

STUDENT ADVISING EXPERIENCES

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

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Created by:

paritii

ADVISING
SUCCESS
NETWORK

INTRODUCTION



This field insight initiative, conducted by Paritii, LLC was dedicated to understanding students perspectives about advising in post-secondary education, with a particular focus on the needs of Black, Latinx/a/o, Indigenous, and poverty-affected students as a means of helping the broader population by understanding the unique needs of underrepresented groups.

The perspectives shared here are the result of perspectives of 60 Black, Latinx/a/o, Indigenous, and poverty-affected students from both Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs).

The goal of this compilation of insights is to help institutions understand students' needs and experiences with advising in their own words.

There is a particular focus on key themes unearthed from students, including how students define advising, overall experiences with experiences, relationship building, advisor availability and turnover, holistic support, and racial and cultural dynamics. In addition, key insights related to advising technology are included. These field perspectives can help the field:

- Understand what constitutes good and quality advising from students' point of view.
- Understand opportunities to improve advising from experiences shared by racially minoritized and poverty-affected students.
- Explore technological applications and features that students feel could most positively impact their college journey.

For more resources on how institutions are addressing these and other challenges, visit www.advisingsuccessnetwork.org



KEY THEMES

Definition of [Quality] Advising



- Racially minoritized and poverty-affected students define good advising as the ability for an advisor to understand their holistic situations and interests, guide them through their academic careers, and help them remove academic and non-academic barriers to ensure successful completion of journeys.
- Not all students felt advisors were necessarily the ones to remove certain barriers, e.g. financial aid office is there for financial aid help; however, they do expect the advisors to help point them in the right direction if necessary.
- Students reported wanting their advisors to understand them as unique individuals, build a connection with them, and be more available and reach out to them more, even if it is just to check in on their progress.

Advising Experiences

- Advisor experiences were mixed. About 70% of students report feeling that their advisor is well informed about how to support them, and generally had a good experience, especially with class registration, applying for restricted classes and declaring their major. However, the remaining 30% report little to no interaction with their advisor, or poor interactions with advisors who lacked the knowledge or interest to help them.
- Outside of the initial first semester or mandatory meeting, about 24% of students report never meeting their advisor at all. Some felt self-sufficient enough to proceed on their own, while others felt alone and lacked guidance and help.
- Racially minoritized and poverty-affected students tend to trust advisors more when their lived experience is understood, if not shared. Without extra time to build relationships or proactive outreach by the institution, students felt alone and “like a number” or a checkbox item on a list.

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In their own words...

“My advisor has always been helpful to me. She has always reached out to me and made sure everything was good.”

“My advisors are exceedingly helpful with providing resources and the information I need in order to succeed in college.”

“I don't go to my advisor for anything other than school-related issues.”

“He has gained my trust and I am very comfortable talking to him about my personal problems that can interfere with my academic life.”

“I didn't really interact with my advisors.”

“My advisor didn't know what was going on and had a one-way approach to everything.”

“I believe that my advisor is doing their best with what they can but is confused just as I am most of the time.”

KEY THEMES

Relationship Building

- Students expressed a consistent desire for advisors to invest more time in building deeper, more organic relationships with them. This includes providing individualized care tailored to students' interests, areas of study, and unique identities (e.g., poverty-affected, first-generation, international students)
- While recognizing their own responsibility in reaching out, several students still expressed a wish for advisors to reach out to them first, as it can be hard to maintain contact given busy schedules.
- Especially for racially minoritized and poverty-affected students who are disproportionately first-generation students, support beyond academics is very helpful as these students may not have many examples to look to for help.



Advisor Availability and Turnover

- Depending on the size and available resources at an institution, advisor caseloads may be too high to allow them to spend enough time with each student. The high turnover rate of advisors and limited availability hindered the student-advisor relationship. Students expressed difficulty finding the time they need with advisors.
- The available modes of communication also made a difference as to whether students felt comfortable reaching out to advisors.
- Students want quick responses to easy questions by text or email as well as longer live or in-person communication on key topics like degree planning and other resource availability questions.

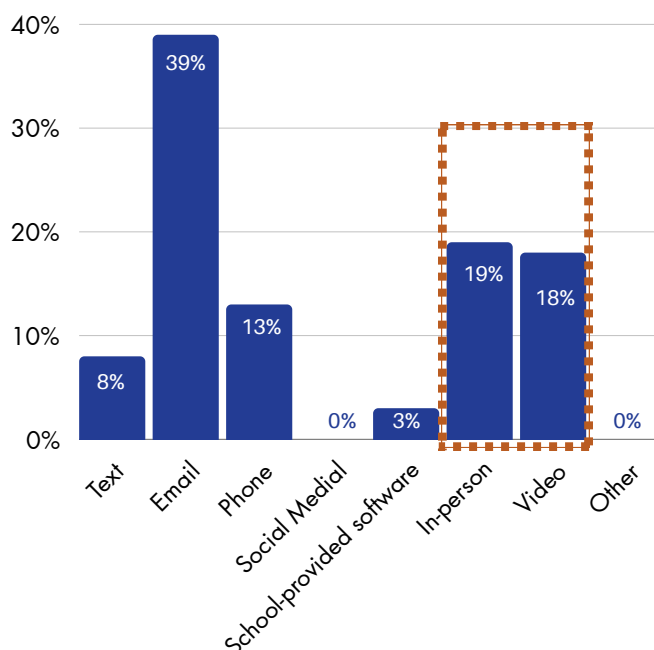
In their own words...

