



University of Pittsburgh
Academic Advising
Landscape Analysis
Phase One

Prepared by:

April E. Belback

Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring

Office of the Provost

July 2019

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Background | 3 |
| Advising at the University of Pittsburgh | 3 |
| Methodology | 4 |
| Step 1: Planning and Organizing | 4 |
| Step 2: Individual Meetings | 4 |
| Step 3: Synthesizing Information | 4 |
| Participants | 5 |
| Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences (DSAS) Advising Center | 6 |
| Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences (DSAS) Departmental Advising | 8 |
| College of General Studies (CGS) | 9 |
| Swanson School of Engineering (SSOE) First-Year Advising | 10 |
| Swanson School of Engineering (SSOE) Departmental Advising | 11 |
| School of Computing and Information (SCI) | 12 |
| College of Business Administration (CBA) | 13 |
| School of Nursing (NUR) | 14 |
| Honors College | 15 |
| Career Center | 16 |
| Summary Matrix | 17 |
| Key Takeaways | 18 |
| Next Steps | 19 |
| Appendix | 20 |
| Survey Questions | 20 |
| Directors of Advising Contact List | 21 |
| References | 22 |

Introduction

Background

A National Gallup-Purdue Index study found that “if graduates strongly agreed that they 1) had a professor who cared about them as a person, 2) had at least one professor who made them excited about learning, and 3) had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams, the graduates’ odds of being engaged at work more than doubled” (Gallup, 2016). In 2016, the University of Pittsburgh commissioned Gallup, Inc. to survey recent Pitt alumni about their experiences as undergraduates and in the workplace. The survey found that only one in ten Pitt graduates strongly agree that they had each of these three experiences (Gallup, 2016). These findings are on par with other large public universities who report at 14% (Gallup, 2016).

The data behind this report helped to launch [Pitt’s Personalized Education Initiative](#), in which the University “aims to prepare students for lives of impact through educational experiences tailored to the specific goals and needs of each student.” Included in the core elements of the Personalized Education Initiative are components which seek to bring resources together that can be customized to the interests and abilities of each student and enriched by advisors and mentors. To develop innovation and opportunities behind this initiative, a Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring was hired out of the Office of the Provost in 2019 to implement a collaborative and enhanced advising and mentoring professional development strategy for Pitt, based on best practices.

The process of leading this transformation has begun, with the Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring conducting the landscape analysis that follows with the goal of understanding the current practices of advising at the University of Pittsburgh. The analysis focuses on undergraduate advising centers in the five freshman-admitting schools (Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, College of Business Administration, Swanson School of Engineering, School of Nursing, School of Computing and Information), as well as the College of General Studies and the Honors College, all of which have dedicated advising centers. Through the course of conducting the analysis, it became evident that adding the Career Center to the inquiry would be prudent as they advise and mentor many students in a similar model. As well, the Office of the Provost is committed to ensuring a connection between academic and career advising.

The research for the landscape analysis included the Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring completing website reviews and conducting individual interviews with the Directors of Advising for each college/school/center to gain a deeper understanding of the advising landscape at Pitt. This report summarizes the information that was gleaned through these findings and discussions.

Advising at the University of Pittsburgh

At the University of Pittsburgh, each college/school/center has different advising models and staffing structures. One centralized piece of information about advising can be found in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#), which indicates that students should consult with their individual schools for specific services. Under **General Information** and **Academic Regulations**, the catalog states, “To be a success, the advising process must work both ways: The advisor will be there to help when the student needs it, and the student must actively seek out an advisor for help. Before signing up for classes each term, students meet with their advisors” (2019). In this way, advising happens locally, as each college/school/center has policies and procedures for how to enforce such a mandate.

Methodology

Step 1: Planning and Organizing

To initiate the project, the Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring met with the Associate Vice Provost for Academic Innovation to discuss preliminary ideas. Some information was shared via email based on an inquiry done previously to gather information from the Directors of Advising pertaining to a few key points. It was determined that the primary objective of the analysis would be to outline the current state of advising at Pitt.

The Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring developed questions to gain a better understanding of the university advising scope. As a framework, these questions were based on the core competency areas for academic advising from [NACADA](#), The Global Community for Academic Advising (2017):

- ✓ Conceptual (concepts academic advisors must understand);
- ✓ Informational (knowledge academic advisors must master) and;
- ✓ Relational (skills academic advisors must demonstrate).

A data collection tool was created using Excel. A spreadsheet for each college/school/center was created with a section for each competency area and question.

First, a review of the advising websites for each college/school/center (see pg. 5) was completed. This not only helped to answer many of the preliminary questions, but also provided the Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring with a basic understanding of each college/school/center. The Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring utilized the data collection tool to compile information as the website reviews were completed.

Step 2: Individual Meetings

Next, individual meetings with each Director of Advising were scheduled. To prepare for the meetings, the Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring reviewed the collected data for gaps in information. This was the basis for each individual conversation.

During the meetings, the Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring utilized the data collection tool to ask questions and compile information.

Step 3: Synthesizing Information

The Director of Undergraduate Advising and Mentoring synthesized the information from the email responses, website reviews and individual interviews in the school/college/center reports that follow (pgs. 6-16) and summary matrix report (pg. 17). From this, important themes emerged about the current landscape of advising practices at the University of Pittsburgh (pg. 18) and recommendations are offered (pgs. 18-19). Last, next steps are shared (pg. 19).

