differentiated student supports
13. Tools and technology
14. Data-informed student supports
15. Evaluation and continuous improvement

We then aligned these categories to ASN's six recommendations for ensuring an equitable, high-quality, and effective advising redesign.

*This review sought to lean in on guidance and evidence tailored specifically to our priority populations.*



## ASN'S ADVISING REDESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

**Position advising as a tool for student success and equity.** *Institutions can identify and begin to address legacy structural challenges, like lack of representational diversity, and work to better understand their student populations, address assumptions and implicit biases, offer staff cultural competency training, audit policies for equity, and involve students and advisors in decision-making.*

**Define the ideal student journey.** *Institutions can engage large cross-sections of historically underrepresented students and advisors to share their experiences, goals, and challenges and then map out an ideal personalized experience based on their input that addresses the barriers they identified.*

**Create and sustain campus cross-collaboration.** *Institutions can foster campus cross-collaboration by clearly articulating roles and responsibilities, creating policies and practices that encourage alignment across departments, allocating resources for collaboration, and providing professional development.*

**Work collaboratively with students to define and achieve their goals.** *Institutions must work with students to develop long-term advising plans aligned to students' learning, retention, transfer, and career goals to provide advising that is **sustained, strategic, integrated, proactive, and personalized**.*

**Use advising technologies strategically to support high-quality practices.** *Institutions can utilize available technologies (e.g., tools that support student applications, course/degree planning, appointment scheduling, career planning, progress tracking, early alerts) that are coordinated across advising and related services.*

**Use data systems to promote continuous improvement.** *Institutions can support qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis and provide training and professional development to enable advisors, faculty, student support staff, and leadership to respond to the needs of each student population in a culturally responsive way. Institutions should invest in structures and systems that prioritize the collection and analysis of high-quality, disaggregated data that is made available to appropriate stakeholders. Students must be a key partner in continuous improvement processes.*



# Research Insights

Key insights emerged from the research related to belonging, inclusion, welcoming spaces, going to where students are, learning more about students' strengths and lived experiences, ensuring care for advisors, addressing bias and deficit-based thinking, and providing ongoing training and evaluation. Insights within each advising category are listed below and aligned to ASN's advising redesign recommendations.

## POSITION ADVISING AS A TOOL FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AND EQUITY

- 1. Institutional Community Commitment.** Holistic advising and differentiated student supports need to be connected to the institution's mission and strategic plan. Institutional leadership must champion holistic advising and invest resources accordingly.
- 2. Advisor Roles.** View advisors as educators and translators for students. Clarify advising roles and expectations, especially as it relates to institutional priorities. Build collaboration into advising roles.
- 3. Advisor Hiring, Retention, and Care.** Promote diversity in hiring advisors. Provide training on how to increase diversity when hiring. Ensure representation of advisors according to student demographics. Invest in advisors, be attuned to compensation levels as a retention strategy, and consider a scaled pay progression. Celebrate advisor successes.
- 4. Professional Development.** Provide ongoing training on inclusive practices, cultural competency, anti-bias approaches, and anti-deficit approaches to data analysis to equip advisors and related staff to better serve all students, specifically Black, Latinx/a/o, Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific-Islander students and poverty-affected students.

*Key insights emerged from the research related to belonging, inclusion, welcoming spaces, going to where students are, learning more about students' strengths and lived experiences, ensuring care for advisors, addressing bias and deficit-based thinking, and providing ongoing training and evaluation.*





## DEFINE THE IDEAL STUDENT JOURNEY

5. **Definition of Student Success.** A sense of belonging is integral to student support. Pull in a broad cross-section of diverse students to help define student success.
6. **Students' Lived Experience.** Understanding and awareness of students' lived experience are critical for all advisors, as many students feel that their advisors do not have a sense of their experience. Understanding students' lived experience should include identifying students' personal and cultural strengths and values; acknowledging the role of family, community, and tribe in students' lives; and honoring and celebrating who students are.
7. **Student Feedback.** Prioritize student feedback. Empower students to share their perspectives. Gather information from students collectively in safe environments. Address bias in data collection. Elevate student concerns and use student feedback to inform decision-making. Consider formal structures, such as a student advisory board, to inform decision-making and engage student feedback.

## CREATE AND SUSTAIN CAMPUS CROSS-COLLABORATION

8. **Cross-Functional Alignment.** Coordinate communication and efforts across departments and offices. Pull in representatives from relevant offices and departments when making key decisions.
9. **Policy and Process.** Audit policies and practices for equity-mindedness. Apply student feedback to policy and process improvements. Ensure racial and ethnic representation to bring diverse perspectives to advising policy and process design. Build coordination and collaboration into policies and processes.





## WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH STUDENTS TO DEFINE AND ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS

- 10. Holistic Advising.** Create welcoming and accessible opportunities for students to engage. Foster supportive environments that promote student well-being and connection. Ensure multiple advising touch points. Consider mandatory and integrated advising and supports. Incorporate case management and referrals. Connect advising to student education and career goals. Address students' basic needs and provide resources via a warm hand-off to other offices or services that can help with those needs.
- 11. Advising Plan for Student Goals.** Work with students to develop their life and career goals and values. Support students in developing a plan to achieve their educational goals. Provide access to opportunities, such as experiential learning, internships, and research opportunities. Work closely with Career Services.
- 12. Differentiated Student Supports.** Provide personalized supports in culturally competent ways. Consider enhanced advising, early warnings, learning communities, and proactive support. Ensure coordination, collaboration, and referrals across offices and departments.

## USE ADVISING TECHNOLOGIES STRATEGICALLY TO SUPPORT HIGH-QUALITY PRACTICES

- 13. Tools and Technology.** Use tools and technology to scale advising. Consider e-advising and holistic case management support with the help of tools and technology. Use tools and technology to better communicate with students and promote resources and opportunities. Use multiple modalities to best reach students.





## USE DATA SYSTEMS TO PROMOTE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- 14. Data-informed Student Support.** Give advisors access to comprehensive student data. Disaggregate data and provide support to help advisors make sense of the data. Apply asset-based perspectives to data collection and analysis.
- 15. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement.** Identify key performance indicators (KPIs). Examine areas, activities, and processes for improvement to better reflect the diverse needs and experiences of students.

## Conclusion

The insights from this research provide an emerging evidence base on how to apply holistic advising redesign to better serve Black, Latinx/a/o, Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific Islander students and poverty-affected students. Supporting these populations in culturally competent ways and considering how advising structures, systems, and policies address students' needs will help institutions strengthen student belonging and retention. Furthermore, this evidence base offers institutional leaders strategies to improve the data capacity, recruitment, and retention of advising staff and faculty, which will also enhance advising redesign and improve student outcomes.

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