



RESEARCH BRIEF

Holistic Student Advising Transformation Change Model

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★ ★ ★ ADVISING
★ ★ ★ **SUCCESS**
★ ★ ★ NETWORK

EDUCAUSE



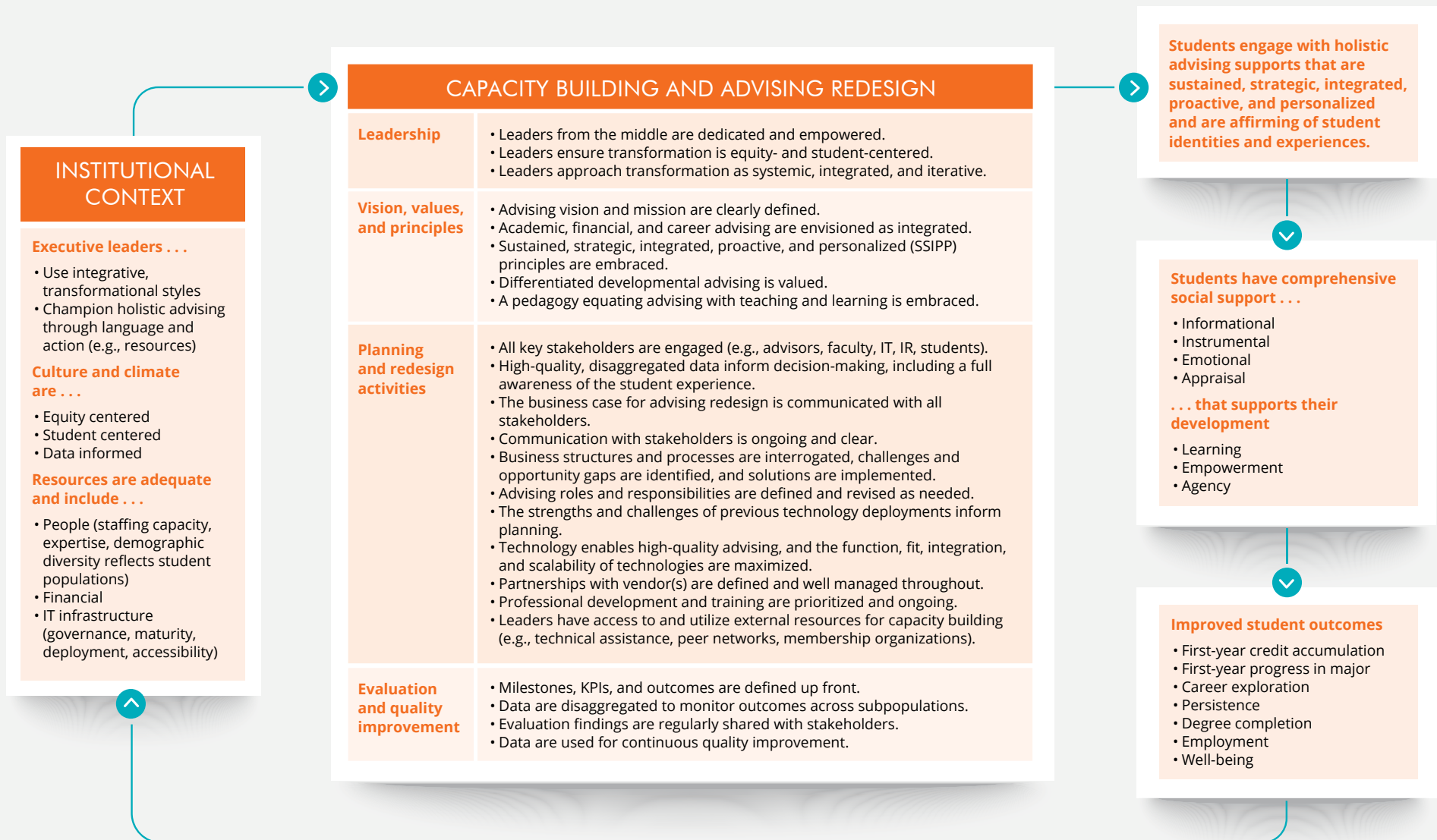
Higher education institutions have dramatically increased their investments in student advising as a central strategy to transform their holistic student-support systems to not only improve outcomes for all students but particularly to ensure equitable outcomes for Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific Islander students and poverty-affected students. Achieving inclusive and equitable student success in higher education institutions has been described as a *wicked problem*, a term that refers to problems that are complex, intractable, and very difficult to solve.¹

The field will greatly benefit from identifying ***promising practices***²—those practices, policies, and structures of student advising redesign efforts that research demonstrates are correlated with equitable and improved student outcomes. We conducted a scoping review to assess the nature and breadth of current research focused on identifying promising practices in advising transformation.