Participants

| College/School/Center | Advising Website Address | Overall Undergraduate Headcount Enrollment Data (Fall 2018) |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences | https://www.asundergrad.pitt.edu/personalized-advising | 11,380 |
| College of General Studies | https://www.cgs.pitt.edu/advising | 978 |
| Swanson School of Engineering | https://www.engineering.pitt.edu/First-Year/First-Year/Home/ | 2,984 |
| School of Computing and Information | http://sci.pitt.edu/ | 209 |
| College of Business Administration | https://cba.pitt.edu/academics/student-advising/ | 2,043 |
| School of Nursing | https://www.nursing.pitt.edu/ | 655 |
| Honors College | https://www.honorscollege.pitt.edu/scholarship-mentoring | n/a |
| Career Center | https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/cdpa/ | n/a |

INFORMATION KEY FOR COLLEGE/SCHOOL/CENTER REPORTS THAT FOLLOW (PGS. 6-16):

- Unless otherwise noted, **Headcount** data was retrieved from [Tableau analytics data tool](#) and reflects the Fall 2018 enrollment.
- **Advisor/Student Ratio** reflects data from advising centers and was reported by Directors of Advising.
- **Advising Personnel** data was retrieved from the Office of the Provost [Data Analytics Team](#) (Pathways Project) and advising websites.
- **Advising Model** indicates who advises students (professional staff, faculty, or departmental advisors), when students are advised (how many years an advising center + faculty or departments work with students if the college/school has a transitional model), and if the Director of Advising has implemented an approach to advising across the college/school/center.

Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences (DSAS) Advising Center

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Headcount: 11,380 overall; 6100 undeclared</p> | <p>Advisor/Student Ratio: 1 : 235</p> |
| <p>Advising Personnel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Director • 2 Assistant Directors • 26 Full-Time Academic Advisors • 1 Front Desk Person | <p>Advising Model:</p> <p>In a Undeclared/Declared Model, all students enter the Dietrich School as “undeclared” majors. As such, all undeclared students work with the professional advisors within the Advising Center. Once declared, students then move to departmental advisors (professional staff and faculty) after processing a change of major form (typically in a 2+2 model). Dietrich Advising Center advisors work with all incoming students to the Dietrich School, both first year and transfer students. The Dietrich School admits a number of students who aspire to move into Pitt’s upper division schools. For this reason, all advisors in the Center have a specific understanding and training of all majors and other academic opportunities across the university.</p> |

Student Success, Resource, and Referral Information:

A strength of the Dietrich Advising Center is that the advisors are well-versed in resource information. On Thursdays, campus offices are invited to provide staff updates to build a network of referrals and student support (e.g. tutoring, counseling, residence life, career center, etc.). As a process, students on academic probation are invited to attend additional meetings with their advisor; mid-term grade reporting and advisor outreach are consistently utilized.

Advising Training:

New advisors in the Dietrich Advising Center go through a six-week training program that gradually introduces all of the majors within the school and university. All academic advisors take part in the training by participating in one-on-one interactions, shadowing experiences and mentorship. New advisors are also intentionally connected to other Dietrich School units (e.g., Office of First Year Programs, Office of Student Records, Office of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity, Study Lab, academic departments, etc.) and other university resources and offices (e.g., DRS, Study Abroad, etc.) in order to be better equipped for student referrals. Points of information covered in the onboarding training include: academic overview, expectations, resources, contextual components, hands-on technology training, and university policy. Dietrich provides ongoing professional development to advisors by hosting presentations to staff about timely topics as appropriate. The center has an internal working group that looks at staff and professional development on a continual basis. Specific training sessions and opportunities related to topics of diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency (e.g., participation in Dietrich School Open Door Project programming, training sessions offered via CCLD, time allocations made for staff to complete Diversity and Inclusion Certificate courses, etc.) are included to better enable advisors to support students from underrepresented backgrounds.

Advising Assessment:

The Dietrich Advising Center currently utilizes multiple forms of advising assessment. Each spring semester, students are sent an electronic questionnaire/survey which is designed to gauge student satisfaction with various aspects of advising and to collect student suggestions on how to improve the practice and/or experience. Focus groups are utilized to collect data on specific initiatives and/or events (e.g., new student orientation, transfer student orientation). Unit supervisors conduct advisor appointment observations throughout the year. Advisor notes are reviewed for evidence of outreach related to various retention efforts (mid-term grade reporting, completion of first-year academic requirements, future term enrollment, etc.). Also, formal feedback is routinely gathered from the advising staff (both within the Advising Center and those from the academic departments) related to various events or aspects of the work. Finally, the school uses SERU data to review and assess student experiences with advising (central and departmental) over time.

Academic Exploration:

Oftentimes, new students are not fully aware of the academic options (majors, minors, certificates, double-majors, dual-degrees, etc.) available to them. Advisors help them to understand the range of opportunities and be confident in their decisions. In addition to advising services, the Dietrich School offers courses and programming through the Office of First-Year Programs that support and engage students through the exploration process. In addition, Advising Center advisors often refer exploratory students directly to academic departments and advisors within those units who regularly meet with undeclared students who are considering their program(s).

