# Piloting a New Advising Model

Southeast Community College is moving to a new model for student advising. Director of Advising, Vicki Domina, planned a pilot of the new model for the 2019-2020 school year and approached Institutional Research to develop an evaluation plan. With Vicki's input, the IR team implemented a multi-faced evaluation of the advising pilot that included: (a) tracking of institutional outcomes, (b) student survey, (c) advisor survey, (d) evaluation of contact logs compiled by the pilot advisors, and (e) a series of short focused conversations with a longer focus group held after the completion of the fall 2019 term. The coronavirus pandemic scuttled plans to repeat all components of the pilot study during spring 2020.

This document provides an overview of the primary (very encouraging) findings from all components of the pilot study.

Student survey

The pattern of results from the survey administered in November 2019 were highly consistent. Pilot students had *more contact* with their advisors and – for every question – reported being *more satisfied*, having *more understanding*, and feeling *more confident* as a result of their advising experience than comparison group students. Comparison students either skipped or responded with a neutral response more frequently than pilot students on most questions. A selection of these results are shown in the figure to the right; values do not add to 100% because the neutral/null responses are not shown.

As the result of advising services that I have received:
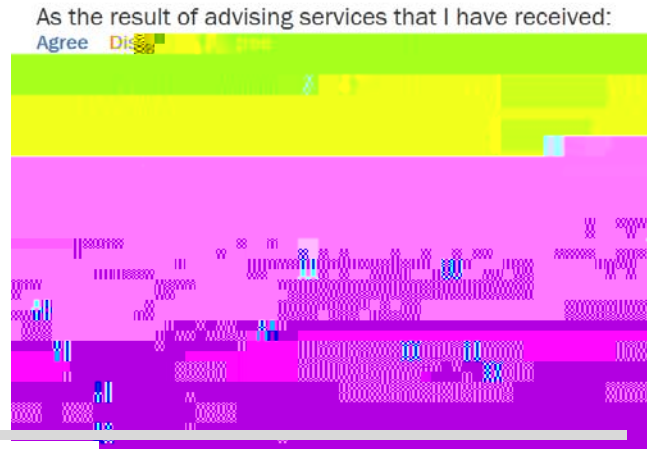
Advisor survey

Before the term, Vicki Domina invited eight staff members and seven faculty members to join the pilot. All advisors completed surveys at the beginning and end of the semester. Both surveys asked whether they knew how to accomplish specific tasks and whether they felt comfortable and prepared for the role. At the end of the semester, additional questions asked them to characterize their experience and report on their level of satisfaction.

As shown, when asked to compare the level of engagement this year to previous years, the vast majority of advisors indicated that this year was much or a little *more engaged*. Two advisors said it was the same and one felt that it was more transactional.

When asked to compare the level of proactiveness, the vast majority indicated that this year was much or a little *more proactive*. Two advisors indicated that it was the same; none said it was more reactive.

Advising contact logs

All advisors were asked to log time and details of their contacts with students. At the end of the semester, IR compiled the logs. Since the advisors used slightly different practices in record-keeping, the results must be interpreted with caution.

The compiled information showed that most advising sessions, which took an average of 28 minutes, were for academic advising/planning purposes and were held either in-person (most often) or by email (a clear second).

Focused conversations with advisors

During each focused conversation, the advisors were asked to reflect on which aspects of the pilot model they felt were going well and which were challenging (or, in the case of the final meeting, to reflect back across the entire semester). The following themes emerged strongly and repeatedly:

- x The advising model facilitated relationship building with students.

- x Advisors found the systematic communication strategy to be beneficial.
- x The pilot encouraged stronger relationships between programs and college advisors.
- x Advisors found the systematic documentation of advising interactions valuable.
- x Professional development for advisors will be needed on an on-going basis.