

Advising Pilot Qualitative Analysis

February 28, 2020

The Institutional Research team has been involved in a multi-faceted evaluation of the advising pilot during the 2019-2020 school year. This document provides an overview of the qualitative elements of the evaluation process: a series of focused conversations throughout the fall 2019 semester and a longer focus group held after then completion of that term.

Overview

During the first semester of the advising pilot, Vicki Domina, Administrative Director of Advising, convened monthly meetings of the pilot advisors. The purpose of these meetings was to share information with the pilot advisors and debrief them on their on-going experiences implementing the new advising model. During each of these meetings, Institutional Research (IR) conducted a focused conversation¹ with the advisors in attendance. Monthly pilot advisor meetings were held on 09/13/2019, 10/10/2019, 11/15/2019, and 12/09/2019.

On 01/08/2020, a longer focus group was held with the pilot advisors. This meeting included an extended focused conversation reflecting on the previous term, as well as a future-oriented exercise focused on designing an ideal advising model for SCC.

Detailed notes on the focused conversations and focus group exercises were compiled from audio recordings. The analysis below is an effort to identify

relationships created a deeper connection to SCC for the students. Below are related ideas that were expressed in the focused conversations:

The pilot encouraged stronger relationships between programs and college advisors. The staff advisors who worked with students in cohort-based programs routinely expressed that the advising model was developing deeper and more positive relationships between advisors and program faculty. Below are related ideas that were expressed in the focused conversations:

Better communication between programs/faculty and college advisors.

Program faculty/chairs are also asking more questions of college advisors.

Instructors have appreciated receiving extra help from a dedicated college advisor.

College advisors assigned to a specific program cohort have a better ability to advise students in that program.

Working with student cohorts within their program spaces deepened the relationship with both the students and the program faculty.

There is a system in place and everyone has their own lane and can collaborate from their areas of knowledge.

- The bridge that could be built between student affairs and faculty and instruction. The closer we can work together to help students the better.

we know best. They faculty felt that it was nice that they had someone that they could p through a lot of hoops to get what they need.

Advisors found the systematic documentation of advising interactions valuable.

The advisors generally had positive comments about the benefits of using CRM Advise, though they also provided many suggestions for small improvements and additional components they would like to see on the platform (see full notes).

Advisors felt the systematic documentation of advising interactions

Concerns and suggestions

Every focused conversation included an invitation to discuss what they felt was not working with the new advising model. There were no concerns expressed about the fundamental elements of the advising model. Most concerns were about having the time, knowledge, and resources to effectively implement the model. There were also many concerns expressed about the difficulty in getting the students to engage in the process (especially in getting them to read and respond to emails and texts). Below are some of the commonly expressed concerns:

Ensuring the advisors had sufficient time to devote to all of their advisees. Faculty participating in the pilot expressed more concerns about time than staff advisors.

Ensuring the advisors have sufficient knowledge about all the campus resources available to effectively advise and refer students.

to students to ensure that

Advisors should have a clear number of advisees assigned to them so they can effectively manage their workload.

More clearly distinguishing the roles between teaching and advising for those advisors who were teaching ACFS and for the faculty involved as pilot advisors.

'Dream Big': An ideal advising model for SCC

The end-of-term focus group included an exercise that asked the pilot advisors to dream big and brainstorm the elements they would include in the ideal advising model for SCC if resources were no obstacle. The advisors brainstormed individually (writing their ideas on notecards) and then gathered in small groups to discuss their ideas and put forward the best ideas for further discussion by the larger group. The larger group then: (1) grouped the ideas into common themes and (2) identified what they felt were the most important elements of a successful advising model.

Listed below are the most important elements and the common themes, followed by a list of all written comments from the brainstorming session:

Most important elements:

Low advising ratio / appropriate workload
matter

Effective technology to communicate amongst each other and with students

Training everyone knows what they need to know to do the job

Private meeting spaces; collaborative spaces

Common themes:

Begin dedicated advising at NSO

Cohort-based/program-based advising assignments (instead of random/alphabetical)

Private meeting spaces

Well-designed advising spaces (for non-hierarchical interaction)

Better technology

More training for advising

Centralized information about advising processes

Dedicated staff advisors with low advisee ratio

Full access to advising notes and student data (including grades)

More presence of 4-year schools and community services on campus

Personnel sufficient to walk students new folks (soft handoffs)