Connections Between Advising and Career Services:

Dietrich Advising Center works with the Career Center Consultants, who have portfolios related to different majors. Career Center staff regularly visits with Advising Center staff to share new updates and/or opportunities for students so that advisors can share with students. Dietrich Advising Center advisors are intentional about incorporating conversations related to careers/career exploration into their discussions with students, as early as the initial summer advising session. Advising Center advisors work to explain to students how the Dietrich general education curriculum builds transferable/soft skills that are in-demand and required in a multitude of professional and personal settings. Advising Center advisors also begin to introduce the concepts and importance of internships and/or research experiences for professional attainment. Advising Center advisors introduce concepts of various inventories (e.g., Kuder, MBTI, Strong Interest Inventory, etc.) and refer students to Career Consultants for interpretation of results. Advising Center advisors also introduce students to helpful online resources (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Explore Health Careers, etc.) and encourage early student exploration and engagement with them.

Advising at Orientation:

Once students are matriculated, an advisor is assigned to each student. Students are provided with resources through the Dietrich orientation website. Advisors reach out to students in multiple ways. Students meet with their advisor in person, by phone, or via Skype. To ensure that students have access to advising resources on an ongoing basis, on-call advising is available Monday-Thursday 8:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. on Friday. Also, 14 peer advisors are available to answer questions from students and parents online, in person, and over the phone.

Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences (DSAS) Departmental Advising

| | |
|--|---|
| Headcount: 11,380 overall | Advisor/Student Ratio: Different for each dept; ranges from 17- 262 |
| Advising Personnel: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 32 departments• 74 departmental faculty and staff advisors | Advising Model: Once declared, students move to departmental advisors (professional staff and faculty) after processing a change of major form (typically in a 2+2 model). Departmental advisors advise declared majors, minors, and certificate students. Departmental advisors work with students to ensure successful completion of the curriculum and discuss opportunities for internships and experiential learning. Advising approaches vary based on students' personal situations. |

Student Success, Resource, and Referral Information:

Advisors, assistant deans, and our Study Lab staff refer students to a variety of resources on campus (e.g., DRS, the Counseling Center, etc.). For students who are living in the residence halls, frequent communication happens with the Residence Life staff. Academic advisors continue to provide primary advising for students on academic probation; advisors can refer students to the Director of Academic Success and Study Lab for additional individual support. Students who have been suspended or dismissed meet with an assistant dean prior to reinstatement.

Advising Training:

Departmental advisors typically meet with staff from our Office of Student Records and Advising Center to be trained on school and departmental information. Some departments have advisor manuals they use to train new advisors, but this varies by department. Across DSAS advisors are encouraged to participate in internal opportunities offered through the school or other units on campus. Encouragement in external opportunities depends on the department.

Advising Assessment:

The senior survey (conducted university-wide) and SERU survey are used at the school level. In addition, DSAS departments go through an external review every 10 years. Some departments also administer a graduating student survey.

Academic Exploration:

Exploration is at the heart of a liberal arts education. Major and career exploration begins in the First-Year Programs (FP) in DSAS courses and Academic Communities. The General Education curriculum also provides an opportunity for students to explore interests. Students are encouraged to make connections with Career Services as early as their first year at Pitt. Departments offer major seminars that focus on connecting majors and careers and also hold career panels with alumni and other opportunities for students and alumni to connect.

Connections Between Advising and Career Services:

Many departments offer a major seminar course that focuses on connecting career opportunities and the major. Many departmental advisors meet with students who are exploring a major but are not ready to declare.

College of General Studies (CGS)

| | |
|--|---|
| Headcount: 978 for BA/BS degree seeking students (does not include students only pursuing certificate, post-bac, or non-degree students enrolled through CGS) | Advisor/Student Ratio: 1 : 250-275 |
| Advising Personnel: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 Director• 4 Full-time Academic Advisors• 1 Front Desk Person | Advising Model: Students in CGS are either internal or external transfers and adult students who work with professional advisors during their time at Pitt. 2/3 of CGS students are non-traditional populations (single parents, veterans, adult students, low-income and first-generation students). |

Student Success, Resource, and Referral Information:

In order to support students in CGS, scholarships are offered to specific populations. CGS also has a separate student government (CGSSG), which provides services and programs to enhance student life on campus for students enrolled in CGS. When on academic probation, students work with their individual academic advisors. The Assistant Dean of CGS created an academic success contract that advisors use in this process.

Advising Training:

New advisors to CGS meet frequently with the Director of Advising every day for the first few months after the start date. Several resources are used in the onboarding process such as the "Faculty and Staff Guide to Distressed Students." This is utilized during this time to help advisors understand vulnerable students. Other resources include providing bookmarks to Pitt-specific websites and having meetings with team members from different academic units and resource centers in the center. Ongoing professional development for CGS advisors include weekly meetings on Fridays that include updates from the Director as well as guest speakers from campus. The Director of CGS also encourages outside professional development; every academic advisor in CGS has been able to attend a conference in the last year and share resources back to the team.

Advising Assessment:

CGS has two student surveys, which help to inform and assess advising: entrance and graduation. Entrance surveys provide advisors with data about the students to better inform their practices. Graduation surveys provide administrators with data to assess the overall unit, as well as the performance of individual advisors.

