

Sustainability at Scale: A System-Level Approach to Understanding Advising Redesign

Application Overview

Purpose of the Project

This research project examines how state systems of higher education have successfully supported and sustained large-scale holistic advising and pathways redesign initiatives to support student success. NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, seeks to engage with systems that have led multi-year advising redesign activities supported by their state legislature, executive office, and/or external philanthropy partners between 2015 and 2020 and have sustained, adapted, and institutionalized resulting elements and/or reforms.

Many higher education systems made significant investments in holistic advising and pathways between 2015 and 2020. While much has been learned about implementation, far less is known about what it takes to sustain and evolve these reforms over time. This project seeks to understand how systems have maintained advising redesign efforts beyond initial funding and leadership cycles, and to document practices that can inform systems and institutions at earlier stages of this work.

The goals of this study are:

- 1) To articulate the sustainability practices that enable systems to plan for the long term and adapt to changing student needs, and
- 2) To provide insights and models that help leaders, practitioners, and funders sustain advising reforms at scale.

Selected systems and a subset of three institutions per system will participate in interviews, data sharing, state convenings, and the development of case studies and practitioner-facing resources.

Who Should Apply

U.S.-based state higher education systems or statewide coordinating or governing entities that oversee multiple postsecondary institutions that supported or coordinated large-scale advising or pathways redesign efforts beginning between 2015 and 2020 and that have successfully sustained elements of those efforts for at least five years.

Eligibility & Participation Requirements

Applicants should review and confirm the following requirements before submitting their application.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible applicants are U.S.-based state higher education systems or statewide coordinating or governing entities that oversee multiple postsecondary institutions. This includes, but is not limited to, university systems, community college systems/associations, technical or applied education systems, boards of regents, and statewide coordinating or governing boards, regardless of institution type or size.

To be eligible, applicants must represent a system-level entity with executive authority and include three participating institutions within the system. Single institutions, including those with multiple campuses, are not eligible to apply.

Applicants must demonstrate that their system:

- Implemented a multi-institutional, holistic advising or pathways redesign initiative between 2015 and 2020.
- Has sustained, adapted, and institutionalized resulting elements and/or reforms.
- Can demonstrate, at the system and institution-level, evidence of improved student success outcomes (such as retention and completion) connected to advising redesign.
- Is able to share existing student-level and/or system-level data related to the impact of the effort.

Benefits of Participation

Selected systems will receive:

- \$15,000 provided to the identified system lead to support an in-person state convening. Funds may also support system and institution participation, including staff time, data analysis, and engagement in project activities.
- National visibility and recognition through participation in published case studies and practitioner-facing resources.
- Opportunities for structured reflection and peer learning with other systems and institutions that have sustained large-scale advising redesign efforts.
- Early access to project findings and tools that can be used internally for planning, communication, and professional development.

Participation Commitments

Selected systems must:

- Identify a system-level lead. This individual should be a senior administrator responsible for student success or advising initiatives who will serve as the primary point of contact for the project.
 - This individual should plan to dedicate approximately four hours per month over the course of the project.
 - Primary responsibilities will include:
 1. Coordinating institutional engagement,
 2. Participating in a virtual, in-depth interview and self-assessment,
 3. Attending regular meetings,



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4. Sharing materials and data,
 5. Supporting and promoting a state convening, and
 6. Reviewing case studies and practitioner resources as they are developed and supporting their dissemination.
- Secure senior leadership acknowledgement and sign-off at the system level (Chancellor, President, or Provost).
 - Identify three institutions and leads for each that took part in the redesign activities and indicate a commitment to engaging in the research project.
 - Institutional leads should plan to dedicate approximately 25 hours total over the course of the project, inclusive of attendance at the state convening.
 - Primary responsibilities for institutional leads will include:
 1. Participating in a virtual, in-depth interview and self assessment,
 2. Attending a state convening,
 3. Coordinating institutional representation at the state convening, and
 4. Sharing materials and data with the system lead and NASPA staff.