"[If I had to advise my institution] I would tell them that students need more support than purely academics. Many of us need help navigating life after college because no one around us has done it before."

"Every student is different and so are their needs. Take the time to get to know your advisee and who they are. Also, try to make it a two-way relationship so the student feels more comfortable revealing their own challenges."

"Try to reach out to students and track their progress each semester. It's hard to constantly have to reach out with others things going on."

"It's like navigating an ocean, trying to make an appointment with your advisor."



Question: If you could choose how to communicate with your academic advisor and professors, which mode would you prefer?

KEY THEMES

Holistic Support

- Although students' expectations of their assigned advisors primarily fell within course planning, degree tracking, and career preparation, students also expressed a growing need for holistic support beyond academics.
- Students acknowledged that it takes a village, and most expressed that while they do not expect their advisor to take care of all their needs, they hope advisors would be able to guide them to the right resources when needed.
- Many racially minoritized students report financial challenges to support their academic and personal goals.
- Students also expressed a desire for more emotional support in addition to academic guidance, especially as mental health becomes a top issue that negatively impacts students' college experiences.



Question: Name the top three things that you felt made a major NEGATIVE impact on your college journey.



Racial and Cultural Dynamics

- Racially minoritized students expressed a wish for more advisors of color, especially at predominantly white institutions.
- While the differences in racial identity between advisors and students were not seen as impacting academic advising specifically, students shared issues with advisors related to race and culture. Students want to advisors with shared, lived experiences.

In their own words...

“My advisor was a white older woman who had no idea how to manage Native students let alone a Native transfer student like myself.”

“We had a lot of cultural differences so they mainly could support me academically but even then didn't really hear my perspective when i told them I was interested in switching career paths.”

“My university should have seen me as a Native student and understood that as Native people, we experience higher education differently and need a village.”

“Put advising Black and Brown students in the care of cultural centers.”

ON ADVISING TECHNOLOGY

Students generally feel technology is most helpful when user-friendly and accessible; confusing websites and software hinder their progress, cause more anxiety than necessary, and may end up doing more harm than good. Students also generally want to be able to find the resources themselves to find immediate answers and reduce reliance on advisors. The following features/capabilities were prioritized by students as the most helpful:

Degree Tracking/Planning

- Students reported wanting an easier way to track their degree progress so they know exactly which classes they need to take and how many credits are needed to graduate, and can work with their advisors on a plan.

One-Stop Resource Portal

- Students seek platforms that provide comprehensive information on scholarships, graduate school applications (including filters for work permits, visas, etc.), and other resources like mental health support, tutoring, childcare, and food assistance.
- Students with special (and sometimes sensitive) situations, such as immigrants and undocumented students, want a resource hub where they can safely find what they need themselves without having to talk through it with advisors who may not thoroughly understand their situation.
- Students also expressed a desire for personalization within platforms, where content is tailored to their individual needs, interests, and goals.

Communication with advisors

- Although students prefer different means of communicating with advisors (some email, some in-person), all students expressed a need for more efficient scheduling and faster response times.
- Many interactions with advisors occur virtually, and students expressed a need for more efficient and responsive virtual tools.

In their own words...

“A better scheduling app.”

“Technology had nothing to do with my poor experience with my advisor.”

“One-stop shop for meetings with campus resources.”

“To monitor my degree path and credits and how I am doing in my classes and GPA.”

“If I had more technological resources it would eliminate the need to contact an advisor for anything.”

“I would add technology in creating a platform where it’s easy to contact your advisor with quick ways needs instead of being backed up for weeks on end.”

“A better system for degree and course planning. We use Banner student and Degree Works and it feels outdated. Maybe having some sort of dashboard for my college specifically on everything we need to know and where to find it.”



For more resources on how institutions are addressing these and other challenges, visit www.advisingsuccessnetwork.org



ABOUT PARITII

Paritii is a woman-owned and operated firm delivering tech-enabled, data-driven, sophisticated, sustainable and equitable strategies for social impact.

We are a full-service social impact consulting firm that leverages equity-aligned technology as a solution. We work at the intersection of technology, strategy, and justice. Our work includes:

- **Research, Testing, & Development:** human-centered, equity-minded design and UX of bold, precise and culturally-sustaining products.
- **Thought Partnership:** articulate complex, intractable problems to clearly articulated solutions for immediate and sustained impact.
- **Culture & Change Management:** design equitable programs and processes, cultivate cultural competency and advance an inclusive perspective to critical work.

Paritii EdTech Support

Paritii aims to ensure that individuals and groups across all lines of difference can benefit from the latest innovations in the global EdTech solution areas.

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ABOUT THE ASN

The Advising Success Network (ASN) is a network of organizations and individuals partnering to engage higher education institutions in holistic advising redesign activities to advance success for Black, Latinx/a/o, Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific Islander students and poverty-affected students. Working alongside institutions, the network brings together students, faculty, advisors and other student support staff to build cultures of care that support students in achieving their personal, academic, and career goals. The network supports the field in reflecting on and addressing institutionally-imposed barriers to student success by providing access to national experts and identity-conscious resources and services.

The ASN is coordinated by **NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education**, and founding core partners include **Achieving the Dream**, the **American Association of State Colleges and Universities**, **EDUCAUSE**, **NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising**, and the **National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition**.

<https://www.advisingsuccessnetwork.org>