Academic Exploration:

CGS focuses on social and academic exploration. Different academic units frequently send CGS advisors announcements for a variety of academic opportunities (including the University Honors College, law enforcement, public policy and several pre-health opportunities). The CCSGS (student government) is very active with events such as non-traditional student week and finals survival packets. Many external transfer students who are admitted to CGS have the intention to transfer to other academic programs. The majority of the internal transfer students have usually declared a major and are assigned to an academic advisor based upon the academic interest (i.e., Administration of Justice, Health Sciences, etc.).

Connections Between Advising and Career Services:

CGS has a Career Consultant within the office space in the same center as Advising, and communication happens frequently with the advising team (both face-to-face and through email). The Career Consultant splits time between CGS and mail Career Center. Both units refer students to each other.

Advising at Orientation:

In mid-late August, CGS sponsors an orientation program. During this program, presentations are facilitated by various CGS staff members including a welcome from the Director of the CGS/McCarl Center, an overview of student services from the Director of Advising and information from the Career Consultant. Past orientations have also included a presentation from the Financial Aid Office and representatives from the CGSSG. Typically, before Orientation, external transfer students will have already met individually with their academic advisors throughout the summer on a one-on-one basis, based on student needs and population.

Swanson School of Engineering (SSOE) First-Year Advising

| | |
|--|---|
| Headcount: 2,984 Overall | Advisor/Student Ratio: 1 : 150-175 |
| Advising Personnel: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 Director• 3 Full-time Academic Advisors• 1 Full-time Transfer Coordinator | Advising Model: In a 1+3 model, students work with the SSOE First Year Advising Center staff for one year then move to departmental faculty advisors after declaring their major. |

Student Success, Resource, and Referral Information:

SSOE ensures that advisors know who their first-generation students are and that knowledge informs their interactions. As well, first-year advisors assist students who may be struggling academically. Academic advisors teach the mandatory ENGR 0081 and 0082 (Freshman Engineering Seminar) courses. An academic recovery course is also offered in the spring semester for freshman on probation (ENGR 0090).

Advising Training:

Advisors in the SSOE Advising Center are provided professional development, including FERPA training and monthly meetings on emerging issues. The Associate Dean has a committee for Professional Development which provides external presenters to the student services unit. SSOE encourages advisors to attend outside opportunities and many attend yearly conferences.

Advising Assessment:

SSOE assesses advising in a few ways. The freshman engineering program advising survey asks students to report on their self-assessed achievement of six desired learning outcomes of first-year advising. SSOE also has a freshman post-spring survey.

Academic Exploration:

All students in SSOE officially enter the college undeclared. A seminar in the first semester helps them to explore different majors within Engineering. 60-70% come with a particular major in mind, and up to half tend to change. Through engineering department presentations, design activities, and professional development opportunities, the seminar helps students to solidify their major decisions.

Connections Between Advising and Career Services:

SSOE has a very active, effective, and well-utilized cooperative education program which shares an office suite with first-year advising. Communication is easy and frequent, including formal presentations during the former PittStart program, first-year seminars, and informal referrals. SSOE has not had a dedicated liaison from the Career Center in Student Affairs in about a year. SSOE is considering an internal position focused on career and professional development for students.

Advising at Orientation:

The SSOE Orientation module includes class selection and the engineering course load, as well as information about how to download the Pathways application and make an appointment with an academic advisor (Skype, phone, or in-person). SSOE students will meet with an advisor to plan their first semester schedule first before their hold gets lifted. SSOE has also created schedule worksheets to assist students in their academic planning.

Swanson School of Engineering (SSOE) Departmental Advising

| | |
|--|---|
| Headcount: 2,984 Overall | Advisor/Student Ratio: Different for each dept; ranges from 20-250 |
| Advising Personnel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departmental faculty advisors; 6 departments; 11 faculty coordinators | Advising Model: In a 1+3.5 model, students work with the SSOE First Year Advising Center staff for one year then move to departmental faculty advisors after declaring their major. Over half of students in SSOE graduate in 4.5 years due to co-op and minoring in other disciplines. |

Student Success, Resource, and Referral Information:

SSOE has many support systems in place to provide resource and referral information for students and advisors. Beyond the first year, the Retention Specialist works with upperclassmen needing extra support or who are in an academically tenuous position. This position is also responsible for different queries to identify students who are trending towards risk. There is a dedicated person to address mental health and wellness issues of students who also provides training for advisors by coaching faculty to manage the process and navigate relationships on campus. For traditionally under-represented students, Pitt EXCEL provides academic coaching, support, enrichment opportunities and community building activities.

Advising Training:

Undergraduate departmental coordinators meet as a group with the Associate Dean once a month to discuss policy, SSOE curriculum, changes in the school, and advising. Although students have assigned faculty advisors, many see the department coordinators as the best source of information. Within each department, some coordinators will train their faculty advisors, but each is different in this approach.

Advising Assessment:

SSOE has a senior exit survey that asks questions about advising experiences.

Connections Between Advising and Career Services:

SSOE has a very active, effective, and well-utilized cooperative education program, matching employer opportunities. 50% of SSOE students take advantage of this opportunity. SSOE has not had a dedicated liaison from the Career Center in Student Affairs in about a year. SSOE is considering an internal position focused on career and professional development for students.

Advising at Orientation:

The SSOE has a transfer student orientation and also a SCUPI orientation for new students to school who are non-freshmen. Additionally, as students matriculate into their departments, some departments will provide a mini-orientation to the department through their first session or two of the department seminar.