Selection Process

NASPA will select between three and five systems to participate in this project. Applications will be reviewed to assess alignment with the project's goals, evidence of sustained advising redesign, availability of outcome data, and readiness to participate in a one-year research effort between March 2026 and March 2027. Selection will also seek to ensure representation across system types, institutional contexts, and advising models. The goal is to assemble a diverse and informative group of systems that can contribute meaningfully to shared learning.

[Click here to access the online application.](#)

Section 1: System Profile & Descriptive Information

1.1 System Information

System name:

State:

<u>Institution Category</u>	<u>Number in System</u>
Public 2-year institutions	___
Public 4-year (non-doctoral) institutions	___
Public doctoral universities	___
Public special focus institutions	___
Public Tribal Colleges and Universities	___
Multi-campus institutions (single IPEDS unit)	___
Other public institutions (describe)	___

Institutional types (check all that apply):

- Alaska Native Serving Institution (ANSI)
- Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI)
- Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI)
- Historically Black College or University (HBCU)
- Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution (NASNTI)
- Native Hawaiian Serving Institution (NHSI)
- Predominantly Black Institution (PBI)
- Predominantly White Institution (PWI)
- Tribal College or University (TCU)
- Other (please describe): _____

Approximate total student enrollment:

1.2 Primary System Contact

Name:

Title:

Office/Division:

Email:

Phone:

1.3 Participating Institutions



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List the three institutions expected to participate. Institutions selected for this project should be representative of the holistic advising or pathways reform efforts. Commitment for participation from these institutions is not required at the application stage.

Primary campus contact for each institution (if known):

Name:

Title:

Office/Division:

Email:

1.4 Please tell us why you selected these institutions

1.5 For each institution, please highlight which of the following topics were part of the institution's redesign activities? (Check all that apply)

- Developing a campus-wide commitment to student success
- Understanding students' lived experience
- Developing a shared definition of student success
- Making student support services more holistic
- Providing personalized student support
- Developing personalized advising plans for student goals
- Engaging directly with student feedback
- Defining faculty and advisor roles
- Evaluating advisor to student ratios
- Developing advisor retention and care strategies
- Developing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff
- Reviewing and updating policy and process
- Ensuring cross-functional alignment
- Utilizing advising tools and technology
- Collecting and utilizing data
- Evaluating and continuously improving processes
- Adapting course schedules

Section 2: Advising Redesign Overview

2.1 Describe the advising or pathways redesign effort launched between 2015 and 2020.

2.1.1 Rationale and Design (200–300 words)



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- What prompted the redesign? What challenges or problems was the system seeking to address?
- What made the approach holistic or systemic (e.g., cross-functional coordination, multiple student touchpoints, system-level strategy)?
- What were the intended outcomes?

2.1.2 Scope and Scale (250–350 words)

How many institutions were involved at launch?

What was the system's role in supporting this redesign effort? Did support include a state mandate, and/or shared program/policy? Did the system support institutional participation with funding?

Which student populations were considered (e.g., first-year, transfer, adult learners, specific equity populations)?

What practices changed as a result of the redesign? Were those changes codified in policy?

What is the current scope of the effort (e.g., expanded, scaled back, adapted, fully institutionalized)?

2.1.3 Timeline and Evolution (100–150 words)

Year planning began

Year(s) implementation occurred

What are the main differences from before redesign to now?

2.2 Which of the following topics were part of your redesign activities? (Check all that apply)

Developing a campus-wide commitment to student success

Understanding students' lived experience

Developing a shared definition of student success

Making student support services more holistic

Providing personalized student support

Developing personalized advising plans for student goals

Engaging directly with student feedback

Defining faculty and advisor roles

Evaluating advisor to student ratios

Developing advisor retention and care strategies

Developing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff

Reviewing and updating policy and process

Ensuring cross-functional alignment

Utilizing advising tools and technology

Collecting and utilizing data



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Evaluating and continuously improving processes
Adapting course schedules

2.3. What level of variation existed across institutions expected to participate in this project? Did they participate in all of the redesign activities you indicated above, or subsets of activities?