Overall, existing research provides evidence that student advising redesign is associated with higher rates of retention and graduation.³ Some research suggests that transformation is contingent upon changes in institutional structures, procedures, culture, and attitudes.⁴ The research also suggests that institutional-level factors and individual-level factors influence transformation success.⁵ Other research has highlighted specific change practices as important to student success transformation, including student-centered missions and strategic plans, collaboration, revised structures, sufficient resources, and the use of data to drive improvement.⁶

Over the past two years, EDUCAUSE has developed a theoretically driven model of change. Our initial model was presented in an *EDUCAUSE Review* article and shared by the [Advising Success Network](#).⁷ This model was grounded in theory, most predominantly ecological systems, organizational development, network, and social support theories. The model that follows incorporates the findings from a recently completed evaluation of intermediary staff perspectives of the factors they perceive to be associated with institutions' successes and challenges in redesigning student advising systems.⁸

HOLISTIC ADVISING TRANSFORMATION CHANGE MODEL



External factors: State/local economic conditions, legislative and budgetary mandates, funding structure, state board, attainment goals

This updated **change model** is a visual synthesis of the research literature that hypothesizes how advising transformation improves student outcomes. It presents a model of change that conveys **why**, **how**, and **when** changes should occur. Consistent with ecological systems theory, it emphasizes the institutional-level factors, as well as individual- and team-level redesign activities that research and theory suggest are important during an institution's capacity building and redesign effort to improve student outcomes.

Moreover, our change model incorporates elements of both theory of change and program logic models. Theories of change are conceptual, show the bigger picture, cut across contexts, and present hypothesized and theoretical mechanisms of change. The presentation of **outcomes** in the figure is more aligned with theory of change models. On the other hand, akin to a logic model, the model includes considerably more detail under **inputs** and **process** as our focus for the change model was to synthesize the research literature and related theory to communicate promising practices linked to desired student outcomes. These are the elements that can be used by institutions in the planning, design, and implementation

of student advising redesign initiatives. In contrast, these elements differ significantly from a program logic model in that our change model represents a synthesis of the literature as opposed to an actual change effort describing a specific institution's effort. However, any institution can take this change model as a template and develop its own institution-specific redesign initiative and logic model. As a change model, it is key to understand this model as a theoretical one that can significantly inform planning and change management.

The change model presented here is intended to provide colleges, universities, and others pursuing holistic student success and advising redesign with an evidence-informed resource to facilitate their strategic planning, capacity building, and implementation activities. It can be used by an institution as a roadmap to highlight key structures, elements, and practices in the planning to support an institution's change initiatives. Using this change model, institutions can develop their own more detailed, contextually driven change model and corresponding action plans. Finally, this change model can facilitate consensus building in the field and enhance research collaboration and testing of assumptions related to advising transformation.

1 Randall Bass, "What's the Problem Now?" *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2020).

2 We refer to "promising" rather than "best" practices because the field of advising transformation is relatively young and the literature is scant. Given the importance of context in influencing practice and outcomes, there is not likely a set of "best" practices.

3 Eline Sneyers and Kristof De Witte, "Interventions in Higher Education and Their Effect on Student Success: A Meta-Analysis," *Educational Review* 70, no. 2 (March 2018): 208–28.

4 Hoori Santikian Kalamkarian, Melinda Mechur Karp, and Elizabeth Ganga, *What We Know about Technology-Mediated Advising Reform* (New York: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center, 2017).

5 Community College Research Center and Tyton Partners, *Technology-Mediated Advising and Student Support: An Institutional Self-Assessment* (New York: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center, 2017).

6 Jessie Brown and Martin Kurzweil, *Institutional Transformation for Student Success: Lessons Learned from Ithaca S+ R's Case Studies*, ITHAKA, 2016.

7 Carol Nixon, "Effective Use of Technologies in Student Advising: Is There a Yellow Brick Road?" *EDUCAUSE Review*, April 13, 2021.

8 Carol T. Nixon, *Promising Practices in Holistic Advising Transformation: Incorporating Voices of Intermediaries*, Advising Success Network and EDUCAUSE, 2022.