School of Computing and Information (SCI)

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Headcount: 823* (the Fall 2019 number of students assigned to advising staff rosters)</p> | <p>Advisor/Student Ratio: 1 : Up to 250</p> |
| <p>Advising Personnel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Director • 4 Full-time Academic Advisors | <p>Advising Model: Students in SCI work with primary-role academic advisors during their entire time in SCI. Academic advising is supplemented by faculty mentors who provide disciplinary expertise. SCI advising is based on a learning-centered model and is delivered using a “flipped advising” approach. Advising will be assessed using Student Learning Outcomes and Performance and Delivery Outcomes that are currently being developed.</p> |

Student Success, Resource, and Referral Information:

With the inauguration of the first freshman-admitted class in the Fall 2019 semester, SCI is building a new advising center. SCI is also creating an academic recovery plan to utilize for students on probation. As a new center, they are working towards a model that separates advising and registration (records office handles enrollment issues).

Advising Training:

SCI’s plan for professional development is based on NACADA's competencies, student development theory and advising theory.

Advising Assessment:

SCI will be incorporating a Canvas e-portfolio in a flipped advising model, which will help to assess advising interactions.

Academic Exploration:

Many advisors in SCI see students who are exploring majors within their school. As a new advising center, they are building a mechanism for how to help students understand exploration inside and outside of the school. Academic exploration is discussed in each advising appointment. While many SCI students have decided on a major, they are encouraged to situate their academic choices in the context of three “big questions”: 1) what problems are you interested in solving? 2) what information do you think you need to solve those problems? 3) what impact do you want to make on the world? These questions are first proposed during the First Year Seminar (FYS), which is taught by SCI academic advisors. Students are asked to reflect on these questions when they make academic decisions through discussions with their academic advisors.

Connections Between Advising and Career Services:

SCI is a career-oriented school. With a flipped-advising approach and modules within Canvas to include career readiness, students will be required to demonstrate what they have learned (e.g. e-portfolios, "what are things most representative of your work at Pitt?"). SCI advisors have met with Career Center representatives to be able to refer students as appropriate. SCI also has an internal experiential education representative, which will help to expand that unit for students.

Advising at Orientation:

SCI students will receive information about the shared responsibility of advising, links to resources and how to meet with an advisor in their Orientation module. Advisors are not lifting holds until after the appointment (in person, by phone, Skype).

College of Business Administration (CBA)

| | |
|--|--|
| Headcount: 2,043 | Advisor/Student Ratio: 1 : 250 |
| Advising Personnel: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 Director• 1 Assistant Director• 9 full-time Academic Advisors• 1 Front Desk Person | Advising Model: Students in CBA work with professional advisors for all four years at Pitt. CBA has incorporated a personalized strengths-based advising approach as well as utilizing a customized individual development plan into each student interaction. |

Student Success, Resource, and Referral Information:

A few things CBA (Pitt Business) advisors do to ensure students are supported outside of academics include 1) utilize the financial aid tab in the Advising Hub as an overview of the student and to identify unmet need, 2) provide outreach as appropriate to connect students to community resources, 3) ensure connections to the counseling center, and 4) continue to have a staff member engaged with the [CARS \(the Care and Resource Support\) team](#). The Director of Advising oversees the academic standing list, but students work with their academic advisors individually to create a plan for success. Also, CBA advisors continuously refer students to the career development office.

Advising Training:

New advisors in CBA spend the first week with the Director and Assistant Director in discussions, scenarios and shadowing. Then, advisors are introduced to other team members, including CBA Career Development and CBA International Programs. CBA provides ongoing professional development for advising staff by hosting semester meetings (twice per term) and trainings.

Advising Assessment:

CBA uses Handshake to assess advising in a few ways, including conducting an annual Pitt Business survey, sending students an email at the conclusion of each advising appointment, and pulling/sorting student responses by advisor out of the system to inform decisions. CBA also has created a Tableau dashboard to track key student metrics across each advisor.

Academic Exploration:

Students in CBA take a course in their first year that is equivalent to a first year seminar. The goal is to make sure they understand their direction in the school of Business, as well as introduce them to internships early. The required business core courses, beginning with Managing in Complex Environments, are structured to provide all business students with an understanding of how organizations function holistically.

Connections Between Advising and Career Services:

Pitt Business Academic Advising and Career Services work in tandem and are co-located in the Tafel Center for Student Success. Pitt Business recognizes that academic development and career development go hand-in-hand for students. Career development for business students begins the day the student is admitted into Pitt Business.

Advising at Orientation:

CBA has created a series of documents to walk students through how to create a first semester schedule. The incoming freshman class is divided up between the advising team. As soon as students are in MATR status, the advising hold is lifted. Then, students are contacted by their advisors to make an appointment (in person, email, phone or Skype). At the end of July, advisors will check the schedules and provide outreach as needed. CBA also has programming planned for Welcome Week for their incoming students. As well, there is a living learning community (LLC) in Bruce Hall that holds 191 beds for Business students.