Section 3: System-Level Advising Landscape

The following questions are intended to provide a system-level view of current advising structures and practices across institutions that would likely participate in this project. Responses may describe typical models, common patterns, or ranges rather than institution-specific details.

3.1 Advisor-to-Student Ratios

From a system perspective, how would you describe advisor-to-student ratios across all system institutions? (Suggested length: 75-150 words)

Please include:

- Typical or common ratios across the system
- Known ranges (e.g., lowest to highest ratios)
- Notable variation by institution type or student population (if applicable)
- Any relevant information for the three named institutions

3.2 Advising Structures Used Across the System

Please describe the advising structures currently in use across institutions within your system.

For example...

- € Self-contained: All advising occurs in a center staffed primarily by professional advisors or counselors; faculty may also advise in the center.
- € Faculty only: All advising is conducted by faculty members, typically within the student's academic discipline.
- € Distributed: Students are assigned to department advisors (usually faculty), with a central administrative unit providing training, tools, and coordination.
- € Split: Advising is carried out by faculty within academic departments and by primary-role advisors in an advising center serving specific student populations.
- € Other (please describe).



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3.3 Advising Models, Responsibility, and Philosophy

From a system-level standpoint, please describe the prevailing advising models across your institutions. *(Suggested length: 150–250 words)*

In your response, address:

- The primary campus unit(s) typically responsible for advising
- How advising responsibilities are coordinated or supported at the system level
- Common advising philosophies or approaches in use (e.g., appreciative, proactive, developmental, coaching-based)
- Advising technologies currently in use *(Examples may include degree audit or degree planning tools, course scheduling and registration systems, early alert or case management platforms, advising notes or student relationship management (SRM/CRM) tools, etc.)*

Section 4: Sustainability of Advising Redesign

4.1 From a system-level perspective, please describe how the advising or pathways redesign has been sustained and evolved over time.

(Suggested length 400-600 words)

In your response, address the following at a high level:

- How the work has been resourced since initial implementation (e.g., base funding, reallocation, grants, and/or other mechanisms)
- How advising functions are staffed and supported across institutions, including any system-level coordination or guidance
- How state or institutional policies, governance structures, and/or accountability mechanisms have influenced the continuation or adaptation of the redesign
- How feedback from faculty, advisors, and students have been considered in sustainability decisions related to advising redesign.
- How evaluation or other data has been considered in sustainability decisions related to advising redesign.



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Section 5: Evidence of Impact and Measurement of Success

5.1 What evidence does your system currently have to assess the impact and effectiveness of the advising or pathways redesign? What outcomes are you currently tracking? Please note any restrictions on your ability to share these data with NASPA for the purposes of this study. (Suggested length 200-350 words)

Evidence could include any of the following:

- Publicly available reports or dashboards displaying student outcomes
- Internal evaluations or analyses conducted by the system or institutions
- External evaluations conducted by third parties (e.g., research organizations, funders, consultants)
- Ongoing tracking of student-level outcomes related to advising (e.g., retention, completion, credit momentum)
- Qualitative or quantitative evidence from national, system, and/or institutional surveys or interviews
- Other forms of evidence (please describe)

Section 6: Readiness and Interest

6.1 Why is participating in this project timely for your system at this moment, and how do you plan to use this award? What does your system hope to learn, contribute, or advance through participation in this research? (Suggested length: 200–350 words)

Section 7: Leadership Commitment

7.1 Please submit a letter of support from a system-level senior leader (President, Chancellor, or Provost) confirming awareness of and support for your system's participation in this project.

The letter should:

- Confirm senior leadership's endorsement of the system's application
- Acknowledge the one-year duration of the project
- Indicate support for the system's use of the project award to facilitate a local convening and institutional participation



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- Affirm the system's ability to: Designate a system-level lead as the primary point of contact, identify three participating institutions, participate in interviews and convenings, & share relevant documentation and data, where available.

Submission instructions:

Please send the letter as a PDF, signed and dated on the system letterhead **directly to** enewkirk-kotfila@naspa.org.

[Click here to access the online application.](#)