School of Nursing (NUR)

| | |
|---|---|
| Headcount: 773 | Advisor/Student Ratio: 1 : 120-200; dependent on program |
| Advising Personnel: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 Director• 6 Full-time Academic Advisors• 1 Front Desk Person | Advising Model: Students in NUR work with professional advisors for all four years at Pitt. |

Student Success, Resource, and Referral Information:

NUR encourages all students to apply for the school's endowed scholarships, which takes into consideration low-income status. NUR has also partnered with UPMC to allow 12 students to attend at no cost (including tuition and board). NUR does not have many students who fall below 2.0, but may have situations where students need to re-take a course because they get below a C-. When this happens, both the Director of Advising and professional advisors provide outreach and work with students to promote academic success, exploration and/or resources.

Advising Training:

To onboard new advisors, NUR provides opportunities to spend time with websites, learn the curriculum, ask questions, and shadow advising meetings. Ongoing professional development for NUR advisors includes weekly staff meetings for new and important information, shared reading opportunities, participate in faculty and staff development workshops on campus, individual membership in NACADA, and attendance at conferences.

Advising Assessment:

NUR has an end-of-program survey that is completed by each senior prior to graduation which includes information about advising interactions.

Academic Exploration:

Based on the year of entry, NUR students are encouraged to pursue a minor, certificate, research mentorship program, or BPhil and have some time in their program for exploration in terms of general education and curriculum requirements.

Connections Between Advising and Career Services:

The senior seminar course in NUR has several guest speakers from the Career Center on topics such as interviewing and resume writing to prepare students for their transition to the workforce. Each year in the Spring semester, NUR hosts a career fair.

Advising at Orientation:

NUR students receive an onboarding letter in an email as well as an e-admissions packet. NUR asks students to use Pathways to make their Orientation appointments with academic advisors (Skype, in person or by phone).

Honors College

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Headcount: 408 FY students lived in Honors housing; 0 students in Honors College</p> | <p>Advisor/Student Ratio: 1 : 78 (for year one; will scale up)</p> |
| <p>Advising Personnel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Director • 4 Full-time Advisors (scholarship mentors) | <p>Advising Model: Students in the Honors College are assigned an (academic) scholarship mentor who will develop a plan of study for their time at Pitt, including coursework, research, and outside of the classroom experiences, as well as a plan to meet the requirements for the Honors College. The Honors College scholarship mentors employ a proactive case management approach.</p> |

Student Success, Resource, and Referral Information:

Beginning in the Fall 2019 semester, in the new Honors College, (academic) scholarship mentors will be assigned to students and they will create a portfolio for each student to meet the requirements for Honors College membership. Mentors contact different groups of students (e.g., Pell-eligible) for financial scholarships based on those criteria. In addition to mentoring duties, each scholar-mentor manages a portfolio of national scholarships and is responsible for working with those students to develop their applications (these students may not all be admitted to the Honors College). Honors College students will be living in Southerland East together as a cohort with a Resident Assistant mentor; there are also four commuter students. In subsequent years, the Honors College will not require students to live in Honors housing. As well, the Honors College is developing a plan to admit internal and external transfer students to the college. It is rare that Honors College students fall in probationary status; this and all requirements need to be discussed/approved at PACUP for policy, but mentors will refer students to their college for support.

Advising Training:

The Honors College is working on the staff development model for the scholar mentors.

Advising Assessment:

As the Honors College has yet to have assigned students to rosters, there is no formal assessment practice. They are looking to incorporate ideas from others into an assessment plan.

Academic Exploration:

The Honors College is considering offering an Honors Freshman seminar to encourage student academic exploration, as it has been noticed that oftentimes honors students need more focus and are interested in many academic pursuits. For the Honors College, advising exploration conversations typically center around adding depth to experiences, minors, research opportunities, study abroad, and referrals.

Connections Between Advising and Career Services:

The Honors College has not had a need for Career Consultants or career advising thus far.

Advising at Orientation:

The Honors College does not have a direct responsibility for academic advising in new student orientation. However, there is messaging about Honors College opportunities for all students in the online orientation platform which addresses how to explore honors courses and how to, if admitted, explore the new community. Tuesday of Welcome Week is devoted to the students admitted into the Honors College.

Career Center

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Headcount: N/A</p> | <p>Advisor/Student Ratio: No rosters; for AY18-19, approx. 6,000 students came through the office</p> |
| <p>Advising Personnel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Director • 1 Associate Director • 2 Assistant Directors • 8 Full-time Career Consultants • 3 Internship Staff • 3 Employment Development Specialists • 1 Alumni Engagement Specialist • 1 Employer Relations Coordinator • 1 Data Coordinator • 1 Marketing and Communications Coordinator • 1 Outside the Classroom Curriculum Coordinator • 1 Special Events and Marketing Coordinator • 2 Front Desk Persons • 1 Business Manager | <p>Advising Model: The Career Center services are for the most part transactional, and the consultants see students on a drop-in or appointment basis. The Center utilizes both the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Strong Interest Inventory for undecided or exploratory students.</p> |

Student Success, Resource, and Referral Information:

It is important that the Career Center develops strategic relationships with departments (advisors, student life, residence life, financial aid, counseling office), as students open up during appointments and consultants need to understand how to refer students when appropriate.

Advising Training:

New career consultants cover basics in a formal onboarding process, including policy information, departmental contacts, subject areas, technology training, and MBTI and Strong Interest Indicator training. For ongoing professional development, Student Affairs provides resources to allow the consultants to attend outside conferences and/or webinars. The center also regularly provides staff trainings and weekly meetings to encourage collaboration.

Advising Assessment:

The Career Center utilizes student surveys 1) after each appointment through Handshake, based on a 1-10 scale and [NACE \(National Association of Colleges and Employers\)](#) and 2) at large-scale programs for feedback. The Career Center has a dedicated assessment person on staff and works with the university assessment team on the post-graduation survey.

Academic Exploration:

The Career Center consultants often have exploratory conversations with students and ask them to think about Career separate from Major; they ask the question, “what career goals do you have?”

Connections Between Advising and Career Services:

There is a dual relationship between the Career Center and advising departments, specifically with the advising centers. It can be somewhat more difficult to make faculty connections, but one point of contact has been classroom relationships and teaching first year seminar courses (6 staff members teach those courses and others get invited into more sections).

Advising at Orientation:

The Career Center does not have direct responsibility for academic advising at orientation. However, the center is assigned 2-3 events during Welcome Week and the office is open for walk-ins. There is also a relationship with Residence Life to present to the Resident Assistants at the beginning of the year about the center for referrals and to do programming in the Residence Halls with their students.

Summary Matrix

| | DSAS | CGS | SSOE | SCI | CBA | NUR | Honors College | Career Center |
|---|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| Headcount* | 11,380 | 978 | 2,984 | 209 | 2,043 | 655 | 408 | N/A |
| Advising Model** | Typically 2+2; advising center staff + departmental (faculty and staff) | Advising center staff 4 years | 1+3.5; first-year advising center + departmental faculty | Advising center staff 4 years | Advising center staff 4 years | Advising center staff 4 years | Scholar-mentors | Career counselors |
| Advising Contacts on Website | Separate pages for staff and faculty advisors | Under CGS staff page | Under SSOE staff page; no indicator for departmental faculty advisors | With SCI staff directory | Under CBA staff page | Under NUR SAAR staff page | Under team page | Under staff page |
| Curriculum Information / Academic Plans | Requirements on School website (Major Sheets) and Catalog | Program requirements on college website (checklists) and Catalog | FY program on website; each dept has requirements on pages and Catalog | Requirements on school website and Catalog | Requirements on college website and Catalog | Requirements on school website and Catalog | Honors courses listed on college website; may also include co-curricular | Services listed on Career Center website |
| First year seminar courses | Not required; different 1 & 4 cr options FA or SP | Not required; Offers transitional course for transfer students | Required; ENGR 0081/0082/0087 FA & SP non-cr courses | Required beginning in FA 19 | Required academic success courses BUS 0010/0020 1 cr | Required; NUR 0001 FA 1 cr course | Not required; may be required in the future | Staff present information in FYS courses across Univ |
| Non-Enrolled Student / Registration Outreach | Advisors proactively reach out to students who are not enrolled in upcoming term | Advisors proactively reach out to students who are not enrolled in upcoming term | Student-driven; staff educates students about registration in FYS and approves individual schedules and lift holds before registration | SCI Academic Records sends per-term enrollment related emails | Advisors email students proactively at beginning of term and throughout for those who need reminders | Data Manager builds first year alias lists and Onboarding Orientation communications | Honors College is building their outreach model; will not manage registration, but Honors College students will have priority registration | In-person events and emails via Handshake platform |

***Headcount** data was retrieved from [Tableau analytics data tool](#) and reflects the Fall 2018 enrollment.

****Advising Model** indicates who advises students (professional staff, faculty or departmental advisors), when students are advised (how many years an advising center + faculty or departments work with students if the college/school has a transitional model).

Key Takeaways

After a review of the information, important **themes** emerged:

1. While each unit has some **training** in place, the majority of the Directors of Advising indicated that they do not have the time or capital to employ regular training opportunities at both the onboarding point and beyond for advisors. This results in inconsistency within and across departments for advising practices.
2. Directors of Advising and the Career Center have jointly indicated a desire for more collaboration. As well, research indicates a more **holistic and proactive approach to career exploration** (as cited in Streufert, 2019; Trusty, 2014) helps students realize their educational goals more effectively.
3. In the website review, it was noticed that **student resource and referral information** is managed locally throughout the university. Each school/college/center approaches this in a different manner and from a different vantage point.
4. Each school/college/center approaches the idea of **academic exploration** differently. Typically referred to as *undecided*, exploratory students often arrive to college unsure about their major and career decisions (Workman, 2015).
5. When a student desires to make a **transition from one academic unit to another**, it can be quite confusing for both the student and the advisor. Navigating process, people, and information are all very challenging transition points at Pitt.
6. There are many **different roles** across the University of Pittsburgh in the space of advising, mentoring, coaching, and counseling. These positions are not clearly defined nor is the scope across the university understood.
7. There is not a defined mechanism for the **assessment of advising** across the University of Pittsburgh. Many units utilize student surveys, but how they are tied to direct unit feedback and improvement is unclear.
8. **Orientation advising** is different across the school/college/centers so that students are getting different information about academics as they are entering the University of Pittsburgh.

From these themes, the following **recommendations** are offered:

1. While every school/college/center is different, there are commonalities about advising, university policy, academics and resources that every advisor and mentor across the institution could benefit from understanding at the beginning of their career and beyond. Creating a suite of onboarding and additional **training opportunities** will help to standardize the practice of advising across Pitt.
2. There are opportunities to **integrate academic and career advising** throughout each step of a student's experience at Pitt. Proactive engagement of academic and career advisors in exploratory conversations helps students to develop early skills and interests.

3. A centralized **toolbox of resources** for all advisors and mentors would be helpful to ensure that every student at Pitt has access to this vital information.
4. Advisors who are dedicated to the work of **academic exploration and student success** is vital. This work is difficult and important to retaining vulnerable populations of students. A key is to provide tools and pathways for students to navigate the university.
5. Creating a **transition document** that is continually updated and includes process steps, contact persons, and advising information for students who are interested in potentially making a change from one academic unit to another could prove to be useful.
6. Defining **the role of academic advisor** across the university by building a clear career ladder will help to support academic units, leadership and professional development at Pitt.
7. Developing a standard **assessment practice for advising** would provide crucial feedback to advisors and advising leadership.
8. The **orientation modules** can include a more consistent message about academic planning and advising practices to ensure each student receives the same access to information.

Next Steps

This first analysis provided an overview of eight school/college/centers at the University of Pittsburgh. However, there are many additional units across the university that provide advising to undergraduate students. A next step will be to **continue the analysis** to include additional units:

- Regional campuses:
 - Pitt Bradford
 - Pitt Greensburg
 - Pitt Johnstown
- University Center for International Studies
- School of Education
- School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
- PIC Health Careers
- School of Pharmacy
- School of Social Work
- Athletic Advising

Launching in August 2019, the eight school/college/centers involved in the first analysis have been invited to participate in the **Pitt Advising and Student Success Improvement Seminar**, hosted by the Personalized Education Team and Partners for Network Improvement, a team of applied researchers at Pitt's Learning Research and Development Center (LRDC). We hope to organize our work on advising models and practices as a **Networked Improvement Community (NIC)** so that we can work on challenges together and with adaptations needed to accommodate the unique aspects of the departments and program areas. There will be support of a shared goal of advising assessment, while also providing units with autonomy.

The Office of the Provost is also involved in a national conversation around academic advising. In October, we will be presenting at the [Reinvention Collaborative Academic Advising Colloquium](#) about Networked Improvement Communities for advising assessment and improvement, as there is interest in RI/RII institutions joining in this collaborative.

The Office of the Provost has begun planning for the **2020 Mentoring and Advising Summit**, which will take place in joint collaboration with Carnegie Mellon University on March 5. We are looking forward to expanding the audience and scope of this event.

Appendix

Survey Questions

1. How many students are on a typical advising roster? What is the ratio of advisor to student?
2. How many advisors do you currently have on your staff? Other team members?
3. Describe the advising model for your college/school/center? Do you utilize more staff or faculty and in what capacity?
4. Describe any services or support your department has in place for students who are first-generation or low-income.
5. What networks do you have in place for advisors to refer students for support of non-academic needs?
6. How are advisors educated or trained about college/school or departmental information?
7. Do you have a training module for new advisors?
8. Are advisors encouraged to participate in professional development within and outside of Pitt?
9. What tools do you use to assess advising across the college/school?
10. Do you have career counselors in your advising center?
11. What opportunities do you have in place for students to connect advising, major conversations and career?
12. Describe your practices for advising students during orientation.
13. What type of registration outreach (distribution of lists, advisor outreach) happens in your school/college/center?
14. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Directors of Advising Contact List

| College/School/Center | Contact | Email |
|--|--|--------------------------|
| Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences Advising Center | Derek Fischer, Director, Advising Center | djf63@pitt.edu |
| Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences Departmental Advising | Jessica Hatherill, Senior Director, Office of the Dean | jhath@pitt.edu |
| College of General Studies | Tiwanda Taylor, Director of Advising and Student Support | tlst28@pitt.edu |
| Swanson School of Engineering First-Year Advising | Jill Harvey, Associate Director and Coordinator of Advising | jgh7@pitt.edu |
| Swanson School of Engineering Departmental Advising | Mary Besterfield-Sacre, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs | mbsacre@pitt.edu |
| School of Computing and Information | Sean Bridgen, Director of Advising | bridgen@pitt.edu |
| College of Business Administration | Elizabeth Adams, Director of Academic Advising | ladams@business.pitt.edu |
| School of Nursing | Jennifer Brunner, Director of Advisement | jlb366@pitt.edu |
| Honors College | Dave Hornyak, Assistant Dean for Honors College | hornyak@pitt.edu |
| Career Center | Ryan Sweeny, Assistant Director for Career Development | rsweeny@pitt.edu |

References

- Academic Regulations. (2019). Retrieved from <https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu/content.php?catoid=132&navoid=11516>
- The Gallup-Purdue Index Report. (2016). *Great Jobs Great Lives: University of Pittsburgh*.
- NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2017). NACADA academic advising core competencies model. Retrieved from <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreCompetencies.aspx>
- Personalized Education. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.personaled.pitt.edu/about>
- Streufert, B. (2019, June). Career advising: A call for universal integration and curriculum. *Academic Advising Today*, 42(2).
- Trusty, J. (2014). Study of outcomes associated with use of the Kuder® Career Search with Person Match at a public research university in greater Miami, Florida. *Kuder, Inc*.
- Workman, J. (2015). Exploratory students' experiences with first-year academic advising. *NACADA Journal*, 35(1).